

Waking Up To All of Ourselves: Inner Work, Social Justice, & Systems Change

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This article focuses on three pillars for advancing our individual and collective well-being: **inner work** (known in some circles as contemplative practice); **social justice/equity**, focusing on the role of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, LGBTQ status, religion, and other forms of difference and similarity in creating healthy, joyful communities; and **systems change**, focusing on social sectors such as healthcare, education, workforce, environment, housing, and other macro/large systems, and how to impact them en masse to create more positive structures for our individual and collective thriving.

Each of these domains¹ and communities of practice has profound tools, gifts, and methodologies to contribute to healthy societies, but in my experience working, practicing, teaching, consulting, and learning in each of these fields for over 20 years, they are rarely brought together in a cohesive whole to advance solutions for our fragmentation as a people and as a planet.² Each of these strands can be (and often is) pursued to the exclusion of one or both of the others, which can limit our ability to experience the full impact of their combined capacity to nurture our collective well-being. The integration of all three strands—*contemplation/inner work*, *social justice*, and *systemic, field-wide change*—can deepen our collective capacity for joy, healing, and thriving in the world.

CLARIFYING TERMS, DISPELLING MYTHOLOGY, & ADDRESSING POTENTIAL PITFALLS

There are a number of key aspects of these three domains for us to consider. This article will discuss these aspects, their interrelationship, and pathways forward:

¹ There are resources on each of these three domains in the footnotes throughout this article as well as at the end, for interested readers to learn more.

² Notable exceptions to this include the work of John A. Powell and the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society (<http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/johnpowell>), as well as the Movement Strategy Center (MSC; <http://movementstrategy.org>), some of whose work is represented in this journal volume, and others.

- the difference between *nascent and deeper* approaches to each of the three domains;
- the difference between *love-based and rage-fueled* approaches to social justice;
- deep, love-based approaches to *social justice already having inner work embedded* (though it may be labeled variously);
- the *danger of spiritual bypassing* and the importance of explicitly linking social justice and inner work;
- explicitly *addressing power and privilege in “progressive” approaches to social change* to avoid erasure in generic approaches; and
- the *non-dual relationship between individual and collective liberation*.

Nascent & Deeper Versions: Pathways for Growth

This section defines what is meant by these three domains of practice and competency in this article. The premise here is that, in order to yield their greatest benefit, these three domains of competency would be pursued in depth: *inner work*, *social justice/equity*, and *systemic, field-wide change*. As with any approach or system, there are nascent and deeper approaches to each of these areas. There must be some litmus test or sense of depth and “quality” in the field for each of these areas and our potential for continued development in each, combining, learning from and with, and leveraging the talents, experience, and wisdom of one another to benefit the world. “Everything is not everything.” We can adjudicate depth together.

At the initial level of any significant endeavor or complex arena, we are novices. The more profound the field we are entering—whether it is holistic medicine, law, education, artistic pursuit and performance, organizational transformation, spiritual practice, or some other area—the further we plumb its depths the more clearly we see how far we have come and how far we still have to “go” to experience more fully the vastness and richness of its treasures and challenges. Below, I offer a schema for three continua of development, drawn from the work and practice of several over the years and centuries, to point us toward an integrated framework for our collective flourishing along these three domains.

1) Equity & Social Justice. Justice and equity as defined in this article include but go beyond a focus on “diversity” and “inclusion,” which are often the first domains focused on by those seeking to learn about equity. Diversity and inclusion remain important in the work, but their true fruition is found in leveraging the wisdom, gifts, vision, leadership, strategy, and analyses of multi-identified people in deep dialogue and joint efforts (that are some-

times tense and messy) toward our collective freedom. Without a well-developed equity muscle, deep work for systems change is not possible, and communities of practice will tend to shy away from the hard work necessary to get to more transformative levels. Furthermore, deep inner work (discussed below) provides the muscle for deep equity, which is a hallmark of truly deep inner work that builds our capacity to engage the full dimensions of our shared civic and planetary life (alongside other dimensions).

Social justice/equity work can focus on multiple levels: **individual, interpersonal, institutional**, and **systemic/societal**. Equity and social justice attend to the historical and current supporting structures, habits, policies, and conditions that lead to predictably differentiated opportunities, life circumstances, and outcomes for specific demographic groups. Equity and social justice are most concerned with the wielding and impact of power, privilege, and resources for individual and collective well-being, alleviating disenfranchisement, and healing the impacts of long-term (often multi-generational) systemic trauma.

A focus at **internal and interpersonal** levels is necessary but insufficient to achieve social justice, yet this is often where initial equity learning efforts lie. Individual dimensions related to inner work and contemplative practice include intercultural awareness; deepening capacity to have challenging conversations; recognizing unconscious bias, emotional triggers, power dynamics, and microaggressions; manifestations of inequity from an intersectional perspective (i.e., the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomics, language/dialect, LGBTQ identity, religion, etc.); and deepening capacity in physiological and emotional presence to remain open, curious, and engaged in emotionally-charged reflection and dialogue.

Additional areas at this level include: values and (conscious and unconscious) beliefs about the worth, intelligence, and capacity of dominant and marginalized communities; becoming more aware of our thoughts, perceptions, biases, stereotypes, etc. about people and groups; family/group history, dynamics, and patterns; exposure, relationships, and density of non-surface experience in cross-cultural contexts; and training, study, learning, and ongoing communities of practice where we live, work, play, and learn in order to deepen our capacity.

I have found the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)³ to be a useful tool to orient those new to a particular domain of these individual skills, namely intercultural awareness. The IDI measures progress along a developmental continuum and assesses individual “capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.” “Culture” is a wide category including race, ethnicity, socioeconomics, gender identity, caste, nationality, language, religion, sexual orientation, and other de-

mographic groups. Intercultural competence (similar to other competency areas) provides a set of skills and capacities that can broaden an individual's capacity to engage with various cultures locally, regionally, and globally. Importantly, intercultural awareness is not an assessment of social justice lenses or capacity in understanding structural equity and inequity. Hence, intercultural awareness is part of, but not as comprehensive a skillset as, having a social justice/structural equity lens.

The IDI categories of development could be summarized in the following ways:

- *Denial*—lack of awareness; observing surface differences but lacking awareness of deeper dimensions; may avoid cultural difference.
- *Polarization*—“us”-vs.-“them” orientation which comes in two forms: *defense*, consisting of feelings of superiority regarding one's own cultures and the denigration of other cultures; or *reversal*, consisting of a tendency to exoticize or romanticize other cultures and denigrate one's own.
- *Minimization*—“we're all really the same”/color-blind/melting pot; “an orientation that highlights cultural commonality and universal values and principles, that may also mask deeper recognition and appreciation of cultural differences.”⁴
- *Acceptance*—deep understanding of cultural commonalities/similarities as well as difference.
- *Adaptation*—skillful engagement with similarity and difference; ability to shift frames and behaviors in “culturally appropriate and authentic ways” while maintaining a clear locus of values (i.e., not relativistic).

All five IDI stages manifest at individual and interpersonal levels and also have institutional and systemic/societal manifestations, in my experience.

Institutional dimensions of equity and social justice include organizational climate, culture, structures, and processes such as: leadership, planning and policies; values and beliefs; programming and project foci; access and inclusion; collaboration, relationships and trust; communication systems; personal commitment and accountability; human resources; evaluation; fundraising approaches; field-building and partnership; and other areas. Each of these aspects of institutional functioning can be pursued with or without nascent or deep equity embedded.

Often institutions focus on the *structural* and *technical* dimensions of organizational functioning (i.e., those that are most amenable to quantitative measurement) and provide

4 <https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/>

insufficient attention to its *social, cultural, and political* dimensions, as they are more nuanced and require sophisticated qualitative means to assess and build capacity. From the perspective of this article, all five dimensions—structural, technical, social, cultural, and political⁵—must be addressed to pursue deep equity. Furthermore, some social justice-focused organizations have also begun to reflect on and build capacity for inner work at the institutional level.⁶

2) Approaches to Inner Work. There are multiple approaches to inner transformation and growth. We are introduced to aspects of paths to development as we are ready, as we are inspired, and as we can engage them. Many times, we may enter and pursue inner work/spiritual practice and either not experience the depths of practice or mistakenly assume the depths we have experienced are all there are. There are different goals and methods to inner work or contemplative practice. Healing, presence, and compassion could be through-lines in all of them, though how these are pursued can look different based on system, tradition, lineage, etc.

Some approaches to inner work seek to cultivate positive qualities and conditions for oneself and one's loved ones and try to avoid harmful conditions, actions, thoughts, and emotions. This is important. Other approaches have the capacity to use the circumstances of any situation or occurrence as fuel for transformation, excavating and uncovering our deepest wisdom and gifts and using practices and methodologies to "wash" away and transform what seem like (or may be) harmful conditions, thoughts, and habits. Practice becomes a transformative elixir.

Still other approaches may have the capacity to support us to rest into the awareness, wisdom, peace, courage, and vivid, fierce presence that are innate for us all. Such approaches can allow us to fully engage any circumstance, thought, emotion, habit, encounter, social condition, or structure with infinite skill, grace, kindness (not "niceness"), and powerful efficacy, drawing from the inexhaustible wellspring of being to sustain and nurture us. Any and all of these approaches may be engaged via stillness and/or movement, silence and/or sound, and solo and/or joint practice, using all manner of natural and/or human-made elements, substances, or objects, and many other methods for their fruitful application.

It is worth repeating here that **deep inner work can provide the capacity for deep equity** because the emotional, psychological, spiritual, energetic, and material intensity of equity work requires much more from us than non-equity-based approaches, in order to remain open, present, engaged, and non-reactionary without resorting to false "politeness"

5 See for instance Petty, 2010.

6 See, for example, Movement Strategy Center's work in this journal volume on "The Practices of Transformative Movements," as well as their "Love With Power: Practicing Transformation for Social Justice" (http://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MS-C-Love_With_Power.pdf) and the work of Hidden Leaf Foundation (<http://hiddenleaf.org>).

or polarization/demonization of so-called “others.”⁷ We can find a deeper engagement, rigor, capacity, and joy, and truly hold each other (and ourselves) authentically accountable, in love.

3) Systems Change & Movement Building. For our purposes, systems change refers to a focus on *sectors* (education, healthcare, workforce, environment, etc.); the *patterns* (over time), *policies, structures, norms, and habits* in society that keep systems in place; and large-scale *processes of change* to impact those systems en masse. Such patterns, policies, and practices can be mapped using data, then viewed and disaggregated by demographic groups (e.g., women, youth, rural communities, etc.) to understand their impacts over time.

Such patterns also include the history of community relationships, migration patterns and shifts (forced and/or voluntary), assets, needs, and the impacts of systems of stratification of resources (economic, social, cultural, environmental, educational, medical, etc.) on specific groups of human beings as well as the natural world. Systems change efforts can include a focus on individuals, groups, institutions, communities, trans-local and regional communities/groups/institutions, and trans-national and global efforts. There are many, many people, organizations, and networks that work at these levels, some with attention to inner work and/or social justice and some without.

Three Interrelated Continua: Inner Work, Social Justice, & Systems Transformation

This schema is illustrative only. It is neither perfect nor are the categories illustrated in it mutually exclusive or correlated by type across the three domains of capacity and practice. The schema is offered to generate reflection and dialogue about the interrelationship between these three domains. There are a number of caveats to note.

- The inner work approaches are not a 1:1 correspondence between the equity and systems change approaches.
- The first row of skills and capacities across all three domains seem to be carried through to the subsequent rows (that is, the levels seem to be nested, in my experience).
- The subsequent/further levels are not “better” than the preceding ones. They can potentially have more breadth and depth and a greater repertoire for action, *so long as they incorporate depth from the preceding levels*. If preceding levels are lost, subsequent ones lose their depth (without seeds, there are no trees).
- We may also prefer to work in any column or row because of passion, interest, inspiration, skill, need, or any other set of factors. Our good work and intentions are precious and priceless gifts wherever we genuinely offer them.

⁷ See, for example, the “Othering and Belonging: Expanding the Circle of Human Concern” forum (<http://www.otheringandbelonging.org>).

- Finally, the premise of this article is that each of the three domains is interrelated, so they are intertwined and essential to create a better world for all of us. Each domain requires the others working in concert for us to heal and to individually and collectively thrive.

This is our joint work: to find each other across these experience and expertise domains, value each other, and learn and grow together. In this process, **the first two domains are most important: inner work and social justice/equity awareness, knowledge, and skills.**

G R O W T H & D E P T H	CONTEMPLATIVE / INNER PRACTICE ⁸	EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE	SYSTEMS CHANGE & LARGE-SCALE PATTERNS
	Path of Cultivation of Positive Qualities and Conditions (& Renunciation of Negative Ones)	Individual & Interpersonal <i>(denial⁹ polarization minimization of difference acceptance adaptation)</i>	Micro ¹⁰ & Meso (Individual & Group)
	Path of Transformation ¹¹ <i>(turning poison into nectar)</i>	Institutional <i>(structural¹², technical, social, cultural, political)</i>	Trans-Local ¹³ /Macro: Organizations, Networks, & Alliances <i>(cross-geography)</i>
	Path of Spontaneous Liberation ¹⁴	Systemic ¹⁵ /Societal <i>(history, power, privilege, context, sectors, community)</i>	Mundo/Global, Fields, Sectors, & Movement Building (healthcare, education, workforce, housing, environment, business, government, NGOs, etc.)

8 See, for instance, Petty, 2016 for a version of some Buddhist approaches to these paths.

9 The Intercultural Development Continuum: *denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, adaptation*: <https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/>

10 Adapted from Otto Scharmer's model re: *micro, meso, macro and mundo*: <https://www.presencing.com/ego-to-eco/social-evolution>

11 See, e.g., Allione, 2008.

12 See, for instance, Petty, 2010 on *structural, technical, social, cultural and political*.

13 "Trans-local" was a term I heard in a planning meeting with Taj James (Co-Director, Movement Strategy Center) circa 2013, referring to linked/networked local communities who learn from, iterate, and cross-fertilize in organismic, ongoing, evolving ways.

14 See, for instance, Wangyal, 2000 and 2012.

15 See, for example, powell, Heller, and Bundalli, 2011.

For all of us, engaging in any of these three domains requires learning, consistent practice, ongoing support, and scaffolding for deepening within oneself and in relation with others. Humility and raising awareness become key here in recognizing where we are in our own development—i.e., where we have depth and where we are more nascent in our learning and growth. For some, *because of the extremity of our footprint on the world, we have a greater responsibility for growth and appropriate action (particularly in inner work and equity) so that we can mitigate our harm and be of greatest benefit.* There are things to learn, reckoning to be had, awareness to develop, deeper textures of our shared social reality to be discerned, and allies to be engaged. No one has to know everything, but we do need to become more aware of the limitations of our knowledge and experience so that we can *partner effectively*, be continual *learners*, and collectively heal.

The challenge here comes with where we find depth in each of these three domains, as well as issues of power and privilege (which are the particular areas of expertise of the social justice/equity domain). Too often, those with depth in popular or mainstream versions of inner work and systems change lack depth in equity and social justice. This phenomenon is so prevalent that we felt the need to develop an entire journal about it in its relation to the inner dimensions of change and collective well-being.

Yet mature versions of inner work and systems change have inherent depth in equity/social justice. Let us be exceedingly clear on this point: approaches to inner work that do not engage the particularity of our incarnate lives and how oppression plays out in predictable, egregious ways for specific populations (privileging some, devastating others, and harming us all) are not deep according to the schema presented in this article. By the same token, approaches to systems change that do not thoroughly integrate a robust understanding of historical and current power and privilege and process their implications would be considered nascent or developing approaches to working in systems. *The absence of an equity and social justice lens in the fields of both inner work/contemplative practice and social systems change is devastating both communities of practice and profoundly hindering the full realization of the benefit of which both of these fields of practice are capable and which is desperately needed.* There is much more bravery, training, and humility necessary for both current and would-be practitioners in each of these fields.

Love-based, Not Rage-fueled, Approaches

There is a misconception of social justice communities I have heard voiced by some: namely, that (speaking bluntly) they are “anger-driven mobs that cannot be reasoned with.” While some equity-focused communities of practice can certainly engage in change strategies from this stance, there are many that do not. I want to distinguish the kind of social justice and vision of equity this article speaks to, which is based in love, from approaches that have rage as their fuel. These are different strategies, requiring different means and leading toward different ends, though they may

(on the surface) have some things in common and use similar language to talk about their work. A love-based approach is based on the premise that the intersection of *inner work* and *social justice* can lead to the natural unfolding of joy, compassion, clarity, and all the positive qualities, and can also wake up fundamental parts of our humanity that have been deadened.

My experience is that without joy, purpose, passion, and a felt sense of the positive transformative potential of our efforts, social justice work can become debilitating and potentially lead to burn-out (which often happens), because in the course of one lifetime the pathway to justice often seems daunting. Such a vision toward joy can be missing from some justice frames that have lost attention to inner dimensions of change and well-being, have become “battle-weary,” and may be moving from a place of unhealed trauma and woundedness. (There are both dominant and marginalized and both individual and community manifestations of such wounds.)

There is a place for anger that leads to clarity that is directed not at people but at the damage we cause and the (sometimes purposefully, sometimes inadvertently) painful results of our efforts. We are many times causing injury to ourselves and to one another. The burial, denial, minimization, and erasure of this harm can compound pain and frustration—materially, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Unacknowledged harm cannot be healed. We in the United States are living in a moment of great reckoning in the aftermath of our presidential election, where more of us are seeing (some for the first time) the deep ravine that lies between various communities around the country and what we each see and experience daily. The beginning of healing can be presence, receptivity/openness, and awareness. Awareness in this case refers to actual *sight*: seeing and reckoning with what *is*. Without this, it is often very difficult for many to move forward.

Deep Approaches to Social Justice/Equity Already Having Inner Work Embedded

Many (though not all) portions of the social justice field already have abundant inner work/contemplative skills and resources, and draw from multiple traditions and approaches.¹⁶ The field of *transformative social change*¹⁷ speaks eloquently to these areas. While there may be many in the social justice field drawing fuel from understandable pain and frustration as a result of decades or centuries of systemic oppression, there are arguably both a longer as well as a more recent history of social justice communities drawing from a deep wellspring of our innate goodness and our wish for the freedom and liberation of all beings. Another example is the work of Laura Rendón and Vijay Kanagala (in this volume), which speaks to embedded approaches of what might be called the inner dimensions of deep social justice/equity work.

16 In addition to the Haas Institute and MSC, see, for example, the work of the Middle Project (<http://www.middleproject.org>), the Ignite Institute (<http://psr.edu/about/centers-and-affiliates/ignite-institute/>), Buddhists for Racial Justice (<https://buddhistsforracialjustice.org>), Zenju Earthlyn Manuel (<http://zenju.org>), the Center for Transformative Change (<http://transformativechange.org>), and of course the work of icons such as Gandhi, Jesus, and Nelson Mandela, who all advanced revolutionary visions for justice, inner and outer peace, and systems change.

17 See, for instance: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformative_social_change

The Danger of Spiritual Bypassing

There is also a conception of contemplative communities or those focused on inner work as being “navel-gazers” who do not care about human conditions because they are focused on “spiritual” matters, beyond the “travails” of this world. Such an approach would be tantamount to the rampant *spiritual bypassing*¹⁸ that has many in social justice communities struggling with, turning away from, or having serious questions about some forms of inner work or spiritual practice, in the belief that such communities and traditions cannot or do not speak to the concrete circumstances and challenges of our lives as contextual individuals and communities. This is certainly the way some in contemplative (sacred or secular) communities are engaging, but it is by no means the way all such communities are practicing.

When “healing,” “presence,” “openness,” “awareness,” “systems,” “ecology,” “mindfulness,” or “enlightenment” are spoken about, it is important to not lose sight of the *particular* and *differences* alongside *similarities* and the *universal*. Some readers may have heard the term “engaged contemplation,” those forms of contemplative practice or inner work which are intimately linked to advancing positive change in the world. Some may also have heard of the term “targeted universalism,” noted by John Powell. Both of these help us to maintain a focus on sameness and difference *at the same time*, without negating either. There are many sacred and secular communities of practice that move and have always moved from this place.

For many people in communities who experience daily and sometimes extreme forms of marginalization, approaches to inner work and contemplative practice must speak directly to their/our emotional, psychological, economic, social, and physical life conditions in order to be experienced as authentic, relevant, and grounded. Engaged practice cannot simply be transcendent; it must also be embodied and take into account our particularity, our specificity, and our differences.¹⁹ Such practice is not engaged as a panacea; it is engaged to transform and transmute, as alchemy, to unleash our inherent wisdom and liberatory capacity.

Addressing Power and Privilege in “Progressive” Approaches to Social Change

There is something important to be said about the relationship between “liberal” or generically “progressive” approaches to systems change and those with a social justice lens and analysis of history, power, and privilege. When liberal approaches begin to address equity, they are often advanced with a focus on *individual and interpersonal* relationships and an anti-bias orientation. This is important and critical work, but it is insufficient. What liberal/progressive approaches (which are often espoused by those in positions of power and privilege) often lack is an *analysis of systems* of

18 See, for example, the article in this journal volume by Carla Sherrell and Judith Simmer-Brown.

19 See, for example, Manuel, 2015.

oppression: the institutional and systemic structures that keep stratification in place. Such structures are intimately connected to the important work we need to do at individual and interpersonal levels, but these two lenses and approaches are not the same.

What often happens in progressive approaches to systems change is another form of “bypassing”: bypassing the difficult work of reckoning with power, history, privilege, and systems that benefit us and harm others. There is a “skipping” that happens, and/or sometimes a paralysis in guilt. Neither of these is the end of the work, but they are often (but not always) phases of it for those in positions of power. This conflation of internal and interpersonal work for the totality of equity work, neglecting the institutional and systemic dimensions, often causes confusion and frustration in the field, both for those who are negatively impacted (especially in their physical well-being) by systems of oppression and for those who tend to benefit (materially) from such systems.

There is much confusion, and much communication gets lost in translation. People of color, women, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups are often striving to raise awareness and recognition on the part of those without a systems lens of the damage that such systems change approaches without an equity lens wreak. They are also often seeking to raise awareness of the role of allies, and a deep recognition of the fact that while, in an absolute sense, we are most certainly all the same, in this world of form and incarnation we are also not. This speaks to the need for would-be social justice activists and advocates to do the deep work of fully recognizing and engaging *both* the universal and the particular simultaneously. This is challenging work.

Individual & Collective Liberation: Non-Dual

Deep equity/social justice work is never solely focused on individual liberation. There is no notion of individual liberation divorced from the collective. This has significant implications for how the purpose of *inner work* is understood.

The dominant worldview in the West gives primacy to the individual. It has promulgated duality and the mind-body, male-female, self-other, and other hierarchies and splits with negative connotations. So, for some engaged in the mindfulness movement, “practice” has come to be viewed as individual practice on the cushion, divorced from relationality and immanent presence in the world and its beauty and messiness. Those in social justice/equity movements come from, draw from, and engage from indigenous paradigms and other approaches where immanence is transcendent and the transcendent is immanent. Hence, while this is not true for all communities of practice or practitioners, for many there is no notion of something that needs to be re-yoked, because there was no perception of a bifurcation ever having occurred. The profundity of these potential differences in worldview/ontology—i.e., the actual experience of life and the world—is significant, and must be fully appreciated in order to engage in dialogue about the nature of useful, powerful inner work practice for individuals and communities, and effective approaches to social systems change.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Inner work capacity seems to make more advanced equity as well as systems skills more possible (and perhaps more stable) but *not* inevitable. That is, inner skills can provide a fertile ground to engage in equity/social justice, *but intentional, deliberate, deep, and sustained learning and growth* are necessary in order to actually **build skills** in equity. These are each domains of competence that our world desperately needs more and more of us to wake up to and cultivate: *inner work* and *equity/social justice*. On the other hand, systems change skills are a specialty that some critical mass of broadly diverse and representative people, but not all people, need to have.

We need to create the **scaffolding and infrastructure in inner work and equity** for more of us to wake up and create a tipping point to manifest our goodness for the benefit of us all. Having more influence in the world requires more capacity in these three domains. If that capacity is not evident in our professed leadership, then we need to make room for and support those multi-identified community members *as leaders* who do have it. Let us use our strengths and truly make room for each other *to lead and learn to better follow*.

Like medical practitioners who offer referrals when they know they are out of their depth, we need both humility *and* a sense of what's further down the path (i.e., the continua above) to know *when* to refer folks to others. We also need sufficiently broad, deep, and diverse **networks/relationships** to know *who* to refer folks to along these three domains of skills. This is often most difficult for dominant community members and those in positions of power: to trust in the leadership and inherent wisdom, as well as the growth potential, of marginalized individuals and communities who have not had access to power and influence. (This is a colossal understatement.)

I had a spiritual teacher who once said that compassion is "action appropriate to the needs of circumstances / the needs of the moment, that supports the liberation of all." Compassion skillfully engages with all of our fears and "demons," without cringing, without defense, and stands gently and courageously in the face of what we know and what we do not know or understand. Such compassion allows us to be truly *with* one another for the long haul, come what may. It leaves no one and nothing out.

Our wounds will only heal if we tend them. As we have seen glaringly in these last few months, untended wounds fester and become putrid. *What are we truly willing (and not willing) to do? How deep are we willing to go into our inner work practice and equity in order to change? How are we willing (and not willing) to grow, to mend and heal ourselves and this world? Is it worth it? And do we believe that it's possible? (I do.)*

RESOURCES

Sample Books and Articles: Inner Work, Social Justice, &/or Systems Change

- Allione, T. (2008). *Feeding your demons: Ancient wisdom for resolving inner conflict*. New York: Little, Brown & Co.
- Galea, S. (2015, January 18). The public consequences of hate [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.bu.edu/sph/2015/01/18/the-public-health-consequences-of-hate/>
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- Wangyal, T. (2000). *Wonders of the natural mind: The essence of Dzogchen in the native Bön tradition of Tibet*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.
- Wangyal, T. (2012). *Awakening the luminous mind: Tibetan meditation for inner peace and joy*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.
- williams, a. K., Owens, R., & Syedullah, J. (2016). *Radical dharma: Talking race, love, and liberation*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Individual & Interpersonal Awareness—Equity & Social Justice Tools & Videos

- Understanding Privilege: <https://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf>
- White Awareness: <http://www.racialequitytools.org/module/overview/transforming-white-privilege>
- Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC): <https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-continuum-idc/>
- Videos: <http://world-trust.org>

Racial Equity & Systems Change Tools & Organizations

- Systems Thinking and Race: http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Powell_Systems_Thinking_Structural_Race_Overview.pdf
- White Allies: <http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org>
- Media, Leadership & Framing: <https://www.raceforward.org>
- Tools (vetted clearinghouse): <http://www.racialequitytools.org/home>

Social Justice, Systems Change, & Inner Work Organizations

- White Awake: <http://whiteawake.org>
- Hidden Leaf Foundation: <http://hiddenleaf.org>
- Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society: <http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu>
- Movement Strategy Center: <http://movementstrategy.org>
- Center for Transformative Change: <http://transformativechange.org/>
- Interaction Institute for Social Change: <http://interactioninstitute.org>
- Rockwood Leadership Institute: <http://rockwoodleadership.org/>
- Social Transformation Project: <http://www.stproject.org>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sheryl Petty, Ed.D. is an equity, personal transformation and systems change consultant with Movement Tapestries (NY), Management Assistance Group (DC), and Movement Strategy Center (CA). She has worked and practiced in equity, organizational development, systems change, inner work/contemplative practice, network and alliance building for over 20 years. Dr. Petty has planned, designed and facilitated visioning, strategy sessions, field-building, planning processes, qualitative research and life coaching with thousands of practitioners, staff, community members, advocates and boards internationally. Dr. Petty was most recently a Principal Associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, was a Fellow at Stanford University's Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, and is currently a Fellow with the Mind and Life Institute and Adjunct Faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University. Sheryl holds a B.A. in Mathematics, an M.A. in Systematic & Philosophical Theology, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership & Change. Dr. Petty is also a priest in an African-based, indigenous tradition (from the Yoruba) and practices Tibetan Vajrayana & Bön Buddhism. Her focus is on supporting the alignment efforts of practitioners, advocates and community members to heal, unleash our most vibrant selves, transform our social systems, and improve our collective life.