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MASTER'S PROJECT: PHIR MILENGE, TURNING TOWARD THE POSSIBLE WITHIN FRACTURE

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MASTER'S PROJECT: PHIR MILENGE, TURNING TOWARD THE
POSSIBLE WITHIN FRACTURE

A Master's Project Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

This report documents explorations along the lines of rooting in self, healing of relationships, and the discernment needed to balance and hold healing within material conditions of loss and fracture. I have understood healing within this project as a self and source contained conversation that can be initiated and awakened by the call of love, and extended through gestures of care. This report explores the relationship between creativity, love, place, and gestures of the possible. Included here are descriptions of my methods, outcomes and results, evaluation and assessment of the project, key learnings and new questions. I designed this project with the hope that it would become a thing and in fact the process offered me a portal for healing and discerning how to shape future processes capable of holding others in their healing processes of divesting from institutions that bind us, and growing the creative freedom within that will support and grow cultural continuity and expression. This document reveals a process that has brought me to a new beginning, a new entry point into my own work and story.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage for Transformation

I entered the Master's in Leadership for Sustainability program in the fall of 2021. I was a new mother who was navigating COVID precautions in a city that had "opened up" but still didn't have a vaccine for children under 5 years old (my son was two and a half years old), I was managing the recovery of my son from environmental contamination and the effects of elevated lead in his small body, I was still reeling from being uprooted from the home we were living in for 13 years because of those issues, and my ideas of how I do my creative work were completely scrambled given the perspective I gained through motherhood and weathering COVID lockdowns. Also, just a few days before the first session of the MLS began, I committed to walk with Afghan culture bearers who were losing their way of life and their homeland due to the ripples of never-ending, genocidal, empire. In this time of great glacial movement in my internal conditions and the external conditions, I was feeling and living cycles of dispossession: my family fleeing our home for the health of my son, my colleagues fleeing their homes and homelands for their lives/livelihoods, my family's history of fleeing revolution and religious persecution, and my decision to leave a field I thought I belonged to but never really belonged in. Real, remembered, experience. Historical, felt, context. The pressure of these multiple frames falling sent me into an inquiry of dust, bones, spinning, and echoes. It required me to remember and turn toward the unknown as wayfinding mechanisms for rooting and self-belonging so that I can slip out of a colonial, individualistic frame and into one of greater coherence and community.

However, what does it look and feel like to peel away from a mental model that appears as if it sustains your life? How do I slip away from a seat at the table, and regain the use of my

thumbs (Pinto S. , 2022)? If my conditioning to individualism and specialness says this is the only and best way to make a life, it makes transformation feel like punishment. When a person, like me, whose people have been oppressed and then incentivized to internalize the oppression, starts to take responsibility for the new way, the right way, it can feel unfair. The voices call back, “it’s not your job, find an easy way out, cash in, sit back, you deserve to rest.” The echoes of unresolved needs, the trauma response and conditioned capitalist solutions – these reactions jump out at me. And in sitting silently within the chamber of loss, where these messages bounce from corner to corner, I came to understand that mental models manifest as story. Story we tell ourselves based on repeated lies, on compromises we’ve made to the lies, and based in stories our people and our communities and our societies tell us is “the right way”. Story feeds multiple dynamics throughout multiple systems, it motors negative feedback loops and patterns of harm across all scales (Meadows, 1999). Ultimately, to lead in the inter-systemic reality I live in, I want to evolve my connections to my story. I want to surrender the binary thinking and scarcity thinking. I want to surrender my institutional identity (nationality, race, minority, etc.) (Mamdani, 2020) and reconstitute self as sovereign within interconnection (Pinto, 2015) (Harjo, 2019). It calls for me to use sense and sense memory, to be in touch with erotic knowledge (Lorde, 1984) and the honesty that necessitates. It calls for activating my leadership practices (language, expressive play, gathering) in service of being human (Wynter, 1976) (Vossougi, 2021) (Morrison, 1984) (Ono, 2013) (Brigforth, 2022) (Boal & Jackson, 1995) .

In my Capstone I set out to answer these questions (among others):

- How do I build a leadership practice rooted in self-belonging?

- How do poetic sequences of play function as mechanisms to reanimate love and belonging?
- How do they invite/offer/open a turning motion oriented towards self-definition and our inherent value?
- How do these moves, together, in relationship, help us divest from/release the American Dream narrative?

Questions that called back to me in my Capstone journey:

- Can you soften?
- Do you really want to be well?
- Will you allow yourself to be seen?
- Where do you come from?
- What are your right responsibilities?
- What are you yearning for?
- What is the one sound?

The questions that called back to me came surfaced through reading, conversations, MLS program affiliates, and tracking my thoughts in my reflection journal as well as in my Capstone assessment document. They are questions that led me back to practice every time I emerged from a process holding up a shiny thing that could be an answer. They might be a response from my authentic wisdom, my source, the sovereign place that still shapes me. These questions are akin to assessment methods that ensure I attune toward the deepest truth, healing, and vision of

transformation. These questions also kept me in the experience of divesting when I thought I'd done enough, had enough, and I didn't want to be uncomfortable any more. But not in the sense of forcing discomfort for the sake of it. These questions actually lead me back to care and nurture of self and healing from trauma, and all the ways that I've avoided caring for myself or denied myself care. Home and making home. What I turn toward when the world rips open, again. The image that these questions speak to is the woman sitting in dust, at the crossroads, wild with grief, clothes torn and hair matted. Rubbing the dust into her face, her hair, calling in the gods. This image (data set) has been with me since my very first day of the MLS till now. The survival practices of the pulverized are not enough. After we are sick from ash and coated in the dust of our loved ones' bones, we need to go on and make life livable.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Structuring the activation energy

In my creative leadership practice I focus on story, poetics, and particularly metaphor/gesture. Gesture as my anchor coach Sharon Bridgforth says can be embodied, can be words, can be one line on a page in her “heart writing voice”, and are a foundational technology or architecture (Bridgforth, 2023). I wanted to explore ways that sharing story, a moment in one’s day/life, opens a space across and through bodies into remembering one’s own stories/memories. What invitations might help participants to notice a core metaphor/gesture from their heritage as a reminder that we can divest/release/stray away from the American Dream narrative? How might multiple interactions help someone walk back to self-belonging and community as the site of power and possibility? But seeing how the American Dream narrative is set up to reinforce empire, and how at all times this narrative machine is ready to suck our dreams and sovereignty in and spit out answers and carrots that point to upholding the State, (Iyer, 2017) (Mamdani, 2020) (Wynter, 1976) I sought structures to hold and to attune toward these goals. Sharon Bridgforth said, “What are the elements required to be fully present with the goddess? What is the healing necessary? Then build the architecture to hold those stories” (Bridgforth, 2023). I am being asked to work on self and then extend out – a mending gesture of in and out, a spiral.

To be well (Lorde, 1984) (Cade Bambara, 1999), I must retrain my daily practices toward wholeness and away from ingrained patterns that default to scarcity and chaos. I must continually be in relationship with my deepest values, through practices that align with my metaphors of power and poetry. I must also hold myself accountable when I don’t come back to these practices and these ways. I must be conscious of when the default patterns return, and how

I fill in the grooves intentionally, so that something new grows. To do this, I had to look at the many area of my life that need repair, and see what's appropriate to this Capstone and what are the things that I must do for life, for my health from here on in? Then, I triaged by asking what's possible in the next six months for me to take on in an honest and thoughtful manner? What can/must wait? I also had to do project planning, I can't get to issue X without passing A, B, and C. And so the main questions that my methods sprung from are:

- How can I help repair relationships across histories and identities in ways that feel good, that free and feed us (Jeffries, 2022)?
- What are my life practices of softening and home-making that bring me into deeper discernment and alignment as I lead?
- What life ways have I seen and witnessed that have made me feel whole, made me feel good to be me?

Teasing out these questions by bibliography mapping, meditating on my teachers and mentors, and reviewing my course notes and course writings I created two buckets of methods. Because this exploration is both about rooting and divesting, I had to pay attention to the energy and the dynamics related to each set of being. Stopping one, increasing another, searching this out, releasing that. I adjusted my methods to my leadership strengths of embodied practice and poetic exploration.

METHOD SET 1: Practices connected to rooting

- Documenting and sharing the riches of my lineage, as home practice and in community.
- Listening to and learning stories and rituals related to the seasons and the cycles of life from friends and close collaborators.

- Talking and connecting with elders. Listening more closely to stories I've heard and to what elders have to say about my capstone ideas.
- Mothering with presence, truly seeing and listening to what my son is showing me about life and about who I am showing up as.

METHOD SET 2: Practices connected to divesting from harm and remaking health

- Build a breathing practice and a physical movement practice and engage in it regularly.
- Developing tracking practices for reviewing and honoring my writing and work.
- Engaging with creative story/song/dance regularly.
- Listening to nature, to the environment, to the pauses within interaction.
- Bringing my core metaphors into the conversations I have in life, and in work/collaborative settings. Leading with these metaphors and grounding in them as I work with others.
- Shaping my work through discernment that comes from an intuitive charge, the needs of the moment but also of the future of the work, and by divesting from prestige, external expectations, or the hope of mirroring the practices that are rewarded by philanthropies.

However, there are ways of being and methods that I cultivated that actually support the goals of both sets of methods. In the final project the methods I leaned on and learned from most were: slowing down, listening deeply, discerning the whispers of place, discerning the whispers of source, understanding moment by moment, discerning the call that's mine, being prepared to unfurl and extend when the call comes, playing, dancing, and taking responsibility for ritual that my ancestors have carried on. I have to admit, I am still struggling with engaging with breathing

and movement practices regularly, honoring my writing and work, and engaging with creative story/song/dance regularly. But this is long term work that I thought could have been tackled in the Capstone.

Taking what emerged through these methods my intention was to arrange a set of moves and invitations that others might take up to initiate their own self-belonging journey. This latter aspiration, to sequence something for others, wasn't achieved in the Capstone time. However, I have laid out the two frameworks that such a sequence would be nested within in the Appendix. I believe these two shaping and sorting methods help move from poetic world into poetic form and they undergird all my thinking.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

3.1. Animating the Poetic

“Poetry starts the multiplication of relationships.” - June Jordan

The dynamic dance of what I know and what I envision moving into required shedding, strengthening, and gaining new practices. The dissolving and reconstituting of practice needed compassion, fun, laughter and collaboration to build and strengthen as a web that could hold me as I divested from narratives of scarcity an individualism towards community, collaboration, complexity, and realness. This is a great dance. And so, called on my community who held strong lineages of choreography and gesture. I spoke to dancers and movers about ideas of “turning” as they understood them in the practices they come from: Kathak and the language of Indian classical dance; Sufi whirling; and Italian Tarantella trance dance. What struck me was that each and every practitioner mentioned being in a place where they were turning away from patriarchal ideologies and practices that have controlled the form, and toward practices of sharing, welcoming, and of centering their leadership as women. From their different dance traditions they also all spoke of turning not as orientating or as a rudder to stabilize and find, but as a center, a “vertical axis” (Lee, 2023), within chaos. Turning means carrying center within. When in the turn, that is not initiated from values that objectify nor from dynamics that mandate the dancer please a viewer, one carries center within. Wherever one moves is center. No longer are outside ideas about linearity, beauty, symmetry appropriate as the body carries center, wherever that body is.

This result, the body holds center, showed up again and again for me as I navigated challenges to find work and discern the right collaborations. I started to realize the ways

colonization works to sever me from my source, from my power, is to have me rely on institutions, those with position and prestige like funders and large arts organizations, the ones who maintain the illusion of individualism and virtuosity, as sources of validity and to track a course. The very forms set up to deplete me are what I've been trained to rely on to stand/walk/turn! And so, getting free of that means using mushy muscles to stand on my own. It means uncertainty, unrecognizable surroundings, and acknowledging my desperation for an external crutch. When I am uncertain and desperate I want to do a thing, something concrete, to prove something to entities outside of myself. As I orient toward a new point of focus (or foci) I have to give up the external attractor/rudder of stability in the room. I have to find a new one (or many) inside me. Rootedness begins inside, the home I carry, the belonging to self. All this happens in movement, within the dance of life. When I can be in my flow I know the work takes the form of conversations, sharings, reaching out, asking for help, extending myself and my ideas to whatever calls them forth in a right way not in service to extractive or hierarchical institutions. I had to turn toward my right responsibilities and define my scope of work so that a new neural pathway, one of my own choosing can get laid down. I had to say no to allies, friends, and my own hopes for specialness. I had to make, as Dr. Sayra Pinto says, "the next right, hard, move" (Pinto S. , MLS Program Information Session, Zoom., 2020), again and again.

3.2. Remember and soften. “Your heart is like her heart.”¹

This section is the ripple in the water, a single dewdrop falling down to the bottom of the well. The image came to me after my brilliant and kind anchor coach Sharon Bridgforth asked me, “In the light of the new day, what’s the one sound? (Bridgforth, 2023)” I thought of a dewdrop falling into a well and the call that little droplet makes as it hits the surface of the water. This image of the well and the water is also the call and response of women and caregivers, those who tend to the future through exchanging stories and resources. The murmurs of past present and future. It’s the way we build worlds despite patterns of empire. This is the turn I made in softening toward memory and toward women’s work – my own mothering. I built a relationship with a crossing guard in my neighborhood. She’s a woman of Bengali heritage and we formed a very powerful connection, in very short but intense exchanges comprised of simple questions and verbal exchanged, gestures of care, and focused touch. In one of our meetings on the street, after a couple of weeks where I had sensed her soul was dealing with something hard that she didn’t want to talk about, she wept after I hugged her. Her daughters didn’t call her nor come home to visit her though they were both living in New York City. “What to do. My husband says, there’s nothing we can do so don’t be mad.” There was no cynicism nor bitterness in her voice. Just grief and pain. I told her “there’s still time. There is still time for them to come back to you, to come back to your heart” and she wept some more. As I walked home that morning after she wept, I wished for her daughters to see her grace, to see her as she is, not the mask that this society has assigned to her body. I wondered what I could offer the world so that her daughters might come home to her again. I asked the goddess of the street, how could my work be

¹ Crossing guard aunty (Didi) introduced me to a friend of hers in the neighborhood saying “your heart is like her heart” and she made a gesture with her hand over her heart.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VqeteJicQSUVV09DBiY0VF9KTydK--r>

nourishing to them and to the daughters of the future – that this pattern isn't repeated? As I walked and prayed I remembered the shame I used to feel about my mother, and the ways I turned away from her, and the goddess of the street told me loving and seeing our elders, seeing their and our own grace comes by melting own shame and blame.

Self-belonging is our birthright but it is co-opted by an oppressive society and reflected back to us as scarcity, lack, and a focus on loss and all that we don't have. Releasing shame, blame, lack, and loss can help us move freely again. A ripple on the surface, the droplets of recognition is all it takes to remind us that we can reclaim our ways, again.

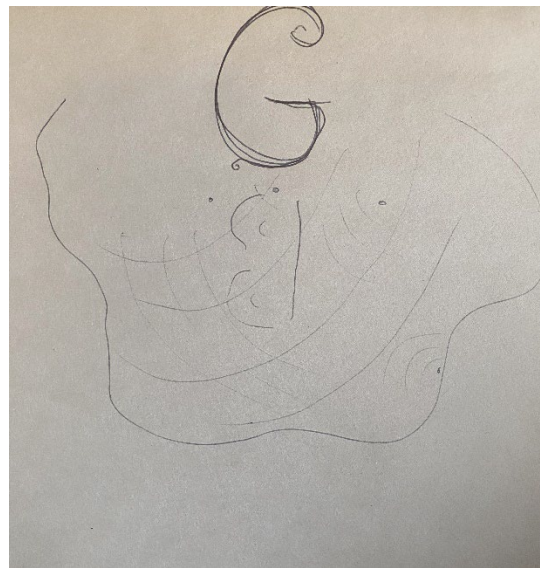


Figure 4: Grace reflected as blame.

The turn is in the softness. We need the droplets of memory, recognition, and resonance in the form of gestures, stories, metaphor. We need a place for stories that can point to all the love waiting for us, on the banks of assimilation, to trouble the mirage of compartmentalization and separation. And by place I don't mean a specialized separate place, it can be a street corner, in public, in my home, it is the place we make for such exchanges to happen at any moment. In

my yearning to aid Didi, I came to my own aid. My project isn't just for others - it's for me, and my mother, and her mother, and my great-grandmother - who sent my grandmother to the other side of India to be raised by aunts because of my great-grandmother's untreated mental illness and those who told her she was unfit to raise her own daughter. And for myself, again, who has many, many times been ashamed to say my primary work is taking care of my child. My main focus in life right now is mothering, and all that is needed to maintain and sustain a good life for my son and his generation. There is nothing to be ashamed of in claiming that, honoring that, and being in that relationship.

3.3. The slender thread of love

I can now discern that in entering this MLS program, I was feeling the full pressure of contradiction – dissolving and budding ontologies, the remnants of internalized model minority desperation, the legacies of trauma from forced migration and displacement pulling at my cells and at my attention, and I was struggling to navigate the world as I was experiencing it. However, I was not being dispossessed of my power nor my birthright, creativity. I was being dispossessed of my illusions that safety and care will come from institutional affiliation. And in that, I was becoming visible to myself. I was beginning to see the evidence of my experience. (Pinto S. , Remote Residential, discussing Joan Scott's "Evidence of Experience", 2022) So in reflecting on the ground I was laying or theorizing that needed to be laid in order for others like me to engage in a process of remembering and reconstituting, I am seeing that structure isn't created as such. It happens in those places where we make legible our own knowledge in and through practice. Structure is simply a slender thread of love that extends from deepest self toward another. It is the concrete gesture of call and response - a reciprocal touching of the heart

that asks for a real response, an authentic one, one where something more can be built – outside affiliation to the state and its institutions.

For this Capstone, I see the slender thread of structure as extending toward another with love, in loving inquiry. As a call, it elicits a gesture in response and invokes a move to heal, change, or break from the old and turn toward something else. It opens a space for release, for letting go of the seat at the table and falling into self. In her module, “Creating Conditions” on December 7, 2021, Sharon Bridgforth asked us what our soul calling is. She talked about virtuosity as stepping inside a moment, publicly, and not knowing what will happen – but deeply listening. We created poems from ancestral food items and looked toward “blood memories” and disregarded knowledge (Morrison, 1984). In connecting ingredients that my mother used in her kitchen and the concept of “disregarded” I came to see my own internalized hatred and disgust at my mother’s kitchen. I disdained my childhood kitchen and I resented my mother’s presence in it. She worked a full day outside the home, just like my father, but unlike my father who sat on the couch and watched T.V. for the rest of the evening, when she came home she walked right into the kitchen and stayed there. Her kitchen was depressing, always slightly dirty, stained by the spices she used, roaches ran relatively freely, half the burners on the stove needed to be lit by matches, the oven did too. She would have to put her whole head and torso in the oven, gas on, and light the gas pipe with a match. The kitchen smelled. It was scary to me. It was not a dignified place. I felt insulted that my mother had to put up with that kitchen, and that she didn’t rail against it. It was a core wound that my mother spent more time there than she did with me. I told myself I’d never be like her.

And so now in my leadership and my own home life, the story I've told myself must go. And the disregarded knowledge, my mother's knowledge and leadership, must take its place in my life if I am to build home as I so need to. And if there's a gesture, in response to the call of love that to heal this wound, I offer an outstretched arm, hand open. "Mummy come out. I'll cook dinner tonight." This gesture teaches me that healing will come not from escape, as the American Dream narrative teaches us, but from entering the places where life is made. The food that nourished our family came from that kitchen, the knowledge of her mother, the women who cooked, the foodways of our people were maintained in that kitchen. The classist, racist, and sexist conditions that constrained, subjugated, and devalued those ways of being are not to be confused with her/those ways. The narrative of the American Dream and all the social service, educational, and cultural institutions say get away, escape, rise above and get out of that kitchen. Buy your mother a new stove, bring her into the 21st century. Spirit, life, the future children, and cultural continuity say go into that kitchen, learn from her, learn what she makes and witness what she puts up with as she cooks. See how she sits in the g-force meant to crush her and creates meals that sustain her family.

CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION

In order to see and understand my results I had to let go of my goals. Mostly, the goal of creating a useable and consumable item for others. And in order to let go of my goals, and be in the process that was unfolding, I relied on my assessment journal, walks with a colleague, walks on my own, paying attention to what nature is showing me, and making small interventions in my work-life. I called my evaluation methods a flocking set of tools to evaluate and align with the deepest vision of this Capstone. . My assessment journal is a place I returned to and used video, image, and written word to help me sort and see and order the learnings. I asked myself two key questions over and over: *What are all the shapes and ways that rigidity/play; softness/hardness; and embracing/isolating shows up? What is it showing you?* These questioned allowed me to be real about my inner conditions and my own behavior, so that I could understand how I am/was relating to external conditions and/or my own fantasies. These questions allowed me to meander off the goal and into the practice so that the deepest healing could take place.

Where I see the effects/process of healing happening are in my interactions with nature, my interactions with my family, and the language and stance I tried on in new and ongoing work related collaborations and relationships. Walking outside, in conversation with someone or alone, allowed me to pay attention to what the seasons and the more than human beings around me were communicating. In this way, the informal feedback I received created a sort of collage. Life around me was having its own conversation, in its living and dying, and it layered and interspersed with the conversation, the worries, the thoughts I was having. Often it offered me play, showed me where I was being rigid, and allowed a softness into my thinking that I otherwise would not have. In my familial relationships, particularly between my mother and I, I

confronted patterns of rigidity in me that were echoes of the rigidity I received. In seeing and being with my mother as she grandmothers my son, I see the initiating behaviors that caused certain responses in me. I have been able to reflect on what I might have needed as a child and what I can offer myself now as a mother to dissolve those inherited patterned responses. In this way, I have been able to soften toward her and what she needed as a mother back then, as well as soften toward myself to allow myself to try again, each moment, to form more loving and connected relationships with all my family members. Lastly, I took on a proactive stance in inserting imagistic and gestural practices that centered my aesthetics and cultural values into my work life. This could mean offering metaphors that were relevant to me as an analogy of a practice I wanted a group to take on, it could be a literal way of moving my hands in speaking with someone, or it could be a way of writing narratives and grant applications that spoke to the core intentions of my work. Most often, this opened up new avenues for relating and for relationships to grow. When I offered these gestures, ideas often bloomed and gained energy. The one place that they have consistently failed is in grant applications. The three applications I wrote while in the Capstone process were all rejected. To me this is really useful information that the grant application process isn't a conversation nor a deeper way of knowing. It is a transactional process of putting the shiniest objects in front of someone for exchange. And so it was helpful for me to experiment in this way and to get a new perspective into what this process is and isn't. It helps me to appropriately place my energies toward this process in the future and to know how best my imagistic and gestural language can serve my work.

In the Appendices are two video examples of images/gestures that I saw in public, on the street, which I repeated and recorded myself doing so that I could interrogate them further. In evaluating my work, I see that holding gesture, remembering and re-forming/interpreting them

on my body offered me ways of organizing my work outside of a discipline, centering it in the everyday, the poetics of life, and showed me that this is where my work is most powerful. In my evaluation and practice, I found a connection to the more, what's possible in the work.

CHAPTER 5: NEXT STEPS

Creating a world outside of the frameworks of domination and oppression requires a skilled practice of transformative leadership, an engagement with self and with others that redefines social relations and roles. In cultivating transformative leadership I am seeing structure as something multi-dimensional, yet innate and approachable. I am not seeing this as held exclusively in a toolkit or series of prompts. I am seeing it as a stance that cracks us open. A readiness to creating our own internal conditions to explore, construct, and expand a sense of self (energetically, interpersonally, and concretely), even if it's momentary. Extending outward when called, toward right relationship, is the beginning of such structure. The slender thread of love begins a web, one we can hold, change, and unfurl toward wholeness. Looking at *Mor/The Turn* within the Healing is Rhizomatic framework, I now see that The Turn as I hope to embody and offer it, does not sit in the Regeneration dimension. It lies in the interplay of the Recognition and Ready the Ground dimensions and it is a pause in the sequencing where one makes a decision. *Mor* can be "More" as in the way we use it in American English. I use it to mean, something else out there, possible, sensed but not defined, yet within our capacities to imagine and name. In the work I hope to do going forward, I am imagining the implications for a process that allows people to turn toward something that feels unsafe, yet within a container is that can make the process bearable and legible as a healing process. I know that massive inner and inter work is needed in order to take hold of this energy and build on it in a good way. As my teacher and master embroiderer Asif Shaikh said, "the turn must be in a right way. If you break, the turn must be in a good way or else you won't be able to join positive and negative. If you can't join mind and heart in your own life, how will you connect the world?" (Shaikh, 2023) In the coming

months and years, this looks to me like a way of bringing people together that isn't determined by a toolkit or set of prompts but by some sort of preparatory work, the work in between what we do when we are together.

As I exit this program, and the world continues to split open, my discernment is better tuned to life. These days I think, maybe I'm not lost. Maybe I can lead within loss? Maybe what I need to turn to are the practices that help us find our center within loss? Coming home to ourselves, we revive our will to imagine. We turn toward the unknown, the disregarded, the lateral histories, the life-ways grown through diaspora. Returning our stories to each other, rooting in community, moving toward love, softening toward grace, and falling into ourselves, we shape water and vessel.

CHAPTER 6: APPENDICES

The two interlinked and overlapped frameworks that undergird my inquiry are described below.

First, a structure for clarifying the gestural/metaphorical from the poetics of life. This framework was taught to me by Master embroiderer and textile designer Asif Shaikh from Ahmedabad, India. The framework, in Gujarati, is called *Tor/Mor/Jor*. Translated to English is means The Break/The Turn/The Join and was taught to Asif from other master embroiderers. *Tor/Mor/Jor* is a sort of map, a way to understand a work of textile artistry as the hand of a master in embroiderer at work. How a pattern breaks, turns, and rejoins speaks to others who know the craft. Seeing how, where, which choices were made within this design structure of an embroidered textile is pedagogy and praxis. And so I applied this framework to guide a praxis of creative self-belonging to set a field, some parameters to navigate toward self-belonging. *Tor/Mor/Jor* would create a field of possibility that guide the moves I would make and also serve as a tuning mechanism to allow me to reflect on the choices and play and how they serve the goal.

This framework of *Tor/Mor/Jor*, for calling forth gesture, was then stretched over the Healing is Rhizomatic (Lopez, 2020) framework by Jennifer Lopez which further clarifies for me where I see my work as a catalyst in a healing process. The Healing is Rhizomatic framework offers three dimensions of engagement of healing: recognition, readying the ground, and regeneration and five “nodes” of “being and experience” where healing (or fracture) occur: body, felt sense, relationship, place, and story. (Lopez, 2020) Seen as mutually constitutive and as extending both forward and backward in time, the framework helped me to imagine a place for my field of praxis.

The interplay of these frameworks allows me to offer my gifts and to play in a field that has some bounds and that feeds the process. See figures 1 and 2 below for the image of how the dimensions and nodes interact and how I perceive them as felt and lived. See Figure 3 for the threads of my methods which I image as the interactions across the field.

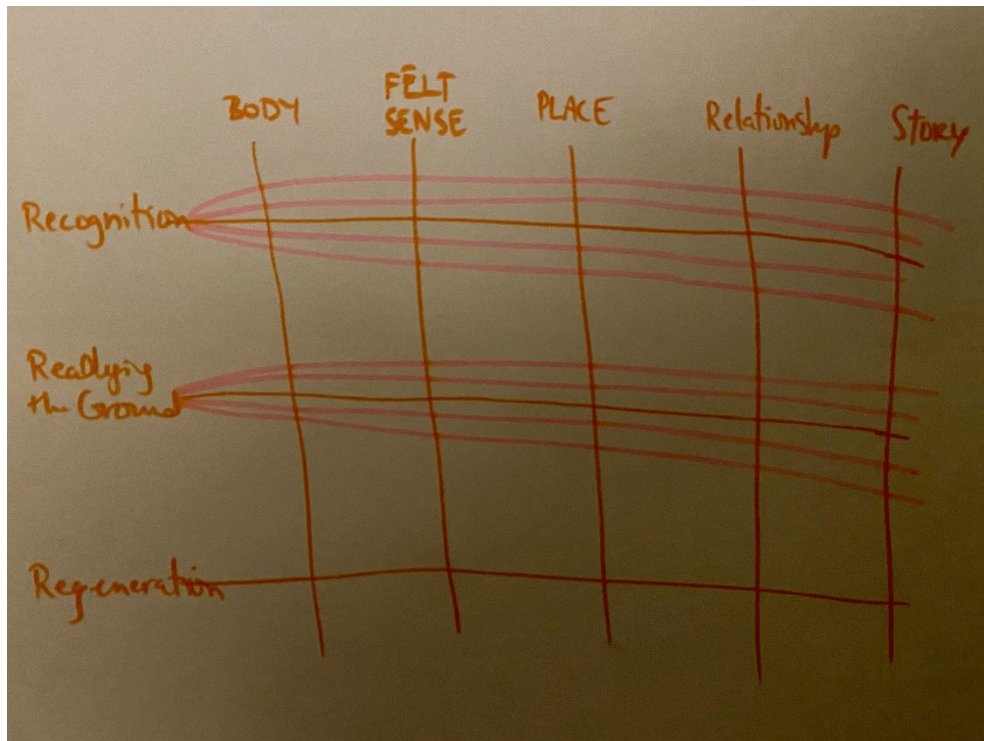


Figure 1: Healing is Rhizomatic field.



Figure 2: Field as experienced.

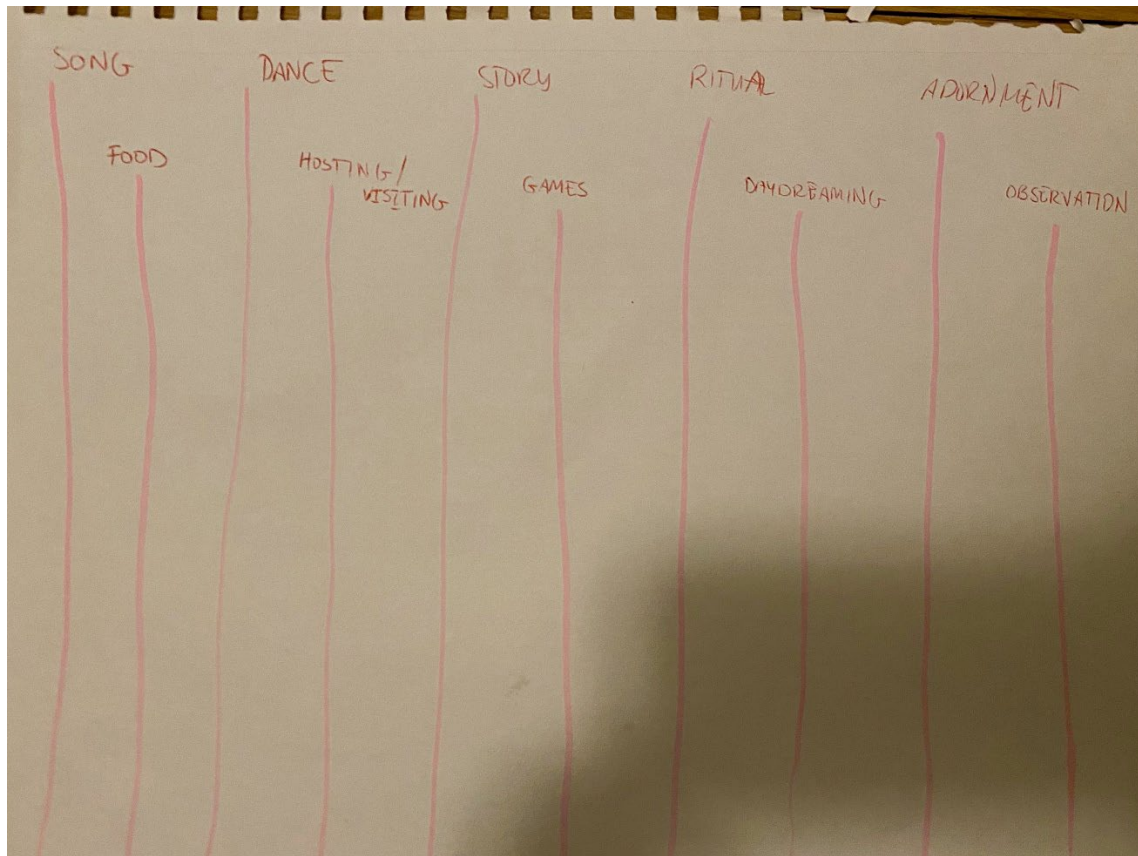


Figure 3: Threads of method.

There is a Portal Pedagogical Model

The following pages (pp.23-26) contain an example of a work in progress in using this framework in my pedagogical design and experiments as well as my work with a group of women of color in unearthing the most potent ways this pedagogy might grow.

**Tor/Mor/Jor is in the Gujarati language and describes a different points of mastery in the practice of embroidery. Translating to: The Break, The Turn, and The Join. This is a concept and practice passed down from master embroiderers to their apprentices and students and was taught to Kayhan by master embroiderer and artist Asif Shaikh*

Purpose/Need	Curriculum Model Description	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in the Piece	Additional Pedagogy/ Curriculum to be Built	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in Our Group
<p>Engagement in part 1 requires an environment where facilitators and participants can navigate risk with shared purpose, vulnerability, empathy, choice, and trust. This requires being mutually responsible for and responsive to people’s needs and safety.</p> <p>Navigating risk enables us to move more deeply and courageously into and with our stories, with ourselves and with others.</p>	<p>The participatory performance <i>There is a Portal</i> sets the ground for individual reflection and self-discovery.</p> <p>Through the story, participants locate the personal place of fracture and the embodied/felt connection to memory. (The break/Tor*)</p>	<p>Recalling memory and personal experience.</p> <p>Participating in the performance by sharing a detail from a memory out loud.</p> <p>Listening and waiting for other responses.</p> <p>Sharing stories and other thoughts (audience to audience) post-performance.</p>	<p>Container building processes</p> <p>Practices of trust building and vulnerability</p> <p>Consent piece - Introduction to the process and work before using it. and/or how to continually think about levels of sharing and consent around sharing story</p> <p>Co-creating shared agreements (sharing ideas for a process and a few tried and true points that</p>	<p>Intentional framing/reframing of words/terms/concepts - reflect on the implications and purpose of using different language</p> <p>Time to connect personally, transition in to the space to make room for creativity, connection</p> <p>Grounding exercises - poem, breathing, guided meditation</p> <p>Creating materials and then collectively reflecting, seeing and discussing what emerged, offering feedback</p>

			<p>apply to group work)</p> <p>Short grounding activities before each or before a set of activities, so folks can focus and ground together before the “experience starts” (ex: leaving space for things to expand and breathe)</p> <p>As well as closing/transition activities to bring ppl out of the experience</p> <p>Intro to Creating a storytelling community - framework of what needs to be set up as well as best practices to keep people in the journey in a fruitful and thoughtful way</p> <p>Writing prompts/exercises</p>	<p>Deep, iterative process of shaping and reshaping the vision</p> <p>intentionally asking what people need, desire, hope for</p> <p>meeting on sunday mornings</p>
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Purpose/Need	Curriculum Model Description	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in the Piece	Additional Pedagogy/ Curriculum to be Built	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in Our Group
The probing of history and memory through multiple layers of engagement	Using a single memory accessed (in Part 1), participants access the	Drawing out and connecting the threads:	Leaving space for materials and questions	Reading excerpts of script together and building activities of storytelling

<p>stimulate a multidimensional field of understanding where participants begin to shape knowledge and enter new modes of engagement. The outcome being new understandings of belonging in/to a place.</p>	<p>wider story around that memory. They enter a focused investigation of personal and political histories (family archives, oral histories, movements for liberation) and legacies of identity and self-hood (critical race theory, im/migration stories, missing people/places/eras) while reflecting upon the spaces in between and around the point of fracture.</p> <p>(The turn/Mor*)</p>	<p>Identifying a detail ("snippets and bits") and then going as deeply and broadly as you can via questions while staying as embodied/grounded as possible. (oral history methods, reflections on the process of questioning self or others.)</p> <p>Recognize when silence might be a thread, that what feels like a dead end may not actually be one. Exploring silence around stories/memories.</p> <p>Identifying symbols as well as the questions and stories they point to about: the self, place, relationships, feelings, context, different perspectives. "What did I inherit?"</p> <p>Shaping story: understanding choices/decisions and</p>	<p>and activities that will make sense and emerge in each group and session.</p> <p>Leaving space for transformative moments within each activity.</p> <p>Projects - doing their own process. Talking to relatives, digging through memorabilia, etc. (even a patterning of how I/the piece was built - ex: hands/dream/ list activity.</p> <p>Writing prompts/exercises</p> <p>People, books, family archives, oral histories</p> <p>Historiography - how histories are written/constructed, by who, why – aurora levins morales</p>	<p>and memory around that reading.</p> <p>Multiple layers of engagement: drilling down, going back, spiralling</p> <p>Sharing personal stories, naming knowledges we're reminded of and drawing from that serve as resources/are shaping our thinking</p>
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		<p>their impacts, history, language, connections and fractures between generations, imagining different possibilities, movement, developing and changing sense of self and awareness/exploration of what creates that sense of self, time, imposed stories/definitions of self, presence/need for mourning, grief, need/longing for reconstitution.</p>	<p>knowing histories of a place and how they are present now</p> <p>recognize which histories are invisible, unacknowledged</p> <p>posing questions which enable exploration, more deeply understanding your role and relationship with that story</p> <p>recognizing history in the everyday surfacing memory</p> <p>Multiple layers of engagement: drilling down, going back, spiralling</p>	
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Purpose/Need	Curriculum Model Description	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in the Piece	Additional Pedagogy/ Curriculum to be Built	Pedagogy Modelled/ Patterned in Our
By making intentional decisions about what, when, how, and why we want to share our stories, we become better able to counter sensationalist and	Crafting and sharing ideas/creative pieces that initiate mending and orient towards future possibilities for moving in networks of belonging. Using the shape of one's story, participants will imagine how their	Seeing and exploring connections between stories: discern patterns, cycles, waves different/broader contexts. "How do you define others and why?"		

<p>extractive storytelling. Instead, we center stories and storytelling that allow us to surface and share healing gestures.</p>	<p>stories might imprint in the larger community and world building hope and creating space for additional voices. (The join/Jor*)</p>	<p>Remembering and creating healing gestures.</p>		
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Five Turns: A Praxis of Mor (Ideas for offerings so others can map their creative origins)

1. Turn Toward Hands:

This is the shape, sound, gesture of care, nurturing, welcome, grace. Elders and culture bearers. Those who make beauty. (Make a gesture of life longing for itself.)

2. Turn Toward Prisms:

This is a way of seeing and knowing the theories and ideas you've come into relationship with. (What is an image or shape of seeing through or seeing alongside of.)

3. Turn Toward Practice:

This is your teachers, how you were taught, and how you know what you know. It is the everyday poetics and the rituals of life. (Make a gesture of welcoming your path and all those on it.)

4. Turn Toward Mending:

This is the fiber between fracture and growth; loss and connection. (Make a gesture of softening/melting/releasing/growing/tending/extending.)

5. Turn Toward Joy:

This is celebration, ease, magic, improvisation, delight, and games. (What is an image of falling into self.)

Characteristics/Qualities of Being in Regenerative Turn:

(Folds?) Creativity: unresolved and unresolvable stance, unknown, in-between, not shaped as of yet.

Spirals: pace, taking the time that a thing needs, widening and tightening boundaries, shifting

focus: close-in/out wide.

Gestures from the street

Here are tracking practices that opened up a way for me to center more powerfully in my work. They also held lessons for me as I returned to them again and again, in how these familiar, ancestral gestures might open a space for deeper connection among other South and West Asian immigrants. How a stance can make you feel close to someone, even someone you pass on the street.

1. Amico, Eat!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XG1y8LfwlC2q8SgkbCiKKqi5WGj6ke46/view?usp=sharing>

Written reflections accompanying this image are on pp. 9-11 of my Capstone tracking document.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MUrzNpz9MYYseXxGfW4D7sM1ZBV7QKSl/view?usp=sharing>

2. Her heart is like your heart.:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MUrzNpz9MYYseXxGfW4D7sM1ZBV7QKSl/view?usp=sharing>

This was from an interaction with Didi, where she's introducing me to a friend of hers who lives in the neighborhood. She introduces me by saying, "her heart is like your heart" and making the gesture in the video. The gesture invoked so much love in me, so much joy in the way the fingers gathered together in that point – the same way they gather together to make the gesture for "eat" seen in the Amico, Eat! video.

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