

WellPower

Shaping Evaluation Through
**Equity, Love and
Liberation**

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We are a team of program evaluators at WellPower, a community mental health center in what is colonially known as Denver, Colorado.

We would like to acknowledge that we live and work in the traditional and unceded lands of the Ute, Cheyenne, Arapaho people, as well as numerous other indigenous tribes and nations who have historically called Colorado home.

We would also like to acknowledge the land we are meeting on today as being the unceded homeland of the Chitimacha and meeting ground for many other indigenous peoples.

Beyond Land Acknowledgement

Education

- <https://www.southernute-nsn.gov/>
- <https://cheyenneandrapaho-nsn.gov/>
- <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/denver-colorado-tribes>
- <https://www.uncovercolorado.com/native-american-tribes-in-colorado/>
- <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/indigenous-community/Colorado%20Tribal%20Acknowledgement%20List.pdf>
- http://www.chitimacha.gov/history-culture/tribal-history_
- <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/nola-tribes>
- [Indigenous Foundation](#)
- [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#)

Support

- <https://difrc.org/>
- <https://denverindiancenter.org/>
- <https://www.coloradogives.org/organization/Firstnations>
- <https://www.fourwindscenter.org/>
- <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>
- <https://www.lowlandercenter.org/>
- [22 Indigenous-Led Organizations Working Toward Social Justice \(foodcorps.org\)](#)
- <https://linktr.ee/protecticwa>

Origins of our ELL working group

- Jara Dean-Coffey’s Equitable Evaluation Framework and Colorado Collaboratory on Equitable Evaluation
- Measuring Love Brown Paper and Shiree Teng’s presentation at AEA
- Aisha Rios from Coactive Change, specifically abolition work

Lauren Beriont from the Emergence Collective – [Questioning How White Supremacy Shows Up in Our Work](#)

Colonial	Alternative	Evaluation application
Either/or thinking	Both/and thinking	Move beyond themes and trends. Explore where there are tensions and contradictions in the data Use evaluation for learning and growth instead of as a pass/fail report.
Fear of open conflict	Conflict as healthy	Set up time for biweekly feedback using tools like The Management Center’s 2x2 feedback Regularly gather partner feedback during the evaluation.
Perfectionism	High quality	Regular brief reports and check-ins as opposed to long end-of-project reports. Reframe mistakes as opportunities for learning .
Quantity over quality	Quality over quantity	Use a mixed methods evaluation approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Expand collection beyond vanity metrics (e.g. number of participants)Build in time in budget to pivot evaluation based on community feedback
Progress is bigger, more	Progress is more just, increased wellbeing	Consider positive evaluation outcomes that don’t only demonstrate growth.
Objectivity	Strong objectivity	Have multiple individuals analyze the same data set. Actively discuss how bias plays a role in evaluation. Involve participants, staff and community members in data interpretation.
Right to comfort	Engage in discomfort	Practice feeling uncomfortable. Use the “Risk/Learning Zone” as a model for individual and organizational growth.
Worship of the written word	Communicate impact in multiple mediums	Move away from lengthy written reports Include more visual presentations and reports with images and diagrams. Expand data collection beyond surveys.
Sense of urgency	Go slow to go fast	Design realistic work plans. Distinguish between realistic short-term and long-term outcomes. Invest in relationship building with the community voice at the outset.

Colonial vs Alternative Frameworks:

Round 1

- Sense of urgency!
- Ways to slow down
- Uneven participation
- No accountability for goals

Round 2

- One topic per meeting
- Meeting prep homework
- Action steps for each topic
- System for Goals – reflection and accountability
- Burnout – this work is hard! Especially on marginalized folks
- Breakout groups for POC and white staff
- 50 mins group discussion, 10 min break, 30 breakout group, 30 min break (2x a month)

Action Steps and Reflections

- Mistakes and lessons learned in monthly team meetings
- Celebrating personal as well as professional accomplishments
- Feedback from team and other agency staff
- Anti-racist evaluation policy – systems change within our sphere of influence
- Facilitating conversations as a white person, a novice, and an emotional human being
- “If we don't do our work, we become work for other people.” — Lama Rod Owens, Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger

- **Create trusting reciprocal relationships with team**
- **Welcome and encourage feedback without defensiveness**
- **Constantly reflecting on the influence and importance of positionality**

Accountability, Collaboration, and Community

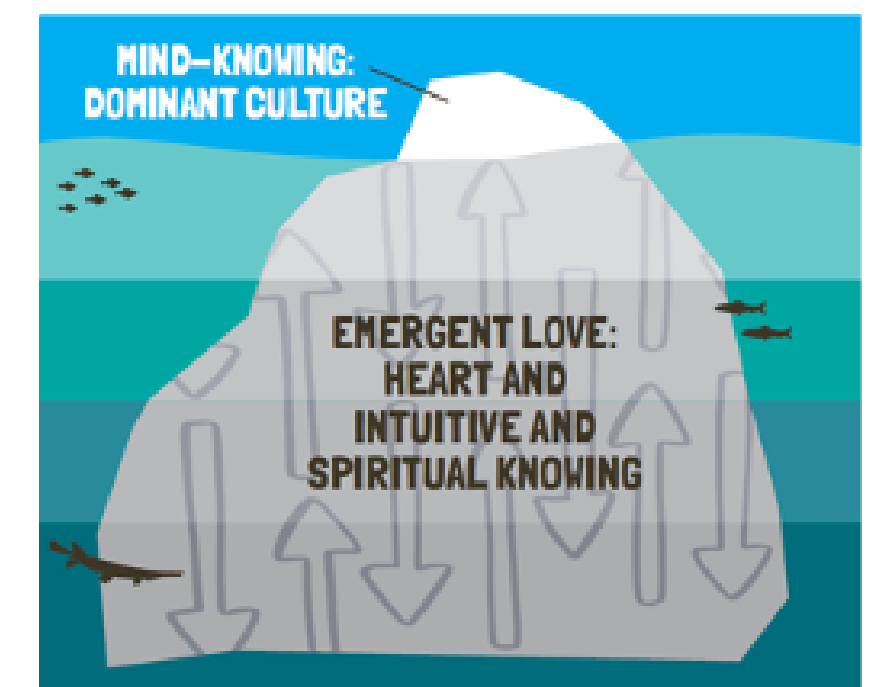
"The questions we ask will determine the future." – Sharon Crossbear

"What happens in the evaluation field is that when we stay laser focused on questions, assumptions—things that are all dictated by those who commissioned the evaluation—we end up reinforcing oppressive dynamics." – Dr. Aisha Rios

We are not alone – who are we accountable to?

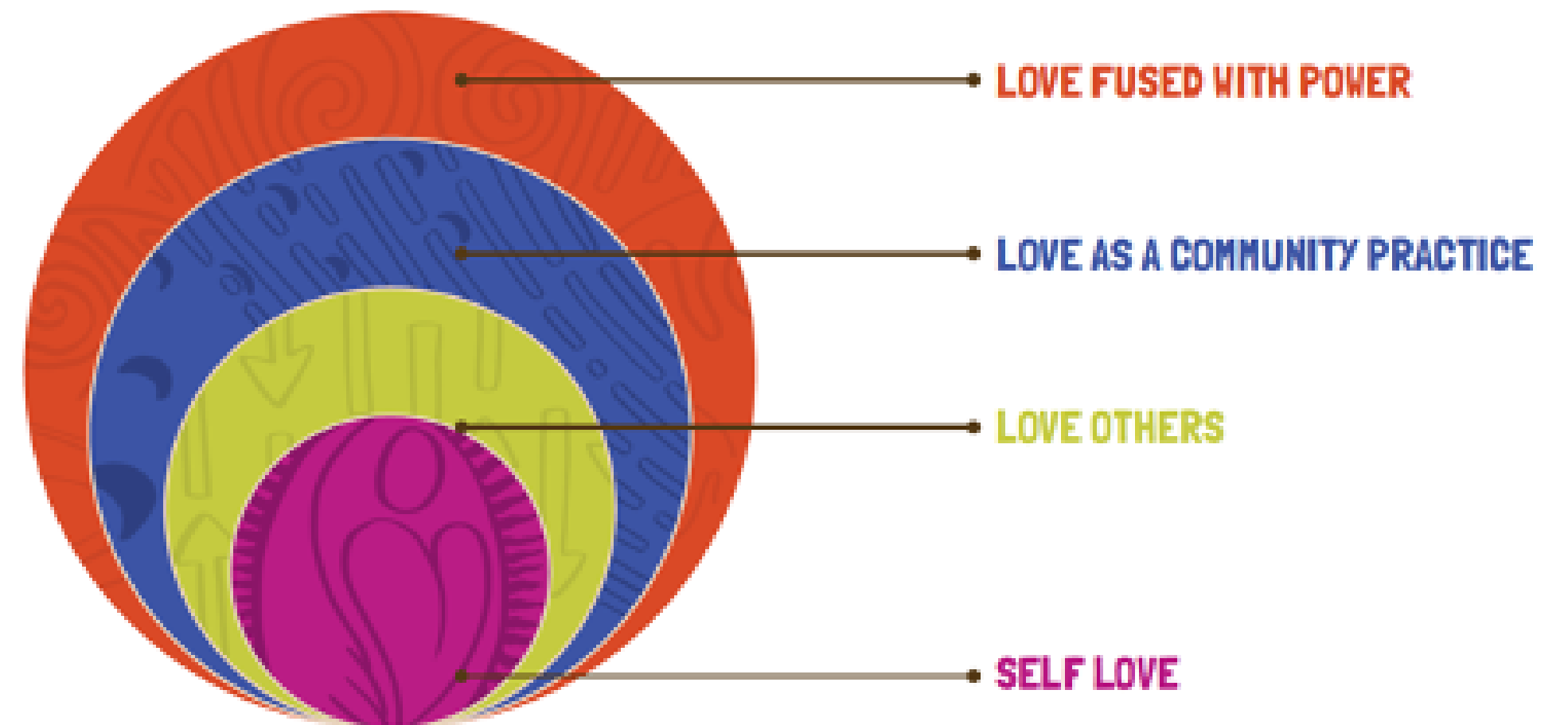
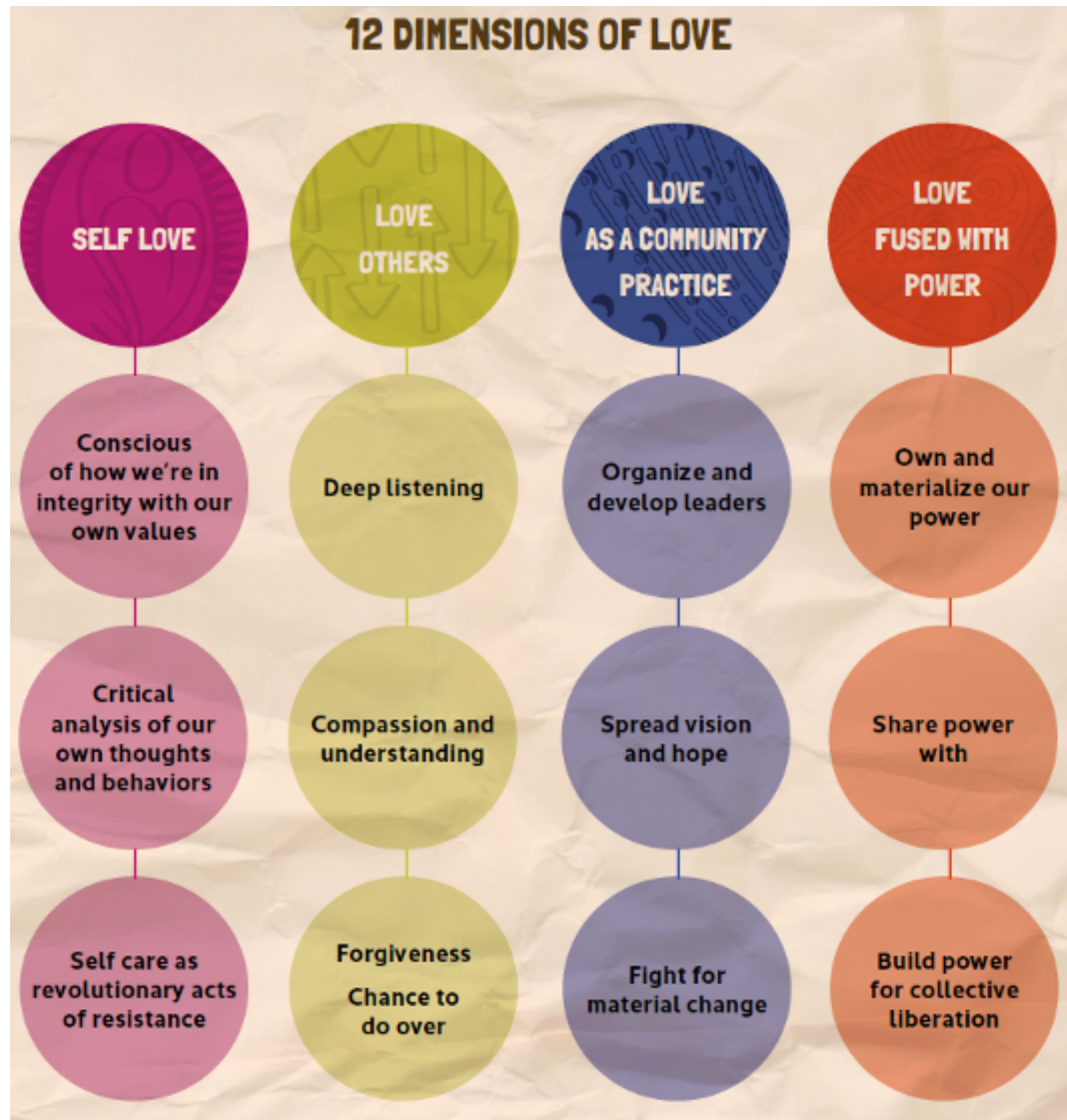
How do we share power?

Intuition in Evaluation



Accountability, Collaboration, and Community

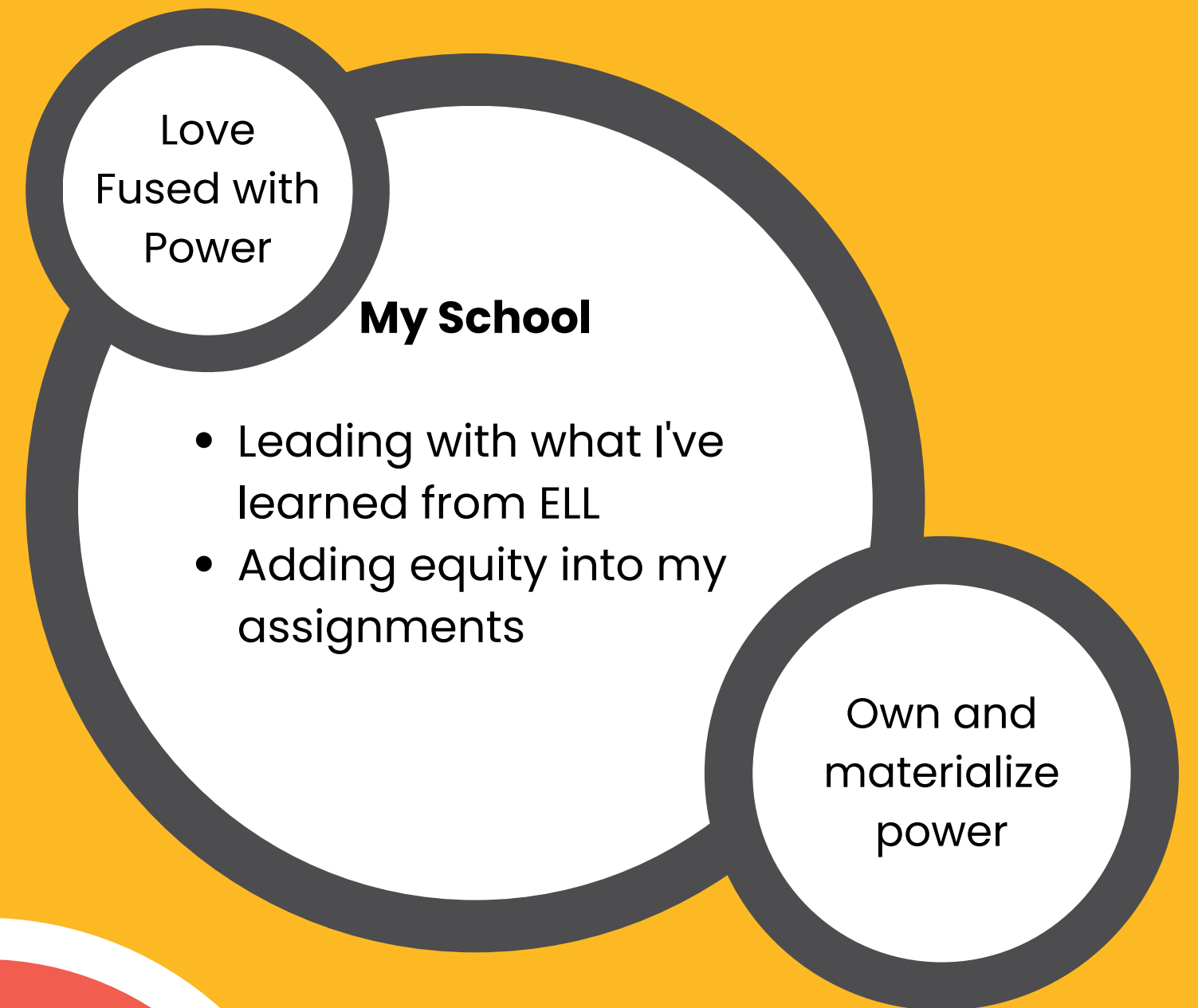
"Love is a threat to systems and institutions that rely on disconnection. Love weaves connection that amplifies in orders of magnitude." – Measuring Love: A Brown Paper



*Images cropped from "Measuring Love: A Brown Paper"

"Power without love—deep love—is merely an ego-driven endeavor. Equally true is that to love without fighting for power is immature, short-lived, and bland. To love in the context of fighting for and building power in our communities requires courage, integrity, and a long-view." – Shiree Teng

Spheres of Influence



Ways to Engage with the ELL Framework

- Shifting the context: "safe space" → **"Brave Space"**
- Right to comfort → **Engage in discomfort**
- Fear of open conflict → **View conflict as healthy**
- Either/or thinking → **Both/and thinking**

"Even if a conversation is difficult, we must still be loving, gentle, decent, honest, moral, honorable, virtuous and full of integrity."

– Dr. Delores James

Resources

- Shiree Teng - [SHIREE TENG](#)
- [MeasuringLove2019.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)
- Aisha Rios - [Meet Aisha Rios - Coactive Change](#)
- [Nothing is broken - what evaluation and philanthropy can learn from abolition](#)
- Lauren Beriont - [About | Capacity-Building | Emergence Collective](#)
- [Decolonizing Evaluation Week: Questioning How White Supremacy Shows Up in Our Work by Lauren Beriont - AEA365](#)
- Tema Okun - [Microsoft Word - whitesupcul07.doc \(dismantlingracism.org\)](#)
- [WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE - HOME](#)
- Sara Onitsuka & Nicole Robinson, [Freedom + Liberation + The Evaluation Ecosystem](#)
- Dismantling Racism - [dRworksBook - Home \(dismantlingracism.org\)](#)
- 2x2 feedback <https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/2x2-feedback-form/>

Colonial vs Alternative Frameworks – Our Version

Colonial	Alternative	Action Steps
Fear of open conflict	Conflict as healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek constructive feedback from others and try not to take it personally • Support each other to process challenging/situations of conflict we experience at work -> you are not alone! • Speak collectively as one voice in challenging status quo • People with greater levels of privilege offer support in bringing up difficult topics to people in power
Perfectionism	High quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions • Say you don't know • Connect with others, don't isolate • Don't compare yourself to others - you do things your own way • Share your mistakes and lessons learned with others
Quantity over quality	Quality over quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess quality: is the data/product going to be useful? • Right size the evaluation for what is needed • Speak up about the benefits of focusing on quality • Stay to true to ethics and say no to things that don't fit
Progress is bigger, more	Progress is more just, increased wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved more in how the funds are used in a grant: advocate to reallocate funding and material resources to increase quality for smaller number of people • Look at reach in a more community centered way - not in number of people served necessarily, but think of how increasing on person's quality of life affects all those around them • Look for alternative ways to measure progress - be creative and gather information from people involved and in small ways as you go along (not just at the end) • Always focus on creating a quality program before trying to increase participation • Advocate for keeping things small, consider sustainability - maybe needs to be small to remain high quality • Better explain statistical significance - if not found doesn't mean that there was no change. Limits of looking at changes in small groups or non-linear.

Colonial vs Alternative Frameworks – Our Version

Colonial	Alternative	Action Steps
Either/or thinking	Both/and thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace BUT with AND • Consider having neutral in Likert scales • Be wary of all or nothing outcomes - consider harm reduction and be expansive in what constitutes a positive outcome
Objectivity	Acknowledge positionality & role of opinions and emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get context for things you are evaluating, especially from people with lived experience • Member checking - showing data back to people (are we collecting the right data? Making right meaning? Conclusions?) • Use focus groups to get community involvement (in place comfortable for them, food, welcoming) • Triangulate data with as many sources as possible (consider outcome harvesting as method) • Consider if results will harm someone (especially marginalized folks) and adjust actions accordingly in order to advance equity and reduce harm • Be mindful of how we're asking questions/collecting data. How will they make people feel? • Adapt validated measures if needed to the people you're working with. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check surveys against Wellbeing Council • Recognize, acknowledge and name your positionality, emotions, opinions in the work you do
Right to comfort	Engage in discomfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always keep in mind who in our culture is given the right to comfort - it means different things for marginalized vs. privileged people • Be aware of positionality in situations as it relates to right to comfort - not prioritizing white comfort • Engage in groups that allow for open conversations with reflection, learning, and challenge • Doing personal reflections on why feeling uncomfortable - perhaps to share with others later • Sharing mistakes publicly

Colonial vs Alternative Frameworks – Our Version

Colonial	Alternative	Action Steps
Worship of the written word	Celebrating the variety of ways of knowing and expressing and communicate in multiple mediums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking not only about what we take away, but what can we add to our writing/act of writing to make it better Both/and - giving people options, including but not limited to writing (verbal, pictorial, video) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faces or other visuals on surveys Offer to read things to people, or have them read it themselves Do video instructions and have a written reference sheet Offer to collect information verbally from people or to have them write it Adding more visuals, limiting 'walls of text' Challenge ideas that other media are lesser or can't be good conveyors of information - learn more about other ways to convey information Think about your audience and accessibility with your writing (consider low literacy or no literacy, is language elitist) Consider how we can use written word to our advantage within current system and power structure (e.g., Documenting for protection, to create change) Writing memos with feelings and other observations to go with transcripts Consent forms - make sure people fully understand in verbal explanations than just reading complicated language
Sense of urgency	Take time to do quality work - value relationship building in process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial justice and equity are urgent, so prioritize them Spend time building relationships and collaboration, understand it takes time Focus on systems change Focus on what's important like putting quality over speed Build time for reflection and creativity When things are busy make sure you don't sacrifice taking care of yourself Focus on what you have control of to create more space - start early, give more time than you think you need, extend deadlines, ask for help Don't compare yourself to others related to how long something takes you - everyone has different strengths and skills sets Have compassion for ourselves, especially when we are feeling judgmental toward ourselves Sometimes the bare minimum is just fine, or just making small improvements/changes each time

We'd love to hear from you.

What have you been doing on your teams?

Have any questions or feedback for us?

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