



## From Human Justice to Healing Justice

*A Non-Traditional Approach to Youth and Community Development and Healing*

Written by: H.O.L.L.A!'s Youth Organizing Collective



The Youth Organizing Collective getting celebrated at the first ever Healing Justice Youth Leadership Graduation Ceremony for completing H.O.L.L.A!'s 18-month-leadership, transformation and healing process/training. Picture by Anthony Edwards.

# WHO WE ARE!

We are the [Youth Organizing Collective](#) (YOC), the movement arm of [How Our Lives Link Altogether!](#) (H.O.L.L.A!).

We are young, old, healers, artists, formerly incarcerated, children of incarcerated parents, lawyers, PhDs, students, school pushouts, organizers, Black, Muslim, transsexual, bi-sexual, heterosexual, of all genders, Korean, experienced organizers, new to organizing, Caribbean. We are parents, children, friends and community peers of people impacted by systemic injustice. We are concerned individuals and a community that ultimately seeks to increase societal healing and justice starting in the communities of color from which we are from.

We echo the realities and settlements of Black, Brown and Indigenous communities within NYC, across the nation, and around the world to heal in conjunction with communities resisting interlocking systems of oppression and interpersonal dynamics.

**Y.O.C is about making Assata Shakur's affirmation a reality:**

*It is our duty to fight for our freedom.*

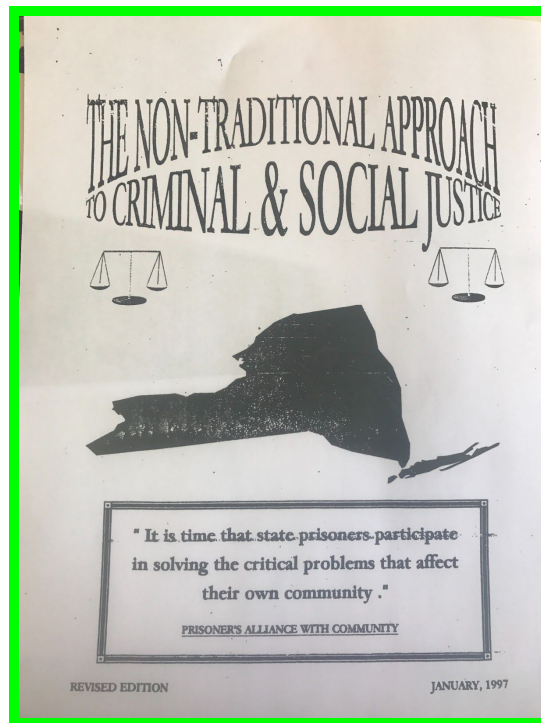
*It is our duty to win.*

*We must love and support each other.*

*We have nothing to lose but our chains.*

*This is about deepening our commitments to each other, working together, throwing ourselves into resisting systems of oppression by organizing and taking care of each other. This is about long term grassroots sustainability, power, love and community.*

# STANDING ON LEGACIES!



Our healing rituals and practices stand on The Green Haven Think Tank's Non Traditional Approach to Social and Criminal Justice organizing and pedagogical principles.

"Men {Humans} Enter prisons and spend years there, yet roots cause of their behavior are never confronted because neither the state or the local administration offers any programs or even a visible theory, which deals with our specific problem. As a result we (i.e., **The Green Haven Think Tank**) had to design, develop and implement programs, classes, from our **Afrocentric, Non Traditional Approach** [to Social and Criminal Justice], which we believe begins to address the values and behaviors and many of the attitudes that lead to internal oppression and our hesitant/fear of our own capacity to **heal and be in a healing process...**" [Eddie Ellis](#).

The quote above from our elder, represents an analysis and practice that is central to the development of the [Center for NuLeadership On Urban Solutions](#) theory of change - [Human Justice](#).

[Human Justice](#) is a praxis driven organizing strategy that pulls on over 60 years of grassroots (i.e., prison and local community organizing) movement building and organizing.

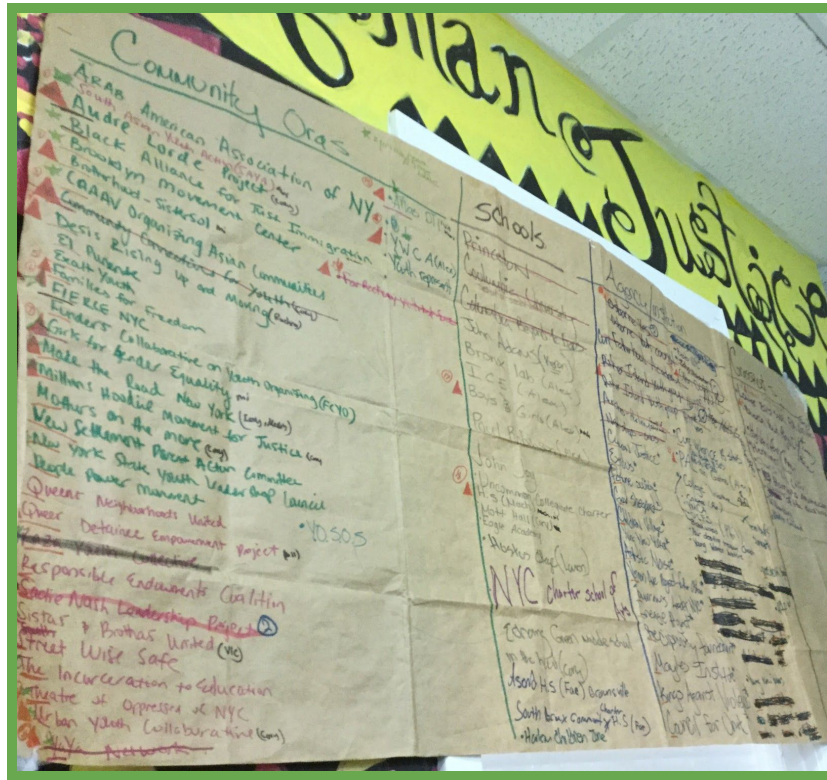
# H.O.L.L.A!'S HEALING JUSTICE MOVEMENT



The Youth Organizing Collective on stage closing our their first ever "Let The Talents Heal" Talent Show. This Talent Show and community build served as the launching for the Healing Justice Movement praxis. Picture by Harold Williams.

We agree with the [Black Lives Matter Movement](#) - that Healing Justice is a [strategy towards sustaining Black Lives](#).

More specifically, Our [Healing Justice Movement](#) is a strategy to (rebuild community structure through self and community healing facilitated through intergenerational-intersectional community organizing and grassroots pedagogy.



H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice Movement Original Target List of 80 youth sites in NYC

Our youth-led [Healing Justice Movement](#) evolved from (CNUS) Human Justice developmental praxis. The second wave of inspiration comes from the ongoing national work being led by the [Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective](#), [Urban Peace Movement](#), [Dr. Shawn Ginwright](#), [CURYJ](#), [Fathers and Families of San Joaquin](#), [Autumn Brown](#), [Southerners On New Ground \(SONG\)](#), [Flourish Agenda](#), [Cara Page](#), [Family Matter Network](#), [Badass Visionary Healers](#), [Breathe: Circles for My Sistas](#), [RJOY](#), [Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#), [Nexus Community](#), [Christina "V" Villarreal](#), [Harriet's Apothecary](#), [Richael Faithful](#), [Piper Anderson](#), [Dr. Shakti Butler -World Trust](#), [American Friends Service Committee](#), [The People's Movement Center](#), [Dr. Joi Lewis](#), [Tanuja Jagernauth](#) and so many other grassroots organizations/organizers (we know and don't know) around the nation/world.

### **Our Strategy for Youth Healing and Solidarity**

Our movement strategy to engage in deep relationship cultivation with other youth of color as a practice of healing started locally in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn of March 2016. To begin mobilizing youth of color throughout the city, we compiled a target list of 80 potential organizations (or sites where youth were at - some sites were street corners where our youth organizers had social capital to start the

conversation) and contacted each through a three-step approach: 1) email, 2) phone call, and 3) visit. In the end, we successfully contacted 50 organizations throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx, consequently [leading 35 healing circles](#) from February to October, servicing a wide range of organizations and institutions, including Riker's Island, community-based organizations, social service agencies, and schools (school-day and afterschool programs). We were not only able to co-lead and co-teach youth, but also service providers, including school social workers and Department of Education staff who work with juveniles in correctional facilities and detention centers. We also provided technical assistance for the New York City Dept. of Health, Columbia School of Social Workers, Echoing Green, and John Jay College. As we began implementing Healing Justice workshops/circles across the city, word spread and service providers and youth based groups began reaching out to us. Requests came from inside and outside the city and we co-lead Healing Justice workshops/circles at Princeton University, The Center for Justice Beyond the Bars Conference, Allied Media Conference in Detroit, and Free Minds Free People Conference in Baltimore and John Jay Prison Reentry Institute to name a few.

We also presented a wide range of city-wide community healing forums that, along with the healing circles, are meant to connect with and mobilize youth of color and their communities.

### Let The Talents Heal!



Let the Talents Heal Talent Show: Y.O.C Sisters.

In March, we hosted Let the Talents Heal, a city-wide talent show for youth. We launched the [Healing Justice Movement](#) through this event, showcasing youth creativity and expression and gathering participants and audiences from

throughout the community. We felt that an event to showcase youth creativity and expression would be a great way to launch the Healing Justice Movement, gathering participants and audiences from throughout the community. It was also during this event that we began creating our Healing Justice mural of community healing. Youth and community members were encouraged to contribute to the mural through the banner's words of poet Audre Lorde ("Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare") and prompts such as "What are you healing from?" and "What does healing look like to you?"

### H.O.L.L.A! Day!



H.O.L.L.A! Day 2016 closing ceremony circle.

In August, we held H.O.L.L.A! Day!, a city-wide event held in a city park in the Bronx, complete with food, face-painting, three-on-three basketball tournaments, and other activities, to heal with and celebrate H.O.L.L.A!'s Healing Justice youth organizers, as well as H.O.L.L.A!'s work and to bring communities of color together in peace and love. More than 250 people attended and several contributed to the mural of community healing.

## The Healing Justice Summit



Healing Justice Summit Y.O.C and Dr. Shawn Ginwright

We held the first-ever 2-Day Healing Justice summit led by youth of color (or anyone, for that matter) on September 15-16 ([Day 1 full video](#) and Day 2 videos [part 1](#); [part 2](#); [part 3](#)). The summit included a keynote from Dr. Shawn Ginwright, leading national expert on African American youth, youth activism, and youth development, and Associate Professor of Education in the Africana Studies Department and Senior Research Associate for the Cesar Chavez Institute for Public Policy at San Francisco State University; and [Loren Cahill](#), a Healing Justice Organizer currently completing a Ph.D. in Critical Social Psychology at CUNY Graduate Center. The summit, which extended invitations to all those who participated in our 35 city-wide healing circles, and partners from the San Francisco Bay Area, included various workshops, breakout sessions, performances and a film screening. Other panels, held [monthly community gatherings/forums](#) to be transparent and visible to the community our movement praxis and organizing process. During our Healing Justice Workshops/Circles we also shared our [Youth Community Assessment](#) with community that ask them to express their and their community relationship/experiences with system of oppression. Results and lessons from the assessment is being prepared currently to share widely with multiple publics.

As a youth-led movement we felt inspired to share what we believe are critical lessons of our [Human Justice](#) pedagogy and [Healing Justice youth-led Movement](#) for ongoing reflection, critique, dialogue, and organizing about the ways communities of color are impacted by systems of oppression and are cultivating strategies of wellness, resistance, and hope.



# LESSONS FROM OUR HEALING JUSTICE MOVEMENT



The Youth Organizing Collective during a political education session coding participants' responses from our Healing Justice Movement youth community assessment survey and evaluation responses from our Healing Justice Workshops.

- 1) **Healing Justice as an Everyday Praxis is Hard Work:** Healing Justice as an everyday praxis gets at *Toni Cade Bambara* infamous question from "The Salt Eaters", **Are you ready to be well?**



Y.O.C co-creates an all sister Healing Justice Workshop with Sadie Nash

2) **Her & History:** a continuum of knowledge, culture resistance, celebration, struggle and relationships that connect us to the past, present and future.



Y.O.C and elder-warrior sister Angela Davis

3) **Human Justice:** Human Rights + Human Development = Human Justice.



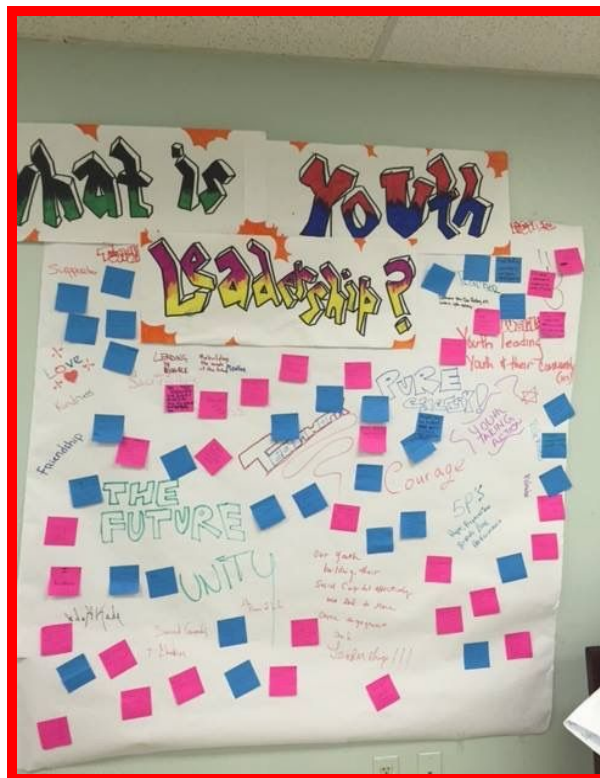
Y.O.C joins CNUS for 2-day Prototyping Training

**4) Grassroots Leadership** - Leadership accountable to historical patterns, grassroots strategies, Afrocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing led by currently/formerly incarcerated people (i.e., directly impacted)



Healing-Centered Youth Organizing Curriculum

**5) Youth-Led Leadership** - Cultivating and sustaining the leadership of historically marginalized youth of color and their communities.



Wall Graffiti from H.O.L.L.A! Ritual Programs

**6) Analysis of Structural Violence** - A reflective understanding of how systems of oppression reproduce harm at multiple level (i.e., CSI - community, society and individual) that informs strategies for individual healing and community wellness.



Let the Talents Heal Healing Justice Mural of Community Healing

**7) Intergenerational and Intersectional Connectivity** - We stand on our her & histories and affirm the wisdom of young people. We recognize that trauma, strategies for resistance, and wisdom travel across generations and through the intersections of our existences with each other.



Y.O.C and sister from The National Council for Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls.

**8) Deep Relationship Building** - A spiritual journey of knowing oneself more in-depth as a process of opening up more space within oneself to connect more deeply with others spirits and beings.



Y.O.C co-create 2nd Healing Justice Workshop with Open Doors

**9) Vulnerabilities** - Owning our guilt, shame, and shortcomings. Uplifting the tensions and contradictions within ourselves, community and system as a practice of healing and justice.



Y.O.C co-create panel experience at Free Minds Free Peoples Conference

**10) Touching Trauma** - Opening up past and present wounds in community as a practice of knowledge sharing, testimony and healing.



Y.O.C hold internal healing circle

**11) Gain & Loss** - Healing is a journey - a process of continuously working to feel better from all the hurt.... But there is always hurt... And there is always healing around the corner.



Y.O.C Healing Justice Sisters

**12) Pedagogy** - The how in which we engage in the process of knowledge, sharing, receiving and creating with ourselves and within community and/or relationship dynamics.



KJ leads political education session on campaign mapping and building

**13) Healing-Centered Youth Organizing-** An engagement/process of deep relationship building as a praxis to shift interpersonal dynamics, community culture, and larger power structures that centers the healing needs of communities and youth struggling for liberation.



Y.O.C co-create Healing Justice Workshop with Next-Steps Program (Bed-stuy, BK)

**14) Courage** - Whether we choose to live against the norm, or by surviving within it, we are brave in our resistance to systems of power that are intentionally trying to suffocate us and our communities.



[Nat Turner Revolutionary Leadership Training Ceremony](#)

**15) Challenges We Face Doing This Work "CSI"** - Organizing is hard when we must negotiate poverty, sexism, interpersonal harm, institutional rejection and every-day problems on daily basis.



Healing Justice Summit Circle with Fathers and Families of San Joaquin



**16) Our Collective and Individual Experiences of Healing - Moments when many individuals are experiencing healing in community with each other simultaneously at the same time.**



Healing Justice Summit Opening Night performance by London Sa'Rell

**17) Building and (Re)connecting to Black Love - Centering our Blackness as Indigenous people with much beauty to share and be proud of.**



Y.O.C host Kwanzaa Ceremony with Community and Family

**18) Land Love** - Establishing a humble, loving and respectful connection for mother earth, and what she offers us in our journey for collective liberation and healing.



Reflection from Y.O.C. and CNUS 4-Day Relationship Building Camping Experience

**19) Expansion of Hope** - A collective belief in us (the people) to create infinite possibilities in our present and future realities.



Y.O.C before boarding flight for Florida, Orlando Celebration

# WE ARE TRUTH



We came to build, what you came to do?  
We came to heal, what you came to do?  
#HEALINGJUSTICE18

[Healing Justice Movement Video](#)

We know from our own personal experiences that in order to create a lasting and sustainable movement, healing is the first necessary step. Outside of our participation in H.O.L.L.A., we do not have an outlet to discuss our healing and trauma. Feeling safe enough to be vulnerable and share how we are processing how power and privilege affects our lives is both a critical and necessary part of analysis for creating any meaningful interventions. Consequently, we are fully committed to creating opportunities for youth to be able to heal and engage in deep critical self reflection. After this period of transformation, we know that they will be even better suited to fully commit to organize for liberation. We are stronger together and united. We believe this will provides us with the fuel we need internally and spiritually to work together to hold policy makers, government officials, schools, police, ideology, (her)history and ourselves accountable.

We write this to share our works. We want to be affirmed, challenged, seen, heard, respected and loved for our sacrifice to be collectively free.