

Winning the Imagination Battle:

Reimagining Feminist Organising Spaces
and Practice

Reflections from the 2nd Feminist Republik Festival



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Glossary

Healing

Healing from a feminist perspective entails challenging what we know about the prominent approaches (mainstream) to care and wellness that focus on isolating our physical, mental and emotional health from our contexts. The focus is largely on pathologising the experiences of WHRDs or managing or reducing psychiatric symptoms, rather than challenging the root causes of emotional, mental and spiritual distress. Politicising healing also entails challenging the primarily individualized responses to support, such as through individual-focused psychotherapies, which alone is inadequate in meeting the collective distress caused by persistent forms of exclusion, violence and marginalisation.


The focus is on understanding trauma as a collective experience that is caused by deeply rooted structures of harm, all of which collude to produce the state of depression, burnout, proneness to conflict, and physical illnesses that many WHRDs grapple with. Healing necessarily entails politicising our wounds by exploring the sources of our collective malaise; creating spaces that manifest the transformations we dream of; and reviving traditional healing practices, which are radical in their resistance to oppressive conceptions of what it means to be well, and to medicalized, approaches to healing that pathologize our experiences of unwellness.

Healing justice

Healing justice is based on an acknowledgement of histories of generational trauma experienced by specific groups of people due to their location at the periphery of societies. Gender, race and class play very specific roles in making black, indigenous, gender non-conforming activists among other groups targets of state and non-state actors' aggression, harm and abuse. Healing justice acknowledges the gender, race and class dynamics associated with generational trauma and centers healing as an approach to social justice organizing. The importance of creating time and resources for healing in a global structure that isolates it from political and economic factors is at the heart of healing justice as a radical approach to organising.

Centering

This report refers to centering healing in the Festival space. In addition to centering healing offerings physically in the Festival space and in the agenda, we also mean that we are centering ourselves in a politicized understanding of healing explained above. We were inspired by the directive to "center ourselves" which is often heard in different spiritual traditions, which largely refers to connecting with our spirit, being aware and present, encouraging us to reset after losing our balance due to the chaos of daily existence.



By centering, we mean connecting with the spirits of our ancestors and rooting ourselves in traditions and frameworks that have been coopted and criminalised. We are trying to retain balance in our collectives and movements by focusing on the traumas we hold that bind and shape us and our relationships with each other, and operating from the intentionality that traumas and wounds must be addressed and healed if we are to ever achieve the transformative world we dream of.

Wellbeing

Closely connected to healing, well being is not a destination, but the mental, physical and spiritual state of feeling well. We understand well-being as a state that closely accompanies healing processes. Well-being lies in the process of healing from the intergenerational wounds and traumas experienced by womn; addressing the collective wounds that often bring us to activism spaces; interrogating how we internalize structures of harm; reviving pathways of healing that make sense to us.

It is based on this understanding of well-being that we understand it to be a journey in which we oscillate in our sense of feeling well and unwell, depending on how well-resourced we are to carry out these difficult conversations and transformations; our ability to create spaces of trust where we can share our wounds without feeling marginalised; our success in interrogating power structures in activism spaces; and our imagination battles to dream of new worlds that resist colonial, capitalist, ableist ways of being. We understand healing to usher a state of wellness that focuses on transformation, not well-being that aims at developing coping mechanisms to help us better adapt to oppression.



Introduction: Are We Doing Enough Dreaming?

The second Feminist Republik Festival centred healing justice as a radical framework for African feminist organising. The framework roots activists' experiences of depression, burnout, trauma, illness, and conflict, among others, on structural drivers of oppression. It illustrates the interconnections between systemic oppression and trauma experienced across generations. In demonstrating the way trauma reverberates through our movement spaces, the framework centers healing as a radical approach to social justice and feminist organising. This is not medical, individualised healing, or relies on depoliticized wellness practices. Instead, this is an approach to healing that aims at transforming us at the individual level, our communities, cultures, and institutions.

The **healing justice framework** is not simply about the absence of state violence or tracking the forms of that violence, but about the presence of the values, practices, and relationships of the world we want. It entails proactively practising what we want in the world, including healthy relationships, skills to de-escalate harm and violence. These building spaces acknowledge the herstories of our wounds, questioning the power structures we implicitly build into our organising spaces and actively working towards imagining different structures and institutions to organise our lives. The framework essentially focuses on transformation, not on adapting better to oppression.

This is the politicized vision of healing that Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAF-Africa), through the Feminist Republik, centred at the second Feminist Republik Festival. This was done in a variety of ways, among which was by creating space for womn's human rights defenders (WHRDs) to experience traditional healing offerings from across the continent.

In organising the Festival, there was a lot of grappling with ways of emphasising the political role of healers and cultural producers, and the centrality of healing to our activist struggles. The inspiration behind embarking on the research was the belief, expressed by activists consistently, that healing is a political act. We are surviving in worlds that were not created with womn in mind, within structures that were consciously created to keep us poor, isolated, and physically, mentally, and emotionally unwell. Therefore, centering healing in feminist organising is a resistance to these structures and to the largely hostile world they created.



We heard activists grappling with many questions:

How can we heal from our individual pains and traumas, those that we experience collectively and generationally?

How can we mend our souls and minds so that we can relate to ourselves and each other out of sisterhood not pain?

How can we create spaces that center this spirit of healing?

Imagining and working towards a world that flows from our visions of healing to center freedom from various forms of trauma and harm is not short of a feminist revolution.

If we center healing in our work, it will create a much softer space that is not just technical and is looking at laws and policies but we will look beyond what we need in terms of the laws, to asking: but are you well?

Nompumelelo Mathabela, South African WHRD at the Festival.



Why Did the Festival Center Healers and Healing Offerings?

The [research](#) UAF-Africa published on healing justice as a radical framework for feminist organising reminded us that our bodies are the sites of the traumas we carry from across generations, in addition to our individual traumas. While these traumas inform us of how the world operates and bestows upon us survival strategies that have carried us for generations, they also manifest as anxiety, illness, conflict, depression, and coping strategies that prevent us from dreaming and working towards radical transformations of our realities.

The reflections of WHRDs that were shared with us during the research interviews showed the myriad ways in which a sole focus on modern medicine, which shapes the support that WHRDs receive for their wellbeing and care, pathologises their experiences and falls short of addressing the illness, sadness and despair that are rooted in decades of experiencing structures of violence.

In conversations with activists, the need to revive traditional practices and resist their conscious erasure from our communities through decades of criminalisation and demonisation was highlighted as integral to our healing. Reviving traditional practices is also an act of resistance through the collective memory of how we have survived for generations using frameworks and approaches that are largely independent of the state and from colonial norms of what constitutes healing and health. It is this need to reflect on approaches to healing that are not solely based on medicalisation, and the priority to revive traditional healing practices, that guided the Festival's focus on centering healers in the space and the agenda of the three days.



What Did it Mean to Center Healing at the Festival?

The Festival space welcomed 37 healing practitioners offering 42 healing practices. Practitioners included midwives, massage therapists, feminist psychotherapists, crystal healers, sound cultural workers, drummers, yoga practitioners, medical doctors, grief healers and art therapists, and healers that focus on body and energy traditions, among others. The space that emerged presented a multifaceted approach to well-being, healing, trauma, and spirit.

The healing offerings space was physically centered in the Festival space. It was not possible to attend a concurrent session without passing by the space designated for healing practitioners. The placing of the healers' tents at the center of the space was symbolic of the belief that healers and health practitioners must play greater roles in our struggles for transformation and our well-being. In consultations with activists for the planning of the Festival, it was stressed that given activist cultures that prioritize "the work", it is essential to make it very difficult to miss the healers' spaces. In so doing, the Festival would attempt to physically disrupt dominant patterns of what it means to be an activist, which often means understanding well-being discussions and practices to be "leisurely" distractions from "the work".

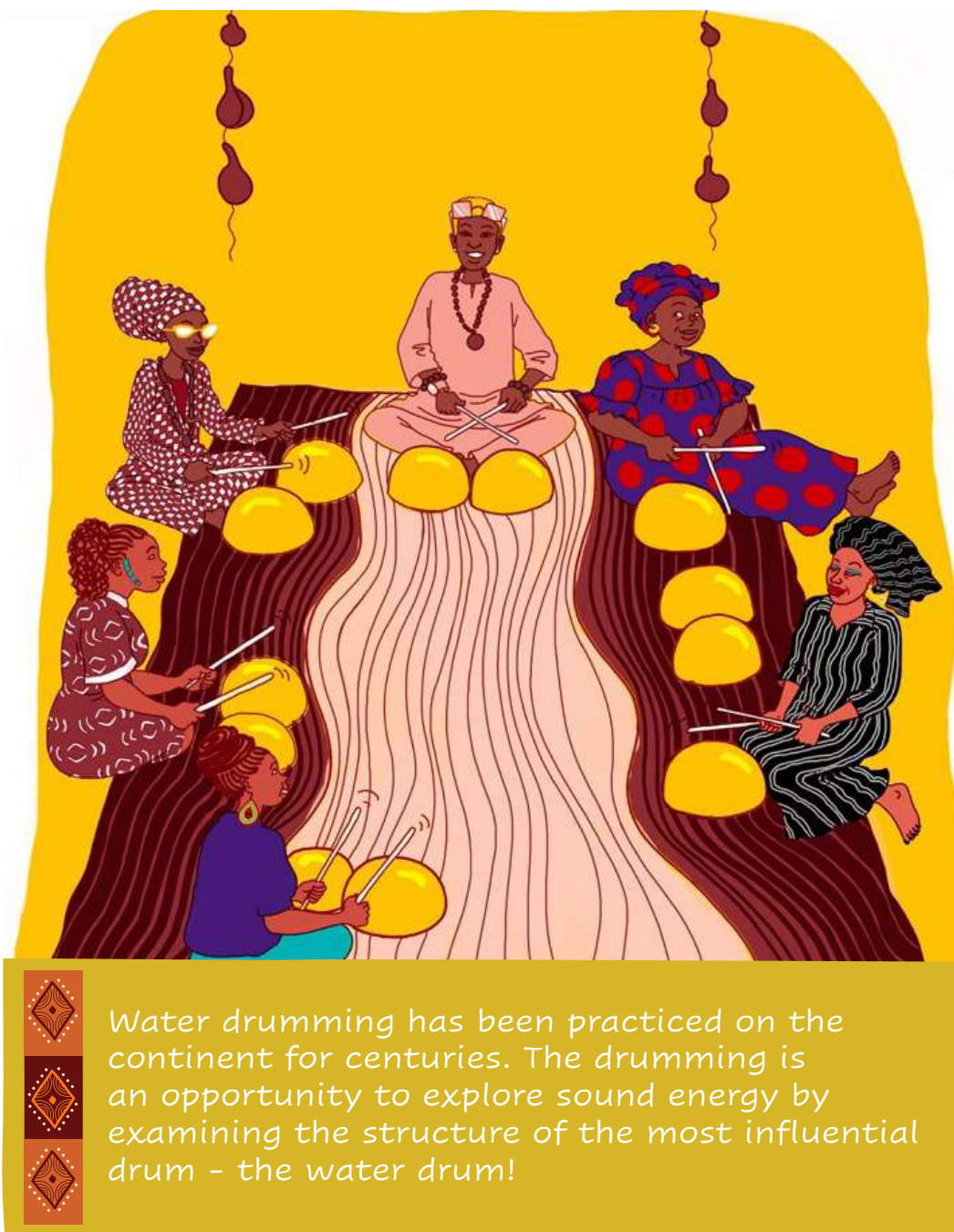
The centering of healers went beyond the physical space, however, to also include centering healers in the programme of the Festival. Unlike the tendency to place offerings related to well-being at the end of long days of discussions and strategising, the Festival's "theoretical" sessions ended at 1 PM every day. For the remainder of the day, activists could experience healing traditions from across the continent.

I liked that healing offerings are so deliberately positioned in the program because it is exactly how I think it should happen beyond the context of the Festival. For healing to be incorporated into our spaces, it has to be done deliberately, it cannot just be spoken about, it cannot just be talked about as a nice to have. Somebody has to actually initiate it and I think what we have seen happen here, all 500 of us. Some of us who have the ability to initiate that deliberateness must go back home and continue to incorporate this spirit in our feminist activism.

Tduetso Tebape, Motswana healer attending the Festival.

Great care was placed to not communicate the space as one of “self-care”, an individualised concept that has largely contributed to the commercialisation of the concept of care, which encouraged the co-option of traditional healing practices and converting them into services that are mainly accessed at a great price. Consequently, the Festival did not offer self-care sessions but tried to present a provocation of what it will look like if healing practices, deeply rooted in African ancestral concepts and traditions, were experienced in feminist spaces collectively.

In preparation for the Festival, the planning team met with healers to orient ourselves in the healing justice framework. A short guiding document was shared in which healers were encouraged to begin their offerings by describing their practice, its cultural roots, how they are a part of this lineage, or why they were drawn to these roots.



Water drumming has been practiced on the continent for centuries. The drumming is an opportunity to explore sound energy by examining the structure of the most influential drum - the water drum!



In having these conversations with healers, the aim was to lift the cultural and historical roots of the practices we use. As we recognize the systemic erasure and co-option of these practices by colonialism and capitalism, the aim was to create a space that honours the generations who built these practices on the continent.

By centering, we also mean that we are centering ourselves in a politicized understanding of healing. Much like the directive to “center ourselves” which is often heard in different spiritual traditions, which largely refers to connecting with our spirit, being aware and present and physically and emotionally rooting ourselves. Centering encourages us to reset after losing our balance due to the chaos of daily existence. We were inspired by this directive.

There was clarity, at the planning stages, that we are centering ourselves in healing. We are connecting with the spirits of our ancestors and rooting ourselves in traditions and frameworks that have been coopted and criminalised. We are trying to retain balance in our collectives and movements by focusing on the traumas we hold that bind and shape us and our relationships with each other, and operating from the intentionality that traumas and wounds must be addressed and healed if we are to ever achieve the transformative world we dream of.

In this sense, the Festival centered itself in healing.





The Festival's Healing Offerings: How Did They Present a Departure from Medicalised Approaches to Wellbeing?

For years, UAF-Africa has been hearing activists' frustration with the way wellbeing is largely framed – individualised support for activists to receive mental and physical “treatment” for symptoms including burn-out, depression, anxiety and a variety of physical illnesses. Conflicts within feminist spaces are largely responded to in a similar “scientific manner”: hire an expert in organisational health or development to think about setting up structures that respond to harm and violence in movement spaces; think about frameworks to hold senior leadership to account and support team members in their wellness and health needs.

These are some of the most common responses to collective traumas in movement spaces and, for years, UAF-Africa sat with activists' reflections that these interventions, while helpful, are insufficient. They are insufficient because the mental and physical symptoms that activists live with are not individual symptoms but indicate systemic pressures that have existed for generations and work in unison to make life for women difficult to survive. Similarly, conflict within movement spaces does not just require human-resource-style interventions, but a deep analysis of why conflicts are rife in movement spaces in the first place; of what we are bringing to spaces that create conflict and violence. Creating structures that do not make space for these difficult discussions effectively means brushing the real issues under the carpet.

I remember when I was coming here on the first day I had a lot of baggage - family baggage, relationship baggage, work baggage but then I realized that, having gone through the different tents, I learned a lot [...] I remember yesterday somebody talked about how we pass our anger to even our children unknowingly and I have done it so many times. So it's all about the baggage that I have always had, that's why I keep on passing all these to other people, then I noticed there are so many things that I could do.

Kenyan activist attending the Festival.

Refrain from Pathologising Activists' Experiences

For years, activists have been thinking about, and demanding spaces and funding for radical interventions. The idea behind the Festival arose from these discussions, in which the Feminist Republik was challenged to create a space where we can build and feel what it could look like if thinking of healing was what brought us together in feminist spaces.

The healers in the space were careful not to pathologise activists' healing needs and there was care in being sensitive to the fact that activists are bringing varying degrees of trauma compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic when we all experienced isolation, fear, illness, and anxiety. Unlike diagnostic-based care, healers stressed that healing is not a linear process or one that aims to arrive at a specific goal. As such, we honoured the right of every person at the Festival to name and decide what healing means for them and what they are seeking to receive and fulfill through the different healing traditions in the space. The absence of a diagnostic lens also meant that activists decided on which healing offering to select, based on their feelings and thoughts of what resonated the most with their healing needs.


Healing in Nature

We are used to "healing" happening in a medical setting - a hospital or clinic – and to be carried out by practitioners who have knowledge of the human body that was acquired after years of study and practice. It is knowledge that we do not have. Our role in such spaces is often to listen and implement a regiment that is handed down to us by these practitioners.

It is critical to underline that the Festival did not intend to diminish or demonise medical doctors or medicine as a valuable practice that has, and continues, to save lives every day. We do not espouse any belief that medication is unnecessary. Medication saves lives. Rather, the Festival attempted to paint a fuller picture of what healing entails that does not solely rely on chemical interpretations of our existence. There is a fuller story that considers our whole selves – mental, spiritual, communal, and emotional selves into our healing journeys. The healing space in the Festival was set in the middle of the trees overlooking the beautiful Lake Naivasha, in Kenya.



The Festival healing offerings and conceptual discussion spaces were all held outdoors in colorful tents.



Colorful garlands surrounded the space and the tents in which offerings were practised. Rather than sitting in a secluded room, tents were adjacent to each other. While there were quiet spaces, the majority of healing offerings happened in an open area where we could hear and see each other. The space was loud, rambunctious, vivacious, and African!

Experiencing healing offerings in this way was also an attempt to feel what it is like to be rooted in the land. A critical insight we heard from activists interviewed for the healing justice research report is that our healing cannot happen if we are not connected to the land, a connection we have lost in decades of colonialism and extractive capitalism. We crave a strong connection to our land. This is a connection that literally roots us to the memory of generations who preceded us and to ancestral ways of knowing and caring for ourselves.

There is **something** about being in nature; converging with nature. I love that we can see the lake! There are trees; there is grass; other living things. That's all that our bodies need.

Jamila Wahome, Kenyan mental health practitioner attending the Festival.

Bathing rituals were one such way to connect to the land. The practice revived spiritual practices that predate colonial interactions, characterised by a reverence for water and cleansing. The rituals involved the use of water and incense in Lake Naivasha to cleanse us physically and spiritually.


We [young feminist activists] will keep the feminist struggle going. We cannot do that with trauma; we cannot do it with wounds.

Liz Loom, Cameroonian WHRD at the Festival.

Present Feminist Approaches to 'Mainstream' Practices



Conversation circles on systemic violence. The conversations were guided by presenting theme-based questions for discussion, centering our feelings and reflections on violence, abuse and trauma that we have encountered in our activist journeys.



The Festival space hosted feminist practitioners who are aware of repressive roots to existing practices, including psychology. Present in the space was Jude Clark, an African feminist clinical psychologist. Jude's expertise is in trauma and group process and focuses on issues of social justice, transformation and healing in the community. Jude focuses on the realisation of a decolonised psychology of collective healing through an initiative called **"Deep Wellness"**, creating spaces and processes to enable Black women to explore what it means to be fundamentally well and to overcome that which stands in the way of our power and joy.

In practice, this meant holding one-on-one sessions on trauma recovery based on a feminist understanding of the roots of trauma in contexts of harm. The sessions were carried out outdoors, and if activists prefer, on the move while walking through the surrounding trees. Feminist practitioners of "mainstream" practices strive to present alternative experiences and analytical roots that make for a different *feel* to how sessions with psychologists are often done.

Shared Rituals: What Does it Look Like to Heal with Others?

Healing offerings attempted to collectively present ideas and experiences focusing on reviving our collective memory of communal ways of survival. Healers aimed to inspire ways in which we could build communal practices that connect our healing to our struggles for freedom and transformation in our respective movement spaces. In so doing, the Festival built on a legacy of existing practices that have been consciously erased from our lives and memory. The presence of healers was proof that political spaces have integrated healers and practitioners to different degrees. We were not stepping where no feminists had gone before. Rather, the aim was to move an analysis around how collective healing practices are critical to addressing generational trauma and harm.

Most Festival healing offerings were done in groups. The collective nature of the practices aimed to resist the individualised nature of practices that are often available to activists to illustrate that healing with others is not just an ideal, but how healing was conceived of, and practised, in many African traditions.

One such practice was **Womn's Sacred Circles**, where activists were invited to tune into their bodies, starting with meditation and then moving to the creation of our own medicine through essential oils. The Circles also included practices such as listening without an agenda and rotating leadership, offering reflections on the power of personal storytelling and thoughts on reclaiming and reinventing rituals. The Circles centered our longing for a powerful community in which to thrive by focusing on our spiritual selves.

Some of the heaviness that I carry is not my own heaviness. It's also the heaviness of the people. I need to acknowledge people I may not have known, but people who were carrying light in one way or the other because of the work. One of the things I am now understanding [...] is that there is physical community but there is also spiritual community [...] that is around source, around connectedness, around a shared history, shared intention.

Interview with a South African WHRD for the healing justice research report.




Feminist psychologists attempted to provide spaces that illustrate what it means to decolonize the psychology of collective healing.

Connecting to our Bodies

Living in almost continuous stress and trauma that manifests in physical and mental means that, for many of us, we do not associate our bodies with joy, but as the source of pain, illness and even shame rooted in the relentless criminalisation of womn's bodies, especially the bodies of sex workers, LGBTQI womn, indigenous womn and disabled womn. Our bodies are also often not trusted, as we experience issues that make us feel like our bodies are 'out of control', such as panic attacks, trembling, or breathing difficulties.

One practice here was **Duk**, which specifically prodded the question: *where do we store joy in our bodies?* In supporting us to shift our understanding of our bodies as sites of pride and joy, the practice is aware that the work of dismantling oppressive systems is tightly connected to transforming our patterns and practices through engaging the body and thinking about how to engage with the traumas it has collected through various social and political structures.





In engaging in this practice as a collective, activists have a model of how to resist structures of harm that destroy us by attacking our physical bodies, and by centering those same bodies as sites of resistance and joy. The practice aimed to dismantle the common anomaly, whereby the work done to address violations against the body often does not engage the body at all. The practice also centered an understanding of transformation that entails breaking out of the physical numbness, that many of us feel, to wholeness. The disconnect we feel towards our own bodies reverberates to a disconnect that stops us from being in relationship with each other. This is one reason behind the harm in movement spaces. Simply put, we owe it to ourselves, and to each other, to tune into our bodies. We cannot do transformative work without honoring our bodies.

The healing offerings made it clear that to intervene in intergenerational trauma and violence, we need to be guided by collective practices that can transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, minds, hearts and behaviors.

Cheptoeck Betty, Ugandan WHRD at the Festival.

Feminist Revival of Traditional Practices

In creating the healing space at the Festival, the political intention was to resist the medical lens that is solely used to understand the physical, mental and emotional struggles WHRDs are grappling with. The intention was to present alternatives that are rooted in practices that our communities have used to survive for generations.

With that political intention comes an awareness that many traditional practices are not to be taken as they are. Many are rooted in patriarchal, heteronormative and ableist conceptions. Healers in the space all grappled with this challenge and have all infused feminist ideas and practices into the traditional offerings they practice.

One example was the **Akashic Guidance sessions**. The practice is rooted in the Akashic Records, which are believed to contain our individual herstories and the records of the connections we have with each other. Another practice is the use of healing crystals that are used to balance energy and reduce physical and emotional pain and distress. While the practices are usually held separately, the Akashic Guidance individually and crystal healing in groups, the healer chose to practice them simultaneously, as together, they created a fuller response to the traumas activists were grappling with.

While the practices do not have any special focus on the womb, the healer chose to have this focus, out of the belief that our wombs absorb the traumas we face leading to different complications. The focus on the womb shifted the emphasis of these healing practices from general trauma to the challenges faced by any person who has a womb.



Reviving Collective Memory of Communal Ways of Survival

A critical insight we heard from activists interviewed for the healing justice research is the importance of keeping the memory of the past alive to illustrate that other ways of life were in fact in existence until they were consciously stolen and erased. As the research put forward:

It is in the interest of current powerholders, argued some activists, that we forget about these lives, and also about how current realities came to be, so that the belief that inequality is the norm is ingrained. Our memories are an important source of resistance.

The focus on memory is critical to our survival and resistance because it makes other ways of thinking about what healing entails available. It is thus critical to remember that it was not always the norm for hospitals to be the sole location for addressing our ailments. Different ways of knowing and doing used to be present to us until they were consciously criminalised and erased from our memories. It is upon us to remember, then bring that memory into reality. These memories resist the commercialisation of our bodies and lives and the attempts to create one version of what constitutes 'health' and the 'healthy body', which is largely a cis-male, white, able body.

One such practice focused on **reviving the knowledge and use of herbs used in the Senegambian region** and the ways it contributes to the healing of women's bodies. Activists were taken through the uses of different herbs and invited to create mixes that would best respond to their needs.



Collective emotional support sessions where groups explored the effects of systemic violence on their physical and emotional selves and how this violence plays out in group settings.



Where Do We Go From Here?

The Festival was a provocation. UAF-Africa was provoked and challenged by WHRDs to shed the comfort of what we know – meeting spaces with packed agendas, and instead create spaces that attempt to ask: where do the pains and violence we have been sitting with for decades come from? How can we fight the systems “out there” and inside ourselves simultaneously? Why are current responses to trauma, burnout and conflict not working? What are we forgetting about what healing means, what it used to mean? What would become available to us if we came into community to think about these questions?

The Festival, in turn, was a provocation to activists to think about what it means to center healing in feminist organising spaces. Now that the connection with some healers has been made, what can we do together? As the political significance of healing offerings becomes apparent, how can we structure our spaces differently?

We are sitting with many reflections about justice and injustice in our contexts. Some of the issues identified during the Festival include legacies of ableism, environmental and land injustices, the stigma of mental health, the traumas of criminal justice systems, the consequences of transgenerational trauma in our communities, the historical context of how our healing practices were stolen, among many others. It is apparent that a lot more work needs to happen to clarify the practices we are referring to under the “healing justice” framework. Work also needs to be done, and is currently being undertaken by UAF-Africa to unpack how “healing justice” resonates in activist communities and how the term can be named and framed to reflect that resonance.

We live in a world organized around trauma. In response, we need to focus on what it means to be a healing-centered society, which can only happen with collective power, rooted in collective consciousness around why healing matters.

Angie Yoder-Maina, Kenyan healer at the Festival.

We are left with many imaginations: we imagine dialogues and connections between medical and healing practitioners to explore how to interrupt systems of oppression and build activist traditions that center healing and wellness.

We imagine feminist economies that lift our traditions, with the aim of shifting activist, and “mainstream” culture about how to honour our full selves and what it means to care for ourselves as collectives.

We imagine transforming our ways of resourcing activists to honour our collective spiritual, physical and environmental wellness.



We are honoured to play any role in imagining another world; other ways of remembering and uplifting communal practices that have sustained us for generations and that are at the heart of revolutionary ways of resisting structures of harm and violence and relating to ourselves and each other.

When we reject the burdens of harm which we have been carrying, what takes their place?
We have more energy, more capacity and greater intensity.
We need tremendous energy, and it is dissipated through pain, fear, and decades of enduring harm and addressing it in repressive ways.

New energy is itself the transformation.
That energy produces the revolution. That is the energy we are after. That is the imagination battle.





Annex: Healing Offerings at the Festival and Healers' Details

Group Art therapy

Healer:

Jocelyn Yeboah-Newton (Yaa Sankofa)

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Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses the visual arts for self-exploration and self-expression. Art, in this case, is used for the purposes of communication, to foster healing, and to improve emotional and psychological well-being. Sound healing, meditation and movement are used to connect and ground us. In these sessions, we will focus on immersing ourselves in what it means to be vulnerable and explore trauma from a place of joy and acceptance. We will go on a journey with different healing themes and be invited to share what we connect with or share words of affirmation and celebration in a healing circle of discussion.

Trauma informed group sessions

Healer:

Jocelyn Yeboah-Newton (Yaa Sankofa)

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Knowing how to think about, process and address trauma to transform, mitigate and grow beyond it, is crucial for flourishing. This applies to both our individual and collective well-being and the sustaining of our activism and movements. The sessions apply a holistic, trauma-informed therapeutic approach to facilitate dialogue around the process of healing and becoming alive in the experience of it. We will be invited to get curious about our own healing process and reflect over questions such as what we have been angry about. It is based on an understanding that trauma is a part of



a process, not the defining destination. These sessions invite joy, community and reflections on our stories and experience. They focus on creative expression as a way to communicate what is within and be held and heard in the space, incorporating sound, meditation, conscious breath-work, movement and conversation.

Art therapy to embody and promote joy

Healer:

Billy Billima

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Where do you store joy in your body? Is it in the softness of your hands, in the melanin on your skin, or in the rolls of your stomach? Where do you hold when you need to feel tenderness? Through journaling, we will immerse ourselves into our bodies and say: yes, I have a scar on my foot and it is a part of me; yes, I have stretchmarks from birthing a child. Whether the stretchmarks give you joy or not, whether the scar makes you beautiful or not, in these sessions, we will be invited to seek and find joy in our bodies.

Dance!

Healer:

Billy Billima

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For thousands of years, and in multiple African cultures, dance has been used as a communal, ritualistic, healing force. The first communication we have in our lives is one in which we're moving. These sessions take us back to the essence of using dance and the patterns of our movements to externalize our emotional lives and center joy! There is a lot of violence based on, amongst others, femicide, homophobic and transphobic attacks on the continent. Centering joy is a way to reclaim our whole selves and thrive in this.

Collective Affirmations

Healer:

Billy Billima

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These sessions tap into and apply the power of affirmation to motivate us to act on aspects of our lives that will drive us towards being and living in ways that challenge negative thinking patterns and affirm and reaffirm positivity into our lives!





Talking Circles on Systemic Violence

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Khawla Ksiksi

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Talking Circles are safe spaces where relationships are built, nurtured and reinforced as part of a healing journey; where norms and values are established, shared and affirmed; and where activists can connect intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. The Circle centers increasing voice, decreasing invisibility, and not privileging one worldview or version of reality over another.

The conversations are guided by presenting theme-based questions for discussion, centering our feelings and emotions about violence, abuse and trauma that we have encountered, to promote the healing of our minds, bodies and spirits. These sessions will start and end with stretching and breathing exercises and a therapist will be present to provide emotional supporting and holding when needed.

Crystal Healing

Healer:

Lamia Samir

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Crystal healing therapy is a form of medicine and the practice of mineral application and attunement for energetic alignment and balance. The right crystal stones can provide holistic wellbeing of mind, body, and spirit. Crystal healing can also harness the power of the mind potently. Crystal are viewed as symbols of purity, pleasure, faith and perfection. These sessions will apply the art of crystal healing therapy to activate good energy from our minds and bodies.

Emotional Freedom Healing and Body Movement

Healer:

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These sessions apply meditation, visualization and body movement. Meditation and visualization are empowering tools to enhance consciousness and self-awareness and to focus the mind. Visualization is a healthy way of bringing positive energy into your mind, body and spirit, expanding your capacity for creativity and surrendering to your own inner wisdom. The art of body movement and chanting will encourage the mind to open, the body to relax, and the blood to flow, bringing relief and freeing up and opening the heart and the womb where negative energies are stored.





One-on-one Akashic Soul Connections

Healer:

Lamia Samir

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Many traditions and belief systems of the world refer to the Akashic Records which are thought to contain the history of every Soul since the dawn of creation and the records that connects us to one another. The Akashic Records are interactive in nature and they have an incredible influence on our daily lives, our dealings, our feelings, our belief systems and the potential realities we portray toward ourselves. They can be used in various ways, but the most common way to access this resource is by using your intuition, which you can develop through practices such as meditation, journaling, and contemplation. You can then begin to access the Akashic records for guidance on any topic or issue in your life. In these sessions, we will be guided and supported to deepen our intuition and spirituality and expand our consciousness through entering into connection with our higher souls.

One-on-one abortion and miscarriage talk therapy

Healer:

Ntlotleng Mabena

Contact information:

ntlotleng.mabena@gmail.com

The term abortion refers to the termination of a pregnancy. Spontaneous abortion or miscarriage is an unintended pregnancy termination. Induced or elective abortion is an intentional pregnancy termination by surgical or medical means. The emotional needs of a woman or person who intends on having, or has had an induced abortion, are likely to be different from the needs of a woman or person who has experienced a spontaneous abortion. However, in both circumstances, a wide range of emotions are common. Some women and persons may feel guilt, shame, grief, depression or anxiety at having contemplated and made the decision and at having carried it out. At the same time, many women and persons feel relief after an elective abortion. These sessions are led by a feminist medical doctor who is also experienced in ceremonies and rituals that offer support and contribute to healing for women who have experienced abortion – elective and spontaneous.



One-on-one therapy sessions on trauma recovery

Healer:

Jude Clark

Contact information:

Jude@deepwellness.co.za

These sessions offer one-on-one therapy that is holistic in that they center both physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being as crucial aspects of our power and humanity as womxn and as gender non-conforming people. The sessions are led by a clinical psychologist and African feminist with expertise in trauma recovery, focusing on using decolonising group therapy. This work has contributed to the formation of radical well-being collectives for Black womxn on the African continent and the diaspora.

Palm healing sessions

Healer:

Ukhona Mlandu

Contact information:

ukhona@gmail.com

Palm healing is hands-on-body healing in which a practitioner places their hands lightly on or over the body to facilitate the process of healing. This vital energy can be channelled to support the body's natural ability to heal itself. Palm healing plays a role in reducing anxiety and pain, inducing relaxation, improving fatigue and helping relieve symptoms of depression.

Intlombe ritual

Healer:

Ukhona Mlandu

Contact information:

ukhona@gmail.com

This ritual is a ceremony of drumming, vigil, collective and participatory singing and dance in a circle. A spiritual moment is created where we will venture into the conceptual idea of what makes space spiritual, looking at the links between the spiritual languages that music made by African peoples has in its many forms. We will experience what spirits remain and live within the instruments we play as music is used as a medium to connect to the spiritual world.





One-on-one and Group Family Constellations

Healer:

Undine Whande

Contact information:

undinewhande@gmail.com

Family constellations therapy works with healing transgenerational trauma in nature and the wilderness through both one-on-one and group therapy sessions. The group therapy works with a meeting of a group of strangers with each person having a chance to be the main point of focus of their own family constellation with each group member role-playing real-life family characters and acting out familiar family dynamics. These sessions will furthermore entail the facilitator supporting activists to remember and recall indigenous healing practices, many of which rise from the land and ancestors of the land and create powerful vibrations that draw back into the collectives of their families, communities and nations. In the one-on-one sessions, the facilitator will place footprints around us to create the constellation. Each pair of footprints represents either a family member, an emotion, or a difficult situation which is processed and ends with healing mantras.

Kundalini Yoga

Healer:

Undine Whande

Contact information:

undinewhande@gmail.com

Kundalini, also known as “yoga of awareness”, is a form of yoga that involves chanting, singing, breathing exercises, and repetitive poses with the purpose to activate one’s Kundalini energy, or shakti. This is the spiritual energy that is said to be located at the base of one’s spine. As Kundalini yoga awakens this energy, it is thought to enhance one’s awareness and help one move past the ego.



Womb Meditation

Healer:

Shakirah Sabira Rahman

Contact information:

inaswomb@gmail.com

The history of womn has been buried beneath the pain of atrocities like that of the witch-hunt and slavery, where womn have faced persecution for simply being womn. The session specifically targets womb health and reproductive health more broadly, including all persons who have a womb. The womb is understood to be the centre of most, if not all the challenges that womn face, including sexual abuse, physical violence, misogyny and miscarriages, amongst others. It is believed that the womb absorbs all this trauma leading to different manifestations of complications, such as painful periods. This womb-healing practice offers activists time to recoup and reminds us of the sacredness of our bodies, which is often forgotten. The womb healing meditations are aimed at releasing tensions and trauma from the womb through breathing, somatic movements, self-massage and touch. Through these practices, the **Healer** can remove any stagnant energy, specifically physical and emotional, helping the meditator to relax and have more space for growth.

Womb Steaming Sessions

Healer:

Shakirah Sabira Rahman

Contact information:

inaswomb@gmail.com

Womb steaming has a long history in Africa and worldwide. Some of the most well-known herbs used in the Senegambian region will be used to understand what each herb contributes to womb healing. Activists will create a personal herbal mix for themselves and, through the notes taken during the session, they can then carry out womb steam in the privacy of their homes or any other location they choose.



Aromatherapy Sacred Circle

Healer:

Laurence Moniasse Sessou

Contact information:

hello@moniasse.com

Womn's Sacred Circles are a much-needed guide that celebrates the rich diversity of their spiritual lives and offers practical, step-by-step advice for those who want to create and sustain a spirituality group of their own. Sacred Circles show us how we can harness the dynamics and power of a group to explore our relationship to the sacred and honour the divine in everyday life. This Aromatherapy Sacred Circle session will invite activists to tune into their bodies, starting with meditation and then moving to the application of essential oils, making their own medicine to take away. Some sessions will also include listening without an agenda and rotating leadership, offering reflections on the power of personal storytelling and thoughts on reclaiming and reinventing rituals. Womn longing for a powerful and supportive feminine community in which to thrive spiritually will find vital wisdom in this space. This Sacred Circle methodology has been focused on womn and in this Festival, will also be offered to gender non-conforming people who do not identify as womn.

One-on-One Aromatherapy

Healer:

Laurence Moniasse Sessou

Contact information:

hello@moniasse.com

The session starts with a consultation, discussing where you are physically, mentally, emotionally and how to proceed with the healing practice. Essential oils are used, and a blend is created to massage your body based on your particular needs emerging from the consultation. Drum and singing are used to consolidate the session and recalibrate the body at the cellular level.

One-on-one herb healing

Healer:

Augustine Pare (French speaking)

Contact information:

eapkant@gmail.com; eliaugustinepare@gmail.com

The session recognises the power of plants to heal a wide range of illnesses and symptoms. However, it focuses on one plant and one ailment. Activists will be introduced to the plant, *guiera senegalensis*, and its many healing uses. Augustine will light the plant and demonstrate its varied uses, accompanied by a healing session that focuses on alleviating back pain.



One-on-one and Group Talk Therapy

Healer:

Mbengue Aminata (French speaking)

Contact information:

mbengueaminata@gmail.com

Mbengue understands Talk Therapy as a resolutely feminist act as it centers womn's voices as a source to guide their own healing and freedom from traumas. The sessions are offered one-on-one and to groups.

One-on-one Reiki Energy Healing and Body Work

Healer:

Julia Nakashwa Hango

Contact information:

juliarthango@rocketmail.com

This session will be a shamanic journey that includes sound medicine with rattle, chimes, drums, music, chanting and then, based on each person's individual and specific needs, offer options of massage for those who may need touch to move energy and through reiki for those who need an energy up tune.

One-on-one and group Tarot Reading and Guidance

Healer:

Julia Nakashwa Hango

Contact information:

juliarthango@rocketmail.com

This session when offered to individuals applies a Talk Therapy approach where we dive into the subconscious through a reading of energies and tap into our specific frequency. Participants can ask direct questions to spirits, ancestors, dead loved ones or get a plain past-present-future psychic reading. Guidance will be offered on what, where and how to go about navigating and addressing whatever you may be dealing with and for which you seek such guidance. In the group sessions, we dive into collective questions and get answers about each other, our individual energies and collective concerns. This then turns the session into a ritual/group ceremony space!



One with Earth

Healer:

Tuduetso Tebape

Contact information:

tuduetso@nubianseed.co.bw

These are group sessions on the uses of different herbs to connect us with the power of herbs and plants for emotional, spiritual and physical healing. This practice involves creating treatments, using plants and other bio-derived and botanical ingredients to create healing treatments, to edify and heal the person who uses them. This healing practice transfers the combined energy/spirit of the healing treatment. The session also offers teaching by passing on the knowledge of the holistic benefits of plants and their physical and metaphysical properties that can be tapped into for personal healing.

Processing Birth Experiences

Healer:

Mariam Diefallah (English and Arabic speaking)

Contact information:

diefallahmariam@gmail.com

Doula philosophy is rooted in reproductive and social justice practices. Recognizing the sexist, racist, and colonial roots of modern gynecology, a doula's presence disrupts the existing power dynamics between doctor and patient and challenges the over-medicalization of childbirth. Knowing this reality of these birthing experiences are laden with power, Mariam provides support to groups to process the emotional, mental and physical aspects of that experience.

One-on-one Postpartum Support

Healer:

Mariam Diefallah (English and Arabic speaking)

Contact information:

diefallahmariam@gmail.com

These sessions focus on processing the birth experience and going through basic postpartum care and answering any questions activists might have in this regard.



One-on-one Birth Planning

Healer:

Mariam Diefallah (English and Arabic speaking)

Contact information:

diefallahmariam@gmail.com

Creating a birth plan is essential for women to feel in control of their birth experience, given the various degrees of violence that most women experience during childbirth. Getting to the point where one has a birth plan entails thinking of different scenarios at the time of birthing and considering the type of environment we want, pain management and birthing position preferences, among other factors that put women in control of their birthing experiences. The session provides us with the knowledge that can contribute to us being enabled to counter attempts by health care and hospital staff to strip us of our agency during childbirth.

One-on-one and Group sessions on Processing Experiences of Abortion

Healer:

Mariam Diefallah (English and Arabic speaking)

Contact information:

diefallahmariam@gmail.com

Abortions are difficult procedures to get in most African contexts due to their illegality in most countries. In fact, an estimated 93% of women of reproductive age in Africa live in countries with restrictive abortion laws. This means that the experience of abortion is, for most women on the continent, unsafe and laden with the risk of legal and possible medical complications. Furthermore, emotional support is largely absent, even though the need for it is critical both prior to and after the abortion. Through this session, Mariam provides support to women who underwent abortions to process the emotions and feelings that the procedure and their contexts might have induced. In the one-on-one sessions, storytelling is applied to share as much as they are comfortable with on their abortion experience, followed by processing them collectively, providing each other with emotional support.



The Wellbeing and Resilience Framework

Healer:

Angi Yoder-Maina

Contact information:

angi@green-string.org

A healing-centered approach is used to talk about our activism, organising and work as social healing. The focus is not on bio-medical, but rather on collective and cultural disruptions that chronic violence, injustice, and inequity bring to our lives. The session holds space for feminists as we explore who we are in the work we do.

Water-Drum Teaching

Healers:

Ndeye Seck and Fatou Dramé (French speaking)

Contact information:

ndeyeseck.dialaw@gmail.com; fd1060712@gmail.com

Healers take us through a water drumming experience at the Lake! For centuries, the water drum has been used during Native African ceremonies. It represents the circle of life and allows one to connect with the earth. Because music is used during rituals for storytelling, as well as for pure enjoyment, activists will have an opportunity to explore sound energy, by examining the structure of the most influential drum - the water drum. The water drummers stand in water up to their waists, each playing a different rhythmic pattern that combines into a complex syncopated rhythm.

Bathing rituals

Healers:

Ndeye Seck and Fatou Dramé (French speaking)

Contact information:

ndeyeseck.dialaw@gmail.com; fd1060712@gmail.com

In many Black spiritual practices that predate colonial interactions, there has been a reverence for water and cleansing. Water has no enemy; it cleanses us physically and spiritually. In many African traditional religions, water is venerated and viewed as a life source. These bathing rituals will involve the use of water and incense and will take place at Lake Naivasha.

Heart to Heart with Hope Chigudu: Let us Talk about Work and Wellbeing

Coach:

Hope Chigudu

Contact information:

hope.chigudu@gmail.com



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