



STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE®
RESILIENCY PROJECT
CASE STUDY



STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE[®]

RESILIENCY PROJECT

CASE STUDY

by Corita Brown, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Introduction
05	The Resiliency Project
07	Theory of Change
08	Impact Stories
20	Lessons Learned
25	Conclusion: A Call to Action
26	What's Next
27	Appendix
29	Acknowledgements
30	About the Author
30	About SSC

INTRODUCTION



In the early months of the Covid pandemic, [Strategies for Social Change](#) (SSC) launched the Resiliency Project, a virtual leadership learning circle that combines peer group coaching, mutual support, and collective learning and strategizing to advance liberatory leadership practices. The project is built upon years of learning, experimentation, and iteration with leadership circle models.

Elsa Ríos, founder and principal of SSC, recalls an early conversation with her consulting partner, Senior Associate Lisa Garrett, that sparked the idea for the pilot project that evolved into the Resiliency Project. “Both Lisa and I were getting great results coaching new Executive Directors in social justice organizations, but were also noticing how deeply EDs, particularly EDs of color, felt siloed, isolated and in competition. With white supremacy culture so prevalent, many experienced imposter syndrome, martyrdom, and a fear of discussing their vulnerabilities.”

Ríos recalls, “My early experience as a social worker helped me understand the power and possibility of group work.” Ríos and Garrett imagined combining their individual coaching with an opportunity for EDs to support each other, be vulnerable, and share challenges, frustrations, and successes with their peers. Garrett noted, “There are so few spaces where leaders, especially from smaller, social justice-focused nonprofits, can experience that kind of solidarity and support.”

Ríos and Garrett also recognized the importance of sharing innovative leadership frameworks. Many of the leaders Ríos and Garrett were coaching dealt with very complex organizational challenges, yet they had little formal leadership training. Ríos explains “Leaders of color often come in after an organization is in decline or in crisis, and are expected to turn it around, but without sufficient support or leadership development.”

INTRODUCTION

Ríos and Garrett decided to experiment. In 2012, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, they convened a multi-generational, multi-racial learning circle with a cross-sector group of women leaders. They designed an experience described as part peer coaching, part learning lab as a way to build leaders' capacity to deal with the challenges and complexities that had surfaced during and after the hurricane.

The next iteration of the leadership learning circles was funded by Cricket Island Foundation, the third by both Cricket Island and Hazen Foundation, in order to support their grantees, leaders of youth organizing organizations across the country. The fourth leadership circle was funded by the New York Fund for Women and Girls to support women-of-color leaders. With each new undertaking, Ríos and Garrett kept refining their “secret

sauce”, the key ingredients that make these groups so powerful: reflection, strategy, collective problem-solving, transformative healing and coaching.

When COVID hit, Ríos and Garrett knew immediately that these leadership circles, adapted to a virtual format and facilitated in ways that met the movement moment, could provide a life line and support deep resilience for BIPOC and queer leaders in social justice movements. This was particularly true for those new to leadership, in smaller organizations, and in less resourced locations. And the Resiliency Project was born.

This paper provides an overview of the Resiliency Project Model and the theory of change, stories of impact and key lessons learned. It concludes with a call to action for the field of philanthropy.



THE RESILIENCY PROJECT

The Resiliency Project and the leadership learning circles that preceded them are based on the premise that, given the outsized impact leaders have on social change organizations and movements, building the skills and resiliency of diverse social change leaders is essential. (See Theory of Change, p.7)

Despite widespread acceptance of the powerful role “human capital” plays in building effective organizations,¹ research finds that the average annual investment in nonprofit talent during twenty years (1992–2011) by the one thousand largest U.S. foundations comprised only 1.24% of the total grant dollars allocated.² For BIPOC leaders, queer leaders, leaders from the south, leaders of smaller social justice organizations, and those pursuing racial justice, this percentage is likely even smaller.^{3,4}

The notable lack of support for leadership development was thrown into sharp relief during the COVID pandemic and racial uprisings of 2020–2021. During these times of great volatility and uncertainty, EDs of social justice organizations report being stretched unbearably thin with little support. The Resiliency Project is designed to help fill this profound gap in leadership development opportunities, to test promising practices that center, support and build the capacity of EDs of color in social justice work, and to make the case for increased philanthropic investment in social justice leaders, particularly BIPOC leadership.

The Resiliency Project’s first cohort launched with 35 participants in May 2020 as a virtual leadership circle centering BIPOC experience and advancing new liberatory leadership models and practices. The second cohort began in January of 2021. A third cohort is slated for September 2021. The core program includes a mix of peer group coaching and mutual support, collective strategizing/ resource sharing, individual coaching, introduction to vital leadership concepts and tools, and development of Individual Leadership Plans. Content focus is adapted to the needs, requests and feedback of each cohort, but typically includes a combination of the following elements:

- Reflective Leadership Practices
- Collective Care/Transformative Healing
- Embodied Leadership Practices; Trauma-Informed Approaches to Leadership
- Adaptive Leadership Strategies
- Emotional Intelligence
- Conflict Transformation

¹ Sparrow, P., & Cooper, C. (2014). Organizational effectiveness, people and performance: new challenges, new research agendas. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*.

² Stahl, R. M. (2013). Talent philanthropy: Investing in nonprofit people to advance nonprofit performance. *The Foundation Review*, 5(3), 6.

³ <https://groundswellfund.org/open-letter-philanthropy>

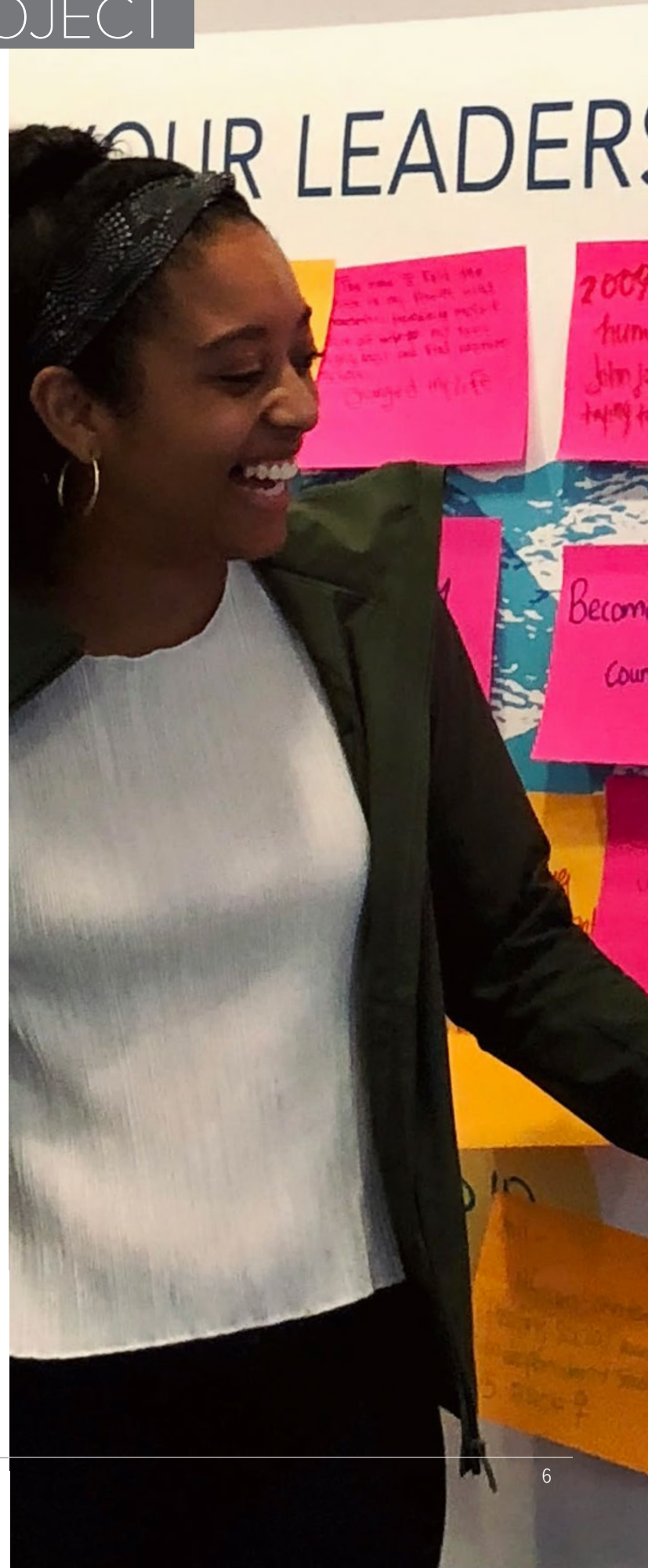
⁴ Cohen, R. (2014). Data snapshot on racial justice grantmaking. In *Critical Issues Forum* (Vol. 5, pp. 38-42).

THE RESILIENCY PROJECT

The Transformative Healing Practices and Collective Care component, a new content area, was added to the model beginning with the first Resiliency Project cohort.

SSC's selection of leaders for both cohorts prioritized BIPOC EDs from social justice-focused organizations, smaller organizations, and organizations based in the South. The first cohort attended the six two-hour peer coaching-learning lab sessions on a drop-in basis and received up to three individual coaching sessions; the second cohort participants committed in advance to all six sessions, and had the option of receiving up to three hours of coaching and/or transformative healing support sessions.

The response to the first round of applications at the beginning of the COVID pandemic was strong, with 35 people applying. All 35 were invited to participate in a flexible "drop-in" model that was designed in response to the high level of uncertainty and complexity during early months of the pandemic. The second request for applications in January 2021 yielded an even more robust response: **149 leaders applied for the 20 available slots**. This indicates a profound need and interest in the Resiliency Project model among social justice leaders.



THEORY OF CHANGE

VALUES

CENTERING RACIAL & GENDER JUSTICE

We believe justice will only be achieved if we center and actively support the leadership of the people who are most impacted. Our role is to ensure that leaders from impacted communities have access to the resources they need to succeed.

PRACTICING LIBERATORY LEADERSHIP

We work to counter harmful, white supremacy leadership norms by advancing new leadership models and practices that center human dignity and collective liberation.

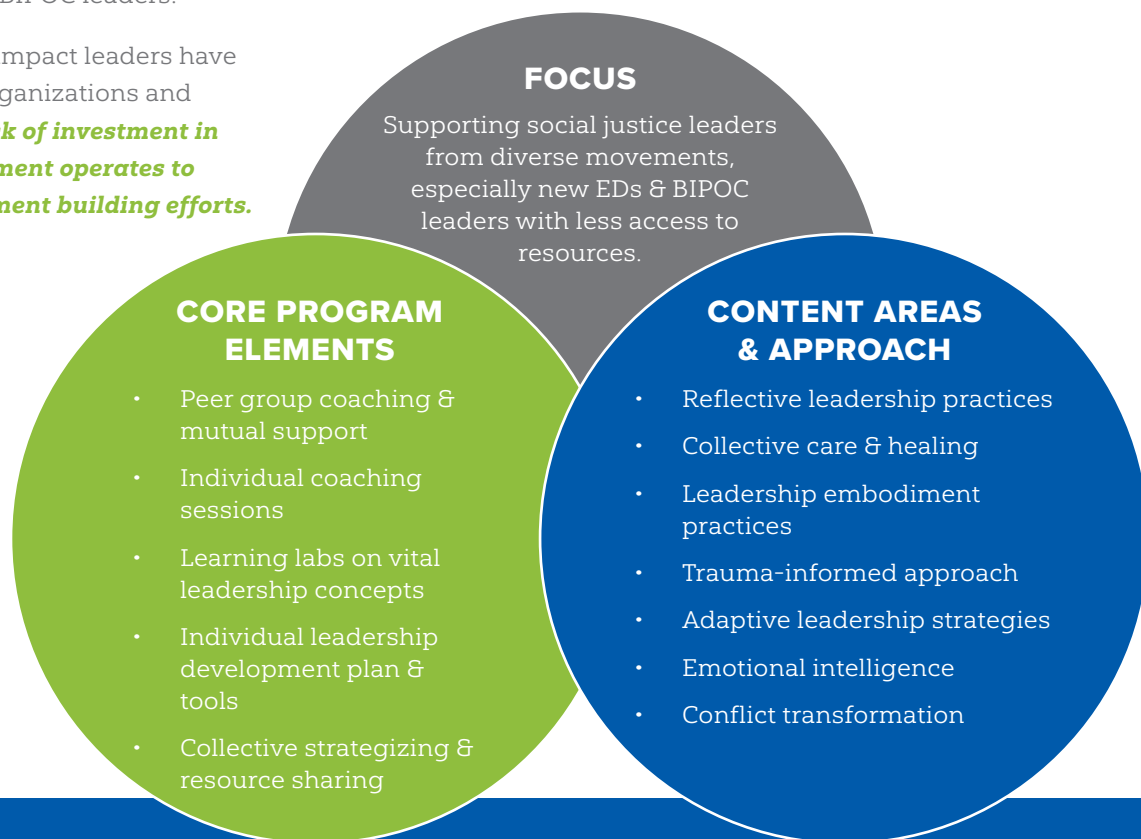
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Only 1% of foundation funding is dedicated to leadership development with a smaller percentage of those dollars devoted to support BIPOC leaders.

Given the outsized impact leaders have on social change organizations and movements, ***our lack of investment in leadership development operates to diminish our movement building efforts.***

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Building the skills and resiliency of diverse social change leaders is an essential strategy for building vibrant social movements.



ANTICIPATED CHANGES

INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

- ↑ Resiliency and ↓ Burnout
- ↑ Ability to manage complexity
- ↓ Isolation
- ↑ Emotional intelligence

ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS

- ↓ Turnover
- ↓ Toxic conflict
- ↑ Capacity to adapt to change
- ↑ Improved relationships among co-directors, direct reports, and board members

IMPACT STORIES

The Resiliency Project became a lifeline for many leaders facing intense organizational, personal and movement challenges. Kris Hayashi, ED of the Transgender Law Center, recalls the deep uncertainty and fear he felt as the pandemic mounted. "It was a horrible and stressful time. Our financial situation was so unknown. We were trying to figure out financial issues at the same time as this global and national crisis.... It was clear that Trans people would be deeply impacted by the pandemic. I remember saying: 'People are going to die. What can we do to get as many people as we can through it?'... It was surprisingly helpful and grounding to hear what others were struggling with and learn about some new tools and strategies. What I remember most is knowing I was not alone in all I had to navigate. "

The emerging results from the Resiliency Project, as well as the leadership circles that preceded it, tell an important story about the power of new liberatory leadership models that center and support BIPOC leadership. Below are reflections by participants in their own words that illustrate the Resiliency Project's contribution to positive changes for individuals and organizations. We are beginning to see broader impacts at the field-building level for those who participated in the earlier iterations of the leadership learning circles.



IMPACT STORIES

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

INCREASED RESILIENCE, DECREASED BURNOUT

Linda Her,
ED of Asian American Organizing Project:

I never have had any coaching, or a cohort of other EDs to learn from, so that's why I applied. When I began as an ED I was just chugging along and set up leadership development for staff... I've attended various leadership development through my community organizing experience, but I had not received executive leadership development training myself prior to becoming an ED. When I became an ED, being a young, queer, Asian, womxn of color, there weren't spaces and leaders that were available to support me and others like me who are leading an organization

or a movement. This can feel or we end up reinventing the wheel, and having to figure things out ourselves... Sometimes I get scared whether we can sustain our level of fast growth, and deal with all the management challenges and it feels overwhelming. When I feel like this I need to be with other EDs. Talking and hearing others allowed me to give myself grace and know that there are many resources that haven't been available to me. Through the Resiliency Project I was able to reflect and give myself some grace and forgiveness, and in that I found healing.



**THROUGH THE
RESILIENCY
PROJECT I
WAS ABLE TO
REFLECT AND
GIVE MYSELF
SOME GRACE AND
FORGIVENESS,
AND IN THAT I
FOUND HEALING.**

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

INCREASED RESILIENCE, DECREASED BURNOUT

**Chris Melody Fields Figueredo,
ED of Ballot Initiative Strategy Center:**

I had ideas of becoming an ED, honestly because I've seen it go terribly wrong many times. We say we are trying to build a world where people thrive, but we often are not thriving in our own organizations. I've seen lots of examples where there is no work-life balance. There is a lot of tension. We are seeing a lot of bad stuff in the world and in our communities, and that has an impact on us as human beings doing this work. People are working 12-14 hour days, its crisis after crisis. and that's why we have burnout. People haven't learned how to pause and take a breath. We need to be modeling for ourselves what we want for our communities and that starts with the person leading the organization.

Being in this role in the COVID pandemic has been relentless to a whole different level. It's been that much harder to find moments to stop and breathe. Even with the flexibility of working at home, it's harder to maintain boundaries; I don't get to walk away or drive home --everything is here. Being with my peers from across the country, and the coaching helped me realize the importance of boundaries and self care practices. I worked so hard when coming into this role to set those things up, but realized I had let it go because it just felt like another thing. The Resiliency Project helped me remember things I already knew about how important it is to be diligent about this because the well gets dry really fast and we need to replenish.



**BEING WITH MY
PEERS FROM
ACROSS THE
COUNTRY, AND THE
COACHING HELPED
ME REALIZE THE
IMPORTANCE
OF BOUNDARIES
AND SELF CARE
PRACTICES.**

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

INCREASED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ABILITY TO MANAGE COMPLEXITY

**Ricky Watson Jr.,
ED of National Juvenile
Justice Network:**

The Resiliency Project helped me with my overall decision making and ability to let people know what I need and expect from them. A lot of that is personal work that has let me step into my power with more clarity and compassion. In the past when people would ask for something I thought was unreasonable, I could get a bit stuck in my head on how best to respond. As I continue to have tough management decisions and conversations, I am asking better questions and it's helping me develop more efficient responses.



**THE RESILIENCY
PROJECT HELPED
ME WITH MY
OVERALL
DECISION MAKING
AND ABILITY
TO LET PEOPLE
KNOW WHAT I
NEED AND EXPECT
FROM THEM.**

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

INCREASED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ABILITY TO MANAGE COMPLEXITY

Alissa Barnes,
ED of ProgressNow New Mexico:

I have come to understand through work in the leadership circles that my personal response when experiencing overwhelm is to box up my feelings and this comes across as short, sharp, uncaring [to my staff], and I have no capacity to absorb anything else. So now, when I realize I am getting in overwhelm mode, I'm taking a pause, and when I do show up I show up differently. Also, I realized that usually if I'm overwhelmed, that the team is too-- it's collective. So that pause helps everyone.



***I REALIZED THAT
USUALLY IF I'M
OVERWHELMED,
THAT THE TEAM
IS TOO-- IT'S
COLLECTIVE.***

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

DECREASED ISOLATION

**Chris Melody Fields Figueredo,
ED of Ballot Initiative Strategy Center:**

It was so helpful, being with a whole different set of EDs, people I'm not usually in community with: folks working on mutual aid, direct service, advocacy and different types of organizing. I realized it doesn't matter what kind of ED you are, we have similar challenges, especially as people of color. Being an ED is a lonely job, even with shared leadership. I'm always thinking about where the money is coming from and how decisions are impacting people's lives and jobs, it's a lot to hold. At the end of the day the buck stops with you and there are so many expectations. It's super exhausting and I felt that from everyone [in the cohort]. We hold so much for other people but who holds us as leaders?



**WE HOLD SO
MUCH FOR
OTHER PEOPLE
BUT WHO HOLDS
US AS LEADERS?**

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES

DECREASED ISOLATION

**Rapheal Randall,
ED of Youth United for Change:**

There is no way in hell I would have been able to do what I needed as an ED without that [peer and individual coaching] support. Coaching introduced me to somatics. I remember once my coach asked me how my body feels and I realized I spend so much time in my head, I wasn't paying attention to how I was showing up. It was powerful to have a coach who was really listening, and hearing to understand. She picked up on things I didn't have the words to say and helped me understand things in the larger context.



***I REALIZED
I SPEND SO
MUCH TIME
IN MY HEAD, I
WASN'T PAYING
ATTENTION
TO HOW I WAS
SHOWING UP.***

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

EXPANDED COLLECTIVE CARE PRACTICES

**Linda Her,
ED of Asian American
Organizing Project:**

This is the first year that we are expanding our organizational breaks for our staff which is separate from vacation time, and everyone is given 4 days off together. These are organizational breaks that our staff leadership have developed together in order to take care of ourselves, so our leaders don't feel like they have to do a lot of catching up or duplicating work to catch people up. It allows our young staff and leaders to know and experience a sense of community care by taking breaks collectively. We are going to begin offering three organizational breaks in the year: spring, summer and winter and also we will have our first collective care retreat in August. I am taking ideas [I am learning about in the Resiliency Project] to my internal team to help shape into the agenda. Why invent the wheel? It's worked well and it's been really relevant.

***I AM TAKING
IDEAS [I AM
LEARNING
ABOUT IN THE
RESILIENCY
PROJECT] TO
MY INTERNAL
TEAM TO HELP
SHAPE INTO
THE AGENDA.***

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

IMPROVED STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

**Chris Melody Fields Figueredo,
ED of Ballot Initiative Strategy Center:**

I have used the [Love and Rigor](#) framework with our senior leadership team and in staff meetings. We are a multi-racial, multi-ethnic organization, with an all female identifying senior leadership team; 75% of us are women of color. It's such a helpful framework because, especially in political work, where we have been taught to focus on rigor, but love has almost always been absent. The framework has helped with this. For example, we had our big conference, and this was challenging for] my leadership

team. We did the reading of "Love and Rigor" before our debrief and it opened up a lot more honesty, accountability and transparency with each other. We know we are coming from a loving place [with each other] and we are respected, and treated with dignity--- but we also have had to have really courageous conversations and not walk away when it's hard. For our senior leadership team [Love and Rigor] has been a guidepost for our relationship.



**WE ALSO
HAVE HAD TO
HAVE REALLY
COURAGEOUS
CONVERSATIONS
AND NOT WALK
AWAY WHEN IT'S
HARD.**

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

IMPROVED SUPERVISION SKILLS

Rapheal Randall,
ED of Youth United for Change:

The Leadership Learning Circle helped me to learn that supervision is not just about tasks--it's about the staff and young people's personal and political development. I have our staff journal to improve their reflective practice....some of this is just baked into my DNA now that I have been practicing for years."



***SUPERVISION IS
NOT JUST ABOUT
TASKS--IT'S ABOUT
THE STAFF AND
YOUNG PEOPLE'S
PERSONAL
AND POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENT.***

FIELD BUILDING

EXPANDED NETWORKS

Rapheal Randall,
ED of Youth United for Change:

Without the leadership circle I wouldn't be at my organization. I was walking into so much shit and I needed a space where I could process and learn from other EDs about what was happening in the sector... We were invited to connect with other leaders in New Orleans when they were building their circles... It put us in a position where our experiences were no longer held individually by just us. People are saying now that the youth organizing sector is changing and that's because we were in these spaces where we saw each other and showed up for each other.

I used to be like 'I never want to misstep' and now now its like "this is bigger than us, it's about movement building." We now have organizers reaching out to us from Amazon asking us to help them think about membership development -- and that was possible because I had some space to think this out.



**I USED TO BE LIKE
'I NEVER WANT
TO MISSTEP' AND
NOW NOW ITS LIKE
"THIS IS BIGGER
THAN US, IT'S
ABOUT MOVEMENT
BUILDING."**

FIELD BUILDING

EXPANDED THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

After the 4th leadership circle, Lisa and Elsa spent time in retreat reflecting on their experience. During this time they discussed the notable absence of leadership literature specifically for social justice leaders. Ríos recalls, *"We had to read primarily from things coming from corporate and entrepreneurial sectors, figure out what was relevant and how to adapt it. We kept having to recreate tools, reinvent, readjust--it was a lot of work!"* So Ríos and her daughter, Surei Quintana, joined forces to develop a free, leadership workbook called: [Love Notes to Our Social Justice Leaders: A Workbook to Support Your Reflective Leadership Practice](#) which they used in the subsequent Resiliency Circles and disseminated widely to social justice movements in the U.S. and internationally. Ríos notes that having the workbook helped with the circles. *"The workbook helped participants develop greater intentionality with journaling and reflective practice. The workbook takes things we are experimenting with and puts them into a seamless container."*

Ríos and Garrett also encouraged participants in the leadership circles to develop their own thought leadership. Rapheal Randall, a participant in an early iteration of the leadership circle who has since published two books with youth and staff about youth organizing, credits the leadership circles for initial inspiration, encouragement and guidance. Randall recalls, *"Lisa and Elsa gave us Harvard Business Review (HBR) articles to read. I remember their explanation really clearly. They said 'We know the content isn't super radical, but some of it is very useful. We need to learn these things, but our people don't spend time writing about our experiences. They gave us the mandate to write. They said if you don't want to read HBR, then you should be writing...and they gave us journals... And that's how it started.'"*

LESSONS LEARNED

The Resiliency Project helps leaders meet the “movement moment.”

Strategy is not the main focus of the Resiliency Project, but Ríos and Garrett were clear not to neglect strategy in the context of movement-building. “Many leaders are so overwhelmed that they are not fully taking into account the context in which they are operating,” Ríos explains, “so they are not as adaptive or strategic as they could be. We would ask the participants: How do we understand this movement moment? What’s your organization’s unique role?” As the COVID pandemic and racial uprisings continued to unfold, participants in the Resiliency Project explored in real time what was needed by the “movement moment” and how they could contribute.

Linda Her, ED of Asian American Organizing Project explains ‘Our young people have not lived through something like [a global pandemic]. This year was hard not only because we are a young organization, but we also didn’t fully understand the bigger picture we were living in, and spent a few months discussing, processing, assessing and re-adjusting our plan/programming. [The leadership concepts introduced in the Resiliency Project] helped create a map for us to understand better where we are. This helped re-ground us and we have been using these concepts to onboard new staff and develop our strategy sessions.’



LESSONS LEARNED

Transformative healing practices are a critical component for developing resilient leadership.

"Some of the core elements of the Resiliency Circles have changed over time" explains Ríos. "As we began to design the circles at the beginning of the pandemic, the importance of centering healing justice was a lightbulb moment for us." Ríos and Garrett invited Healing Justice Practitioner Faith Bynoe to join the design and facilitation team in order to weave transformative healing practices throughout the circles. The team also offered cohort members individual healing support sessions with Bynoe in addition to individual coaching with Ríos and Garrett. The approach resonated strongly with leaders in the field.

Chris Melody Fields Figueredo, ED of Ballot Initiative Strategy Center recalls how exhausted she felt as the pandemic mounted, and how the project's framing around resilience and healing justice initially drew her to participate. "I hear so much from my staff and partners about the harms they experience in movement work and in a white supremacist culture...I knew having a place to focus on these transformative healing practices would be so important. How do we build a world where our worth is seen and we lead with radical love? It's hard when everything else in the world is telling you otherwise."



LESSONS LEARNED

Peer coaching provides leaders with support for immediate challenges and helps them develop stronger supervisory and management skills.

Participants noted that engaging in peer coaching helped them identify new approaches to shared challenges, as well as deepen their understanding that, as a leader, it was okay not to have all the answers. The peer coaching approach taught participants to ask good questions, help their staff reflect on their experience, and then move into action. Rapheal Randall, ED of Youth United for Change recalls “having people bring a dilemma [to the group] and instead of us telling them what to do, we began asking them coaching questions to get them to better understand how to engage. This helped me with raising issues [in my own organization.] Most EDs come in [to the job] and our first task is just fundraising. We don't get taught this other stuff. When I was being interviewed [for the ED position], I was never asked about my approach to managing people. I think people write it off like you have it or you don't versus thinking about it as a skill to be developed.”



LESSONS LEARNED

Cross-movement participation helps dilute competition, promote creative collaboration, and set the stage for building a larger, cross-movement agenda.

Ríos and Garrett credit Sarita Gupta, former ED of Jobs with Justice and now Director of the Future of Work(ers) at the Ford Foundation, for influencing their thinking about the importance of developing cross-movement participation and moving away from siloed agendas. As a self-identified “strategy wonk”, Ríos strongly believes that “a type of synergy is needed across movements--so we are not thinking about it like a zillion different agendas--but as part of a larger agenda that moves forward to make big wins happen that actually stick.”

Participants in the cohorts frequently noted the power of understanding common challenges and interests with leaders working in other fields. Ricky Watson Jr., ED of National Juvenile Justice Network, reflected: “In the small groups it became clear the commonalities many of us shared, especially as new EDs of color, including institutional challenges we have that are different from our white predecessors. That was really helpful. I felt super isolated when I first started and had no clear pathway for decompression. Being with other leaders with similar experiences and values who were working in other fields was uniquely helpful and also took away any worries about competing for funding. As I hold this leadership role, I recognize that establishing healthy outlets can make transitions much smoother and I want as many of my colleagues and predecessors in leadership to have an opportunity like this one.”



LESSONS LEARNED

Direct and on-going organizational development work with social justice organizations helps keep the Resiliency Circles deeply relevant.

As consultants, Ríos and Garrett engage in organizational development work with many organizations of different sizes in different issue areas. Over the last 20 years SSC has consulted with several hundred organizations. Being this close to the work has enabled Ríos and Garrett to regularly test and iterate a range of approaches to address common challenges and dynamics.

“One of the reasons why we are able to do this well” notes Ríos, “is that we are getting to see first hand what is going on and how leaders are showing up through our consulting work. Those engagements directly inform what we offer and explore in the circles.”



CONCLUSION

A Call to Action for Philanthropy

The Resiliency Project learnings and outcomes underscore the crucial importance of creating more sustained and intentional investments in organizational leadership, particularly BIPOC and queer leaders, leaders of smaller social justice organizations and organizations based in the South. These investments are critical to support and sustain progressive movement-building.

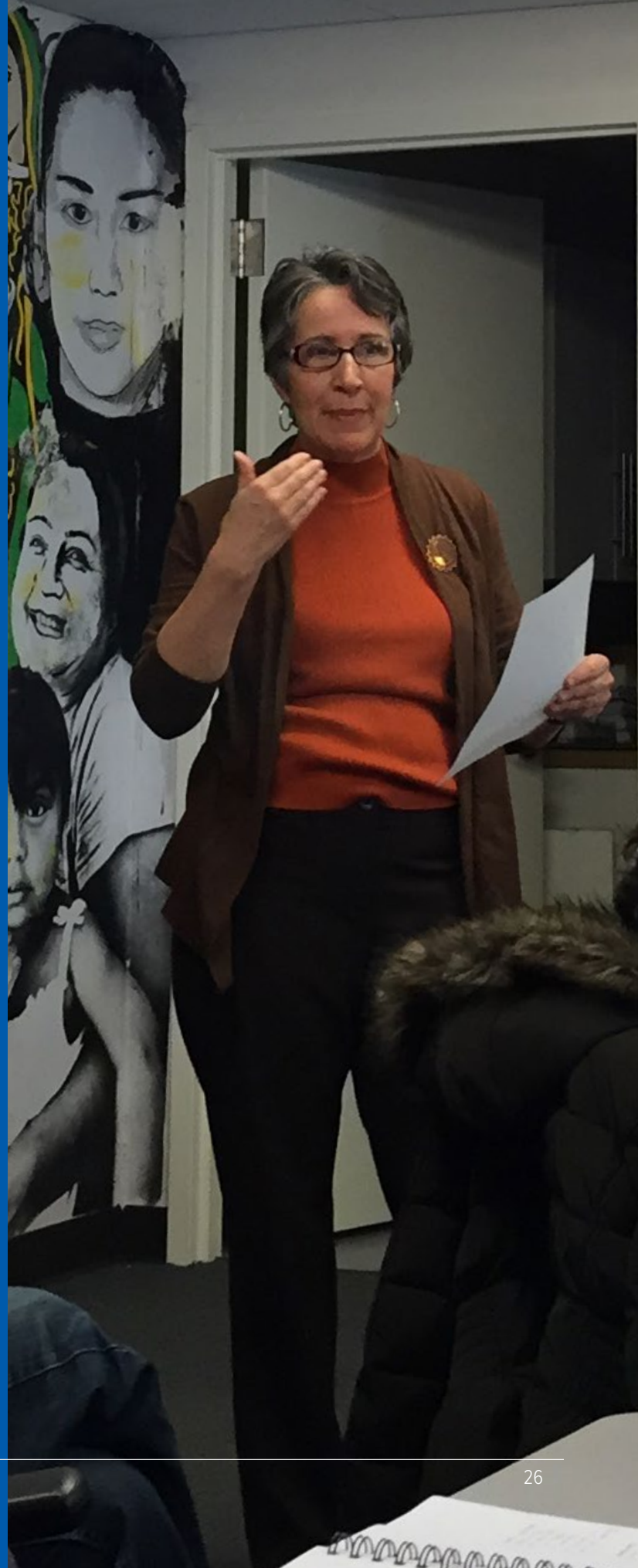
Strategies for Social Change recommends the following four key investment strategies:

- 1. Support initiatives that center BIPOC leadership development and build leadership pipelines in social justice movements,** especially in under-resourced parts of the country or in sectors with fewer resources more generally. Fund or subsidize coaches and leadership capacity builders to expand their offerings to make them more accessible.
- 2. Provide coaching and training support that align with different stages of the organizational life cycle** including when a new ED or co-director takes the helm, when an organization is scaling up, in moments of crisis, and during executive transitions.
- 3. Invest in supporting BIPOC and queer leaders to succeed in high stakes, volatile environments** and enable them both to enhance their resiliency and adaptive skills, as well as to hone their strategies in the face of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). When resourced, leaders are able to support staff retention and improve overall well-being within the organization. These supports may include, but are not limited to, leadership learning labs, peer coaching circles, transformative healing support, individual coaching, co-director and senior leadership team coaching, and conflict transformation training.
- 4. Invest in new leadership development tools and thought leadership for social justice leaders:**
 - Fund social justice leaders to write about their leadership experiences and learnings to help guide and strengthen the leadership of others;
 - Support research that will identify and disseminate innovative learning about liberatory leadership practices;
 - Invest in the development of social justice oriented leadership tools including leadership skills assessments, emotional intelligence assessments, team building, and management tools that take into account the values and specific context and skill sets needed in the social justice sector.

WHAT'S NEXT

What's next?

"We're expanding our efforts to support and build the capacity of social justice leaders," added Ríos. Strategies for Social Change is currently planning to scale the work of the Resiliency Project through building new partnerships, and combining it with their work on supporting Leadership Transitions, Team Building, Executive Coaching and Thought Leadership. This new project **Leadership Reimagined™** will provide a virtual and physical space for learning, reflection, re-energizing and collaborating. Ríos and Garrett describe **Leadership Reimagined™** as an opportunity to curate transformative moments of learning designed to spark innovative strategies, mutual support, embodiment of liberatory practices and greater trust and radical collaboration across social justice movements.



APPENDIX

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE COHORT 1

Date: 2012

Funded by: Self Funded by Organizations

Participating Organizations:

1. American Friends Service Committee
2. Unitarian Universalist VEEC
3. NYC Administration for Children Services
4. Union Health Settlement

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE COHORT 2

Date: Fall 2014–May 2015

Funded by: Cricket Island Foundation

Participating Organizations:

1. [Little Village Environmental Justice Organization](#)
2. [Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project](#)
3. [Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice](#)
4. [DRUM](#): Desis Rising Up and Moving
5. [Global Action Project](#)
6. [Chicago Freedom School](#)
7. [Youth United for Change](#)
8. [Ifetayo](#)

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE COHORT 3

Date: March 2016

Funded by: Cricket Island Foundation and Edward Hazen Foundation

Participating Organizations:

1. [Tunica Teens in Action](#)
2. [Mekong NYC](#)
3. [Grow Dat Youth Farm](#)
4. [Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools](#)
5. [VAYLA](#)
6. [Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition](#)
7. [Youth United for Community Action](#)
8. [BreakOUT!](#)

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE COHORT 4

Women of Color (WOC) Leadership Circle

Date: 2018–2019

Funded by: New York Women's Foundation- NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color

Participating Organizations:

1. [New York State Youth Leadership Council \(NYSYLC\)](#)
2. [BlackFem, Inc.](#)
3. [Girl Vow](#)
4. [New York State Youth Leadership Council \(NYSYLC\)](#)
5. [The Alex House Project, Inc.](#)
6. [The BLK Projek](#)
7. [viBeTheater Experience](#)
8. [S.O.U.L Sisters Leadership Collective](#)
9. [The WomanHOOD Project](#)
10. [Welfare Rights Initiative](#)

APPENDIX

RESILIENCY PROJECT COHORT 1

Date: May 2020

Funded by: Hive Fund and National
Institute for Reproductive Health

Participating Organizations:

1. Just Futures Law
2. Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health
3. Birthmark Doula Collective
4. New Voices for Reproductive Justice
5. Asian American Organizing Project
6. Black Women for Wellness
7. Uzazi Village
8. CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
9. Cabrini Green Legal Aid
10. Transgender Law Center
11. NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia
12. Florida Alliance of Planned
Parenthood Affiliates
13. Planned Parenthood of South, East
and North FL
14. Make It Work Nevada
15. Immigrant Defense Project
16. Global action project
17. Jolt
18. Georgia Conservation Voters
19. Women's Medical Fund
20. CEER
21. Coalition of Communities of Color
22. Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
23. New Era Colorado
24. One Hundred Miles
25. Lilith Fund
26. CAAAV: Organizing Asian
Communities
27. The Center for Hope and Healing, Inc
28. ProgressNow New Mexico
29. AMPLIFY GA
30. Florida Immigrant Coalition
31. Feminist Women's Health Center
32. Tewa Women United
33. HEART Women & Girls
34. 9to5

RESILIENCY PROJECT COHORT 2

Date: January 2021

Funded by: Groundswell Fund and
Open Society Foundations New
Executive Fund

Participating Organizations:

1. Alternate ROOTS
2. Asian American Organizing
Project
3. Ballot Initiative Strategy Center
4. Breath of My Heart Birthplace
5. Center for NuLeadership on
Human Justice and Healing
6. Equality Texas
7. Freedom Inc
8. Grassroots Leadership
9. Justice for Muslims Collective
10. Miami Workers Center
11. National Juvenile Justice
Network (DC-based)
12. Positive Women's Network
13. Raleigh PACT
14. Sex Workers Outreach Project
15. Texas Harm Reduction Alliance
16. THE AFIYA CENTER
17. Violence Intervention Program
18. Virginia Civic Engagement Table

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deep appreciation to former Resiliency Project, Leadership Circle participants, and SSC leadership team who participated in interviews for this case study.

CHRIS MELODY FIELDS FIGUEREDO,
Executive Director,
Ballot Initiative Strategy Center

KRIS HAYASHI,
Executive Director,
Transgender Law Center

RICKY WATSON JR.,
Executive Director,
National Juvenile Justice Network
(DC-based)

RAPHEAL RANDALL,
Executive Director,
Youth United for Change

ALISSA BARNES,
Executive Director,
ProgressNow New Mexico

LINDA HER,
Executive Director,
Asian American Organizing Project

ELSA RÍOS,
Principal and Founder,
Strategies for Social Change

LISA GARRETT,
Senior Associate,
Strategies for Social Change

The Resiliency Project and earlier Leadership Circles were developed with generous support from:

- Hive Fund
- National Institute for Reproductive Health
- New Executive Fund/Open Society Foundations
- Groundswell Fund
- New York Women's Foundation- NYC Fund for Girls and Young Women of Color
- Cricket Island Foundation
- Edward Hazen Foundation

We are especially grateful to Melanie Allen and Erin Rogers, Co-Directors of the Hive Fund for supporting the development of this case study.

Special thanks to Faith Bynoe, Sonya Kharas, and Surei Quintana for their participation in making the Resiliency Project a success.

Thanks to Alexandra Saba for editorial and research support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Corita Brown, PhD is a consultant, coach, and researcher working at the intersection of organizational development, racial justice and embodied leadership.

For more information visit coritabrown.com.

ABOUT SSC:

Strategies for Social Change (SSC) is a woman of color owned consulting firm whose mission is to help social change groups transform the world. The organization designs innovative strategies and solutions to help groups increase their resources, maximize their strategic impact and achieve their vision for a better world.

For more information visit strategiesforsocialchange.com.

ELSA A. RÍOS

Elsa A. Rios, JD, MSW is the Founder and Principal of Strategies for Social Change (SSC). She is a nationally recognized leader in the fields of organizational development and leadership transition and served as founding Co-Director of RoadMap, a national network of capacity builders dedicated to working with social justice organizations.

LISA GARRETT

Lisa Garrett is a leadership consultant and coach with 20 years of experience with nonprofits and philanthropy, and the communities they serve. She partners with other masterful consultants through RoadMap and Strategies for Social Change to support transformational change efforts.