



photo: Steve Pavey / Hope in Focus Photography



2018-2020 strategic priorities

We deeply thank the gs strategy team for your time, wisdom and commitment in co-creating this next phase of gs' work, and articulating and honing our intended impact. The strategy body included: Alta Starr, Angelica Otero, Briana Herman-Brand, Chris Lymbertos, Clay Smith, Danielle Feris, Denise Perry, Jay Conui, Lisa Thomas-Adeyemo, Morgan Bassichis, Nathaniel Shara, Raquel Lavina, RJ Maccani, Spenta Kandawalla, Staci K. Haines, Sumitra Rajkumar, Thomas Assefa, and Xochitl Bervera.



A Living Document

The generative somatics Strategy Team convened from April 2015 through December 2016 to guide gs towards its best contribution over the next 3-5 years. We explored the following key questions:

- What **parts of our justice movements** should we prioritize partnering with?
- How should we **“spread” somatics** in a way that is both accessible and preserves its quality ? (i.e. that is wide and deep at the same time)
- What **impact** do we intend to produce in the leaders and formations (organizations, alliances, etc.) we partner with?
- What level of **internal political alignment** do we have, and what do we need to develop and deepen?
- How can we continue to **dismantle white supremacy and practice racial justice** within every aspect of our work?
- What **organizational infrastructure** and growth will we need to carry out our work?

This strategic plan will be a living document that gs leadership will return to regularly to evaluate its implementation and make changes responsive to evolving conditions.



Background

generative somatics (gs) grew out of the success of Somatics & Trauma courses and the experimentation with somatics within generationFIVE's efforts to advance transformative justice approaches to ending childhood sexual abuse. In 2009, gs gathered national movement leaders to answer the question: ***Is somatics relevant for the movement?*** We received a resounding 'yes,' and over the past eight years have received the same message. **We are clear that politicized somatics—a transformative methodology that builds embodied leadership to align our personal and collective practices with our principles, and to heal from trauma and internalized oppression—is relevant, useful and needed in**

social and environmental justice movements.

Our work has grown dramatically since 2009. We have expanded our bench of teachers from 5 to 45. We developed partnerships with visionary movement formations—in the early years, we worked closely with Social Justice Leadership (SJL) and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). We have since partnered with Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (BOLD), and the Racial Justice Action Center (RJAC), which have in turn shaped the methodology and deepened its application. We have built a sustainable organizational infrastructure, and firmly established the relevance of somatics to social and environmental justice movements.

Pivoting into a New Moment

The conditions in which we are working have shifted substantially since we launched in 2009. Within the U.S., masses of people are mobilizing around competing values. On one hand, we have seen the emergence and growth of vibrant progressive resistance movements addressing the

core contradictions of white supremacy and capitalism in the wake of the Obama presidency. This is evidenced by the Occupy movement, Black Lives Matter, indigenous resistance across North America and the water protectors fighting against the Dakota Access Pipeline, prisoner strikes, Palestinian solidarity

and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israeli Apartheid, the mobilization of thousands of people at airports and in the courtrooms to defend against the Muslim travel bans, the post election Women's March, among others. On the other hand, we are seeing the consolidation and escalation of racist backlash from right wing populist forces within the U.S. and internationally. This is evidenced by the emergence of the Tea Party and "alt-right," Brexit and other xenophobic/austerity movements globally, and the ascendancy of the "new confederacy" and the Trump regime. The interlocking ecological, political, and economic crises we have always faced are now more entrenched, presenting grave threats to the immediate survival of Black, immigrant, indigenous, Muslim, and Arab communities, as well as to our planet. Our movements are stronger and wider than they were in 2009, but so too are the forces we are up against.

generative somatics is well-positioned to make a meaningful contribution in this historical moment. We will make the following pivots to best respond to the evolving conditions:

- **Focus our efforts:** Somatics works best when there is an ecosystem of support around leaders, teams and their formations. This will be in the form of courses, practice groups, coaching and somatic bodywork,

supportive peers, and dedicated teachers. We will focus our efforts in key struggles and locations where we can grow this ecosystem.

- **Increase accessibility:** We will continue removing barriers that prevent poor and working class people of color (including undocumented people, people with disabilities, parents, trans women, non-native English speakers, and formerly incarcerated people) from being able to fully access gs programs and community.
- **Hone our relevance:** We will work to ensure that our programming, partnerships, and communications are maximally relevant to the needs of the movement in this historical era.
- **Grow our capacity:** We will continue to develop our internal sustainability, somatic competencies, and analytical sharpness. Currently, the call for gs programs is three times our ability to meet the need. We are committed to growing our capacity and increasing our financial resources skillfully and in ways that align with our values.

Strategic Priorities

It is critical for us to identify strategic priorities. We are committed to making a transformative and measurable impact in this period that can then grow and deepen over time. We have arrived at the following priorities to guide us from 2018-2020:

- **We will continue to prioritize**

building the power of leaders and formations organizing poor and working class communities of color who are bearing the brunt of white supremacy and capitalism, are invested in dismantling the oppressive forces they face, and are working to create a truly just society. We prioritize partnering with formations that are making demands on the state, and those advancing scalable community alternatives. In particular, we work with grassroots base-building organizations with feminist orientations that value the interdependence of individual and collective change.

- **We will prioritize** and hone our efforts to partner with leaders, organizations, and alliances in these issue areas:

- 1. Freedom from Political Repression and State Violence:**

We understand this work to include—ending state and non-state sanctioned repression and abuse; halting surveillance, mass targeted deportations, and the criminalization of dissent; abolishing the prison industrial complex; and sustaining the

right to freedom of expression. This priority area also includes ending militarized and racist policing, which is connected to war and imperialism; and supporting alternatives aimed at creating safer communities including advancing transformative justice.

- 2. Environmental and Climate**

Justice: We understand this work to include—fostering a just transition from an extractive economy that severs the relationship of people and place, toward life-affirming and equitable ways of meeting the needs of all. This includes halting environmental racism, the climate crisis, and assaults on the earth and creating regenerative economies that foster ecological restoration, community resilience, and social equity.

[\(Movement Generation\)](#)

These struggles are inviting and uniting multiracial masses of people to address some of the core impacts of white supremacy and capitalism, such as anti-black racism, colonialism and imperialism. Somatics is an organic and practical fit for leaders and formations engaged in these movements to build power and move towards a life-affirming vision amidst escalating repression, violence, and chaos. Prioritizing in this way will allow us to deepen relationships and make a concentrated impact in two critical areas of movement building.

Desired Impact

Five Competencies

We plan to develop social and environmental justice leaders, teams and formations so they can do their work more effectively, powerfully, and resiliently, contributing to more vibrant, life-affirming movements for freedom. **We aim to produce the following five embodied skills and competencies in individuals, teams and formations that will concretely magnify the power of our participants and movement partners:**

- **Commitment:** The capacity to return to a positive vision and act from ours values under pressure; to identify what we care about and make that known to others.
- **Connection:** The capacity to form and sustain trusting, authentic relationships;

compel others; be a supportive presence amidst difficulty; and give and receive grounded feedback.

- **Coordination:** The capacity to effectively collaborate with others in teams, partnerships, alliances, and remain responsive to evolving conditions.
- **Collective action:** The capacity to take powerful, life-affirming actions with others, rooted in shared values and vision, through clear and compelling requests, declines, promises, celebration, and evaluation.
- **Conflict as generative:** The capacity to effectively engage in and transform interpersonal and organizational breakdown, ask for and offer accountability and repair, and generate more dignity and trust for everyone involved.





Four Impacts

The five embodied skills and competencies we aim to produce will strengthen our movements by having the following **four impacts in organizing and movement building**:

- **Campaigns and actions will be more powerful, life-giving and vision-driven** in the face of ongoing repression, conflict, exploitation, and backlash.
- **Organizational and movement culture will shift towards greater mutual belonging, dignity, and power**, with an increased ability to address, heal, and transform internalized oppression and trauma.
- **Movements will organically contribute to the development of alternatives** for responding to violence and emergencies in our communities in ways that do not engage the State. They will advance **transformative justice**—ways of addressing harm and violence that produce safety, healing, agency, and accountability, while undermining and transforming oppressive systems and practices.
- **Movements will more effectively grow and scale work** across identity, worldview, and geography; and make the most strategic and bold contribution to the creation of a just, loving, and sustainable society.

Growing into this Next Phase

To meet make this desired impact within our strategic priorities, we will:

- **Focus** course enrollment, movement partnership selection, and teacher development on leaders and formations who work in our strategic priority areas.
- **Organize** gs practitioners to serve organizers and leaders who work in our strategic priority areas through individual and collective healing.
- **Increase** accessibility for poor and working class people of color, including undocumented people, people with disabilities, parents, trans women, non-native English speakers, and formerly incarcerated people.
- **Continue** to dismantle white supremacy within organizational practices, norms, and methodology and work to embody racial justice within gs.
- **Expand** the role of non-staff leadership bodies to further democratize and decentralize our organization.
- **Grow** our programmatic offer and organizational capacity through teacher development and transformative fundraising, so we can meet the significant call for our work.



Thank you for engaging with generative somatics, and for all the ways you make this work possible. We can only do this together! If you have ideas about our Strategic Priorities, please connect with us. [Please be a part of forwarding this vision and work by offering your support, here.](#) Thank you!