

STEPPING INTO POWER

*A Movement-Building Fellowship for
the Strong Families Network*



**An Evaluation of Program Impacts
2016-2021**

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STEPPING INTO POWER



“SIP gave me tools to bring my values to my work. I gained an appreciation for myself and leadership, and an understanding that the way I've felt in spaces is valid. I got a framework to decolonize leadership and center my staff's full selves.”

Introduction

Stepping Into Power (SIP) is a transformational leadership development program with a racial and gender justice framework that calls forth leaders who are Black, Indigenous women of color and queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people to step into their full power as individuals, as peers in community, and as **co-creators of a social justice movement** that transcends the multiple oppressions that pervade their personal and professional lives.

SIP was created by Eveline Shen and Forward Together to meet the needs of besieged leaders on the front lines fighting for transformational change. *What more could we achieve if our movement truly supported these courageous leaders instead of burning them out?* This strategic insight became the **Theory of Change for Stepping Into Power** (pages 2-3).

Stepping Into Power

Context

- People of color, especially those who are women, immigrants, LGBTQ, and TGNC, are marginalized, stigmatized, and denied reproductive and social justice.
- Oppression and a competitive culture cause isolation and pit leaders against each other for limited resources.
- Lack of organizational support, ongoing oppressive forces, and self doubt prevent these leaders from stepping into their full power and collaborating with others to build organizations and a movement for justice.

Strategies

STRUCTURE

- 10-month peer learning cohort to build leadership capacity and mutual support; deep connection for collaboration; and mental, physical, and emotional self care

CURRICULUM

- Courageous Operating System (COS): Leading from courage with Clear Purpose, Conditions for Success, and Creative Momentum
- The 5 elements of Courageous Practice
- Music for harmonious community building
- Art of Communication for personal voice and shared narrative

METHODS

- Facilitated workshops
- Music and movement to support learning integration and build community
- Executive and communications coaching

FRAMING QUESTIONS

What more would we achieve if we could:

- *Honor ourselves and each other as whole and powerful leaders?*
- *Successfully navigate through challenges by using a **decolonized leadership model** that is meant for us?*

(SIP) Theory of Change

Outcomes

SHORT-TERM

- Shift in self-perception from self-doubt to confidence and a recognition of being powerful leaders.
- Greater skills in public speaking, staying connected through conflict, and integrating a practice of music and movement into leadership.
- Within each SIP cohort, leaders build community, strategic alignment, and support for each other's work.
- Leaders have tools and skills to navigate and make decisions through complex/uncertain situations that are aligned with their purpose, values, and strengths.

MID-TERM

- Leaders model and share COS strategies within their organizations and with their peers and networks.

LONG-TERM

- Leaders operate in alignment with their values, purpose, and strength.
- The movement for strong families is powered by grassroots groups working collaboratively across linked issues, led by people who bring their whole selves, center self-care and healing, and honor and support one another in shared agendas for justice.

Impact

- SIP graduates are stepping fully into their leadership and increasing their impact on the individual, organizational, and movement levels.
- SIP graduates and other Black, Indigenous women of color, queer, trans, and gender non conforming leaders forge authentically collaborative and supportive organizations at the forefront of the movement for social justice.
- Societal messages, practices, and policies support the rights of women, youth, and all families to be respected and have the power and resources to reach their full potential.

- **Create a culture within our organizations to support the vision we want in the world?**
- **Jointly address impacts of racism and other oppressions?**

- **Work from a place of abundance rather than scarcity?**
- **Build a movement that creates and sustains leaders?**

What Makes SIP Unique?

SIP is a 10-month multi-modality experience, designed with the Courageous Operating System (COS) at its core. Eveline Shen created the COS specifically for leaders to be able to navigate through any situation whether it's crisis or moving a strategic initiative in the face of systemic oppression.

The Courageous Operating System (COS) is integral to the SIP experience. Using the COS, SIP participants developed **courageous roadmaps** for achieving their short- and long- term leadership goals. Leading from a place of courage, they define a **clear purpose and conditions for success, and they identify areas of creative momentum to support themselves on their journeys.**

The operating system that is prevalent in nonprofit and social justice cultures is one that places self-sacrifice above self-care. It is common to see executive directors place work above time with family or community, spending more time raising money than focusing on strategy and feeling tired and burned out on a daily basis. Although it comes from a desire to be of service and create societal change, this operating system weakens organizations and movements.

The COS centers leaders' needs and values and honors their strengths. It nurtures courage above self-sacrifice, and it help build the skills and strategies that protect visionary leaders from forces that can undermine or destroy their work.

THE **COURAGEOUS** **OPERATING** **SYSTEM**



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The SIP Curriculum

In addition to learning the COS, leader-participants progress through the following unique curriculum, with personalized support from executive and communications coaches:



Courageous Practice

Participants learn five elements necessary for collective and strategic action for movement building:

- Relaxation
- Stance
- Energy
- Rhythm
- Awareness



Music

Joint music and movement experiences support a mutual sense of belonging and the ability to build community. Participants:

- Co-create
- Synchronize
- Connect
- Develop harmony and rhythm together



The Art of Communication

Participants learn how to share their stories in an embodied way that helps listeners see their experience as part of a larger shared narrative. They experience sessions in:

- Vision & Voice
- Story & Message
- Audience & Future

Who Participates in SIP, and Why?

77 movement leaders from 18 U.S. states, Washington, D.C., and Mexico participated in three cohorts between 2016 and 2020, representing a diversity of:

AGES: 29 –63

POSITIONS: Executive directors, management staff, development staff, artists, communications staff, social services staff, board members, program staff, organizers.

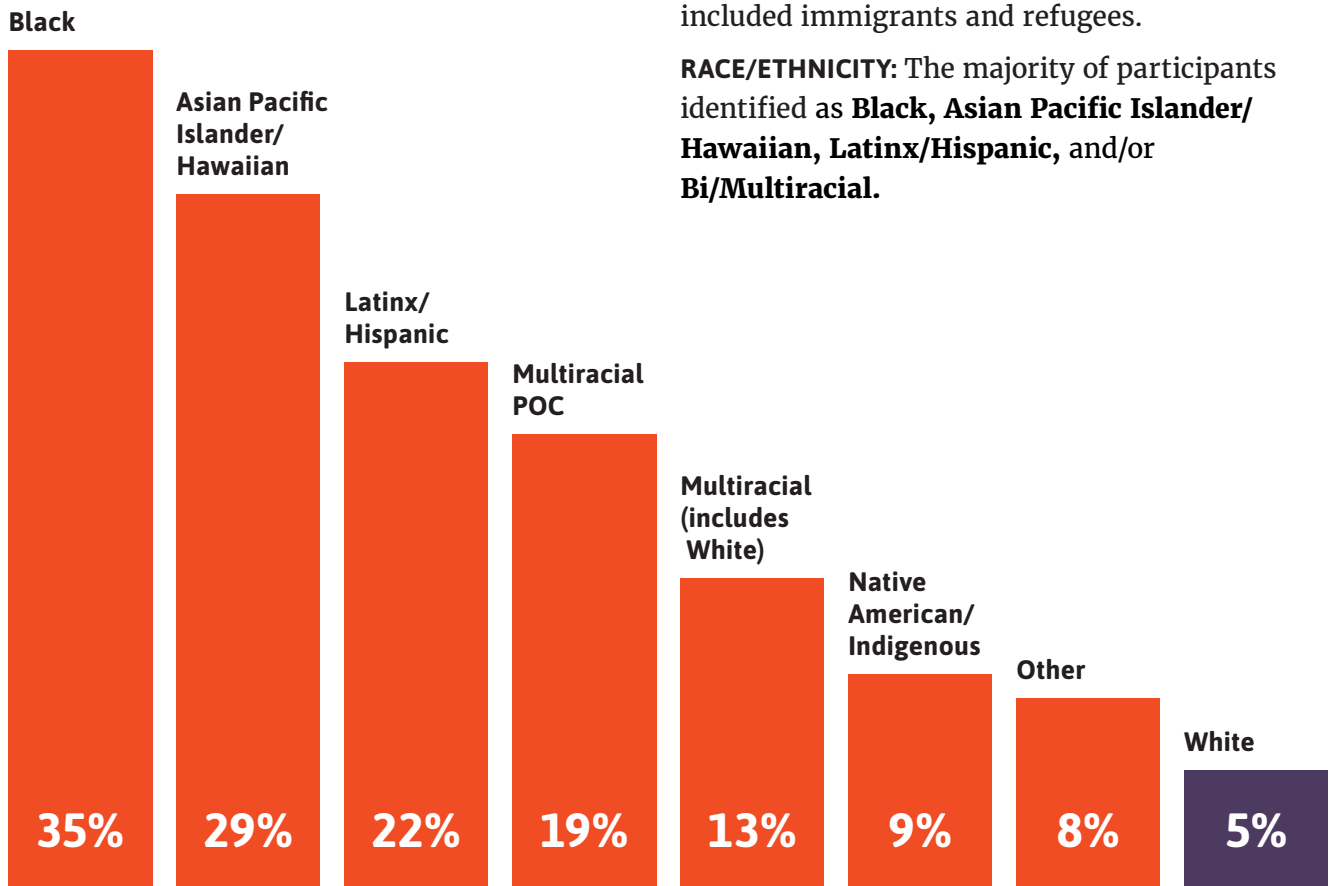
AREAS OF FOCUS: civic engagement, women’s rights/gender justice, racial justice, Indigenous people’s rights, immigrants’ rights, reproductive justice/reproductive rights, health equity, labor rights, trans rights, education, youth development, and anti-violence, among others.

LGBQ+ IDENTITIES: Many identified as LGBQ+.

GENDER: The majority of participants identified as women. Eight participants identified as transgender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and/or two-spirit; and two participants identified as men.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE IDENTITIES: SIP participants included immigrants and refugees.

RACE/ETHNICITY: The majority of participants identified as **Black, Asian Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, Latinx/Hispanic, and/or Bi/Multiracial.**



“For me, SIP is learning **and building on my strengths and using them to advocate for the communities I work with**. That means learning how to manage conflict and learning how to be assertive when in spaces that are not people of color centered and not social justice centered.”

“I was hoping to **gain balance in my workload and self-care**...to learn how to better manage, lead, grow, and inspire my team...to learn how to **change the atmosphere in my organization** for the better.”

“**I wanted to invest in and develop other leaders** and work on replacing myself. That was a big thread of everything I did at SIP.”

“My hopes and desires around my leadership are **to feel confident and powerful** and take up and share space in a way that I should.”

“I know I’m a leader, but **I didn’t have the leadership skills**.”



How does SIP answer the Theory of Change framing questions?

To explore the answers to the framing questions and identify outcomes resulting from SIP participation, the external evaluation firm of Korwin Consulting drew upon:

- Quantitative and qualitative data collected through pre- and post-session surveys from approximately 70 participants in three Cohorts between 2016 and 2020.
- Research, videos, and other materials provided by SIP leadership.
- A focus group and interview with a total of 10 graduates from all three SIP cohorts held in May and June, 2021. Key informants were former and current nonprofit executive directors as well as policy, organizing, and community engagement directors.
- Multiple geographic regions and demographic communities were represented.

ALISON LIN

FRAMING QUESTIONS FROM THEORY OF CHANGE (PAGES 2-3)

What more would we achieve if we could:

- **Honor ourselves and each other as whole and powerful leaders?**
- **Successfully navigate through challenges by using a decolonized leadership model that is meant for us?**
- **Create a culture within our organizations to support the vision we want in the world?**
- **Jointly address impacts of racism and other oppressions?**
- **Work from a place of abundance rather than scarcity?**
- **Build a movement that creates and sustains leaders?**



2021 Spotlight on Outcomes

Key themes emerging from the focus group and interview conducted in mid-2021 with 10 SIP graduates spanning all cohort years included:

- **The COS framework positioned them to lead differently and be more courageous.** It allowed them to be more focused, define success, develop staff, and reestablish purpose and vision within their organizations.
- **The concept of “Failing Forward” helped them grow as leaders** and allowed them to learn and look at success from a different perspective.
- **Being with leaders like themselves tackling social justice issues created a space of community** where they didn’t feel isolated and could generate strategic and collaborative solutions.
- **The use of music and storytelling allowed them to create a unique more loving space** to dive deeper with constituents into the issues that affect their communities.

What more would we achieve if we could honor ourselves and each other as whole and powerful leaders?

Participants came to recognize their own courage and strengths as leaders.

Recognizing Acts of Courage: SIP participants engaged in an exercise to learn to recognize and celebrate their daily “Acts of Courage.” **The Courage conversation made an impact on fellows in the following 3 ways:**

1. Fellows changed how they think about the everyday acts of courage that it takes to do their work.
2. Fellows came to see the value in recognizing these acts of courage.
3. Fellows who had not previously taken the time to claim, honor, or celebrate their everyday acts of courage now do so.



EUGENE ERIC KIM

Fellows learned to fully recognize their strengths and the importance of centering themselves. SIP helped fellows to recognize and move from their existing strengths as leaders rather than their deficits. This approach affirmed and uplifted them. **This is not just a departure from traditional leadership programs, but also from U.S. society’s pervasive culture of racism and sexism,** which levels a relentlessly critical gaze on leaders who are women and gender nonconforming people of color.

*“Seeing value in acts of courage—no matter how ‘small’—will help my leadership in so many ways. Feeling and exhibiting **pride in courageous moves gives me confidence and emboldens my vision and work.**”*

*“I was able to name priorities and values I see as important, without starting out with what my organization or movement needs me to be. **I felt like I could see and name the role of my leadership in a new way.**”*

*“**I could learn from and reflect on my own strengths and growth areas in a way I never really get to in my organization.** I also began to see more deeply where my own insecurities and feelings of inadequacy are holding me back.”*

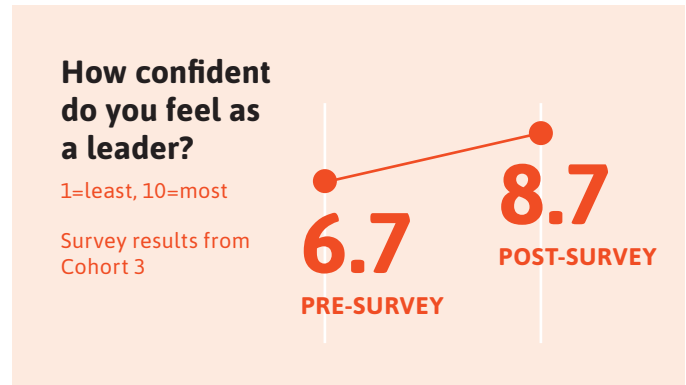
*“**Qualities were reflected to me that I hadn’t predicted or identified in myself.** It was helpful and grounding to use those qualities to anchor my/our vision.”*

They deepened confidence and leadership skills.

Confidence: The majority of fellows reported an increase in confidence as a result of their participation in SIP.

- Fellows increased confidence in their ability to navigate conflict
- Fellows increased their confidence in public speaking

Leadership: Fellows shared they are more able to bring their full selves to their leadership after completing SIP.



Participants described SIP’s executive coaching as “transformative,” providing them with concrete steps to grow as leaders.

In their coaching session with SIP creator Eveline Shen, they applied the **Courageous Operating System** to challenges they faced. **Participants had a-ha moments and gained transformational insights into how they could achieve their purpose and have bigger impact.**

*“Stepping into my leadership and using courage to have uncomfortable but necessary **conversations** shifted the narrative from fears about letting go of a staff member to coaching them into a job that is better suited for them.”*

*“We created a timeline of all accomplishments. That **helped with my anxiety and frustration** and inability to see my ‘wins.’”*

*“Thinking about **what to learn from failure and apply it moving forward**, the difference between success and failure, noticing what requires clarity and courage.”*

*“Eveline has the incomparable **ability to ground me and ask the very clear questions** that need to be asked to get to the core of the issues I’ve been working with.”*

*“Eveline has **helped me realize what my real goals are**...I knew I wanted to do something more, but I couldn’t pinpoint what it was. Now it’s a lot clearer.”*

100% of participants felt more prepared to tackle their goals after the session.

100% of participants felt they could address a situation or challenge facing them at work.

Participants understood the complexity of being a leader and the need to step back, prioritize, and redefine success according to values.

*“Before the meeting, my plate felt super full. Sitting with Eveline **helped me to figure out what I need to carry the work forward** and also how I might best manage my time and effort.”*

What more would we achieve if we could successfully navigate through challenges by using a de-colonized leadership model that is meant for us?

Participants learned to redefine success according to their values and the social change they want to make.

Participants report feeling more connected to their values and having a greater understanding of their purpose. They explain:

*"I had to redefine success in 2020. That meant not just for my coalition, but for all our partners. **I would not have been able to do that without SIP strategies** around redefining success and how to do it with courage."*

*"It reignited **my passion and affirmed my strengths**. It allowed me to recommit to using my values to lead. It was grounding, and it excited me to grow as a stronger leader."*

*"More and more, **I am learning and getting more confident** with what I already have in me."*

Fellows reported that they had more tools and frameworks to lead with clear purpose after coming to SIP.

Do you define success according to your values?

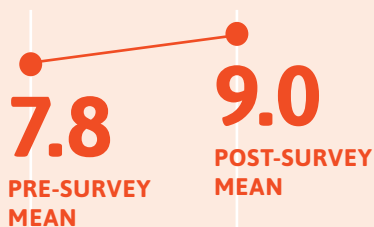
% of fellows who responded yes



Survey results from Cohort 2

How much do you prioritize leading from your values?

1=least, 10=most



Survey results from Cohort 2

*"Understanding the Courageous Operating System helps me remember that things take time to build. **I appreciate thinking about how to break large tasks into smaller steps**. When we set intentions and take steps, the people and things we need come when least expected."*



Building Confidence and Work Culture Shift

Tamiaka Atkins is a leader with a fierce determination to dismantle systems built by white supremacy, so that communities of color can have self-determination and freedom. A life-long community organizer and activist, Tamiaka

founded the Atlanta Chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the first chapter of that national labor justice organization to exclusively focus on African Diaspora domestic workers. That chapter became the model for We Dream In Black. She is currently the Executive Director of ProGeorgia, a non-partisan civic engagement table.

Tamiaka is never at a loss for bold ideas. However, while she is often in the company of other leaders of color, she almost never has time for innovation and creativity with them. This—along with expectations of various stakeholders for her to adhere to their priorities, seemingly endless work, and the stresses inherent in being “Black and brown in America”—has often caused her to feel drained and burnt-out, because she always felt like she was never doing enough.

Tamiaka started SIP as a new ED inheriting the organization from a previous leader who was white. She enrolled in SIP in 2018, after hearing about it from other SIP alumni and seeing in them a confidence that they had gained in leading and planning while bringing their whole selves to the table.

In the first session of SIP, Tamiaka felt moved and validated when she and other leaders could identify concretely how oppression, sexism, and racist systems were impacting their leadership and work. She was transformed by the message that she and all cis- or transgender women of color, are “enough.” She explained, “I realized that I don’t have to work myself to death to prove I am valuable and that I have something meaningful to offer. It allowed me to move from a space of insecurity and defensiveness to a stance where I can strategize better, dream bigger, and be more innovative.”

She began to immediately apply this message to her work. During the 2020 Census, philanthropic partners expressed a heightened interest to fund civic engagement work in the South. Some came with a particular agenda for the region. SIP helped Tamiaka gain the confidence to negotiate with funders to help them

see that her organization could do work that was much more powerful than what they had been asking for.

SIP gave her the tools to plan and implement strategies while centering her values, Tamiaka was determined to change parts of the civic engagement culture that was harmful to organizers. In the face of a common civic engagement funder practice of treating electoral canvassers as expendable, and at a time in late 2020 when organizations were planning to lay off canvassers after voter registration money had dried up, she worked to change philanthropic and organizational culture, so that electoral canvassers were recognized as valuable and worth retaining and investing in. As a result, many canvassers remained employed at their organizations through the pandemic and are now leading outreach and civic engagement efforts.

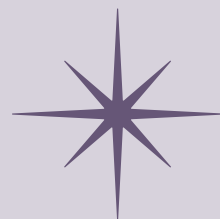
Coming to SIP helped Tamiaka step into her power as a leader and gave her tools to act according to her values, which benefitted both her and her organization. The gains she says she values most are:

- Learning how to identify “what to move, what to pause, and what to discard” or say “no” to, rather than blaming herself when the work is too much.
- Confidence in her own bold leadership style that aligns with her vision and what she loves.

Furthermore, through music and rhythm activities and sharing stories of everyday acts of courage with her peers, she built supportive relationships with those in other organizations and movements. This network helped her to see the courage that exists in the women of color around her, the importance of naming their courageous acts which often go unnoticed and helped to keep her spirits up during really challenging times while integrating joy, music and dance.

Using what she learned from the Courageous Operating System, she was able to get her board excited about a vision for the organization and create a plan to make the vision become reality.

“I had to redefine ‘success,’ not just for my organization, but for our partners. I would not have been able to do that without the SIP Courageous Operating System. It helped me to figure out who my allies were and what funders were allied with me. SIP also helped transform our organizational culture, and that goes back to redefining success. I’ve gotten a lot of feedback that my organization has modeled good self-care for other state and national organizations.”



Courage + Strategy = Leadership

Karla Gonzales Garcia has been heavily involved in social and racial justice work throughout her career, focusing on survivors of domestic and sexual violence and immigrants. When she joined SIP in 2018, Karla was the Policy Director at the reproductive justice organization Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR). Her long-term career goal is to be the voice for grassroots communities, wherever she works, raising awareness to their pressing needs and advocating for policy and systemic change. She currently works as the Director of Organizing and Community Partnerships at Hunger Free Colorado, a food justice organization.

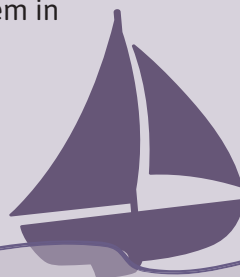
Karla had never received structured training or mentoring on being a leader before enrolling in SIP. Like many in the social justice field, she had simply been moved up into increasingly responsible roles over the years, as people recognized her commitment and overall competence. Because of this, Karla found it challenging to identify and articulate her own purpose, values, and skills, which affected her self-confidence. As an immigrant from Peru, she often felt invisible and found it difficult to be assertive when opportunities arose that could affect the culture of the organization.

SIP instilled a confidence in Karla to speak up about her needs to people in leadership at her organization, which led to stronger relationships and better collaboration. She learned the importance of self-care and developed ways to create a more sustainable pace for herself to manage her workload and prevent burnout. She had courageous conversations with her staff and shared tools and resources to support them in their own leadership development.

What Karla learned in SIP also helped bring about positive change for members of her community. In the midst of a legislative campaign in a highly contentious policy environment, Karla refused to support the predominant narrative about the bill she was working on that didn't center the lived experience of marginalized communities. Instead, she successfully applied the skills and courage gained in SIP and gave an impassioned speech about the importance of not marginalizing the lives of undocumented immigrants for political gain. The bill went on to become a state senate priority and subsequently became law.

To Karla, SIP was transformative. She explains:

"SIP gave me the opportunity to literally believe in myself. It validated that I was a leader and I could do this. SIP decolonizes the standard way of thinking about leadership and helps the leader in each of us to shine in a world which is constantly trying to push us out and make us invisible."



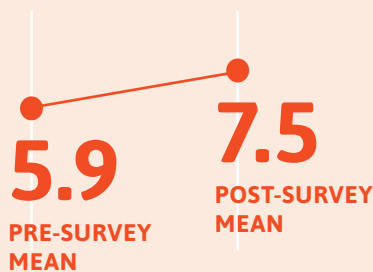
What more would we achieve if we could create a culture within our organizations to support the vision we want in the world?

Participants acquired new skills to address challenges and conflicts.

- The majority of fellows reported an **increase in their comfort dealing with conflict after SIP**. The Courageous Operating System helped leaders feel more prepared to deal with challenges that arise.
- Participants engaged in exercises to explore conflict management, including a framework of perceiving conflict as “togetherness”—understanding that **conflict can provide an opportunity to engage meaningfully to solve a problem**, rather than responding to conflict by working in “silos.” Participants reported that these learnings and opportunities taught them concrete skills to manage conflicts.
- Participants **engaged in peer consultations** to help them deal with a conflict they are currently experiencing in their work.
- Participants engaged in coaching sessions to address communication challenges faced in their work. Participants shared that they **applied learnings** from these coaching sessions to:
 - **Prepare for and speak confidently** in funder briefings.
 - **Mediate conflict** with partner organizations.
 - **Develop staffing plans** to better support their organizations, including a transition plan and a restructuring plan.

How comfortable are you in dealing with conflict?

1=least, 10=most



Survey results from Cohort 3

*“I had to address conflict couple times almost immediately after the training. In one scenario, it **went much better than I anticipated**, because I stayed relaxed and kept big awareness and trust very present the whole time.”*

*“**These are all practices I will remember** during conflict and will bring back to my board and throughout our work.”*

*“The most informative experience was when **a staff member who had gone through SIP called me and said, ‘I want to have a direct conversation with you.’ She did it in such a supportive way.** I took notes so that I could remember how she did it.”*

Participants learned how to build organizational cultures that celebrate everyday efforts and prioritize courage.

“Understanding purpose and vision has been something we’ve done a lot with our staff. For a long time, we were just going with it. **It now feels so much more focused...**our guiding question: ‘Is this building power for our people?’ If it isn’t, it’s just a distraction.”

“I am thinking much more about framing healthy practices like saying ‘no’—**setting boundaries**—as courageous, as opposed to just ‘important,’ which can then feel at odds with what gets lifted up as being courageous—doing what others won’t, taking on more or bigger fights, etc.”

They are bringing new communication skills back to their organizations.

- Fellows reported that they have increased their comfort, skills, and techniques to tell great stories in their public speaking after coming to SIP. They shared that they have **gained skills and tools to help other people in their organizations and communities improve their public speaking skills** and tell great stories as well.
- Communication tools helped leaders **be more succinct in their messaging**.
- Participants learned to **organize and create stories that spotlight their work**, recognizing the importance of planning and organizing their thoughts to garner the most impact.

2017–2018 SIP cohort fellows participated in a communications workshop.

100% of fellows participating reported that this workshop helped them increase their public speaking skills.

Fellows also engaged in coaching sessions to address work-related communication challenges.

88% of fellows participating in communication coaching sessions have been able to apply tools they learned to a challenge they faced in their work.

“Now, before any presentation, **I will think about who my audience is and what I’m trying to convey**. I will include emotions and memories and paint a clear picture for them.”



BETHANIE HINES



Vision for Intergenerational Leadership

Corrine is the visionary executive director of Tewa Women United, one of the oldest Native multi-issue organizations in the country that was created and

led by Indigenous women. Under her leadership, the organization has exponentially grown in size and budget. Corrine constantly grapples with fitting the innovative culturally-responsive programs TWU creates for rural Indigenous women and girls and their communities within the context and confines of systems that have been put in place by western colonization and patriarchy. Her communities face deep rooted challenges including soil and water contamination from nuclear waste, high rates of gender based violence and reproductive oppression, colonial perspectives of poverty and imposed systems which limit tribal community members' ability to "own" land and housing. Rural Indigenous communities need long term solutions that are culturally driven and effective in addressing the complexity of challenges they face.

Corrine enrolled in the SIP in 2016 with a desire to strengthen her organization's sustainability while embracing community, self, and collective care. Specifically, she wanted to develop an organizational infrastructure, grounded in compassion for her community, with effective systems in place to manage people and operations to help Tewa achieve long term sustainability over multiple generations.

The Courageous Operating System she learned at SIP served as a roadmap for Corrine to achieve her short- and long- term leadership goals. She now challenges her staff to accept the practice of "Failing Forward"—to purposefully and deliberately learn from failure to build success by testing different ideas to strengthen the organization. She has conducted conflict resolution exercises she learned from SIP with her supervisors to debunk assumptions that conflict must be hostile, authoritative, or avoided altogether. Instead, she emphasizes using empathy and seeing conflict as an opportunity to meaningfully solve a problem and create new solutions.

Corrine appreciates SIP's impact in helping her to solidify the direction she envisioned for her organization. With a belief that, "You need to have a circle with you that can also hold that vision with you," she has sent three other management level staff through SIP. With a shared language and tools from the Courageous Operating System, they have been able to help the organization navigate through multiple challenges, including the pandemic. As the organization continues to evolve, Corrine knows that she and her staff are well equipped on their journey to create a world where rural Indigenous communities can thrive; a world where they can build assets and own their land and homes; a world where they are free from sexual violence and reproductive oppression; and a world where they can grow healthy food in their gardens and drink clean nourishing water; a world where the lives of indigenous women and girls are valued and honored and celebrated.

"You need to have a circle with you that can also hold that vision with you."



What more would we achieve if we could jointly address the impacts of racism and other oppressions?

Fellows increased their knowledge and analysis to be able to move the needle in addressing racism and white supremacy in their work.

100% of participants in Cohort 1 reported that they are thinking in new ways and taking concrete steps to take on anti-Black racism in their organizations and movement-wide.

95% of participants in Cohort 2 reported having a greater understanding of how anti-Black racism and white supremacy have contributed to policies that oppress families in the U.S.

For instance, they gained a greater understanding of:

- The Page Law of 1875, which was used to bar immigrants from China from entering the U.S.
- Racist aspects of the New Deal.
- Other policies that contributed to criminalizing poor people of color.

*“I was reminded that although there is a moment right now of urgency and visibility and struggle, **this work needs to be done long term.** We can start where we are now and move forward even if we’re not as well positioned for this movement as we’d like to be.”*

*“**I felt reconnected to implications of what’s happening** in the U.S. and clearer in some ways about why my work to sustain people working in social justice organizations is important.”*

*“**I learned about the stark realities for folks living under very different circumstances** and still finding their voice and strength to fight back, while risking their lives.”*

*“**The conversations were rich and layered** with insight around movement-level, organizational-level, and personal-level strategies for moving anti-racist work. There were lots of practical suggestions.”*

*“**Making connections** to historical moments of anti-Blackness in policies **help us understand and see existing oppression today** and how it continues to manifest in our political infrastructure. This helps us fight systems that don’t work for us. It helps us identify the opposition’s agenda and tactics in ways we can hopefully dismantle.”*

What more would we achieve if we could work from a place of abundance rather than scarcity?

Leaders created community and trust through music and storytelling.

Participants built true fellowship in SIP and left the program feeling less isolated. Many shared that opportunities to participate in making rhythm and music and to tell their stories helped to create bonds and create community. Participants joined in this healing practice and connected from a place of emotional depth, fostering connections between individuals, organizations, and movements.

*“So many of our non-profit and activist spaces have prioritized leading with the head. **We need music, food, dance, and other rituals and modalities to connect to create authentic community.**”*

*“Just playing and laughing with **people builds comfort and closeness**, and the emotional and ritual depth and storytelling with the music is transformative.”*

*“For myself in this journey, the song from Melanie, creating the mantra has been the most powerful piece. **It’s been about how to hold the joy in all the darkness.** That has been the most powerful piece of reclaiming that joy.”*



EUGENE ERIC KIM

100% of Cohort 2 fellows who participated in the Building Community Through Rhythm and Music activities with vocal activist and integral SIP facilitator Melanie DeMore gave positive feedback.

100% of Cohort 2 fellows stated that the activities helped them build more connections within the SIP cohort.

*“The activities of singing and clapping and snapping together were so different from some other experiences I’ve had with music and were a **great entry point to a different part of the brain** and new connection to each other.”*

*“**Music clears my mind; music brings me joy.** Our music has to be considered part of the work.”*

Leaders strategized how to set sustainable pacing for their work to build resiliency.

SIP showed leaders how they can make the **pace of their work more sustainable**. Participants share that this allows them to approach their work strategically and sustainably.

*“Pacing, in particular, was super valuable and grounding. I feel more equipped and comfortable stopping or slowing down to do deep strategizing. **I feel more equipped to create sustainable solutions**, versus plowing through.”*

What more would we achieve if we could build a movement that creates and sustains leaders?

By participating in SIP, leaders are building movements together.

- Celebrating acts of courage together **brought about new insights**, strengthened their conviction in their viewpoints, and helped them feel connected to other fellows and recognize their collective courage.
- By working together with their “buddies” and in small collective groups, participants were able to **learn different perspectives** and receive direct feedback.

*“I no longer feel isolated and victimized, as **I know I can count on a huge powerful network** to lift up my voice as well as that of our cross sectional movement.”*

*“Being in relationship with other women-of-color executive directors **helps to remind me I’m not in this on my own**. It helps remind me how much I do know and can share here.”*

SIP supports sustainable and effective movement work.

Stepping Into Power fellows attest to the value and far-reaching impacts of the program on their personal leadership development and on their organizations, external relationships and alliances, and their effectiveness in working to build a more just society.



Letting the Heart Lead the Way to Justice

Wendy Chun-Hoon is an innovative builder and leader of complex networks that hold frontline communities at the center. Her career has included large-scale initiatives

that connect communities, advocacy groups, and funders to build a movement for labor justice.

Wendy was the Executive Director of Family Values @ Work, a movement network of grassroots coalitions advocating for worker and family economic justice, when SIP creator, Eveline Shen, invited her to the program in 2016. “It was magic that Stepping into Power found me at the exact moment I was asking myself, am I enough? I struggled the first session to find words for my own leadership. By the second session, I began to feel part of a sisterhood of movement leaders holding space for one another, witnessing each other’s strengths. By the end, I shed the second-guessing. I started breathing, believing and committing to build with other women of color, queer, trans and gender non-conforming leaders in social justice work.”

SIP gave Wendy what she calls a “muscle memory” of being able to connect her mind and body in her work. Because of the camaraderie and safety she felt at SIP, she choose to let down her shield and experience what “courageous practice” means. She recalls a physical exercise with another SIP participant that illustrated tension in relationships. As they moved together with both tension and balance, she saw that these two forces are not opposites, and she understood that conflict in work relationships are a part of growth and positive change. She also names elements of the Courageous Operating System,

making music with her peers, and learning how to communicate directly and supportively as very important lessons. SIP helped her understand and articulate to her staff the importance of leading from an intersectional racial, gender, LGBTQ, and disability justice framework.

Wendy’s revelations helped build her resilience and focus on what matters, so that courage and success come more easily now. Through her SIP experience, Wendy learned to put her heart at the center of her work. As a result, she grew as a leader and gained the confidence to step into her role as executive director of Family Values @ Work. She was able to trust her instincts and encourage colleagues to think and act differently. This helped the organization—where two colleagues also went through SIP—to advance bold initiatives and make significant impacts in the communities they serve. SIP helped her gain tools, resources, and a newfound confidence, and the knowledge in her core that she is well equipped to lead.

“Being a part of SIP was the early foundation for me to be prepared to lead my organization, and not just lead it in an ‘I am responsible’ way, but in an ‘I know we can do it differently’ way. This ultimately led to a very different board that was majority women of color, having been majority white-led; a very different staff, which was already in the works, but really came through then; and also just believing in myself and that I had aright to take up that space.”

In early 2021, President Biden appointed Wendy to be the Director of the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, where she currently serves.





BETHANIE HINES

Conclusion

If there were a SIP 2.0, SIP participants would like:

- **Train-the-trainer skills**, so they could teach SIP strategies to other staff and board members.
- **Support to apply the Courageous Operating System to innovative or radical projects** graduates wish to develop outside their current working position, “like a lab or experimental development space.”
- **Additional coaching** on how to have “hard,” or direct conversations.
- **Emphasis on how to rest and heal.**
- **Intergenerational engagement**, particularly to support wellbeing and self-care among the youngest movement leaders.
- **Deeper learning about trauma-informed leadership**, with a focus on addressing intergenerational trauma experienced in Black communities.

In the wake of monumental challenges of the past several years, many of which are ongoing, a program designed by and for leaders of color — with a deep knowledge of the social justice sector, a profound love of community, and an unwavering message that self care, and not self destruction — is critically important to building a just society.



Korwin Consulting advances social justice solutions by helping organizations respond thoughtfully and effectively to pressing community needs.

Evaluator: Robin Horner (Principal), Aricia Berry, Nico Punkar



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