

Impact Summary

Gender and Sexually Expansive (2SLGBTQIA+) Change Lab

Where it Started & How It Evolved

The long-term relationships of Righting Relations members helped launch the Gender and Sexually Expansive (GSE) Change Lab. At first, it was an invitation to share QBIPOC experiences, but then it expanded to broader conversations about queerness. There was a wide range of representation in the group - folks who carried a lot of lived experience of violence that others related to.

"It was a gift to receive those stories. We have the precious responsibility to carry those stories and teachings to share how we experience the world in queerness."

So much intentional care and connection was incorporated into the group process, in spite of the short time the group had together. Listening, discussion, reflection, coming back together to take actions, and building – these were all heart-led and/or ceremony-led, which grounded the group to the physical world, even though meetings were over Zoom. For those who were able to gather in-person, it was natural to be together and came with a healing that was unanticipated due to the practices the group had cultivated together.

Impact

The Utopia Zine was the result of the Change Lab's time together, and how they wanted to carry the responsibility of honouring members' stories. The group curated the stories shared by members, then reflected on what they were learning from those stories. From there, they summarized and brought together their learnings into the zine.

"It was naturally spiritually nourishing. Part of it is that everybody's story is worthy of telling, and woven together, those stories are something we can capture in time and also carry in time."

"Getting unique and privileged access to stories that I might not have heard otherwise - that deepened my understanding of other ways or experiences of oppression, joy, and resilience."

Members emphasize the beauty and pervasiveness of queer gatherings of any kind. The strengths that Queer gatherings give to groups, projects, and fields is substantial and organic. The Queer way of doing things and being together "homey", easy, and comfortable. These are experiences which members shared they longed for in other parts of their lives.

Through the Change Lab, members felt better connected to Righting Relations (RR) and the way it works. Spending time with other RR members helped build relations and understand the goals and intentions of RR as a whole. As we know, putting names and stories to faces is a powerful connector.

"A lot of healing happened in those spaces and circles. I am welcome here, live my values, learn from others, and share my experiences with others."

Members gained confidence and a further sense of belonging during the in-person gathering, and carried that with them. Sometimes it can feel hard to belong in the wider network of RR, when there are many foci and different ways that people work together in different group dynamics. But the Change Lab experience connected members in meaningful ways to the broader network of RR.

"Going through the Change Lab really solidified the sense that I was in a place where I needed to be. I felt like I was meant to be here."

Overall, members shared that the Change Lab contributed to building towards a more hopeful future. The project, the tactile resources, and the connections – they are an exercise in hope in a time of extreme darkness for the Queer community.

"It does feel like a glowing amber in a pit of ashes."

"It brings hope knowing that we have all those relations available and that we can pick up and run together."

Learnings

Navigating trauma is a key piece of queer experiences. Members reflected on how they always carry trauma and joy at the same time. It felt powerful and healing to join all together and honour each other's gifts, even if everyone carries their own traumas.

The natural process for the group was to: 1) listen, and then 2) reflect. This was done four times to carry the bundle properly, smudge it, and then add it to the collective.

Where to Now?

The Zine was the major output of the Change Lab, which had ripple effects, as described above. Since then, the group have sought each other out in RR spaces and continued to focus on creating and collaborating together. There are many opportunities open for further connection, especially to do education, advocacy, and amplification. The impact of this Change Lab means more sustained action can be had, more sustained movement building, more sustained resource building.