

STARTER CULTURE

# Supporting a hidden movement: why fund *inner-led* change?

By Claire Milne

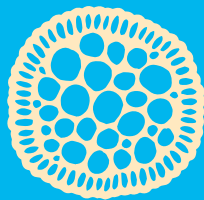
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“

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

”

**Lilla Watson**, Aboriginal popular educationalist, activist and elder



# STARTER CULTURE

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# This report is about how change happens.

It is a response to growing concern for the health and transformativeness of social and ecological change groups, organisations and movements - and society at large. Drawing on more than 250 interviews from change-makers across 14 countries we outline the extent to which this movement-wide health crisis is resulting from a widespread neglect of the inner dimension of life.

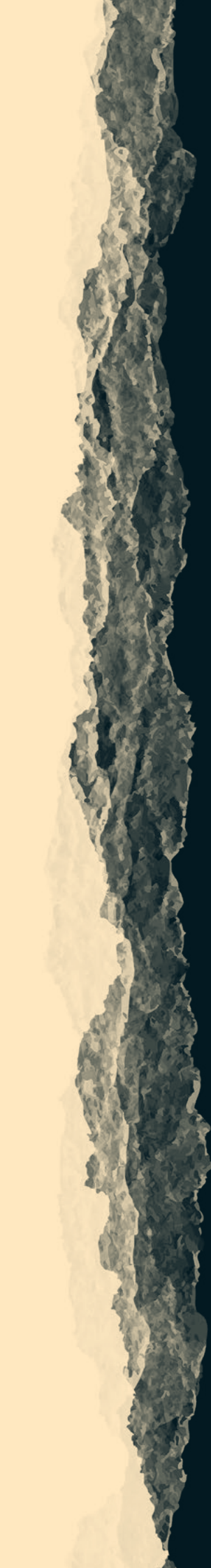
Our research over two decades illuminates the burning need to return the 'inner' to the heart of social and ecological justice and renewal work. This report is a clarion call to funders and philanthropists to centre inner-led change within their theories of change and funding priorities - and to fully embody a whole-systems approach by investing in approaches to change that go beyond the consciousness that created our current global predicament. It's part of a wider thread of our work collaborating with funders and philanthropists to significantly increase funding for inner-led change - and to help unleash the transformative potential of the funds tied up within funding and philanthropy.

**To speak of our inner lives is to recognise that how we experience and make sense of the world matters, and that how we relate with what goes on inside of us shapes:**

- how we behave towards ourselves and others, both human and the natural world we are part of;
- the cultures we co-create and the consciousness with which we do so;
- how we go about making change happen; and
- how transformative our change-making efforts are.

## What is inner-led change?

We framed the term inner-led change as a long-overdue **reuniting of 'outer' change work** (which recognises and challenges harmful societal structures and tries to create alternatives) **with 'inner' change work** (which supports us; to explore our own entanglement in a culture that perpetuates these harmful societal structures; to cultivate healthier relationships with ourselves, each other and other-than-humans; and to co-create the healthy, relational and just cultures our hearts long for - and which our current social and ecological collapse demands). Crucially, inner-led change goes well beyond personal wellbeing and western psychology to include dimensions that are richly relational, interpersonal, fractal, social, cultural, mythic, political, spiritual, soulful and other-than-human.



Inner-led change seeks to expand consciousness beyond that which created our current crises and collapse. It supports us to source our change-making from expanded dimensions of consciousness, rather than creating them from the very same ‘power-over’ consciousness that created the problem.

## Moving beyond our power-over paradigm

In her essay “*The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House*” black feminist Audre Loudre, alongside a host of other black/ radical feminists, potently crystalized ‘*the personal is political*’.

Inner-led change is a modern-day reminder of this truth-telling. *The inner is political* in that, like the personal, it expands well beyond individual wellbeing to bring into consciousness how we each internalise and act out the socio-historic, systemic and cultural realities we abhor and challenge in others - and blame our current crises on. The uncomfortable truth is that inner work that neglects the political implications of our inner worlds and fails to empower us to take radical self-responsibility for our own culturally conditioned complicity in the current crises, simply serves to support the power-over status quo.

Meanwhile attempts to address poverty and suffering and create a more equitable and just world will likely fall short of anything more than sticking plasters unless they engage in the inner work needed to expand consciousness beyond that which created our current context of extreme inequality, crises and collapse. When we engage in the socio-political aspect of inner work, we begin to decolonise at depth by directly dismantling the power-over culture within us. And when we place an inner dimension at the heart of our groups, organisations and movements we help unleash their transformative potential.

Inner-led change supports us to empty ourselves of our culturally conditioned ‘predict and control’ approach to change. This is what allows us to become responsive to Earth’s wisdom as it emerges through us and our groups, organisations and movements.

### Supporting a Hidden Movement

Our research has revealed a hidden movement thrumming with an abundance of inner-led change practitioners, specialists and activists seeking routes to change that centre this inner dimension that is key to co-liberation from our power-over paradigm and the colonial cultures it thrives through. These pioneers are tending to a vitally important dimension in our understanding of how change happens - and helping unleash its transformative potential. They hold the keys to the depth and scale of transformation demanded by our current times and hence their work crucially needs more support and visibility.

# What is Starter Culture?

**Starter Culture is a small organisation bringing together those interested in inner-led change to unleash deep cultural transformation within our ourselves, our communities and at scale by:**

- Sharing compelling stories and evidence around the vital role inner-led change plays in the deep cultural transformation demanded by our times.
- Offering and signposting to a wide range of support around inner-led change.
- Supporting transformation beyond our culturally conditioned selves that are perpetuating the power-over culture at the heart of our current social and ecological collapse.
- Grappling together with the wily predicaments of our times.

Our vision is a vibrant, transformative and well resourced movement for inner-led social and ecological change whose practitioners, groups and organisations understand their work to be a crucial part of a potent, collective movement for deep and unprecedented cultural transformation.

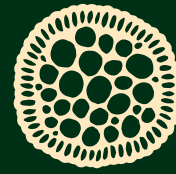
“

**Change is a messy thing and doesn't happen at once.**

When a butterfly is formed inside a chrysalis, it first dissolves its old caterpillar form. Out of that sticky collapse the imago emerges. Most calls for responding to planetary breakdown are based on climate science or behavioural studies. They are all tidy outer affairs discussed in rooms. But the kind of shift needed to navigate times of collapse requires us to undergo a difficult inner change with our feet on the Earth, to hold fast as a known world falls about us.

” **Charlotte Du Cann, author of *After Ithaca* and co-Director at Dark Mountain Project.**





## Our agenda

Our intention is to raise awareness of the crucial role inner-led change plays in navigating social and ecological collapse – though we are not inclined to try and persuade you! We hope what we are sharing here will:

- Whet your appetite for a deeper inquiry into how inner-led change is a potent ingredient within the change that you seek to support.
- Help create the cultural and policy space needed for more of us to get behind what we already feel deep in our bones, yet have thus far felt unable to do anything about in the face of the immense complexity and scale of our global crises - and what is at stake were we to deliberately take the lid off this veritable can of worms.
- Prompt you to ask the question - what is at stake if we **don't** take the lid off this can of worms?
- Inspire you to explore how to unleash the transformative potential of your organisation/ fund by integrating an inner dimesion.
- Help make significantly more funding available for inner-led change work.

We are sharing this publication within the spirit of Creative Commons and without charging. We warmly invite donations to enable us to continue supporting inner-led change to flourish at depth and scale and to become widely accessible to all who want and need it.



**Donate here:**  
[www.starterculture.net/donate](http://www.starterculture.net/donate)

What if inner-led change holds the keys to navigating these times of collapse in a good way?

# A note on language

Using the term 'inner-led change' during our Cup of Tea conversation with staff from indigenous-led Pawanka Foundation, felt odd and clunky. We came to realise this was because the inner and outer dimensions of change seemed to be inherently interwoven within the Pawanka team's language, within the projects they support - and presumably their consciousness.

We like to think then that the term inner-led change has a limited shelf-life and that as our collective consciousness expands, our activities to make a difference socially and ecologically will come to inherently integrate these inner and outer dimensions.

We also like to think that some of you reading this may already experience enough integration between life's inner and outer dimensions, such that for you too, the term inner-led change may feel somewhat clunky.

- We are using the terms **activists**, **change-makers** and **inner-led practitioners** interchangeably to refer to anyone engaged in activities intending towards creating a more life-affirming and just world. We hope you will see yourself in this.
- When we use the terms '**others**', '**world**' and '**whole earth community**' - we are referring to both other human beings *and* those that are 'not human': our more-than-human wild allies including rivers, rocks, and other things normally considered inanimate.
- When we talk about '**expanding consciousness**' we are referring to the process of revealing ways of being and experiencing life that we have marginalised and are therefore unaware of - which, alongside shadow work, includes experiencing ourselves as an entangled interdependent part of the wider web of Life - rather than exclusively as an individual human being.
- Expanding consciousness is often understood to be an exclusively upwards and outwards movement towards transcendence i.e. connecting to the oneness of all life in the universe, often depicted as spirit, the divine or God. We also include its neglected mirror image, the downward and inward dimension that Thomas Berry calls **inscendence**. This dimension of consciousness connects us with the unique and wild part in each of us (what we call soul) that is in conversation with the invisible realms of the wild soul of Earth.

Inner-led change is about supporting us to expand into these more-than-human realms of consciousness so that our change-making is informed by our deep listening to that which is way beyond the limits of our hyper-individualistic human centric strategic-minds.



**To our indigenous ancestors, and to the many aboriginal peoples who still hold fast to their oral traditions, language is less a human possession than it is a property of the animate earth itself, an expressive, telluric power in which we, along with the coyotes and the crickets, all participate.**



**David Abram**, *Spell of the Sensuous*



# How did we do our research?

This report is informed by more than **250** interviews across **14** countries with:

▼  
social and ecological change-makers integrating an inner dimension into their work.

▼  
inner-led change practitioners whose work supports change in the 'outer world'

▼  
funders incorporating inner-led perspectives into their work supporting change.

## Our 'Cups of Tea' process



We called our research a 'cups of tea' (CoT) process because it consisted of semi-structured conversations exploring the success, challenges, needs and opportunities experienced by those supporting inner-led change to flourish. We carried out 12 'cups of tea' processes (around 20 conversations each) across the following themes:

- Radical leadership among people of colour in England;
- Power and identity amongst development workers in Nepal;
- Disability & climate activism across Scotland, England & Bulgaria;
- Rites of passage work with young people across eight countries;
- Integrating an inner dimension into social & ecological change in; Wales; Scotland; England; Oxfordshire; Devon; and Bristol (as 6 separate Cups of Tea (CoT) processes); and
- Funders' relationships with inner-led change.



Whilst the majority of our conversations were in the British Isles, they also included perspectives from India, Nepal, Chile, Peru, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Australia, Spain, Japan and the United States.

The interviewees' work ranges over 40 different areas of expertise from agriculture, social justice and philanthropic funding through to transformative conflict, yoga, nature connection and ancestral healing. See the end of the report for examples of the inner-led change practices CoT participants are involved in.

# The times are urgent - let's slow down

If you are reading this you will almost certainly already be aware that these times bring with them a sense of urgency. How can we thaw our hearts to the chilling reality that we have likely already passed the 1.5 degree carbon threshold and are increasingly likely to exceed 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels?\* That we are already in both social and ecological collapse is palpable. This reality can make it hard to get on board with an inner-led approach that appears to fly in the face of this urgency. And yet, as Bayo Akomolafe from the Emergence Network says "The times are urgent – let's slow down."

“

I am reminded of the Chinese word for *crisis* which consists of two characters: one represents ‘*danger*’ and the other ‘*hidden opportunity*’.

”

**M. Scott Peck** in *The Different Drum: The creation of community - the first step to world peace.*

## The Work That Reconnects

Activist elder Joanna Macy framed our current times as the Great Unravelling and helpfully classified our change-making into three categories:

1

**Holding actions** that stop destructive actions and policies (e.g. direct action and campaigning).

2

**Creating life-affirming alternatives** (e.g. local regenerative food, energy and transport systems).

3

**Shifting consciousness** beyond that which created our current crises (e.g. transforming and healing trauma, shadow work, eco- and spiritual-awakening and soulcrafting work).

Inner-led change seeks to expand consciousness beyond that which created our current crises and collapse. It supports us to source our holding actions and creation of alternatives from expanded dimensions of consciousness, rather than creating them from the very same consciousness that created the problem.

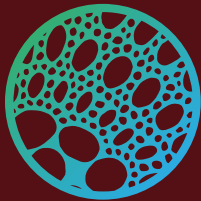
\*The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) along with swathes of the international scientific community agree that global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, is the threshold for runaway climate change and its likely irrevocable impacts the world over.

# “ For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house

” Audre Lorde

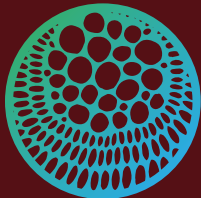
This report draws on over 250 interviews with social and ecological change makers, inner work practitioners and funders from across 14 countries. It is a response to the burning need to return the ‘inner’ to the heart of social and ecological justice and renewal work. It’s a clarion call to funders and philanthropists to centre inner-led change within your theories of change so as to invest in solutions beyond the consciousness that created our current global predicament.

## Vital ingredients of inner-led change



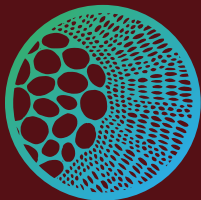
### ECO-CENTRIC

Expanding beyond our individualistic human-centric lens of the world to include collective, nature-connected, more-than-human ways-of-listening, seeing, being, doing, knowing, imagining and becoming, that support us to source solutions from beyond the consciousness that created our current crises. Listening to Earth’s dreaming as She whispers sweet everything’s into our infinitesimal ears.



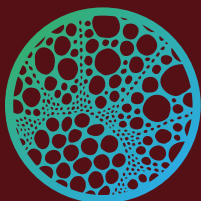
### TRAUMA-(AT)TUNED

Recognising trauma as the collective waters we are swimming in whose transformative power lies in recognising its collective, systemic, historic and species-wide nature. Expanding beyond trying to ‘fix’ broken individuals so they become more palatable, controllable, productive cogs in our consumerist works.



### DECOLONISING AT DEPTH

Tracking colonialism’s imprints within our own psyche, identity, behaviours and beliefs. Doing the inner work needed to be able to recognise and transform the ways we have internalised, acted out and caused harm through this power-over culture. Recognising, healing and transforming the collective trauma resulting from historic and on-going colonisation.



### EMERGENT STRATEGIZING

Letting go of our need to predict and control. Re-membling how to embrace the initial discomfort of life’s inherent uncertainty. Taking one step at a time towards the North Star that is our overarching vision. Actively surrendering to a power greater than ourselves. Becoming a hollow bone for the regenerative power and potential of the Life-death-Life cycle.

“

It may be a cliché that no problem is solved from the mindset that created it, but it is still true. If we could envisage where we need to get to it wouldn't be a big enough change to make it worth going from where we are.

”

**Manda Scott**, *Accidental Gods* and  
Author of the *Boudica Series*

# Contents

## Section 1

### What we mean by inner and why it matters

14 - 15

- 1.1 The costs of neglecting the inner . . . . . 16 - 19
  - Burnout and the marginalisation of rest . . . . . 20 - 21
- 1.2 Beyond personal wellbeing and western psychology: decolonising 'psychology' and 'mental health' . . . . . 22 - 23
- 1.3 Moving beyond our power-over paradigm. . . . . 24 - 25
- 1.4 Why 'good' people do 'bad' things . . . . . 26 - 27

## Section 2

### What is inner-led change?

#### ~ and how does it relate with relational culture?

28 - 29

- 2.1 Inner-led change is reuniting life's inner and outer dimensions . . . . . 30 - 33
- 2.2 Inner-led change is politicising the inner . . . . . 34 - 41
- 2.3 Inner-led change is cultivating an ecological sense of 'self' . . . . . 42 - 43
- 2.4 Inner-led change is relating with that which is invisible
- 2.5 Inner-led change is supporting Life's evolutionary edge

## Section 3

### What does inner-led change look like in practice?

44 - 43

- 3.1 Wholing and healing for those working for change . . . . . 46 - 47
- 3.2 Unleashing the transformative potential of groups and organisations . . . . . 48 - 53
- 3.3 Cultivating seeds of a healthier culture at a wider level . . . . . 54 - 55

## Section 4

### Why funders need to pay attention to inner-led change

56 - 57

- 4.1 Because it gets to the root of all our ecological, social and cultural crises . . . . . 58 - 59
- 4.2 Because it supports the healthy relational cultures our collective futures rest on
- 4.3 Because it deepens and amplifies existing investments in 'outer' change
- 4.4 Because there is clear and growing demand . . . . . 60 - 61
- 4.5 Because without funding it is unpaid labour (largely by marginalised identities). . . . . 62 - 63
- 4.6 Because there is evidence it works . . . . . 63 - 65
- 4.7 Because the market economy has trapped us into consumerist quick fixes. . . . . 67

## Section 5

### Next steps for funders

67 - 68

- 5.1 Fund the cultivation of healthy organisational and group culture . . . . . 70 - 71
- 5.2 Centre inner-led change within your theory of change and funding priorities and criteria
- 5.3 Fund initiatives identified by our CoT research . . . . . 72 - 73
- 5.4 Learn how to embrace collective trauma. . . . . 74 - 75
- 5.5 Join together as a community-of-practice for inner-led change funders . . . . . 76 - 77
- 5.6 Help pioneer a collective fund resourcing earth-centric inner-led change at depth and scale
- 5.7 Invest in the inner-led change support needed to decolonise at depth and transition from transactional to relational funding and trust-based philanthropy
- 5.8 Become an ambassador of inner-led change. . . . . 78 - 79

## Section 6

### Grappling together

80 - 81

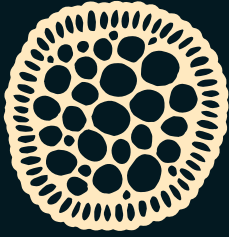
## Section 7

### Deep Thanks

82 - 85

**What next?**

[Back page](#)



More and more change-makers (and people at large) are turning to practices that support their inner lives like mindfulness, meditation, therapy, counselling, body work, yoga, nature connection, myth, ritual, dream-work, dance, movement and storytelling, to name a few.

Often they are sought as a way to wellbeing, yet most of them incorporate an unacknowledged active factor: connection to something beyond our individual and human experience. Most of us don't really have an understanding of how these practices relate with our attempts to create change in the wider world. And the lack of a widely known shared term for this broad and diverse field - and how it relates with change in the wider world, can make collaborating around it very challenging. Also the differences in how we each experience and express our inner worlds can create confusion, fear and a sense of 'not belonging' between us. At best, this has led to widespread neglect and/or resistance to developing awareness of our inner experience; at worst to us ridiculing or vilifying it. This is why we coined the term 'inner-led change'.



**What we  
mean by ‘inner’  
and why it  
matters**

## 1.1 The costs of neglecting the inner

Because the importance of tending to our inner lives has been diminished in the contemporary western world, it can be hard to talk about the inner and its vital role within social and ecological change.

Frequently the inner makes itself known when it's missing, in symptoms that will be familiar to many activists and change-makers including:

**1** **Anxiety and unprocessed grief** for our changing climate, species extinction and social and ecological collapse. The transformative power of these feelings can be harnessed effectively when related with and conducted, but ignored they can lead to despair, depression and/or frantic overwork;

**2** **Overwork, burnout, destructive conflict or destructive power dynamics** in, and beyond, organisations full of people trying to make the world a better place;

**3** **Harmful group dynamics** that arise when people with lived experience of a problem (e.g. systemic racism) are trying to work alongside people who want to help but are unaware of their own entanglement in the problem;



...in our culture, we are deeply unskilled with grief. We hold it at a distance as best we can, both in ourselves and in each other, treating it as, Joanna Macy says, like “an enemy of cheerfulness.



**Toko-pa Turner**, author of “Belonging: Remembering Ourselves Home”



“

When our grief cannot be spoken, it falls into the shadow and re-arises in us as symptoms. So many of us are depressed, anxious, and lonely. We struggle with addictions and find ourselves moving at a breathless pace, trying to keep up with the machinery of culture.

”

**Francis Weller** in *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*.

“

**...modern culture is suffering an epidemic of alienation, yet so many of us feel alone in our unbelonging, as if everyone else was inside of the thing that we alone are outside of. And keeping silent about our experience of estrangement is, in large part, what allows it to perpetuate.**

”

**Toko-pa Turner**

## 1.1 The costs of neglecting the inner

- 4 **Unconsciously playing out 'power-over' dynamics** despite our commitment to 'power with' - owing to unconscious assumptions and culturally conditioned habits and ways of communicating and relating.
- 5 **'Othering' dynamics** as we project what we cannot tolerate in ourselves onto others, contributing to polarisation and the suffering this causes.
- 6 **Loneliness, anxiety, depression and despair** largely fuelled by a severance from our inherent entanglement with and belonging to the wider web of life.
- 7 **Hypocrisy and/or cognitive dissonance** when we lack the emotional resilience needed to relate with the truth of our behaviours and choices and their destructive impact on others and the world.
- 8 **Addiction** - to activism, helping/ rescuing, consumerism, oil and harmful substances like tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy foods and other recreational drugs.

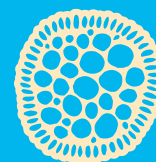


Increasingly I came to realise my addiction to activism was a means to avoid feeling the pain of what it is to be alive in the world today.



**Claire Milne**, in [www.transitionnetwork.org/news/my-name-is-claire-and-im-in-recovery-from-addiction-to-activism-part-one](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/news/my-name-is-claire-and-im-in-recovery-from-addiction-to-activism-part-one)

### The Elephant in Our Movements



Having spoken to some 250 projects and practitioners, across 14 countries, we find ourselves able to name the epic elephant in the room: the vast majority of social and ecological change work is being alarmingly hindered by a lack of capacity to attend to the inner/ relational dimensions of change.

The truth is that we grantees are rarely honest about the extent to which burnout, destructive conflict, emotional difficulties and harmful group and power dynamics impact our work because we fear this will result in us losing our funding.

# Burnout and the marginalisation of rest



There is no denying that the increasingly widespread phenomena of burnout is wreaking havoc on our groups and movements - and society at large. Many of you reading this will have experienced it or known people who've lived the physical and emotional collapse that is its calling card. In a nutshell, burnout results from a culturally created and endorsed habit of ignoring one's needs (communicated to us as emotions and body sensations), to privilege productivity and efficiency. It is the bodys' loud shouting out for balance after all its many whispers and nudges have been ignored.

In the dominant culture there is a blinkered belief that progress is the only confirmation of success. '*More is better*' underlies the single story of progress as a straight line from less to more. This conviction is what brings us to our knees with burnout; when the work ethic this conjures is coupled with an underdeveloped ability to listen to one's inner world of body sensation and emotions we lose the ability to take action on what we feel. We lose our ability to meet our needs in healthy ways - at great cost to ourselves, our groups and the earth.

Because modernity also has an overarching story of humans being separate from the web of life, we believe ourselves separate from the cycles of winter and summer, night and day, life and death. We live as if pursuing more light, more summer, more life, is

somehow sane and perceive it as an error when we get slowed down by illness or when someone dies (which isn't to minimise the suffering and grief involved in both). Our current state of global emergency can be tracked back to this consuming belief in '*more is better*' that has decimated ecosystems and other cultures who have a more balanced relationship with the universe we are part of.

With that straightline story of progress we marginalise the natural necessities of death, endings and rest. Nature works in circles rather than in straight lines - rest feeds work; death, through composting, creates the environment for new life to emerge and so on. By continuing to work at changing broken systems without attending to the way those broken systems show up in each of us, and our groups, organisations and movements, can only ever be counterproductive, because we will be creating more of the same, no matter how earnestly we desire the opposite outcome.

Mainstream schooling and many modern parenting techniques prioritise strategic thinking and the suppression of our emotions. The focus is on conformity and obedience to a power-over structure, with punishments on tap if you don't do as you are told. A four year old who would authentically be playing outside within reach of the people who love them most is removed to an environment where

they are surrounded by over-worked strangers who coerce them to largely stay seated and to apply their minds, regardless of whether they are curious or not. If they express their feelings about a mismatch between what they feel/ sense to do and what is being required of them, more often than not they get shamed and/or punished.

This type of out-of-balance education squashes the development of our ability to listen to our emotions, body sensations, and most of all, our wild imaginations. By using punishment to enforce the regime, schooling and mainstream parenting creates a conformity of workers that slot neatly into the industrial military complex - priming us perfectly for our current burnout epidemic. Very few of us in modernity live fully, accessing all the ways of knowing and being (sensing, feeling, imagining and heart-centred thinking) and following a mature yearning to be what earth made us to be.

Inner-led change is the antidote to burnout, supporting us to live fully and attend to the intelligences of feelings and earth/ body, because we're not going to strategically think ourselves out of this burnt out catastrophe we are living.

There is an urgent need for funding to support groups and organisations to get the support they need to create the relational cultures of care necessary to go beyond the current burnout epidemic that is pillaging our groups and movements of their vital life force.

**For more on burnout see:**  
[www.starterculture.net/gateways/burnout](http://www.starterculture.net/gateways/burnout)

## 1.2 Beyond personal wellbeing

To speak of our 'inner' lives is to recognise that how we experience and make sense of the world matters, and that what goes on inside of us shapes how we behave on the outside towards others, human and more-than-human – and crucially, how we go about making change happen.

The inner can feel like something that is only personal to us – and is often misunderstood to just be about personal wellbeing or resilience. But the inner resides inextricably in the connections between us, our inter-relational connective tissue: in our closest relationships as well as in how we build community and relate to others - human and other-than-human. Becoming aware of our inner experiences (for example our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, beliefs, needs, desires, expectations and imaginings) is essential to cultivating the 'we' space that underpins relational culture. and to connecting us with our compassionate caring hearts and our fiery rage that refuses to tolerate harmful behaviours.

The inner is therefore strongly implicated in how we go about trying to change cultural, political and economic systems that cause harm, injustice and environmental destruction. Outer systems shape our inner experience, which in turn shapes how we show up in the world. So unless we do the inner work to become aware of how our action in the world, including how we approach change-making, is being shaped by historic and current cultural and societal norms, it is nigh on impossible to reclaim our choice and power to truly align our ways of being and change-making with our values. Our diminishment of the importance of attending to the inner world therefore helps to explain why these systems are so very hard to transform. Without turning our attention to the inner world we can't help but replicate the very consciousness, culture and harmful relationships and societal systems we are trying to change.

“

**If you're not connected to yourself you can't really connect with others – and it's connection that is going to swing this vast collapse into something more wholesome.**

”

**Bell Selkie Lovelock**, guide and mentor with [Animas Valley Institute](#)

# Beyond Western Psychology decolonizing 'psychology' and 'mental health'



What we call 'psychology', with its claims to universal truths about human nature, originates from western psychology's bias towards white, middle and upper class male perspectives. It is telling that most indigenous languages don't have specific terms for depression or mental illness. Mainstream mental health provision in the West, while well-intentioned, is mainly blind to its partial and fragmented roots. This limits its potential to supporting the 'wholing and healing' of those it seeks to support, especially those outside a white, western, middle class, ableist, male and normative context.

Expanding beyond our individualistic human-centric lens of the world, indigenous psychologies include collective, nature-connected, more-than-human ways-of-listening, seeing, being, doing, knowing and becoming. They offer us deep rooted support to source solutions from beyond the consciousness that created our current crises by listening to Earth's dreaming as She whispers sweet everything's into our infinitesimal ears. We are each invited to dig deep into the roots of our own ancestral lineages and the indigenous roots to resilience and regenerativity they offer us in abundance.



**Western psychology promotes itself as the standard for psychology ... and makes authoritative statements like '*psychology demonstrates that individuals are most motivated by individual rewards*', whilst what is most motivating [outside the West] is working with and serving the community. This is a powerful underpinning for mainstream psychology acting as a colonising force. The idea of [a plurality of] psychologies is not acknowledged and the contributions of indigenous approaches to psychology are rarely even conceptualised.**



**Richard Katz**, author of *Indigenous Healing Psychologies*

## 1.3 Moving beyond our power-over paradigm: shedding our protective strategies

As you likely know, all of us in contemporary western cultures develop unconscious protective strategies at an early age as survival mechanisms that we later continue enacting in an attempt to avoid inherent feelings of vulnerability until we become aware of them. Without inner work, most of our choices, behaviours, personality and identities are actually strategies we developed as children as a way to protect us from harm, fear or feeling overwhelmed. In healthier cultures humans develop less strategies for emotional survival because healthy cultures enable us to be connected to our inner world, those around us and to the greater earth community, so we feel less vulnerable to overwhelm and less isolated. Because mainstream culture neglects our inner dimension, few of us have cultivated the emotional ground needed to relate with these protective strategies so that they no longer unconsciously dictate how we show up. Learning to love these parts of ourselves that we developed to keep us safe from abuses of power is key to liberation from them having power over us.

**It is our lack of loving relationship with these protective parts of ourselves that fuels the power-over paradigm underpinning our modern western culture** - call it dominant, mainstream, normative or western contemporary culture, or modernity, or whiteness, or patriarchy, or human-centrism - personally we prefer 'power-over culture' as it belies their shared underbelly.

This lethal cultural cocktail shapes the forms and flavours that our protective behaviours, personalities and identities take. This is what we mean by '*cultural conditioning*': conditioning that perpetuates power-over culture through protective strategies arising as anger, judgement, fear, hate, rejection, loneliness, people-pleasing, rescuing, over-work, consumerism, screens, addiction etc in the absence of a more conscious way to respond.

Liberation from this power-over paradigm, and the cultures it feeds, therefore requires us to do the inner work that offers us alternatives to unconscious childhood coping strategies, such as easefully welcoming and conducting our feelings (without needing to numb them or act them out), or conducting them in service of something wholesome.



Sobering, eh? **Transforming the power-over culture at the heart of our current crises starts with each of us learning how to welcome our vulnerability and pain.**

Only then will our internalisation of power-over culture begin to dissolve, skin-shed and make compost for new ways of becoming-together to come through.

Within this historic moment, the current sense of self across the modern world is one of human-centric-hyper-individualism. We could say that this sense of self is actually a protective strategy that seeks to defend us against what it is to surrender to our inherently more collective state of inter-being across species, space, time and worlds - leading to wide-spread amnesia around our inseparability from the earth community and the cosmos. As we heal the trauma that keeps us in this very limited and earth destroying sense of self we become able to let in this influx of the more-than-human. This is the key to truly co-creating regenerative futures.

“

**Trauma is the assemblage of body-proofing rituals which we use to defend against the influx of the more-than-human.**

”

**Bayo Akomolefe**

## 1.4 Why 'good' people do 'bad' things\*

**These can all seem like very different issues. But they are all symptoms of a deeper human dilemma affecting how we relate with and impact ourselves, each other and the Whole Earth Community.**

Because our culture tends to value outward expression and achievement, and undervalue inward exploration and being, many of us have become unable to attune with how we are impacting and being impacted by others. For example; we can act unskillfully in reaction to our emotions, often with devastating unintentional impacts on others and ourselves. We can be unaware of how harmful power dynamics, like those of gender, race, class and ableism, emerge when we interact with each other. We can contribute to destroying our beloved Earth without shedding a tear.

Tending to our inner worlds is what enables us to become aware of our impact on others - and the world, and to more and more be able to truly choose how we behave and initiate repair, rather than being at the blinkered behest of our power-over cultural conditioning. And for us inner-led change centres honing our ability and courage to initiate repair in a good way when we do inevitably slip up and behave in ways we would prefer not to and which hurt others. This is what we mean by walking our talk and co-liberation.

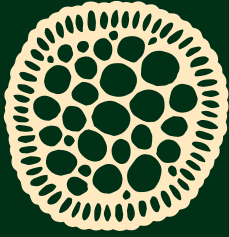
\*With thanks to James Hollis for the book: Why Good People Do Bad Things: understanding our darker selves.

“

The anaesthetised heart is capable of great cruelty, war, and the objectification of others including, and especially, the natural world... It's only in re-mem-bering our wounded, outcast selves that we can belong our world back together.

”

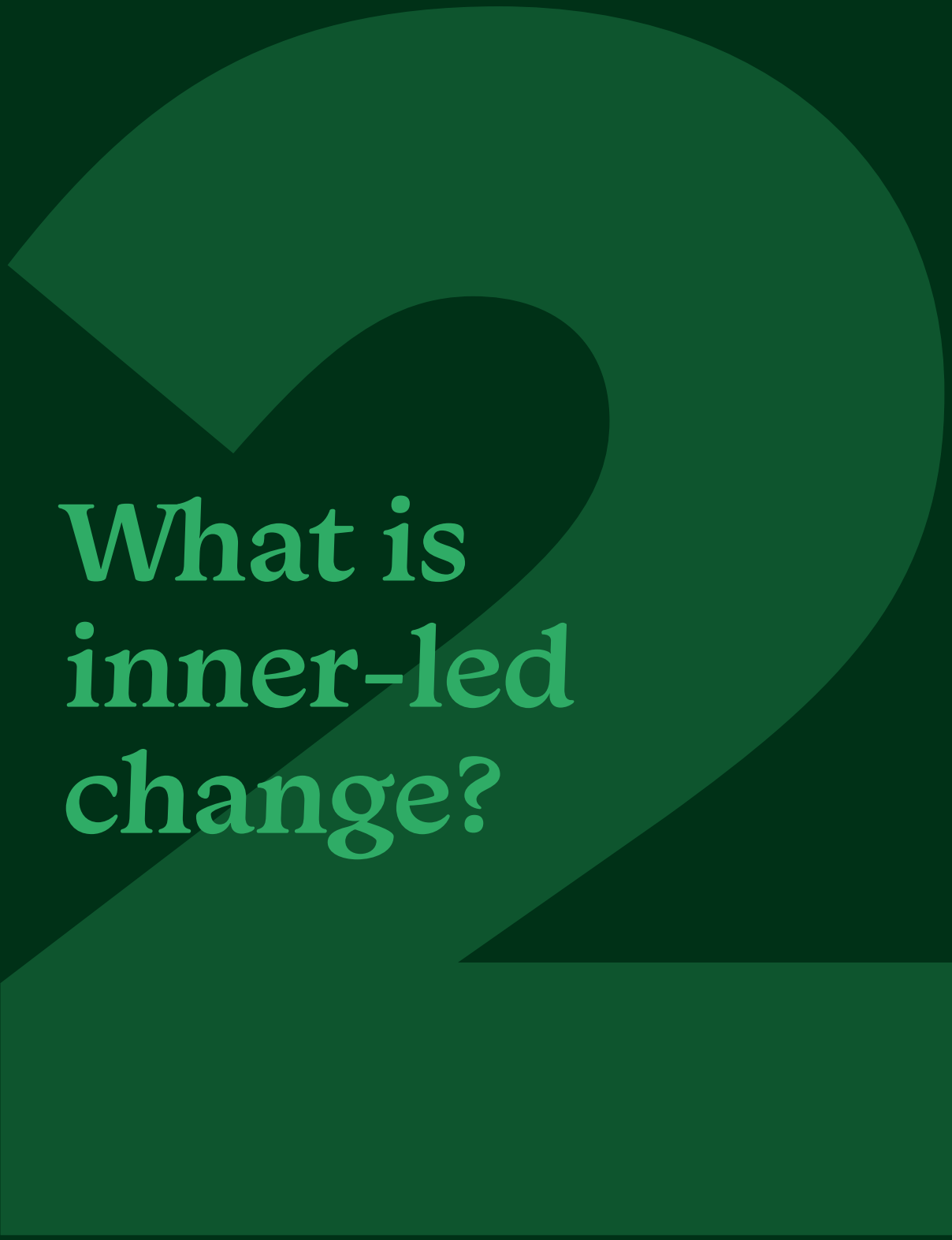
Toko Pa Turner



**Inner-led change is attending to the space where the inner and the outer meet; the intersection between ourselves and the world. It is a turning towards and tending to the very space that has been disappeared through our culturally conditioned illusion of separateness - fuelled by our power-over culture.**

**Inner-led change is all about the relational space** between what arises within us (thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, beliefs, judgements, projections, stories, fantasies and mythic imaginings, for example) and that which arises within others, human and more-than-human. We could call this the 'we' space that exists between our inner worlds and the outer worlds. It is the dance between that which is arising in me and that which is arising in another/s. It is the eternal relational dance between ourselves and the world - resplendent with its infinity of animate beings, human and bountifully otherwise.

**Relational culture and inner-led change then, are one and the same thing.** They approach the tasks of inner and outer change together. They cultivate the deep connective tissue that is needed to dismantle and compost the power-over culture we have internalised within ourselves, our groups, organisations and movements - and within our families, schools, communities and institutions. It is only by tending to this relational space within which power-over culture lives, and is perpetuated by us, that we can decolonise at depth and meaningfully skin-shed this internalised power-over culture from the inside-out. This is how we make the space needed to co-create ways forward in genuinely reciprocal relationship with each other and the whole earth community.



**What is  
inner-led  
change?**

## 2.1 Inner-led change is reuniting life's inner and outer dimensions

**Our inner and outer lives are actually inseparable. The experiences we've had, and the ways we hold them, shape our perceptions, behaviours and ways of being in the world.**

The ways we relate to all aspects of ourselves – including the parts we'd prefer not to acknowledge and/or are not aware of – affect how we are with everyone else, and how we relate with and treat the more-than-human world. It is when we are in healthy connection with ourselves, others and the natural world we are part of, that we start to become the healthy adults and elders our world so urgently needs. And it is only when we are in relationship with all these aspects of ourselves/ the world that we can re-member our inherently collective state of inter-being.

Yet power-over culture has created an illusion that these inner and outer dimensions are separate because to persist, power-over culture needs us to disconnect from our inner experience and the awareness it gives us of our impact on others and the world. This is at great cost: this disconnection from our own inner nature is at the heart of the human-centric individualism that cuts us off from our inherent belonging to the wider web of life and allows us to treat others, and Earth, in careless, harmful and destructive ways. This separation and devaluing goes so deep that it seems normal. It feels normal to be embarrassed or ashamed about sharing our true feelings. It feels normal for our hearts to be untouched by the harm done to others by our job or our consumption, or by our silence and

complicity in oppressive beliefs, behaviours, systems and institutions, be they historic and/or current.

Most of us struggle to connect with the felt sense of our body, heart, and the more-than-human world we are part of. This is why most of us are used to feeling pretty numb. Our mainstream culture has led us to believe it's not possible to experience emotions like anger, grief, sadness and fear in easeful and/or generative ways - and yet, whilst often it takes committed inner work to get there, it is wholly possible. And it's our access to these natural emotional responses in the face of our impact on others, and the world, that connects us with our hearts and motivates us to align our behaviours with our values.

This deep and normalised sense of separation from and resistance to our inner worlds comes through in our change-making efforts, too, whether we're trying to change the rules, or create alternatives like local food, energy and transport projects. This normalised sense of separation from our inner worlds helps to explain why organisations rarely seek help proactively for common occurrences like burnout, difficult group dynamics and transforming systemic oppressions, instead waiting until we're in crisis, destructive conflict or for people to leave our organisation. The norm is for the lid to be firmly shut on the can of worms unless a crisis forces us to pay attention – and even then we tend to look for quick structural fixes rather than exploring the inner roots. And indeed, more and more groups and organisations are now at that crisis point and urgently seeking support around these inner dimensions of change.

**How does this  
sense of separation  
between your inner  
world and the  
outer worlds show  
up within your  
change-making?**

## 2.1.i Our attempts at changing the outer tend to exclude the inner

- Attempts to create a more just world by protesting, trying to change laws, policies and institutions or creating more localised alternatives, usually don't look within. We tend to miss an examination of the culturally conditioned beliefs and ways of relating with each other - and the world, that helped create our current problems and injustices. In this way, whilst still vitally important in the shorter term, protests, direct-action and community-building tend to focus only on symptoms and are limited by the same power-over consciousness that created the problems we are trying to address.

**St Ethelburgas**, a London-based organisation sitting at the intersection of climate and peace is a good example of a project bringing together inner and outer dimensions of change. They offer events, training, leadership programmes and multimedia content which equips and inspires people to become peacemakers in their own contexts. Their project work includes community reconciliation, refugee inclusion, radical resilience, viewpoint diversity and spiritual ecology.

- Attempts at institutional and political change are frequently derailed and diminished by burnout, destructive conflict, power struggles, systemic oppressions and harmful behaviour among activists. We could see this as the systems of harm that we want to change, expressing themselves unconsciously through us. They will continue to do so beyond our conscious awareness, so long as we think the task of change is only on the 'outside'.

An example of a project addressing political change by bringing together inner and outer dimensions is **Grassroots to Global** which is supporting people around the world to learn how to make important collective decisions together in wiser, emotionally intelligent, trauma-informed ways.



## 2.1.ii

# Our attempts to work with the inner can exclude the outer

- Attempts to support people who've been harmed by violence and injustice often focus on supporting their inner lives, either through relief of symptoms or 'healing' their trauma, without looking at the historical roots of the systemic societal problems that cause and perpetuate the harm - and how our current power-over consciousness perpetuates trauma.
- Attempts to support wellbeing and spiritual connection often focus on individual rather than collective wellbeing - and are grounded in consciousness that is limited to the individual-self. They don't typically engage with the systemic, structural or 'outer' aspects of injustice, inequality, human-centrism and suffering. Inner work is often seen as 'indulgent', 'navel-gazing' or as a 'white' or 'middle-class thing' – and when it doesn't engage with structural violence and inequality, that perception contains razor-sharp truth.
- The language used by those with skill in inner work often doesn't resonate with many of those who might most need it. People from all backgrounds may have resistance to anything sounding 'spiritual', normative or simply disconnected from their own lived realities.
- Many inner-led change practitioners are unaware of their approaches being rooted in human-centric consciousness and a disconnection from our inherent entanglement within the wider web of Life - and that it is this lack of awareness of our more-than-human consciousness that lies at the heart of our current crises.



**The seeming inability [of some inner work] to tackle root causes leads people of colour to dismiss it as outright duplicity, ignorance, and hypocrisy, thus further widening the gulf between groups who essentially wish to support each other but often end up being suspicious of the 'others' credibility and motives.**



**Elizabeth Mypisi**, Radical Leadership Amongst People of Colour CoT Coordinator.

## 2.2 Inner-led change is politicising the inner

### 2.2.i The undefended heart

An anaesthetised armoured heart, unable to feel vulnerability and pain, allows us to behave in ways that hurt others without feeling empathy, remorse and care - which are the very things that move us to enact repair and behave in compassionate and mutually beneficial ways. When this anaesthetising and armouring happens collectively, it becomes oppression and social anomie. When it happens in relation to more-than-humans it becomes factory farming, industrial agriculture, extractive industries producing all our consumer/ convenience goods, species extinction and eco-systemic collapse.

The inner is political because it supports us to relate with and embrace our pain, vulnerability, grief, sorrow and remorse. Through this we reveal the kind of relationships, cultures and worlds we do and don't want. Inner-led change also supports us to turn towards our anger in ways that awaken our passion to make this change happen and harness its deliciously transformative potential in creative ways. It is this alchemising of our emotions that supports our protective strategies to fall away and liberates us from the power-over paradigm at the root of our current social and ecological collapse.



**Without inner change there can be no outer change. Without collective change, no change matters.**

**angel Kyodo williams**

Like the personal, the inner is political in that it expands well beyond individual wellbeing to bring into consciousness how we each internalise and, through our protective strategies, act out the socio-historic, systemic and cultural realities we abhor and challenge in others - and blame our current crises on. The uncomfortable truth is that inner work that neglects the political implications of our inner worlds and fails to empower us to take radical self-responsibility for our own culturally conditioned complicity in the current crises simply serves to support the power-over status quo. When we engage in the socio-political aspect of inner work, we directly dismantle the power-over culture within us and begin to decolonise at depth. And when we place an inner dimension at the heart of our groups, organisations and movements we help unleash their transformative potential.

## 2.2.ii

# Attunement: co-liberating from the power-over paradigm

The term 'attunement' refers to our ability to be 'in tune' with the emotions and energies moving within us and others. To emotionally attune to others we need to first be able to attune to ourselves by embracing our own embodied emotions. If I am not intimately in touch with what happens inside me when someone behaves in ways that impact me then it will be nigh on impossible to attune with what is happening in others when our behaviour is impacting them. To move beyond the power-over paradigm we each need to become aware of, and touched by, how our behaviours impact others and how we are impacted by others. To do this we need to re-member how to attune, both with those immediately around us and with those less obviously impacted by us.

We could say then that our current crisis is due to a widespread inability to emotionally attune - to ourselves, each other and our more-than-human friends and allies. Generations of collective trauma lie at the heart of the armouring and anaesthetising that underpin our

difficulty with attunement. Relating with and transforming this inherited collective trauma is the key to us re-membering how to attune - which is in turn what is needed to transform our state of collective numbness, and to feel our heart-felt responses to causing harm to others. Only then will we begin to actually decolonise at depth and move beyond our complicity in the power-over paradigm - and start to experience our belonging to the wider web of Life.

There is clear evidence that repressed trauma is passed on epigenetically across generations and that this collective trauma - and the behavioural patterns it creates, live in each of us. This means we all have ancestral healing to do around the harms caused and received by our ancestors being both oppressed and oppressors. Taking this long view helps us recognise that what we call trauma is in fact the collective waters we are currently swimming in as a species - rather than something certain 'damaged' people are experiencing.

## The wandering winding way of the wound\*

When we talk about inner-led change we are talking about big and multi-generational work. The cumulative histories of trauma, violence and extraction along (and beyond) racial, class, gender and species lines that have led to current injustices and inequalities, are yet to be collectively acknowledged or processed in mainstream culture within coloniser nations like England (where we are writing this report).

We are not going to 'fix' our unhealthy (power-over) coloniser culture, as it emerges through our inner lives, within a generation. In fact we are not going to 'fix' or 'solve' it at all; that's not a helpful way to think about it. What we can do, however, starting right now, is seek to understand the depth of the problems, and how this intersects with our approaches to change.

Taking this long view helps us recognise that what we call trauma seems in fact to be the collective waters we are currently swimming in as a species, rather than something that certain 'damaged' individuals are experiencing. The individualised pathologizing approach that is invisibly prevalent within our mainstream culture implies that the 'solution' to trauma must lie in one:one support for the individual to somehow get 'fixed' or healed by an expert, and if we don't manage to 'heal' we are somehow failing to live up to the neo-liberal version of what it is to be a healthy (read productive and controllable) human being.

Our own intimate and humbling journey with trauma has led those of us at Starter Culture (on a wandering winding path) to sense that collective trauma holds the keys to the deep cultural transformation demanded by these times of collapse. Getting intimate with trauma - within ourselves and those

around us, has led us to realise that the key to trauma's transformative power seems to lie in recognising its collective, systemic, historic and species-wide nature. This perspective expands out beyond the mainstream's pathologizing mental health approach that is grounded in an unconscious belief that trauma is about fixing broken individuals so that they become a more palatable, controllable and productive cog in our consumerist works.

Turning towards what has been kept unconscious can be risky work within groups and organisations - the primary risk being causing more pain to those who have already suffered. That is why this work needs informed and expert support and facilitation beyond what is currently on offer from mainstream mental health professionals. And it's why this report is not a call to fund approaches seeking to 'fix' trauma or simply improve individual wellbeing through western psychology. Rather it is a call to funders to learn about the collective, systemic, historic and species-wide nature of trauma so as to recognise it as something we are all immersed in and historically and culturally infused with, rather than something that those more broken and dysfunctional than us have and that we can avoid. And it is a call to recognise that neglecting, avoiding and pathologizing trauma is seriously hindering the social and ecological change work currently being funded.

We want funders to use their power to create the financial, cultural and policy space needed for collective trauma to be recognised, related with and transformed within our groups, organisations, community spaces and society at large. This is how change happens - rather than through inadvertently making the swathes of people currently experiencing trauma symptoms feel like they are broken and need fixing.

\*With thanks to Bayo Akomolefe for this relieving and expansive framing of what we tend to call 'trauma'



“

We see an ever-growing awareness emerging of issues such as wellness, resiliency and trauma within the philanthropic and social change sector. However, much of these efforts are aimed at supporting people to be more well-adjusted to their institutions and to capitalist modernity in general, rather than supporting any potential access to liberatory states-of-being.

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**Alnoor Ladhr** and **Lynn Murphy** in  
*Post Capitalist Philanthropy*

### 2.2.iii

## Relational culture: the antidote to power-over culture

Emotional attunement (with ourselves and others, human and otherwise) is a prerequisite then to decolonising our groups and organisations - as well as funding and philanthropy, and moving beyond power-over culture. When we are able to emotionally attune to ourselves and others we are able to relate with, rather than unconsciously act out our protective strategies. Relational culture is cultivated through practices, processes, structures and agreements that support us to emotionally attune with ourselves and each other. Groups and organisations that neglect their inner dimension cannot avoid perpetuating power-over culture - no matter how opposed to it they may be. See [www.starterculture.net/about/organisational-culture](http://www.starterculture.net/about/organisational-culture) for a taste of what relational culture can look and taste like.

2.2iv

## Radical inclusivity: becoming wild allies

One of the most widespread and harmful protective strategies that power-over culture breeds is that of vilifying, repressing and marginalising certain ways of being - and those identities and people associated with them. It is these strategies, that live within us all, that have given rise to the extreme state of polarisation that is blighting modernity, through the marginalisation, abuse, oppression, inequality and suffering this leads to.

We have been culturally conditioned to marginalise anything or anyone we perceive as likely to evoke feelings we do not want to feel. For example many of us have spent our lives repressing feelings of loneliness, anxiety, sadness, anger or fear and in our attempt to not feel these we have likely developed protective strategies that make it very challenging for others to express these emotions around us. When we start to relate more with these vulnerable parts of ourselves we naturally begin to feel more self-love and compassion for them - as well as for the protective strategies we have developed around them. In turn we start to naturally feel compassion and care for the people we previously made wrong, shamed, avoided etc for mirroring these ways we have been marginalising within ourselves. As we learn how to love these parts in ourselves we find it far easier to welcome them in others. This is how we cease colluding with power-over systems of marginalisation and oppression and instead become governed by the compassionate movements of our hearts.

Our ability to marginalise others is a tragic result of how defended our hearts have become in response to the intergenerational trauma that lives within us all - combined with a widespread lack of the inner work that helps us to transform this trauma and thaw our anaesthetised hearts. When we marginalise others, we see them as "not us", or as less deserving of abundance or as "subhuman". This allows us to extract resources from them - be they fellow humans or our beloved animate Earth. Seeing these others within our network of relationships and care would mean losing the very resource they represent for us, which appears to threaten our own way of being in the world and our very survival or way of life. We are asked through inner change, to extend our outer change work to reflect that we are fundamentally in relationship with the world and how we meet our needs must include the well being of all beings with whom our lives are interwoven. This healing work is an ecological spiritual awakening out of the numbness of the protective strategies of trauma.

## 2.2v Same but different

If inner-led change is an approach that recognises our inner and outer worlds are indivisible, then what it looks like in practice depends on where we are, personally, in relation to current and historical systems of harm and abuse (and both the outer and inner consequences of this). People who have experienced oppression may have healing and recovery to do that is different from the work required of people whose vulnerability has been hidden behind the shield of a dominant social status and the power and privilege that comes with it.

It's a generalisation and simplification – but not an unhelpful one – to say that people who have experienced more of the harms caused by a destructive system (such as racism, class inequality, sexism, ableism, gender inequality and normativity – and myriad other flavours of normativity) may be more able to feel, see and acknowledge the vital role of inner-led change and the urgent need for it to be supported. They are also more likely to experience defensive behaviours when they point this out to those in positions of power.

**Much healing is needed from the historic collective trauma inflicted by harmful institutions, politics and cultural norms, as is a necessary reclaiming of agency in order to speak up about a culture that has tried to deny and prevent that agency. And crucially, for this healing to happen it needs to be financially supported.**

For those who have benefitted from dominant systems of power the need for inner work can be harder to notice and acknowledge and there is often less of an obvious incentive to look at it. And yet unprocessed collective trauma is widespread regardless of skin colour, class, gender, health, education and material wealth. This is painfully evidenced by the behaviour of those in prominent political leadership positions worldwide.

As an example, those who have benefitted from dominant systems of power may need to do inner work to acknowledge that some of their activist tendencies come from a 'rescuer' mentality: a protective strategy against feeling the vulnerability that comes with admitting our complicity with and/or helplessness in the face of, deep and widespread suffering. Compulsively taking action can serve to hide a drive to appease our guilt and perpetuate unconscious identification as a paternal 'caretaker' or saviour, enacting power-over in a different, albeit less obviously destructive way. In many ways this is simply neo-colonialism.



**Sometimes we need to go apart in our different groups, to enable our own healing, so that we can all come together and make ourselves whole again afterwards**



**Singhashri Gazmuri**, Radical Leadership amongst people of colour Cup of Tea participant


## 2.2vi Ubuntu: I am because we are

While inner-led change involves personal work, none of it can be done only individually, despite what individualistic capitalist culture would like to tell us. And it is by actively engaging with inner-led change within the context of relationship that we are able to see more of ourselves - our wholeness, the parts we find harder to love and how we impact others.

Being able to relate more openly with all aspects of ourselves - and the impacts they have on others, is the starting point for relating more healthily with each other and the other-than-human world. It is key to transforming group dynamics and to moving away from human-centrism towards life-affirming cultures grounded in our becoming more fully-human and flourishing as our unique gifts in the world.

Inner-led change as the unification of inner and outer change in a context that recognises the ongoing consequences of trauma-inducing histories, holds the keys to what is variously called regenerative culture, co-liberation, prefigurative politics, (eco- and embodied-) awakening, co-creativity and simply 'walking our talk' - and to these becoming lived realities rather than just compelling ideas or the latest buzzwords.





2.2vii

## Liberation from consumerism: staying with the trouble\*



**Radical inner-led change is what patriarchy and capitalism are most frightened of. It connects us with a power that is infinitely more potent, enriching and meaningful than money, materiality and the fear, deceit and disconnection they are built on.**



**Claire Milne** [www.starterculture.net/  
activism-as-love-in-action](http://www.starterculture.net/activism-as-love-in-action)

Inner-led change holds the keys to liberation from consumerism's stranglehold. Our relationship with consumerism is driven by a far-reaching protective strategy designed to avoid feeling the kaleidoscopic-ness of what it is to be alive in the world today. Most of us are aware that to some extent the stuff we buy, watch and consume is distracting us from the truth of what is going on inside and around us. When we pause and let all this go, we empty out and get to feel what life is like

without all the screens, shopping, clothes, food, drink, books, chatter, driving, flying, fixing, tidying the house or helping/ rescuing. Most of us spend nigh on all of our time running away from this 'emptiness' in our projected fear of what lies beneath. And the reality is - within this emptiness thrums a whole lot of everythingness, which includes feelings, sensations and experiences we associate with exquisite joy and pleasure - and that which we associate with abhorrent terror and dread. The whole shebang. And it is only when we become able to welcome and conduct this kaleidoscopic range of feelings and experiences - the rejoiced, the rejected and the reviled, that we can go beyond the protective strategies we developed to defend against feeling all this. So it follows then that we can only move away from the consumerist culture that directly feeds our current social and ecological collapse if we learn to feel the everythingness that sits beneath the consumerist goods that enable us to be busy and distracted from the truth of our existence. And it is through opening ourselves up to this eternal dance between emptiness and everythingness that Life's inherently regenerative flow becomes able to move through us, fully alive in wild reciprocity with all of Life.

\* To borrow the language of Donna Haraway

## 2.3 Inner-led change is cultivating an ecological sense of ‘self’

The roots of our current collapse lie in our severance from our entanglement with and belonging to the wider web of life. *Eco-awakening*, a term coined by Bill Plotkin who founded **Animas Valley Institute** more than four decades ago, refers to the ongoing process of awakening to the visceral and emotional knowing of your deep belonging to Earth. It is the sweet relief marking the end of the illusion-of-separation from “nature” and a re-membling of yourself as part of the Earth community, no more or less than every other creature. No longer do we look at the natural world (of which we are part) with objectifying eyes conditioned to think only of what we can ‘get’ by way of resources or experiences.

When our theories of change and delivery systems lack eco-awakening practices and our strategies are not aligned with nature’s inherently regenerative life-death-life cycle and its honouring of the ebb and flow of the seasons, we will continue to source so called ‘solutions’ from the power-over consciousness that created our crises and which led to

the sense of separation allowing us to ongoingly harm our beloved Earth. How many organisations do you know that support their staff to truly honour the deep rest needed over the winter period, listen to Earth’s dreaming and refuel for the rest of the year?

Examples of this eco-awakening work include **Ecological Homecoming** - a yearlong online course by **Bringing it Home**, **ULEX project’s From the Roots Up** train the trainer programs for change-makers, and **Animas Valley Institute’s Wild Mind for Activists** programs.

For inspiration on funders taking action, we loved hearing about the grantmaking work of **Regenerosity** - a joint initiative of **The Buckminster Fuller Institute** and **Lush** that is supporting the “regeneration movement” with a world view and a funding practice grounded in “principles and patterns of nature” that seek to advance “agroecology, permaculture, circular economy, ecosystem restoration, regenerative finance and more.”

## 2.4 Inner-led change is relating with that which is invisible

Much of our inner lives, and the inner dimension of change, is invisible and subjective. This means it eludes objective measurement and presents a challenge to our predict-and-control paradigm explaining why it has been so neglected, resisted and marginalised within our mainstream culture - and the theories of change of almost all funders and change-making organisations.



**If we can’t measure it, is it real?**



**Richard Katz** in *Indigenous Healing Psychology: honouring the wisdom of the First Peoples*.



There is something that often is missing in how most of us understand “the inner” – probably because it’s hard to articulate. It’s something to do with my experience as a Sufi of being in relationship with realities that exist around what we call the inner but that are neither personal nor about relationships between humans, but rather are places/beings/levels of reality that exist in the unseen. For example, the plane of the soul, the archetypal worlds, the void/emptiness from which all things manifest, and the inner aspects of Earth/nature – the soul of the world, elemental beings etc. The fact that these have been edited out of [most contemporary western] human culture I believe is a major part of the problem.

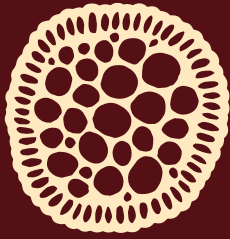
”” **Justine Huxley,**  
Kincentric Leadership

An example of work supporting this invisible realm is North America-based organisation **Ancestral Medicine** which has supported hundreds of thousands of people to reconnect with the ancient pan-cultural tradition of relating with our ancestors. A wide variety of training is available in over 12 languages by practitioners in at least 19 countries with dedicated spaces for minority and marginalised groups, low-cost options for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low income, or those who are other-than-English-speaking.

## 2.5 Inner-led change is supporting Life’s evolutionary edge

**For inner-led change to support expansions in consciousness beyond that which created our current crises we must track where our practices and approaches might have their roots, and therefore be perpetuating, power-over culture.**

With this in mind it is helpful to track areas of life through which collective consciousness seems to be currently expanding into - and thereby revealing that which was previously in shadow (and unconscious). In tracking this, we become aware of practices and ways of being and relating likely to support this expansion in consciousness and become able to embrace what we could call **‘Life’s evolutionary edge’**. It is by paying attention to and embracing this evolutionary edge that we as a species expand our consciousness and evolve beyond that which we are now; that is, beyond that which created and continues to perpetuate our current crises.



## Inner-led change works across at least three fractal levels supporting:

### 3.1

**Individuals** to become more healthy, whole and transformative;

### 3.2

Change-making **organisations** to cultivate healthier, more regenerative cultures that support the unleashing of their transformative potential.

### 3.3

The cultivation of **more regenerative cultures** across society more broadly.

Interwoven within each of these levels of scale are a range of dimensions of inner-led change ranging from wholing and healing, through to spiritual practices that support our capacity to experience our inherent state of oneness with all beings beyond the space-time continuum, and soulcrafting practices that ready us to encounter soul and discover the unique purpose we are here in this lifetime to share our gifts as.

**This introductory report focuses mainly on the wholing and healing dimension of inner-led change - and we look forward to exploring the dimensions of spirit and soul with you another time.**

**What does  
inner-led  
change  
look like in  
practice?**

### 3.1 ‘Wholing and healing’ for individuals working towards change

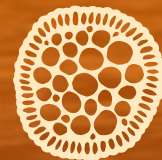
The effectiveness of our groups and movements rests on the emotional and spiritual health of their members - which in turn is shaped by the group’s culture and norms. It is therefore essential to the health and transformativeness of our groups and movements that those involved are supported to move towards emotional and spiritual health. And it is equally essential that the inner support they receive is being sourced from consciousness beyond the power-over paradigm that created our current crises.

This means there is an urgent need to go beyond the mainstream western approach to mental health that is in itself largely a product of power-over consciousness and its blinkered need to predict and control. Tightly woven within this mainstream approach is a culture of ‘wound-ology’ that reduces inner work to a fragmented focus on psychologically ‘fixing’ an individual’s wounding, pain and suffering. This mainstream culture of ‘woundology’ overlooks the socio-historical and systemic origins of our wounding - and the deep and abundant tap roots to collective health and wholeness that come to life when we expand our consciousness into the realms of our collective and more-than-human nature. And while healing our wounding may be vital, it is only part of the much vaster picture. In our experience, the most transformative inner-led change work necessarily includes, and goes beyond healing by also offering support around the process of ‘wholing’.

**Wholing\* practices** support us to access and embody the myriad healthy ways of listening, feeling, being, relating, imagining, intuiting, and knowing that reside within our (more than) human blueprint. For example our capacity to be; in touch with our embodied emotions; empathic; emotionally attuned; open-hearted; loving; compassionate; caring; creative; wise; innocent; wild; indigenizing; sensual; erotic; mytho-poetic; and deeply transformative - and our capacity to reciprocally relate with our other-than-human friends and allies. In our personal experience these more-than-human relationships hold the keys to transforming our escalating mental health crises and the wider social and ecological collapse this is part of. Might it be that we humans are simply not capable of navigating and going beyond our current crises - and the collective trauma that underpins it, without re-memorizing how to be in reciprocal relationship with Earth and our more-than-human friends and allies?

Thanks to Bill Plotkin at Animas Valley Institute for his framing of the wholing process.

Healing our wounding first and foremost involves recognising that we are all wounded and hosting unprocessed collective trauma in our bodies – and that it is this collective wounding that underpins the behavioural patterns that lead to burnout, chronic illness, destructive conflict, consumerism, unhealthy and harmful ways of relating with power, depression, despair, anxiety, aggression and violence.



### **From a funder perspective, supporting this work could involve:**

- Providing funding for programs, retreats, mentoring, sabbaticals etc that support wholing and healing for changemakers and their groups, organisations, movements - and especially their leaders.

For example **Fetzer Institute** funds and supports the **Retreat Center Collaboration** a growing community of retreat centres and their allies across North America. They offer retreats supporting the inner and outer dimensions of change, for example, racial healing and ancestral land legacies.

- Including criteria within your funding programs that encourages applicants/ grantees to prioritise the time and budget needed to identify and integrate support around the wholing and healing work that unleashes the transformative potential of our groups, organisations and movements.
- Funding your own staff to receive wholing and healing support to become more healthy and transformative and more aware of the rich benefits of funding this support for grantees.

## 3.2 Unleashing the transformative potential of groups and organisations

**Inner-led change at an organisational, group and movement level involves cultivating inner-led cultures that support more regenerative relating and grow the ground needed to unleash their transformative power.**

Since cultivating relational culture is the antidote to power-over culture, our groups, organisations and movements dedicated to creating a more life-affirming world are the perfect cocoons for precisely the deep cultural transformation demanded by these turbulent times of trauma and transformation.

And yet the number of organisations, groups and movements turning towards this game-changing dimension of our change-making are few and far between - and at great cost, as we have already outlined.

**The reasons for this are plentiful and include:**

- Our addiction to action-oriented outer progress and tangible impact.
- An overlooking of just how much our group culture determines our meaningful impact in the world.
- A fear of what is at risk if we take the lid off the can of worms that lies ever close beneath the surface of our strung-out groups and organisations - be that fear of letting people/earth down, losing our funding because we can't deliver what we promised, and/ or fear of losing our job/ income.
- A dearth of examples to be inspired by and learn from.
- Not knowing where to get support from.
- A lack of practitioners with the necessary skills and experience to support organisations and groups through the whole system, earth-centred, inner-led approach needed for culture change at this level of scale.
- A distinct lack of funding for the support needed for this type of organisational culture change work.



**It is unsurprising then that so few groups and organisations embark on this journey in a meaningful way. There are however an ever evolving range of practices, processes, structures and agreements that can support us to cultivate more healthy relational culture for example, supporting us to:**

- Explore our own relationships with power, how this shows up in our group/organisation/fund/foundation and how it relates with our own familial, historical and ancestral relationships with power.
- Turn towards rupture and repair and enable conflict to support our individual and collective transformation.
- Collaborate across difference by learning how to welcome multiple perspectives and identities, even when seemingly contrary to our own.
- Centre collective care and avoid burnout.
- Work with emergence (rather than needing to 'predict-and-control').
- Become trauma-attuned.
- Engage in heart-centred listening, thinking and relating.
- Expand beyond human-centrism into cyclical regenerative ways of working and relating with nature as a design principle within our theories of change.
- Co-create transformative forms of governance and collective decision-making that distribute power, resources and responsibilities across and beyond individual organisations.
- Integrating ongoing reflection and feedback loops that support regeneration and learning across the organisational-system.
- Expand our 'windows of knowing' beyond just rational strategic thinking to include feeling, sensing, imagining and heart-centred thinking.
- Integrate rituals, ceremonies and other practices that support us to hone our reverence to powers greater than our human-centric strategic minds.
- Expand our conception of what constitutes 'success', 'impact' and 'evidence' within the context of our change-making and upgrade our theories of change to reflect this expansion in consciousness.

**This inner-led shift to relational culture is essential if funders and philanthropists are to decolonise at depth and meaningfully transition to trust-based philanthropy.**

At Starter Culture we have a set of co-created Relational Agreements that provide a reference point for what we are aspiring to in regard to how we relate with each other - thereby supporting the cultivation of healthy relational culture.

## Relational agreements

Our relational agreements express the culture we seek to co-create throughout all our collaborations. We commit to proactively doing what is necessary to more and more align with these agreements, whilst recognising that these are aspirational and none of us are, or need to be perfect.

- **Accountability:** We do what we say we are going to do and communicate clearly and promptly when we are no longer able to.
- **Gratitude & appreciation:** We find ways to cultivate and regularly express appreciation and gratitude.
- **Self-awareness:** We find ways to increase our self-awareness in relationship with our: needs; impact on others; relationships with power; and, our conditioned ways of being, relating and communicating.
- **Radical self-responsibility:** We find ways to deepen our capacity to take responsibility for:
  - our own feelings, needs, judgements and projections
  - asking for support when we need it
  - offering and receiving feedback in healthy generative ways
  - engaging in the process of both rupture and repair.
- **Empathy:** We find ways to more and more come into connection with our own feelings, needs, judgements and projections so as to be able to increasingly empathise when these show up in others.
- **Conscious communication:** We find ways to communicate with empathy, care and compassion for ourselves and others, including: listening as much as we speak; speaking one at a time without interrupting; supporting all voices to be heard; owning our judgements, feelings and needs; making clear requests for support to meet our needs; seeking agreement around and holding confidentiality as appropriate; and speaking from our hearts and needs.
- **Regenerative Feedback:** We do the work needed to get better at offering and receiving feedback in healthy generative ways in the spirit of radical self-responsibility, even and especially when it feels uncomfortable, and to respect any agreed organisational processes around this.
- **Rupture & repair:** We find ways of becoming more able to allow ruptures in relationship to unravel and to initiate and engage in the repair work needed to cultivate trust and safety.
- **Resourced & available:** We find ways to become well resourced and available within our collaborations, both physically and emotionally by: cultivating balance in our lives to avoid burnout; finding ways of balancing our own needs with that of the group; and saying 'no' when we need to.

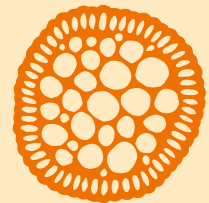
# The need for external support

Despite there being a wealth of ways to turn towards this group and organisational culture change, there is no denying that external support is essential at this group level.

This is not least because dismantling and transforming power-over within our groups and organisations involves dismantling and transforming it within ourselves - and this is inevitably messy work that involves revealing and transforming trauma through transformative conflict and the rupture and repair this requires. It is nigh on impossible for a group member, regardless of how experienced they are as a group facilitator, to hold space for these culture change processes since they are themselves fully entangled in the group field.

One great example of an organisation supporting culture change at this level of scale is **Universite du Nous**. They have been innovatively supporting organisations to integrate 'shared governance' structures and processes into their workplace for over a decade. For example they trained and accompanied **Transition Network** for several years in their transformational shift to shared governance.

An example of this organisational change work within the funder community is happening at **Global Greengrants Fund** who are a year into a three-year cultural transformation journey. Eva Rehse, their Director of strategy and global integration told us:



“

Over the last year we have been journeying towards more collaborative and decentralised decision-making within our staff body. Through a guided process of sensing and intuiting inspired by natural systems, like the interconnectedness of mycelium, or the collaborative work of ants, we are collectively reinventing our ways of working, reducing hierarchies and training our muscles to collaborate more effectively. The transformative change we seek needs to be facilitated from the inside out and guided by our values and principles, so we started by working on the inner individual and collective dimensions to understand ourselves and each other better and to create a shared language for the process and the change we seek. Just one year in, we are already feeling the difference in how we relate to each other, how we show up and carry out our work, including where ideas emerge from, how we make decisions, and centring care for each other in all our processes.

”

## What does inner-led change look like in practice?

Having healthier group culture is not the same as some individuals in an organisation having done some inner work. Nor is it the same as including a few inner work practices or processes - although both of these are a great starting place. Unless inner-led change is fully integrated into our organisational cultures, (the protective strategies of) those with the most power and influence determine the organisation's cultural norms. It is becoming widely recognised that most if not all of us have damaged nervous systems that are often stuck in a stress-response - resulting from unprocessed intergenerational trauma. This is why leaders of groups and organisations often unconsciously set the tone for burnout, conflict and unhealthy power dynamics.

Healthier organisational culture therefore requires learning how to recognise when unprocessed trauma patterns - and the protective strategies they create, are running the show. This can look like the obvious and best-known trauma response of 'fight' or 'flight', which in change-making organisations looks like 'urgency', burnout and destructive conflict. It can also look like 'fix it' (obsessively looking for solutions and a blinkered focus on hope) and 'fawning' (people pleasing) or a kind of 'checking out' or absence that is really a form of avoidance, numbing us to our participation in power-over cultures and to our impact on ourselves and others. These trauma patterns/ protective strategies often become normalised within our groups and relationships.

When we are able to notice that a group's dynamic is moving into dominance/compliance and the rupture this tends to cause, we can learn to take steps to de-activate our nervous systems and become interested in what is actually happening rather than trying to control things (fight/fix it/fawning) or trying to avoid or escape (flight). We are then more likely to be able to stay in difficult conversations and remain relatively awake to our playing out of 'power-over' dynamics. This inner work does not happen simply from cerebral understanding. It requires the embodied work that supports us to heal our nervous systems and release patterns stored in our bodies. And it requires work at a spiritual and soul level if we truly want to surrender our human-centrism and become reverent to powers beyond our ego-centric strategic minds.

The need for this support around organisational culture is ubiquitous across groups and organisations working for change - including amongst funders themselves, as evidenced in our recent 'cups of tea' process with some 20 professionals working for philanthropic bodies. Funders therefore need to support this vital work by including it in their funding criteria and priorities - and also by committing to their own organisational change processes.

“  
**Trauma decontextualized  
 in a person looks like  
 personality. Trauma  
 decontextualized in  
 a family looks like  
 family traits. Trauma  
 decontextualized in a  
 people looks like culture.**

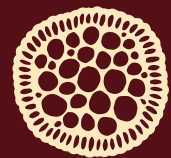
” **Resmaa Menakem<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup> Resmaa Menakem has written about how this dynamic underpins racism in the US: *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*, (Central Recovery Press, 2017)

An example of an aspect of this work happening within the funder community is the foundation that supports our own work, who are experimenting with a regular practice of vigils, guided with outside facilitation informed by southern African indigenous traditions, to help staff refine their ongoing efforts at emptying out and deep listening to Earth. One of their programme Directors told us:



It's a skill most of our team never learned growing up and we often feel like beginners. To us it's important that funders don't come with predefined solutions, or even predefined questions, so that we can start from this place of emptiness in our relationships with grantees. Internal discussions also recognise our 'not-knowing' in the face of the complex, evolving, perhaps collapsing systems we're part of. Where we are successful in generating an openness of spirit, the heart is as engaged as the head; you feel the flow of conversation going around the room rather than anyone controlling it.



**From a funder perspective, supporting this work could involve:**

- Creating funding streams focused on funding inner-led earth-centric organisational culture change.
- Resourcing inner-led earth-centric culture change within your own organisation.
- Setting meaningful criteria that ensure applicants/ grantees prioritise healthy organisational culture (including self and collective care) and include this in their budgets and project plans.
- Ensuring that reporting and monitoring systems and practices respect grantees' time and are adequately budgeted for.

For example, Starter Culture's main funder provides budget to support our experimentation with and cultivation of healthy organisational culture - and we hope that this experimenting may lead to them offering similar support to other grantees.

### 3.3 Cultivating seeds of healthier culture at a wider level

As well as supporting change-makers at the individual and organisational levels, inner-led change also includes consciousness expanding work that dismantles power-over culture and cultivates seeds for more regenerative culture across society at large. Inevitably diffuse, this work involves creating and supporting practices and structures that support everyone and anyone to relate more regeneratively with ourselves, others and the wild others.

For example; emotionally connected parenting; alternative approaches to education; rites of passage rituals for young people; restorative justice; embodied racial healing and justice work like 'somatic abolitionism' and 'cultural somatics'; social prescribing; nature connection, eco-awakening work and practices that support our connection with soul.

**Emergence Foundation** is a great example of funding directed at projects working at this society-wide level. Between 2018 and 2022 they funded a wide range of initiatives delivering on their aim to: *"support individuals and organisations inspired by a depth of purpose to improve the quality of life of individuals, enhance communities and benefit the environment through educational projects which affect a shift in consciousness or perspective that provides a force for positive change in the world."* The Foundation's guidance to applicants describes types of projects they wished to support that are exemplary of inner-led change at this wider societal level (as well as at the individual and relational levels) - and that serve as great examples for other funders to learn from and be inspired by.

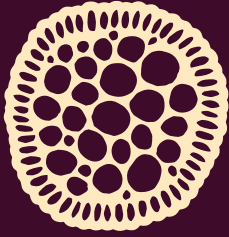
## One of the seven project types Emergence Foundation invite is *'Uplifting and Developing Culture'*:

- A inclusivity:** seeking unity within diversity e.g. transcending division and/or creating bridges through finding common ground, shared humanity and/or a higher common objective.
- B empathy:** proactive ways of understanding and working with difference, reducing the tendency toward 'otheration' or objectification; caring for and understanding the needs of the whole.
- C** understanding and applying the **principles and values intrinsic to collaboration** i.e. prioritising and working towards higher objectives.
- D** **constructive questioning and critical thinking** with regard to contemporary human experience and culture.
- E** **expanding perspectives** and new ways of thinking.
- F** **cultivating egalitarianism** – recognition of and respect for the fundamental equality of all people.
- G** **global, holistic awareness** including but not limited to 1) a deep time cosmic perspective and 2) an understanding of the relationship between past and present, historically.

## Supporting a Hidden Movement

As you can see inner-led change approaches and practices are infinitely diffuse and diverse. This largely hidden movement of practitioners, specialists and activists are seeking routes to change that centre this inner dimension that is key to co-liberation from the power-over paradigm at the heart of our current crisis - and the decolonising at depth this supports. The hidden nature of this movement is at least in part down to its constituent parts looking very different from one another: they can look like two people talking/ listening quietly together; like a group of people making art, or sharing in a circle; like a training on clear communication; like someone sitting under a tree 'doing nothing'; like people drumming together; like people moving or dancing together; like ceremony or ritual; like people simply wandering in nature; or like people spending time in prolonged silence together. Practitioners who focus on cultivating embodied connection with ourselves and others - human and more-than-human (that is the work of authentic relating and wild reciprocity), are pioneers of a vitally important dimension in our understanding of how change happens and what is needed for deep cultural transformation. **We framed the term 'inner-led change' to bring a sense of unity and potency to this vital hidden movement.** This work urgently needs more support and visibility and that's what this report is about.

You can read more about how we discovered this hidden movement through our Cups of Tea process here:  
[www.starterculture.net/revealing-a-hidden-movement](http://www.starterculture.net/revealing-a-hidden-movement)



**I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy ... and to deal with those we need spiritual and cultural transformation, and we scientists don't know how to do that.**



**Gus Speth**, environmental lawyer and founder of World Resources Institute.

So far we have explored how inner-led change shows up and/or can be supported, neglected or absent within our change efforts - and to what effect. We have also unravelled why it matters so much. We will now share why centring inner-led change is essential if funder investments are to support ways forward that are attuned with and responsive to the true nature, depth, scale and complexity of our current crises.



**Why do funders need to pay attention to inner-led change?**

## 4.1 Because it gets to the root of all our ecological, social and cultural crises

**It seems clear from our vantage point that our current socio-ecological collapse is fundamentally a result of a diminished sense of what it is to be human. Moreover, as a species we have lost touch with our inherent place within, and symbiotic inter-dependence with, the more-than-human wider web of Life.**

This means it has become normal for us in the West to behave in ways that are bringing the future of our entire species, and untold other species, into question. That is, we have landed at a point in Western human development that is both suicidal at a species-level and ecocidal at an inter-species level.

Change-makers and funders increasingly understand the need for systemic responses that recognise the interconnected nature of our problems. Yet most 'systems change' approaches still omit the inner realm, because current approaches have mainly arisen from within the dominant worldview that at best neglects the inner, and at worst ridicules and punishes it.

The 'outer' systems we want to change are largely maintained, usually unconsciously, by what's going on in our inner worlds – including and especially the inner worlds of people with power and whom our current culture privileges. Our inner lives are therefore at the heart of the human-centric colonial project of domination and extraction. So, if funders want to address oppression, injustice and eco-systemic collapse, our inner lives and relationality must be centred within both our theories and practices of change.

Inner-led change expands our consciousness and enables us to source ways forward from beyond the ways of thinking and being that created the mess we're in - and addresses the human development dilemma at its root. When we heal our severance from our inner worlds we can begin to reconnect with our inherent state of belonging to the natural world, and with our built-in feedback loops that open us to feeling the visceral pain that comes from causing others and the world harm - making it a whole lot harder to behave in the directly or indirectly harmful and destructive ways that colonial cultures have blinkeredly conditioned us into.

**When funders put inner-led change at the heart of their work, they truly begin to support a whole-system approach.**

## 4.2 Because it supports the healthy relational cultures our collective futures rest on

At the core of our current crises and collapse, and its recent colonial underpinnings, is a breakdown in relationship. Most of us have lost our capacity to relate in healthy ways with ourselves and others - human and more-than-human. If you take any one of the plethora of our crises, we find a breakdown in relationship at its core. Take our food system. It is clearly a breakdown in relationship between those who eat; buy; process; grow; deliver; and become food that sits at the heart of our current food crises - and all the devastating impacts this has on us as an inter-species. Throughout this report we point time and again to how our diminished capacity to relate healthily within and beyond our groups, organisations and movements significantly hinders our transformative power in the world.

Inner-led change is what supports us to create the healthier relational cultures that enable us to relate more deeply, authentically and transformatively with ourselves and others - human and more-than-human. Co-creating regenerative futures through and beyond our current collapse rests on this relational healing and wholing.

## 4.3 Because it deepens and amplifies existing investments in 'outer' change

The faltering of our change efforts is not just down to the complexity of the challenges we face. More often than not they falter – despite our huge efforts – because they lack the healthy and transformative cultures needed for our efforts to thrive and flourish. Burnout, destructive conflict, racism, sexism, ableism and other forms of unhealthy and harmful power are together undermining existing funder investments in vital socio-ecological change efforts. Investing in inner-led change is all about cultivating the regenerative culture that unleashes the transformative power of groups and organisations, and their capacity to source ways forward from a wisdom and potency beyond the consciousness that created our current crises.

**For grantees to truly thrive and succeed in the long term they need to be financially supported to focus on the inner dimensions that hold the keys to the truly regenerative culture our collective futures depend upon.**



**What if HOW we respond to the crises is part of the crises?**



**Bayo Akomolafe, Emergence Network**

## 4.4 **Because there's clear and growing demand, whether explicit or hidden**

**Our conversations with more than 250 changemakers and inner-led practitioners highlighted just how many people, groups and organisations perceive an urgent need to integrate an inner dimension into their work and cultivate the relational cultures that will support them to unleash their transformative potential and decolonise at depth.**

## 4.4.i Demand from change-making groups and organisations:

**Most interviewees expressed a need and desire for inner-led support so as to become more transformative in their work. Yet, they lack the financial resources to make this possible.**

Because funders rarely include inner-led change within their funding priorities and criteria, very few projects include this in their applications, let alone apply for projects and capacity building work that are inner-led.

Without easily accessible funding for inner-led approaches that support transformative organisational culture, groups will continue on a burnout-inducing, outcome-focused hamster wheel of project after project without time to attend to the condition of the soil from which any outcomes must grow. We need funders to play a leading role here by proactively making funding for inner-led change much more easily accessible, and visibly integrating it into funding priorities, programmes and your own organisations, trusts and foundations.

## 4.4.ii Demand from practitioners of inner-led change

**Meanwhile most inner-led change practitioners we spoke to, who have skills and understanding to support people and organisations to become more transformative, told us they struggle to make their work financially viable, as most of those in need lack the resources to pay for it.**

Paucity of funding was reported as the main barrier to supporting groups, organisations and communities. Many are working voluntarily or for insufficient pay and spend a lot of time on publicising their work rather than being able to focus on giving their gifts in the potent way they could, if it were not such a financial struggle. Ironically, of course, it tends to be those inner work practitioners not focusing on systemic injustice and outer change who do manage to financially flourish in their work because their clients tend to be people with greater financial resources looking for personal support. For example therapists, body workers or life coaches who provide exclusively high cost support to wealthy corporate clients.

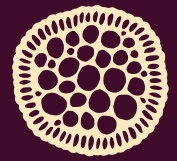
Practitioners also reported that their offerings tend to be disparate, and that while they may network within their own discipline, there's no consistent 'scene'. This misses an opportunity in terms of the rich potential for learning, cross-pollination and collaboration across different approaches - and means it is hard for changemakers to know where to look and who to trust. This cross-pollination needs incentivizing and financial support.

## 4.5 Because without funding it is unpaid labour (largely by marginalised identities)

**There is a reality that many individuals within organisations and groups attempt to do this inner work in unfunded time while necessarily having to focus their paid time on the more visible and tangible delivery of outer change that is more likely to be valued by funders, and therefore funded. And most worryingly, those most in need of doing this unpaid labour tend to be those with marginalised identities who pay the price of people's lack of awareness around acting out power-over dynamics.**

The fact that this labour is often unrecognised and apparently unvalued by funders undermines those advocating for such inner approaches and diminishes their ability to have a significant impact. What's more, in the absence of this inner work being funded it tends to not be reported on as it does not feature in the 'measurables' on which organisations must report back to funders, and so its pivotal role in how we go about making change happen often remains invisible.

## 4.6 Because there's evidence that it works



Peer-reviewed evidence for the transformative power of inner-led approaches is just beginning to emerge, with a number of researchers now working on studies, mostly in connection with climate change and sustainability. For example this open access paper in the journal Science Direct reviews analyses of linkages between inner and outer dimensions of change within sustainability and climate action across current relevant research.



[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378021001527](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378021001527)

Policymakers are beginning to realise that attention to the deep drivers of our disconnection from nature is as important as carbon policies. Much attention is on mindfulness, which can support our ability to stay with difficult feelings associated with thinking about the climate and ecological crisis, connect more deeply with ourselves and each other, expand our perspectives, attune our inner compass to our values, and move away from the autopilot that keeps us in unsustainable behaviour.

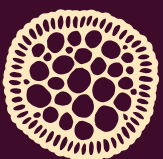
The clinical benefits of mindfulness, particularly compassion-focused approaches, have been the subject of thousands of studies, resulting in funding across corporate, government, health, education and the criminal justice system. There's a useful discussion of this literature in the report, *Reconnection: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out* by the **Mindfulness Initiative**.

[www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/reconnection](http://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/reconnection).

Important to note is that much of the mindfulness scene has been co-opted by those simply seeking to become more effective within their corporate-led consumerist pursuits; hence the term McM mindfulness. "What's more, without

*the embodied knowing of our belonging to the wider web of life, many within the mindfulness movement have a tendency to make "nature" a backdrop to be used as a resource rather than an active and intelligent collaborator in the restoration of a person's sense of wellbeing."* Bell Selkie Lovelock.

Beyond mindfulness and compassion, much of the evidence for the transformative power of inner-led approaches lies in anecdotal form and experiential narratives, held by disparate practitioners, collectives and facilitators, often at grassroots level, across different types of intervention. Some interventions have travelled further than others: practices from Joanna Macy's **'The Work that Reconnects'** have been shared for decades with thousands of people, including those working in government settings, with many positive testimonies and increasing academic research. One of the aims of our Cups of Tea process was to gather together some of this anecdotal and experiential feedback. Change-maker after change-maker testified to the profound value of rooting their change efforts in personal reflection, mindful, embodied awareness, connection with nature, body, spirit and soul and healthier group culture.



# Inner-led measurement and evidence

One of the tasks for funders interested in inner-led change is to support a process of co-produced inner-led evidence-gathering from the disparate practitioners, facilitators and organisations who are in a constant process of experimentation, review and learning. This would ensure that the wealth of inner-led approaches that are having an impact on a small scale can be shared collectively, increasing their reach and contributing to this growing field that is seeking to become more aware of itself. What's more it would reveal and make available the wide range of potent inner-led approaches to reflection and learning that could bring great gifts to the realms of monitoring and evaluation and impact analysis more broadly.

## Expanding relationships with time

Integral to generating inner-led measurement and evidence is unpacking deep seated and system-wide assumptions about timescales, about how we measure impact, and what constitutes 'evidence', 'impact' and 'success'. This is not only because the kind of culture-cultivating interventions we are talking about here are long-term, and not always measurable in shorter term project lifecycles, although that is often true. It's also because the standard way of thinking about 'evidence' as a measurable indication of progress, is a product of the colonial / power-over ways of thinking and consciousness that have caused the problems we're trying to tackle. It's part of the predict-and-control paradigm.

When we truly learn to support emergence, we learn that transformation comes when we let go of presuming we know what needs to happen - or even what questions to ask, and instead work with what is happening, while still keeping the long vision in mind. When an organisation or project's vision is strong and lives in the bodies, hearts and minds of all its group members, this emergent approach is naturally navigated in tandem with constant and inherent strategic reference and reverence to the longer term vision. It is this emergent approach that holds the potential for the depth and scale of change demanded by these unprecedented times.

## Honouring Kairos

The ancient Greeks had two words for time; chronos and kairos. The former refers to chronological, sequential time as we know it. Kairos refers to an unplanned, unexpected and opportune time for action. We could say then that chronos offers a sense of rhythmic certainty whilst kairos impregnates us with uncertainty, serendipity and life's transformative potential. These turbulent times have brought kairos out of hiding, where previously it was repressed and denied in our fear of its unpredictability. Whether we like it

or not then, these turbulent times require us to embrace and support the flavour and pace of change kairos unleashes. Change-makers' (and especially funders') approach to what constitutes impact and success, monitoring and evaluation and the timeframes within which all this happens, is therefore in urgent need of an overhaul. We can no longer blinkeredly presume change is exclusively linear if we want to invest in the depth and scale of change these times require.



“

**Time is not an arrow  
relentlessly moving forward,  
but something circular and  
strange, more akin to a lake  
in which the past, present  
and future exist.**

”

**Robin Wall Kimmerer**, Director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment and author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**Many of the people designing, delivering – and funding – projects are understandably still beholden to the colonial ‘predict-and-control’ paradigm of delivery, monitoring, measurement and evidence. So investment is needed to develop new paradigms around monitoring, evaluation and ‘evidence’ that:**

- reflect the emergent nature of change and its need for constant feedback loops across the system,
- values learning and the journey/process as an end in itself, rather than only valuing predetermined outcomes or ‘measurables’ that presume we can know how things need to go for a vision to be realised.
- validates and supports expansions in self-awareness within organisations and groups - and the individuals within them, as a vital measurement of ‘progress’ in that it holds the keys to the expansions in consciousness demanded by these times.
- Recognises that cultivating relationships is; a vital end in itself; not something that can be ‘squeezed in’ prior to applying for funding simply to prove we are working collaboratively; and needs significant time and space throughout a project’s lifecycle if it is to go beyond tokensim and support meaningful change.

**Starter Culture has collated sources of evidence for the efficacy of inner-led change interventions, which are available on our website at [www.starterculture.net/what-we-do/collating-an-evidence-base](http://www.starterculture.net/what-we-do/collating-an-evidence-base)**

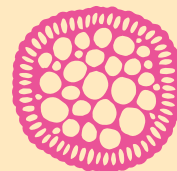
# Why do funders need to pay attention to inner-led change?



## 4.7 Because the market economy has us trapped into consumerist quick fixes

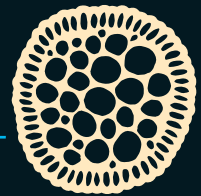
(and stymied our courage to deepen and expand into the long view)

Just as local food systems need funding or subsidising because our market economy undermines them being able to compete with supermarkets and the industrial food complex, inner-led change work needs funding and subsidising because it can't compete with the allure of consumerist quick fixes to numb our pain, or – in the case of changemaking organisations – the addictive allure of overwork and the stress, numbness and busy-mess it causes.



When funders put inner-led change at the heart of their work, they begin to truly support a whole-systems approach.

**Across the more than 250 ‘cups of tea’ conversations we had to explore the challenges, needs and opportunities that groups and organisations are experiencing around inner-led change, the consistent thread was a compelling lack of time and funding. This was true for organisations needing support with inner-led change, people offering support, and funders themselves wanting to integrate inner-led change into their own personal and organisational practices.**



There is currently a ripe and vital opportunity for funders and philanthropists to play a leading role in creating the cultural space and finance that is needed for inner-led change to take its necessary place at the centre of our social and ecological change work. We need a radical shift in culture and consciousness that recognises the inner dimension of change as an integral part of transformatively responding to the urgency of our current crises. This shift needs to be prioritised, and resourced. Funders are perfectly placed to use their power to make this happen. Without the support of funders and philanthropists our social and ecological change efforts risk being further hindered by the age-old neglect of the inner dimension of change. We can no longer afford to do this.

Within this section are a range of steps you might like to consider if, like us, you recognise the urgent need for inner-led change to be supported.

**We don't expect you to know how to do any or all of this. Starter Culture would love to work with you to explore how you might move forward – no matter how small or ambitious your next step might be.**

A large, stylized teal number '5' is centered on a dark teal background. The number is composed of solid teal shapes. The top bar is a horizontal rectangle. The vertical stem is a vertical rectangle. The bottom curve is a large, rounded shape that starts from the bottom of the stem and curves back up to meet the stem on the left side.

# Next steps for funders

## 5.1 Fund the cultivation of healthy organisational and group culture within:

### 5.1.i Your current grantees

Fund your current grantees to go through an earth-centric, inner-led process that supports them to unleash their transformative potential - and the decolonising at depth this is contingent upon.

### 5.1.ii Your own organisation

Invest in your own organisational change process so that your organisation is supported to identify gaps in awareness and cultivate healthier, more relational and transformative organisational culture, governance and communication with grantees, and model investing in this to your grantees. This needs to be the foundation of any meaningful shifts towards trust-based philanthropy and the decolonising at depth it requires.

One way to embark on this process is to reflect on the foundational questions you ask yourselves when assessing applications and before making funding decisions and to integrate an inner-led change dimension, such as:

- **Where/what are the inner dimensions of this project or problem we are interested in working with?**
- **Are they visible? If not, why?**
- **How can we help the applicant to surface them so that we get a fuller picture of what's going on?**
- **What kind of attention, support and resourcing do these inner and relational dimensions require to be meaningfully addressed?**

And crucially this needs to be made visible to applicants so that they know they will be rewarded for including inner-led change.

## 5.2 Centre inner-led change within your theory of change and funding priorities and criteria

**Use your power as philanthropists and funders to create the cultural space and financial capacity needed to support expansion in consciousness and culture that values, centres and supports earth-centric inner and relational dimensions of change:**

**5.2.i** Include inner-led change, healthy relational culture and transformational governance within your funding criteria and priorities so that applicants feel able and encouraged to apply for funding for inner-led change projects and/or to include support for this within their project design.

**5.2.ii** Create a funding program/stream specifically for those seeking support around inner-led healthy organisational/group culture, transformational governance and inner-led change more broadly.

**5.2.iii** Prioritise the time and resources needed to integrate inner-led change, healthy relational culture and transformational governance within your theory of change.

By including inner-led change within your funding priorities and criteria and, crucially, making funding available for the time and support needed for inner-led change to be meaningfully integrated, you are sending a strong and enabling message to groups and projects that you recognise the imperative to integrate and fund this inner dimension of change.



**...by devoting our efforts and resources to support the evolution of consciousness, we not only address internal causes of suffering but also unleash the compassion and creativity needed to solve a variety of external challenges that plague our planet.**



**Evolve Foundation**

## 5.3 Fund inner-led change initiatives identified by our Cups of Tea research as a route to strategic impact at depth and scale:

### 5.3.i Unleashing the transformative potential of our groups, organisations and movements.

Fund groups and organisations to get support to explore and cultivate the regenerative relational culture that supports them to decolonise at depth and unleash their transformative potential, including:

- **Transformational governance and collective decision-making.**
- Developing **Relational Agreements**.
- Exploring our relationships with **burnout** and cultivating cultures that support us to become resourced and available.
- **Transformative conflict:** learning how to offer healthy regenerative feedback and turn towards and transform rupture as and when it arises, and the repair it requires.
- **Emergent Strategy:** learning to embrace uncertainty and the initial discomfort it brings.
- **Decolonising at Depth:** exploring our own and our organisation's entanglement with power-over culture, and how our relationships with power live deeply buried in our bodies and personal and collective histories.
- **Nature Connection and Eco-Awakening** practices so as to source ways forward from beyond our culturally conditioned minds.
- Integrate rituals, ceremonies and other practices that support us to hone our **reverence to powers greater than our human-centric strategic minds.**

See page 49 for more detail on this.



## 5.3.ii Community-based Rites of Passage work with young people

**This project will, once funded, pilot a community-led approach to supporting young people crossing the threshold into socio-biological adulthood.**

Rites of Passage work is a pan-cultural wisdom tradition that provides nature-based inner-led support in times of significant change and transition. The immense challenges young people face today calls for a radical rethink of how to support them, particularly at significant times like puberty and leaving teenagehood or school.

This trans-local pilot project across a number of geographical communities will bring together the wisdom of nature-based Rites of Passage work with a wide range of groups, projects, schools and institutions already supporting young people in their day-to-day lives, across a wide range of contexts, cultures and lived realities. It will cross-pollinate across the respective strengths of a variety of approaches to enable adults to better support young people to thrive - and bring the gifts of Rites of Passage work into the heart of our communities, and especially to those most disadvantaged and marginalised.

## 5.3.iii Programmes that support change-makers to source from beyond power-over consciousness

These programmes, once funded, will support change-makers, and their groups and organisations, to explore their relationships with power and reciprocal relating with themselves and others (human and more-than-human). In this way change-makers will be supported to transform beyond their cultural conditioning and to source their change efforts from beyond the consciousness that created our current crises and collapse - and thereby unleash their transformative potential.

## 5.3.iv 'Community of Practice Coordinators'

Resource paid coordinators to bring together and coordinate theme and place-based communities of practice to support connection, deep listening, cross-pollination, collaboration as well as skill, knowledge and resource sharing amongst activists, change-makers and practitioners working with inner-led change.

Foundations for communities of practice have already been laid down by our Cups of Tea processes in areas including:

- Radical leadership among people of colour across England
- Rites of Passage with young people trans-locally across 8 countries
- Social and ecological change-makers across Wales, Scotland, Bristol, Devon and England who are integrating an inner dimension into their work
- Development workers in Nepal (nationals and non-nationals)
- Climate activists with disabilities
- Funders and philanthropists interested in inner-led change



## 5.4

# Learn how to embrace collective trauma and support grantees to do the same

**It's time to face up to the reality that unprocessed trauma is the collective waters we are swimming in. We believe that the key to transforming trauma lies in recognising its collective, systemic, species-wide nature.**

This systemic perspective expands beyond the mainstream's pathologizing mental health approach that is grounded in an unconscious belief that trauma is about fixing broken individuals so they can become a more palatable and productive cog in our consumerist works.

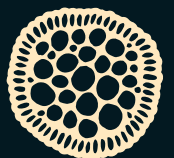
Funding is needed to support groups, organisations and society at large to expand into this wider perspective of collective trauma and to thereby become trauma-philic - that is to learn how to welcome and become friends with trauma - rather than pathologize and fix it. Without this, those for whom unprocessed

trauma is revealing itself are being left to the perils of the Market to decide whether they get support - and any support they do get is likely to emanate from a narrow pathologizing-human-centric-individualised (power-over) consciousness or be cost prohibitive, especially for folk from marginalised communities.

Groups, organisations and society at large need support to become able to embrace unprocessed trauma as a collective, systemic, species-wide predicament that we are all grappling with - rather than as a problem that needs to be fixed within certain broken individuals. What this means is that as well as groups and organisations needing support to expand their consciousness in this way, so too do those identifying as trauma and mental health experts. That is, we need the mainstream mental health support on offer to go beyond a pathologizing human-centric approach grounded in an unconscious belief that we need to fix broken individuals.

## In light of all this we encourage you to:

- Learn more about how collective trauma is at the root of the issues you are seeking to address through your funding;
- Fund work that supports groups, mental health experts, and leaders more generally, to understand the collective, systemic, species-wide nature of trauma and to become more trauma-philic;
- Include learning about collective trauma and becoming trauma-attuned as a funding priority and criteria; and
- Create funding streams specifically for this work thereby using your power as a funder to create financial, cultural and policy space for this vital terrain of deep cultural transformation.



## 5.5 Join together as a community of practice for inner-led change funders

We imagine such a community of practice would facilitate the sharing of grappings, challenges, needs, experience, expertise, and case studies for the purpose of learning from each other and harnessing the potential of collective enquiry in service of inner-led change and the deep cultural transformation it supports.

## 5.6 Help pioneer a collective fund resourcing earth-centric inner-led change at depth and scale

By creating a collective inner-led change fund overseen by those who deeply understand its complexity and nuance at both depth and scale, investment in this vital work will be amplified, deepened and reach those approaching inner-led change in the most transformative ways.

## 5.7

# Invest in the inner-led support needed to de-colonise at depth and transition from transactional to relational funding and trust-based philanthropy

**Our Cups of Tea conversations highlighted that many funders are recognising the need to radically question their colonially-conditioned relationships with grantees and with funding and philanthropy more generally.**

Funders are starting to experiment with new forms of accountability, feedback and equitable relationships, and trying to move away from standard patterns of short-term, project-based funding cycles grounded in an approach to measuring impact that presumes that change happens much quicker and linearly than is actually the case. Some have a specific goal of 'trust-based philanthropy'; some are working on a gradual transition without naming it as such.

For example, **Mobius Foundation** takes an approach to funding that preferences inner transformation, and systems change through emergence, that involves less of a metric-orientation to track success (largely replacing written progress updates with unstructured in-person check-ins) and an emphasis on continuity of support and providing additional resources for well-being and human development.

Inner-led change is vital within this transition to trust-based philanthropy. Predict-and-control ways of working are deeply ingrained within our conditioned psyches, as well as the culture that shapes them. Inner-led support is needed for individuals and organisations to cultivate the relational and emergent cultures needed for trust-based philanthropy to become a

reality. We can't predict what's going to 'work', we can only embark on the journey. Otherwise we're defining the markers of success through the consciousness that created our current crises and that we're trying to expand beyond.

Much of the current focus is on de-colonising power relations within funder-grantee relationships. For example, in our Cup of Tea conversation with **Be the Earth Foundation**, Renata Strengerowski told us about their use of Flow Funding (a methodology developed initially by Marion Weber) which supports funders to move towards radically relinquishing control of how and where their money is spent. Instead of the funder making these decisions, it is change-makers on the ground, with whom they have cultivated trust over time, who decide which projects receive funding and how relationships with them are tended to.

Transitioning to trust-based philanthropy requires an inner-led approach. This needs to start with an in depth inquiry into how funders and philanthropists are relating with power - and the historic roots of these relationships. And this work needs external support from those with both the compassion and experience to hold space for this vital inquiry.

## 5.8

## Become an ambassador of inner-led change

Find ways to raise awareness around inner-led change and its vital role within any approach to social and ecological change, for example:

- Amplify stories of inner-led change. For example, invite blog/vlog contributions from inner-led change practitioners, host webinars with inner-led change practitioners and those organisations integrating an inner dimension into their work.
- Invite Starter Culture or other inner-led change practitioners to host sessions at your events.
- Host events that create space for grantees and/or other funders in your networks to explore inner-led change and the challenges, needs and opportunities being experienced in relation to it.

A great example of this took place in January 2023 when, following a Cup of Tea conversation with us, Dumi Gatsha, **Shift the Power Funder Collective** Coordinator (a group seeking to challenge and change inequitable grant making practices, particularly in international funding flows) boldly centred inner-led change within the agenda of their “Philanthropy Party” convening in London. This two-day event bringing together philanthropists and change-makers from across the world centred inner-led change by inviting Starter Culture to lead the opening presentation. This resulted in inner-led change - and the decolonizing at depth it supports, becoming a central theme throughout and beyond the event. And we were delighted to feel the resonance with our assertion that *'professionalism is colonialism's Trojan Horse'*.

Another example is **Edge Funder's Alliance** inviting us to be a keynote speaker at a webinar they hosted and publishing a blog on their website, in response to discovering our work around inner-led change.

[www.edgefunders.org/edgely-wednesday-inner-led-transformation](http://www.edgefunders.org/edgely-wednesday-inner-led-transformation)

Our funder Cup of Tea process revealed a number of other welcome examples of funders acting as ambassadors for inner-led change - and thereby using their power to carve out cultural and policy space for inner-led language that often gets rejected, disrespected or mocked:

**GMSP Foundation** use the term “*Spiritual Solidarity*” (and the hashtag: #SpiritualSolidarity) as a way of recognising and celebrating inner-led connection between collaborators when they witness it.

**Fetzer Institute** intentionally imbue their language with ‘the inner’ through phrases like “*Don’t go left, don’t go right, go deep*” and by, for example, capitalising Love, to mean divine Love that faith and spiritual traditions experience as the heart of Sacred Mystery, which goes beyond human love.

## Kalliopeia Foundation are very explicit on their website about their work being inner-led:

**Our work is grounded in four core principles:**

- **Life Is Sacred:** we honor all life as sacred, expressing reverence for one another, the Earth, and life as a whole.
- **Interconnectedness:** we approach ecology, culture, and spirituality as inextricable and interdependent.
- **Innovation:** we generate creative ideas and outcomes through simple, meaningful engagement with others and the Earth.
- **Service:** we embrace an ethic of care—the essential and natural aspiration to respond to needs beyond our own.

To this end, as well as giving grants to organisations based in the States, Kalliopeia Foundation also publish *Emergence Magazine* and curate the *Global Oneness Project* as ways of sharing inner-led stories that reveal the emerging connections between ecology, culture, and spirituality.

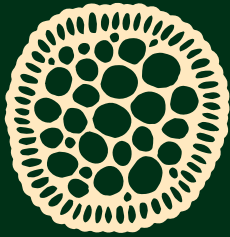
The non-profit organisation **Synergos** hosts a collaborative community with in-person and online gatherings for leaders in philanthropy exploring the intersection of philanthropy, contemplative practices, self-reflection and spirituality as part of its *Spiritual Civilization* initiative.



**None of the ideas outlined above are ends in themselves, but, rather, practices in letting go of control... and activating currently atrophied muscles. They embody a transition from transactional giving to relational giving. Transition is not an end-state. It is a journey of un-learning, experimentation, re-learning, integration, humility and then unlearning all over again. By definition then, transition is emergence.**



**Alnoor Ladhr** and **Lynn Murphy** in Post Capitalist Philanthropy



The times ahead look destined to become increasingly more testing. What if inner-led change, and the regenerative, relational and transformative cultures it supports, are the best way to adapt and transform in the midst of collapse? What if the intervention most needed right now is investment in our capacity to transformatively navigate these times of cultural death, such that we stand the greatest chance of birthing our unknown futures? What if inner-led change (the interweaving of inner and outer change) holds the keys to the evolution of consciousness demanded by our current collapse?

We very much hope you will feel the tug to get in touch with us at Starter Culture to explore how we can grapple together with how to integrate inner-led change and relational culture within funding and philanthropy - and make significantly more funding available for the thrumming abundance of inner-led work longing to unleash and share its transformative potential wherever it is most needed and wanted.



**It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.**

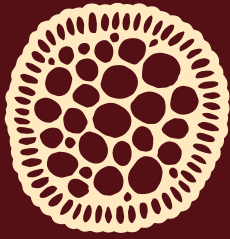


**Donna Haraway** in *Staying with the Trouble*





# Grappling together



**We are deeply thankful to you for taking the time to read this report.**

**We know how full all of you are and just how many demands there are on your time, attention and finances. We dearly hope that in reading this you will feel moved to get in touch with us to ask any questions you now have and/or to explore how to move forward with supporting one or more of the suggestions we have shared.**

And we are also deeply grateful to all of you who generously shared your time to have a Cup of Tea conversation with us - without you this report could not exist. Thank you for all your heart-felt work bringing inner-led change to life at a time when its value and worth are often hidden in plain sight.

Whilst this report was primarily written by me, Claire Milne, the 'we' that I constantly refer to is Starter Culture's wonderful core team Bell Selkie Lovelock, Sara McFarland and David Crook - all of whom have contributed in a cacophony of ways, not least through their soulful solidarity within this tremulous act of becoming more visible in this witchy work that many of our ancestors were killed for. I am particularly grateful to Anthea Lawson for her structuring, writing and editing work during the early stages when I naively believed this could be a 10 page affair. I am also very grateful to Sarah McAdam, Elizabeth Mpyisi, Toni Spencer, Justine Huxley, Eva Schonveld, Jo Hamilton, John Fellowes and Peter Lipman for their feedback on an early version. Deep gratitude goes out to Lauren Forrester whose incredible gifts for graphic design made tangible my longings for this dense report to ooze beauty and support a pleasure-full read. And my heartfelt thanks also go to my mentors and teachers Colin Harrison (Movement of Being), Elizabeth Serra (Feminine Ecstasy), Sarah McAdam (Transformational Governance) and Bill Plotkin (Animas Valley Institute) and my precious friends Eve Bartlett and Rachel Baker (alongside countless others of you) whose support over many many years has enabled me to more and more embody the inner-led and relational ways of being this report points to. And finally I am ushering deep bows to my more-than-human ancestors, allies and guides whose ever increasing presence in my life supports me to more and more weave webs between worlds by becoming a wild ally to all that and those which are marginalised.



Deep  
thanks

## Deep thanks

**And deep thanks also goes out to all the funders and funder activists (listed below) we have been collaborating with through our Cups of Tea process and who shared their stories with us - including those cherished ones preferring to be anonymous.**

Birju Pandya at **Mobius**

Caprice Jackson at **Emergence Foundation**

Eva Rehse at **Global Greengrants Fund**

Ruth Adrade and Lucia Nader at **Lush / Regenerosity**

Renata Strengerowski at **Be the Earth Foundation**

Julius Mokrauer at **Evolve Foundation**

Jonathan Lever at **The Fetzer Institute**

Carla Bush, Nidia Bustillos, Mariana Lopez at **The Pawanka Fund**

Faith Flanagan at **Buckminster Fuller Institute / Regenerosity**

Alnoor Ladha & Lynn Murphy at **Transition Resource Circle**

Rob Kaufold at **Hemera Foundation**

Sohrob Nabatian at **Kalliopeia Foundation**

Sonal Sachdev Patel at **GMSP Foundation**

Melissa Durda at **Synergos**

Dumi Gatsha at **Shift The Power Funders Collective**

Deborah Coughlin & Antonia Packard at **A Million Realities**

Kit Muirhead at **Alliance Magazine** (a publication serving the global philanthropic sector)

**Edge Funders Alliance**

Florence Miller at **Environmental Funders Network**

**We also want to thank all the potent and inspiring organisations, practitioners and activists we have mentioned, and a few others whose work has contributed to this report in various ways and whose inner-led change work is breathing vital life into our famished movements.**

**Universite-du-nous**

**ULEX project**

**Transition Network**

**The Work that Reconnects**

**The Mindfulness Initiative**

**St Ethelburgas**

**Kincentric Leadership**

**Grassroots to Global**

**Dark Mountain**

**Emergence Network**

**Ecodharma Centre**

**Creative Commons**

**Bringing it Home**

**Animas Valley Institute**

**Ancestral Medicine**

**Toko-pa Turner**

**Thomas Berry**

**Singhashri Gazmuri**

**Sara McFarland**

**Robin Wall Kimmerer**

**Richard Katz**

**Resmaa Menaken**

**Melissa Pandika**

**Manda Scott**

**Lilla Watson**

**Joanna Macy**

**Elizabeth Mpyisi**

**Donna Haraway**

**Bill Plotkin**

**Bell Selkie Lovelock**

**Bayo Akomolafe**

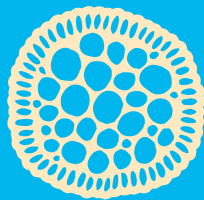
**Audre Lourde**

**Anthea Lawson**

Whilst space precludes mentioning the more than 250 activists, change-makers and inner-led change practitioners who generously shared their stories with us over a Cup of Tea conversation, here is a taste of all the many inner-led change practices and approaches they are drawing on and some of the contexts they are applying them within:

Meditation, mindfulness, yoga, prayer, embodied research and practice, psychology, psychotherapy, martial arts, coaching, ancestral lineage healing, group facilitation in contexts including women's groups and social justice organisations, campaigning on social and climate justice issues, peace, sustainable development projects within government and academia, Way of Council (a group listening and communication practice), cooperative organisations, support for carers, nature connection, permaculture, writing and publishing, art, rites of passage for young people entering adulthood, eco-awakening and nature-based soulcraft practices (as birthed by Bill Plotkin and Animas Valley Institute), vision quests, agriculture, community action groups, low energy projects, local council leadership, local government, philanthropic funding, restorative justice, nonviolent communication, addiction recovery support, arts administration, environmental work including flood resilience, supporting marginalised communities, herbalism, spiritual guidance, Work that Reconnects (buddhist-based eco-psychology practices grounded in Joanna Macy's work) and climate psychology.





# STARTER CULTURE

[www.starterculture.net](http://www.starterculture.net)

# What next?

Please email our Coordinator [clairemilne@starterculture.net](mailto:clairemilne@starterculture.net) if you are/ work for a funder/ philanthropist and would like to:

- Explore how you can support and invest in inner-led change and relational culture.
- Explore collaboration around transforming the wider funding climate to centre inner-led change and relational culture.
- Ask any specific questions you may have.

Please email [hello@starterculture.net](mailto:hello@starterculture.net) if you would like to:

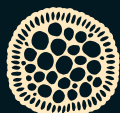
- Request more copies of the full report to share with your colleagues, collaborators and networks.
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