We Carry Generational Demands for Healing that will not Rest:
An African Feminist Exploration of Healing Justice as an Analytical Lens and a Practice
An African Feminist Exploration of Healing Justice

Practices that center healing

The Framework

Analytical Lens
Roots of trauma and harm

Take a Break
Analytical Lens
Structural violence: roots of trauma and harm

Social structures designed to stop certain individuals and groups from reaching their full potential
Denial of access to affordable, culturally specific and anti-oppressive health care

Psychiatric models that pathologize the experiences of activists

Justice-as-pain

The intensification and growth of extractivism, commodification and appropriation of land and environmental degradation

Violence against bodies that deviate from “acceptable” identities and sexual orientations

Roots of structural violence
Roots of transgenerational and collective trauma

- Structural violence
- Living under relenting threat and violence
- Carrying memories of generations of harm
- Isolation of discredited narratives
Manifestations of transgenerational and collective trauma

- Anger, frustration, fear and hurt are expressed, often against other activists
- Feeling “born with a wound”
- Harmful coping mechanisms that activists resort to, to alleviate the “weight” of trauma
Take a Break

Breath Exercise

Take a deep breath and notice how you feel in your body, and how the world around you feels...

Let our breath connect us in this moment – and hold ourselves and each other in solidarity through breath.
Take a Break
Physical Grounding Technique

- Place both feet flat on the floor
- Lean back and make note of the feeling of the chair under you and against your back
- Cross your arms over your chest
- Gently tap your shoulders, alternating one side at a time
The Framework

Healing cannot be separated from the daily work of activism.
Healing as a process not an event
Spaces that embody radical transformations
Centrality of land to healing
Alternative feminist eco realities
Centering the logic of community
Looking back and forward generationally to understand our context and experiences
Shifting the focus from symptoms to root causes in responding to trauma and harm
Recovering then embodying sacred teachings in ways of being
Accepting there is no one-size-fits-all approach to justice
Healing as a way of recovering the wholeness that we lost
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Healing as a process not an event
What could feminist political strategies for liberation look like if they centered healing?

- Being in control of our triggers
- Strengthening networks
- Practices that cultivate sacredness
- Centering the role of healers
- Being in relationship with the earth
- Ongoing reflection, learning, strategizing, discovering and applying
- Addressing transgenerational and collective traumas that impact our movements
What could feminist political strategies for liberation look like if they centered healing?

- Feminist spaces that analyze structural causes of our traumas
- Creating models of collective care and healing that can be replicated
- Memory as resistance
- Developing feminist leadership
- Creating cultures of trust that allow us to question tenets such as ‘safe space’