

Division of Access and Equity

Toolkit

2017



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Introduction

The Division of Access and Equity has created this toolkit as a resource for people and organizations wanting to do work in midwifery and serving pregnant and birthing people that is equitable and takes into account the wide range of folks who are midwives and who midwives serve. None of these resources or tools are meant as an end point. Each of these items is a starting place that offers points for further consideration, questioning and exploration.

Birth Justice Principles

The following principles of birth justice should be considered by any entity or individual taking action in the childbirth system if they want that action to be rooted in birth justice:

- The people most affected should be directly involved in all stages of decision making and action.
- The existence of institutional and structural racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, ageism, xenophobia, and other forms of systemic oppression has to be acknowledged.
- To dismantle those institutional and structural forms of oppression actions must be taken to put certain people at the center, who have not been at the center. This includes people of color, queer people, women, gender-nonconforming and transgender people, immigrants, young or old people, differently abled people and others who are regularly marginalized.
- Barriers to participation by any of these people should be actively removed and the people facing the barriers should be considered when actions to remove barriers are taken.
- People who are more often in the center need to step back and amplify the voices of other people who are not often centered.
- Organizations need to consider who was and was not present during the building of the organization. If there were consistent gaps, if there were people who are affected who were not present in building those organizations - the organizations need to acknowledge that they are limited in their ability to effectively act on behalf of those people.
- Organizations who cannot effectively act on behalf of people who are directly affected need to step back and amplify the work of organizations who are better suited to work on behalf of the affected people.

Equity Evaluation Tool

Updated: April 2017

Use these questions as a guide to all internal discussions/decisions.

Do we have a complete picture?

- Who needs to be “in the room” to make this decision? Are they here? If not, how do we hear from them?
- Will people from the affected groups be meaningfully involved or represented with this option or in this decision?
- What information is missing about how this might affect people?
- Who may need to move aside in order to get the complete picture?

Who does this affect and how?

- Does this option affect certain groups differently? How? Are there pre-existing inequities?
- If a certain group is adversely affected, are there ways it can be mitigated? If a certain group is benefitted is it intentional? Fair?
- Does this option expand, narrow or leave in place pre-existing inequities? Does this option produce inequities?
- Does this option reduce disparities or address discrimination while meeting other organizational goals at the same time?
- What unintended consequences could result from this option? Can those consequences be mitigated?

Is resource distribution equitable?

- How does this option distribute resources among different people/groups?
- How does this option create a benefit to groups that have been particularly affected or that have faced preexisting inequities?

Do we have a plan for follow-through and evaluation?

- What mechanisms ensure successful implementation of this option?
- How will impacts be documented and evaluated?
- Are we prepared to let go of things we get from keeping the status quo in place?

**Characteristics that commonly show up in organizations
and undermine the goal of promoting equity and access:**

And what we might do instead

| Things that show up | Antidote |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Perfectionism/fear of conflict | Focus on appreciating and learning |
| Sense of urgency | Realistic plans, acceptance of realistic timing |
| Defensiveness | Name the fear with empathy |
| Focus on content over process | Use process to support content |
| One right way | Honor and validate when alternatives work |
| One-way decision making | Everyone is accountable and responsible |
| Either/Or thinking | Look for more than two options, note nuance |
| Power Hoarding | Change is inevitable, challenging leadership is healthy |
| Individualism | Skillful teamwork |
| Progress = Bigger/More | Progress = Values based process |
| Objectivity | ID your Point of View (POV), See other POVs |
| Right to Comfort | Discomfort = Growth |

Did you see any of these show up? How did you try to counter them?

Appendix A: Coalition Capacity Checklist

The Coalition Capacity Checklist is a way for coalitions to take a quick snapshot of themselves. It is not designed as a quantitative instrument, but rather as a way for coalitions to take a quick pulse on their performance. Fill out the checklist either individually or as a group, indicating how well you feel the coalition is doing in each area. Then use responses as a way to dialogue about how to improve the coalition.

| | Excellent | Better than Average | Average | Needs Improvement | Non-Existent in Our Coalition |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Leadership | | | | | |
| The goal of the coalition is clearly stated and understood by all members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition can articulate why it is the appropriate vehicle for addressing the goal (as opposed to another coalition or working individually). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has clearly articulated rules and procedures that are understood by all members, including criteria for membership, member obligations and decision-making processes. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has a clear leadership core tasked with keeping the coalition on track. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition is action-oriented (i.e. more time is spent doing work than talking about it). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has a decision-making process that is considered equitable by all members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has members that can strategically help achieve coalition goals (including time, resources, influence, trust, etc.). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adaptive | | | | | |
| The coalition continuously monitors the advocacy environment in order to make strategic decisions about timing and activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has a strategic plan (or equivalent) that is action oriented. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition monitors and evaluates progress and effectiveness. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition evaluates members, taking stock of skills, commitment, contribution and effectiveness. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition successfully engages all available internal resources. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition can mobilize/go after resources external to individual members (e.g. foundation grants). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition promotes collaboration between members distinct from the work of the coalition itself. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | Excellent | Better than Average | Average | Needs Improvement | Non-Existent in Our Coalition |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Management | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has frequent and productive communication with all members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members actively participate in coalition activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members feel like they are deriving value-added through their participation. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members are given clear tasks and goals. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members understand their roles/obligations. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Coalition staff have clear roles and responsibilities (if relevant). | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition is able to manage conflict among members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition keeps careful records of assigned and completed tasks. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Technical | | | | | |
| The coalition has a diverse and relevant membership. Staff in the coalition have a greater role in facilitating the work of the coalition than <u>doing</u> the work. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has sufficient skills to communicate with members. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has sufficient skills to communicate with nonmembers. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has sufficient policy/advocacy expertise. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition has sufficient tangible resources (space, equipment, etc.) to carry out its activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Culture | | | | | |
| Members in the coalition trust each other. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members in the coalition respect each other. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members feel free to disagree with one another in coalition meetings. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members speak with a united voice even if they are not in full agreement with coalition decisions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The coalition is sensitive to power differentials and works to minimize their impact. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The Concentric Circles Model

The Division of A&E is working to increase equity and access for midwifery. As such, old systems that maintain inequity have to be challenged and dismantled.

One way to do that is through a concentric circles approach to leadership and power where the goal is to strengthen each group we relate to and are part of. Like healthy ecological systems that are in balance, concentric-circle-oriented organizational work keeps the power and leadership of individual leaders and organizations in check. Power is checked forcing the center to the margins, by dynamic feedback loops (each group hears different things from different people), and pressure points (each group is accountable to different people and demands).

Midwifery exists in relationship to the communities who need midwives. Elephant Circle and Southern Birth Justice Network represent some of those communities. They are queer and POC led organizations. They are consumer-based. They are birth-justice focused. They work with poor and low income folks. Formalizing the relationship between the Division and these two other organizations helps the Division of Access and Equity stay connected and in check.

This relationship also helps shift the base and power-building structure of MANA as a membership organization. The dominant model of political advocacy among healthcare providers is professional associations. This advocacy model reinforces the existing power imbalance against midwives since their professional associations are smaller and less resourced than other health care providers.

Building an alliance between midwives and consumers adds sheer numbers, increases political strength, and moves the forum from a place where medical providers have an advantage (professional associations) to one where midwives have an advantage (consumer loyalty and passion). Thus, connecting consumers and midwives in coalition and partnership is a deliberate strategy to increase political power.

Through this model of concentric circle organizing the Division is actively working to counteract the inequity that results from the dominant approach. This model formalizes the idea that “my growth is bound up with yours, my freedom is tied to your freedom.” The dynamic tension of working ecologically helps us hold each other accountable, helps ensure that many different people have access to power, and helps prevent one person or group from growing too big.

Indra has also written about this model in this blog post:
<http://www.elephantcircle.net/circle/2017/4/24/working-ecologically>

Organizations Doing Birth Justice Work and Centering People of Color and/or Queer & Trans Folks

These are organizations and leaders that you can support or connect with if you are interested in doing birth justice work. If you are interested in offering allyship - make sure you have done your homework first, by reading more about who they are, what they do, and why they do what they do.

Mama Sana

<http://msvwatx.org/>

Black Women Birthing Justice

<http://www.blackwomenbirthingjustice.org/>

Southern Birth Justice Network

<http://southernbirthjustice.org/>

International Center for Traditional Childbearing

<https://ictcmidwives.org/>

Elephant Circle

<http://www.elephantcircle.net/>

Young Women United

<http://www.youngwomenunited.org/>

The Prison Birth Project

<http://theprisonbirthproject.org/>

The Healing Clinic Collective

<https://healingcliniccollective.wordpress.com/>

The Changing Woman Initiative

<http://www.changingwomaninitiative.com/>

Commonsense Childbirth

<http://www.commonsensechildbirth.org/>

The InTune Mother

www.timcenter.org

Ancient Song Doula Services

<https://www.ancientsongdoulaservices.com/>

Recommended Reading

Books on pregnancy, midwifery, reproductive justice:

Pregnant Butch

Birthing Justice: Black Women, Pregnancy, and Childbirth

Granny Midwives and Black Women Writers

African American Midwifery in the South

Why Not Me, the Story of Gladys Milton, Midwife

Listen To Me Good: The Story of an Alabama Midwife

La Partera: The Story of a Midwife

Reproductive Justice: An Introduction

Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty

The Doulas: Radical Care for Pregnant People

Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organizing for Reproductive Justice

A book on dealing with trauma:

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others

Websites:

<https://www.raceforward.org/>

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

<http://crackingthecodes.org/>

<http://www.birthforeverybody.org/>

Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable

12/18/13

by Ngọc Loan Trần

I started having conversations on this practice of “calling in” after attending Race Forward’s Facing Race Conference in Baltimore, MD in 2012. Facing Race was a gathering of thousands of people working on advancing racial justice. The space was full of energy, commitment, and a ride-or-die-and-put-it-all-on-the-line mentality for making sure we’ve got our bases covered in this fight against racism and dismantling white supremacy.

What happens when thousands of people who all “get it” come together and everyone knows something about “the work”? We lose all compassion for each other. All of it.

I witnessed all types of fucked up behavior and the culture that we have created to respond to said fucked up behavior.

Most of us know the drill. Someone says something that supports the oppression of another community, the red flags pop up and someone swoops in to call them out.

But what happens when that someone is a person we know — and love? What happens when we ourselves are *that* someone?

And what does it mean for our work to rely on how we have been programmed to punish people for their mistakes?

I’ll be the first person and the last person to say that anger is valid. Mistakes are mistakes; they deepen the wounds we carry. I know that for me when these mistakes are committed by people who I am in community with, it hurts even more. But these are people I care deeply about and want to see on the other side of the hurt, pain, and trauma: I am willing to offer compassion and patience as a way to build the road we are taking but have never seen before.

(continued below)

I don’t propose practicing “calling in” in opposition to calling out. I don’t think that our work has room for binary thinking and action. However, I do think that it’s possible to have multiple tools, strategies, and methods existing simultaneously. It’s about being strategic, weighing the stakes and figuring out what we’re trying to build and how we are going to do it together.

So, what exactly is “calling in”? I’ve spent over a year of trying to figure this out for myself, and this practice is still coming to me daily. The first part of calling each other in is allowing mistakes to happen. Mistakes in communities seeking justice and freedom may not hurt any less but they also have possibility for transforming the ways we build with each other for a new, better world. We have got to believe that we can transform.

When confronted with another person’s mistake, I often think about what makes my relationship with this person important. Is it that we’ve done work together before? Is it that I know their politics? Is it that I *trust* their politics? Are they a family member? Oh shit, my mom? Is it that I’ve heard them talk about patience or accountability or justice before? Where is our common ground? And is our common ground strong enough to carry us through how we have enacted violence on each other?

I start “call in” conversations by identifying the behavior and defining why I am choosing to engage with them. I prioritize my values and invite them to think about theirs and where we share them. And then we talk about it. We talk about it together, like people who genuinely care about each other. We offer patience and compassion to each other and also keep it real, ending the conversation when we need to and know that it wasn’t a loss to give it a try.

Because when I see problematic behavior from someone who is connected to me, who is committed to some of the things I am, I want to believe that it’s possible for us to move through and beyond whatever mistake was committed.

I picture “calling in” as a practice of pulling folks back in who have strayed from us. It means extending to ourselves the reality that we will and do fuck up, we stray and there will always be a chance for us to return. Calling in as a practice of loving each other enough to allow each other to make mistakes; a

practice of loving ourselves enough to know that what we're trying to do here is a radical unlearning of everything we have been configured to believe is normal.

And yes, we have been configured to believe it's normal to punish each other and ourselves without a way to reconcile hurt. We support this belief by shutting each other out, partly through justified anger and often because some parts of us believe that we can do this without people who fuck up.

But, holy shit! We fuck up. All of us. I've called out and been called out plenty of times. I have gotten on people ruthlessly for supporting and sustaining oppression and refusing to listen to me. People have gotten on me about speaking to oppressions that aren't mine, being superficial about inclusion, and throwing in communities I'm not a part of as buzzwords. But when we shut each other out we make clubs of people who are right and clubs of people who are wrong as if we are not more complex than that, as if we are all-knowing, as if we are perfect. But in reality, we are just really scared. Scared that we will be next to make a mistake. So we resort to pushing people out to distract ourselves from the inevitability that we will cause someone hurt.

And it is seriously draining. It is seriously heartbreaking. How we are treating each other is preventing us from actually creating what we need for ourselves. We are destroying each other. We need to do better for each other.

We have to let go of treating each other like not knowing, making mistakes, and saying the wrong thing make it impossible for us to ever do the right things.

And we have to remind ourselves that we once didn't know. There are infinitely many more things we have yet to know and may never know.

We have to let go of a politic of disposability. We are what we've got. No one can be left to their fuck ups and the shame that comes with them because ultimately we'll be leaving ourselves behind.

I want us to use love, compassion, and patience as tools for critical dialogue, fearless visioning, and transformation. I want us to use shared values and visions as proactive measures for securing our future freedom. I want us to be present and alive to see each other change in all of the intimate ways that we experience and enact violence.

I want our movements sustainable, angry, gentle, critical, loving — kicking ass and calling each other back in when we stray.

Ngọc Loan Trân is a Việt/mixed-race disabled queer writer grounded in the U.S South. Their work is about bold, fearless visioning that cuts through the nonsense to make real the freedom, justice and love we seek. You can read more of their work and writing at nloantran.com.