

CONVENING TO END CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A STRATEGIC CHOICE FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING

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Invitation

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Two years ago, the Ms. Foundation invited us and other leaders from a cohort of grantee organizations to a learning laboratory they called “convening” to explore what it would take to build a movement to end child sexual abuse. While we all had commitment to the prevention of child sexual abuse, we were mostly isolated, siloed, and protective of our dearly held models, programs, values, and analysis. Most of us had some experience with bold dreams getting crushed in the midst of competing interests and unaligned strategies that are too often the result of well-intentioned movements or collaborative endeavors.

Many of us have deep roots in the child abuse treatment field. We have worked with many survivors and seen how the abuse deeply impacted their lives and those of their families and communities; lives that have been defined by loss, shame, disbelief, substance abuse, persistent mental illness, poverty, and impaired relationships. Some of us identify as survivors ourselves, whose healing and activism are intimately intertwined. And many more of us are the children, lovers, neighbors, parents, and partners of survivors, and also bystanders of child sexual abuse.

We came into the convening with disparate expectations. One survivor-lead advocacy group came expecting to extricate a policy agenda, a map that they could adopt. After all, why re-create the wheel? Another was originally resistant to the idea of movement building: “As someone who has done sexual violence prevention and response work for a long time, I worried that we weren’t accounting for the decades of service development that preceded our work together. Simultaneously, with all of us working toward the projects for which we’d just received funding, I wondered why we needed to be working toward a larger ‘movement’ at all. Wasn’t working on our individual goals enough?” We discovered, with equal measures of disappointment and hopefulness, that there is no map, and that summing up our individual goals was necessary but inadequate.

What the convenings did offer was something more fundamental: a space that was safe enough to hold the bold vision of ending child sexual abuse instead of settling for treatment, an invitation to rediscover the social change roots of our social service field, a more nuanced understanding of child sexual abuse, and a deeper recognition of the ways that other forms of oppression fuel and enable the sexual abuse of children.

Working alongside folks from across the country has not meant that we have had to agree upon a collective action plan; in fact, it has been a healthy indicator for our cohort that we don’t always agree on action steps and priorities. What we’ve learned instead is that the beauty of building a movement is rooted in the idea that we can all work differently toward a much bigger goal, but that being in relationship with one another helps us all to do our work in a more effective and better informed way.

Over a period of two years, our cohort moved from disconnection into authentic relationship and, along the way, created a prototype of movement building that we want to offer to people who believe that ending child sexual abuse is one of the most urgent issues of our time. It must be addressed in a way that includes and transcends our individual programs, disciplines, legislative initiatives, solutions and approaches. This is a model that supports bringing our full and vulnerable selves as survivors, allies and capacity builders into the mix. It is not without risk.

We believe that we are creating a movement moment in the work to end child sexual abuse. We are building the bridge as we walk across it, learning how to build a social justice movement that is deep and wide enough to hold the histories behind and the work ahead of us. To build a movement that amplifies the voices of experience and inspires many more to tell our own complicated and compelling stories. We are building a movement that is fluid enough to adapt and disciplined enough for strategic action. We are building a movement that calls each and all of us to bring our most vulnerable and bravest selves forward. We offer these pages in an attempt to share some of what we are learning about this movement moment. We invite you to learn along with us.

With love and hope for our work together,

The Extended Design Team

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Preface

This is an invitation to a new conversation about what building a movement to end child sexual abuse might require of leaders, capacity builders, and allies. It is not intended to be a “how-to” or a recipe book for movement building. Movement building is much too complex a process for such a technical approach. Rather, we (the facilitation team along with the Ms. Foundation for Women) want to share key aspects of a recent experiment in leadership development and movement building. Naming the pilot cohort of eighteen organizations working to end child sexual abuse as an “experiment” feels risky in some ways—it implies that the results are not entirely known, emphasizes the testing of assumptions, and assumes that there will be unintended results. And indeed the convening series did evolve in unexpected ways and challenge assumptions about what leaders need from one another and from capacity builders. In the pages that follow, we consider the variables that contributed to the successes, limitations and learnings of this experimental convening series. We hope that leaders and partners in the movement(s) to end child sexual abuse will challenge, elaborate upon, and extend this work.

Introduction

What will it take to build an inclusive, strategic, and sustainable movement to end child sexual abuse? The Ms. Foundation for Women brought eighteen organizations and more than thirty leaders together in a series of four convenings between 2011 and 2012 to explore this question. What emerged from this exploration was the clear necessity for a strong and strategic social change movement and the insufficiency of current strategies to build collective power. To meet the complex challenge of ending child sexual abuse, leaders, organizations, foundations, and allies must experiment with new approaches to building leadership and collective power.

The following pages describe one set of experiments in convening for movement building. The first section places the work to end child sexual abuse in a social and historical context in order to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities of organizing in this current moment. The next section tells the story of how the content of the convenings evolved over the course of this two-year journey, and how design decisions affected the work of the participating organizations and leaders. The last section offers a set of interdependent strategies gleaned from this experiment. Wherever possible, specific tools, reflection pieces and frameworks that guided this journey are offered in the spirit of shared learning and further exploration.

I. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Episodic Amnesia: What will it take to stop forgetting about child sexual abuse?

The sexual abuse of children is largely a silent epidemic. At rare times, the issue receives widespread media attention. One recent example is the case of Jerry Sandusky, who used his privileged position in the Penn State community to sexually abuse countless children over many years. Going back further, the McMartin Preschool case, the Catholic Church scandals, and other high-profile, sensationalized cases drew public attention, outrage and concern. While public attention has been channeled into greater awareness of some aspects of the problem, an increase in services for some child survivors, and new policies on reporting and managing offenders, it has not translated into broad-based support for a movement to end child sexual abuse. Lasting changes in the cultural norms and practices that foster child sexual abuse will take more than media attention that emphasizes dangerous stereotypes about offenders, victims, and prevention. Many people have heard that one in four girls and one in six boys will experience sexual abuse, yet these well-worn statistics have not shifted the collective will to protect and empower children nor to hold adults accountable for violence against them. The collective response to child sexual abuse alternates between periods of frantic attention or oblivion and denial, what feminist psychologist Judith Herman calls *episodic amnesia*. Herman writes, “the study of psychological trauma does not languish for lack of interest.

Reflection:

By the early 21st century, the issue of child sexual abuse has become a legitimate focus of professional attention, while increasingly separated from second wave feminism...As child sexual abuse becomes absorbed into the larger field of interpersonal trauma studies, child sexual abuse studies and intervention strategies have become de-gendered and largely unaware of their political origins in modern feminism and other vibrant political movements of the 1970s.... The institutionalization of child maltreatment interventions into federally funded centers, national and international societies, and a host of research studies offer grounds for cautious optimism. Nevertheless, as Judith Herman argues cogently, 'The systematic study of psychological trauma...depends on the support of a political movement.

B.L. Cling

Rather, the subject provokes such intense controversy that it periodically becomes anathema.”¹

The individuals, leaders and communities who have worked to end child sexual abuse during the times of oblivion have developed numerous important strategies, from providing life saving support services to child survivors and their families, retooling public health models for prevention, organizing grassroots response efforts, and improving the response of the criminal justice system. But the impact of this work has been severely limited by cultural backlash, political pressure, and chronic underfunding. Leaders and organizations in the field have not had the consistent space to develop a shared vision, values and analysis that would harness their diverse strengths and strategies into a powerful social change movement. Unlike the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence movements, there is no national infrastructure to collaborate across disciplines and communities, share innovation and take collective action. Lasting changes will require a social change movement that can withstand the ebb and flow of public attention, policy trends and funding fluctuations, and make strategic use of the opportunities for lasting change in social norms, policy and legislation. History teaches that social change comes in alternating cycles, what movement historian John D’Emilio called “creeping” and “leaping”.² During the “creeping” times, the development of strong relationships between leaders and stable infrastructure between organizations lays the groundwork for the “leaping” times in which public engagement, attitudes and policies catapult forward.

Child sexual abuse is a complex phenomenon, rooted in histories of patriarchy, slavery and colonialism, maintained by a web of privilege, dispossession and silence. Unweaving that web will require equally complex and varied strategies on the individual, community and structural levels. Ending child sexual abuse is not a matter of scaling up a single successful program, or passing any one law or policy—it is truly an adaptive challenge.³ Solutions to adaptive challenges reside in the ability of leaders to employ a learning strategy that involves experimentation and perspective shifting. Leaders must be able to negotiate apathy and ambiguity with a flexible strategic approach that takes into account both the complexity of the challenge and a clear vision of transformation.

A Tradition of Convening

The Ms. Foundation has been funding work to end child sexual abuse for over thirty-five years. The Foundation made its first grant to support a community project to end child sexual abuse in 1978 and hosted the first-ever funder briefing on the issue in 1982. Convenings have been a core strategy of the Foundation for many years. It has a long tradition of bringing together activists, survivors and allies to support one another to name child sexual abuse as a social change issue, to connect child sexual abuse to other forms of structural violence, and to center the voices of survivors in change efforts. The relationships that leaders and organizations build by coming together have helped to sustain their work during the times of public apathy and backlash. Indeed, such alliances are the currency of a movement. Building strong alliances between individual leaders and organizations requires intentionality, resources and time to foster the trust and alignment that enable movements to leap forward.⁴

In 2002, the Foundation brought together 27 activists and professionals in a roundtable discussion. This discussion, *Beyond Surviving: Toward a Movement to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse*, named social change movement as necessary to ending child sexual abuse and detailed the effects of child sexual abuse and the challenges to movement building. A roundtable in 2010, *Love and Revolution*, brought self-identified survivor-activists into dialog about the relationship between healing and activism and the importance of survivor-leadership in movement building. A third gathering held at the Omega Institute in June 2011, brought together leaders of the five organizations in the U.S. that have been squarely focused on child sexual abuse over the last 10+ years. While these organizations have created some of the most innovative frameworks and promising prevention programs, they worked largely in isolation, without significant relationships between leaders nor collaboration between organizations. Each of these first-ever gatherings demonstrates the potential of creating space for relationship building and strategy sharing, but also the limitations of one-time convenings to fully realize that potential.

Rooted in this tradition of creating space for gathering, centering the voices of those most affected, and building relationships between natural and unlikely allies, the Foundation determined that it could best contribute to the work of ending child sexual abuse by fostering the conditions for movement building. In 2011 the Ms. Foundation launched a new pilot grantmaking program that was designed to support a cohort of leaders and organizations focused on organizing and advocacy to address long-term culture and policy change to prevent child sexual abuse. The Foundation received 255 proposals and selected 14 projects (representing 18 organizations) to receive one-year grants of \$20,000 to \$100,000. The one-year pilot cohort was extended in 2012 when all 14 projects were awarded continuing grants for a second year

¹ Herman, 1992, 1997

² D’Emilio, 2002

³ Heifetz, 1998

⁴ Masters & Osbourne, 2010

of work. Organizations represented the diversity of the field, including statewide sexual assault coalitions, arts organizations, faith-based groups, culturally specific community-based organizations, survivor-lead policy advocacy groups, domestic violence agencies, and child abuse prevention organizations. Taken together, the cohort represented some of the most exciting work happening in the field to end child sexual abuse.

II. CONVENING EXPERIMENTATION

The pilot cohort gathered in what became a series of four convenings over two years, the first and second in June and November of 2011, and the third and fourth in June and October of 2012. All four convenings were held in a conference center in Chaska, Minnesota, just outside of Minneapolis. The Foundation partnered with Ritchie|Tye Consulting to design and facilitate the convenings. Over time this core design team expanded to include members of the cohort and partners in strategic communications and anti-oppression. The design team approached the planning process with the desire to: 1) hold the complexity of the issue of child sexual abuse on individual, organizational and movement levels; 2) balance the need for relationship building, skill development and movement building; and 3) learn what kind of leadership and leadership development is needed to end child sexual abuse. The goals and activities for each convening evolved as the group became more cohesive and more able to tolerate ambiguity and complexity.

The Power of Personal Story and Movement History

The overarching goals for the first two convenings were to cultivate connection between leaders and organizations and to introduce the framework of movement building. The first convening began with a performance of *Secret Survivors*, an innovative theater project by New York City-based theater group Ping Chong + Company that uses personal narrative to explore the complex ways that child sexual abuse occurs and the reasons that survivors remain silent. Rooted in strategically constructed personal narrative and performed by a diverse cast of survivors of child sexual abuse, the piece explores the possibilities and limitations of intervention and prevention strategies, and affirms the potential for resilience and healing for individuals and communities.⁵ Beginning the convening series with *Secret Survivors* centered the voices of those most affected by child sexual abuse and challenged the cohort members with an analysis of child sexual abuse rooted in social justice and anti-oppression frameworks. Another early activity, constructing a *Movement Timeline*, rooted the cohort in the historical, social and political context of child sexual abuse and early prevention efforts. Building on work begun by participants in previous convenings, including *Love and Revolution* and the *Omega Institute* convenings, cohort members worked together to document the unwritten history of the people, projects and cultural events that inform the current work to end child sexual abuse. Cohort members were invited to add details about the social-political landscape, arts and cultural events, research and policy developments and the work of their own organizations to the timeline. Creating the *Movement Timeline* was itself a critical intervention because the preceding decades, even centuries, of

community organizing, life-saving service delivery, research and policy development had not been braided into a coherent narrative and had largely been lost to periods of denial and apathy. Many leaders did not have access to the rich and complicated history of organized resistance to child sexual abuse. Creating the *Movement Timeline* enabled leaders to share important stories from their own perspectives and to begin to recognize the cyclical nature of social change movement building.

Tool: Movement Timeline Reflection Questions

- When did you enter the work to end child sexual abuse?
- What are the political, cultural and social events that shaped how you see child sexual abuse?
- What are the events that shape how your community responds to child sexual abuse?

⁵ Swadhin & Zatz, 2012

Responding to a Movement Moment

In the second convening, the facilitation team planned to lead the cohort through vision and values clarification, and to deepen the focus on movement building with a peer-led conversation about how cohort members were using movement building indicators in their work. This plan was thrown into question when the Jerry Sandusky case at Penn State story broke on the eve of our gathering. Leaders arrived exhausted and hungry for the opportunity to come together as a group. Some leaders were eager to generate consensus and develop a collective response to Penn State, while others looked to the Foundation to articulate the path forward. Others observed the lack of agreement about core vision and values about the root causes of child sexual abuse, and the critical tensions in the field about prevention, the role of the criminal justice system, and the relationship to other forms of oppression and resistance movements. Leaders struggled to hold the complexity of the issue in the heat of a major media response. As one partner observed, “although it’s tempting to skip steps and focus on this ‘movement moment’ where there is high visibility, great public attention and rapid change, if the readiness and capacity do not exist, it’s simply not possible to sustain meaningful change.” Penn State might have been a leaping moment in the movement to end child sexual abuse, but the relationships between leaders and the infrastructure between organizations were not yet strong enough to sustain collective action. This gap, between where the movement needs to be and where the movement was at the moment, revealed the lack of shared understanding of root causes of child sexual abuse and its relationship to other forms of violence and structural oppression. The differences between leaders and their approaches, a potential source of strength, could not yet be used in a strategic way.

Committing to Growing Together

Following the second convening, the Foundation decided to continue to support and convene the pilot group of grantee partners for a second year. The additional time and the release from the pressure of competing over resources allowed for the group to commit to building the capacity to communicate more strategically and to hold the complexity of child sexual abuse in a more nuanced way. The “movement moment” presented by Penn State increased the sense of urgency to develop a shared analysis and more strategic framing of the problem, and raised the necessity of directly addressing the political tensions over vision and values within the cohort. Cohort members took a greater role in co-creating the convening goals and challenging the design team to meet their growing readiness to address deeply held tensions and differences. The third and fourth convenings focused on strategic communications and developing a shared understanding of how identity and oppression inform individual and community experiences and responses to child sexual abuse. Cohort members used strategic communications frameworks to clarify their organizational theories of change and to develop more coherent, targeted and effective stories of prevention. At the same time, conversations about the role of structural inequality and the relationship of child sexual abuse to racism, poverty, sexism and other forms of oppression challenged cohort members to “widen the lens” of child sexual abuse prevention.

Critical Questions: High Profile Cases of Child Sexual Abuse

Analysis

- How can we understand the failure of bystanders to respond?
- What creates an offender?
- How is child sexual abuse linked to other injustices?

Message

- What are we asking decision makers to do?
- How can we talk about child sexual abuse so that people can listen?
- How can we center the voices of survivors in the response process?

Movement

- How do we merge grassroots ideas with a policy framework?
- How do we move from isolation to collective responsibility?
- How do we respond in the moment in a way that builds movement?

Individual

- How do we respond without getting triggered?
- How can we bring our full selves?
- What are the steps to connect with our power individually and collectively?

Strategic Storytelling

The thread of strategic storytelling began in the first convening and was strengthened throughout the course of the entire convening series. In hearing the powerful personal narratives of survivor-activists in *Secret Survivors*, cohort members acknowledged the power of storytelling to heal, connect and transform individuals and communities. Co-constructing the *Movement Timeline* invited cohort members to share and document stories of the political and cultural conditions that shaped their organizational histories and their current work. In the urgent analysis of Penn State, leaders debated how to shift the media story of child sexual abuse to one that inspires adult responsibility and community engagement. In the third convening, facilitation partners Holly Minch and Amanda Cooper of Lightbox Collaborative shared an audit of current messaging about child sexual abuse and revealed both the considerable successes and serious limitations of how leaders and organizations talk about child sexual abuse to the broader public. For example, decades of public service messages and awareness campaigns have educated the public about the frequency of child sexual abuse, but these statistics have not created clarity about what adults can do to end child sexual abuse. Marshall Ganz's invitation to "recapture the power of public narrative and learn the art of leadership storytelling"⁶ resonated strongly with the cohort. As trust and intimacy developed among the group, cohort members practiced new ways of storytelling. Participants practiced leading with the "story of self" by giving voice to the personal journeys in their work to end child sexual abuse. The group also experimented with the "story of us," articulating the values that the group came to share as a community. And the group challenged itself to tell the "story of now" that would communicate the urgency of the work with a spirit of hope and possibility.

Lasting changes in the cultural norms and practices that foster child sexual abuse will require the movement to tell new stories about who offends against children, what "victims" look like and what prevention means. Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie says, "the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Adichie's work, *The Danger of a Single Story*, opened a powerful dialog about how child sexual abuse has been "single-storied." In this dialog, cohort members shared stories about the intersections of race, class, gender, ability, nationality and sexual orientation in individual and community experiences of child sexual abuse. This included discussions of how families and communities respond to child sexual abuse, experiences of seeking support and justice, and the complex relationship of offenders and their families and communities. This work, grounded in the lived experience of leaders and their communities, set the stage to develop a more complex analysis of structural oppression and child sexual abuse.

Tool: Danger of a Single Story

1. Watch Chimamanda Adichie's TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*

http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

2. Reflect

- How have you been "single-storied?"
- What are the single stories that are told about your communities?
- What are the single stories that we tell about child sexual abuse?
- What might be possible if we could tell more complete and complex stories?

Integrating Identity and Oppression

Developing a more complex analysis of child sexual abuse and structural oppression required leaders to talk about issues that are usually avoided. As one leader noted, "these conversations are scary, they will invite each of us to bring our full selves into the work more than we have been able to do so far. There will be power in that, even if we may need to go through discomfort along the way." The work to develop a shared power analysis was skillfully facilitated by consultants Monica Dennis and Rachael Ibrahim and rooted in the methodology of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. Through an experiential process of sharing personal and community history, story circles, political education and large group discussion, the cohort began to trace the connections between economic injustice, racial oppression and child sexual abuse as related forms of structural violence.

During a powerful piece of work about cultural stereotypes of Black women, some white leaders expressed frustration at the focus on race. In the debrief meeting that followed a challenging session, a white leader expressed her disappointment at not knowing how to respond to the reactions of her colleagues. With the support of the facilitation team,

⁶ Ganz, 2009

she committed to calling for a dialog of white folks who wanted to learn to be allies. The facilitators adjusted the convening agenda to make time for this work. When she made the invitation, all of the white people in the cohort stepped into the circle and began a powerful dialog, speaking to a desire for authentic connection, to the shame of unearned privilege, and to the fear of getting it wrong. It was the first time that many white leaders spoke directly about these issues and the first time that many leaders of color witnessed white allies struggling openly with internalized racism and privilege without looking to people of color to lead, facilitate or educate. In this moment there was a palpable shift in the room, as leaders took great risks to show up more fully in the moment and in the movement, and to speak to the unspoken dynamics of race, oppression and difference that exist as fault-lines between leaders and communities. In the evaluation of this work, one leader shared that they were “able to connect more deeply with all of the grantee partners as individuals thanks to the work on oppression/privilege. I finally had room emotionally to be open to authentic connection since I no longer felt burdened to name the importance of understanding oppression.”

The work on identity and oppression had several layers of impact. By integrating an analysis of structural oppression within an ongoing conversation about strategic storytelling, cohort members practiced finding their own stories of leadership and telling more compelling stories. In addition, by the fourth convening, the group reached a tipping point in their relationship to one another and their capacity for collective action. As one leader described, “(in) the sense of strength, togetherness, support, incorporation found around this fire, there is open space and presence; the modeling and practicing of taking risks for a purpose; the historical framework, the connection with child sexual abuse, racism, oppression.”

Critical Questions: Power Analysis

- How does oppression show up in your organizing/work?
- Who is “above” and “below” the power line in your work?
- How does the power line impact your ability/capacity to show up authentically in the moment?

III: DESIGN FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING

The core task for the convening series design team was to find balance among relationship building, skills development and creating the conditions for collective action. To these ends, the facilitators used the lenses of systems perspective and group development to address the dynamics within and between individuals, organizations and the movement simultaneously. In addition, the design team as a whole relied on several key design principles to shape the convenings over the two-year period:

1. Acknowledging the effects of trauma for individuals and organizations
2. Creating a culture of connection
3. Practicing collaborative design
4. Attending to group development
5. Intention and emergence
6. Learning out loud: Missteps and missed opportunities

1. Acknowledging the Effects of Trauma

One leader said, “child sexual abuse is one of the first places we learn about shame, collusion, violence. It is this large gaping wound that we ignore.” Many leaders and activists who are drawn to the work of ending child sexual abuse are also survivors. Many more are the children, lovers, neighbors, parents and partners of survivors. It seems paradoxical⁷ that the dynamics of child sexual abuse, especially shame and disconnection, show up within and between the very organizations working to prevent child sexual abuse. And yet, coping strategies related to the trauma of child sexual abuse become part of organizations and the movement itself. While there are a few public survivor-leaders who lead with their own stories of child sexual abuse, many more are disconnected from their stories as allies, friends and community members. This core disconnection—from experience, from story and from others—denies leaders and organizations access to a powerful source of authority and inspiration. Unlocking the power of connection by giving voice to untold stories and acknowledging the effects of trauma within the field has the power to transform a field of committed but isolated leaders into a community of aligned and engaged allies.

⁷ LaPianna, 2010

2. Creating a Culture of Connection

The work of authentic relationship building called for a space that was warm and inviting, but with clear boundaries and transparent authority. The design team worked to cultivate a culture of connection and possibility by inviting authentic relationships and holding the space as hosts rather than trainers. Facilitators and extended design team members took care to prepare the work spaces—seating cohort members in a large circle or small table groups and inviting cohort members to bring objects representing their individual gifts and the power of their communities. Despite the heavy nature of the issue, the space was full of laughter and hope as cohort members listened deeply and acknowledged both connection and differences. As cohort members connected with one another as individuals affected by child sexual abuse, as leaders struggling with ambiguity and as partners in a broader movement, they brought themselves more fully into the room and into the work.

3. Practicing Collaborative Design

The Foundation and facilitation team determined the content and the process for the first convening. While this was practical and appropriate for the Foundation as the host of the convening series, it also reflected an all too common dynamic between funders and their grantee partners, in which funders hold all the authority to set the agenda and define the parameters for grantee partners' collaborative work. The goal of fostering long-term, sustainable movement building to end child sexual abuse required shifting this dynamic and finding ways for leaders, organizations and funders to examine complex problems as partners in exploration. Ending child sexual abuse is not a matter of "scaling up" successful programs but building a common framework and cultivating commitment to collective action. Following the first convening, the design team made a key decision to ask cohort members to share design responsibilities in the spirit of shared learning and co-creation. Five grantee partners—representing social services, social justice, national and local organizing, next generation leaders, movement elders, leaders of color and white leaders, queer and straight leaders—accepted the invitation to join the planning and design work. Sharing design responsibilities with grantee partners created accountability between the Foundation and grantee partners, and built the capacity of all partners for shared leadership.

This collaborative and dynamic design process was labor and resource intensive. In addition to planning the goals and activities of each convening, the extended design team met before, during and after each in-person gathering to reflect, course correct and provide feedback to the facilitation team. The extended design team served as a laboratory for leadership development, a space for cohort members, Foundation partners and facilitators to practice, prototype and play. In these sessions, the extended design team processed group dynamics as they unfolded, and strategized about design and facilitation decisions in real time. The extended design team created a sense of intimacy and risk taking, inviting cohort members to step more fully into their own leadership. One member noted that cohort members were invited into a "gracious space in which full participation was really wanted. There was safe enough space to push back; it wasn't just people around the edge." As another member noted, they experienced "a sense of agency that was surprising and meaningful. I've become intentional about creating that kind of space in my work at home."

4. Group Development: Becoming an "Us"

Leaders entered the convening process from a variety of different places, some "ready to go," many more isolated and depleted, and some suspicious of a Foundation-initiated movement building project. Over the course of the convening series, the cohort evolved from a collection of individual leaders and organizations, each focused on their particular project, into a more cohesive group, better able to recognize the interdependencies and critical differences between their approaches. Groups, like individuals, develop and mature over time. Group development is affected by numerous factors, including the social and political environment, relationships between group members, authority structure, and time.⁸ Group development can be summarized into four phases:⁹

1. *Dependency and Inclusion*, authority figures are idealized and issues of safety are foremost
2. *Counter-dependency and Flight*, conflict erupts and subgroups form
3. *Trust and Structure*, cohesion develops and communication is more open
4. *Work and Productivity*, roles are clarified and the capacity to hold both task and emotion develops

While it would be an oversimplification to say that the cohort moved through these phases in an orderly or linear way, this model does reflect key aspects of the cohort's journey toward interdependence. In the first convening, cohort members looked to the Foundation and facilitation team for direction and minimized difference and conflict between their

⁸ McCollom, 1990; Bennis & Shepard, 1974

⁹ Wheelen, 2007

work and political perspectives. In the second convening, the dynamic political environment heightened anxiety and a sense of urgency. Conflict emerged between members who argued that collective power should be rooted in shared values and members who argued that only concrete action would bring cohesion to the group. The second convening became a space for group members to challenge one another and the Foundation about the ultimate purpose and goals of the convening series. The third convening was characterized by intimacy and self-disclosure. By addressing the conflict between process and content, values and strategies, the group began to take shared responsibility and to develop the capacity to hold multiple identities and perspectives. Cohort members took more risks as they practiced strategic storytelling, exploring the connections between identity and oppression, and lovingly challenging each other as differences emerged. The fourth convening concluded with a group exercise that invited cohort members to “tell the story of Chaska” through creative small group presentations. All of the performances included powerful demonstrations of the group’s development of solidarity and collective identity over time. The journey toward an authentically connected group of leaders and organizations ready (or more ready) to move together took the full two years of the convening series.

5. Intention and Emergence

A flexible set of *Design Principles* emerged over the life of the convening series. These process through-lines guided strategic decisions about agenda and approach. More than the goals and objectives for each convening, the *Design Principles* served as the social infrastructure for the convening series. In their piece, “How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity,” John Kania and Mark Kramer find that “to be successful in collective impact efforts we must live with the paradox of combining intentionality (that comes with the development of a common agenda) and emergence (that unfolds through collective seeing, learning, and doing).”¹⁰ The design team consciously worked with this paradox of intentionality and emergence. Many aspects of the convening series were held constant, including where and when convenings were held, opening and closing rituals, and clear boundaries around time and space, which helped to create the sense of safety and stability that the work required. The design team modeled transparency by negotiating with one another openly, and improvisation by shifting the agenda to respond to the needs of the group in real time. One leader observed that creativity and risk taking were required in taking up this facilitation stance: “the facilitation seemed to be organic and creative. This contributed to my own sense of trusting the moment and taking a risk as a leader.”

Tool: Design Principles

1. Create a “learning laboratory” to test ideas and investigate new paradigms, approaches and methodologies to the work of ending child sexual abuse.
2. Create opportunities for shared meaning making and pattern recognition in order to build capacity for strategic thinking.
3. Integrate understanding of effects of trauma on individuals and organizations and provide opportunities for self-care and reflection.
4. Integrate different ways of knowing, provide multiple ways to engage and space for reflection.
5. Create opportunities for grantee partners to share vision, values, strategies and challenges.
6. Foster connection between leaders, projects and organizations; honor and acknowledge history and experience in the room while welcoming new voices.
7. Build the capacity for movement building and collective action by creating a shared context.
8. Practice telling stories, as individuals, communities and movements, in increasingly complex and compelling ways.
9. Share design responsibilities, create and hold open spaces so that there is room for emergent conversation and unplanned work.
10. Integrate identity and oppression, strategic storytelling and communication with movement building.

6. Learning out Loud: Missteps and Missed Opportunities

The design team sought to find the balance between relationship and skill building, process and content, structure and emergence. As in all experiments, some approaches had unintended consequences and others failed entirely. An early attempt to map the emergent relationships between cohort members elicited anxiety about differentiation and inclusion. Experiments with mapping the different perspectives in the room created confusion as cohort members struggled to differentiate between their personal, project and organizational perspectives. The facilitation stance itself evolved over time; cohort members reflected that the lead facilitator took up “too much air time” in early convenings, leaving participants feeling constrained or patronized. As the design team grew to include cohort members, strategic storytelling partners, and identity and oppression partners, the facilitation stance shifted toward process consultation rather than meeting facilitation. Attempts at integrating somatic learning and “bringing in the body” were warmly received but not fully integrated into the facilitation approach or convening design. The choice to integrate across content areas had many benefits, but also limited

¹⁰ Kania & Kramer, 2013

the specificity with which each could be explored. As a result, leaders left wanting more direct application work around strategic communications and anti-racist organizing.

WHAT IS POSSIBLE NOW: PROMISING STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING MOVEMENT

What will it take to build an inclusive, strategic and sustainable movement to end child sexual abuse? What emerged from this series of convenings is threefold: 1) leaders who bring their full selves to the work; 2) authentic connections between leaders and organizations; and 3) a more complex analysis of and narrative about child sexual abuse. These strategies are interdependent, as leaders bring themselves as individuals more fully to the work, authentic connection between leaders becomes possible. Rooted in the fertile ground of connection, leaders are able to challenge their own and others' assumptions, move beyond simplistic and defensive positions, and incorporate a power analysis of how child sexual abuse affects individuals and communities.

As Brené Brown writes, “what we know matters, but who we are matters more. Being, rather than knowing, requires showing up and letting ourselves be seen. It requires us to dare greatly, to be vulnerable.”¹¹ Bringing one’s full self to the work of ending child sexual abuse means acknowledging the effects of child sexual abuse on an individual, community and movement level. It means rediscovering the power of public narrative and leadership storytelling to build commitment to end child sexual abuse. As leaders “dare greatly” by letting themselves be seen, more authentic connections between individuals and organizations become possible. Building the capacity for connection in the face of denial, shame and disconnection is perhaps the most necessary skill that leaders and the movement must develop. Inviting leaders to practice storytelling and deep listening fosters connection, as does time and space for reflection, learning and celebration. This, in turn, strengthens the movement. Finally, developing a more complex understanding of child sexual abuse involves making connections between this issue and other forms of violence. This requires leaders to tolerate discomfort, examine privilege and learn to challenge one another with compassion. Tracing the historical and political relationships within and among the movement to end child sexual abuse and the struggles for disability justice, Native sovereignty, immigration justice, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) liberation, and racial equity, is not a theoretical exercise but an applied practice of connection and shifting perspective. Building a more complex political analysis of child sexual abuse challenges the binary of “perpetrators” and “victims” and surfaces deeply held assumptions about prevention and response strategies. Acknowledging the relationship between survivors, offenders and their shared communities leads to powerful shifts from services and punishment, to healing and accountability.

In Conclusion, Another Invitation

This convening series was an experiment to learn about what movement building to end child sexual abuse requires of leaders, organizations and capacity builders. The learning, about both the *process* of fostering connection and cohesion between movement leaders and the *content* of developing an analysis of child sexual abuse that acknowledges the complexity of the issue—is subtle but potentially transformational. Sharing the learning, limitations and design of these experiments in movement building is an invitation to further exploration and dialog between leaders and capacity builders. *What will it take to build an inclusive, strategic and sustainable movement to end child sexual abuse?* It will take much more risk taking and experimentation to activate the power of story, connection and courageous conversations about identity and structural inequality. We hope that leaders and partners in the movement(s) to end child sexual abuse will challenge, elaborate and build upon the promising strategies that emerge from these experiments. As one leader said, “this is a different time than ever before. We’ve never had this much knowledge, substance or possibility.”

¹¹ Brown, 2013

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**Ms. Foundation Pilot Cohort to End Child Sexual Abuse
2011- 2012 Pilot Cohort**

1 in 6, Santa Clarita, CA
CONNECT, Inc., New York, NY
Darkness to Light, Charleston, SC
generation FIVE, Oakland, CA
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, Bronx, NY
Massachusetts Citizens for Children, Boston, MA
Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, St. Paul, MN
OAASIS Oregon, Portland, OR
Peace Over Violence, Los Angeles, CA
Ping Chong + Company, New York, NY
Prevent Child Abuse America, Chicago, IL
Prevent Child Abuse Maryland, Baltimore, MD
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ
Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina, Raleigh, NC
Samaritan Counseling Center, Lancaster, PA
Stop It Now!, Northampton, MA
Teach Our Children, Brooklyn, NY
Tewa Women United, Española, NM

Extended Child Sexual Abuse Movement Timeline

Co-Constructed by Ms. Foundation for Women Ending CSA Pilot Cohort
 Artwork by Chandra Larsen, Social Policy Research Associates





1917
 From Henry starts
STOP IT NOW
 - Helps bring focus on
 - adult RESPONSIBILITY
 - perpetration prevention

1918
RUN RIDT
 survival activist
 Coalition in SE
 later becomes
 generation FIVE

1919
 Similar laws
 begin to pass
 around the
 country

1916
Stand out of Circulation
 by Dorothy
 Hill
 2nd wave
 UIC +
 H
 1916
Rush
 by Sapphire

1918
PATRIARCHSHIP
 addresses CSA as
 public health issue
 MN Dept of
 Health
 MN Coalition
 Against
 Sexual
 Assault

1915
**UN World
 Conference
 on WOMEN**
 held in Beijing

1917
**Killing
 Black
 Body**
 by Dorothy
 Roberts

2000
**Boarding School
 Healing Project** forms
 addresses legacy of
 CSA in Native American
 communities
 2000
Darkness to Light
 founded

2001
**DAVID SATCHER GENERAL
 CALL TO ACTION**
 David Satcher issues
 includes need to
 address CSA as a
 PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

2000
**Grace Paley
 documentary:
 The Children we
 Sacrifice**
 USA in South
 Asian Communities

2000
NSVR
 National Sexual
 Violence Resource
 Center opens

2002
Ms Foundation
 releases
 "Surviving:
 Toward a Plan
 to Prevent Child
 Sexual Abuse"
 for Women releases
 with wide range
 of stakeholders in DC.

2002
**Massachusetts:
 Clergy sex abuse
 scandal breaks**

2002
Stop it Now!
 convenes:
**EXPERT PANEL on
 CSA PREVENTION!**

2002
**CDC awards
 multi-year CSA
 prevention grants:**
 - Massachusetts
 - Minnesota
 - Georgia

2002
**ENOUGH
 ABUSE**
 Campaign in MA

2003
CONNECT
 founded
 Collaborate with
 generation FIVE
 for repairing CSA
 among

2003
**1st BEEB
 PROFESSIONAL
 CONFERENCE**
 held on CSA
 prevention
 Largest
 longitudinal
 study that
 includes
 CSA

2003
ACE
 Adverse
 Childhood
 Experiences
 Study
 Center for
 Disease
 Control
 and
 Prevention

2005
**National
 Social A
 Exploita
 takes**

2005
**Ms America
 by day
 Lessons
 Learned from
 Ultimate's
 Unconditional
 Love**

2005
**Former
 Ms America,
 Marilyn
 Robinson
 memoir about
 being an
 incest survivor**

1996
**WORLDPEACE
 RESEARCH
 ACT**
 1996
**Anti-globalization
 movement takes
 root in Seattle
 WTO protests**
 Global Initiative
 1998

2000
**REPRODUCTIVE
 JUSTICE
 MOVEMENT**
 REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH +
 SOCIAL JUSTICE

September 11
 2001
 a tracks

2001
**STOP
 It's
 Sexual
 Assault**

"WAR ON TERRORISM"
 4 WAVE
 10/11/01

NO
 BIDD
 OIL

2001
**growth of INTERNET
 and new MEDIA**

2000



