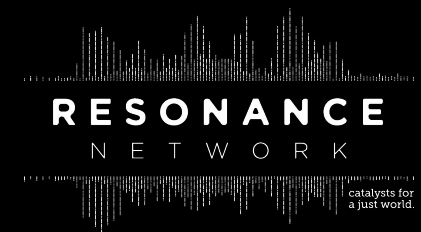




Welcome!

A Conversation on Cultural Strategy



How did we get here?

Power California has convened multiracial, intergenerational electoral organizing networks for 15 years and has anchored our theory of change in cultural strategy for the last five.

We fill the gaps in skills, infrastructure, and resourcing to harness the power of cultural strategy in organizing for justice. Since 2014, we have tested, developed pilots and platforms, and integrated cultural strategy with electoral organizing, racial justice, and migrant justice.



How did we get here?

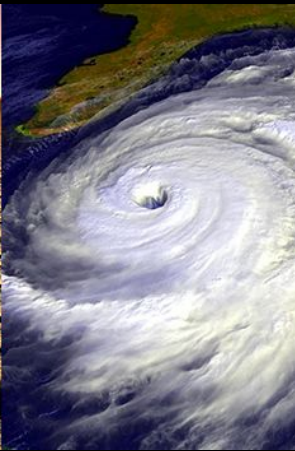


Art by Crystal Clarity for *Until We Are All Free*

Until We Are All Free racial justice initiative, in partnership with CultureStrike and Black Alliance for Just Immigration, demonstrated how cultural strategy can catalyze change at the individual, organizational, and community level.



The crises we face are immense. Our solutions must be greater.



As current social systems fail, we must reimagine new solutions together while expanding the scope of what's possible.

We must bring our own liberation into being.



Now is the time to move beyond campaigns to a movement to shape the future for generations to come.

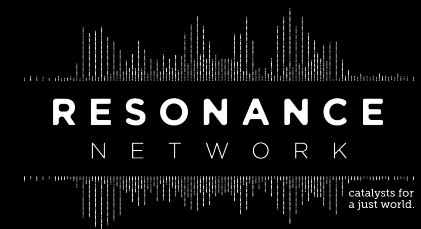
We must transform the ways we organize, vote, and govern with the dignity and humanity of all people and future generations in mind.

Introducing reset

Through cultural strategy, the reset project at Power California cultivates imagination and builds power toward inclusive and participatory governance.

reset leads co-creation and implementation of a national cultural strategy to advance governance that centers people and the natural world.

Together we will lead and govern.



reset 2030 Goals

- 50-year worldview of governance that centers people and the natural world
- Rooted in cultural strategy, develop an ecosystem of leadership in 12-16 states with state and community leaders, artists, culture workers, organizers, communicators, academics, and advocates
- Deliver local, state, and tribal campaign wins in these 12-16 states
- Develop and disseminate case studies, policy briefs, collaborative metrics, evaluation reports, videos, and curricula highlighting lessons learned, best practices, gaps, and innovations

reset Creative Council



Anasa Troutman
Clayborn Temple



Judith LeBlanc
Native Organizers
Alliance



Jeff Chang
Race Forward



Chrissie Castro
Advance Native
Political Leadership



Innosanto Nagara
A is for Activist



Kate DeCiccio
Artist, Cultural Organizer

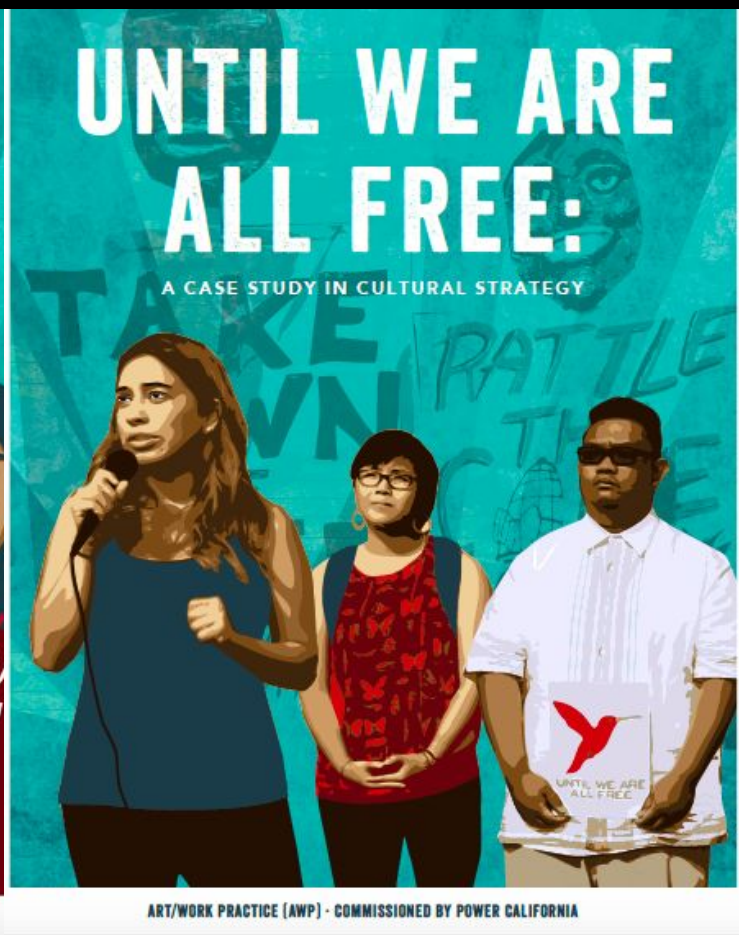
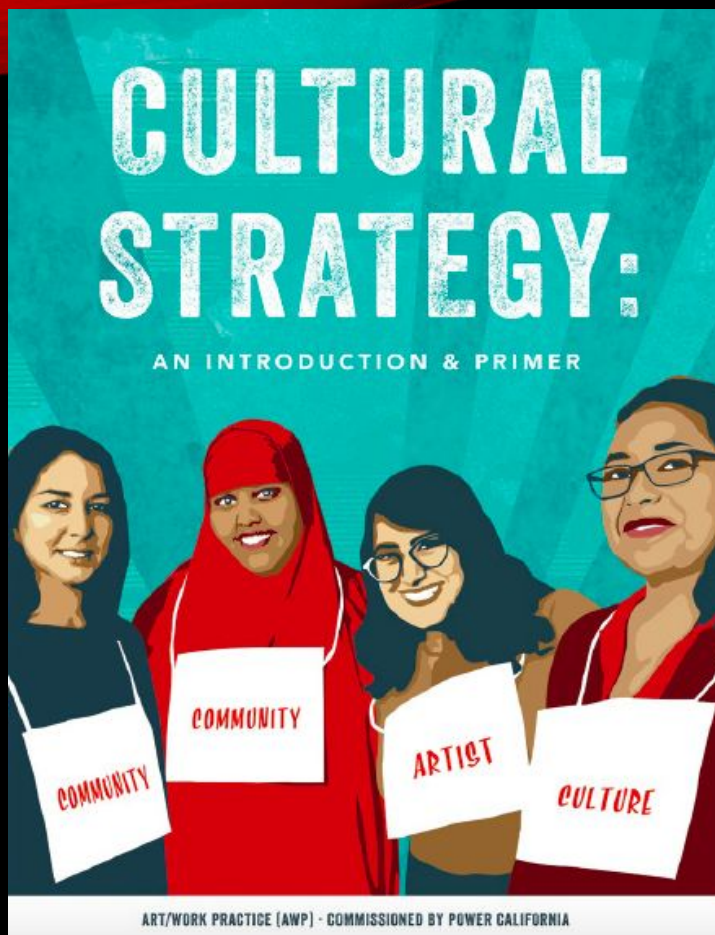


Gerald Lenoir
Haas Institute for Fair
& Inclusive Society



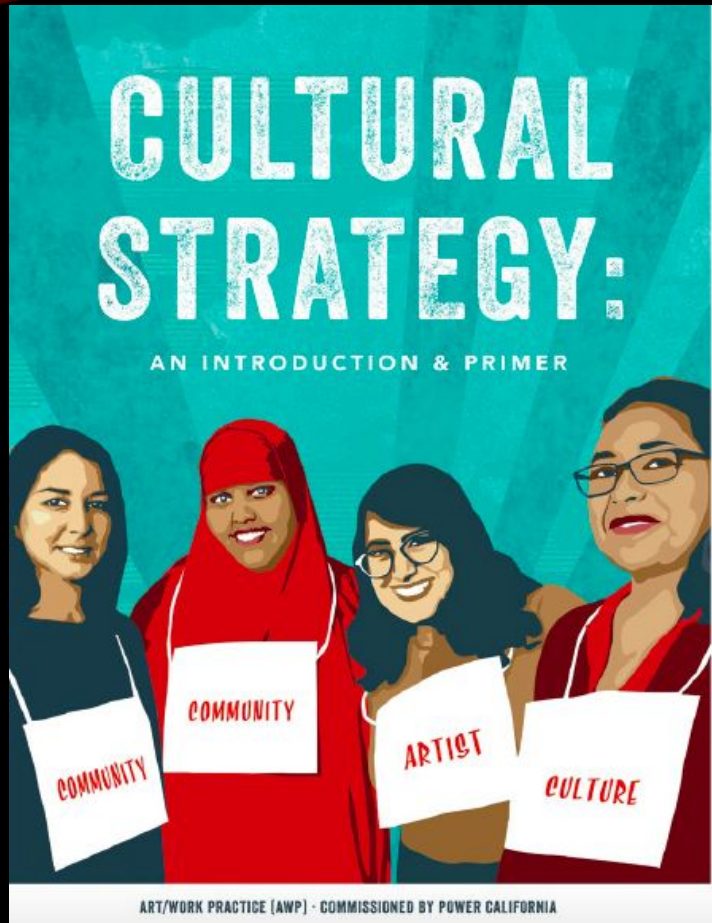
*Rooted in the unwavering love
we have for each other
and belief in our collective strength,
the reset project
activates whole people,
thriving families, and
interconnected communities
from a place of expansive vision.*





What Cultural Strategy looks like when it is:

- Brought down from the clouds
- Close to the ground
- Centered on experiences of those most marginalized
- Organizationally integrated



Download Primer at:

www.bit.ly/culturalstrat

Heads up! A discussion guide and toolkit is forthcoming.

Linking Stories, Narratives and Culture



Linking Stories, Narratives and Culture

Stories are like stars.

Narratives are a collection of related stories, like constellations are a collection of stars.

Stories bring narratives to life by making them relatable and accessible, and narratives infuse stories with deeper meaning.

Source: *A Conversation about Cultural Strategy* - Chang, Manne and Potts



Culture: The Basis for Meaning-Making

Culture is like a galaxy.

The galaxy is where stars and constellations live—it is their home. Likewise, culture is the home for story and narrative.

Like galaxies, culture is dispersed, and ever expanding and evolving.



Culture is Epistemic. Culture is Context.



What is Cultural Strategy?

- Not new!
- Not inherently good/bad, right/left, progressive/conservative
- Vast field with a multiplicity of tactics and players
- Field of practice and ecosystem that makes cultural justice possible

What is Cultural Strategy?

A **holistic field of practice** that engages **all aspects of cultural life and all avenues of social change making** to transform society for a just, viable and liberatory future.

Since Cultural Strategy is inextricable from *cultural work*, **artists, creatives and cultural workers** are key agents of cultural strategy.

The Horizon: Cultural Justice

Cultural Justice is **healing and remedying** of the **historical erasure, suppression and marginalization** of people's artistic and cultural practices. Cultural Justice reclaims ways of living, being and sense-making stolen from us by systems of oppression.

Source: Race Forward's Narrative and Cultural Strategies program



What is NOT Cultural Strategy?

Cultural Strategy is not JUST...

Arts Integration
Visioning and Values
Narrative Shift

10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

**Arts
Integration**

**Vision,
Values, &
Worldview**

Power Shifts

**Narrative
Shift**

**Discovery v.
Dissemination**

**Pre-
figuration**

**Issue
Development
& Definition**

**New
Normals**

**Stickiness &
Sustainability**

**Organizational
Integration**

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL STRATEGY

PULLOUT

1

ARTS INTEGRATION

Culture change is impossible without artists and their art. As organizations work toward arts integration, it's important to consider some key questions: Are artists/creatives part of your visioning and planning process right from the beginning? Are you checking for input, ideation, co-creation and advisement from artists along each step of your process? Do you have processes or mechanisms for iteratively engaging artists as stakeholders and as community members? Have you budgeted to pay artists fairly for their time and talent? The right kind of artist is crucial on this last point: well-established and famous artists might help elevate your organization's profile and visibility, but it's far more important to ethically engage artists who are connected to communities you work with - and ideally who are from those communities.

2

VISIONS, VALUES AND WORLDVIEW

Cultural Strategy allows us to

be forward facing, to imagine and say what we are for and to envision the future and the values that will get us there. Integral to this work is being able to look back and learn from the past in order to inform our future. And, as we articulate our vision, we must connect it to a clear worldview as well, e.g. Migration is Beautiful and the ambition to do away with borders.

3

POWER SHIFTS

When working in service of liberation, Cultural Strategy catalyzes the transformation of oppressive power structures and hierarchies. It focuses on shifting and redistributing power by populating stories, narratives, art, cultural tropes, practices and ideas that actively disrupt dominant power structures. Cultural strategists understand the holistic ecosystem that supports broad and scalable change, and must work in concert with their allies in the fields of organizing, media, direct action, policy, education, electoral action, narrative change, pop culture, social entrepreneurship, coalition building, and elsewhere.

4

NARRATIVE SHIFTS

Narrative shift is essential to Cultural Strategy, and cultural strategists and workers should understand narrative design. This involves being able to explicitly name dominant frames, identity storylines that advance or disrupt frames, and craft compelling stories that carry the messages for their cause. Narrative is however, one major part of culture change - not all of it. Jeff Chang.

Liz Marne, and Erin Pettis describe the relationship between stories, narrative, and culture as follows:

Stories are like stars. Individual, shiny and bright, they move and inspire us.

Narratives (and narrative systems) are a collection of stories in the same way that constellations are a collection of stars.

Stories can be connected together into narratives, like stars can be connected together into constellations, making deeper sense and meaning.

A culture, then, is like a galaxy. Ever expanding and evolving, a culture is comprised, in part, of narratives as the galaxy is comprised, in part, of constellations. The galaxy is where stars and constellations live—it is their home.

5

DISCOVERY VERSUS DISSEMINATION

Artistic or creative expression and cultural work are central to social change; they allow us to feel at the emotional, physical, and spiritual level. Cultural Strategy focuses on creating conditions for discovery, experiential learning and artistic immersion - versus simply focusing on ideas, stories, or message dissemination.

6

PREFIGURATION

Prefiguration is the ability to enact and manifest future realities as though they already exist now. This entails practicing living our desired future in the present, e.g. trying out leadership structures that are more inclusive and responsive to team and community needs.

7

ISSUE DEVELOPMENT AND DEFINITION

Cultural Strategies define and outline issues clearly, shift dominant paradigms, connect audiences, and fundamentally set the terms of the debate. Cultural Strategy is foundational to movement building because in defining an issue, it identifies who the stakeholders and impacted people are, and draws

connections between siloed groups in support of structural and systemic change. It helps unite audiences across issues, particularly those wedge issues that are used to divide communities.

8

NEW NORMALS

Cultural Strategy allows interrogation of questions like: What's 'normal'? Who belongs, who is acceptable? What are the values that underlie the perception of normal? Why? These questions excavate untruths and challenge us to change what's 'normal' when it diminishes, devalues, or leaves anyone behind - especially those pushed to the margins.

9

STICKINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

For something to stick and be sustainable, it must be a long-term endeavor. Freedom and liberation and the requisite cultural changes to get us there are not won in a short time frame or via a campaign or policy change. Cultural Strategy requires stamina and adaptability for the long haul. In the fight for LGBTQI+ rights, marriage equality won after a sustained push over at least a decade. And there's more to overcome, e.g. the lack of centering of the experiences of Black and Brown people in the community, as well as the experiences of transgender and

gender non-conforming people.

Stickiness and sustainability require: investment in infrastructure, e.g. full compensation and permanent positions for artists and culture workers, and the fostering of deep, durable relationships.

10

ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION

Many movement people are mounting beautiful, inspiring culture change campaigns or projects often with dissemination plans that allow them to reach far and wide. However, this is not Cultural Strategy - these are external, visible, constituent or member-facing outputs of cultural work, e.g. performances, murals, literature, art events, banners and more. This type of arts integration is a major component of Cultural Strategy; however, there's also need for a less sexy, less visible but just as critical component of Cultural Strategy, which is internal organizational change.

Effective Cultural Strategy must be understood, integrated and truly rooted in an organization's operations and practices. How do the values, vision, and change outcomes demonstrated externally manifest internally?

* Chang, Jeff; Liz Marne, and Erin Pettis. "Conversation about Cultural Strategy." https://medium.com/@erin_pettis/conversation-about-cultural-strategy-8a2cc8888888

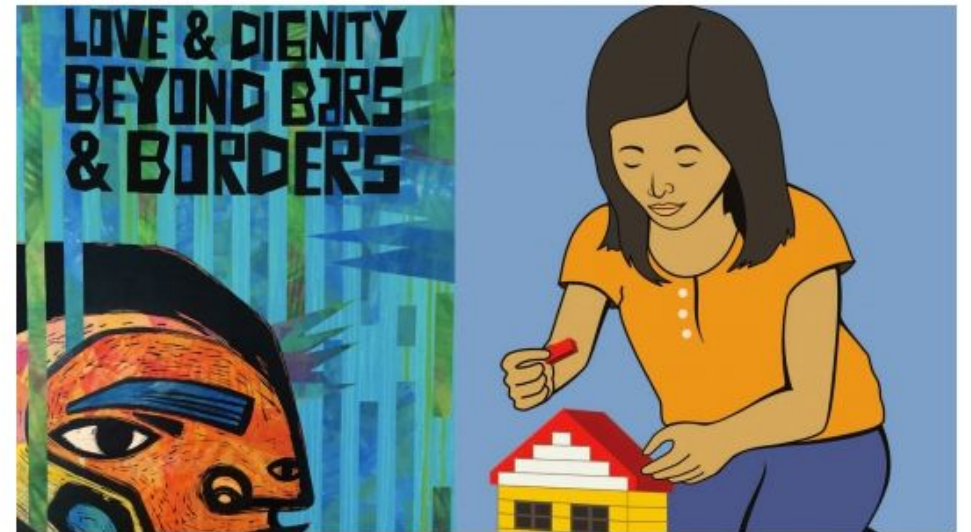
10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

Arts-Integration: Ethically and meaningfully integrates artists, cultural workers and art-making in *all* parts of strategy and decision-making.

Narrative Shifts: Fosters new narratives, defends hard-won narratives, and simultaneously disrupts and supplants oppressive ones.

Source: Power California Cultural Strategy Primer by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice

"Until We Are All Free" Art Kit



10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

Visions, Values and Worldview: Leads with expansive, liberatory vision and just values, as well as clear political ideological stances.

Source: *Power California Cultural Strategy Primer* by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice



10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy



Priya's Shakti Augmented Reality and anti-DV project

Prefiguration: Imagines, enacts & manifests liberatory futures as *though they already exist now.*

Source: Power California Cultural Strategy Primer by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice

Discovery versus Dissemination:

Prioritizes experiential, immersive, sensory and emotional learning and growth.



10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

Issue Development and Definition: Defines and delineates issues, sets parameters of debate, and connects audiences across issues.

Stickiness and Sustainability: Creates long-term staying and “sticking” power for cultural shifts through infrastructure for cultural strategy and durable relationships with cultural workers.

Source: *Power California Cultural Strategy Primer* by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice



Meet to Sleep project by Blank Noise, India 2016-2018

10 Key Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

Power Shifts: Builds and redistributes power by reclaiming and popularizing art, narratives, traditions, stories, practices and norms that disrupt oppressive power structures.

New Normals: Destabilizes problematic cultural norms and normalizes alternative beliefs and behaviors.

Source: Power California Cultural Strategy Primer by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice



Pop Culture Collaborative + Wonderland Podcast on Cultural Strategy
-www.popcollab.org



10 Characteristics of Cultural Strategy

Organizational Integration:

Cultural strategy is about moving towards justice and wholeness through transforming culture. **Cultural strategy shakes up organizational inertia, and builds skills, analyses and prioritization for culture change work.** Cultural strategy should be integrated *across* organizational programs functions and teams.

Source: Power California Cultural Strategy Primer by Nayantara Sen + Art/Work Practice



What's Incompatible with Cultural Strategy?

The 4 Cs

Clarity: Culture change is messy work. Cultural strategists must navigate murky, diffuse, uncertain, adaptive and complex situations with no clear causality. Experimentation is key.

Compartmentalization: Cultural strategy should be a constitutive part of *all change strategies*, and connected to all programmatic areas of work. Nothing changes without culture change!

Source: A Conversation about Cultural Strategy - Chang, Manne and Potts + Toward New Gravity: Narrative Initiative report



What's Incompatible with Cultural Strategy?

The 4 Cs

Closure: To dismantle entrenched systems like patriarchy and racism, cultural strategy plays a long game. Our work must be future-facing, highly iterative, persistent and resilient.

Catharsis: Cultural strategy builds for the long haul, and builds muscles for repeated fights. *The people must not experience a vicarious revolution as a substitute for real revolution.* - Augusto Boal

Source: *A Conversation about Cultural Strategy* - Chang, Manne and Potts + *Toward New Gravity: Narrative Initiative report*

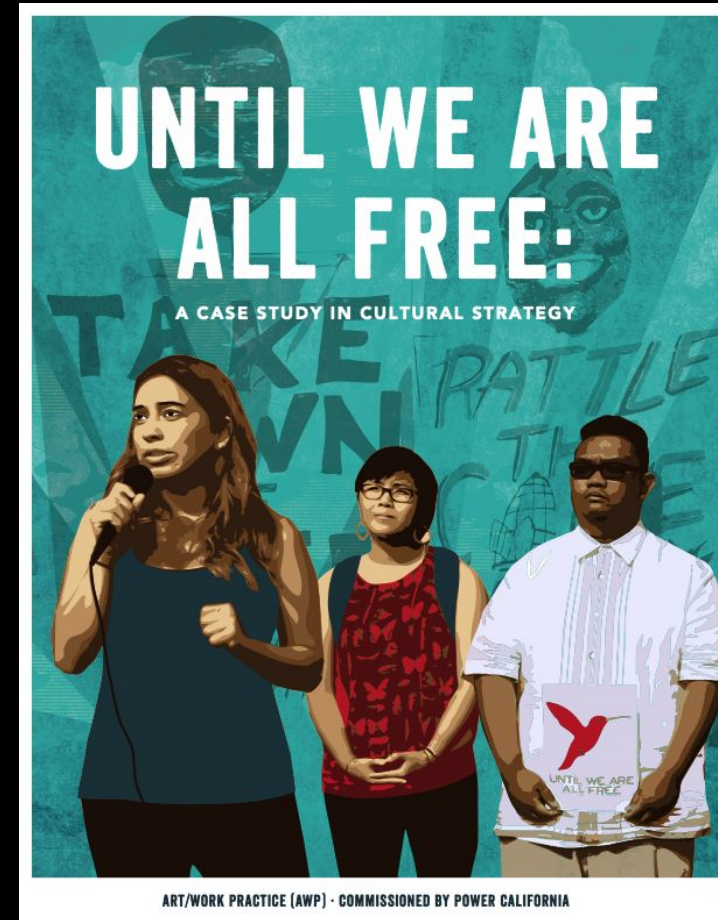




*Artwork by Kate DeCiccio for
Amplifier.org featuring Amanda Gorman*



Cultural Strategy in Practice



Lessons & Challenges

- Making the case for cultural work
- Limited spaces for visioning and creativity within grassroots organizing
- Clarifying roles and expectations between partner organizations
- Bringing cultural strategy down from the clouds to the ground
- Strategizing and planning in an emergent space
- Inadequate funding and resourcing

Emergent Questions

As more movement spaces and organizations engage artists to work on staff, how can organizations continue to hold space for these artists to:

- have **protected time and space** for their creative practice, and
- be in **community with other creatives?**

Emergent Questions

- What does it take to **sustain** collaborative Cultural Strategies for the long term?
- Can one organization meaningfully engage Cultural Strategies? Are **partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration** essential to Cultural Strategy?

Emergent Questions

- How do you internally **institutionalize a “culture”** for valuing cultural work? Beyond intellectually valuing cultural work, how do you **operationally ready an organization** to experiment with and refine Cultural Strategies over time?

Emergent Questions

- Given the limitations of traditional evaluation tools in the realm of cultural work, **what are innovative and effective indicators, outcomes, and impacts** of Cultural Strategy over time?

Questions & Answers

Seeking Your Input

Gracias!

Maita!

Thank you!

Salamat!

Shukran!



Art by Jess X. Snow for Until We Are All Free

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