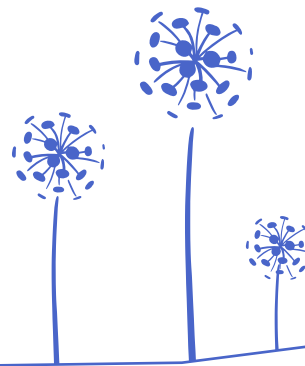


FACILITATION FOR COLIBERATION



Facilitation is a science. How you support a group of people through a process, what activities you select, and how you respond to challenges will have outcomes that you can begin to predict the longer you facilitate. Facilitation is also an art. There are infinite factors at play that you cannot predict or completely plan for. How you show up matters. How you listen matters. Each of the thousand tiny choices you make in a workshop matter. There is no recipe that you can follow to get the same result. There are however principles that you can support you in making each of these important choices.

Facilitating deep collaboration towards liberation requires some specific guiding principles. Here are three, inspired by principles of Popular Education, as a compass for facilitators to give life to this work, and, hopefully ensure that this work in turn, gives life.



Justice is what love looks like in public.

CORNEL WEST

JUSTICE/LOVE

Justice fueled by love strives to create the conditions for a more just and equitable world in which everyone can thrive. Justice and love cannot exist without the other. What is possible when we see how justice is grounded in love and love is grounded in justice? Facilitation for coliberation works to nurture conditions that strengthen trust, respect and dignity. It invites people to come with

their whole selves, not leaving parts of themselves at the door.

To coliberate (collaborate towards liberation) one must love, trust in and respect each other's humanity, even when it's hard to work together. Love means listening to each participant, not just to their words, but what is beneath their words. It means making space for the truth and struggle of everyone's lives to be involved and engaged in this work. Facilitators have to be intentional about creating an environment in which everyone feels respected, because many folks don't experience that out in the world. Justice/love is care work. It is bringing your heart to the work, on fire with your innermost wishes for real and meaningful change.



The truth is we are all one. The reality is we are not.

LETICIA NETO

We can simultaneously hold awareness of our common humanity and the realities of deep inequity. We are all made of water; water is life. And we do not drink the same water. Surfacing shared problems allows us to discover our deep connections through struggle and collaboration. Naming and disrupting oppression and domination is critically urgent. Justice is recognizing how the injustices that people experience or perpetuate outside of your meeting can quickly be reproduced inside of your meeting. Your job as a facilitator is to



strategically name and inquire about them when they occur -- making space for learning, repair and calling in your participants to co-create a different way of being with each other.

Justice is working so that what you create together doesn't just end up on a shelf, but actively works to address historical and systemic harms that people in your group experience. Facilitating a Coliberate process means working to shift historical power dynamics by centering the leadership of those who are most impacted.



I don't want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to import pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas.

PAULO FREIRE

DEEP RELEVANCE

Start where people are at and join them there - there is no other place to be. Facilitation grounded in deep relevance makes space for what is most important and real for who is in the room. It addresses what is going on in their lives, their communities and in the world at that time.

Stay where people are at. It is essential to continually make space and time for whatever is present that needs to be heard. This requires flexibility and adaptation, to change the agenda as needed so that it addresses what is most alive in the group.

There are no cookie cutter formulas for liberation - the spirit of popular education is about continual adaptation to shifting realities and contexts. The word "relevance" is not so revered or used as "love" and "justice" yet without it you and your participants are swimming in uselessness. Deep relevance is about knowing that you are with the right people, at the right time, working on the right thing, together.

Much of this process, as is the case in all forms of Popular Education, is about finding shared struggle, or common cause - and then working together to address it. This is the essence of coliberation. If you aren't working both on something each person knows and cares deeply about - and that you can recognize in each other - the project will collapse. This is the engine that drives motivation, work, collaboration and change. People are either in it together, or they will likely fall off the project over time. It needs to be deeply relevant to their lives.

Deep relevance is critical at every aspect of the project. As a facilitator, you have to ask yourself: Is the purpose relevant to the community? Are the questions they are asking relevant to the purpose of the project? Are the research tools relevant for the sample, or the community, that you are gathering data from? Is the conversation in the meeting relevant to the moment we are in? Is the planned exercise still relevant to what participants need or want right now? Is the work we are doing relevant to the political moment?

CREATIVE PRAXIS

Praxis is the alternating cycle of action and reflection that supports movements for change. Facilitation supports a group through this upward spiral journey to reflect on key issues to address, which leads to informed action, then reflection on the effects of this action to be incorporated into the group's knowledge for the next cycle. This should be a creative process that welcomes people's full selves and engages all of the senses. It invites multiple learning modalities and courageous expression. It should be fun.

Creative praxis centers joy in the process of generating new knowledge, ideas and designs. We



If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution.

EMMA GOLDMAN





need to embody the change and the world we want to build. This is a process that allows us to be both self-loving and self-critical. As a facilitator of creative praxis, your job is to establish and maintain an environment in which people are expressing their truth, reflecting on reality, and generating new ideas to build a just and sustainable world for their communities.

In the context of this work, creative expression supports folks to discover and/or develop ideas through writing, poetry, theatre, etc. By making space for all forms of creative expression, this curriculum and your supportive facilitation, can help people arrive at something more aligned with their truth. If we operate under dominant cultural norms that count only some forms of expression as legitimate (i.e. western academic written words) and some sources as truth (i.e. what university researchers or the media say), then we will diminish what people really have inside them to express.



Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform their world. To exist as a human is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn re-appears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming.

Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word - which is work, which is praxis - is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.

PAULO FREIRE



YOUR ROLE AS A FACILITATOR

- Draw out the intelligence in the room.
- Create space for people to feel comfortable and respected by others.
- Disrupt micro-aggressions or dynamics which privilege the participation of some over others.
- Encourage “both/and thinking” over “either/or” thinking for more creative ideas. For example, if someone is disagreeing with a point that someone else made, ask if it is possible for both to be true. Or suggest a third idea that incorporates the core of each.
- Try to use accessible language, rather than jargon.
- Create space for laughter.
- See, hear and acknowledge the feelings that these exercises might bring up for people.
- Acknowledge some people may want to observe, and make that an option that is easy for people to opt into (without them having to feel awkward and ask for it).
- Attend to what is happening in the moment (while simultaneously being mindful of the clock). Pay attention to the level of engagement that the participants have, and take breaks or change the agenda if necessary to keep everyone engaged.
- If something unexpected happens and you need time to figure out what to do, take a break so that you can discuss it with your co-facilitator or other participants.



Pedagogy does not exist as a premeditated theory to learn, but as a course to personally discover and create. Pedagogy is an opening of new paths that are dynamic, unrepeatable, meaningful.

FRANCISCO GUTIERREZ & CRUZ PRADO

