

POPULAR EDUCATION

"Between all of us we know everything"

- Zapatista Wisdom



Popular Education is the process of bringing people together to share their lived experiences and build collective knowledge. Popular Education learning informs action for liberation.

Principles

- Pop Ed equalizes power. This means that everyone's knowledge is valuable and important in building shared strategy and vision: "We are all teachers and learners."
- Pop Ed is a *praxis*. This means it combines theory and action. Pop Ed is crucial to organizing and organizing is crucial to Popular Education.
- Education is not neutral, but political. Pop Ed intentionally creates the space for directly-impacted people to challenge current systems and envision new possibilities.

Practices

- It is important to build spaces where everyone is welcomed and able to share as they are comfortable. This means creating space for:
 - People to communicate in their preferred or native language.
 - Acknowledging and breaking down oppressive power dynamics. One tactic is to invite folks to sit in a circle that allows everyone to share.
 - All abilities and bodies.
- It is important to meet people where they are, and to facilitate according to the different ways people learn: seeing, listening, speaking, feeling, practicing, playing. Not all people access/provide information in the same way. We encourage using videos, music, food, art, words and movement!
- Use 3-way learning practices where the participants learn from the facilitator/trainer(s), the facilitator/trainer(s) learns from participants, and participants learn from each other. Facilitators should listen more than they speak and prioritize space for people to talk to each other.
- Follow the Popular Education Spiral: Start with participant experiences, look for patterns between those experiences that can highlight shared struggle, add new information/theory, practice skills, strategize and plan, take action to change the world, reflect, and return to the beginning of the spiral!

Question/Offering

- What do your/our life experiences teach us about the kind of society we live in, the kind we want, and how to get there together?
- How do you find or create the spaces where people can learn from each other?

CULTURAL ORGANIZING



Cultural Organizing celebrates and honors people's spiritual traditions and cultural expression in the work to shift policies and practices.

Principles

- Cultural Organizing impacts ideas, actions and core values. It centers collective learning, and is always led by and accountable to the culture of the participants.
- Culture is rooted and present in each person, but has shared energy that can transfer, shift, or move people, power and ideas.
- Developed by Tufara Waller Muhammed and Ebony Noelle Golden, Highlander explains CO as a triad: faith, spirituality and/or wellness traditions; the practice of art and culture; and policy. Culture moves through the creation of art, the practice of healing, and the implementation or change of policy that shifts power.
- Cultural organizing works to amplify access in all spaces.

Practices

- CO, in essence and practice, is healing. Eating around the table with beloveds, playing or practicing one's music, or creating from what is around us can all be cultural practices that make room for healing.
- Cultural organizing connects creative practices and organizing techniques. It creates space for us to celebrate and share our full selves and to experience the joy and healing we envision for our futures.
- CO can help us communicate ideas through our cultural rituals. Language is only one form of communication, but Language Justice and accessibility are the cornerstones of this work.

Question/Offering

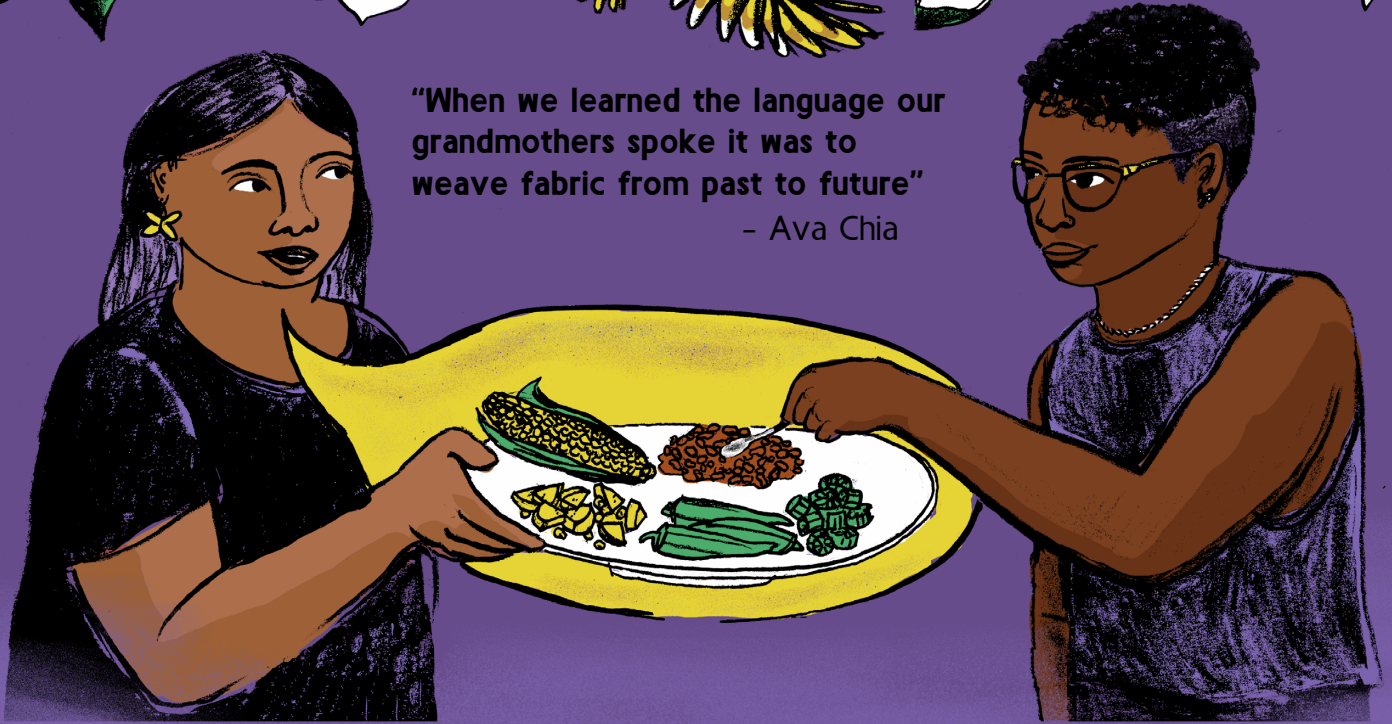
- What does it look like to share/center spiritual and cultural traditions in your community's organizing work?
- How are cultural strategies creating a society affirming survivors?
- How might we use absurdity to amplify legislation and policy?

LANGUAGE JUSTICE



"When we learned the language our grandmothers spoke it was to weave fabric from past to future"

- Ava Chia



Language Justice recognizes language as an essential part of empowerment in collective learning and strategy-building. It creates spaces where people from different places, different cultures, and different dialects/languages can come together and understand each other, without forcing themselves to communicate in a language that is not native to them.

Principles

- Language is central to all living things, our cultures, and communities. Communication happens between people, from and with animals, nature, plants, and the elements.
- Not all languages are verbal or have a written form. Sign Languages and body language are examples of this. Understanding this is important when practicing Language Justice.
- Colonization has caused many languages to be imposed, lost, forgotten, and/or appropriated. LJ is about disrupting the shame, stigma and power dynamics that stem from colonization.
- There are languages that are dominant and non-dominant, due to forced assimilation and depending on one's location. Language Justice seeks to give power to non-dominant languages in a space. For example: in East Tennessee, the dominant language is English, while languages like Spanish, Arabic, Hoka-Siouan and other languages are less centered.

Practices

- LJ goes beyond interpretation and translation - while this might be a complex process, it's an excellent start! Make these two things available for your base whenever possible. Pay interpreters and translators for their labor, especially native speakers. Like cultural work, those raised and immersed in their language know the intricacies and complexities of it best.
- Don't assume English will be the primary language spoken. Even when interpretation is provided, people might revert to the dominant language because of assimilation. Try centering facilitators and speakers that speak the non-dominant language(s).
- It is important to find out, recognize and learn what languages are being spoken by your base, and to center language accessibility in outreach and planning. Consider different dialects, cultural forms of expression, physical access and jargon, accents, etc. Having materials translated and accessible to your base is essential for active participation in a space.
- Everyone should use interpretation equipment if they are not fluent in all the languages spoken. This helps to equalize power dynamics in a space.
- Honor the languages in the room, the languages lost, stolen, forgotten, and the language of the land.
- Queering Language: For some languages, gender neutrality is complicated. For others, gender neutral words are the norm. Queering language is necessary to fully embrace language as a tool of empowerment and use it to recognize and uplift differences. For examples of queering language, please check out Highlander's website!

Question/Offering

- What experiences have you had in spaces where folks have spoken other languages than your own? What were some of the practices used to communicate? What worked well or did not work well?

INTERGENERATIONAL ORGANIZING



"Young people are not just the future, they are the present" - Unknown

Intergenerational Organizing brings together the collective wisdom of ancestors, elders, young people, and all those in between to envision, strategize and take action for a better future.

Principles

- Recognize, understand and combat adultism (the oppression of young people by adults) in all spaces.
- Young people are at the forefront of *all* social issues. Respect the dignity and agency of young people, and honor the wisdom that is shared.
- Similarly, it is important that in all spaces folks recognize, understand and combat ageism (the oppression of elders by adults and younger people).
- Elders bring an abundance of knowledge and relationships gathered through time and experience that can help us recognize patterns, inspire learning moments, and gain new lessons.
- Ageism and adultism, like all other oppressions, are systemic and not just individual. This means that our societies are set up through laws, politicians, and institutions to create and continue injustice. In order for our spaces to be just and liberatory, they must be intentional about disrupting adultism and ageism.
- IO is about authentic relationships and recognizing that people have a multitude of skills, knowledge and wisdom to share. This methodology goes beyond what people can produce and give, and offers an opportunity for deep relationships that focus specifically on those less-centered in traditional settings.

Practices

- Have organizers of all ages in your leadership team – this is more than just performative. A more grounded space is one where the wisdom of the past is being co-shared with the wisdom of today and can facilitate co-creations for the future.
- Have authentic youth-centered and youth-led spaces – create space for young people to gather that incorporates feedback, strategy and ideas into the overall work.
 - Age caucuses can be useful tools in the early parts of intergenerational gatherings. This entails breaking folks off into groups based on age and facilitating conversations surrounding needs, wants and processes that are needed to center youth and elders in the gathering. This could look like sharing experiences/stories, solutions, or commitments that can be shared back to the bigger group.
- Have mentorship models that are based on mutual support, agency, and empowerment across age groups in order for wisdom to be shared and absorbed. Young people should be seen as mentors to elders as well.
- Have spaces that are equitably shared with folks of all ages. Notice: who is speaking in the room, and who isn't; whose feedback, suggestions and strategies are being worked with, and whose aren't; who is given the power and opportunity to facilitate and who isn't.
- Make your space accessible! Accessibility can encompass the physical space, the tools and technologies used and the way information is being taught and shared. Make sure that everyone in the room feels equipped and familiar with the tools and technologies introduced. Allot enough time and space for folks to become familiar and encourage co-learning and co-teaching around these tools.

Question/Offering

- What does it look like for you (and/or your organization) to support and be an accomplice to young people and to elders?
- What practices do you do, or can incorporate, to center young people's, elders' and ancestral wisdom?

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH



Participatory Action Research recognizes information as power. It is a collective process where people investigate a specific issue or question to inform organizing, strategy and solutions.

Principles

- Everyone has knowledge to offer and everyone has the right to information.
- Research is a part of popular education and organizing – people want to change something and need to research to find the best strategies and solutions. People naturally investigate issues and problems that affect them all the time. PAR is that practice collectivized for change.
- PAR honors and makes space for many kinds of important knowledge – community, cultural, lived experience, academic (knowledge that has been legitimized by an institution), etc.
- PAR is participatory. Research should be conducted, led, and shared democratically by communities and organizations who need information about issues that concern them.
- PAR creates knowledge and is defined by the need for action. Research is initiated by people coming together to address issues or problems in their lives. Action gives a clear purpose for research and research findings inform actions and solutions.

Practices

- A PAR process engages communities in identifying the problems they face and what information is needed, determining a process to find that information, and deciding how that information will be used toward action.
- PAR equalizes power. It can involve researchers with institutional expertise, but needs to center equitable relationships with people in communities.
- PAR helps people learn how to do research themselves to support self-determination and build community skills for the long haul.
- Some common participatory research methods include:
 - Conversations, surveys, interviews, meetings, art, poetry, storytelling, accessing government agencies and records, working with research librarians at public libraries, meeting with public officials, and using online resources.
- Information and findings should be broadly accessible and understandable to communities, so they can use it to plan appropriate strategies.

Question/Offering

- What additional information does your community need to find out to organize / build the world you want / win? How can you get that information? And who can help you?

LAND, LEGACY, & PLACE



Land, Legacy and Place builds strategies to nourish and tend to our relationships with our histories, places, communities, and environments that support our collective thriving.

Principles

- Land means Earth, and Earth is central to everything because it is central to the lives of all living things. The history of *Land* is really the history of all that's living on Earth, and vice versa.
- *Land* and *Legacy* encourages us to honor, know, and engage with the histories of the community and place we are in. We must do this through a decolonial approach.
- We understand who we are by learning and re-learning the stories and histories of each *Place* as it was told by the people of that *Place*, and not the story written by those made powerful through colonization and exploitation of people and the land. What are the stories of the place you live? Who are the storytellers?

- In practice, LLP is a methodology of living in a mutual interdependent relationship with the Earth. We practice this methodology by engaging collectively and critically with the history of the land, and deciding together what must be done now. This methodology puts into motion strategies around restoration, reparations, and reimagining ownership.
- *Place* based organizing is about taking into account the struggles, methods of resistance, cultures, challenges, and opportunities of a particular area. Organizing is a process that happens within a community, all shaped by our histories, context, and relationships. It is highly political and central to our work.
- This exploration of the past, present, and future should be done by considering the *Legacy* left behind by local communities, and the intergenerational relationships that help shift our present conditions for the future. Who has come before us and what did they make possible? What do those possibilities call upon us to do now? How can we help steward those *Legacies* and create our own?

Practices

- Many people are displaced from land and their histories. Acknowledge that not everyone has a long history or connection with the place that they are currently in.
- Cultivate a practice of acknowledgement for the places, land, or area we are living in, and the histories that come with that. This acknowledgement must be active and inform the strategy of our work.
- Build your own community mapping process. Consider how the creation of maps supports particular political purposes and can *re*-shape our understanding of places to shift power and resources. Also consider doing a People's History, oral histories, and timeline activity that is built from the knowledge of the people living in that area.

- Learn the stories of the people of the land you exist on. This can be done by researching an area, building connections with the people living on that land, acknowledging and celebrating all forms of life, or listening to the traditions of those that tend to the land around you. Connecting with local organizations can also be a helpful resource.
- Learn how reparations is a restorative process of land justice – not a destination of liberation.
- Everything happens on land, from small to worldwide ecosystems. How can land justice be central in your plan for social change?
- Many organizing efforts seek to protect land and communities from exploitation and destruction, sometimes over large geographies. For example, indigenous groups joined together to fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline, and tree-sits are happening across Virginia to stop the building of pipelines.

Question/Offering

- What is the story of the land you are on? Who are the people and creatures of that land? How have they tended the land? How have they struggled and resisted oppression?
- How is your story connected to other places and people globally? What other places, homelands and stories do people carry with them?