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NPOQ

NONPROFIT QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

Radical Leadership

*Visioning
Lines of Flight*

Becoming Sovereign



**Backlash, Burnout,
and BIPOC Leaders**

Edge Leadership

**Infrastructure for
a New World**

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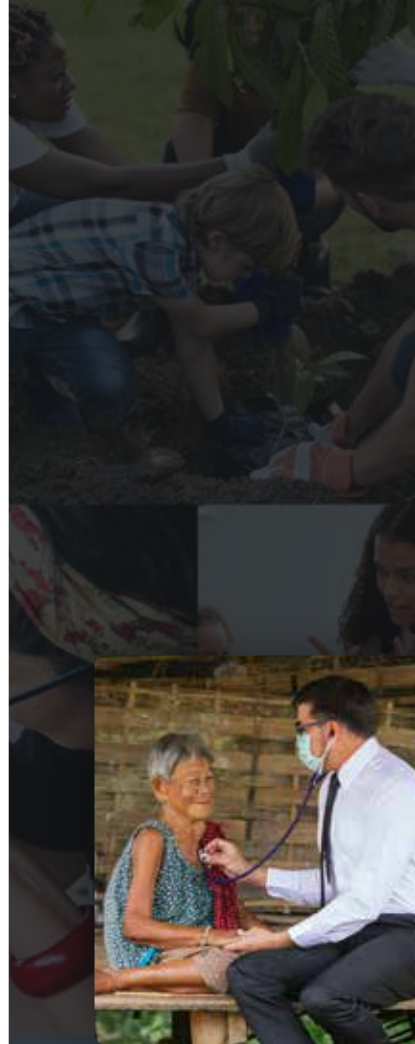
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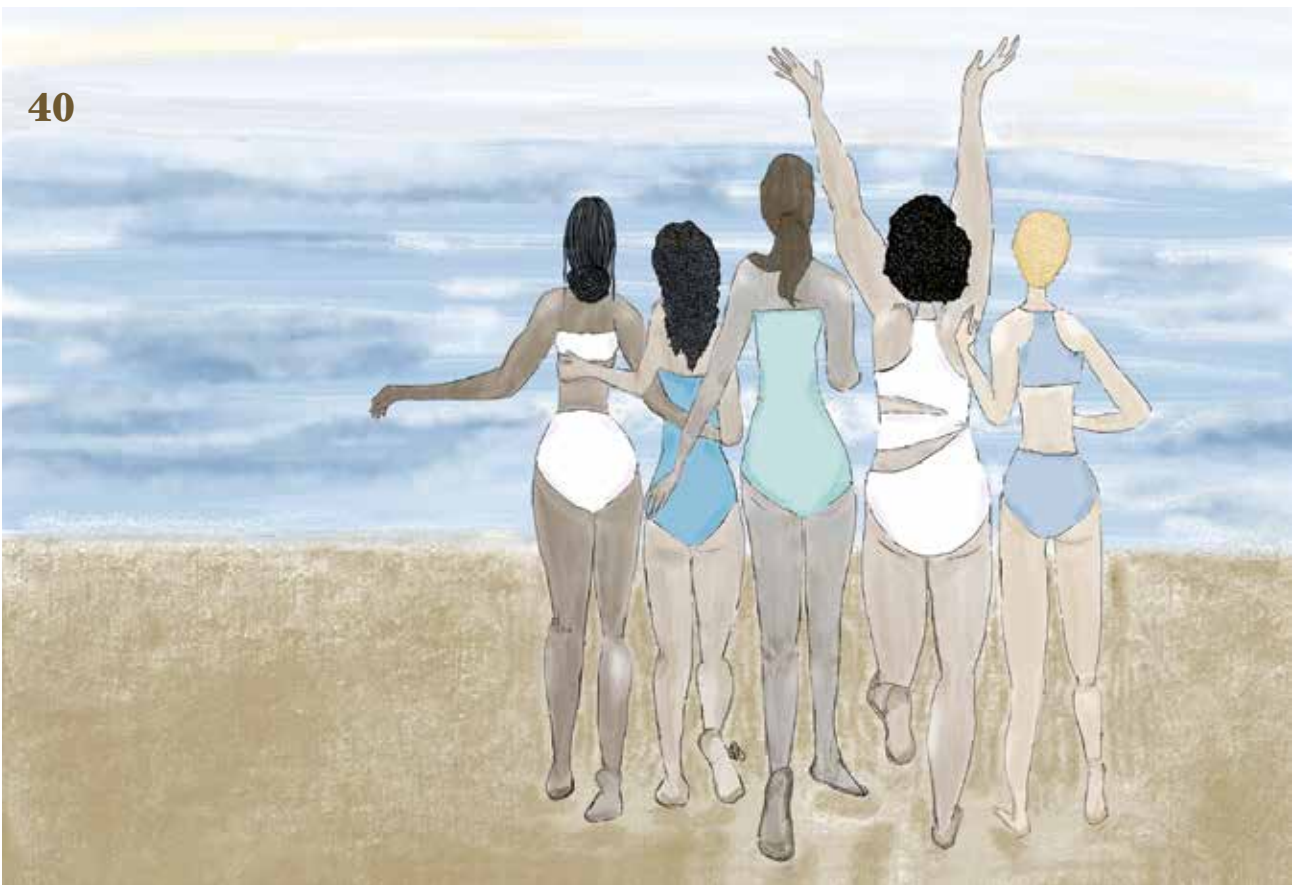
“The premise of the Edge Leadership platform is to bring together a powerful community of primarily people of color who are innovating social change. This sprung from a demand in the society to design infrastructure that supports leaders of color.” This piece introduces Edge Leadership’s key principles.



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WELCOME



Dear Readers,

Do you believe in magic?

Recently, as I was doing a Q + A session with a cohort of nonprofit leaders of color who are reading my book *The Power Manual*, one woman said to me, “Some of us were a bit triggered when we were reading your book. We felt that some of your ideas about personal power were magical thinking! I mean, we need to focus on systemic racism.”

The underlying assumption is that magical thinking is unrealistic, and that developing personal power is not a critical part of social change work.

Before I responded, I felt the gap between us. I am often talking across this gap. It is the gap between radical vision and practical day-to-day decisions, between the creative process and the strategic one. The frame that drives our work is critical, and we have to be able to talk across these frames—to draw lines between them.

Our goal does not need to be simply to change the system. We can also seek to escape it. To create the other worlds we believe are possible. Isn't that what magic is?

Believing we can only work inside systems to change them is what is unrealistic. We also need “lines of flight,” “bolts of pent-up energy that break through the cracks in a system of control and shoot off on the diagonal. By the light of their passage, they reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists.”¹

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who coined the phrase “lines of flight,” link human creativity to our ability to be free, to escape the status quo.

But that requires radical responsibility, breakthrough creativity, and a belief in magic.

There are (at least) two types of work to be done now: work at the edge creating the new forms leaders are asking for, and the work of leading organizations. Not only do we need to fund and build out the visioning/creative/imagination space (the support groups aren't enough), we need the link between these to be stronger, so that instead of triggering, visions of a better world can inspire more visionary leadership and work.

For example, I am leading both *NPQ* and Edge Leadership, an R+D platform for social change focused on leaders of color. *NPQ* addresses “the system,” while Edge Leadership focuses on creating new forms and knowledge (and sometimes recognizing long-established ones). These enliven *NPQ*, and *NPQ*, in turn, distributes them to the field. Both are needed to build the future we want from the present in which we live.

It's time to recognize magical thinking as a liberatory leadership style.

This edition of the *Nonprofit Quarterly* magazine explores where we are going vis-à-vis race and power—the edge, in terms of articulating vision, building for a transformative civic infrastructure, and creating new lines of flight.

I assumed the role of President and Editor in Chief in January of this year. I am honored to have the opportunity to build on the work of founding Editor in Chief Ruth McCambridge, who, in 1999, launched what is now a multimedia platform with this very magazine. I am excited to create the *NPQ* you've been telling us you need at this moment—one that leads the way in restructuring knowledge creation in the field.

I invite you to join us on this journey.



Cyndi Suarez
President and Editor in Chief
NPQ

NOTE

1. Tim Rayner, “Lines of flight: Deleuze and nomadic creativity,” *Philosophy for Change*, June 18, 2013, philosophyforchange.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/lines-of-flight-deleuze-and-nomadic-creativity/.



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Vision in Leadership

by
Danielle Coates-Connor

■
*“A different person in
leadership with a different
set of assumptions can
actually shift the system.”*

—Cyndi Suarez





THIS IDEA THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO CREATE NEW FORMS, OR WAYS OF ORGANIZING LIFE, IS CENTRAL TO SUAREZ'S CREATIVE APPROACH.



here's this notion that change takes time. But in reality, a lot of change just happens in radical paradigm shifts," explains Cyndi Suarez, *Nonprofit Quarterly's* new president and editor in chief. "If you don't know that process of transformation, then you don't know how to harness it."

In late-December 2020, Suarez was promoted from her role as senior editor, and kicked off 2021 by inviting the entire staff to a five-day virtual vision retreat.

Suarez says, and has demonstrated, that "a different person in leadership with a different set of assumptions can actually shift the system." Since this leadership transition, *Nonprofit Quarterly* has refined the editorial line to sharpen its focus on analyzing justice as it pertains to race, the economy, climate, and health. This focus allows *NPQ* to delve into the ecosystems that comprise these issue areas, especially social movements, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropy. Suarez came to these frames as a result of various conversations with leaders over the past four years, in which the main theme was ecosystem sensemaking.

NPQ has also been restructured to support leading thinking and practice from the field—particularly from leaders of color—which has already been in development through Edge Leadership, an R+D platform for social change hosted by *NPQ* and launched by Suarez before taking on her new role. *NPQ* is currently building out a Voice Lab for leaders of color in the field interested in developing their voice. The lab will host writing, podcasting, online learning, and social media workshops; and it will support the development of a body of work through purpose, storytelling

mediums, and audience workshops. This unique relationship between Edge Leadership, an environment set up to cultivate voice, and *NPQ*, a publication, creates the conditions for the knowledge creation needed now within and beyond the sector.

Joel Toner, president and publisher of the *Nonprofit Quarterly*, is thrilled by the organization's progress. "We are so lucky to have Cyndi, as the organization is positioned to provide the critical racial equity and leadership perspectives our readers and the sector need right now."

Suarez and Toner are working closely to strengthen and diversify *NPQ's* revenue streams, including fortifying the organization's grant support, growing its burgeoning membership model, and building out other earned revenue opportunities, including its highly successful online learning program.

Toner praises Suarez's innovative leadership style, which he says is already transforming all aspects of *NPQ's* mission and has quickly galvanized staff. "It creates a more vibrant, creative, energetic, woven organization, where good ideas come from everywhere and not just from the top but from every role in the organization and from everyone in the room," he said.

Marcus Walton, president and CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, notes Suarez's rare blend of imagining new ideas and operationalizing change. "Being able to use this platform to share a perspective that, quite frankly, has never been asked of me before, translated into an elevation of my status in the field." Walton believes Suarez will lead *NPQ* to elevate the voices of those who go unheard. "Cyndi's work, support, and encouragement to share my

SUAREZ BELIEVES IT IS VITAL FOR LEADERS OF COLOR TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF IMAGINING THE FUTURE FOR NONPROFITS AND CIVIL SOCIETY. “THERE’RE A LOT OF SPACES FOR ANALYZING WHAT’S WRONG WITH THE WORLD WE HAVE NOW. BUT THERE ARE NOT A LOT OF SPACES FOR IMAGINING THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN.”

point of view at NPQ has translated into a level of credibility that could have taken years to achieve otherwise,” he said.

“What excites me most is innovation. I’m attracted to new ideas,” says Suarez, who has been involved in social change for thirty years as an organizer, strategist, funder, and intellectual. “Movements for social change need to create new ways of thinking and being. People who are not used to being seen as having power can take power and create new forms of social change.”

Walton calls Edge Leadership “next level”—the answer to the question, What is next? Advanced practitioners are being engaged on the platform to explore possibilities in ways Walton has not seen before. “Edge Leadership allows us to have a space to explore possibilities instead of negotiating through practical, constrained, preexisting options offered by current inequitable structures.”

This idea that it is possible to create new forms, or ways of organizing life, is central to Suarez’s creative approach. Based on her field research with leaders of color, she has prioritized four pillars critical to creating new forms of civic infrastructure: *vision, accountability, knowledge creation and evaluation, and space to replenish*. “In essence, edge leaders are creating a new culture,” she says. “They are designing at the edge, between the present and a livable future.” Bit by bit, these ideas are making their way into NPQ via multimedia articles featuring voices from the field, and articles by edge leaders.

Christopher Cardona, program officer at Ford Foundation, marvels at Suarez’s ability to synthesize complex theory into digestible, applicable bites. “It’s a vision of power and mastery that people of color in particular can exercise in

environments that are not designed for them, or environments that are even designed to oppress them and force them to not bring their full selves to what they’re doing. Cyndi offers a framework, a way of thinking and being and feeling that helps people in nonprofit organizations understand their own individual and collective power differently and exercise it from wherever they are.”

Cathy Garcia of Philanthropy Con Café calls Suarez’s work, particularly her series on Women of Color in Leadership and her book *The Power Manual*, “foundational.” “When I think of Cyndi’s leadership, I think of somebody who is not afraid to ask really deep, intentional questions. We especially need that in this sector that thrives on politeness and niceness at the expense of accountability and having real conversations.”

Suarez believes it is vital for leaders of color to be at the forefront of imagining the future for nonprofits and civil society. “There’re a lot of spaces for analyzing what’s wrong with the world we have now. But there are not a lot of spaces for imagining the world we want to live in,” she said.

She can’t pinpoint how she developed this point of view. But she remembers, as a teen, going to a feminist bookstore and asking for the section on Latina authors. The clerk pointed her to a tiny section of books, and Suarez remembers thinking, “Great. There’s space for me to write the books that need to be written.”

“People think theory is abstract,” Suarez says, “but for me it is real.” She describes herself as a “theory head from the hood,” and is known for breaking down complex ideas into relevant calls to action. Her recent piece “Forms: A New Theory of Power” describes ways in which we can

“THIS DESIGN BEYOND LIMITS IS CHALLENGING AND EVEN DANGEROUS WORK THAT SHIFTS NOT JUST WHAT IS MADE, BUT THE MAKER.” –CYNDI SUAREZ

rethink society.¹ “What Does It Look Like to Support Women of Color to Lead,” written when political strategist and movement builder Wilnelia Rivera helped Ayanna Pressley to win a Congressional seat with the slogan “Change Can’t Wait,” continues to reverberate in nonprofit boardrooms, among philanthropy leaders, and across sectors.² “This design beyond limits is challenging and even dangerous work that shifts not just what is made, but the maker,” says Suarez. “Very few people will take it on. However, it only takes a critical mass of sufficient energy to make a difference.” She describes the four pillars of this change noted earlier, in “Infrastructure for a New World” (pp. 40–49, in this issue), in which she articulates infrastructure as “not just physical space or things, but the ability and capacity to be *part of* what we’re building.”

Suarez’s new podcast series features women of color.³ “I’m really interested in tracking women of color in power this year as part of our key work. Why does it matter for women of color to be in power? How do we do power differently?” Through candid, in-depth interviews, listeners will come to understand how these women embarked on their paths to

leadership, how their leadership styles have evolved over the years, how they envision their work now, and what they hope to see for their fellow women-of-color leaders.

Suarez recalls how her thinking about power started early in life. “I remember as a kid when I started to realize that I had racial, gender, and class identities that positioned me as low status in society. But I didn’t think of myself as marginalized. In fact, I saw these as privileged positions for understanding power. It’s easier to see how power works from the bottom, even though it can be hard.”

Kristell Caballero Saucedo, program officer for Racial Equity Initiatives REP Fund at Borealis Philanthropy, notes how the sector gets stuck on criticism, and that Suarez manages to lead in a way that demands people to imagine and offer solutions: “You can play while doing this work. You can imagine. You can create. You can innovate.”

The *Nonprofit Quarterly* welcomes Suarez’s leadership and a new generation of effort to influence whose voice is heard, how to think creatively, and how to be a liberatory social change agent.

NOTES

1. Cyndi Suarez, “Forms: A New Theory of Power,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, March 18, 2021, nonprofitquarterly.org/forms-a-new-theory-of-power/.
2. Cyndi Suarez, “What Does It Look Like to Support Women of Color to Lead?,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, January 4, 2021, nonprofitquarterly.org/.
3. See first in series: Cyndi Suarez, “New Borealis Leader Outlines Bold Vision for Philanthropy,” Tiny Spark podcast, *Nonprofit Quarterly*, February 4, 2021, nonprofitquarterly.org/new-borealis-leader-outlines-bold-vision-for-racial-justice-philanthropy/.

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Becoming Sovereign

by Cyndi Suarez

- For edge leaders creating viable futures, it is critical to not only understand but also know how to build personal sovereignty.



O

ver the last year, NPQ has incubated Edge Leadership—a multi-sector social change R+D platform.

The ideas behind Edge Leadership build on the writings of design theorist Tony Fry.¹ In his book *Design as Politics*, Fry explores the central role of design in helping us move from “the unsustainable state of the world” to a redirection based on asking demanding questions about sovereignty:

What does it take to remake sovereignty by design?

What is there to remake?

How does what is sovereign become sovereign?²

Fry describes this work as “designing from the edge”—peering out into an unpromised future.

I build on Fry’s work by explicitly naming this kind of work as *edge leadership*, and identifying five key characteristics:

1. **Personal sovereignty** Edge leadership is acting from a sense of power
2. **Risk** Edge leadership involves risk-taking
3. **Transformation** The core edge leadership practice is transformation—understanding how it happens, in ourselves and others
4. **Connectivity** Edge leaders identify and name connections between things, and build connections with others
5. **Multiplicity** There are many ways to do things at the edge; we don’t have to agree on everything

Here we begin to examine personal sovereignty.



body

territory

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT

While sovereignty is usually associated with political states—as the ability to protect geographical boundaries—it is originally associated with Christ and the Catholic Church. When the Holy Roman Empire lost its political and economic power and could no longer effectively challenge states, the state became sovereign.³

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which brought to an end the warring in Europe, is credited with articulating the concept of territorial sovereignty as clear borders that can be defended. It marks the transition from the Middle Ages to “a world of sovereign states.”⁴ But its critics argue that it does not provide “a clear statement of the principle of sovereignty”⁵—perhaps due to the reality that borders are sites of contestation, and therefore not only not always clear, but ever-changing.

THE PERSONAL ASPECTS

We are just now beginning to see the articulation of sovereignty as personal. Sofya K. Nartova-Bochaver, professor at the Higher School of Economics/National Research University in Moscow, is one of the leading researchers of personal sovereignty. At a very high level, she defines personal sovereignty as “a trait that demonstrates the extent to which a person’s empirical Self is respected by his/her social environment.”⁶ Or, more simply, “the life space of the personality.”⁷

The concept of sovereignty as border control is carried into the personal. Here, a person is a “physical-territorial-existential integrity,”⁸ where she both has a personal sense of the world and projects herself into it. Thus, the boundary is between one’s sense of self and one’s environment.

Nartova-Bochaver explains,

The presence of a private, individual territory is, therefore, a very important component of the normal life activity of a living being in defense of its security.

Real or anticipated change in the boundaries of an individual’s territory acts as a signal for specific behavior: either for the protection of the previous boundaries by means of aggressive-defensive behavior, or for flight to a place of greater security. The boundary between private and foreign territory is a zone of heightened psychological tension.⁹

It makes sense, then, that “the boundaries of a psychological space are defended by both physical and psychological means.”¹⁰ However, sovereignty isn’t just about defending one’s physical and psychological space.

American sociologist Thomas S. Henricks—whose work focuses on social stratification, race, and game theory—sees people as “orderly creatures who wish to ‘know’ the character of situations so that they can move through them in an efficient, confident, and morally justified way.”¹¹

The central role of interactions and relationships cannot be overstated.

Henricks writes, “human experience is the awareness that one is involved in ‘relationships’ . . . , and this involvement includes a judgment about one’s ‘standing’ in these relationships. If people use these interactions or relationships to acquire what they do not have, they produce a society in which relationships are in continual tension and subject to change.”¹²

Nartova-Bochaver adds that in times like these of overpopulation and environmental challenges, people are more prone to both have to take others into account and protect their identities.¹³

things

routine habits

As she delves in, she defines personal sovereignty as:

1. a person's ability to protect his/her psychological space
2. a balance between a person's needs and the needs of other people
3. the condition of personal boundaries
4. a system of explicit and implicit rules regulating relationships between people¹⁴

This is rigorous balancing work that requires deep awareness and skill. This skill is developed via the responses we have for coping with “everyday deprivations, challenges, and stress.”¹⁵ Over time, these become habits. By the time we have exited adolescence, these habits have become a very important trait.

PERSONAL SOVEREIGNTY PROFILE

In addition to defining the personal aspects of sovereignty, Nartova-Bochaver identifies six domains:

1. **Body**
2. **Territory**
3. **Things (belongings)**
4. **Routine habits**
5. **Social contacts**
6. **Tastes and values**¹⁶

One's preferences along these domains comprise a sovereignty pattern or profile. People with a high degree of personal sovereignty have high self-esteem and self-representation, communicate more effectively with others, and have a general sense of trust in the world. People with low personal sovereignty tend toward avoidance and anxiety in their relationships, depression, and criminal behavior.

High personal sovereignty is critical to well-being and achievement; and low personal sovereignty makes it difficult to overcome life's challenges.

Nartova-Bochaver was prompted to study personal sovereignty after several years working at the consultation center of the Scientific Research Institute for Childhood of the Russian Children's Foundation. There she noticed that children and adolescents who exhibited aggressive behavior, vandalism, and theft often had lives where their need for personal life space had been denied. The more deeply adults denied them this space, the more serious the reaction. These early experiences shape the person and tend to persist.¹⁷

Nartova-Bochaver and her team constructed the Personal Sovereignty Questionnaire.¹⁸ Most of the items were taken from real psychotherapy client stories of traumatic life events. Each item includes not only a description of an event, but one's feelings as one reflects on it. Thus, the same event may give rise to very different experiences, depending on one's interpretation.

The questionnaire has six subscales representing the aforementioned domains. Examples of items are:

1. I often felt offended when adults punished me with slapping and cuffing (Body).
2. I always had a place (table, chest, box), where I could hide my favorite things (Territory).
3. It annoyed me when my mother shook my things out of the pockets before laundering (Things/Belongings).
4. I often became sad when I didn't finish my play because I was called by my parents (Routine habits).
5. My parents accepted that they didn't know all of my friends (Social contacts).
6. I usually succeeded in having a children's celebration as I liked (Tastes and values).¹⁹

HIGH PERSONAL SOVEREIGNTY IS CRITICAL TO WELL-BEING AND ACHIEVEMENT; AND LOW PERSONAL SOVEREIGNTY MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME LIFE'S CHALLENGES.

social

She explains,

The more provocative the situations experienced by a person who cannot cope with this challenge (and which arouse his/her negative feelings), the less the person's sovereignty level. *Thus, both the absence of such situations in the life experience, and personal resistance against them, ensure psychological sovereignty.*²⁰ (Italics mine.)

In the use of the questionnaire with adolescents and youth from Armenia, China, and Russia, the most significant results were found in the interactions between the factors they looked at: culture, age, and gender. Generally, the lowest scores were found among female respondents, and the highest among males.

Nartova-Bochaver set out looking for differences in levels of personal sovereignty between cultures, and instead found that the main differences were *within* the cultures among the various status groups.

She attributes this "impressive result" of sovereignty being generally high across cultures to "the evolutionary and adaptive function of the sovereignty trait in everyday lives," and concludes that "all cultures need and support its development."²¹

However, one wonders what would happen if one included race as a factor. In fact, it's surprising that a study of personal sovereignty would not include it, as race is a central organizing factor of human value, both within and across societies.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF RACE

The current Black Lives Matter movement, which started in the United States and has spread around the world, speaks to the urgency of looking at race. And though it started out specifically addressing the challenges Black people have defending their bodies, it quickly expanded to cover the other five domains.

Political scientist Mae Coates King sums up the centrality of race as an organizing force in the United States when she writes, "A basic and distinctive feature of the American political system became evident, namely, the primacy of the role of race in the acquisition and loss of power and status."²²

Henricks sees one's status in society as critical to one's experience, and identifies four possible positionalities:

- Privilege—the possession of special rights
- Subordination—to be the object of obligations
- Marginality—separation from others
- Engagement—being fully engaged in reciprocal interactions with others²³

The ideal positionality is engagement.

Low status, or to be the object of low opinions, manifests in the body as negative affects. Teresa Brennan, a former professor of mine at The New School for Social Research, pioneered affect theory. In *The Transmission of Affect*, she writes,

Pheromones act as direction-givers which, as molecules, traverse the physical space between one subject and another, and factor in or determine the direction taken by the subject who inhales or absorbs them.²⁴

Brennan's brilliance is in infusing this observation from the field of neuroendocrinology with the role of power in relationships and how those are further shaped in stratified societies.

To be dominant in an interaction is to be able to off-load one's anxiety; and to be subordinate is to be compelled to upload the anxiety of others.

**THRIVING DEPENDS NOT ONLY ON THE ABILITY TO PROTECT ONE'S BOUNDARIES
BUT ALSO ON MAKING TRANSPARENT AND CROSSING THEM.**

contacts

Further, Brennan finds that negative affects accumulate, so that people who experience constant subordination have a harder time resisting them. This aligns with Nartova-Bochaver's observation that the more challenges a person faces with which she cannot cope, the less sovereignty she experiences.

Brennan writes, "the predominance of the affects means it is harder to struggle against them, and when the predominance is complete, one no longer knows that there is anything to struggle against."²⁵

Like Nartova-Bochaver, Brennan focuses on gender. However, given the central role of race as a stratifying force in societies, we can see how important it is to examine it as a key site for understanding personal sovereignty.

BUILDING PERSONAL SOVEREIGNTY

For edge leaders creating viable futures, it is critical to not only understand but also know how to build personal sovereignty.

Nartova-Bochaver writes,

The boundaries of a person's space dictate his attitude to his social micro-and macroenvironment—to his family and friends, to his social and ethnic group, and to humanity. Whether he perceives the social environment as "his own" or as "foreign" determines the possibilities for the manifestation of constructive, life-creating tendencies that will make social boundaries transparent for him and take him across them.²⁶

Here, she introduces the idea that thriving depends not only on the ability to protect one's boundaries but also on making transparent and crossing them. How does one do that? Nartova-Bochaver's sovereignty profile and Fry's demanding questions are a great start.

- **These are the kinds of inquiries Edge Leadership is set up to explore. Stay tuned as we dig deeper into personal sovereignty and begin exploring the other four key edge characteristics. Go to Edge Leadership @ edgeleadership.org to join the conversation.**

tastes & values

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How to Be an Antiracist Supervisor.

Start with Changing What You Call Yourself.

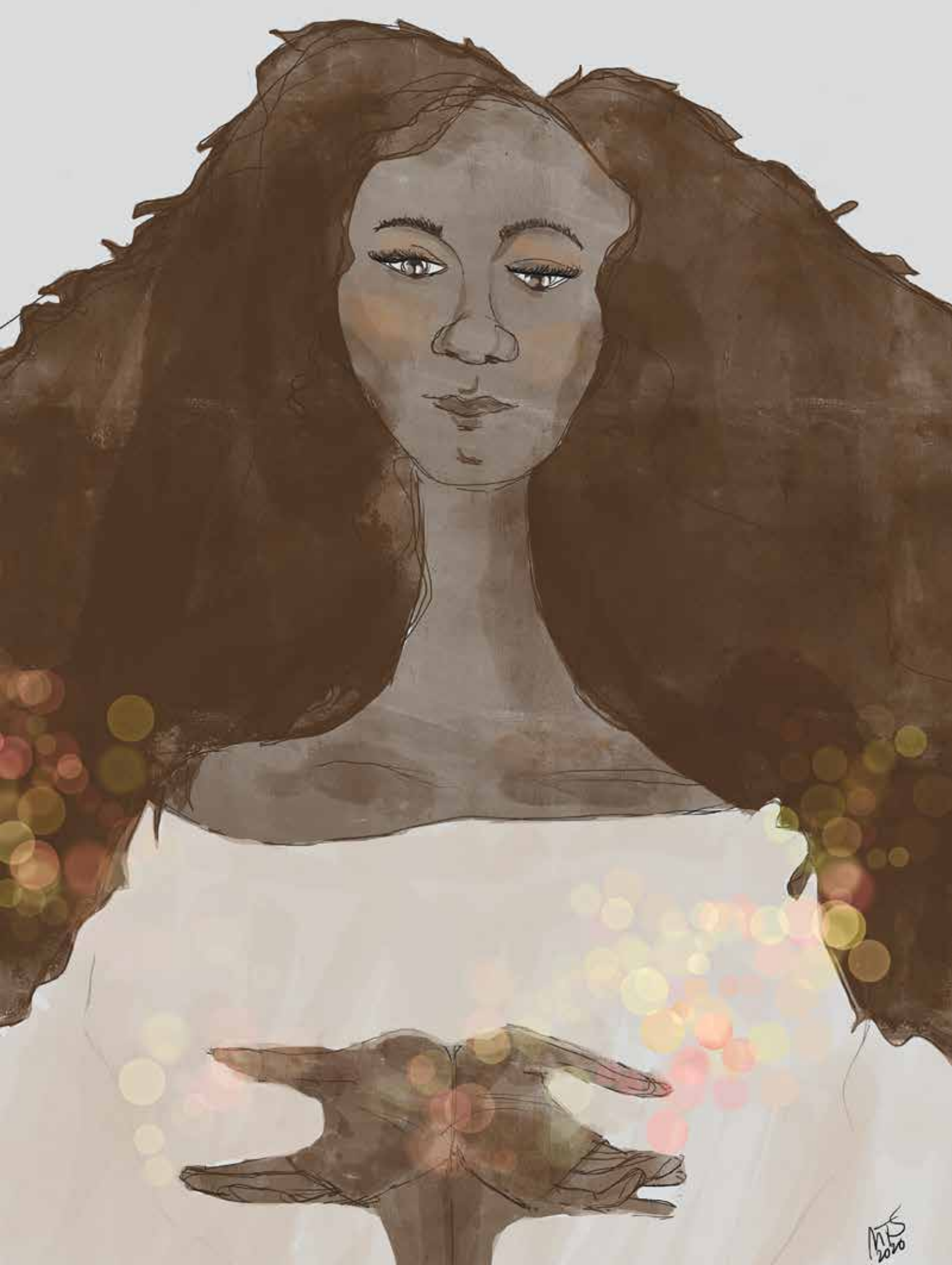
by *Kim-Monique Johnson*

- We can rid ourselves of the supervisor title—but to truly rid ourselves of the embedded racism in organizational leadership is to envision a different paradigm.

Editors' Note: *This article was first published by NPQ online on April 15, 2021.*

I have long struggled with calling myself a supervisor. Maybe it activates something in me from my youth—years of hearing my working-class parents complain about their supervisors being micromanagers, always looking over their shoulder, demanding production, scheduling long workdays. My parents would complain about having to *put in for vacation* and wait for approval from their supervisors, as they struggled to get matching vacation time to spend with us as a family.

As an adult, my discomfort calling *myself* a supervisor is connected to my experiences holding various leadership positions in nonprofit organizations, including serving as chief human resources officer for a global reproductive healthcare nonprofit. Sure, I participated in management training and learned about different leadership styles. I took solace in identifying *my* servant leadership style—one that rejects the command and control ways of supervising that date back to production lines in factories. And still, there are organizational structures and so-called human resources best practices that perpetuate a power dynamic—a dynamic that has always felt unsettling for me.



MIS
2010

I'VE COME TO APPRECIATE THAT MY VISCERAL REACTION TO THE TITLE *SUPERVISOR* IS NOT RELATED TO **INDUSTRIAL** WORK. MY REACTION IS **ANCESTRAL**, RELATED TO SLAVE WORK.

Could it be that the coach in me prefers a more equitable power share when working with junior staff? Or could it be that it is time to retire the term *supervisor/manager*, especially since our mission-driven work in nonprofits is more knowledge and service than industrial and factory work?¹

Indeed, I attributed my distaste for the term *supervisor* to the history of oppressive management systems dating back to the Industrial Revolution. I was taught that modern management practices began in England with the creation of factories, and in industrialized North America with the cotton gin.

THE BRUTAL ORIGINS OF THE SUPERVISOR ROLE

European management thinkers are credited for identifying the function of supervisors into five roles: to plan, organize, coordinate, command, and control. This mechanization of labor and unrelenting drive for production led to long work hours, unsafe working conditions, low wages, and exploitative child labor.

Recently, that narrative has been shattered by documented accounts of violently sophisticated business practices originating on the slave plantations of the Caribbean and in the Southern states of America. In her book *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management*, Caitlin Rosenthal, assistant professor of history at UC Berkeley in California, argues that modern management practices—the ways in which supervisors or managers engage with employees to get work done—is rooted in, as *Harvard Business Review* describes it, “the soil of plantations rather than the dust and debris of the factory floor.”²

In her review of many business records of slave owners, Rosenthal found that modern business management practices employed by corporations and nonprofits—creating middle managers, performance management, productivity

analysis, and workforce planning—can all be traced back to the management of plantation slavery.³

I've come to appreciate that my visceral reaction to the title *supervisor* is not related to **industrial** work. My reaction is **ancestral**, related to slave work.

At CRE, we define *supervision* as a process marked by values-based support, feedback, openness, continuous learning, and partnership. It is inclusive and equitable, with dual responsibility for success in which both supervisor and supervisee are equally invested in creating a fulfilling, respectful, and mutually beneficial developmental relationship.

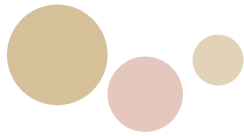
And yet, even with a definition and good intentions to reinvent the supervisor role, these matter less than the inherent racist management system that guides how we interact with our teams. This management system was designed to value white lives and white livelihood over Black lives and Black livelihood. The system was designed to demand productivity and profit for the benefit of the slave owner at the physical, mental, and emotional expense of the enslaved. As Rosenthal documents, we inherited the oppressive system and practices, which includes inheriting the title *supervisor*. We can rid ourselves of the supervisor title—but to truly rid ourselves of the embedded racism in organizational leadership is to envision a different paradigm.

What would we call ourselves if we were not using terms rooted in oppression? What would we do differently?

TRANSITION FROM ANALYSIS TO ANCHORING A NEW WAY FORWARD

Coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to

WHAT IF WE DID THE *EXACT OPPOSITE* OF WHAT BEING A SUPERVISOR WAS CREATED TO DO?



“normality,” trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

—Arundhati Roy⁴

The notion of the pandemic as a portal shifted my perspective from what was to what can be created. My thinking shifted further when I heard Dr. Angel Acosta describe the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with four hundred years of reckoning with racism as *COVID-1619*.⁵ As an educator and social justice facilitator, he offers a healing-centered framework for leadership and organizational development.⁶

I began to question, what would it be like to center health and wellness in our approach to our work with our teams?

Knowing that being a supervisor is tied to the origins of a management system that began with the brutality of enslaving Black people, it's no surprise that, in general, workers report feeling that they are being overworked, are stressed, and that they are experiencing mental health challenges. One in five adults in North America experiences a mental health challenge in a given year, and there is some evidence to suggest this is higher among nonprofit staff.⁷

The stress related to being a leader of color⁸ and for supervisors in POC-led nonprofits on the COVID frontlines⁹ understandably leads to health problems and burnout.

In *Dying for a Paycheck*, author Jeffrey Pfeffer notes that in a survey of almost 3,000 people, 61 percent of employees

said they had become sick from workplace stress, and 7 percent that they had been hospitalized.¹⁰

A 2011 study by Opportunity Knocks highlights factors that cause nonprofit employee burnout.¹¹ Half of the respondents indicated being burned out.¹² Much of this was related to workload and expectations to do more with less—as is often the case, especially during staff turnover or when positions are eliminated. Seventy-four percent of nonprofits reported that they distribute responsibilities among their current staff when positions are eliminated.¹³ Pushing staff to work harder, longer, and with fewer resources is toxic for staff and costly for nonprofit organizations in more ways than one.

In 2019, the World Health Organization listed burnout as an occupational phenomenon, described in the international classification of diseases as:

a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy.¹⁴

Let's go back to the origins of modern management rooted in slavery. What if we did the *exact opposite* of what being a supervisor was created to do? What if we not only abandoned the term altogether but intentionally centered the well-being of our people first? What if being antiracist meant focusing on the health of Black lives and Black livelihood, not as an afterthought or a statement on our website, but as *the* primary reason we work together, for our collective healing and liberation?

“WE WILL NOT GO BACK TO NORMAL. NORMAL NEVER WAS.” —SONYA RENEE TAYLOR



Some may say, “But we can’t create policies for improving the health and livelihood of Black staff. What about other identities?” We have recent history of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 improving the livelihood of Black people by prohibiting “discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.”¹⁵ Changes in racist policy to make things better for Black people leads to making things better for all people, including Black people who are also LGBTQ, pregnant, disabled, gender nonbinary, and other protected classes, as is the case in New York City Human Rights Law.

Others may say, “We can’t prioritize employee well-being. We have to focus on our bottom line, our deliverables, and funder demands. Our mission to service our clients is our top priority. Employees have to expect to work hard for the mission. We’re not corporate America, we just don’t have the resources to focus on wellness at work.”

Let’s compare what we used to say we couldn’t do, or could only offer as “perks,” to what we have done during the dual pandemics of COVID-1619.

As supervisors, managers, leaders we have:

- shifted to all staff working remotely, allowing for greater flexibility and trust;
- acknowledged racial trauma and given time off for Black staff traumatized after the police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd;
- held conversations in the workplace about racism, antiracism, and specifically anti-Blackness;
- declared that Black lives matter, and made commitments to support that both externally and internally;
- moved beyond the performative calling for intersectionality to holding space for the unique needs of LGBTQ staff of color, especially Black trans women;
- eased work goals and so-called productivity demands during the crisis;
- checked in with staff on their well-being, not just on work-related tasks;
- fostered community care with wellness resources as a team;
- rescinded HR policies that restrict staff from earning an income through self-employment or a “side hustle” if they were furloughed or had work hours reduced during the pandemic;
- supported flexible working hours during the day if a team member needed to assist their children with remote learning;
- encouraged logging off to take a walk, make a meal, or even take a nap to recharge during the day;
- created *walk and talk* phone meetings to reduce Zoom fatigue and encourage movement and getting fresh air as a healthy alternative to sitting in front of the computer for long hours;
- provided standing desks and other ergonomic equipment needed for work-at-home setups.

We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

—Sonya Renee Taylor

Indeed, we have an opportunity to reflect on this past year and create something new. What would that new garment look like? For example, what if we described our open positions using the following paradigm shift?

The Pandemic as the Portal from	Stitching a New Garment to
Demonstrates skills as a supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will exemplify our core value of continuous learning with the title of Learning Partner (LP) as you lead a team. As an LP, you will partner with team members on agreed expectations about the work we need them to do to support our mission, as well as how the team will accomplish the work. • You will educate your team by sharing what you know, using a coaching and mentoring approach, and you will expose your team to learning and development opportunities. You will have a budget to support the individualized professional development of your team members. • Your success as a Learning Partner for your team members is directly connected to how well your team feels supported, recognized, valued, and able to connect with you for their personal and professional well-being.
Able to multitask in a fast-paced environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You know how to slow down and help your colleagues pause in order to disrupt any false sense of urgency or push for productivity at the expense of personal and collective well-being. • You are skilled at prioritizing and setting boundaries so that you can focus on each project with clarity and a feeling of accomplishment.
Willing to work weekends and some evenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are able to integrate work and personal life with attention to your self-care, so that your work schedule is not depleting. You find ways to feel restored and fueled throughout the day and the week, so you can best contribute to our organizational goals and mission.
Must have high emotional intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have experience recognizing vulnerability, both in yourself and in others, so that you have compassion for yourself and others when under stress and when things don't go as planned.
Proficient in cultural competence and DEI and skilled at applying an equity lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can describe your personal and professional racial equity journey related to undoing racism and dismantling anti-Blackness and other forms of oppression that exist in BIPOC communities and marginalized communities such as LGBTQ folks and people with varying abilities. • You are skilled at lifting up the power and promise of marginalized groups versus focusing on the problems and pathologies put upon them by dominant society. • You share your life lessons from lived experiences when it feels supportive to you; and you can readily share your learnings from various resources that have most profoundly led to your learning about antiracism and anti-oppression.
Mandatory on-site work with at least 75 percent work-related travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide the tools and technology support so that you can work from anywhere. We encourage working in creative spaces that help you generate ideas and support your well-being while working. • Work-related travel is limited to approximately 25 percent, so that you can maintain a work/life rhythm that best supports your ability to manage your work and your personal life.

continued on next page

The Pandemic as the Portal from	Stitching a New Garment to
<p>We offer competitive compensation and benefits</p>	<p>The salary range for this position is {insert salary range}; in addition, we offer these supports to help you manage your personal finances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student loan assistance • yearly subscription to a personal finance budgeting app <p>We offer these supports to help you manage your mental, emotional, and physical health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yearly subscription to a meditation app • self-care and community care wellness programs • paid time off: vacation; sick days (if you, a partner, family member—including pets—are sick); mental health wellness time; and other leave time customized to your unique circumstances • child care support • pet insurance; discount perks programs • health insurance and wellness supports available from your first day of employment
<p>Paid holidays off</p>	<p>{insert number of paid holidays off}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a nonprofit that is not providing lifesaving, life-sustaining services, we close down between December 25 and January 1 to recognize end-of-year stress and time for reflection, rejuvenation, and planning for the holidays.

So, yes—in building antiracist organizations, we can start by changing our name. We can stop calling ourselves *supervisors, managers, chiefs*, or any other label that’s rooted in racism and the replication of harmful work norms. More important, we can view this pandemic as a portal, rip

away the harms of the past, and stitch a new garment by changing what we do and how we do it.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of CRE.

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Bringing over twenty-five years’ nonprofit experience, **KIM-MONIQUE JOHNSON**, a senior consultant at CRE, provides support to organizations through organizational development, curriculum development, group facilitation, and diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies. She identifies as a Black, cisgender lesbian, who recognizes the importance of creating space for naming identities and lived experiences. Johnson has experience in healthcare, human resources, and leadership coaching. She is passionate about helping new managers as well as seasoned executives who face new challenges related to organizational management, diversity, racial equity, and inclusion. For leaders who wonder how to show up as their authentic selves, for people of color who may also be part of LGBTQ communities, she offers coaching to support their well-being and success. Before joining CRE, Johnson served as the chief human resources officer at the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the VP of talent at the Food Bank for New York City. Her global experience includes a year as a volunteer sexuality education teacher in Gabon, Central Africa, and coleading the first LGBTQ multiyear training for healthcare providers in Lima, Perú. Johnson is a certified Wiley Everything DiSC® workplace facilitator, a senior certified professional with the Society for Human Resource Management, and is certified in the Clark Wilson 360 Feedback Survey. She is also certified in Energy Leadership Coaching with the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (IPEC). She obtained a BA in psychology from Johns Hopkins University, and an MSW from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.



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Moving beyond **Imposter Syndrome**

by Kad Smith

- Ultimately, understanding why we experience the doubts we do and where they are coming from presents us with the *choice* to question what it is we need to overcome them. Not what someone else says we need. Not what we've been told we're supposed to need. But *what we know at our core, looking in that mirror, we truly need.*

S

o many aspects of my identity inform how I think I am being received—make me question if I belong and, ultimately, if I will be treated with dignity due to the content of my character, not solely on how I present. My imposter syndrome goes from 0 to 100 whenever I am acutely aware of what I call “The Three Ws” in my working sphere: *Whiteness, Wokeness, and Wiseness.*

WHITENESS

From my educational upbringing to the community I come from and a good majority of my career, navigating predominantly white spaces is not unfamiliar to me. Still, after almost three decades of wayfinding through whiteness, I too often feel the effects of imposter syndrome creep up on me.

Because imposter syndrome is fundamentally about not realizing the gravitas of one's own brilliance and the desire to be recognized for one's own unique contributions, *I understand with every day that passes why spaces designed to center the experiences of white folks have often left me calling into question my own intellectual capacity.* On a macro level, the colonial project of the United States remains invested in an undercurrent of forced mass assimilation into Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition. We see this in what is and isn't recognized as patriotism,¹ we uplift it through many of our national holidays,² we prop it up with the abstruse messages encoded in the advertisements we consume daily.³



I HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE OTHER THAN MY DESIRE TO BUILD BRIDGES IN A WORLD THAT SEEMS HELL-BENT ON KNOCKING THEM DOWN.

Understand white American culture, or be “uncultured.” You decide.

I think back to my teenage years, when I recall at least two white teachers who looked at me in bewilderment as I told them how moved I was while reading *Soledad Brother*, by George Jackson.⁴ He was no Mark Twain in their eyes—they could hardly understand. And because they didn’t understand, they met me with silence, a silence that was so spurning from educators from whom I desperately sought approval. (It should be noted that I had no problems diving deeply into Socrates or studying the works of Ernest Hemingway, and such endeavors were always met with praise.)

A defining behavior of those experiencing the “imposter phenomenon,” according to Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in their 1978 journal article “The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women,” is that *individuals will choose not to reveal what they truly feel, downplaying their own interests to appease others.*⁵ I think back on those moments and wish I would’ve told those teachers, “Socrates was no Soledad Brother.”

In my early career, I remember all too well how code switching helped me be taken seriously. Colloquial language was met with stares that reeked of judgment. More bluntly, the pride I took in my vernacular could open me up to ridicule. *Let me be clear, mastery of the English language is not monopolized by white folks.* I despised hearing things like, “Why are you talking white?” when growing up. *But there’s danger in professional environments where the lexicon of communities of color is thought of as anything other than ordinary.* It forces those of us who communicate with language that reminds us of where we come from to ask, “Am I being a fraud when I want to say something that feels right and natural, and I don’t, for the comfort of this particular audience?”

Ultimately, I find myself able to escape the vertigo of self-doubt and phoniness when I turn to the mirror and, as Tupac Shakur describes in an interview in 1997, “look directly into my face and find my soul.”⁶ *Why do I need*

their stamp of approval for my intellectual range? Why am I more focused on how they see me than how I see myself? What would my Bigmama say if she saw me shape-shifting to earn the favor of white folks?

There are still times when I’ll walk (or lately, Zoom) into a mostly white board meeting, or take on work to support an all-white leadership team, and the letters galore behind their names (MPA, MPH, JD, MBA, LMAOWTF), and the stories of vacation homes, will make me feel as if I’m confined to a small sliver of the world; and the apparently funny jokes about *Arrested Development* will have me doing all the Google searches I can in sixty seconds.

But then I remember: I’ve been invited into their space for *my lived and learned experience.* They asked me to join them to give voice to what I see from *my vantage point.* There’s nothing phony about their need to understand my experiences and the experiences of people like me. *I have nothing to prove other than my desire to build bridges in a world that seems hell-bent on knocking them down.*

WOKENESS

I would’ve thought that, by 2021, this word was mostly used in jest—but apparently it still has some traction. The concept of being “woke” is one that we saw rise to prominence around 2015 to describe increased consciousness of systemic and structural oppression. It is a word that once upon a time carried real weight; it has now been weaponized by conservatives across America (woke supremacy, what???)⁷

While the word “woke” may be mostly a joke in the spaces I navigate, what seldom feels like a joke is folks who seem persistently to derive pleasure from assessing someone else’s consciousness. These folks will test your wokeness without revealing their hand. I call this process a “woke assessment.” Woke assessments are often done to determine if you’re enlightened enough to work with, share space with, support the cause(s) of, and/or simply grace the Twitter timeline of said assessor. *While we should be seeking to build with those with whom we are*

I IMAGINE THAT EVEN AFTER YEARS OF WORKING TO SUPPORT LEADERS ACROSS FIELDS, LENDING MY TIME AND VOICE TO VARIOUS MOVEMENTS, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A CHANCE TO BE MORE CONSCIOUS OR “WOKE.”

aligned, I often wonder if the assessment process plays out to identify how folks can grow, or to belittle them for how little they know. In my experience, these woke assessment “tools” become more popular the more privileged the environments you find yourself in: academia, philanthropic boardrooms, cocktail parties, and so on.

Also in my experience, these woke assessments are seldom extended with compassion. No, they are executed swiftly and abruptly. *While I understand the urgency to build critical consciousness around all forms of oppression, I can't help but notice the ivory-tower nature of performative wokeness. Some of my homies call this that “blue-check Twitter sh*t.” There is a wide chasm between requiring that people recognize the entirety of what makes us human and demonizing individuals for not fully regurgitating the buzzwords of your choosing.*

And still, as this feeling becomes more and more common for me, I've noticed myself creeping into the self-doubting space of asking: *Am I aware enough? Do they understand just how much I care?* If I stumble into a reckless “no” to any of those questions, it's a recipe for self-imposed catastrophic guilt.

I can overcalibrate for displays of enlightenment, exerting immense amounts of effort to prove I am knowledgeable about any issue at hand, but not truly figuring out my unique call to action. Ultimately, that becomes an exercise in disingenuity. Clance and Imes identify another behavior that those with imposter syndrome experience: seeking the approval of “superiors.” The superiors are those who, while assessing your wokeness, feel entitled to deliver the ultimate *pollice verso*,⁸ determining your fate vis-à-vis whether or not you're conscious enough to carry on in shared space.

I imagine that even after years of working to support leaders across fields, lending my time and voice to various movements, there will always be a chance to be more conscious or “woke.” I believe it was Socrates who said, “I know that I know nothing.” Every act of introspection inspired by assessing my own “wokeness” returns

me to this truth. If I hold that truth closely, I don't have to worry too much about others' assessments of me—*because there is no assessment that can be given that magically completes the quest to recognize people's humanity.* That is a lifelong process, and only satisfied when one forms meaningful connections with others because of who they are, not just what they know.

WISENESS

I grew up in the age of Nintendo 64 and PlayStation. Yes, I am dating myself: I'm a millennial, and I wear it as a badge of honor. I often find myself to be the youngest person in the room. Perhaps many of my millennial peers can recall a time, as do I, when someone told them, “You're wise beyond your years” as a form of flattery. (I can only imagine how Gen-Z folks feel hearing the phrase.) The compliment always comes from those I can confirm, or that I perceive, to be my elders. Having been raised by my Grandmother, I do appreciate the compliment, because it makes me think of the wisdom she exuded so effortlessly. But it often makes me wonder: what compels people to appraise someone else's wisdom?

Wisdom is understood in so many ways: *self-transcendence; the ability to exercise good judgment; having an abundance of experiences from which to draw.* For the sake of keeping the “-ness” in my three Ws, I will offer that wiseness is the measure of being wise or exercising wisdom. I work in a space of supporting leaders and creating spaces for learning. For the leaders I support, exercising good judgment is highly important in having their leadership recognized. Transcending limitations is inspiring. Sharing a wealth of experiences allows individuals to connect with folks across many walks of life. All of this can be true, but the goalposts shift when wisdom is made inextricable from age—when the driving factor of our wiseness is the decade we were born. Wisdom and age are not a 1:1 tandem.

I've seen so many brilliant leaders who are afraid to take on increased risk and responsibility because they have been told, “You don't have enough experience.” You'll have



twenty-something-year-olds working in agencies to end homelessness, who have formerly been without a home—for years of their lives—told, “You don’t have enough experience” to lead in significant ways. The irony.

When we ask ourselves about the measure of our wisdom, we should never be content with landing on our date of birth. For me, *when doubt of my wiseness creeps in due to being the youngest person in the room, I recall the grief that I’ve endured, the tragedies I’ve turned into triumph, the seemingly endless moments of laughter I’ve shared with folks from across the world.*

Doubt projected onto me by others and doubt I’ve internalized have stifled my development. Introspection is one antidote to the incendiary doubts we experience when imposter syndrome takes root. Introspection is the

gateway to self-determination within our psyches. Ultimately, understanding why we experience the doubts we do and where they are coming from presents us with the *choice* to question what it is we need to overcome them. Not what someone else says we need. Not what we’ve been told we’re supposed to need. But *what we know at our core, looking in that mirror, we truly need.*



Whether the source is from reactions to Whiteness, Wokeness, or Wiseness, the doubts I unpack only make me more capable of asking myself the questions I must to catapult me to places of pride, fulfillment, and purpose. Imposter syndrome may not be going anywhere for many of us, but introspection will allow us to show up authentically.

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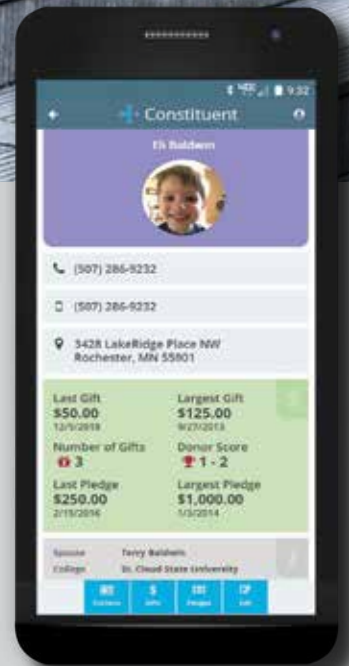
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Backlash, Burnout, and BIPOC Leaders

by Mistinguette Smith

■ Important burnout prevention for BIPOC leaders includes dedicating time and energy toward building communities of care for themselves. Those circles are where they will find the reality checks and energy to persist in the face of backlash.

An illustration of a hand with a bracelet, positioned as if resting on a surface. The hand is rendered in a simple, sketchy style with a few lines and some shading to indicate form and texture. The bracelet is a simple, thin band with a small circular detail.

White backlash is everywhere. It riots in our nation's Capitol.¹ It makes bold leaders tiptoe through the nonprofit sector.² It causes a foundation to close its doors just as it begins to reckon with the intersection of misogyny and white supremacy.³ It makes headlines in education.⁴

Unlike the vocal conversations about leading organizations toward racial equity, white backlash—the hostile reactions of white people to that very possibility—often goes unnamed. So does its human impact: racial burnout.

Both backlash and burnout thrive without language to expose and examine them; but once they are called out into the open, this allows leaders to strengthen themselves and each other. Inviting and framing that conversation is key to



my consultations with people who want to stay in movements for racial justice for the long haul.

RACIAL BURNOUT

Backlash is such a predictable pattern that in hindsight it is sometimes used as a thumbnail indicator of impact.⁵ However, it can be hard to identify white backlash while it is happening. When a nonprofit is pushed from within to make concrete steps toward racial equity, but makes work life intolerable for BIPOC staff—that is backlash. When a foundation’s grantee evaluations show that racial equity is a requirement for success, yet the board insists it should move more slowly and hire a consultant to study the matter further—that, too, is backlash. Those in the fray describe backlash as feeling like “whiplash,” or “having the carpet pulled from under you.”

FRANK CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DAY-TO-DAY RACIAL REALITIES CAN MAKE PATTERNS OF BACKLASH VISIBLE AND SERVE AS A REALITY CHECK FOR RACIAL GASLIGHTING.

Backlash creates the experience of working one's self to death while seeming to make no progress at all.

How is burnout related to backlash? Burnout is the result of committed, skillful work that seems to achieve no results. This means that even highly effective work can burn people out during periods of extended backlash. Burnout can be mistaken for fatigue, but it is a serious physical and mental health condition. In fact, burnout is an internationally recognized syndrome, in which unmanageable workplace stress leads to feelings of exhaustion, cynicism and negativity about one's job, and reduced ability to do that job well.⁶ People in many fields whose work is to alleviate suffering experience vocational burnout, where stressful emotional labor is made worse by unmanageable workloads and unclear role boundaries.⁷ Research describes additional characteristics, named as racial burnout, specific to the experience of racial justice activists.⁸

Racial burnout happens to people who feel a deep emotional responsibility for eliminating racism. It is often a life-long personal calling related to an identity, rather than just a professional commitment. One person I spoke with described her life work as: "I wanted to fix a thing: the harm that [racism] has done."

A person is vulnerable to racial burnout because of being constantly aware of both the micro and the meta—conscious of racism in interpersonal interactions and aware of the overwhelming structural reinforcements for white supremacy. This intense awareness creates emotional exhaustion and feelings of isolation from others who don't "get" it. Racial burnout often creates mistrust in the sincerity of others, and this can show up as criticism and backbiting. Every issue feels personal when one must also carry the weight of white people's so-called "fragility" on one's shoulders.

Reactionary white backlash is predictable, but racial burnout from it is not inevitable. Current conversation about healing justice⁹ points to a growing understanding of the need to prevent the physical, spiritual, and emotional harms encountered by racial justice activists. However, the same nonprofit executives and foundation staff who advocate for healing justice approaches¹⁰ often fail to build respite, reflection, and community care for themselves.

Salaries, job titles, and being one step removed from street activism may buffer decision makers from many things, but racial backlash is not one of them. People in executive and grantmaking roles are particularly vulnerable to backlash. Unlike frontline activists, they have fewer day-to-day experiences of community success, and their very role is to be constantly attuned to the institutional and cultural backlash that impedes justice work. As leaders, they are accountable for making meaningful progress on social issues without accounting for the impact of racial backlash.

FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO PURPOSE AND JOY

Intervening in racial burnout requires more than a sabbatical and some support from the healing arts. Because the targets of white backlash are racial groups, burnout prevention requires racial community care.¹¹ Some leaders find this refuge in their teams, especially if their staff are mostly BIPOC, but role-peers should be at the center of a community that provides space for honesty and pain as well as thriving. Informal or self-organized peer conversations at grantmaker affinity group meetings, or a private Signal channel with a few trusted peers,¹² can be sources of community care. Elders round out every life-giving community. Even if they are no longer doing paid work in the field, elders hold the generational memory of how racial justice movements can embody resilience when the pendulum of change swings in either direction. Solid communities of care hold up and hear from racial justice aunties and uncles.

What does community care do to intervene in burnout? Often, it creates a safe place in which to speak one's truth, and to feel relieved that others are having the same experience. Everyone I talked with as I prepared this article said, "I'm so glad to hear I am not the only one going through this." Frank conversations about day-to-day racial realities can make patterns of backlash visible and serve as a reality check for racial gaslighting.¹³ Other times, community care can mean holding up a mirror for others. Burnout causes a shifting baseline of energy and enthusiasm. A colleague may not notice that they are no longer inspired by ideas about how change is possible. They may need someone to tenderly point out the connection between racial backlash and the feeling that their lifework has been reduced to a paycheck.

Community support for resilience doesn't solve the problem of racial backlash. Backlash is violent, and the burnout it causes is an enduring, disabling harm.¹⁴ It can be both wise and liberating to acknowledge the injury of backlash and realize, "I'm not going to recover from this." This admission can offer entry to a liminal, transformative space that invites new opportunities: a new platform for justice work, or a redefinition of the role through which one expresses personal purpose.

Important burnout prevention for BIPOC leaders includes dedicating time and energy toward building communities of care for themselves. Those circles are where they will find the reality checks and energy to persist in the face of backlash. Refusing to burn out in the face of backlash is a way for BIPOC leaders to collectively use their power and move toward the goal of liberation: to live every day connected to purpose and joy.

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Infrastructure *for a* **New World**

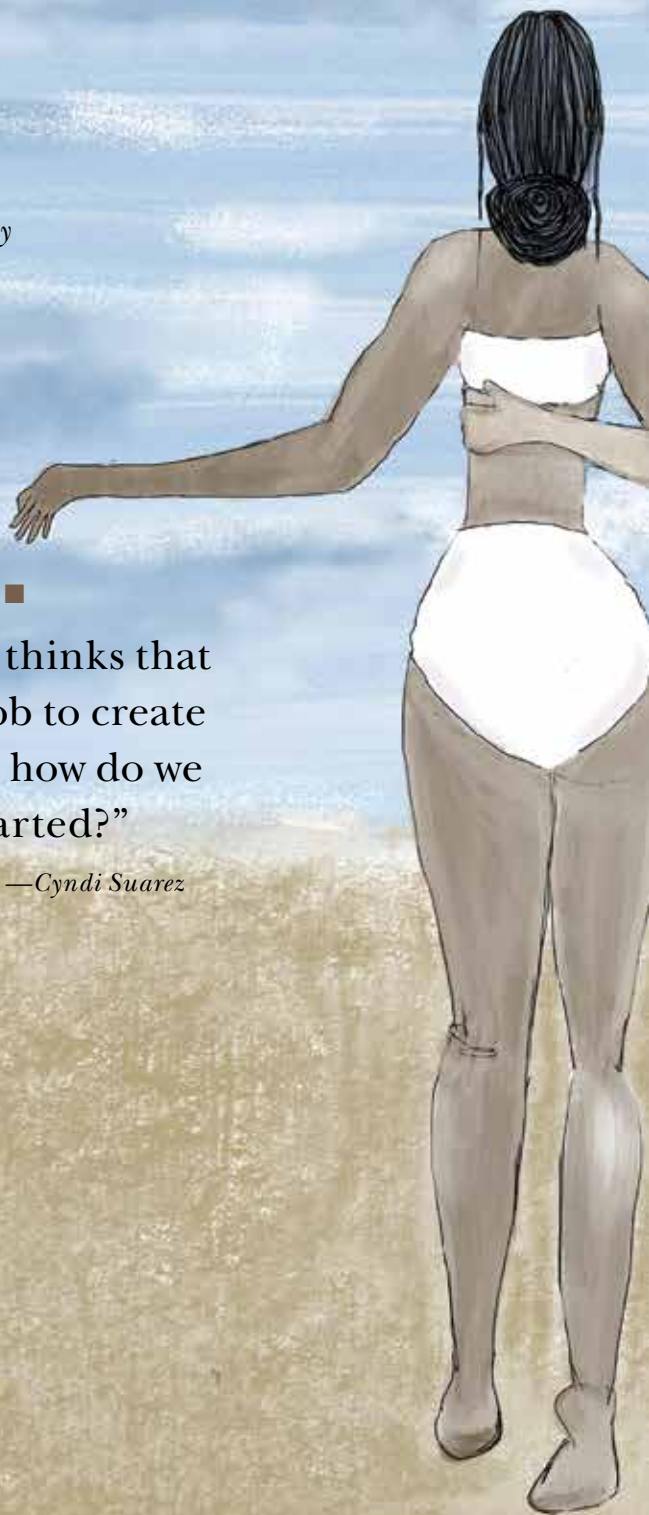
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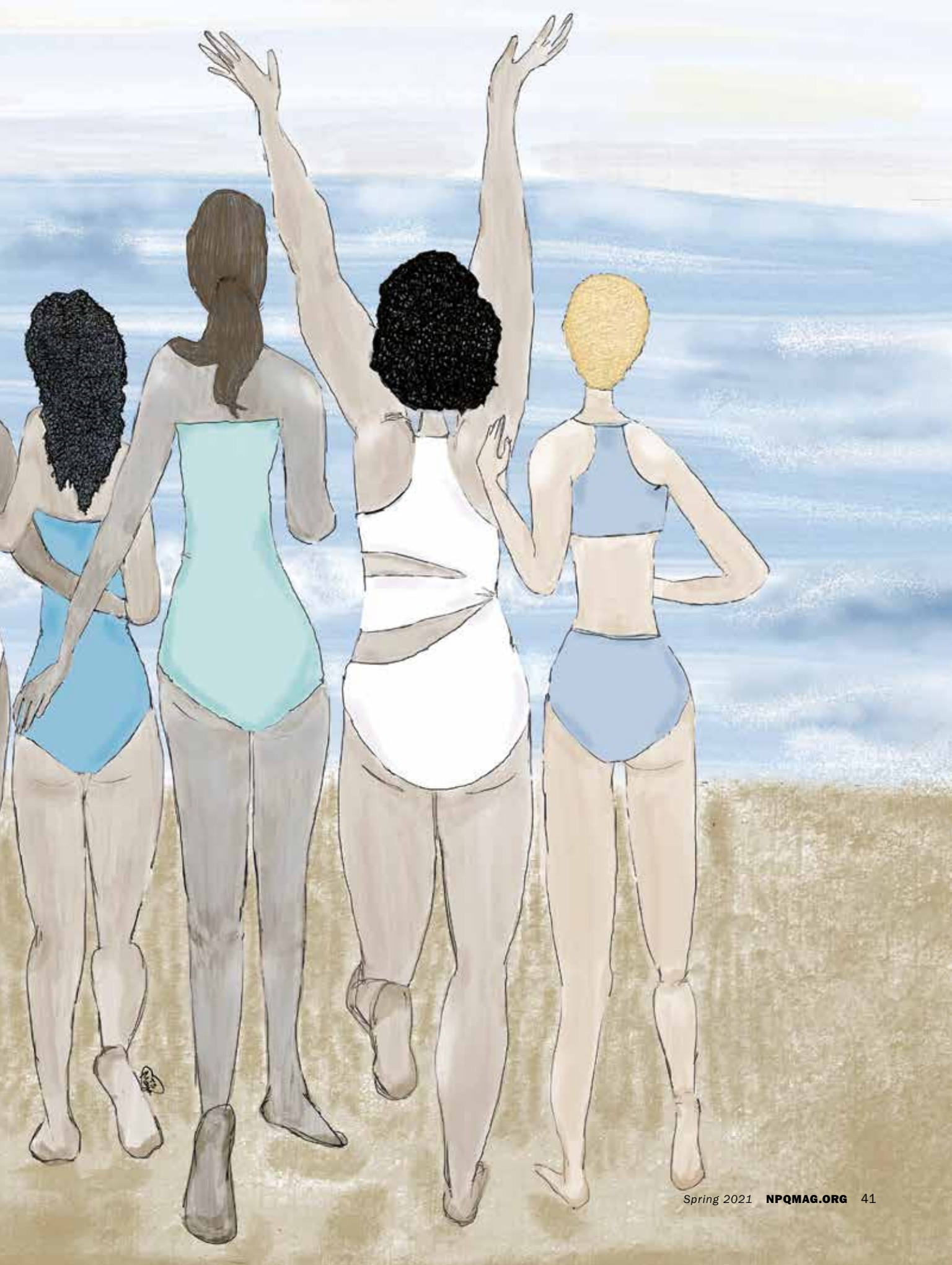
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■

“If no one thinks that
it’s their job to create
the space, how do we
get started?”

—*Cyndi Suarez*





F

or the past three years, NPQ has been exploring the question: *Why have conditions for people of color not improved in the past 30 years, despite various DEI and racial justice efforts?*¹

Our conversations with leaders of color² in the field about what they need to create real social change has converged around a call to action for designing and building civic infrastructure that supports leaders of color.³ This expands the concept of infrastructure beyond support for nonprofit organizations, to support for leaders and the communities they serve.

The work has quickly evolved into Edge Leadership, a social change R&D platform designed primarily by and for people of color—in movements, philanthropy, nonprofits, politics, and culture—to meet, experiment, and create new forms that advance social change.⁴

This summer, we hosted our first roundtable on this topic and found that leaders of color want to move infrastructure beyond tinkering with what is, toward a vision of how we want to be together as humans. Below are the top four themes that emerged.



VISION

Perhaps not surprisingly, what leaders of color want most is vision.

Kristell Caballero Saucedo, Program Officer at Borealis Philanthropy, says, “I think that it is important to have an image or a vision where everyone can understand what their role is and how they can thrive in this vision.”

Saucedo wants us to move away from “doing the opposite of what exists.” She explains that “the vision of what we want to live is larger than just like the specific thing that we’re living at this moment.”

For example, this spring and summer we saw philanthropy move to fund criminal justice reform in response to months of daily massive protests across the country and beyond against anti-Black police brutality. But the problem is larger than this.

Saucedo says, “It’s larger than just things that you can give your money to one time.” Rather, “there is something that is not attached to the existing reality, but is something that we could create, or that is lifted up from the existing realities that live within our own communities, or the cultures that are being suppressed, and the stories that are being suppressed, and the value system that is being suppressed.”

Author and consultant **Dax-Devlon Ross** agrees. “I’m concerned that the framing of a lot of the discourse right now from people in positions of authority is that this is a criminal justice issue, solely and strictly. And, so, I see a lot of our resources pouring towards justice-oriented organizations like NAACP. So, someone has defined this challenge. Who did you all talk to, to get a real sense of what is needed?”

Dr. Akilah Watkins-Butler, President and CEO of Community Progress, says, “I don’t want to pit organizations against each other, or strategies of how Black folks, especially Black Indigenous and Latino folks, get ahead. I’m not trying to be in conflict around that. I *do* think we need to have a strategy conversation around how resources get distributed.”

Kenneth Bailey is cofounder of Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI), one of those rare organizations that is “on the money” in terms of what these leaders are asking for but not “on the radar” of funders. He says,

We’re trying to really use both the large social movement going on around abolition and defunding police and this COVID moment to ask larger questions about “is life working for us?”

Bailey points out that in order to build vision at this scale, we need new forms that can hold difference and complexity. He reminds us of the work of political theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari when he says,

We don’t need to have one line of flight toward liberation. I feel like as we move toward the 21st century, we’re going to need to design new forms that allow people to be in them in multiple ways without being on top of each other. We have to be thinking hemispherically and globally . . . Where I am, is we literally just have to start to construct our world, and then try to invite people into it. That’s the best I have right now.

Marcus Walton, President and CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), says, “I often wonder how much the lack of a shared vision impacts our scattered approach to making things happen. I’m from an old-school, family-run church, and for years I heard, ‘without a vision people perish, without a vision people perish, without a vision people will perish.’”

For Walton, this visioning overlaps with the cultural expression “bringing our whole selves to this work.” It “must be intentional about inviting people in to express their traditional cultural beliefs and values through their work.” He asks, “How do we mine the wisdom from cultural practices and create something new that reflects the best of those traditions?”

Walton shares that, in his first year in his role at GEO, he’s been wanting “to ground ourselves in what’s happening right now, take a beat before we jump into action.” But he’s received pushback from people who say, “that’s not enough, we need to do more.” He understands: “We are socialized to just jump into action and do all these call-outs. The people who are new to the game don’t appreciate that visioning is the right first step.”

The work of creating liberatory visions includes an understanding of how social change occurs, its cycles and phases. This helps us not only understand the openings for transformation, but to plan ahead for the next cycle.

Anastasia Reesa Tomkin, writer and Direct Service Coordinator at Common Justice, says, “While it’s encouraging seeing these protests, I’m worried about what happens after this moment passes. People like us will pick up where the masses left off. What happens when the police unions change their game plan?”

Bailey adds, “We can start to move toward having people who are ready to encounter power in the second wave that weren’t the people who did the protest. How do we start to capture another set of people who might be able to deal with organized power in new ways?”

The work is also creative, not just strategic. It must speak to hearts and minds.

Artist **Jenie Gao** stresses the importance of visuals. She says, “Seventy percent of the information we receive in the world is through our eyes, so visuals are incredibly important in shaping who we believe and what we value.”

But, Gao notes, “90 percent of artists in society are white,” making the art world “one of the most unequal industries that exists.”

So, in order for visioning to include people of color as creators of visual culture, we need to, as she says, “dismantle the things keeping people out, both in terms of who has access to the art world and the stigmas attached to it.”

Darshan Khalsa, Vice President at Rivera Consulting Inc, shares that when her team recently read and discussed Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, she had a moment of realization: “Oh sh*t, this book starts in 2024. What was the future is now.”

The *Parable* series’ exploration of the crumbling of oppressive structures and the anarchy that ensues is resonating with many social change practitioners today.

“But,” Khalsa asks, “what do we build in its place? What are the new forms that allow us to imagine new things?”

Finally, our visioning must take into account the high risk of social change.

Khalsa says, “Knowing when to take risks is important, because our lives are at stake. When we rebuild, how do we protect ourselves? Thinking about Tulsa, what does it mean to build a thing and have white supremacy come burn it down?”

To summarize, visioning that supports leaders of color:

1. Creates vision that not only takes into account who frames the challenge but also asks larger questions about how we want to live, and allows us to imagine new things

2. Frames the challenge in ways that equitably distribute resources
3. Holds difference and complexity
4. Mines the wisdom of its various cultural practices to create something new
5. Understands the phases of social change
6. Is not just strategic; it's creative and highlights the arts
7. Mitigates against the inherent risks involved in leading transformative social change

ACCOUNTABILITY—PHILANTHROPY AND GOVERNMENT

Second on the list—unsurprisingly, given the asymmetrical power relations that undergird most social challenges—is the need for accountability from both funders and government.

Watkins-Butler gets to both the intersection between these and the point when she says: “I think that we need to push wealthy people to pay their share in taxes so we don't have to go begging philanthropy for basic things we should have as part of being citizens.”

Cathy Garcia, Founder of Philanthropy Con Café, a platform to elevate the leadership and vision of grant makers of color, says, “The culture of philanthropy in itself has been really insidious for a long time, totally driven by proximity to whiteness and white supremacy. So, how do we hold ourselves accountable as institutions?”

She adds that over the past few months she has observed foundations set up special funds and make big public statements about the need to address injustices while Black staff inside those organizations feel the effort does not extend to them.⁵

Garcia says,

There is an immediate pull to react and throw money, but it still doesn't solve for internal processes that are harmful to the communities we are trying to serve and for the work that we're trying to do.

Because as a field philanthropy seeks to be “objective,” we forget that for many of us the communities we are serving are also *our* communities, and the inadequate responses of our institutions are disheartening, as an individual and as a grant maker.

This resonated with artist and consultant **Wesley Days**.

I worked on a two-year project around SNAP online delivery for Farragut Food that allowed for voucher housing residents in Brooklyn to be able to receive online delivery directly through SNAP benefits, the same resources that the rest of the city has through Instacart and other paid services. The Department of Agriculture piloted that project in New York first, and now it's about to expand to 22 cities, and the foundation paid for that pilot to happen.

But then when you were talking about it—the extraction process—I literally witnessed it. I watched millions of dollars be extracted through fundraisers as our work was projected online and the rich people over at Pier 60 were just given the money. And then I watched the process that the funder utilized in giving the money, what it required. And, so, I just felt very much like a witness to the process you just described in a very granular level.

For Days, part of the answer is reinventing civil society around decentralization of data, which is being tested via a new practice of using cryptocurrency platforms to track data.

He explains,

When I talk about decentralization, I'm not talking necessarily about ideology; I'm talking about, if resources go out, the moment they go out everybody in the ecosystem knows they've gone out. There's a cryptographic hash. It documents it the moment it goes out.

That has to become part of a new transparency that will create a continuity in knowing where the value has gone because you can go back and say, okay, you got this money, what were the results? You can hold people accountable that way.

In our system you can't hold funders accountable because of laws that make their financial books private. But transparency forces people to think differently.

Of course, this assumes we have a value theory—a sense of where value is created, agreement that it should be amplified, and ideas as to how.

Elaine Martyn, Vice President and Managing Director of the Private Donor Group at Fidelity Charitable, says, “When we were trying to guide our donors, one of my colleagues said, ‘Isn't there like a Feeding America version for racial injustice?’ That's been something we've been thinking about. There's a lot of confusion around, ‘how do we do this and what tools are needed to help reimagine?’”

Thus, accountability that supports leaders of color:

1. Has as an ultimate goal the shifting of public dollars from philanthropy back to government, or the commons
2. Extends beyond social challenges, to the destructive practices that contribute to them
3. Decentralizes data so that we understand where value is created and how it is amplified

4. Needs spaces, ways of thinking, and tools that help us reimagine what is possible

KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND EVALUATION

Leaders of color also see knowledge creation and evaluation as key features of civic infrastructure.

Ross offers a timely example with how he's come to imagine the concept of spatial justice. He describes a May 14, 2020 *New York Times* story based on the geotracking of people who left the city during coronavirus. It found that about five percent of the city's population had departed as a result of the epidemic. It also looked at the parts of the city from which they left and where they went. He says, “It was this incredible, incredible indictment of the way we built cities for people who don't need them.”

Through the relationships that are forming at Edge Leadership, Ross learned that other people are using the concept of spatial justice. He shares,

Through talking to Kenny [Bailey] I've discovered that there are people in North Carolina who are thinking about “spatial justice” as a way to really move social justice conversations more forward by giving them some kind of a larger umbrella to sit under that covers a lot of the different ground that we're all trying to get at. Whether it's health disparities or education disparities, all of them are happening in place-based settings and there is some consistency in that concept.

Ross also notes that in his conversations with people who are doing spatial justice work he's discovered, to his surprise, “that in the last 20 or 30 years there have been dozens upon dozens of majority minority municipalities that incorporated around the country.” He wonders: How did this happen and what is being learned about how to do it?

He thinks philanthropy has a role to play in advancing spatial justice.

It's not just in the funding of more organizational work, which is incredibly important, but what are the new ideas around this concept of how we are going to live? How are we going to push back and build a new constituency to think about, not just public investment in urban design, but how we reimagine who is involved and what the goals of urban design and development are?

Blocking access to knowledge creation is referred to as epistemological violence—the silencing of the voices of marginalized groups. Indian post-colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak introduces the concept in her classic essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” where she extends French philosopher Michel Foucault’s triad of knowledge/power/social control to explore the flip side—how marginalized groups are denied this.⁶

Being excluded from the creation of social meaning makes it difficult for people to understand significant portions of their social experience.⁷ It is central to both the processes of normalizing white experiences as universal and othering. Epistemic violence feeds material violence because it determines what is valued and what is not, and where resources are directed.

And, so, having a sense of what we value and then designing systems that amplify that, with feedback loops that are transparent, is core to a viable civic infrastructure that supports leaders of color.

This is what **Jara Dean-Coffey**, Founder and Director of the Equitable Evaluation Initiative, wants to contribute to through her evaluation work. She says,

What I'm really thinking about are the ways in which our understanding of knowledge and evidence, which are grounded in patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy, contribute to the collective ignorance that we hold as the United States of America. So, what we

believe to be true reinforces a belief system of what is value and who is valued. I desperately want to change that, and I realize in doing that a lot of Black and Brown folks do not engage in knowledge generation in a way which shifts the paradigm.

A big part of the challenge is that philanthropy is the main customer for evaluation. She adds,

Philanthropy has a tremendous amount of influence on what we believe to be true, and evaluation pretends that it's neutral. So, we just share what we see, but I see what I see because of who I am, and I give you what you want because of who paid me. So, I'm trying to make clear those paradigms and those norms so that people can own them and hopefully change and challenge them.

Dean-Coffey observes that there are not many people of color in the evaluation field. She thinks much of this is due to the history of data being used against people of color. But, she warns, “as long as we don't touch it, it means someone else is controlling it. So I'm also trying to figure out how to break that mindset so that we're all in the knowledge generation game and we're not deferring to someone else who is going to continue to tell a story about us that just isn't true.”

Clare Nolan, Cofounder of Engage R+D, adds, “I work in the space of evaluation, learning, and strategy, and one of the things we've been talking about is how to transform the practice of evaluation and learning so it is not a tool for reinforcing white supremacy but for equity, justice, liberation, and healing. In order to do that, we need to take care of ourselves as whole people and be in connection and alignment with grassroots organizations and people doing progressive work. We are in practice around that, we're not living that, but it is our aspiration.”

So, access to knowledge creation and evaluation is key to supporting leaders of color. This includes:

1. Strategies organized by powerful, higher-level concepts—which allow for coherence—and resourced
2. Access to knowledge creation that disrupts othering and its concomitant material deprivations
3. Evaluation that seeks to define, identify, and amplify value
4. Philanthropy that displaces itself as the main customer by supporting evaluation that serves communities
5. People of color taking a lead in evaluation, and being supported in that

SPACE TO REPLENISH

Finally, leaders of color seek a place to be human and replenish, as our work is particularly challenging.

Watkins-Butler shares that she joined this roundtable because she was “needing just really good space to just be human.” The last few months have been challenging for her as she finds herself “grieving where we are as a country.”

Before she can make alliances and do multicultural work, Watkins-Butler needs space to “imagine what it means to be a Black person living in a society where there’s love and justice.”

This resonates with Saucedo, who points out that white supremacy shapes relationships between people of color. “There is no trust. There’s nothing that can help us build a relationship if we are not really having conversations that are needed to be had about why there’s no trust.”

For **Darnell Adams**, Cofounder of Firebrand Cooperative, infrastructure that supports leaders of color is not just an intellectual exercise; it’s a “constant coming together of head, heart, spirit.”

Reflecting on the whole conversation, consultant and policy professor **Dr. Nicholas Harvey** says, “What I’m hearing leaders of color saying is that they need the freedom to risk.” This makes sense, as one of the key features of edge leadership is that it is risky work.

Thus, ultimately, supporting leaders of color means supporting their ability to take risks. This includes:

1. Time away from the work to imagine what is possible
2. Spaces to build trust with each other
3. Engagement of the head, heart, and spirit
4. Help mitigating risk

In closing, infrastructure is not just physical space or things, but the ability and capacity to be *part of* what we’re building. It is the ability to make power accountable, including ours. It is real access to resource distribution. It is interest and skill in talking across paradigms. It is multi-vocal efforts. It is alignment. It is cultural production. It is the capacity to imagine, and create, something better—and in an exponential fashion, because time is running out.

■ **Edge Leadership began earlier this year with a series of in-person and online convenings. This article and multimedia story series features the thinking of edge leaders. Follow these talented, sector-crossing, forward-thinking social change agents at @EdgeLeadership2020 on Instagram, via NPQ’s channels, and by joining our closed 500-seat platform experiment.**

NOTES

1. This analysis is based on BoardSource's report on leadership trends in the sector, finding that leadership of color is low and declining, in spite of this being identified as the main challenge for decades. Feedback from readers of color to *NPQ*. My personal experience over my 30 years in the sector. The experience of most of my friends, many of whom are leaders in the sector. See *Leading with Intent: BoardSource Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*, leadingwithintent.org/.
2. Cyndi Suarez, "What Does It Look Like to Support Women of Color to Lead?," *Nonprofit Quarterly*, January 4, 2021, nonprofitquarterly.org/what-does-it-look-like-to-support-women-of-color-to-lead/.
3. Cyndi Suarez, "Rethinking Nonprofit Infrastructure," *Nonprofit Quarterly*, October 30, 2019, nonprofitquarterly.org/rethinking-nonprofit-infrastructure/.
4. Edge Leadership, edgeleadership.org/.
5. Cathy Garcia, "Philanthropy: Solidarity Is Not A Replacement For Action," *Philanthropy Con Café*, June 4, 2020, medium.com/philanthropy-con-cafe/philanthropy-solidarity-is-not-a-replacement-for-action-43cd2211cb7b.
6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 271–313.
7. Allie J. Bunch, "Epistemic Violence in the Process of Othering: Real-World Applications and Moving Forward," *Scholarly Undergraduate Research Journal at Clark 1*, article 2 (October 2015).

CYNDI SUAREZ is the *Nonprofit Quarterly's* president and editor in chief. She is the author of *The Power Manual: How to Master Complex Power Dynamics* (New Society Publishers, 2018), in which she outlines a new theory and practice of power. Suarez has worked as a strategy and innovation consultant with a focus on networks and platforms for social movements. Her studies were in feminist theory and organizational development for social change.

To comment on this article, write to us at feedback@npqmag.org. Order reprints from <http://store.nonprofitquarterly.org>.

About the Artist: Maya Thornell-Sandifor

Maya Thornell-Sandifor (She/Her/Hers) is a certified DEI professional with a Master's in organizational development. She has more than twenty years of experience working with philanthropic, nonprofit, and public entities to support organizations and leaders in their efforts to align their organization's practices, policies, and cultures to values-based mission and visions. She was previously the director of Racial Equity Initiatives at Borealis Philanthropy, where she led the Racial Equity in Philanthropy fund (REP), the Racial Equity to Accelerate Change (REACH) fund (which supports nonprofit organizations in advancing racial equity practices), and the Racial Equity in Journalism (REJ) fund. Thornell-Sandifor has worked with organizations across the social justice and movement spectrum, including labor, economic justice, environmental justice, criminal justice reform, reproductive justice, and gender justice. Her philanthropic experience includes nine years at the Women's Foundation of California, where she managed several portfolios, including the Sisterhood Fund, which invests in girls and young women-led and serving organizations across the state of California. Thornell-Sandifor is a trained facilitator who has developed the following training curriculums: Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens; Building and Applying Our Racial Equity Skills; Power and Privilege—Liberated Gatekeeping; and Cutting through Implicit Bias. She has deep experience helping organizations design policies, practices, systems, cultures, and program strategies that are inclusive and equitable.

Thornell-Sandifor has been drawing as a hobby for over a decade, but during the pandemic began more earnestly to concentrate on her craft of drawing and painting, both digitally and on paper. As an artist, she likes to dispel myths around stereotypes, especially those related to the Black community, and draw/paint folks in everyday situations. In her more recent work, she plays with exploring gender norms and colorism.



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EDGE LEADERSHIP

Cyndi Suarez designed Edge Leadership to explore how social change happens. The platform launched in 2020 with an in-person retreat in New York City at the Sugar Hill Storytelling Museum. Not long after, the COVID pandemic began, and the Black Lives Matter movement reached a crescendo; and, while we thought that would hamper the development of Edge, in fact it galvanized it: leaders heightened their call for such a space, and Ford Foundation came in with seed funding.

Throughout it all, the concept of voice was alive and burning for leaders. These two events—COVID and BLM—were a turning point for leaders of color in deciding that it was time to step out in the field differently, with their thinking leading the way.

“When I made the transition to the president and editor in chief role at NPQ,” Suarez said, “I brought my vision of reshaping NPQ to be a sensemaking organization for civil society. This core vision was developed through the many conversations I have had with leaders in the field over my previous four years as senior editor focusing on race and power. While lack of information may still be an issue, the main challenge is sensemaking—the knowledge needed to make strategic, creative, liberatory decisions.”

Suarez believes that conversations can change the world. Through her convening and facilitating of thought leaders, Edge Leadership is developing a new civic infrastructure. The knowledge created as a result of this effort is radiating through the field, creating new possibilities for how society is organized.

—Danielle Coates-Connor

“The premise of the Edge Leadership platform is to bring together a powerful community of primarily people of color who are innovating social change. This sprung from a demand in the society to design infrastructure that supports leaders of color.

In this space we will build relationships, share information, imagine a new set of power dynamics, and produce forms that advance social change.”

—Cyndi Suarez



“If no one thinks that it’s their job to create the space, how do we get started?”

–Cyndi Suarez

EDGE LEADERSHIP launched an online network in November of 2020, in partnership with Infinite Growth (www.infinitegrowth.rocks), a design firm for change-makers. **Danielle Coates-Connor** led the creative direction, with **Devyn H. Taylor** as art director and **Leo Martinez** as web developer. The project began with a storytelling initiative to harvest insights from a recent virtual meeting of thought leaders. Through that, the team built the visual identity of the project and created a suite of stories to drive the first public wave of platform membership invitations. Infinite Growth continues to partner with Edge Leadership to support knowledge creation on the platform, offer visioning workshops, and develop the creative direction with the growing community.



Danielle Coates-Connor



Devyn H. Taylor



Leo Martinez

INITIAL RESULTS *from* CONVENING EDGE LEADERS

Edge leaders want to move infrastructure beyond tinkering with what is, towards envisioning what we want to be together as humans...

VISION

Visioning that supports leaders of color

- Takes into account how we want to live and allows us to imagine new things
- Frames the challenge in ways that equitably distributes resources
- Holds difference and complexity
- Mines the wisdom of its various cultural practices to create something new
- Understands the phases of social change
- Is not just strategic; it's creative and highlights the arts
- Mitigates against the inherent risks involved in leading transformative social change



“How do we make an invitation that acknowledges our individual heritages, that mines the wisdom from those traditional practices, cultural practices, and create some new structure, a new forum that reflects the best of those traditions?”

—Marcus Walton



ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability that supports leaders of color

- The ultimate goal is shifting our public dollars from philanthropy back to public governance
- Extends beyond issues, to the root cause of the systemic problem
- Decentralizes data so that we know where value is created and how it is amplified
- Needs tools that help us reimagine what is possible



“I would love to see philanthropy leverage the full weight of its power for transformation.”

-Akilah Watkins-Butler



“How do we create justice for people who are vulnerable in these cities?”

-Dax-Devlon Ross

KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND EVALUATION

Access to knowledge creation and evaluation is key
to supporting leaders of color

- Strategies organized by powerful concepts and resources at a higher level allow for coherence
- Access to knowledge creation disrupts othering and its concomitant material deprivations
- Evaluation seeks to define, identify, and amplify value
- Philanthropy should displace itself as the main customer by supporting evaluation that serves communities
- People of color need to take a lead in evaluation, and be supported in that



“How can we change culture and reinvent civil society as an existing text that we have now around decentralization?”

-Wesley Days



SPACE TO REPLENISH

Supporting leaders of color means recognizing us as embodied beings who need . . .

- Time away from the work to imagine what is possible
- The space to build trust with each other
- To engage at the head, heart, and spirit levels
- To be supported while taking risks

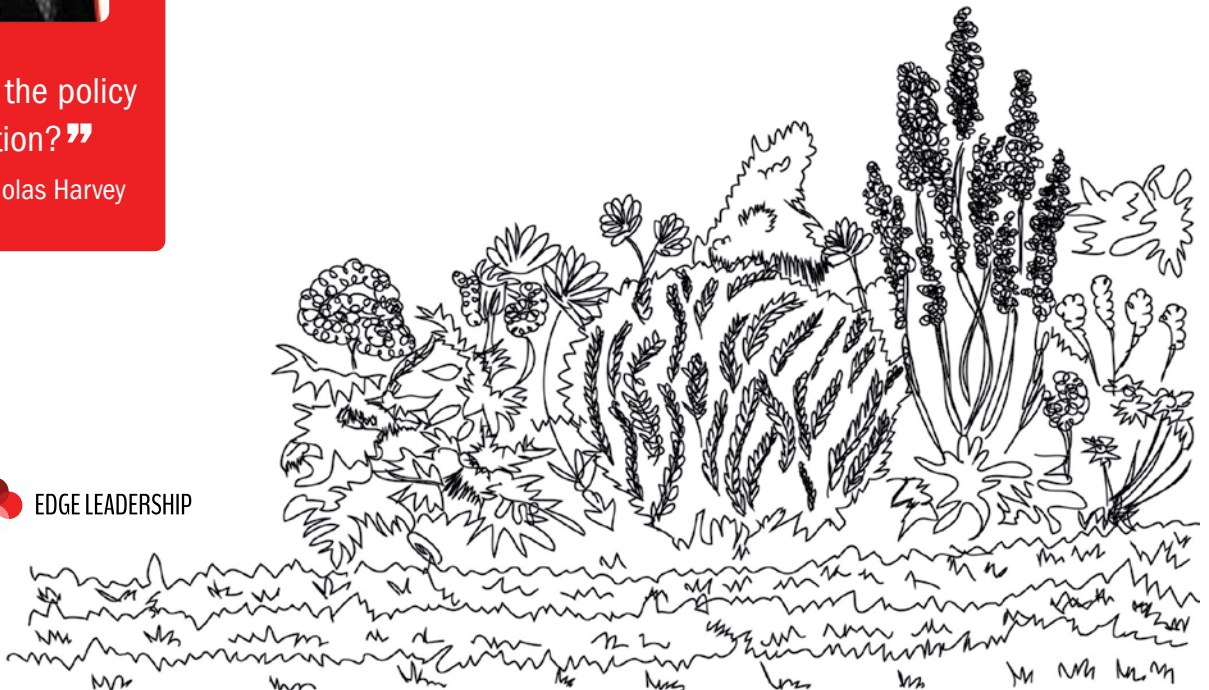


“What’s the policy for liberation?”

-Dr. Nicholas Harvey

“How has our exposure to whiteness and white supremacy impacted how we engage with one another?”

-Kristell Caballero Saucedo



A close-up photograph of a man with short brown hair and a light beard, smiling broadly as he removes a light blue surgical mask. He is holding the white elastic straps of the mask with both hands. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

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