

Leadership for Liberation

A Leadership Framework & Guide for Student Affairs Professionals

Jordan Harper & Adrianna Kezar



THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF THE “LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION” GUIDE COVER

The mural we spotlight on the cover is the work of female artists in Los Angeles. The words “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” emerge from that of Civil Rights Activist, FANNIE LOU HAMER. Her words are echoed and amplified by many including bell hooks, whose ideas were central to the construction of this framework. The idea that nobody is free until everybody is free is deeply rooted in community, collective liberation, and tackling systems of oppression that actively dehumanize and marginalize. This quote centers the theme of liberation and reminds all who bravely take on this journey to think of their neighbors and to unify on this central premise.

AMY SMITH is a contemporary, mixed-media artist and muralist who created the mural on the cover. Amy is self-trained and always evolving in all artwork mediums to create one-of-a-kind pieces that reflect both her passions and fury, juxtaposed through the lens of imagination. While some of Amy’s work is driven by political, social, and environmental injustice, most reflect her deeply-rooted optimism and belief in the power of the feminist spirit, unity and love. Please visit her website: amysmith.art or Instagram: @amysmithart

The mural can be found in the Melrose Art District in Los Angeles, CA.

Throughout this guide, you will find green boxes with pull-out questions. These questions are meant to guide you in thinking about your own institutional context and programmatic situations. Therefore, it would be helpful to write the answers to these questions on a piece of paper or in a separate document. Though, for your convenience, we have attached a one-sheeter at the end of the document that compiles all of the pull-out questions presented throughout the practitioner guide.

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This past year we have seen both the best and worst of humanity on our college campuses and in our society. There have been inspiring examples of bravery, courage, and compassion as our communities have addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has also brought xenophobia to the forefront of our society, and we continue to see racism and acts of violence directed at people of color. The pandemic has also deepened equity gaps across higher education as low-income, first-generation and BIPOC student enrollments have dropped significantly. No matter a college or university's size, student body, affiliation, or type, every campus is facing increasingly complex challenges: budget deficits, public health concerns, and weary faculty and staff who are continuously doing much more with less. Higher education is clearly at a critical inflection point – and we will need new, innovative, compassionate leadership.

This guide by Jordan Harper and Adriana Kezar articulates a need for a new model of leadership - leadership for liberation. Their provocative thesis argues for a bold and forward-thinking leadership that focuses on the systems, structures, and cultural norms that are the heart of our most challenging societal problems. This work represents an entirely different methodology of leadership – one that is intentionally separate from traditional systems of power and privilege and, instead is rooted in liberation as a social construct. As the guide concludes, Jordan and Kezar weave their theory of leadership for liberation into the Social Change Model of Leadership, bringing new insights into this existing leadership model.

Today's issues will demand a new approach to organizational and social change. We will need leaders who understand and acknowledge the effects of privilege and oppression. In that light – this work to advance leadership for liberation may be just what we need to see real change. Enjoy.

Warm regards,

Kevin Kruger
President

*the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability
of the student affairs profession*

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INTRODUCTION

FRAMING

Developing leaders for social change is central to student affairs educators responsible for fulfilling higher education's mission of cultivating the next generation change agents. Student affairs personnel have been well served by leadership models and frameworks such as the Social Change Model of Leadership that provide the values and skills students need to enact what the Working Ensemble (1996) describe as positive social change. The positive social change they champion is described as the envisioning of a better world. But this envisioning of a better world could be sharpened with a more specific focus on equity, equality, or justice. A broad definition of social change that does not specifically call out these issues allows manifestations of power, privilege, race and racism, white supremacy, and other "isms" to go unchecked. The failure to do so leaves social change vaguely defined and perhaps miseducates students on the vital role leadership has in creating a more just and equitable world. The prospect of imagining a better world also requires liberation, which appears to be missing in present day leadership programs and frameworks.

So, what does leadership for liberation mean? Leadership for liberation means preparing students to grapple with complex, interconnected systems of oppression and domination that prevent the envisioning of a liberated world. Leadership for liberation espouses that in order to create a better world, we must shift systems, structures, and cultural norms that give rise to and support vexing and wicked problems of inequality. Leadership for liberation also takes into account both individual liberation for the oppressed and the oppressor and collective liberation for humankind. We strongly believe that leadership for liberation requires resistance to traditional systems of power and dominant ways of enacting change. And leadership for liberation requires a shift in orientation—for people to be less concerned with obtaining privilege and position and more concerned with the liberation of all people.

bell hooks (1994) defines individual liberation as a "historical moment when one begins to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstance" (p. 47). Collective liberation recognizes that all of our struggles are intimately connected and that the work of liberating the oppressed and the oppressor falls on everyone. Freire (1996) reminds us that the oppressor is a victim in the cycle of oppression and is not free either. In the act of dominating, one is also stripped of their humanity and so all of us remain in a cycle where we are not fully free or human. hooks also writes, "until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle" (hooks, 2006, Chapter 20). It is the responsibility of all to participate in the un/learning needed to achieve systemic change. And therefore, we position the information in this guide to be of use to students from all identities and backgrounds.

BACKGROUND & ORGANIZATION

This practitioner guide introduces the leadership for liberation framework that includes cultural commitments, mindsets, and liberatory values and concepts. The values and concepts we introduce in this guide originally emerged from a critique of the Social Change Model of Leadership (see Harper and Kezar, 2021) and how it neglects to mention race, power, and oppression. We then used Yosso's model of Community Cultural Wealth (2005) to think through potential values and concepts that we believe to be connected to liberation and its relationship to engagement with race, power, and oppression. Our decision to focus on race in our article lies in the belief that race is one of the most insidious forms of power and oppression. As we note in the article, while we focus on race explicitly, we believe the liberatory values and concepts can be utilized by other members of marginalized groups and even those from dominant and privileged groups. We also foregrounded race as Yosso's model is focused on race. This guide, however, extends our thinking beyond race. And our work is strongly grounded in notions of intersectionality and that various aspects of one's identity may result in being minoritized or discriminated against. Moreover, our current turbulent times have only intensified the need for student leaders to be introduced and to think about liberation especially as it becomes increasingly evident that radical transformation is needed for our society. The organization of this guide is as follows:

1. First, we begin by providing space for higher education professionals to participate in an inward reflection. The inward reflection is a way for practitioners to critically reflect on their identities, any biases they believe they hold, and the ways in which they define leadership and arrive at the work of leadership development.
2. Second, we introduce the CECIL cultural commitments and leadership for liberation mindsets that serve as the bedrock for the liberatory values and concepts and subsequent activities.
3. Third, we transition into discussing the team roles and competencies needed for achieving individual and collective liberation.
4. Fourth, we detail the six liberatory values and concepts that we believe capture leadership for liberation best: liberation, power and oppression acknowledgment system challenging, storytelling, support networks, and fellowship. For each value and concept, we present two activities that put the values and concepts into play that can be integrated into your respective leadership programs. We are also careful to consider both synchronous and asynchronous activities to fit the current times and also as a way to get practitioners to think about offering virtual leadership programming in the future.
5. Fifth, we present a way to incorporate leadership for liberation values and concepts into one of the most popularly used models of leadership, the Social Change Model of Leadership. The example is derived from Harper and Kezar's (2021) publication, Leadership for Racially Minoritized Students: An Expansion of the Social Change Model of Leadership.
6. Lastly, we round out this practitioner guide by offering ways to evaluate students' grasp on these values and concepts.

INWARD REFLECTION

Research on educators that teach and facilitate leadership reveals that 85% of leadership educators are white (Jenkins & Owen, 2016), and, more broadly, leadership educators tend to draw on their own lived experiences, previous leadership roles, and professional experiences in the process of conceptualizing and facilitating leadership (Priest & Seemiller, 2018). In knowing this, it is important to reflect on your previous experiences, definitions of leadership and liberation, and salient and hidden identities that may drastically affect how you teach and facilitate leadership.

Salient identities are best described as prevalent identities that show up the most in specific situations or environments (e.g., gender, racial identity). Hidden identities are identities that may not be outwardly apparent but still may alter how you experience certain situations or environments (e.g., sexual orientation, religion).

Complete the following reflection independently. If you are walking through this guide with your staff or in a special reading group, it would be beneficial for everyone to share their reflections if comfortable.

QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
<p>PAUSE and READ: We encourage you to think about both your salient and “hidden” identities for this question. Some examples include: cisgender, middle-class, millennial, able-bodied, etc. These identities, both the one’s we think about all the time and the one’s we take for granted, have significant bearing on how we teach leadership to college students.</p>	<p>Name:</p>
<p>?</p>	<p>What identities do you hold?</p>
<p>Your Role on Campus (in your own words)</p>	
<p>What keeps you in this work?</p>	
<p>How do you define and conceptualize leadership?</p>	
<p>What previous experiences helped you make sense of leadership?</p>	
<p>How does your definition differ from what we offer in the introduction? Do you imagine this being problematic as you work through this guide and attempt to integrate these principles into your practice?</p>	<p>How does this definition and conceptualization of leadership change how you teach and facilitate leadership, if at all?</p>
<p>?</p>	<p>How do you define and conceptualize liberation?</p>
<p>What does leadership for liberation mean to you?</p>	

CECIL CULTURAL COMMITMENTS & LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION PRINCIPLES

The leadership for liberation framework is best informed by a number of cultural commitments and mindsets that serve as the foundation for liberatory values and concepts. In this section, we introduce and detail these commitments and principles.

CECIL CULTURAL COMMITMENTS

As we look toward rethinking leadership for social change with an eye for liberation, it is necessary to name specific cultural commitments. These cultural commitments serve as a “true north star” for which all of your values, concepts, beliefs, and activities rely on. For the leadership for liberation framework, we introduce and employ what we call the CECIL cultural commitments. CECIL is an acronym that stands for Community, Empathy, Creativity, Inclusion, and Love. These commitments are explained in the subsequent figure and in more detail below:



COMMUNITY: The work of achieving individual and collective liberation can be taxing. But it is necessary. Therefore, the community cultural commitment exerts a reliance on each other and a deep care and concern for one another. Ways to enact this commitment are to check in with each other both during and after the leadership program, offering ways to connect and learn about each other outside of the leadership program, and ensuring there is always time during the leadership program to build community with one another. It is also beneficial for practitioners and students to think about what radical community care looks like for your specific context and program.

EMPATHY: A commitment to empathy is vital for leaders invested in both individual and collective liberation. Empathy is best understood as being compassionate towards others and their respective needs and experiences. Without empathy, leaders cannot effectively enact deep, transformational change or move towards collective liberation. A cultural commitment to empathy also means listening to understand and not to respond as well as being aware of words that wound and halt progress. Centering members from oppressed and marginalized communities is necessary for this commitment.

CREATIVITY: Leaders with an eye toward liberation have to exhibit a radical imagination and employ creative ideas and strategies to unlock liberation. That means thinking beyond what has been done before, trying new things, not being afraid to fail, using new mediums, and repurposing ideas meant for different contexts. To be creative, many individuals will need to think beyond their current backgrounds and experiences often grounded in western or white traditions. To open up the available ways of thinking about the world, this cultural commitment suggests that indigenous ways of knowing and strategies and practices that emerge from communities of color can very well help transform our society.

LOVE: In bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), she urges us to center an ethic of love and deep care for each other and the world because "without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world from oppression and exploitation are doomed." Though these cultural commitments are in no particular hierarchical order, love can only be embodied by practicing the other cultural commitments as well. Any movement towards liberation or social change must be rooted in a love ethic. Adopting a love ethic requires individuals to look beyond themselves and make a conscious choice to think about and care for others and embrace where others are in the learning process as we work collectively to transform our society.

INCLUSION: A cultural commitment around inclusion ensures that there is an intentionality to include the voices, perspectives, and ideas of oppressed and marginalized people. It decenters dominant perspectives and narratives and centers and celebrates members from marginalized communities and the knowledge and skills they have to bear. The idea of radical hospitality emerges in this commitment, which means promoting honest interactions rooted in mutual respect, honesty, and belongingness.

LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION PRINCIPLES

Liberation is tied up with social transformation and radical reconstructions for a better world—a world where all can thrive, and oppression can be absolved. It is in this nexus where leadership, which we define as relational not positional, has the ability to make a difference. But some principles must guide this work.

In this section, we posit six core principles to the work of leadership for liberation. Each principle is influenced by the work of scholars and civil rights leaders who have fought for freedom and liberation (e.g., The Combahee River Collective, bell hooks, Michael C. Dawson, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Christopher Emdin, and Paulo Freire). Further reading about liberation and other related concepts can be found in the recommended reading section of this guide.

These principles govern the values and concepts we outline later in the guide and work to build or activate certain muscles needed to achieve the goal of empowering, liberating the oppressed and the oppressor, and changing systems accordingly. The leadership for liberation principles can be found below:

LANGUAGE & LOGICS

Understanding language and logics is important if we are to overcome the interlocking system of domination that deeply affects the inability for everyone in our society to thrive. Not only is it important to know how to talk about race and oppression (e.g., definitions of race, racism, oppression), but it is just as important to learn how to read and understand real-life situations of racism, oppression, and discrimination. Some examples include understanding the idea of white tears, how policies are meticulously written to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people and understanding how the logic of colorblindness or discrimination manifests when race or discrimination are not specifically mentioned. Embedded within this principle is also the importance of using language and history as a guide to deal with problems that exist today. Language and logics shape our social order and if we want to actively build anew, we must have a foundational understanding of both.

TRAINING, ORGANIZING, STRATEGIZING

Training, organizing, and strategizing are all resilient and necessary to achieving liberation and leading with liberation in mind. This multipronged principle is upheld by the idea that leadership is relational (not positional) and that liberation can only be achieved by enforcing a comprehensive approach that relies on educating each other, leaning on strengths in the group and people within individual and collective networks (see Support Networks section), assigning team roles (see Assuming the Position section), and working together to devise a plan of action. With this principle at the front of mind, people begin to get a clearer sense of how we get from the current situation to the future.

COSMOPOLITANISM (NO BYSTANDERS)

As outlined in our introduction, the work of liberating both the oppressed and the oppressor and dissolving these interlocking systems of oppression falls on everyone. With that being said, we posit cosmopolitanism as a necessary leadership for liberation principle. Cosmopolitanism is concerned with fostering socioemotional connections with the goal of building students' sense of responsibility to each other and the learning environment (Emdin, 2017). In the principle of cosmopolitanism, everyone has a responsibility for the learning that happens in the space. The learning space is not a space for bystanders—everyone plays an active role.

IDENTITY CONSCIOUSNESS

A consciousness of our identities and how they show up and perhaps take space is imperative to the work of individual and collective liberation. Also, embedded within liberation is breaking the shackles of imposed stereotypes that may limit how you participate in leadership and take position in the fight toward transformative change. Enacting this mindset means sharing your identities aloud and doing the internal work needed to learn about the privileges and disadvantages your identities carry in a number of places and spaces.

PRAGMATIC UTOPIANISM

Borrowing from political scientist Michael Dawson (2013), we think of pragmatic utopianism as the synthesis of imagining what could be with considerations of political reality in order to think of ways to develop a liberated world. Pragmatic utopianism acknowledges that transformative change can occur within our current social order and clears a utopian path made possible by our imperfect policies, practices, and institutions. And in this very difficult pragmatic utopianism, it is important to celebrate small wins and always be aware of the systems that run through our society.

OPEN AND HONEST DELIBERATION

Liberation requires deliberation. In other words, uncomfortable conversations are welcome and necessary if we aspire to move toward liberation. Through open and honest deliberation, complicated truths emerge and members in the group can learn from each other and perhaps shift their own beliefs and values. Many of the values and concepts outlined in this framework (i.e., power and oppression acknowledgement, system challenging) require students to engage in courageous conversations that may get tense at times. But the conversations help build trust, check our biases and perceptions, and help us to imagine what can be.

In the guide, we will reference the liberation principles and cultural commitments which are important to each of the six values needed to develop leadership for liberation. These references are made so that leadership educators can be sure to be cognizant of integrating these principles and commitments into the activities. It's also an important place for higher education professionals to remind students to be thinking of these principles and commitments as they develop a better understanding of these values.



We understand that other principles may work when thinking about institutional context. Are there any other principles you would enact? More importantly, mindsets that are not deficit-based or based on interest convergence (Bell, 1980)?

ASSUMING THE POSITION

While most leadership frameworks and models champion the collaborative nature of leadership, very few discuss the roles members of a group should play as they move toward social change. Every student arriving at comprehensive leadership programming on college campuses brings a unique set of skills and knowledge that can contribute to the leadership needed to achieve liberation.

Borrowing from Bensimon and Neumann's (1993) study of college leadership, we introduce the team competencies and characteristics needed for a group of leaders working to achieve collective and individual liberation. A few of the roles were altered to suit the leadership for liberation framework. Our hope is that higher education professionals can introduce students to these team competencies and characteristics in their respective leadership programs so that students can use this in their future leadership and social change endeavors.

▶ **CRITICAL THINKERS** who are inquiry-oriented, analytical and expand the team's "intelligence" by redefining and reinterpreting the problem or issue.

▶ **COLLABORATIVE LEARNERS** who are open to new ideas and constructive feedback, and who do not see participation as a burden.

▶ **ANALYSTS** who are skilled at defining the problem, interpreting and seeing patterns in data, viewing data from diverse angles, and helping the team move from the simple to the complex.

▶ **INTERPRETERS** who do not jump to conclusions, explain how an issue or topic could be viewed by those outside the team, and routinely ask, "How do we know that ...?"

▶ **EMOTIONAL MONITORS** who establish, maintain, and balance the human, personal, and emotional aspects of team dynamics, and who will facilitate others, introduce humanity, and ease tensions.

▶ **ADVOCATES** who ask questions that center oppressed groups and individuals, and acknowledge inequities are created and/or exacerbated by inadequate knowledge, a lack of cultural know-how, and/or the absence of meaningful support.

▶ **FRIENDLY SKEPTICS** who raise questions and critiques that will ultimately strengthen the team's approach to social change.

▶ **LIBERATION & TASK MONITORS** who keep the team on task and focused on liberation as an end-goal. Liberation monitors are aware of their many identities and in regards to race, recognize that white is a racial identity; reflect on consequences of taken-for-granted practices; remind the group of their working definitions of liberation and leadership; and model how to view practices, structures, and policies through a critical lens. It is imperative that the role of a liberation monitor does not lie solely with racially minoritized students or students from other marginalized groups.



Comforting the emotions of white participants can hinder the learning and liberation of other racially minoritized participants. How will the person in this role ensure that does not happen?

SOME WAYS TO ASSIGN THESE ROLES ARE TO:

- RESPECTFULLY SURVEY STUDENTS AFTER INTRODUCING THEM TO THE TEAM COMPETENCIES AND CHARACTERISTICS;
- HAVE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN AN OPEN DIALOGUE ABOUT WHAT ROLES THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE PLAYING WHILE ALSO ENCOURAGING THEM TO CHALLENGE THEMSELVES IN NEW ROLES;
- HAVE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN AN ASSET REFLECTION ACTIVITY AND CONNECT ROLES TO THE INDIVIDUAL ASSETS IN THE GROUP.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LIBERATION VALUES & CONCEPTS

In the following sections, we will begin to introduce the leadership for liberation values and concepts in more detail. In each section we also reference what CECIL commitments and principles are central to the value/concept.

For brevity, we have compiled a table with the liberatory value/concept, explanation, and the CECIL commitments and principles enacted.

Liberatory Value/ Concept	Explanation of Value/Concept	CECIL Commitments & Leadership for Liberation Principles
Liberation	Liberation is both an individual and collective process in which one becomes aware of their true selves, their political circumstances, and works to upend oppressive structures and systems.	Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Logics; • Training, Organizing, Strategizing; • Cosmopolitanism; • Identity Consciousness; • Open and Honest Deliberation; • Pragmatic Utopianism
Power & Oppression Acknowledgement	The power and oppression acknowledgement refers to a critical consciousness of power imbalances and a mindfulness and awareness of how whiteness shows up, is perpetuated, and exists as a direct threat to liberation.	Empathy, Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Logics; • Cosmopolitanism; • Identity Consciousness; • Open and Honest Deliberation
System Challenging	System challenging focuses on denouncing and actively confronting oppressive systems, policies, and practices that prohibit real change. To actively challenge a system means to diverge from what society or those in positions of power view as normal or even acceptable	Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Logics; • Training, Organizing, Strategizing; • Cosmopolitanism; • Identity Consciousness; • Open and Honest Deliberation; • Pragmatic Utopianism
Storytelling	Storytelling is a highly emotional activity that involves sharing impactful, resonating stories, and counternarratives.	Community, Empathy, Creativity, Inclusion, Love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Logics; • Training, Organizing, Strategizing; • Cosmopolitanism; • Identity Consciousness; • Open and Honest Deliberation
Support Networks	Support networks refer to people both inside and outside of the group attempting to make change that you can rely on for support and advice.	Community, Inclusion, Love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Logics; • Training, Organizing, Strategizing; • Cosmopolitanism
Fellowship	Fellowship refers to the connectedness of a group or community beyond the problem they are trying to change.	Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmopolitanism; • Identity Consciousness

**Note: Some of these activities may activate negative or uncomfortable emotions from students. Thus, it is important to welcome those emotions and encourage the group to work through them together. This content may be new to some but is a learning experience for all.*

1. Liberation

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Language and Logics;
- Training, Organizing, Strategizing;
- Cosmopolitanism;
- Identity Consciousness;
- Open and Honest Deliberation;
- Pragmatic Utopianism

Liberation is both an individual and collective process and should be the driving value of any leadership program focused on social change. For the individual, liberation is looking inward and realizing potential, breaking away from stereotypes and misconceptions that society so wrongly stamps on you, and acknowledging the need to be in a constant state of learning and unlearning about yourself, systems, institutions, policies, and people. The latter is also true for collective liberation. Collective liberation means that we must work for justice for everyone and calls for groups to be un/learn together about systems of oppression and marginalization so that, together, groups can imagine a more just and equitable world.

While disagreements are inevitable and inescapable, collective liberation struggle occurs when there is a lack of harmony, understanding, and common purpose. As Robert Jones Jr. (Son of [James] Baldwin) says, “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

“There can be no liberation without education.” Accordingly, leadership education and programmatic efforts should do more than teach the concept of leadership or how to cultivate leaders. It should educate participants about the interlocking systems of domination and oppression that plague our society and our institutions.



What does this quote mean to you? How can you ensure that education about systems, policies, and practices that are meant to disenfranchise people from marginalized and oppressed communities happens in your leadership programs? How will you continue to educate yourself to feel more comfortable educating others?



credit: Rob Walsh (modified)

ACTIVITY: WHAT'S YOUR TOMORROW?

TIME COMMITMENT: 20 MINUTES

MATERIALS: STRIPS OF PAPER, BUCKET, PENS

PURPOSE: LIBERATION IS HAVING ONE FOOT IN THE NEW WORLD AND ONE FOOT OUT OF THE OLD WORLD. THERE IS AN AWARENESS OF WHAT COULD BE, WHAT IS, AND WHAT CAN'T BE. LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, REQUIRES A RADICAL IMAGINATION. THIS ACTIVITY ENCOURAGES PARTICIPANTS TO THINK ABOUT THE LARGEST, MOST VEXING SOCIETAL PROBLEMS OR LARGEST, CAMPUS ISSUES AND ASKS THEM TO BRAINSTORM INDIVIDUALLY, AND THEN COLLECTIVELY, A BETTER TOMORROW. THIS ACTIVITY ASKS THEM TO ALSO ELIMINATE THE BOUNDS OF SOCIETY, SOCIETAL NORMS, OR SCRIPTS BECAUSE THE FIRST STEP TO LIBERATION IS IMAGINING WHAT COULD BE POSSIBLE IF INEQUITIES AND INEQUALITIES DID NOT EXIST. AFTER THEY DO THIS, THEY THINK ABOUT WHAT SOCIETAL STRUCTURES, NORMS, OR INSTITUTIONS PREVENT A BETTER TOMORROW FROM HAPPENING.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Share the purpose of the activity.
2. If the activity is conducted in person, hand out 3-4 strips of paper to each participant, and if the activity is conducted in a virtual environment, encourage students to write their responses on paper readily available to them or type out their responses.
3. Explain to them that, for this activity, they will be asked to think about societal or campus issues that exist because of harmful policies or practices. On their strips of paper or on a document, participants will write their hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow where these inequities and inequalities no longer exist. Give students 10 minutes to complete this and be sure to remind them that their names do not need to go on the slips.
 - a. It might be helpful to share examples with participants. Here are two:
 - i. Tomorrow, the University of Southern California will abolish the SAT/ACT requirement for undergraduate students.
 - ii. Tomorrow, election day will be a holiday.
4. After participants are done writing on their slips of paper, have them drop their slips into the bucket. If the activity is virtual, please skip this step.
5. The facilitator will then mix them up in the bucket and inform participants that you will be passing the bucket around the circle and each person will read a paper slip out loud. If the activity is virtual, facilitators should encourage students to go around and share their hopes for tomorrow.
6. After the activity is done, offer time for participants to silently reflect on the activity.
7. Ask some debriefing questions. Here are a few to get you started:
 - a. How did this activity make you feel? Hopeful? Hopeless? Powerful? Powerless?
 - b. What systems or policies must be revisited and changed to put some of these ideas into action?
 - c. What does leadership have to do with putting some of these ideas into action?

**ACTIVITY: VOICING COMMITMENTS, TAKING A STAND
(DEVELOPED BY THE CATALYST PROJECT)**

TIME COMMITMENT: 30-40 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON SIZE OF THE GROUP

MATERIALS: FLIP CHART PAPER, MARKERS

PURPOSE: EVERYONE'S LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED IF WE TRULY WANT TO MOVE TOWARDS COLLECTIVE LIBERATION. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO "PASS THE MIC" AND HEAR PARTICIPANTS' "WHY." THIS ACTIVITY IS BENEFICIAL FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED AS IT HELPS PARTICIPANTS CONNECT TO A SENSE OF THEIR OWN POWER AND PASSION FOR JUSTICE AND LIBERATION.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Share the purpose of the activity and remind students of the definition of collective liberation and its importance in your leadership program context.
2. Explain that, in this activity, everyone will have the opportunity to share aloud their commitments to engaging in social justice and liberation work and what drives them.
3. Also, explain that it can be scary to be vulnerable and honest talking about things that are hard to talk about and that we were probably taught at a young age not to talk about it, but part of how we counter that is by practicing speaking our truths.
4. Share that while participants are talking, facilitators will write a word or two for each person to synthesize themes across people's commitment to liberation and social justice work.
5. The facilitator should share first and model the activity for participants. Facilitators should estimate a minute or two per participant.
6. After participants have spoken, honor what people have said and connect it to the goals of the overall program. It would also be beneficial to share out some words that were written on the flipchart.

2. Power & Oppression

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Language and Logics;
- Open and Honest Deliberation
- Cosmopolitanism;
- Identity Consciousness;

When it comes to leadership, power and oppression are always in play. Thus, it is important to call out and acknowledge the manifestations of power and oppression. We posit the Power and Oppression Acknowledgement as an extensive and ongoing intentional process where the group works together to comprehend and eradicate power imbalances by way of personal anecdotes and awareness of group dynamics. Encouraging an explicit acknowledgment of power dynamics ensures this aspect cannot be ignored which is often preferred by those in power. In acknowledging the power and oppression dynamics in the room, the group, together, can think through how power dynamics shape leadership processes, raise questions about who speaks, and ensure everyone's voices are heard.

Embedded within this acknowledgment is mindfulness regarding whiteness and the way it manifests both within the group and the strategies and tactics the group is using to tackle the issue. The group must be aware, at every opportunity they get, about the ways whiteness oppresses and dominates. Though these conversations are tough and uncomfortable for facilitators and participants alike, they are necessary when thinking about liberation and disrupting inequitable and unjust systems. **As Tressie McMillan-Cottom (2018) explicates, “Whiteness defends itself. Against change, against progress, against hope, against black dignity, against Black lives, against reason, against truth” (p. 117).** Therefore, it's imperative that students see it, acknowledge it, and actively disrupt it.



What does this quote mean to you? How have you been complicit in whiteness and how will you change that?

Another way to acknowledge power and oppression is to acknowledge the native land that is currently being occupied. Acknowledging the indigenous peoples land where leadership activities are taking place calls attention to the physical manifestation of white supremacy and genocide that is necessary to properly recognize how power and oppression have shaped social order and physical space. In virtual spaces each person can say where they're from and what native people originally inhabited the land. These are small yet mighty ways to acknowledge power and oppression. A map of native land can be found at <https://native-land.ca/>.

ACTIVITY: BALCONY MOMENTS (ADAPTED FROM UMBC CAMPUS LIFE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS)

TIME COMMITMENT: 20 MINUTES

MATERIALS: VIDEO (LINK BELOW)

PURPOSE: ONE WAY TO DISRUPT WHITENESS AND WHITE SUPREMACY IS TO CALL OUT CONTRADICTIONS AND PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR AND SPEECH IN THE MOMENT. WHEN IT COMES TO LEADERSHIP, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE DYNAMICS IN OUR CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITIES. WHEN THERE IS TENSION IN THE ROOM, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THAT TENSION. WHEN PEOPLE ARE FEELING LESS THAN FULLY ENGAGED, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT WHY YOU'RE FEELING THAT WAY. THE IDEA IS TO GET IN THE HABIT OF NOTICING YOUR ENVIRONMENT AND RECOGNIZING INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS, WHICH IS KEY TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE LEADER AND MOVING TOWARD LIBERATION.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain to participants that we're going to call this calling of attention to dynamics "balcony moments." Balcony moments are a metaphor for observing group dynamics, and the metaphor goes something like this: If you're dancing on the dance floor, most of your attention is on the people right around you. But, if you go up on the balcony, you would notice all sorts of patterns. On the balcony, you can gain perspective on the bigger picture.
2. We encourage you to take ownership of your own learning experience by calling Balcony Moments during this program, where you call attention to dynamics you are noticing among your peers. For example, you might call a balcony moment to say that only white women have been speaking today, or that the way we are discussing a concept is not getting at the root of the issue.
3. Calling balcony moments can feel a little bizarre at first because it may feel disruptive or counter-intuitive to the way higher education is set up. However, we encourage you to give it a try, because we may all be able to benefit from something you have to share.
4. Explain to participants that we will watch a video (<https://tinyurl.com/LFLbalcony>) and debrief together our observations from the balcony.
5. After watching the video, allow participants time to sit and reflect. Then, open the floor for observations and reflections. Here are some questions to get you started:
 - a. What group dynamics were at play in the classroom setting?
 - b. Was white supremacy and other forms of privilege evident in the classroom?Provide examples.
6. Explain to participants that we want to engrave balcony moments into our program. Therefore, today, the facilitators will model balcony moments throughout the session. If you feel compelled or so willing, please feel free to call your own balcony moments today and any moment after. Balcony moments are much needed and welcomed interruptions.

ACTIVITY: POWER TAPPING (ADAPTED FROM UNITED WORKED HUMAN RIGHTS CURRICULUM, N.D.)

TIME COMMITMENT: 30 MINUTES

MATERIALS: LARGE EMPTY SPACE (FOR MOVING AROUND), FLIP CHART PAPER, WHITE BOARD

PREPARATION: PREPARATION*: THIS ACTIVITY REQUIRES SOME PREPARATION AHEAD OF TIME. PLEASE READ THE NOTES BELOW:

- **ON FLIP-CHART PAPER AHEAD OF TIME, CREATE A CHART WITH THREE PANELS. IN EACH PANEL, WRITE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING: VISIBLE POWER, HIDDEN POWER, INVISIBLE POWER.**
- **IN ORDER FOR THIS ACTIVITY TO COME OFF WELL, NONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS CAN KNOW WHAT THE ACTIVITY IS AHEAD OF TIME. THE GOAL IS TO SHOW AN EXAMPLE OF THE THREE FORMS OF POWER AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF DISRUPTION OF THESE FORMS.**
- **YOU MUST CLEARLY UNDERSTAND THE RULES OF THE GAME AND READ THROUGH AND THINK THROUGH THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS. IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR FACILITATORS TO PLAY THE GAME AHEAD OF TIME AND THINK ABOUT HOW IT WILL WORK IN PRACTICE WITH THE PARTICIPANTS YOU HAVE. THIS SHOULD LEAD TO DEVELOPING SOME OF YOUR OWN QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION.**

PURPOSE: BEING AWARE OF POWER—VISIBLE, HIDDEN, AND INVISIBLE POWER—IS BENEFICIAL TO LEADERSHIP AS POWER APPEARS IN MANY WAYS. FOR THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO PLAY OUT THE SUBTLE DIMENSIONS OF POWER AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE CONCEPTS OF VISIBLE, HIDDEN, AND INVISIBLE POWER.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Set the room up with chairs in a circle. DO NOT inform students of the purpose of the game or how it has anything to do with power. Instead inform them of this rule (read directly from the paper):
 - a. “No one can talk. If you are tapped once, you can stand up/raise your hand (accessible language). If you are tapped twice you can do whatever you want.”
 - i. NOTE: It is important to remember the wording for these rules. You cannot say, “If I tap you...” because you need to go back later and be able to say that there was no rule about who could do the tapping. So simply say: “If you are tapped once you can stand. If you are tapped twice you can do whatever you want”.
 - ii. NOTE: Move briskly so people don’t think too much about the rules, which will lead them to discover the loopholes before the game is played.
 - iii. NOTE: Make sure not to say who can do the tapping, or what ‘do anything you want’ means. If these questions come up, reply with the rules above, and say, “Let’s do the game, and you will see how it works.”(In this instance, prepare for the possibility that someone will discover the loopholes within the game and actually disrupt the balance of power.) Keep your answers as short as possible without giving away that you are hiding something. You are essentially rushing through the rules to minimize scrutiny. You want people to figure it out or respond directly to the game as it is being played.
2. Do the activity, making sure to tap only one person twice, and making sure that at least one person is not tapped at all, which means they will remain sitting.
 - a. NOTE: There are two scenarios here, one of which is far more likely than the other. In the first scenario, (the more likely one,) no one realizes their own agency in creating power. Those who were tapped twice walked around the room, did a few jumping jacks, maybe even wrote on the chalk board, or left the room. Those who could stand and not talk did so, and those who remained sitting and silent, remained silent, remained sitting and silent.

- a. NOTE: There are two scenarios here, one of which is far more likely than the other. In the first scenario, (the more likely one,) no one realizes their own agency in creating power. Those who were tapped twice walked around the room, did a few jumping jacks, maybe even wrote on the chalk board, or left the room. Those who could stand and not talk did so, and those who remained sitting and silent, remained sitting and silent.
3. After the activity, bring the group back to their chairs.
4. Debrief with the group. Here are some structured questions to get you started:
 - a. How did each person feel in the role they were given?
 - b. Why did I (the facilitator) choose to do what I did and why (the more important piece) did those of you who were tapped not choose to tap the others and give them freedom also?
 - i. NOTE: Most people will be very surprised that they actually could have tapped the others, having accepted completely that this was the provenance only of you, the facilitator. Discuss why.
 - c. Why is it that we never questioned the roles given to us, or the roles that have already been set up before we walked in the room?
 - d. Why didn't other who stood up/raised their hands begin to tap others to stand up? Was this something you even considered doing?
 - e. Why did the people who sat the whole time stay that way? What did you think about while sitting? Did you think about getting up?
5. Pull out the flip chart paper with the three panels labeled visible, hidden, and invisible power. Have the group brainstorm and think through the rules and work together to write down the various ways power was expressed. This can be written down in the form of questions. Here is an example:



POWER

Visible	Hidden	Invisible
The rules as they were told -- Why were people given the three ways of interacting during the game?	Why did (facilitator) tap only one person twice instead of everyone?	Why did the person who was tapped twice believe that they could not similarly tap everyone twice?

3. System Challenging

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Empathy, Creativity, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Language and Logics;
- Training, Organizing, Strategizing;
- Cosmopolitanism;
- Identity Consciousness;
- Open and Honest Deliberation;
- Pragmatic Utopianism

A number of traditional and popularly utilized leadership models and frameworks rely on normative and dominant ways of enacting change. Within a liberation framework, those ways are insufficient. Leadership for liberation means tackling oppressive systems, disrupting them, and building a new more liberated and equitable society. **Therefore, system challenging is one of the most important values within this framework.**



How, if at all, do you encourage students to challenge the system in your leadership development programs?

System challenging focuses on being aware of the system and the way it works. Then, moving towards denouncing and actively confronting oppressive systems, policies, and practices that prohibit real change. To actively challenge a system means to diverge from what society or those in positions of power view as normal or even acceptable. In other words, students must get creative and tap into a radical imagination to enact deep and systemic change that liberates the oppressed.

Teaching students to challenge systems actively pushes against notions of white supremacy and helps them see that deep and systemic change occurs when you challenge oppressive and inequitable systems. System challenging asks students to tap into or develop a form of resistant capital. It also asks for the group at large to be tempered radicals (Kezar et al., 2011), working within the system but also finding ways to profoundly disrupt the very system they're working in and want to change.

Facilitating the system challenging value takes courage, patience, and empathy. Getting students to think creatively about ways to disrupt inequitable systems can be difficult because we've all been socialized to think that change looks a certain way. It can also be difficult because there is a heightened level of racial literacy needed to challenge systems and achieve both individual and collective liberation. Therefore, it is important for students and facilitators to remind themselves of the leadership for liberation mindsets outlined in the beginning of this guide. **Curriculum developers must embed racial literacy activities into their leadership development curriculum and encourage students to do the work beyond the time allotted in the program.** Some ideas include requiring a community reading about oppression and marginalization (e.g., *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race* (Tatum, 2017) and *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower* (Cooper, 2018)) and developing a glossary of racial literacy terms as a community to show how these terms and concepts are defined and operationalized in many ways. We provide other racial literacy resources in the Storytelling section of this guide and under the racial literacy mindset.



What does racial literacy have to do with leadership?

ACTIVITY: IMAGINATION & RECONFIGURATION

TIME COMMITMENT: 20 MINUTES

MATERIALS: FLIPCHART PAPER, MARKERS

PURPOSE: TO CHALLENGE NORMATIVE AND OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS, WE MUST BE AWARE OF THE SCRIPTS AT PLAY. THIS ACTIVITY ASKS STUDENTS TO TAKE NOTE OF THEIR IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT, WORK TOGETHER TO IMAGINE ALTERNATIVES, AND THEN TAKE ACTION AS A COLLECTIVE. THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THIS ACTIVITY IS TO SIMULATE WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO CHANGE NORMATIVE AND OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS SO THAT ALL CAN THRIVE. THIS ACTIVITY ALSO GIVES PARTICIPANTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE EFFECTS OF LIBERATION IN REAL TIME.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remind participants of the purpose of this activity.
2. Encourage participants to take stock of the scripts in play in the room. Some examples may include everyone sitting, raising hands to speak, sitting in a circle, etc.
3. After participants observe the scripts in the room, ask them the following questions to get them to think about oppressive environments and environments that are not conducive to a liberatory environment:
 - a. What scripts do you feel comfortable with keeping in play? Why?
 - b. Whose voices and perspectives are centered in the current environment?
 - c. How are these scripts oppressive, if at all?
 - d. What should we change to create a more thriving environment?
4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION: Have students watch this clip, <https://tinyurl.com/LFLhidden>. And ask the following questions:
 - a. What scripts are at play in this clip?
 - i. Answers should include: “put your head down and work” mentality, all men wearing shirts and ties and women wearing long dresses passed their knees, Black women having to use the colored bathroom
 - b. Who holds the power in this clip? Why?
 - i. The most popular answer will be the white man asking Taraji P. Henson’s character where she was, but Taraji P. Henson’s character actually holds some power in this clip as well because she stood up for herself and the very system that was mistreating her.
 - c. How are these scripts oppressive, if at all?
 - i. Answers should include: they marginalize Black women, the clip shows a lack of agency on the part of workers regarding what they wear and how they work.
 - d. What would you change to create a more thriving environment?
 - i. Answers should include: more people of color in the room, racially and gender inclusive restrooms, more agency regarding what employees’ wear, and an openness to express feelings and emotions
5. On flipchart paper, encourage participants to create some new “rules” (term used loosely) to ensure a thriving environment for all.
6. Make sure to honor these new “rules” as the program goes on.

ACTIVITY: OP-ED WRITING

TIME COMMITMENT: 1 HOUR, 30 MINUTES

MATERIALS: LAPTOP, OP-ED EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES

PURPOSE: PRACTICING USEFUL TACTICS TO DISRUPT AND CHALLENGE THE SYSTEM IS IMPORTANT FOR ANY LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION PROGRAM. ONE WAY TO CALL ATTENTION TO ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IS THROUGH OP-ED WRITING. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL WORK AS A TEAM TO WRITE AN OP-ED ROOTED IN CHALLENGING THE SYSTEM AND UNCOVERING A CAMPUS ISSUE. THIS COLLABORATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY ACROSS LEADERS AMPLIFIES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE AND CAN BE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS MOBILIZING AND ORGANIZING TOWARDS DEEP, MEANINGFUL CHANGE.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remind participants of the purpose of the activity.
2. Inform participants that they will collectively write an op-ed piece centered around a pressing campus issue that they all find to be important.
 - a. Here is a “How-To” guide provided by the Harvard Kennedy School: [How to Write an Op-Ed or Column](#)
 - b. Compile examples of op-eds from places like the New York Times, Inside Higher Ed, The Chronicle. And encourage students to do the same.
3. Encourage students to tap into their networks for guidance and for people to edit their op-ed. Also encourage students to think about where they would want this piece to land: the campus newspaper, Inside Higher Ed, etc.
 - a. Note: This op-ed may take longer to produce. Think about providing space for participants to write the op-ed outside of the duration of the activity.
4. Debrief this activity. Here are a few questions to get you started:
 - a. How did you all balance different opinions, emotions, and perspectives?
 - b. Did anyone think about the audience of the op-ed or the language you used?

4. Storytelling

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Empathy, Creativity, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Language and Logics;
- Training, Organizing, Strategizing;
- Cosmopolitanism;
- Identity Consciousness;
- Open and Honest Deliberation;

Storytelling has the ability to illuminate the past, present, and future towards small- and large-scale change. Individual stories help us see the world and situations from other different vantage points. It is necessary for students to hear stories of power, privilege, resistance, marginalization, and oppression in an effort to construct another world that is stronger and more powerful than both the story and the realities alone (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The stories we champion and encourage higher education professionals to require of their students are stories that emerge from racial and cultural understandings, ways of knowing, and strategies for change. In the process, students and higher education professionals must confront their biases about the social other and open themselves to learning from and about each other to build community and move closer toward individual and collective liberation.

Storytelling can be a highly emotional practice. **Thus, it is important for higher education professionals to establish community guidelines.** While the type of storytelling we call for can be highly emotional, we do not encourage forcing everyone to share. Marginalized students are often asked to recite and revisit traumatic experiences while students from dominant and privileged identities listen on. Therefore, we encourage all students to participate in storytelling as they feel comfortable. But more specifically, we encourage students from dominant and privileged identities to think critically about their privilege in the process and how concepts such as power and oppression severely limits the opportunity for marginalized students to thrive and feel their own sense of liberation and authenticity. And for many people they



What community guidelines have you used or seen in past programs/activities that can be utilized for this value?



credit: Rain Bennet (modified)

ACTIVITY: POWER & OPPRESSION STORIES

TIME COMMITMENT: 40 MINUTES

MATERIALS: STORYCORPS APP & ACCOUNT, VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE

PURPOSE: STORIES OF BOTH POWER AND OPPRESSION ARE IMPORTANT TO HEAR AND DIGEST AS GROUPS MOVE TOWARD COLLECTIVE LIBERATION. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS HAVE A CHANCE TO INTERVIEW EACH OTHER ABOUT TIMES THEY FELT BOTH POWERFUL AND POWERLESS. THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS ACTIVITY IS TO GET PARTICIPANTS TO HEAR STORIES FROM THEIR PEERS FROM DIFFERENT IDENTITIES AND BACKGROUNDS IN AN INTIMATE SETTING. USING STORYCORPS OR VIDEO CONFERENCING SOFTWARE, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO INTERVIEW EACH OTHER AND RECORD (WITH CONSENT) THE INTERVIEW.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remind participants of the purpose of this activity.
2. Pair participants off.
3. Encourage participants to choose who will go first and who will go second. Also, remind them of the importance of active listening, not interrupting, and creating an inviting space.
4. Share that the two questions being asked in the interviews:
 - a. Share a story about a time in your life when you wanted/needed to feel seen, heard, or understood—and you were. What did this allow you to do and/or be?
 - b. Share a story about a time where a system, program, or policy let you down. How did this make you feel? Does it fuel your desire to make an impactful change?
5. Bring the group back together and debrief. Here are a few questions to get you started:
 - a. What did you learn about the importance of storytelling from this activity?

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

- Both students and facilitators should download the [StoryCorps](#) app (available on Apple and Android) before the activity begins. We encourage program staff to first play around with the interface and get a feel for the app. If the app does not fit the needs of your program or program delivery method, consider using a video conferencing alternative to conduct the intimate interviews.
- It is beneficial for educators to think about building a [StoryCorps Community](#) after creating a login. The community will allow for these stories and interviews to be kept private and only for program participants and staff.
- This activity can be done in person without StoryCorps or video-conferencing. It is important, though, to provide spaces for pairs to share their stories in private.

ACTIVITY: IDENTITY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

TIME COMMITMENT: 30 MINUTES

MATERIALS: PAPER, PENS, MARKERS, FLIPCHART PAPER, LAPTOP

PURPOSE: AN AWARENESS OF YOUR OWN IDENTITIES IS IMPERATIVE FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND LIBERATION. RACE AND RACISM ARE BOTH IMPORTANT TOPICS TO THINK THROUGH AND INTERROGATE INDEPENDENTLY BEFORE THE WORK OF DEEP, MEANINGFUL CHANGE CAN OCCUR. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE COMPLETE CREATIVE CONTROL TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN IDENTITY AUTOBIOGRAPHIES. BY CREATING TEXT, VISUAL STORYBOARDS, OR PODCASTS, JUST TO NAME A FEW, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO AMPLIFY THEIR AWARENESS OF THEIR OWN IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES FOR OTHERS TO DIGEST AND UNDERSTAND. BY GIVING PARTICIPANTS FULL CREATIVE CONTROL, THE HOPE IS THAT THIS EXPERIENCE WILL BE AGENTIC AND FULFILLING FOR ALL.

INSTRUCTIONS

There are no specific instructions for this activity.

NOTES & SUGGESTIONS

- This may very well be the first time some participants are grappling with their identity and other racialized encounters. Hence, we encourage program staff to build a digital repository for students to tease through in the construction of their identity autobiographies. We offer a few resources to begin:
 1. [Race and Racism Glossary](#)
 2. [Developing a Positive White Identity](#)
 3. [A Racial Autobiography of Race in Social Science Spaces: Reflections of My Early Understandings of Race and Racism](#)
 4. [Morgan Jenkins: This Will be My Undoing \(The B&N Podcast\)](#)
 5. [Racial Identity Development Models](#)
- This is a flexible activity where students have the autonomy to write about anything regarding their experiences with their identity construction. However, we encourage program staff to introduce autobiography bookends to shape the autobiography and give students a sense of direction. The Pacific Educational Group offers two bookend questions that ask specific questions about race. We endorse and encourage program staff to implement:
 - Earliest: What was your first personal experience in dealing with race or racism? Describe what happened.
 - Most Recent: Describe your most recent personal experience in dealing with race or racism. Describe what happened.
- For this activity, we encourage program staff and facilitators to also build their own identity autobiographies before participants create theirs. This can promote transparency and also offer an example for students to mimic and adapt.
- Encourage participants to use their creativity to create their autobiographies. They may consider creating picture-only PowerPoints, using the Voice Memos app, handwriting in a journal, or simply typing up their autobiographies in Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- **Whether these autobiographies are shared in a large group, with a partner, or shared at all is up to the discretion of the program staff and facilitators.** However, it is important for participants to share their autobiographies out loud as it can benefit the entire group and is a necessary practice for collective liberation and community building.



What community guidelines need to be put in place for students to feel safe sharing their identity autobiographies?

5. Support Networks

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Language and Logics;
- Training, Organizing, Strategizing;
- Cosmopolitanism;

Leadership for liberation relies on the premise that leadership is not positional, but instead relational. Thus, it is important to posit support networks as a necessary value within the leadership for liberation framework. Support networks can be best understood as people, both in-group or out-of-group, who individuals can rely on for resources, guidance, encouragement, and support. Building support networks within the group and relying on support networks outside of the group are both essential for individual and collective liberation.

Out of group support networks provide an unbiased, detached view from the problem allowing group members to get different opinions about the issues, how to tackle the issue, or support in the challenging process of deep and meaningful change and liberation. Students come from different backgrounds and communities and offer unique insights to social change. And they are connected to different people and resources as a result.

In group support networks are aligned with the deep care and ethic of love the permeates throughout the leadership for liberation framework.



credit: Matteo Vistocco (modified)

ACTIVITY: SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS (ADAPTED FROM KUSHIN, 2015)

TIME COMMITMENT: 30 MINUTES

MATERIALS: PAPER, MARKERS

PURPOSE: OUR SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE COMPOSED OF PEOPLE WE CAN TURN TO FOR ADVICE, SUPPORT, AND GUIDANCE. LEADERS CAN TAP INTO THEIR RESPECTIVE NETWORKS IN TIMES OF CRISES OR TO EVEN RECEIVE AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THINGS. WITHIN THESE TIES AND NETWORKS IS SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IS IMPORTANT WHEN LEADING WITH LIBERATION IN MIND. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL DRAW OUT THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS INDEPENDENTLY AND THEN, AS A GROUP, PARTICIPANTS WILL ATTEMPT TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TIES EXIST BETWEEN OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAM. IN THE END, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO PROPERLY VISUALIZE THEIR NETWORKS AND THE CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS IN THE PROGRAM AND BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THE BRIDGE BETWEEN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LEADERSHIP.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remind participants of the purpose of this activity.
2. Ask participants, on their blank sheet of paper, to create three columns.
3. In the first column write out the names of the last 10 people you talked to.
4. In the middle column, ask participants to write their relationship to the people in the first column. For example, was that person your friend, roommate, professor, etc?
5. In the last column, write the name of one person you introduced the person in the first column to. It is important that you have a connection to this person, too. This list creation should take about 5-7 minutes.
6. Then, ask participants to flip their paper over. On the other side, ask them to write out the names of the 10 people in the first column spread out all over the sheet, like a big circle.
7. Then, ask participants to draw a line from 1 person to another if person 1 knows person 2. Give participants 5-7 minutes to do this.
8. Now, ask participants to add their names somewhere on the sheet and draw arrows to people you are intimately connected to. On the side of the arrows, write any social object you have in common with the people connected to you (e.g., Lacrosse, class, zombie movies, Thai food etc.) and what do you go to them for (e.g., advice, support, guidance, information).
9. Debrief this activity. Here are a few questions to get you started:
 - a. How did it feel to visually draw out your social networks?
 - b. Now that it is visually drawn out, what do you believe to be the value of support networks in relation to leadership? Liberation? For example, who has power? Who influential? Who has particular skillsets? Who can your problem solve with? Who can you count on if you need help?
 - c. What surprised you about this activity?
10. After debriefing, inform participants to look at their networks and see their sense of capital -- who are they connected to? Who are the people they are connected to, connected to? That is, who can they draw upon if needed?
11. Explain that some people have networks where everyone knows everyone, like a sorority or fraternity. And some people have separate work, school, and friend groups that may not interact at all.
12. Invite participants to answer the following question: Who would you turn to in your personal network for advice or guidance around a complex societal issue like climate change or voting rights? Take a couple volunteers and encourage them to explain why.

ACTIVITY: BUILDING THE TEAM (ADAPTED FROM BURNETT & EVANS, 2016)

TIME COMMITMENT: 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: PAPER, PENS/MARKERS

PURPOSE: LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION IS BUILT ON THE IDEA THAT LEADERSHIP IS RELATIONAL AND COLLABORATIVE AND NOT POSITIONAL. TO FURTHER EXPLICATE THIS IDEA, PARTICIPANTS IN THIS ACTIVITY WILL THINK ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL NETWORKS AND CATEGORIZE PEOPLE INTO THREE ROLES: SUPPORTERS, PLAYERS, AND INTIMATES. IN DOING THIS, THE HOPE IS THAT PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO MORE CLEARLY CONCEPTUALIZE THE ROLES PEOPLE PLAY IN THEIR LIVES AND HOW THEY CAN TURN TO THEM IN TIMES OF NEED.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remind participants of the purpose of this activity.
 - a. **OPTIONAL:** This activity can be done as a complement to the social network analysis activity. In fact, it is highly encouraged.
2. Encourage participants to think about people both inside and outside of the group and categorize them into the following roles:
 - a. Supporters - go-to people you can count on to care about your life. These people are close enough to you that their encouragement helps keep you going, and their feedback is of real use.
 - b. Players - active participants in your leadership for liberation project and transformative change. These are people you are doing the work with, your co-workers in the classic sense.
 - c. Intimates - your close friends and family members. They could be affected by your liberation and change project and the most influential people in your life.
3. After participants have categorized the people in their lives, inform them that now they will take it a step further and list some positive and helpful characteristics attributes of these people that will help construct the ethic of love and care.
 - a. An example would be: Johnny (supporter) checks in on me periodically and always ends the call with a meditation that helps ground me in reality. My mother (intimate) is always reminding me of where I came from and sends me positive quotes almost daily. Lauren (player) embodies a deep care for others and ensures that I take care of myself even during this long and arduous fight for racial equity.
4. Debrief this activity. Here are some questions to get you started:
 - a. How did this activity make you feel? Was it hard to categorize the people in your life?
 - b. Were there people that fit in more than one category?

6. Fellowship

CECIL Cultural Commitments: Community, Empathy, Inclusion, Love

Leadership for Liberation Principles:

- Identity Consciousness;
- Cosmopolitanism;

Fellowship refers to the connectedness of a group or community beyond the problem they are trying to change. Fellowship helps to build love, trust, and care needed to achieve collective liberation. Through fellowship, isolation is minimized, and relationships can be built outside of the issue the group is trying to change. Fellowship also places a burden on those with privileged identities to see ways that members of a group may feel disconnected and to rectify this isolation.



How, if at all, is fellowship different than the traditional “get-to-know you” activities?

Fellowship can only be built with time. Hence, it is important to allocate a significant amount of time in your respective leadership programs and initiatives for students to get to know each other and develop a care for the people they’ll be working alongside. It cannot simply be an activity in the first few minutes of a program or on the first day of a retreat—it must be embedded throughout the duration of the leadership development program. Instilling this value of fellowship will allow students to see the purpose of connecting with others, hearing their stories, and getting to know them on a deeper, more intimate level.



ACTIVITY: IF YOU COULD TAKE A DIFFERENT PATH

TIME COMMITMENT: DEPENDS ON THE SIZE OF THE GROUP

MATERIALS: NONE

PURPOSE: FELLOWSHIP AND GETTING TO KNOW THE GROUP ON A DEEPER LEVEL IS IMPORTANT IF MEANINGFUL CHANGE AND LIBERATION EXISTS AS THE END-GOAL. IN THIS ACTIVITY, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO PRACTICE THE VULNERABILITY NEEDED FOR MEANINGFUL FELLOWSHIP. EACH PARTICIPANT WILL BE ASKED TO SHARE A LITTLE ABOUT THE PATH THEY CHOSE TO TAKE IN LIFE, AND, GIVEN EVERYTHING THEY KNOW NOW, WHICH PATH THEY WOULD CHOOSE TODAY IF THEY COULD DO IT ALL OVER. VOCALIZING THESE THOUGHTS AND DESIRES CAN BE INSPIRING, ENCOURAGING, AND CALMING—ALL WHILE BUILDING COMMUNITY AND GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER OUTSIDE OF THE ISSUE THE GROUP IS ATTEMPTING TO TACKLE.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Share the purpose of this activity, summarized above.
2. Ask each participant to share their name, a little about the path they chose to take in life, and which path they would choose today if they could do it all over, knowing what they know today.
3. The facilitator should start to model for the group and then encourage a volunteer to start.
4. After the entire group shares, ask debriefing questions. Here are some to get you started:
 - a. Are there any reactions to any of the stories shared during this activity?
 - b. What's one word to describe how you all are feeling at the conclusion of the activity?
 - c. Would you call this a liberating activity? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY: LIGHTING PASSION PRESENTATIONS

TIME COMMITMENT: TBD -- DEPENDENT ON HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS

MATERIALS: DEPENDENT ON HOW STUDENTS' WISH TO PREPARE THEIR PRESENTATION

PURPOSE: FOR THIS ACTIVITY, STUDENTS ARE ASKED TO PREPARE A PRESENTATION (AUDIO, VISUAL, MULTIMODAL, ETC) CENTERED AROUND SOMETHING THEY ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT AND WOULD LIKE TO TEACH THE GROUP ABOUT. THIS ACTIVITY PLACES A SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS AND THEIR PASSIONS AND AFFORDS STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT INTO PLAY THE RELATIONAL NATURE OF LEADERSHIP. LIGHTING PASSION PRESENTATIONS ALSO ALLOW STUDENTS TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER ON A DEEPER LEVEL SO THAT THEY CAN BUILD A LOVE AND CARE FOR EACH OTHER.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask students to silently think about something they are passionate about or deeply invested in. Some examples include baking, reality television, rowing, or community service.
2. Inform students that they will have 15 minutes to come up with a presentation based on what they are passionate about, why they're passionate about it, and why others should care or be interested. Students are welcome to make PowerPoints, posters, or simply talk through their lightning passion presentations.
3. Remind students that they are purposely called lightning presentations and that they will have 5 minutes to present.
4. While students present, encourage other students to take notes or think about questions to ask after the activity is over.
5. Once all students have presented, students will engage in the networking section of the activity where they will be able to freely move around the room (or virtually) asking each other questions about their passion presentations and also further build relationships amongst interests.

APPLYING LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION TO THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

What we have provided in earlier sections is a new way of thinking about leadership for systemic change through a liberation lens. While the liberatory values and concepts can be their own framework, we also encourage you to think about overlaying this framework with current models and frameworks used in your respective leadership programming.

In this section, we overlay the Leadership for Liberation framework onto the Social Change Model of Leadership (HERI, 1993). The Social Change Model of Leadership has been widely used in many student leadership development programs. The model has exposed students to a more collaborative, relational approach to leadership and has encouraged them to think about ways to achieve social change. The values and concepts are meant to add more weight and substance to the model instead of avoiding the model in its entirety.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP?

The Social Change Model of Leadership is a widely used model in higher education that challenges traditional notions of leadership and orients leaders to think more fully about positive social change.

The group of higher education administrators and educators who created the model, known as The Working Ensemble, contended that a new model was needed to best prepare the new generation of leaders; a model that centers service, social justice and a nonhierarchical approach to leadership and social change (HERI, 1993). As a result, they came up with seven values, popularly known as the 7 C's, that work interconnectedly to achieve social change. Each value is categorized under three domains: individual, group and societal/community.

- ▶ **INDIVIDUAL VALUES:** consciousness of self, congruence, commitment
- ▶ **GROUP VALUES:** collaboration, controversy with civility, common purpose
- ▶ **COMMUNITY VALUES:** citizenship

WHAT CRITIQUES EMERGE FROM THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL?

While a valuable approach to developing leadership, the Social Change Model shies away from explicit discussions regarding race, power, and oppression. Additionally, the model is marketed as a “one size fits all” approach to leadership that names desirable traits that all leaders should aspire and perpetuates dominant leadership narratives such as collaboration and civility (Cabrera, Corces-Zimmerman & Utt, 2019). The perpetuation of these dominant leadership narratives leads to interest convergence and, as a result, reinforces white supremacy, oppression, and marginalization in leadership.

Another critique of the model is that “positive social change” is a vague term and the model does not pinpoint whether the end goal is equity, equality, or justice. Without specifically noting these end goals, social change may end up reproducing inequalities.

HOW ARE THESE CRITIQUES ADDRESSED IN THE LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATIONS FRAMEWORK?

The Leadership for Liberation framework addresses the critiques of the Social Change Model in numerous ways. First, the power and oppression acknowledgement value and identity consciousness principle force students to grapple with race, power, and oppression at almost every turn. It goes beyond the consciousness of self value in the Social Change Model by encouraging students to be aware and cognizant of not only themselves but power dynamics and the pervasiveness of whiteness in society. We must name it to fully tackle and address it.

In addition, the Leadership for Liberation framework does not espouse normative approaches like controversy with civility or collaboration. But, instead, the framework encourages students to resist and challenge when they assume interest convergence is happening or when oppression is at play.

With liberation being the end goal of the Leadership for Liberation framework, we are able to be more specific about the type of positive social change we want. Liberation is not synonymous with equality, justice, or equity—it is about dismantling oppressive systems, unleashing from stereotypes and negative self-image, and reconstructing. The framework is different in that it honors and uplifts the knowledge and stories students bring to bear and calls for resistance and challenging oppressive systems.

WHAT CULTURAL COMMITMENT ARE HIDDEN WITHIN THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL?

While the model does not explicitly discuss cultural commitments, it does champion community, peace, self-awareness, and shared purpose. But as explained earlier, the model only champions these commitments when folded into dominant narratives about leadership. This is highlighted more specifically in the group values.

WHAT MINDSETS ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL?

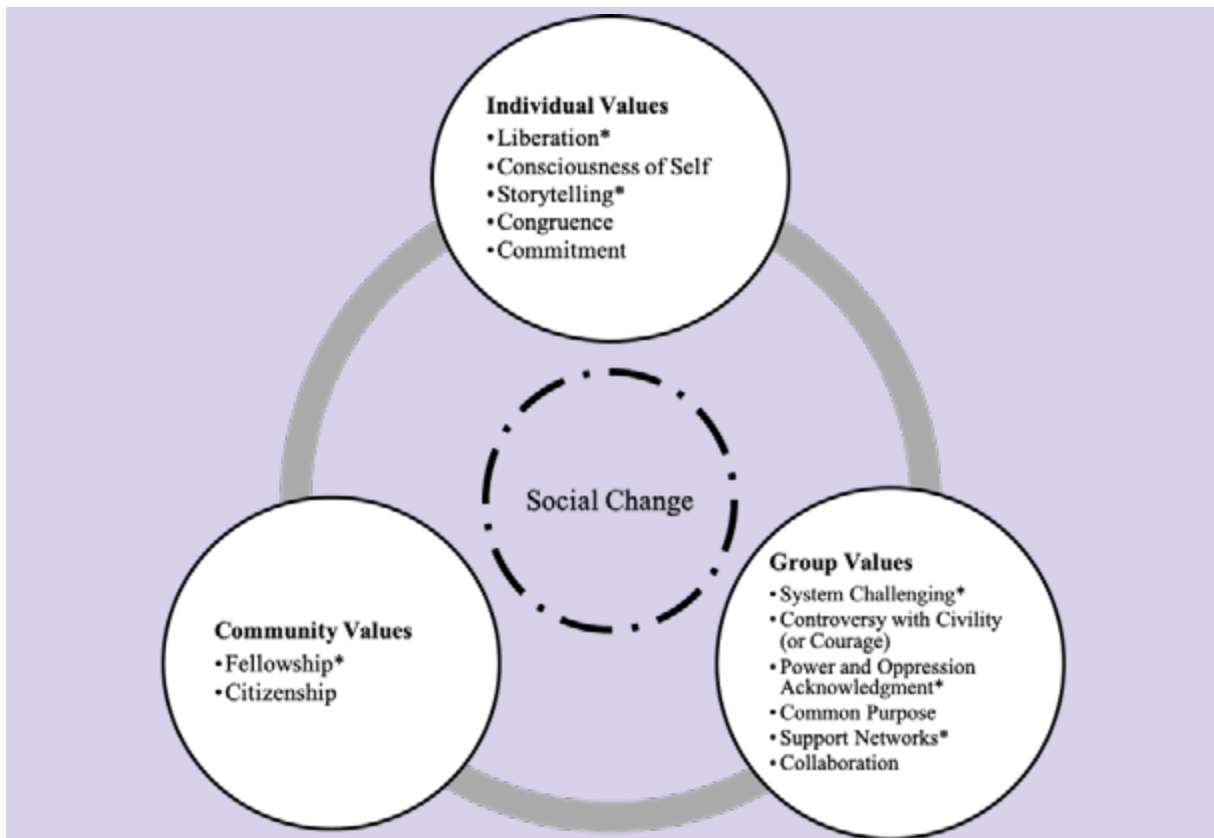
The Social Change Model is built on the premise that:

- ▶ Leadership is viewed as a process, not a position;
- ▶ Service provides a powerful vehicle for leadership development and meaning making;
- ▶ The model explicitly promotes the values of equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service.

The latter is not as clearly explicated as the other two premises. Some values such as controversy with civility may run contradictory to the equity premise they espouse.

WHAT DOES A LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION FRAMEWORK INTEGRATION INTO THE SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL LOOK LIKE?

In the figure below we embed the liberatory values and concepts into the already existing Social Change Model framework. This showcases how we see the values and concepts we introduced in this guide fitting into a very useful model that simply needs extended thinking. We honor and acknowledge the complexity and contradiction evident in the integration of the two frameworks. Some of the values fit in more than one section. For example, liberation and storytelling can be seen as both an individual and group value. Also, important to note is that we opted to include Controversy with Courage instead of Controversy with Civility because civility encourages interest convergence and may only further marginalize oppressed groups.



This integration affords students a more nuanced understanding of what leading for social change looks like. It gives them an end-goal to think about (liberation) while also honoring marginalized groups and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they bring to bear. Instead of abandoning the Social Change Model of Leadership, the leadership for liberation framework can be used to extend the utility of the model. honor and acknowledge the complexity and contradiction evident in the integration of the two frameworks. Some of the values fit in more than one section. For example, liberation and storytelling can be seen as both an individual and group value. Also, important to note is that we opted to include Controversy with Courage instead of Controversy with Civility because civility encourages interest convergence and may only further marginalize oppressed groups.

We strongly encourage you all to read our paper, Leadership for Racially Minoritized Students: An Expansion of the Social Change Model (Harper & Kezar, 2021) for a deeper dive into critiques of the Social Change Model and the importance of these new values and implications for racially minoritized groups.

LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The last section of this guide focuses on assessing and surveying student participants on their grasp of the leadership for liberation mindsets, cultural commitments, team roles, and values and concepts. **In this section, we provide 2 questions that student participants can be asked on end-of-program surveys or exit interviews.** We also recommend ways to include student participants in the future of the program that utilizes the leadership for liberation framework.



How do you currently assess students' grasp of leadership concepts? Do you believe it is sufficient enough?

▶ **CECIL COMMITMENTS**

1. What are the five cultural commitments in the leadership for liberation framework?
2. What cultural commitment was most prevalent in the leadership program?

▶ **LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION PRINCIPLES**

1. Name one of the leadership for liberation principles.
2. What leadership for liberation principle was of utmost importance to you in the program?

▶ **LEADERSHIP FOR LIBERATION TEAM ROLES**

1. What team role did you take on during the leadership program? Did you feel like you played your role well? If not, why?
2. Did you find these team roles to be important? Please explain.

▶ **LIBERATION**

1. How has your definition of liberation changed from the beginning of the program to now?
2. What does it mean to lead with liberation in mind?

▶ **POWER & OPPRESSION ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

1. How do you define or conceptualize power and oppression?
2. How will you be sure to acknowledge power imbalances and oppression in future situations and environments?

▶ **SYSTEM CHALLENGING**

1. What cultural commitments are important to uphold when challenging normative and oppressive systems?
2. How will you be sure to become an agent of change committed to challenging systems of dominance and oppression?

▶ **STORYTELLING**

1. What is the importance of storytelling in leadership?
2. How did it feel to tell stories of power, oppression, identity, and resistance?

▶ **SUPPORT NETWORKS**

1. Define support networks.
2. Discuss the importance of support networks in connection to leadership and/or liberation.

▶ **FELLOWSHIP**

1. What is the importance of fellowship when leading towards liberation?
2. How do you think your personal identities affect how you fellowship with others, if at all?

AFTER THE PROGRAM

While these assessment questions give curriculum developers and facilitators insight into how student participants grasped the leadership for liberation framework, it is important to think of ways to include student voice in the program evaluation and subsequent redesign and altering. Students' development, their liberation, is important and should be treated as such. **Here are a few ways to include program participants after they've gone through their respective leadership development program:**

- ◇ Invite them to serve on curriculum planning committees;
- ◇ Consider a peer facilitation model where past participants act as facilitators of this leadership for liberation framework;
- ◇ Find ways to include them in recruitment efforts (e.g., creating recruitment materials, presenting at information sessions);
- ◇ Brainstorm new values and concepts that are connected to leadership with an end-goal of liberation.



If you implement any of these recommendations, how will you be sure to properly compensate students for their time?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

We encourage higher education professionals and students to think about ways to extend this framework. What values and concepts are also important when thinking about liberation as an end goal? What other activities get at these values and concepts? What other historical figures and contemporary activists can we analyze to learn more about the work of liberation? What about our current historical moment make a leadership for liberation mindset necessary? Bend and shape this framework to fit your context and the times we are living in.

PULL-OUT QUESTIONS

1. How does your definition differ from what we offer in the introduction? Do you imagine this being problematic as you work through this guide and attempt to integrate these principles into your practice?
2. We understand that other principles may work when thinking about institutional context. Are there any other principles you would enact? More importantly, mindsets that are not deficit-based or based on interest convergence (Bell, 1980)?
3. How will you make sure that participants have a working understanding of race, power, and oppression concepts and definitions?
4. Comforting the emotions of white participants can hinder the learning and liberation of other racially minoritized participants. How will the person in this role ensure that does not happen?
5. What does this quote mean to you? How can you ensure that education about systems, policies, and practices that are meant to disenfranchise people from marginalized and oppressed communities happens in your leadership programs? How will you continue to educate yourself to feel more comfortable educating others?
6. How, if at all, is fellowship different than the traditional “get-to-know you” activities?
7. What community guidelines have you used or seen in past programs/activities that can be utilized for this value?
8. What community guidelines need to be put in place for students to feel safe sharing their identity autobiographies?
9. What does this quote mean to you? How have you been complicit in whiteness and how will you change that?
10. How, if at all, do you encourage students to challenge the system in your leadership development programs?
11. What does racial literacy have to do with leadership?
12. How do you currently assess students grasp of leadership concepts? Do you believe it is sufficient enough?
13. If you implement any of these recommendations, how will you be sure to properly compensate students for their time?

RECOMMENDED LIBERATION READINGS

Liberation is a necessary yet rather complicated concept that is intertwined with major ideas like capitalism and race. Here, we suggest further readings on liberation that helped our understanding in building this framework and guide.

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Credit: Tom Hermansi (modified)

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The world's leading research center on student access and success in higher education, the Pullias Center for Higher Education advances innovative, scalable solutions to improve college outcomes for underserved students and to enhance the performance of postsecondary institutions. The Pullias Center is located within the USC Rossier School of Education, one of the world's premier centers for graduate study in urban education.

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