



# Restoryation

NATIONAL DATA REPORT  
2024

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# Restoryation Gratitude

Restoryation was conceived in a moment and was meant to capture that moment. The shorthand name for the moment was “pandemic,” but that was code for the widespread suffering and disconnection caused not only by Covid-19, but also by unchecked racist violence, political polarization, and the felt and lived experiences of a world coming apart at the seams.

Since its beginning, Restoryation has been a project built on “yes.” In September 2021, I sent a simple question to a few colleague friends: does anyone want to find a way to get together in-person? Almost immediately, a few said yes. And I knew Vanessa Timmons was the right person to lead us. I am so grateful to Vanessa, Kate McCord, Angela Blount, Kelly Miller, Adam Stark, and Max Walsh for creating the origin story of Restoryation.

We imagined storytelling as the way forward and wondered if others would be interested. A broad invitation was sent to state and territory coalitions and many said yes. Without knowing exactly what Restoryation was, you said yes. So strong was the hunger for connection. Big thanks to the coalition teams from: Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Washington DC, and West Virginia. Your willingness to spend time, work hard, invest money, and wander into the unknown was the engine that drove Restoryation.



Hundreds of people, collectively known as “the workforce,” but also known for what you do (advocate, director, preventionist, etc.) and, more importantly, for who you are (survivor, BIPOC\*, LGBTQ+, etc.) said yes to participating in story circles. It is your stories, and the honesty, spontaneity, and artistry with which you shared them, that form the heart of Restoryation. Your tears, laughter, raw truths, and big love moved me in ways I did not know possible. Thank you.

Numerous state and federal funders were asked to support Restoryation and said yes. You have followed our work, heard periodic updates, and pledged to explore your roles in whatever comes next. I’m grateful for your strategic, trusting, and steadfast partnership.

Thank you, Dr. Cris Sullivan, for helping me think about an evaluation process for Restoryation. And thank you, Laurel Winsor, for the logistics and technology wizardry you have gifted before, during, and since Restoryation. You are two of my go-to yes people, and I’m grateful for that.

It has been an honor and a joy to be a part of the Restoryation “design and wisdom team.” We formed easily with little need to norm and good humor in the storm. Together, we have held every aspect of Restoryation, been spacious and gentle, and met every deadline nearly on time. The world knows you as Dr. Funmi Ayeni, Dr. Adam Farero, Dr. Gabriela López-Zerón, Vanessa Timmons, Kelly Miller, and Kate McCord. I know you, simply, as friends. For that, for your generous intelligence, for saying yes - deep and enduring thanks.

\*BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People of Color



Time and again, I have sat amazed and humbled in the presence of my extended BIPOC family. Restoryation was no different. The stories you shared - whether in BIPOC-only circles or in mixed circles - were both unique and achingly familiar. Collectively, we hold modernized versions of the old stories. Collectively, we know to bring forward the ancient. To you, I say yes. Kamsahamnida, gracias, salamat, thank you - for your warrior spirit, grace, openness, and loving pursuit of freedom. We shall not rest until it comes.

And, finally, I offer gratitude to the stories themselves. They brought Restoryation to life, connected the telling to the listening, and combined themselves into a long, rich story that is overdue and worthy.

From the start, Vanessa has said, “the story knows.” Yes, the story knows.

Nan Stoops  
Restoryation Design Team  
Washington



# Restoryation

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It started here...

# Long Story, Short

Across the country, advocates gathered in story circles to explore the impact of Covid-19 and our tumultuous times. Powerful stories emerged. We learned what is needed for our movement, the ways the pandemic is changing our work, and the impacts on survivors and families.

In 2023, twenty-four state coalitions created story circles with 885 advocates and service providers to (re)connect within themselves, with each other, and with the purpose and meaning of our daily work, prioritizing the lived experiences of BIPOC advocates and service providers.

We witnessed stories of individual and collective grief and depletion, for many deeply traumatic and complicated. We accompanied each other to begin to heal toward reclaiming purpose and the power of community. It was medicine.

We broke the isolation of silence of the shared pain and trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic. We discovered healing and connection. We practiced being whole and grounded, even as the ground shifted.

There was an opportunity for innovation and adaptation toward ways of being that embodied wholeness and thriving. We rapidly shifted to remote and flexible work models, wages increased. Innovative practices were abundant.

Collectively, we found a way forward. Advocates and service providers want to live and work at the same time. Therein lies the key to our long-term sustainability. It's as simple as that.

Restorying is a guidepost for our continued evolution in this work, evolution in which we must be actors rather than observers, creators rather than subjects, and leader-warriors rather than victims. We hope that sexual and domestic violence workers, policymakers, funders, community partners, and the movers and shakers of public opinion will work together to craft stories of tomorrow.





# Restoryation

THE PROCESS



# Restoryation

## Why We Gathered

In the Fall of 2021, a small group of movement advocates gathered in Seattle, Washington to tell our stories and make sense of our complex times. The pandemic had just begun to lessen its isolating grip, and the story of its impact was emerging. We shared stories of unprecedented homelessness in our communities, community violence, workforce fatigue, systemwide strains on capacity, and high turnover at every level.

As we listened to and held each story, questions began to form about what possibilities might emerge if other advocates could tell their stories. This early storytelling circle paved the way for the national Restoryation project, which was adopted and led by domestic violence coalitions in 24 states and territories across the United States.

We gathered around the circle of Restoryation to ask ourselves what is needed for our movement, to explore ways the pandemic is changing our work, and to understand how the changing landscape impacts the needs of survivors and their families.

While this is not our whole story, it is a snapshot of a moment. It was a moment when we gathered together to tell the stories shaping us and to choose a way forward together.



# Restoryation

## How We Gathered

The Restoryation Design Team designed Restoryation to explore the impact of Covid-19 and the emerging needs of the anti-violence field. We invited anti-violence advocates and prevention specialists from the domestic and sexual violence field. Twenty-four states and territories answered the call.

We gathered the story circle facilitators, listening and learning together how to best hold meaningful discussions in each community. The facilitators thoughtfully crafted story circles that included art, music, nourishing food, movement, breathing, and deep listening.

Powerful stories emerged.

As the Design Team envisioned Restoryation's impact on "workforce health and sustainability," we understood

that stories alone would not drive change in workplace practices. We needed data.

And so, we decided to add an evaluation component and conduct the evaluation in a manner consistent with the spirit of Restoryation. Dr. Cris Sullivan helped develop an evaluation methodology and tools, and Drs. Oyesola (Funmi) Ayeni, Gabriela López-Zerón, and Adam Farero worked with the Design Team to collect the data and use it for sense-making and imagining a collective path forward.

As the evaluation process unfolded, we came to see it less as evaluation and more as elder witnessing and wisdom. The data took on a multi-dimensional life, and it is no coincidence that our BIPOC wisdom team of data experts unearthed the stories both told and untold by the numbers.



# Restoryation

## What We Gathered

The Restoryation story circles provided a rich opportunity for participants to reflect on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their work. To capture the diverse experiences and insights of participants, we implemented a multi-phase data collection process, including pre-event, reflection, and post-event surveys, while honoring the storytelling processing without interference. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Michigan State University to guide the implementation of this project.

### SYSTEMATIC DOCUMENTATION OF REFLECTIONS AND STORIES

**Pre-event Survey:** Before the story circles, participants completed a survey as part of the registration process. This survey gathered specific socio-demographic information about the participants and their work.

**Reflection Survey:** During the story circles, participants filled out a reflection survey. This survey was designed to capture the personal and professional impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on participants. It provided a crucial snapshot of the challenges and changes experienced during this unprecedented time.

**Post-event Survey:** At the conclusion of the story circles, participants were asked to complete a post-event survey. This survey collected feedback on their experiences during the gathering, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of the story circles themselves.



**Sticky Notes:** During the story circles, participants were invited to identify and share their top needs to move forward, both personally and professionally. Each participant jotted down their most pressing needs on sticky notes, which were then collected by the Data Team. To manage and analyze this data, the Data Team focused on a sub-sample of sticky notes from Washington and Virginia, categorizing individual reflections into a structured coding system that encapsulates the diverse and complex needs expressed by participants. The proposed coding structure was then shared with representatives from other participating states. Our intent was to provide a robust framework that could be used to analyze state-level data consistently and effectively.

**Follow-Up Interviews:** Follow-up interviews were conducted with story circle participants in Washington and Virginia. These interviews aimed to gather more in-depth reflections about the story circles, document participants' reflections about their work, and better understand their ongoing needs. The interviews provided a deeper qualitative layer to the data from two regions of the country, enriching our understanding of story circle participants' experiences.

## SENSE-MAKING SESSIONS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The Data and Design Teams led several sense-making sessions to organize and analyze the collected data. One pivotal session was held in Seattle in September 2023, where preliminary data was shared with participating states and territories. This session not only informed the direction of our analysis but also ensured that the insights and feedback from participants themselves guided the interpretation of the data.



Together, we made a deliberate decision to highlight the stories from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) participants. While the term BIPOC is an imperfect label that groups together diverse cultures and perspectives, with distinct histories, challenges, and needs, it is crucial in this context to acknowledge the shared experience of marginalization that BIPOC advocates often face. By centering their narratives, we aim to bring attention to the unique challenges and strength of BIPOC participants, fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of the field.

Throughout this data report, we continually lift up the experiences and narratives from BIPOC participants in the story circles. Their voices are essential to understanding the full scope of the challenges faced by domestic violence and sexual assault survivor advocates and the systemic changes needed to support them effectively.



## Restoryation

# Who We Are: Design Team

The **Restoryation Design Team** is comprised of four current and former coalition staff with decades of experience working in the movement to end gender-based violence:

**Nan Stoops** (she/her) has worked in the anti-violence movement as an advocate and organizer for more than 40 years. Currently, she is the Strategic Advisor at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV), where she served as the Executive Director for 17 years. Nan is a founding member of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and she has served on numerous boards and advisory groups. She received the 2010 Seattle Girls' School Grace Hopper Award and was named as one of the Seattle Storm Inspiring Women in 2018. For balance, Nan relies on her family, baseball, and movies (usually in that order).

**Vanessa Timmons** (she/her) is a trauma coach and consultant who has been a non-profit leader, leadership and organizational change consultant, and anti-violence advocate for over 35 years. She attended Marylhurst University's Multidisciplinary Studies Program in Portland, Oregon. Committed to life-learning she has continued her education through certificates and training, including the Interpersonal Neurobiology of Trauma Certification Program at Portland State University.

**Kelly Miller** (she/her) recently completed her tenure with the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence in a shared collective stewardship model. Over the last fourteen years in leadership, Kelly has integrated organizational policies and practices centered on our beingness. Our beingness matters. Her work in the anti-violence movement has been enriched by many – beloved family, empowered survivors, and extraordinary colleagues. Following her departure from the Idaho Coalition in September after nineteen years, Kelly will be fully immersed in Collective Acceleration to evolve and become the humans these times and the universe requires of us.



Restoryation

## Who We Are: Design Team

**Kate McCord** (she/they) adores her family, reveling in bodies of water, the smell of orange blossoms, and the hum of cicadas in the summer. She sees the ancient ritual of story circles as sacred work in bearing witness, nurturing belonging, and cultivating community care and wholeness. Kate is especially drawn to art as narrative and political practice, discovering new ways to foster compassion, and dreaming up futures in which we all thrive. Kate has been in the movement to end sexual and domestic violence since finding her passion for the work at the age of 19 and is currently Associate Director of the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.





## Restoryation

# Who We Are: Data Team

The **Restoryation Data Team** is comprised of three dedicated researchers with extensive experience in working with gender-based violence survivors and advocates:

**Gabriela López-Zerón, PhD, LMFT** (ella/she/her) is a bilingual bicultural applied researcher and mental health therapist dedicated to supporting survivors of gender-based violence. As an advocate for culturally-responsive and community-engaged research and practice grounded in language justice, Dr. López-Zerón's work focuses on the impact of support services and interventions for survivors, particularly among immigrant Latine communities. Driven by a belief that inclusive and equity-focused approaches can catalyze meaningful change, she is committed to advancing individual and collective healing journeys, fostering resilience, and promoting a more inclusive and equitable world for all survivors.

**Oyesola Oluwafunmilayo Ayeni, PhD** (Black; she/her) is an applied researcher, community-engaged evaluator, educator, and organizational learning expert. Her work is dedicated to employing community-grounded and culturally-relevant equity methods to highlight the unique experiences of individuals and communities impacted by gender-based violence, especially those from historically and systematically marginalized groups. Additionally, Dr. Ayeni's work examines the effectiveness and impact of survivor-centered programs and community interventions, providing data-driven insights that inform the development of holistic support systems for diverse survivors. Dr. Ayeni's work is rooted in her passion for investing in the liberation of all survivors through a trauma-informed lens.



Restoryation

## Who We Are: Data Team

**Adam Farero, PhD, LMFT** (he/him) is a collaborative researcher and practicing marriage and family therapist in Michigan. His work centers on resilience and posttraumatic growth in underserved communities, employing methods that reveal real world-truths and drive meaningful change. Dr. Farero is committed to designing studies and measures that tackle significant questions, with the goal of making the world a better place. His strength-based approach to both research and therapy focuses on harnessing strength and resilience in the face of trauma, oppression, and injustice. He is passionate about collaborating with like-minded individuals who are dedicated to creating a better world for us all.



Story Circle  
Participant  
Demographics

# Race & Ethnicity

A total of 885 domestic and sexual violence service providers completed the initial Restoryation survey. Nearly 42% of the story circle participants identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), including Latinx (n = 116; 13.3%), African American/African (n = 105; 12%), Multi-racial (n = 71; 8.1%), Asian/Asian-American (n = 36; 4.2%), Native Hawaiian (n = 22; 2.5%), Native American (n = 14; 1.6%), and Middle Eastern (n = 1; <1%). 58.2% (n=508) of the participants self-identified as white (n = 508; 58.2%).



**WHITE**

58.2%

**BIPOC**

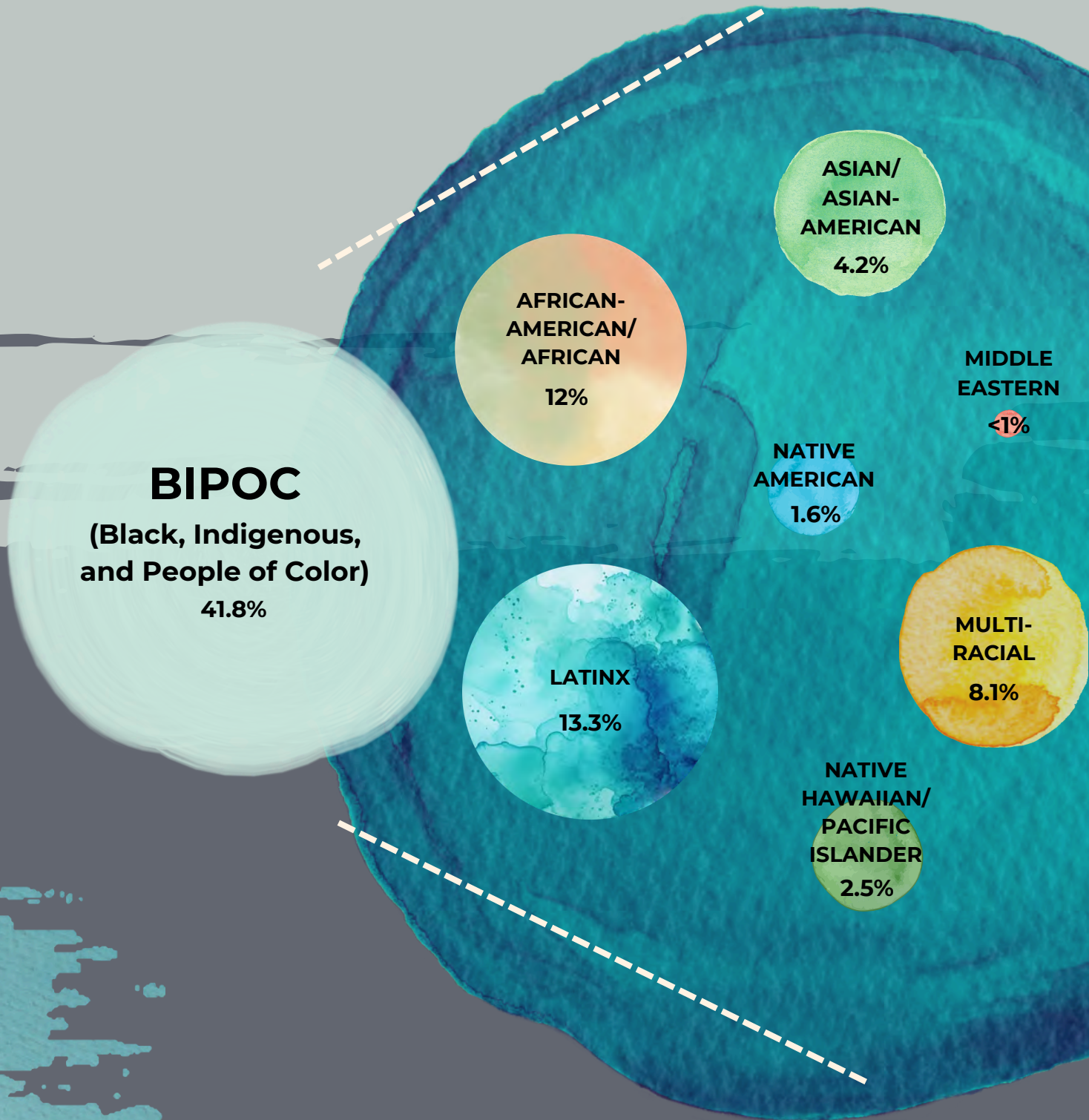
**(Black, Indigenous,  
and People of Color)**

41.8%

*Me gusta mi trabajo y me apasiona poder seguir ayudando a las personas que lo necesitan en específico poder proveer los servicios en nuestro idioma a las comunidades más vulnerables.*

*I like my job and I am passionate about continuing to help those in need, specifically by providing services in our language to the most vulnerable communities.*

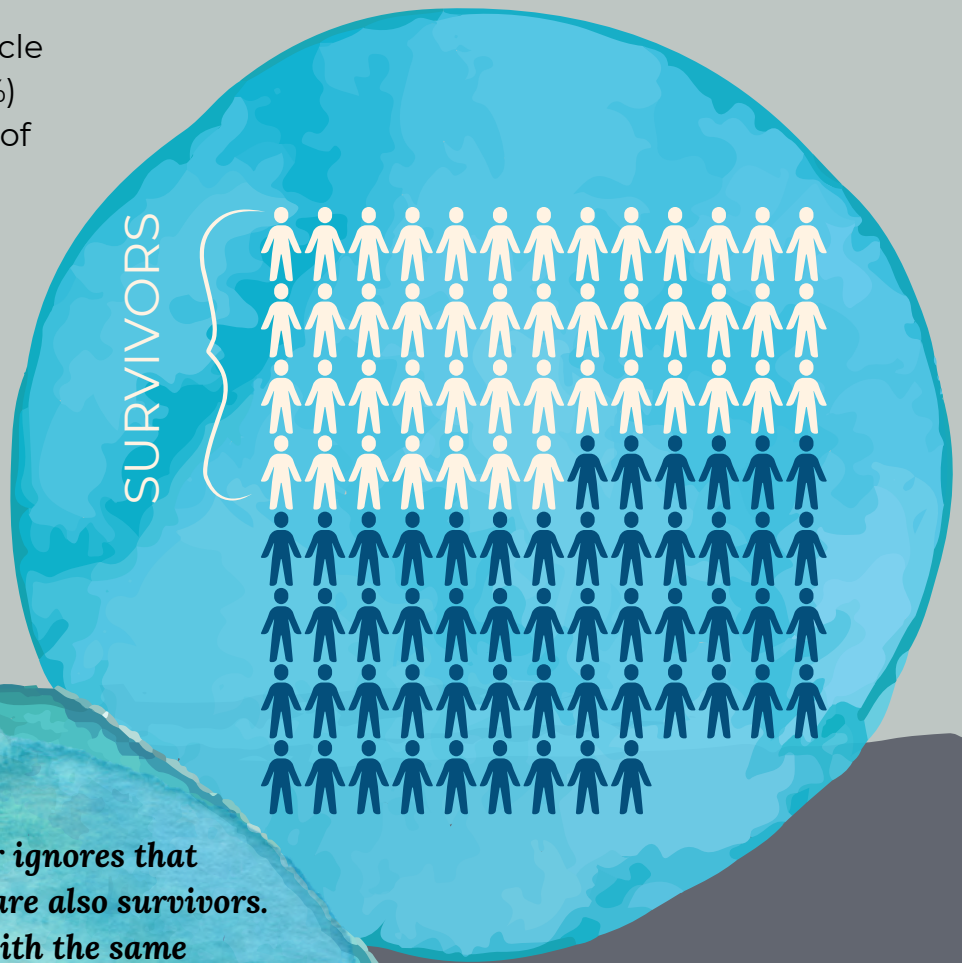
I am so grateful to have been a part of this opportunity and space. Being with other people of color who are able to relate to my unique experiences matters and is connected to the work we do.



# Survivorship Status

Almost half of the story circle participants (n = 401; 45.5%) self-identified as survivors of gender-based violence.

Of those participants who were survivors, many talk about their survivorship publicly as a way to educate and connect with others (n = 231; 57.8%).



***The movement forgets or ignores that a large number of advocates are also survivors.***

***We need to be treated with the same principles of equality, safety, dignity, agency, and trauma informed actions.***

*Start by believing advocates when they say they are overworked and underpaid.*

*Don't shame us when we ask for a pay raise.*

*Listen to our voices. Stop power dynamics and hierarchies within agencies.*

*Do not pile on more and more work.*

*Give us more time to reflect and rest during our work day. We need more options of supervision with counselors and therapists to work through our secondary trauma.*

*I stay in this field because I truly feel it is my calling, helping other survivors to grow into the individuals they would have always been if not for the abuse.*

*I feel that this field will always unfortunately need advocates to go out into the community, speak with lawmakers and to develop better plans of services to truly holistically help survivors.*

***My goal is to always be the advocate I never had.***

***I don't think there is another field or movement that I feel as passionate about as IPV.***

*I know my passion drives my work, and makes a big difference in my capacity and motivation.*

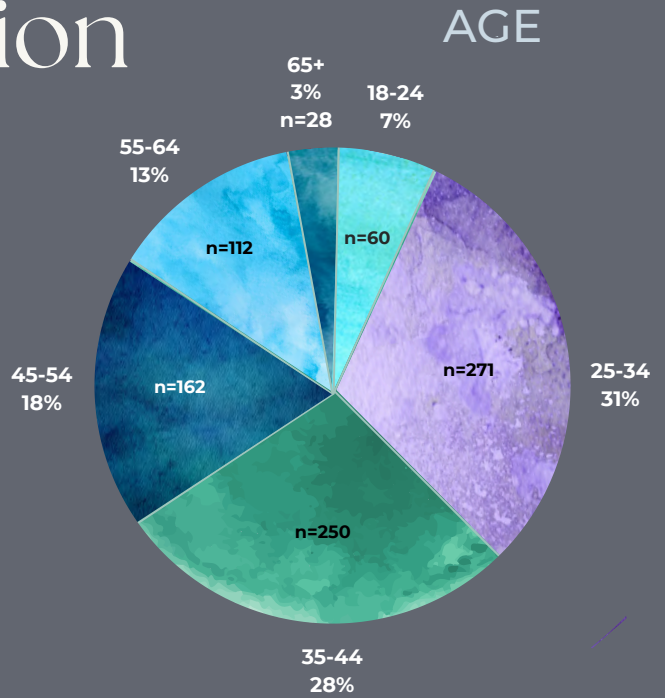
***But I am also burnt out and frequently struggle with reminders from my own trauma.***

# Age, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

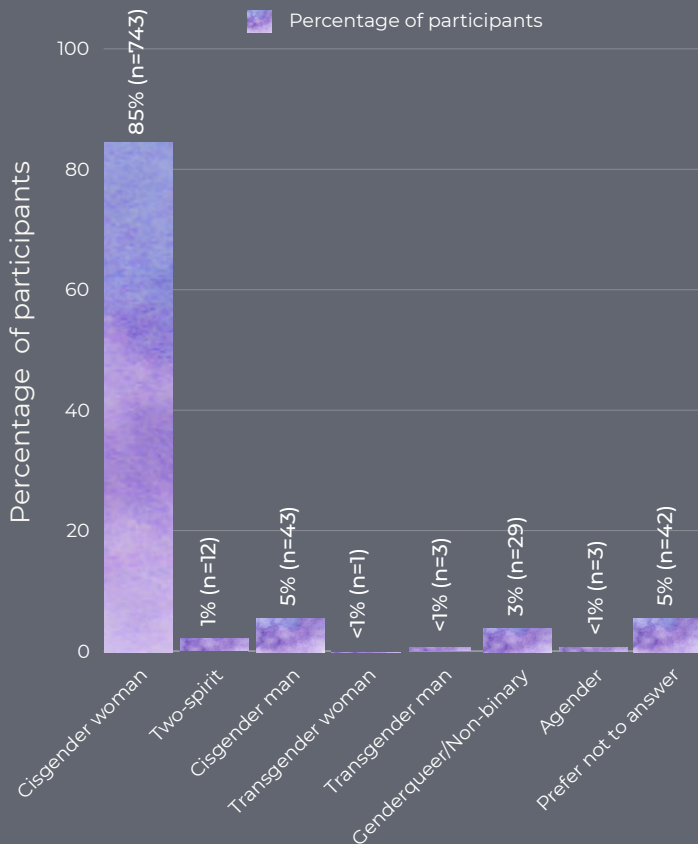
About half of story circle participants were between 35 and 54 years old, while 37.5% were between 18 and 34 years old and the rest were above than 55 years old.

The majority of participants (85%) were cisgender women.

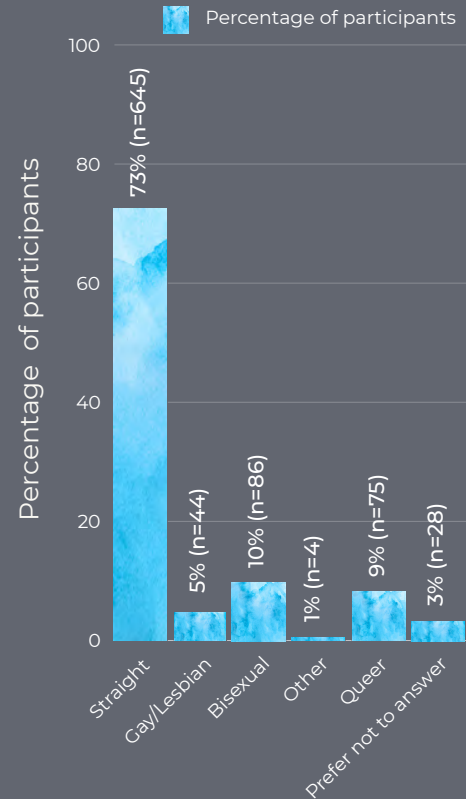
About three quarters of story circle participants (73%) reported their sexual orientation as straight. See figures here for full information.



## GENDER



## SEXUAL ORIENTATION





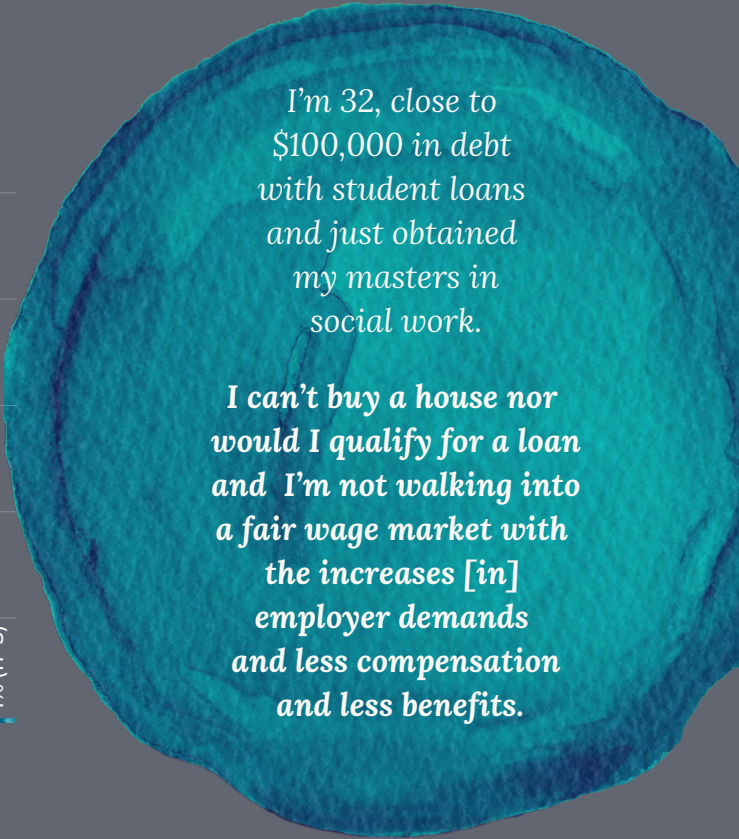
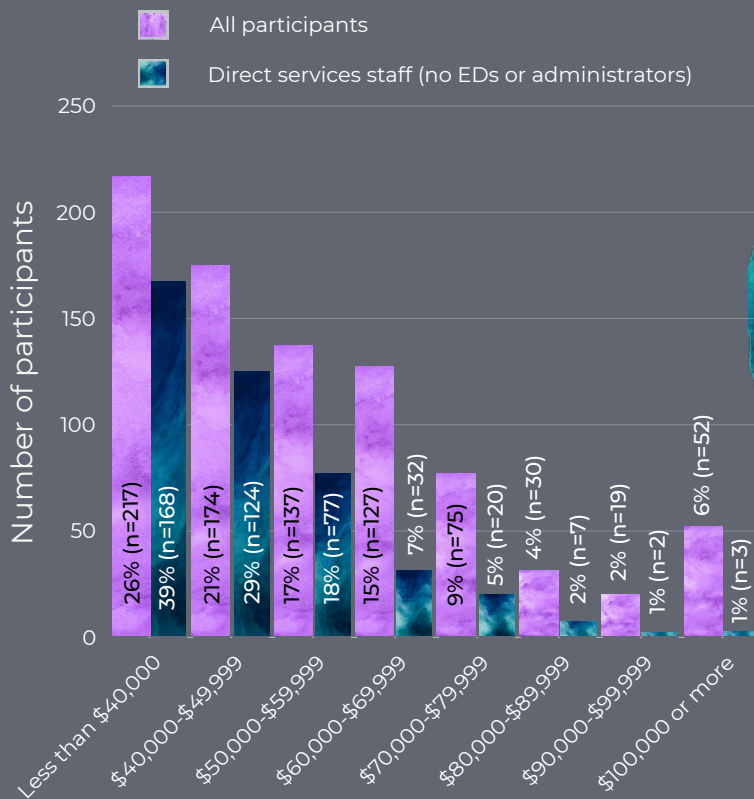
# Income & Type of Organization

Story circle participants overall reported their annual salary as follows: less than \$40,000 (26.1%, n=217), between \$40,000 - \$49,999 (20.9%, n=174), \$50,000 - \$59,999 (16.5%, n=137), \$60,000 - \$69,999 (15.3%, n=127), \$70,000 - \$79,999 (9%, n=75), \$80,000 - \$89,999 (3.6%, n=30), \$90,000 - \$99,999 (2.3%, n=19), and \$100,000 or higher (6.3%, n=52).

Direct services staff (subtracting workers who identified their role as executive directors (EDs) or administrators from the data) made lower salaries more frequently as compared with all participants. 67% of direct services staff reported making less than \$50,000 per year at their agencies.

The Living Wage Calculator from Massachusetts Institute of Technology indicates the living wage rates across the U.S.: <https://livingwage.mit.edu>.

## ANNUAL SALARY



Participants identified their organization as a victim services provider (n = 342; 38.7%), state/territory coalition (n = 194; 21.9%), community/social justice organization (n = 147; 16.6%), multi-service agency (n = 140; 15.8%), and legal service agency (n = 40; 4.5%).

Additionally, almost half of the participants indicated that their organization focused on domestic violence and sexual assault, including child sexual abuse (n = 427; 48.2%). The remaining participants reported their organization's focus as domestic violence (n = 339; 38.3%), all crime victims (n = 84; 9.5%), sexual assault (n = 25, 2.8%), human trafficking and child welfare (n= 6, <1%).

# Tenure in the Movement

Most of the story circle participants worked directly with survivors as part of their role (n = 636; 72.3%).

The number of years participants have spent working with or for survivors of gender-based violence ranged from shorter than one year to 50 years, with an average of 8.9 years.

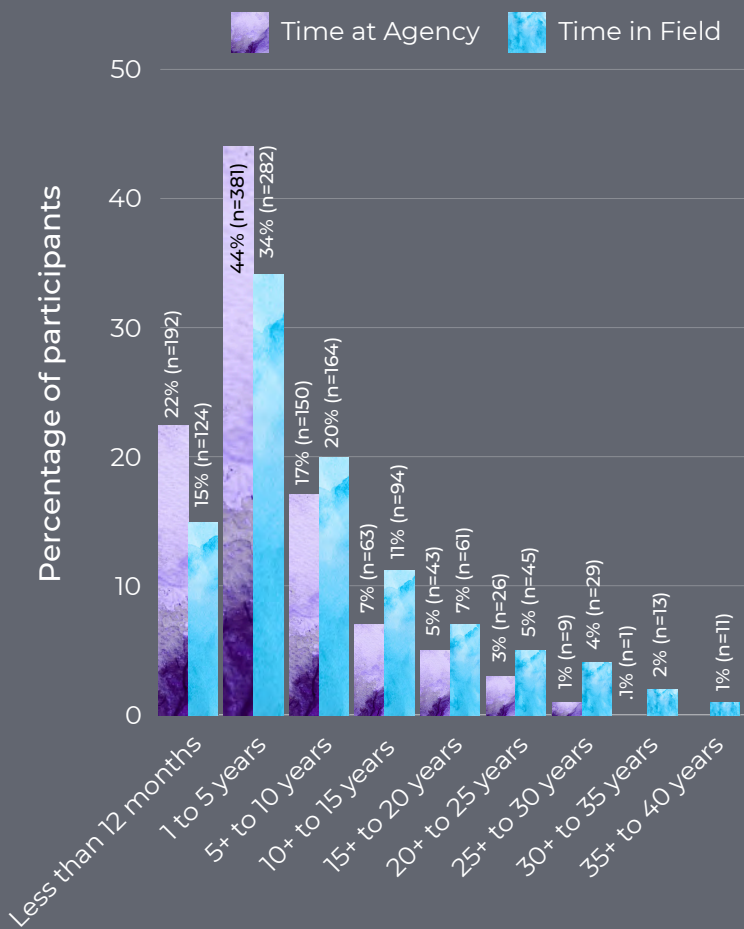
The number of years working at their agency ranged from less than one to 32 years, with an average of 5.4 years. On average, most participants worked 40 or more hours per week (n = 689; 78.1%).

The remaining participants worked between 20 and 39 hours per week (n = 168; 19%) and less than 20 hours per week (n = 13; 1.5%).

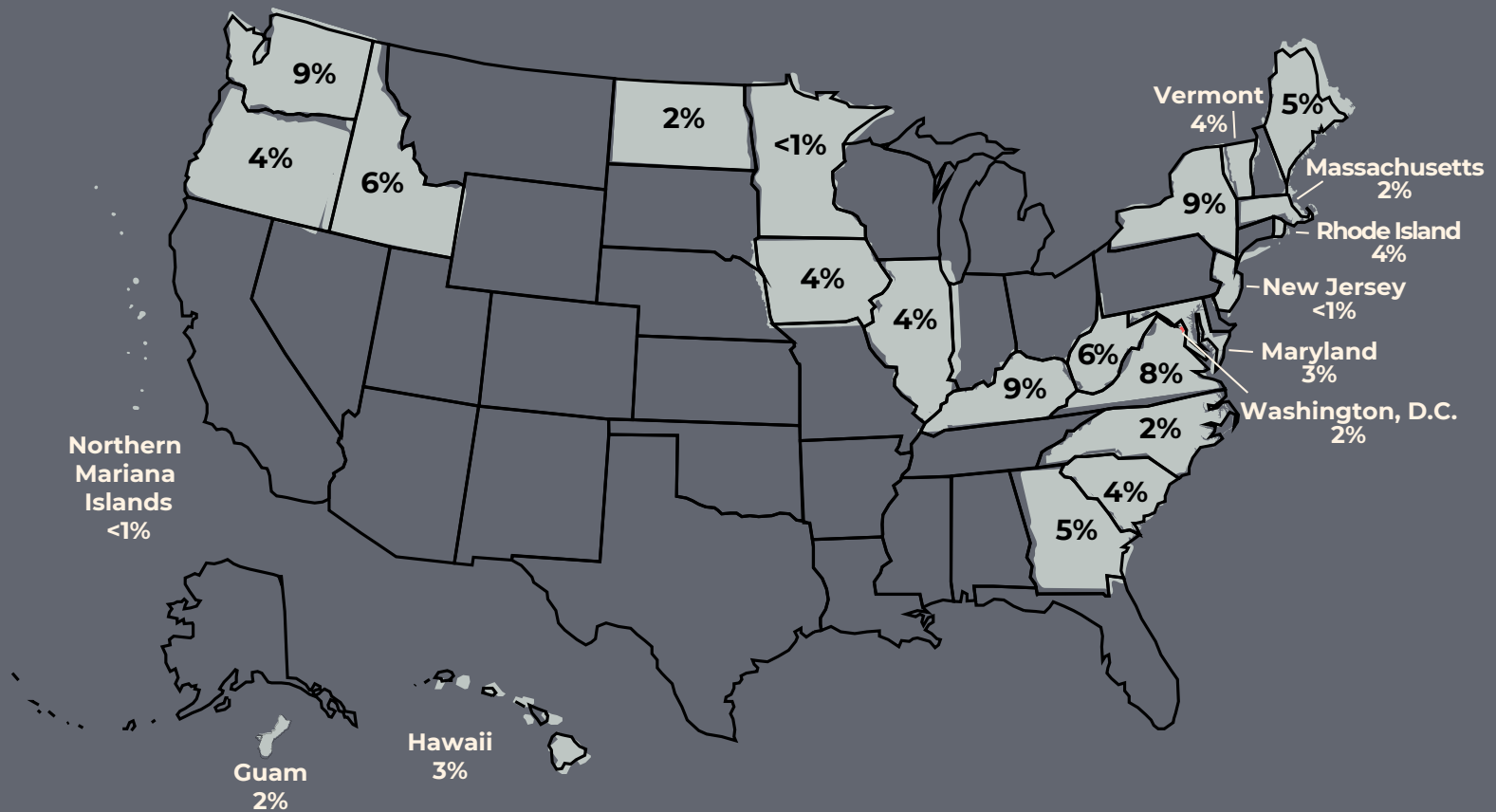
*I am connected to this work that I do because of my generational family history with domestic violence and sexual assault. I am here to serve survivors and to work to end violence. I have moved positions and agencies previously so I can keep doing this work in different ways, and I am extremely fulfilled by this work.*

***I have worked in this field in multiple ways across the course of a decade specifically to prevent my own burnout because working with survivors is the most fulfilling thing I have ever done.***

*My family has its own generational history with power-based personal violence, and I feel very strongly about participating in the movement to end such violence.*



# Participating States & Territories



## WORKERS FROM 24 STATES & TERRITORIES PARTICIPATED\*

Georgia	(n = 63)	New York	(n = 107)
Guam	(n = 26)	North Carolina	(n = 24)
Hawaii	(n = 39)	North Dakota	(n = 18)
Idaho	(n = 74)	Northern Mariana Islands	(n = 6)
Illinois	(n = 44)	Oregon	(n = 43)
Iowa	(n = 50)	Rhode Island	(n = 42)
Kentucky	(n = 103)	South Carolina	(n = 46)
Maine	(n = 62)	Vermont	(n = 49)
Maryland	(n = 39)	Virginia	(n = 97)
Massachusetts	(n = 17)	Washington	(n = 109)
Minnesota	(n = 1)	Washington D.C.	(n = 23)
New Jersey	(n = 1)	West Virginia	(n = 74)

\* For each state and territory the total number of participants across all waves of data collection are indicated above, while for any individual item the number of individuals who answered the item may be less than the number indicated here.

# Visual Storytelling

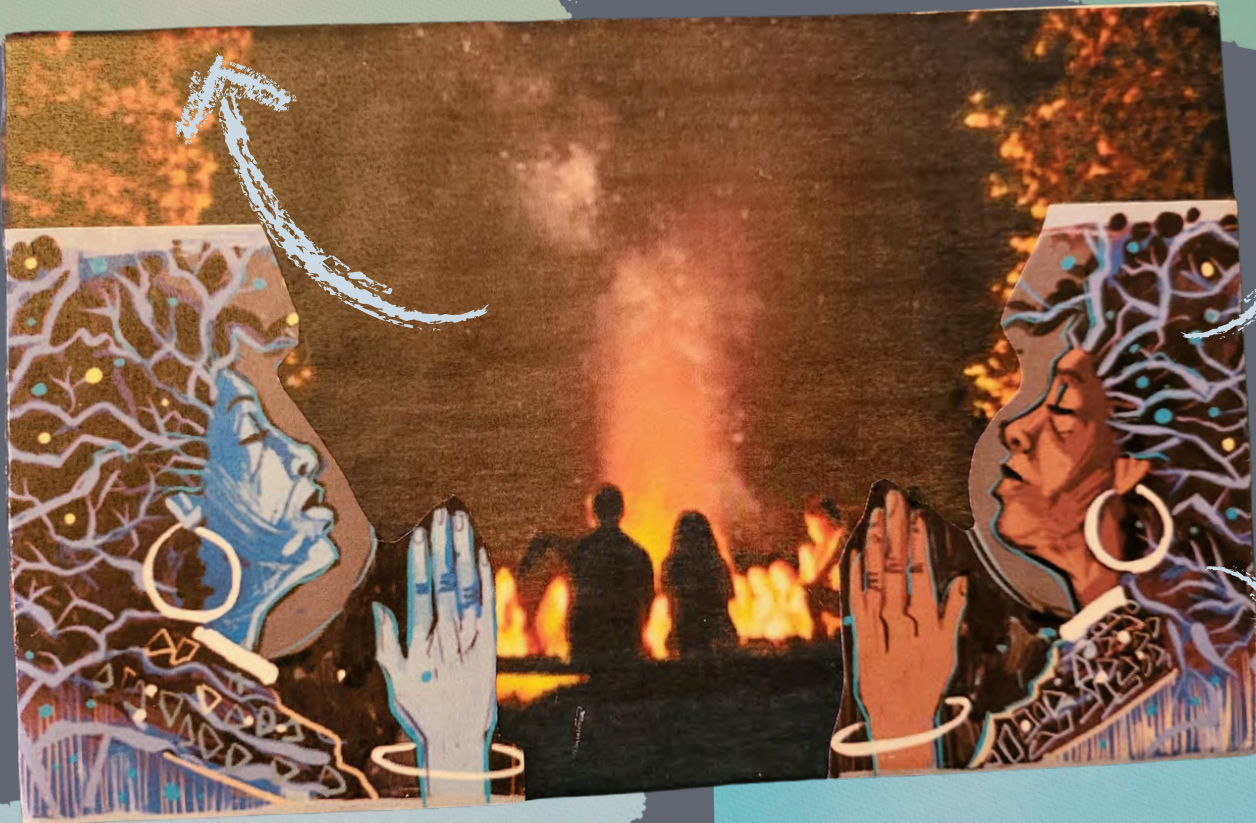
Visual journaling is similar to written journaling; it is a way to explore and express our stories. The act of collage and drawing allowed the circle participants to see what was abstract in graphic form.

The texts included next to each collage are quotes from the artist, describing their collage.

“There’s a sense of connection and healing and becoming more empowered because we are together.”  
--BIPOC Restoryation facilitator and creator of this collage

The first image I found was the people around the fire and it **reminded me of healing and connection.**

In the very beginning of this project we just gathered, and experienced the energy of the gathering. **That is still what is needed: to stay connected, to stay around the circle.**



**Our solutions and our healing are in our ability to connect with one another and to hold one another in a way that tells us we can do hard things together.**

**The women represent elders who are here who know the way. As we gather, they gather.**

The chain is about connection...but **there's a brokenness right now** that I'm dealing with.

“ We can do so many powerful things. But the fight is to also stay together. ”  
--BIPOC Restoryation facilitator and creator of this collage



Funding scarcity means fighting to secure the bag. There's so many nonprofits trying to apply for the same funding because they're also seeing cuts in charitable giving.

How do we structure things so we're not fighting for resources. How do we build sustainability? We have to repair the system that we have been bequeathed.

This poem speaks to what the work can be... if we work together.

“ What I want for all of us is to have the joy of doing the work, even though the work is hard. ”

--BIPOC Restoryation facilitator and creator of this collage

During the pandemic there was a at least an **attempt to actually see the past for the harms that it caused,** and as a way to move forward...

She looks **so happy and connected with nature...and no stress.** That's what I want for all of us...to have the joy of doing the work, even though the work is hard.



The penguins are **together, looking at the challenge ahead.** I interpreted it as a desire to like move together, to face those challenges.

We have **lower capacity because of the loss of talent and wisdom,** so I'm really grieving those things.

We've had **so much turnover at the organization that the culture has shifted significantly.** We try to be open to the fact that maybe what we create together will be better.

“ I thought of how story circle participants connected. That's where beloved community came in. ”

--BIPOC Restoryation facilitator and creator of this collage

“Deep in the woods lies what once was a tall, mighty tree” is **symbolic of survivorhood.**

**Our time together was symbolic of peace.**  
A reconnection to nature.

The “do not disturb”: that is **giving permission** to take an hour in your day to be still and undisturbed.



She represents my ongoing emphasis of striving to **reflect, represent, and empower little girls of color.**

You can see the theme of love popping up, and that's self-love, community love.  
**With the world being so dark, we have to continue to shine love.**

“ The common denominator  
is togetherness,  
having a joyful life. ”

--BIPOC Restoryation  
facilitator and creator  
of this collage



“

It says “I woke up on the bright side.”

The **common denominator is togetherness, having a joyful life.**

And I just found those words that came very quickly.

I put them together and **I realized for myself, it's not how much you say, it's about what you say.**

And some of **the small things that you say can have a big impact.**

And I feel like to me, this speaks to **having good energy.**

I'm optimistic.

”





# Emerging Theme:

## GRIEF & DEPLETION

Throughout the “active”  
pandemic I did not experience  
upped levels of anxiety.

Now that the pandemic is  
“over” my anxiety has  
increased exponentially.

The incongruous messaging of  
“All is well now” vs. my body’s  
need to process WTF just/is  
still happening is putting my  
anxiety over the top.

Restoryation Participant



## Restoryation

# Grief & Depletion: Introduction

Like trauma, grief is both personal and complicated. Even when the loss is a collective one, the fallout of grief is a singularly unique experience, etching itself on our psyches in varying patterns and depths. Grief manifests in ways that are as distinct as a poem written from one soul to another.

To metabolize it, grief requires us to pause, reflect, and honor the loss. As advocates responding to the needs of survivors of sexual and domestic violence, we were first responders in the catastrophe of a global pandemic. The luxury of spaciousness and the opportunity to heal were simply not available to us during the height of Covid.

Within the story circles, we bore witness to deep loss: beloveds who had passed without the opportunity to say goodbye or to mark their transition with ceremony. We held stories of collective loss around the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many other vibrant lives extinguished at the hands of police.

We heard the heartbreak of losing faith when many of our neighbors abandoned basic principles of decency and collective care by refusing to simply wear a mask to save lives.

My teacher, Vanessa Timmons, says “We need accompaniment through grief to heal.” As advocates, we know the simple act of being present, of bearing witness and walking alongside a survivor is powerful. The same holds true for us as advocates; we are all survivors of deep loss now, even if we weren’t before.

Advocates arrived at the story circles at first wary about this unfamiliar process of storytelling, but soon realized it felt as if they had been holding their breath for 2 years. They were ready to exhale. It was a relief to be in community, to share our sorrows and joys, to be seen and heard.

It was medicine.

Kate McCord  
Restoryation Design Team  
Virginia

# Grief and Depletion

In the story circles, Restoryation participants shared a collective story of grief and depletion, underscoring the profound challenges they faced during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighting the urgent need for systemic support and resources to address the pervasive hardship experienced by the workforce.

## A STORY OF BEING STRETCHED THIN

Domestic violence and sexual assault survivor advocates found themselves grappling with overwhelming demands and insufficient support and resources. The sentiment of being stretched thin was palpable, as multiple story circle participants shared:

*The **demand is so high even when I delegate or ask for assistance, I can not meet the needs** of clients, staff and community partners.*

*I am **feeling overall burnout** and a lack of organization and direction. I can do tasks when they are directly in front of me but I am **struggling with long term planning and being creative.***

*I feel like **we are asked to do more & people struggle with providing space & time** to do what they are asking us to do. Volume of email keeps increasing.*

*I am dragging...I am **extremely tired because the work load has gotten heavier** and isn't seeming to let up.*

## HIGH TURNOVER AND BURNOUT

The aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic further compounded these challenges, casting a shadow of collective pain over an already burdened workforce, as one participant reflected:

*The work is always hard and knowing survivors are experiencing job loss, childcare issues, housing needs, etc., as the direct result of the pandemic, adding to an **overextended caseload for our team and network of advocates.***

Amidst this environment, this constant inundation with tasks and responsibilities left workers feeling overwhelmed and undervalued. Two advocates shared:

*I feel that **the work I did during Covid was not valued or respected by funders...** It made it clear to me that working in an SV [sexual violence] non-profit org is not the best thing for those who care about being trauma responsive.*

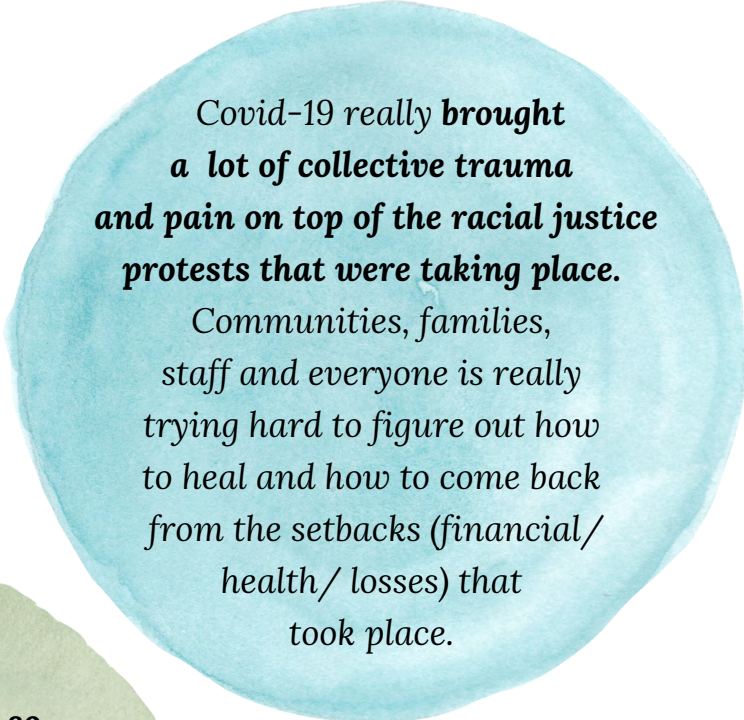
*People burned out quickly due to the intensity of their work... We also **are not paying people enough to make them feel appreciated** or like this is a lifelong career.*

*The level of knowledge of remaining and new staff at member orgs is very basic. **Building everything back from the ground up feels overwhelming** and like we have taken a huge step back.*

This sentiment was echoed by others who expressed frustration with the monumental task of rebuilding while experiencing high turnover and burnout.

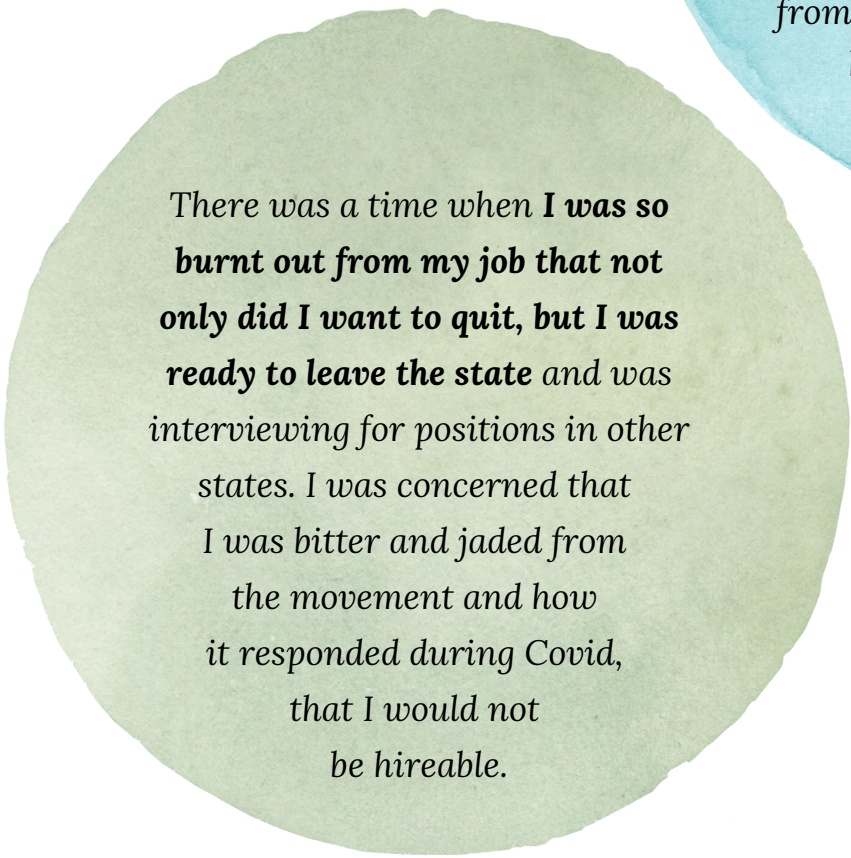
## ILLUMINATING WORSENING DISPARITIES

The pandemic not only exacerbated existing disparities but also highlighted the systemic inadequacies and barriers that workers faced in their efforts to provide support and care, particularly among BIPOC staff, as two BIPOC participants expressed:



*Covid-19 really **brought a lot of collective trauma and pain on top of the racial justice protests that were taking place.***

*Communities, families, staff and everyone is really trying hard to figure out how to heal and how to come back from the setbacks (financial/health/ losses) that took place.*



*There was a time when **I was so burnt out from my job that not only did I want to quit, but I was ready to leave the state** and was interviewing for positions in other states. I was concerned that I was bitter and jaded from the movement and how it responded during Covid, that I would not be hireable.*

# IMPACTS ON MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH


The toll on mental and physical health was profound as workers navigated the intersection of personal struggles and professional demands. Story circle participants revealed feeling a deep sense of physical and emotional depletion, as multiple direct service advocates explained:

*My **physical energy is much less than it was before the pandemic.***

*The pandemic took its toll on me physically... I have less energy, I have gained weight. I have had increased depression and anxiety.*

### PHYSICAL HEALTH


4 in 10 participants said their physical health is worse since the pandemic



When reflecting on their own physical and mental health, over 40% of participants said that their physical health is worse now than it was before the pandemic (40.6%, n = 452).

### MENTAL HEALTH

4 in 10 participants said their mental health is worse since the pandemic



Nearly 42% of participants reported their mental health is worse now than it was before the pandemic (41.8%, n = 461).

*The pandemic has had such an enormous impact on my mental health and well-being and it's really spilling over into my work.*

**I'm not doing well emotionally or mentally.**

# Grief & Depletion Collage

“ There was an instant connection of personal grief that we had in doing the art together. ”

--Restoryation participant  
and creator of this collage

The picture represents the way that grief flows through all of it, the gold swoosh. Parts of the grief explode when you least expect it and all around us are little dots of mini explosions waiting to happen.

Most of the time, the personal grief was very intertwined with organizational grief. Perhaps illustrating how complex it is that we are working in organizations from a multitude of different personal experiences.

Waves of grief are sometimes sharp like the blue purple ones. Sometimes waves are smaller and swirly, but the gist of it is, grief comes in waves.





The realities of climate change,  
backlash of white  
supremacy tactics that  
are undermining democracy,  
trust in institutions,  
targeting of BIPOC  
communities, the rise  
in anti-semitism -  
all affect my worries  
for my children,  
our communities,  
our hope for the future.

Restoryation Participant

## EXACERBATING CONDITIONS

The mental depletion experienced by advocates was heightened by the experience of financial and economic hardships resulting from the pandemic. Story circle participants discussed their anxieties and concerns related to the rising costs of living:

***Inflation and financial instability has made me more anxious about being able to achieve my goals like owning my own home, being debt free, retiring with financial stability at 65 years old. It feels like we are working to survive. It is impossible to thrive financially and thus mentally.***

***I also feel more financial and economic anxiety about myself and survivors, even now as food prices are so high.***

This depletion was exacerbated by the relentless nature of the work, leaving workers feeling drained and exhausted. Story circle participants shared their experiences and reflections:

***I'm exhausted. I lived and worked through the pandemic... I suffered my own losses, endured my own struggles all while directly working with survivors and managing folks...***

***I am exhausted to the core of my being. I've found some better ways to cope with this but I can't sustain my current work load unless we can hire more help... I feel stuck and overwhelmed most of the time.***

Again, survey responses validated these experiences and showed potentially how widespread these sentiments are felt. Specifically, 39.4% (n = 433) of participants indicated that the impact of Covid-19 had them feeling more anxious about their work. Additionally, 40.5% (n = 441) also indicated feeling less energized about their work due to the impact of Covid-19.

## CONVERGING IMPACTS

In addition to work-related trauma and strain, the broader socio-political tensions and worsening environmental changes during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic took a significant toll on the mental health and overall well-being of advocates. Story circle participants described the internal and external depletion resulting from racial injustices, gun violence, climate change, humanitarian crises, and political unrest:

***State violence against the Black community and aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, unrelenting gun violence, climate change.***

*We are living in the sixth extinction of human beings and do not seem to have the collective will to change human behavior from an individualistic (extractive and violent) society to a collective society...*

***The fallout of the pandemic economically...the increasingly visible, vocal and empowered hate-based groups, the attempted overthrow of the presidential election, insane levels of gun violence and mass murders, the war on Europe, and the increasing rise in power or right-wing fascist, nationalist groups in Europe, and the looming global disaster that is climate change***  
*are about ready to do my head in...*

Despite these challenges, advocates shared a profound commitment to self-care and healing. Story circle participants shared their journey toward reclaiming their sense of purpose and passion amidst the turmoil they experienced.

I was absolutely depleted  
and did not understand why

I had lost so much of my  
passion and personal  
commitment to this work  
that has always been so  
meaningful to me.

I was burnt out, entirely...  
seeking connection helped me  
realize that this is what I had so  
deeply missed in my work.

We need each other.

Restoryation Participant



# Emerging Theme:

HEALING & CONNECTION

It was really helpful  
to process [the] feelings  
and experiences  
of the past few years.

To take a break from  
compartmentalizing,  
try to put things into words  
and also have ways  
to express without words.

Restoryation Participant



## Restoryation

# Healing & Connection: Introduction

*“I’m trying to figure out...or should I say **feel out** the answer to what I need.”*

--BIPOC STORY CIRCLE PARTICIPANT

In times of change and transition, we call for connection and answers; when those times threaten to change who we are, we reach for story. The isolation of the pandemic left many advocates and their organizations grappling with a mass of conflicting needs, none quite as staggering as the need for answers to what to do with our brokenness and how to start a path toward healing.

We arrived at our circles depleted yet hopeful. We shared our stories of uncertainty and loss, and as we listened, stories of resilience and nourishment emerged alongside our stories of struggle. We discovered the invitation of the storyteller—an invitation to come together and break the isolation of silence.

Together we explored the transformative healing power of connection. And in those moments of listening, we practiced being whole and grounded, even as the ground shifted.

Laughter began to join the tears, creating a healing wholeness balm that offered us a way forward.

Vanessa Timmons  
Restoryation Design Team  
Oregon

# Healing and Connection

The Restoryation story circles provided sexual and domestic violence workers a profound opportunity to come together, connect, and heal from the shared pain and trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The vast majority of those able to participate in this event indicated that it was a worthwhile event, with 99.5% (n = 995) of participants responding positively. Additionally, 99.7% (n = 998) of participants indicated that the facilitation of the story circle was effective. When asked how comfortable participants were sharing with others, there were again overwhelmingly positive responses. Specifically, 988 (98.3%) participants reported feeling comfortable sharing with others at the event.

## THE POWER OF SHARING STORIES

Participants resonated deeply with the experience of verbalizing their thoughts and feelings among their peers, as one participant articulated:

***Speaking things out loud  
to and with people who I have not  
shared things with felt healing,  
important, and I felt seen.***

*Hearing other people's experiences  
over the last 3 years felt connecting.  
I haven't thought about my experiences  
in the ways that I was able to today.  
**I am grateful for the connectedness  
that I feel towards my  
coworkers after this.***



This sentiment was echoed by others, emphasizing the power of storytelling in fostering community and understanding, particularly after enduring the many challenges of the pandemic:

*Las experiencias de vida de cada persona te hacen crecer. **Te hacen reflexionar, te enriquecen, te dan herramientas y te empoderas con tanto conocimiento.***

*The life experiences of each person make you grow. **They make you reflect, enrich you, give you tools, and empower you with so much knowledge.***

*Today was very worthwhile, especially getting to know my coworkers.*

**Storytelling is the best way to reconnect after experiencing so much trauma during Covid and working remotely.**

## BREAKING ISOLATION

The significance of creating spaces like the Restoryation story circles, where advocates from different agencies could gather and connect, was punctuated by several participants. They valued the opportunity to connect with peers outside their agencies, realizing that their struggles were not isolated, but instead shared across agencies throughout their communities, as multiple direct service providers shared:

*It was a pleasure to share this space with so many advocates outside of my workspace.*

**Sometimes it feels my work can only be relatable to those I work with, however the same issues I face are felt across the city in different agencies.**

*I realized my struggles were not **unique to me or my agency.** They are similar all over.*

*I am so **happy to connect with others in different communities that are experiencing similar struggles and maybe life experiences.***

For some participants, the story circles marked a long awaited opportunity to meet coworkers in person for the first time, deepening their sense of belonging in their organization.

***After over a year of working at my organization, today was the first day I have met many of my coworkers in person, and the first time we have gathered all together.***

This sentiment echoed throughout the country as advocates savored the moments of genuine connection and camaraderie:

*I have longed for that, and I appreciate this process for bringing us all together in a present, intentional way.*

*It felt really good to tell and listen to stories with our staff.*

***It made me feel connected in a way I don't usually get a chance to feel. It was emotional and nourishing.***

*I appreciate hearing from others here, **it gives validity to the strong feelings and trauma that I and others went through** that is rarely spoken of in a context of support and healing.*

## SPANISH-SPEAKING ADVOCATES IN COMMUNITY

Spanish-speaking advocates in particular deeply appreciated the opportunity to connect and strategize with other like-minded Spanish-speaking workers in the movement:

*Me encantó compartir y conocer a las personas con quienes varias veces hablé antes pero por teléfono para coordinar los recursos para un sobreviviente, y **poder hacerlo en persona fue muy cálido y reconfortante***

*I loved the opportunity to meet and talk with people I have previously only spoken with over the phone to coordinate resources for a survivor.*

**Meeting them in person was a very warm and comforting experience.**

*Me dio mucho gusto **poder compartir ideas de como tener alianzas estratégicas** que nos permitan continuar con la justicia en el lenguaje y la justicia sanadora.*

*I was very pleased to be able to **share ideas on how to have strategic alliances** that allow us to continue [working on] language justice and healing justice.*

## A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

For many, the story circle provided a much needed reprieve from the stresses of their work, offering a space for relaxation, renewal, and self-reflection, as advocates shared:

*I needed this moment to connect with others in the field.*  
***I needed this venue to take a beat and breathe.***

*I appreciated the sharing with my peers & **being able to relax & unwind & have a moment of breathing room.***


Participants left the event feeling restored and more at ease, emphasizing the importance of taking moments to decompress, as advocates shared:

***I felt at ease during this event and very refreshed,***  
*I hope there will be more events like this.*


*Came in pretty beat up.*  
***Left feeling restored and connected.***

## CREATING SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

As story circle participants reflected on the challenges faced by advocates, the need for prioritizing staff well-being evidently emerged, as two participants emphasized:

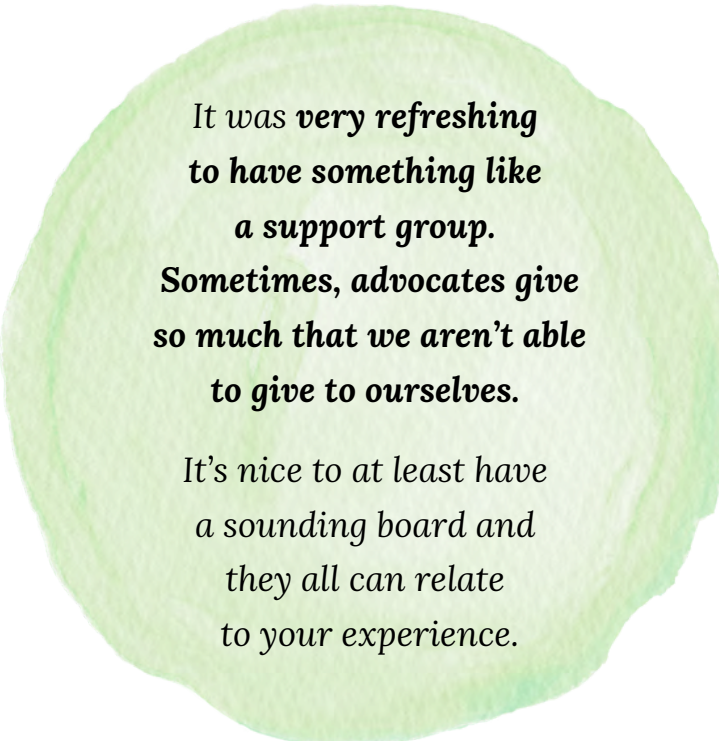


We need to **prioritize staff wellbeing because it directly impacts the services we provide survivors** and because staff are human beings.




I feel like a lot of these issues existed before Covid...I am grateful that there was a **discussion that catered to the needs of people working in this field.**

Several participants highlighted the importance of creating spaces for staff self-care and support. Advocates recognized the value of focusing on their own needs within a supportive community:



It was **very refreshing to have something like a support group.** Sometimes, advocates give so much that we aren't able to **give to ourselves.**

It's nice to at least have a sounding board and they all can relate to your experience.



The ability to focus on my own needs and lessons in a **supportive community** was a much needed break from day to day work.

# Healing & Connection Collages

“ Healing and connection are really about enrichment. ”

--Restoration participant and creator of this collage



Above the trunk is a cycle where you have words of enrichment and empowerment, love, connection, healing, **brought up by the water and oxygen as it circulates.**

There's a **whole ecosystem underneath** that makes this tree remain standing.

The **root system spreads out** when it connects with **other roots**, which connects to all different walks of life.

You can **create a cycle of healing and connection** as you continue to connect back to the roots.

“ Trying to practice  
the world  
we wish to see  
is prevention. ”

--Restoryation participant  
and creator of this collage

Connecting to nature is  
healing because **the natural  
world is therapeutic.**

Trying to practice  
the world we  
wish to see  
is prevention...  
that connection  
with younger  
people and  
giving them  
the tools to be  
in a different  
place when  
they're  
adults than  
we were in.



**To be grounded is to be connected  
to the earth.** For me, being near  
the water, particularly the ocean,  
is just something...I feel like  
**it's in my DNA.**

I'm really excited about  
**the prevention work that we're  
doing** and the way that we're  
connecting with young people  
in the community.

## CENTERING BIPOC ADVOCATES' NEEDS

Restoryation story circles also highlighted the importance of centering the needs of BIPOC advocates and creating spaces that honor their experiences, as advocates expressed:

*I am so grateful to have been a part of this opportunity and space. **Being with other people of color who are able to relate to my unique experiences matters and is impacted [by] the work we do.***

This call for collective healing underscored the significance of BIPOC-specific spaces and language justice efforts to provide a foundation for genuine connection and understanding.

*There are not a lot of safe spaces for the BIPOC community to gather.*

*Necesitamos recuperarnos de este trauma pandémico y **solo podemos hacerlo colectivamente y preguntando a las comunidades mismas que es lo mejor para ellas (o nosotras)** y no llevando lo que nosotras desde nuestro lugar o posicionamiento creemos que es lo mejor.*

*We need to recover from this pandemic trauma, and **we can only do it collectively by asking the communities themselves what is best for them (or us)** and not imposing from our own perspective or position what we believe is best.*

*El hablar en nuestro idioma cambia totalmente cualquier contexto y **nos hace sentir cómodas.***

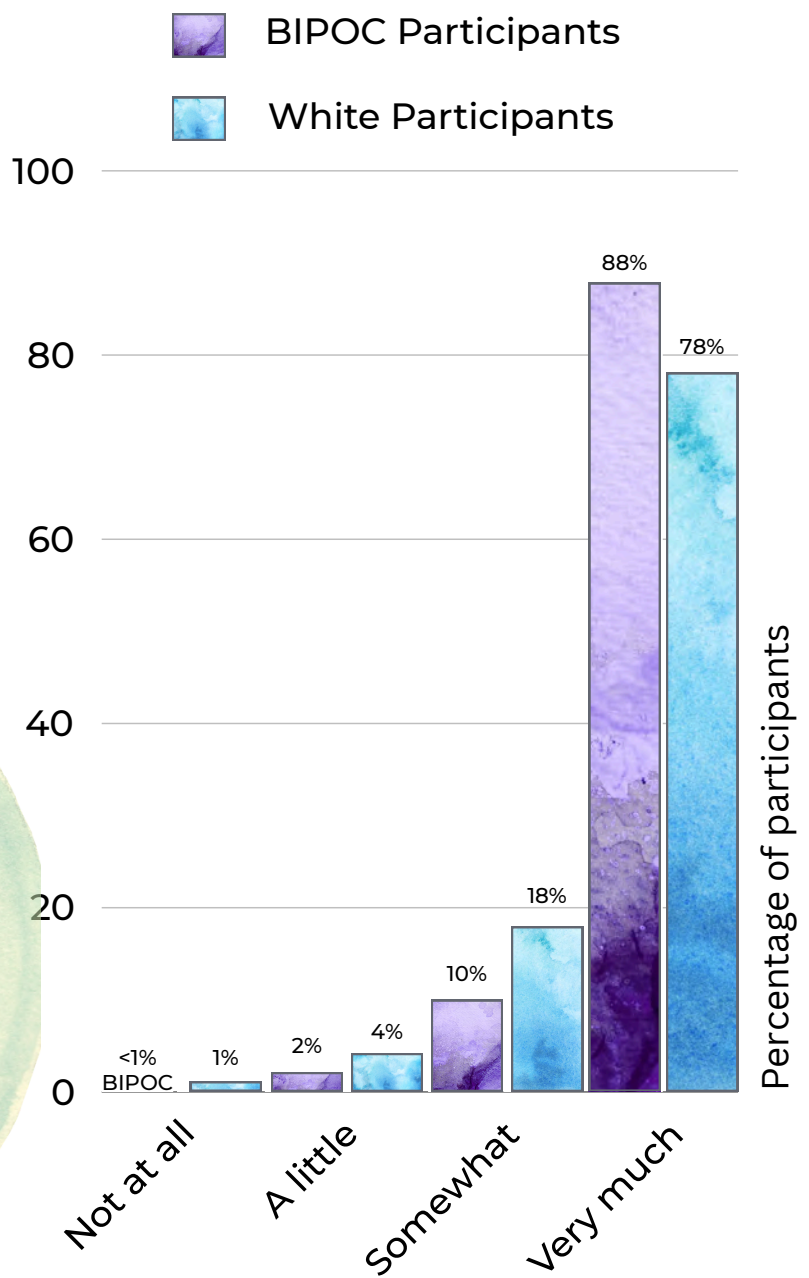
*Speaking in our language totally changes any context and it **makes us feel comfortable.***



The importance of BIPOC-specific spaces is underscored by participants' reflections on the value of story circles. Although all participants deemed the event worthwhile, BIPOC participants, on average, found it more beneficial than their white counterparts. This difference remains even after accounting for participants' comfort levels in sharing and their perceptions of the event's facilitation effectiveness.

“HOW WORTHWHILE WAS THE EVENT FOR YOU, HOWEVER YOU DEFINE THAT?”  
(By percentage)

*The opportunity today to connect in person and be with one another has been golden, and **we need more of this** -- more laughter, more sharing stories, more getting to know one another, more breaking bread -- **to sustain for all of the hard work.***



## CENTERING HEALING

The significance of creating healing and connective spaces for advocates is also highlighted in story circle participants' reflections on how the gathering provided an opportunity and conducive environment for brainstorming ideas and contemplating potential enhancements for their work:

I enjoyed the opportunity to...**make progress toward my personal understanding of where my work and the Coalition's work may need to go.**

Connecting in a safe small group with others from the work brought laughter, hope and connection.  
**Ideas to take back to the local team I work with.**

This event offered me a break from busy work to **think about how I can move forward with my team and new ideas that may be beneficial.**

As story circle participants reflected on their future needs to support their work and well-being, they expressed a collective longing for more opportunities to gather and further their journeys of healing and connection:

I would like to incorporate **more healing and sharing activities with my coworkers** to build rapport and intimacy.

It humbled me to learn  
of all the difficulties  
my coworkers have been  
dealing with for much longer  
than I have been here.

It made me realize  
just how hard it has been  
for everyone and makes me  
want to be more patient and  
supportive of everyone.

I also feel more connected  
with my own thoughts  
and beliefs.

Restoryation Participant

I would love for this story circle  
to happen more often  
for Latina advocates.

I feel it is a very important  
space for us.

To be able  
to express myself  
in my language.

In English I can say it  
but I don't feel the same.

Sometimes I can't  
find the words.

I wish there was  
more support in our language.

Restoryation Participant



# Emerging Theme:

INNOVATION & ADAPTATION

While we did a great job of  
adapting our work at the  
beginning of the pandemic,  
I don't feel like we've ever reset  
as we've moved into this new  
phase...we need to be doing  
strategic planning around  
what our work looks like  
long-term in this environment.

Restoryation Participant



## Restoryation

# Innovation & Adaptation: Introduction

During Covid, we experienced a phenomenon in which many things were moving at an accelerated pace. One pattern of acceleration was that of collapse and destruction. Safety nets for survivors fell apart – from communal shelter to school closures to job security. And in times of crisis and acceleration, there was also an opportunity for innovation and adaptation toward ways of being that embodied wholeness and thriving.

Across our movement, dominant culture habits of control and hierarchy fell away. Seemingly hard boundaries crumbled. Domestic violence programs and state coalitions rapidly shifted to remote and flexible work models, wages increased, and stipends were provided for front line advocates and to working parents with children.

And these rapid transformations worked! Survivors actively engaged and appreciated the flexibility of virtual counseling and support groups. Survivors and children benefitted from living in single-family apartments rather than rule-bound communal settings.

Advocates were happier. Advocates were also conscious of the suffering throughout disproportionately impacted communities, expanded beyond the lens of advocacy for survivors and became good neighbors. BIPOC advocates had time and space to nourish and nurture themselves and their communities. Organizations shifted away from hierarchical leadership models and practices. Salaries for advocates increased. Governmental funders loosened mandates on data collection and reporting, and still the funds were stewarded with responsibility and care.

We need to continue to move toward innovative practices and ways of being that center wholeness, collective care, and thriving. We need to re-commit to rigorous efforts to continue to meet and leverage the opportunity within the chaos of collapse and the challenges ahead. Here's why: there is still much at stake. Let's continue to be ready for this historic moment.

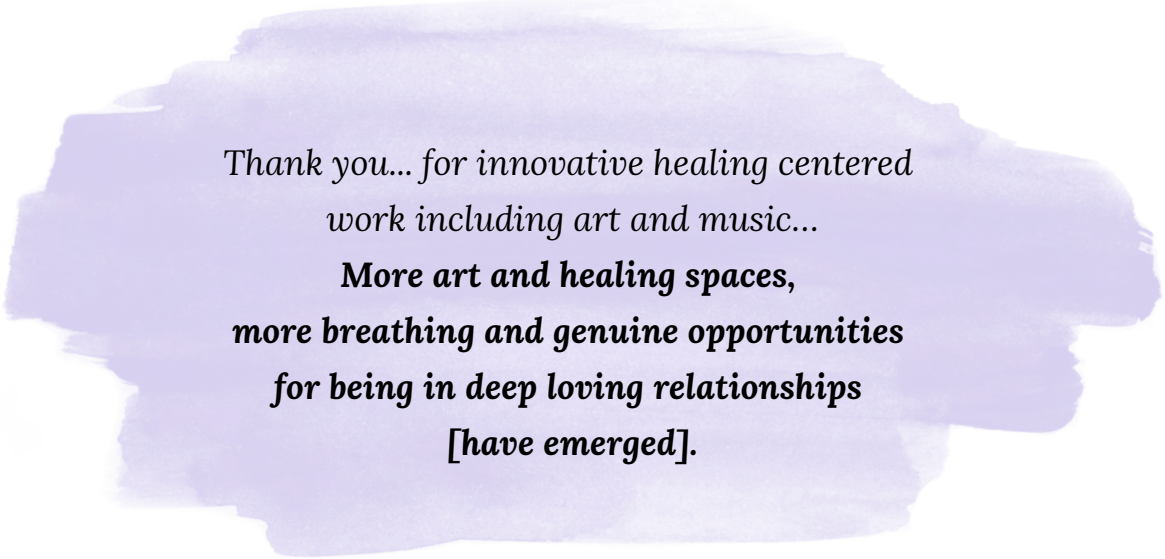
Kelly Miller  
Restoryation Design Team  
Idaho

# Innovation and Adaptation

As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded, sexual and domestic violence organizations found themselves thrust into a period of unexpected transformation and urgent adaptation. The Restoryation story circles provided a reflective space for participants to share their experiences, underscoring the profound changes and challenges that advocates and their organizations navigated during this time. Their stories detailed a journey of innovation, adaptation, and resilience amidst profound uncertainty. The vast majority of story circle participants (86%, n=532) reported organizational changes as a result of the pandemic. Participants highlighted this dynamic shift in organizational culture and practices that were significantly influenced by increased flexibility from funders and a renewed emphasis on comprehensive care.

## EMBRACING INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY

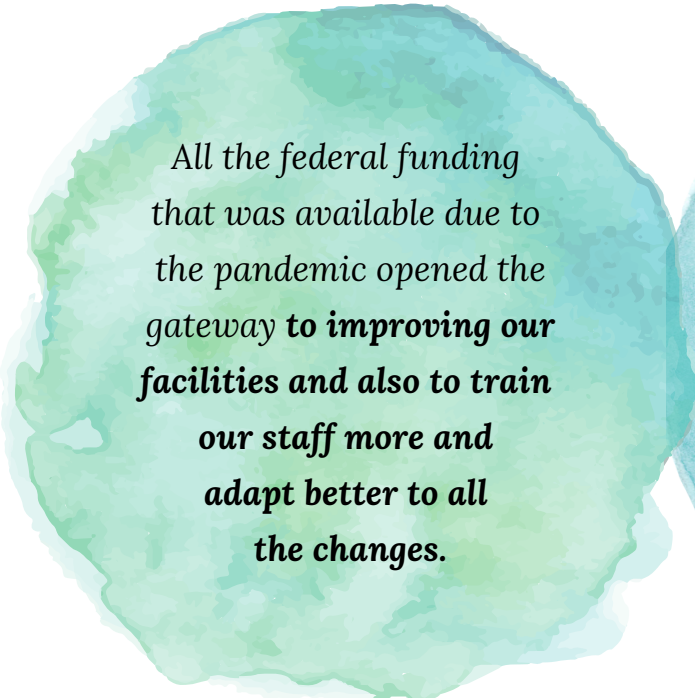
The pandemic prompted a notable shift in the positionality of funders, who demonstrated unprecedented flexibility, allowing organizations to innovate in how they support survivors and staff. An advocate celebrated this shift:



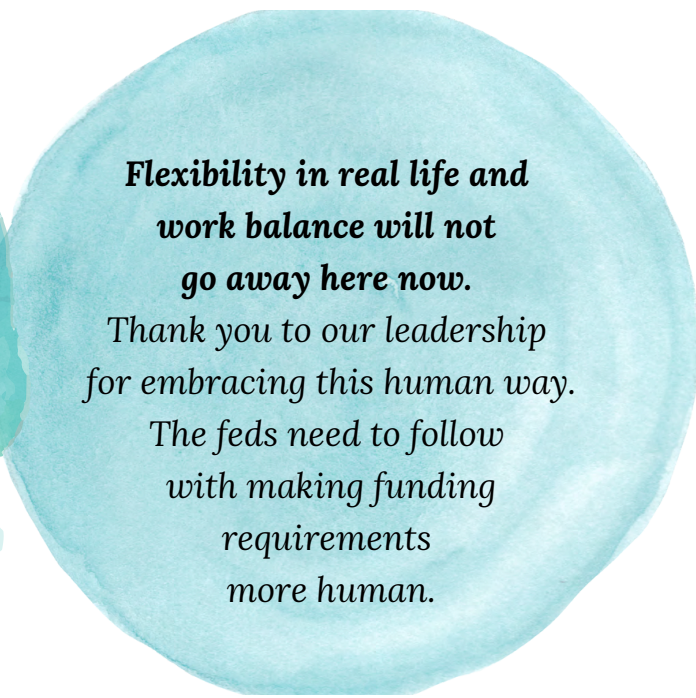
*Thank you... for innovative healing centered  
work including art and music...  
**More art and healing spaces,  
more breathing and genuine opportunities  
for being in deep loving relationships  
[have emerged].***



This flexibility and openness was instrumental in creating nurturing work environments during tumultuous and uncertain times without interrupting services for survivors. Amidst the pandemic, 98% (n=610) of story circle participants shared that their organization continued providing support services to survivors and 90% (n=559) of participants indicated their organization did not reduce staff hours. Several story circle participants shared their reflections:

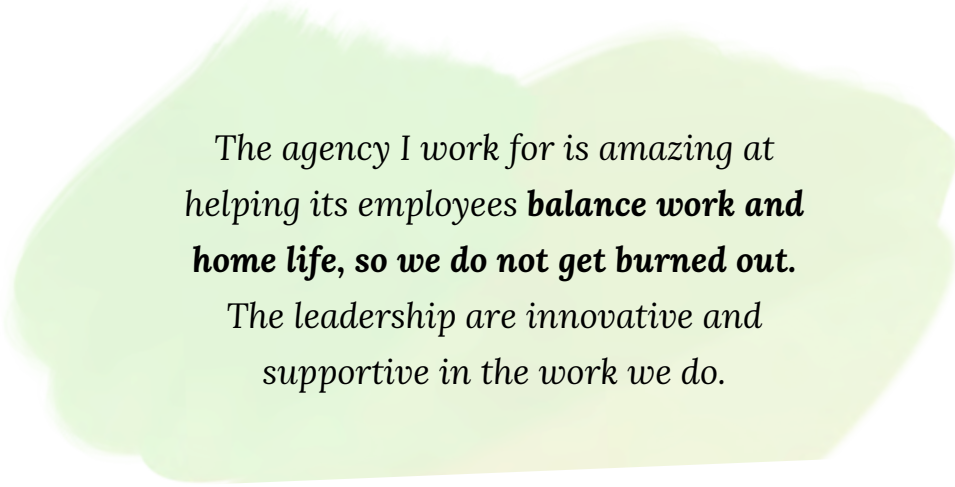


*All the federal funding that was available due to the pandemic opened the gateway to **improving our facilities and also to train our staff more and adapt better to all the changes.***



**Flexibility in real life and work balance will not go away here now.**  
*Thank you to our leadership for embracing this human way. The feds need to follow with making funding requirements more human.*

Sexual and domestic violence organizations capitalized on this opportunity to balance work and life more effectively. This approach has been essential in maintaining staff wellbeing and ensuring the continuity of care for survivors, as one direct service advocate noted:



*The agency I work for is amazing at helping its employees **balance work and home life, so we do not get burned out.***

*The leadership are innovative and supportive in the work we do.*

The increase in federal funding for sexual and domestic violence services during the pandemic provided an opportunity for organizations to address existing resource gaps in service provision. Organizations were able to institute changes to improve the overall quality of services provided to survivors. These changes included addressing staffing needs, and enhancing capacity to provide meaningful language access and virtual services as some advocates noted:

*We were able to **add a new position at the shelter we created a Case Manager position.***

*We created a **webchat system** and had **more bilingual advocates.***

Participants also identified the tangible ways in which the increase in federal funding has been instrumental in expanding the scope of services provided to meet the diverse needs of survivors and facilitating survivors' access to existing services:

*Also because of Covid emergency fund, we were able to **help clients financially.***

***Being able to meet clients where they are at,** some don't have transportation and being able to meet them virtually in their homes to sign papers virtually **many people have remarked how helpful it is.***

***We became more accessible to people in the rural [location], folks with physical disabilities and parents of young children by providing remote services.***

## ADAPTING TO EMERGING NEEDS

During the Covid-19 pandemic, new trends in survivor experiences emerged, highlighting the need for flexible and innovative approaches to providing support services:

We are seeing new trends and patterns in survivor experiences, and DV agencies **need more resources and innovative approaches than ever before.**

We learned that **we are adaptable and can still provide quality services.**

Positive changes? The ability to adapt in times of stress and pressure, **we have seen how resilient our organization is during times of great stress.**

With the shift toward more flexible funding and operational models, agencies were able to implement changes that fostered more supportive and responsive work environments. For instance, 62% of story circle participants (n=384) indicated that their organization began to work primarily with survivors remotely. These innovative responses to unprecedented challenges became crucial for sustaining the workforce during the height of the pandemic. Story circle participants detailed specific improvements for staff:

During the pandemic we worked on moving toward a more equitable salary structure... We also were **able to create more human-centered policies - like providing financial support to staff most impacted by social/political events, stipends for parents homeschooling, more flexible work hours.**

We have been more flexible and adaptive for both staff and clients. We were forced to move to action on things that had been neglected, such as staff wellness and retention. This created **increased wages, free mental health support, and flexibility.**

Our leadership's focus on supporting staff and treating [them] as humans is appreciated. We are more nimble in our responses. We lead by example about **supporting staff in their personal needs.**

Work became much more flexible and responsive to personal and family circumstances.

Overall I worked a lot but there were times when I didn't or couldn't and that was ok.

**I worked around my family's needs.**

## UNANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

Despite positive developments, the transition was not without its challenges. The shift to remote work, while beneficial in some respects, also presented difficulties:

Some of our projects (housing) have significantly grown so we are working with more survivors. **We are still perfecting working remotely and virtually.**

**It can be difficult working remotely with housing with survivors and ensuring they are receiving adequate support.**

We are seeing the negative effects of direct service being done remotely and the **integrity of the direct service has suffered due to remote work.**

# Innovation & Adaptation Collages

“ Even though we're under fire, there's beauty and what we're going through and where we're going to be. ”  
--Restoryation participant and creator of this collage

Funding is becoming ever more restrictive, and competition for funding is also ever changing.

But we are intelligent and incredibly strong and we can figure out how to overcome these challenges and provide safe homes for people.





*I have really benefited from my role  
in being part of a larger community...*



*--Restoryation participant and creator of this collage*



*In a changing environment, butterflies migrate.*

***In changing seasons and a changing world, they've all adapted in a lot of ways...some have big wings, some have small wings, some have wings that are looking a little raggedy.***

***They all still travel towards warmth and light and to where the rest of their community is.***

***That's something that I have really benefited from in my role is being part of a larger community and moving towards the light with my community.***

***And even if we have to change our wings sometimes, or our wings look a little raggedy, we still usually find our way south [to warmth].***



## ADDRESSING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

As story circle participants reflected on the adaptations and innovations during the pandemic, BIPOC participants specifically highlighted significant strides in addressing social justice issues as crucial responses to systemic inequities exacerbated by the crisis. Essential discussions and initiatives on anti-racism and white supremacy were sparked, as one advocate shared:

*We started doing **serious anti-racism/white supremacy culture work** in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Our workplace became much more flexible and therefore family-friendly in particular.*

The discussions also expanded into structural changes within organizations, including efforts toward unionization and enhanced equity training. Several participants noted the progress in these institutional reforms:

*[The positive changes during the pandemic were] hybrid [work] and **more awareness of antiracism.***

*There is wider spread recognition of needing to do things differently and in more sustainable ways. **We've upped our game on centering BIPOC experiences and needs.***

*We **have a union** and are having more conversations and trainings.*

Despite notable strides made, BIPOC story circle participants recognized that much work remains to be done. They were energized by the prospect of continuing their advocacy to achieve the substantial systemic changes they envision. A direct service advocate poignantly reflected on the broader implications of their work:

*I'm burned out and want to see movement/progress that supports my sustainability... **I am interested in justice/policy work, as well as building models of safety, accountability, and community support outside of any punitive systems, while simultaneously dismantling those carceral/white supremacist systems that uphold systemic oppression.** The survivor-serving, grant-funded, nonprofit industrial complex organization in late-stage capitalism is draining, unsustainable, and a cat chasing its own tail.*

## CONCERNS AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted critical gaps in services for marginalized communities, including people with disabilities and those who are immunocompromised. Looking ahead, story circle participants shared a cautious optimism paired with concern about sustaining the gains made, as several advocates shared:

*The influx of Covid dollars was great and much needed, but now I **fear what happens when that's gone and we're returning to the 'having to scrap for every dollar' mentality again.***

*I feel like we are slipping back to old work patterns. I want to be mindful in our planning **not to take on too much and work more collaboratively.***

*If we at our agency are truly inclusive and intersectional, we cannot elect to ignore the needs of our most vulnerable... **I feel pressured by surrounding entities to look 'beyond' the pandemic and revert back to before instead of innovating to ensure we never go back to ignoring those [needs].***



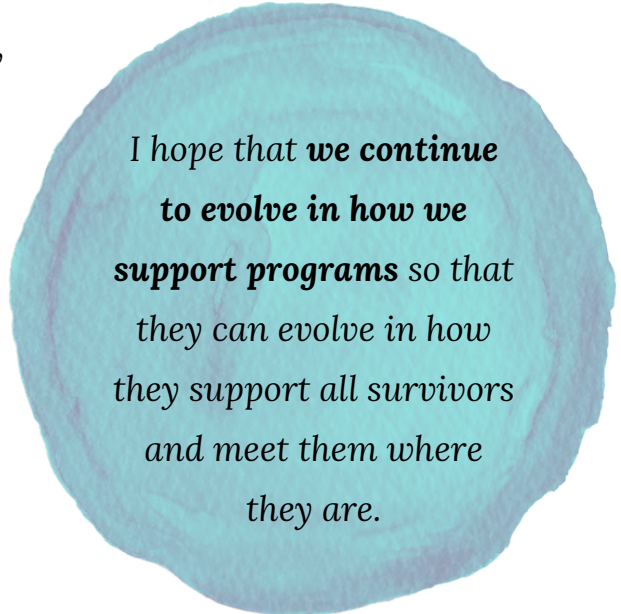
Survey results further underscored the need for innovation, reflecting a strong consensus among participants regarding future changes. When asked about their organization, 60% of story circle participants (n=590) indicated they had specific hopes and goals for organizational transformation. Moreover, 66% of participants (n=655) indicated they were looking forward to reshaping the way they approached their own work, suggesting a collective commitment to ongoing adaptation and innovation.

For instance, there is a strong desire among advocates for continued evolution towards supportive, flexible and inclusive practices.

This sentiment was echoed across story circles, emphasizing the need for a shift towards more comprehensive and inclusive care:



*We have worked very intentionally on creating a space where we can feel comfortable sharing...I **hope that we are able to create even more policies that support us to do our work in a way that creates space for us holistically.** I hope that we can **spend more time in visioning what we want our work to look like and a bit less on crisis-response moving forward.***



*I hope that **we continue to evolve in how we support programs** so that they can evolve in how they support all survivors and meet them where they are.*

As sexual and domestic violence organizations navigate the post-pandemic landscape, the insights gained during the Covid-19 pandemic provide a vital blueprint for building more resilient and supportive systems.

I love my colleagues and  
our collective vision.

I love being part of supporting  
our member programs  
and the amazing advocates  
that do such good work.

I love being part of  
creating communities  
where it's safe for people  
to love one another.

The culture of perfectionism  
and overwork, though,  
is in conflict with my values  
of building a sustainable and  
equitable workspace and life.

Restoryation Participant



# Emerging Theme:

## SUSTAINABILITY

I love and care deeply  
about this work,  
but we are grossly  
understaffed, underpaid,  
and undertrained  
to be able to adequately  
meet our clients needs.

We burn through people fast...

It feels constantly  
like we're all swimming  
against the current  
until we run out of energy,  
and few things change.

Restoryation Participant



## Restoryation

# Sustainability: Introduction

We most often think of "sustainability" in an organizational survival way, but Restoryation gave us perspectives that were both more focused and more expansive. The fatigue and worry shared by story circle participants were palpable. They need time and flexibility. They need connection with each other and within themselves. They linked their own sense of self to a bigger sense of who we are as a nation, or nation of nations.

Care was conceptualized in layers - for self, for family, for community, for country, for the earth. Sustainability was not limited to baseline survival; it was imagined as human-centered thriving and magnificence.

Individuals in our workforce want to live and work at the same time. Therein lies the key to our long-term sustainability.

It's as simple as that.

Nan Stoops  
Restoryation Design Team  
Washington

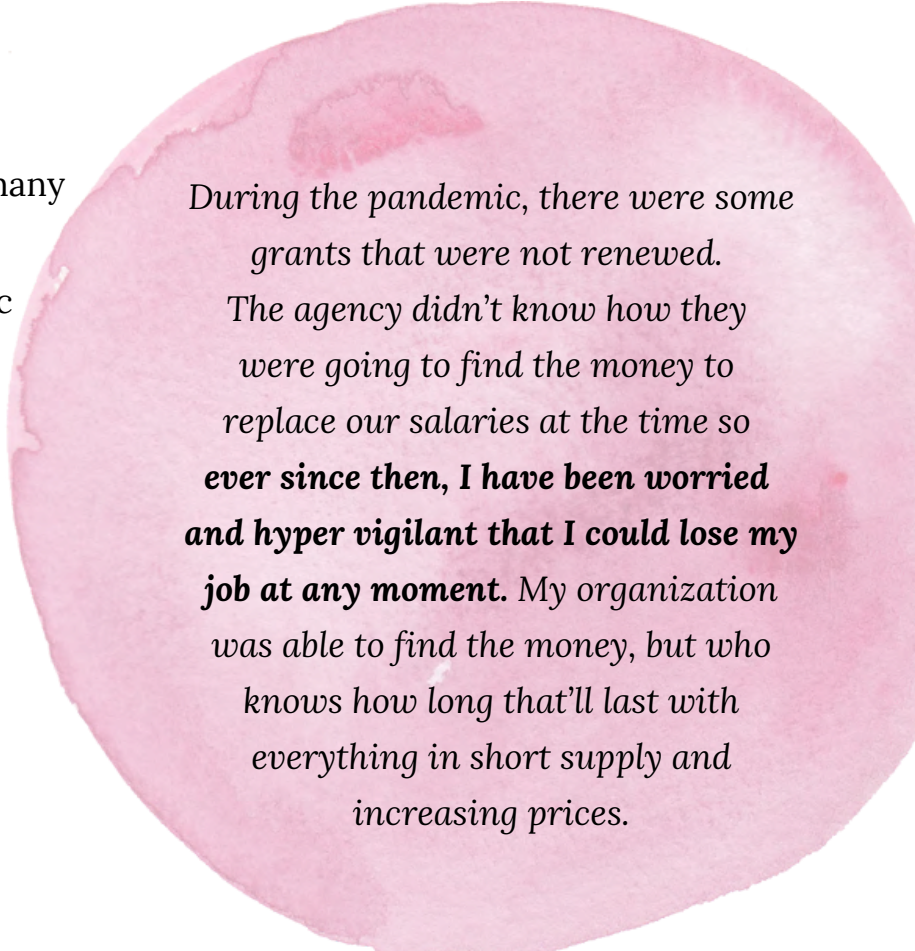
# Sustainability

The story circles provided a reflective space where Restoryation participants shared their hopes for sustainability in the sexual and domestic violence survivor advocacy field. Participants highlighted the persistent challenges related to financial instability, emotional exhaustion, organizational constraints, and the critical need for systemic change. As they opened up about their experiences, a collective story emerged, revealing both the profound struggles and the unwavering dedication of advocates. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated many of these struggles, underscoring the urgency of creating a sustainable and resilient field.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES: NAVIGATING FINANCIAL AND STRUCTURAL UNCERTAINTIES

The financial instability faced by many sexual and domestic violence organizations during the pandemic presented a significant concern for sustainability.

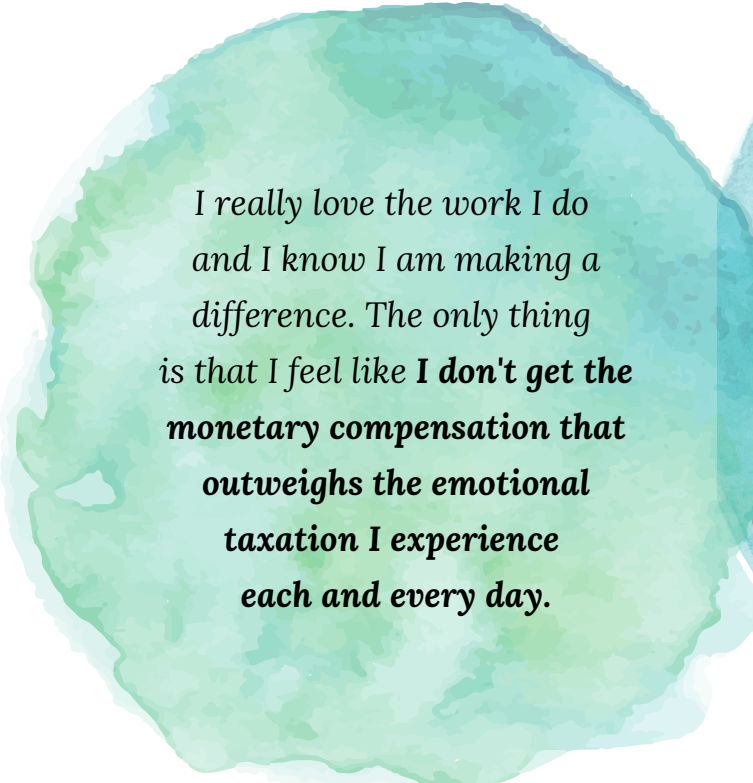
Story circle participants shared their anxieties about job security and the impact of funding cuts on their work. One participant captured this pervasive fear:



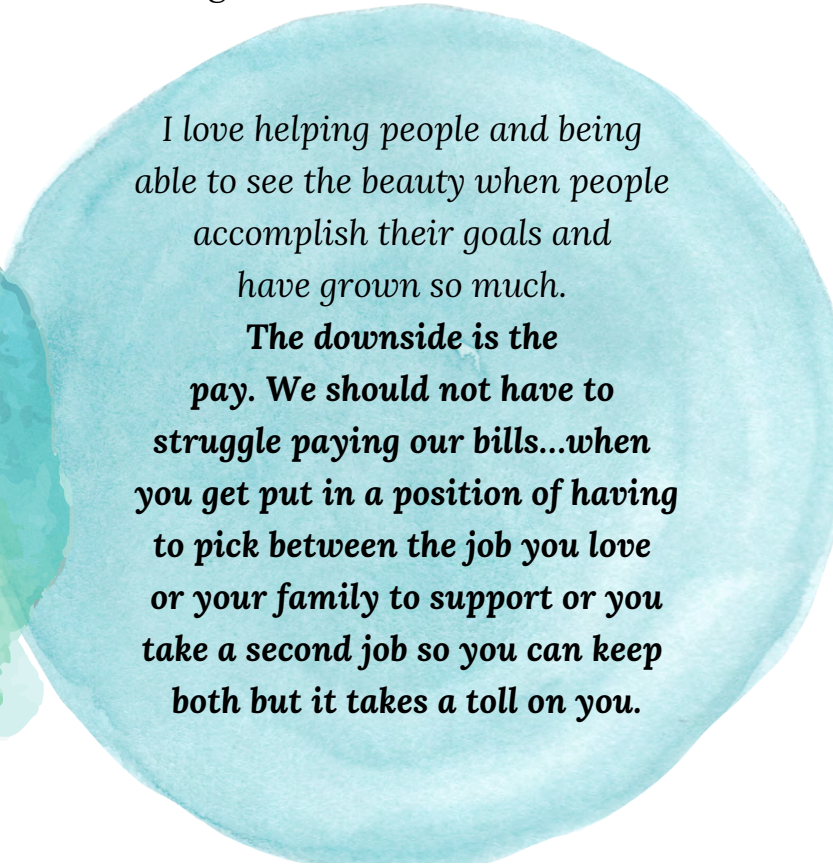
*During the pandemic, there were some grants that were not renewed. The agency didn't know how they were going to find the money to replace our salaries at the time so **ever since then, I have been worried and hyper vigilant that I could lose my job at any moment.** My organization was able to find the money, but who knows how long that'll last with everything in short supply and increasing prices.*

Survey results also highlight significant concerns about job loss, with over half of all participants (53.6%, n = 608) expressing worry about their job security. This anxiety is especially pronounced among BIPOC participants, 59% (n = 195) of whom reported job security concerns. Notably, BIPOC participants were more concerned about their job security on average than white participants, even when accounting for weekly work hours, job satisfaction, and experience in the field. This finding could have particularly worrisome implications for future representation of BIPOC workers in the field.

The need for thriving wages for advocates was emphasized by storytelling participants. Financial instability not only affects job security but it also impacts workers' ability to continue their work without facing burnout and financial strain. As participants expressed:



*I really love the work I do and I know I am making a difference. The only thing is that I feel like **I don't get the monetary compensation that outweighs the emotional taxation I experience each and every day.***



*I love helping people and being able to see the beauty when people accomplish their goals and have grown so much.  
**The downside is the pay. We should not have to struggle paying our bills...when you get put in a position of having to pick between the job you love or your family to support or you take a second job so you can keep both but it takes a toll on you.***

Survey results support these claims, with 54.7% (n = 325) of direct service advocates earning less than \$50,000 annually. Given that 96.3% (n = 604) of these advocates work full-time, these findings underscore the urgent need for better wages for advocates.

# THE IMPACT OF HIGH TURNOVER

High turnover and understaffing in domestic and sexual violence advocacy organizations exacerbate these financial and structural challenges, leaving many workers feeling unstable and unsupported. The majority of survey participants (56.9%, n = 616) reported inadequate staffing in their organizations. Story circle participants also emphasized the ripple effects of turnover and the tensions between achieving financial stability for advocates and ensuring adequate staffing.

Organizational shifts and mishandlings deepen a sense of grief among advocates. The loss of staff and erosion of trust within organizations compound staff's sense of isolation. Several story circle participants shared reflections that highlight a sense of depletion and disconnection:

*We have always had a lot of turnover but it has definitely been heightened since the pandemic, specifically in direct service roles. **Which also indirectly affected non-service roles like ours in prevention because of the constant shift of coworkers, which can be really disheartening.***

*My organization recently decided to eliminate 3 positions in order to give everyone else a raise. I'm not sure that was the right decision and I'm worried that **we are trading a living wage for being chronically understaffed.***

*We are understaffed because **we do not have the financial resources to hire the staff needed** to adequately enlarge our capacity as we desire.*

*I feel like **systems that affect our work are becoming more rigid** at the time that they need to be more flexible and I am **having to support program leadership in crisis because of this.***



# Sustainability Collage



*I'm standing in the red, representing our funding.*

*And I'm hollering into a bullhorn.*

*I've got words, I'm shouting, I've got other people around me.*

*I got a house for shelter.*

*I feel like we're **wrapped in chains** in the red.*

*I feel like we're almost drowning and in the drowning*

*I included top hats as government or men.*

*How this has contributed to maybe us being in the red?*

***I have hearts and raindrops because we love this work and there are bad days.***

***We deal with broken hearts.***

*I'm screaming to the sun that something will...*

*I'm optimistic.*

***I'm trying to be optimistic.***

## THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF ADVOCACY AND COMMITMENT TO THE WORK

The strain of balancing professional duties with personal responsibilities emerged as a recurring theme throughout the story circles. Participants pointedly shared how the demands and conditions of their work deeply affected their personal wellbeing. One participant's candid reflection underscores the profound emotional toll of these challenges:

**I am very driven by this work AND I wish it was more sustainable.**

**I am tired, my heart is tired.** This is also why it is hard to apply for jobs elsewhere—I am so tired. So I keep plugging away and there are waves of inspiration and hope that help keep me going, but if I could switch to something that did not break my heart, I would.

I would probably come back after a few years, energized, with [a] new perspective, and that would be nice. I look forward to that rested self. Haha—it's good to dream, right? But the whole climate—

all the violence and hate and bigotry that is happening

right now is also exhausting.

Despite these overwhelming challenges, many advocates remain steadfast in their commitment to their work, driven by a passion - a calling - for the cause and a desire to effect meaningful change:

I'm likely to stay in the field because **I believe in the movement and feel energized contributing to a cause about which I feel passionate.** I worry about sustainability in this field due to lack of growth opportunities: **I do not wish to move into management, but I do wish to increase my earning potential.**

***I'm burned out and want to see movement/progress that supports my sustainability...I am interested in justice/policy work, as well as building models of safety, accountability, and community support outside of any punitive systems, while simultaneously dismantling those carceral/white supremacist systems that uphold systemic oppression. The survivor-serving, grant-funded, nonprofit industrial complex organization in late-stage capitalism is draining, unsustainable, and a cat chasing its own tail.***

This relentless drive, coupled with the emotional and physical exhaustion from their work, paints a vivid picture of the duality that many advocates face: a deep, unwavering commitment to the work and the significant personal sacrifices they endure to sustain it.

## STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABILITY

High turnover rates and the loss of institutional knowledge are significant barriers to sustainability. As two advocates shared:

***Our advocates have unsustainable caseloads of 50-70 active clients at a time. They are getting burned out. We do not have funds to staff at the level we need to, to prevent turnover and ensure victims are served.***

*I have never found any other type of work I am as passionate about and I like being part of helping make our field more sustainable and furthering solutions to the root causes of violence and oppression....I am exhausted to the core of my being. I've found some better ways to cope with this but I can't sustain my current work load unless we can hire more help.*

BIPOC direct service providers expressed that inadequate leadership training and mentorship further hinder sustainability efforts.

*Soy la única advocate que es bilingual... **se necesita a otra persona.** [I am the only bilingual advocate...**another person is needed.**]*

*I would like to support survivors who speak Spanish; there are already so few resources for them. However, **it is tiring to do a lot of work and not get anything in return as far as asking for more DEI-involved movement in the organization.***

*I had a breakdown last year that forced me to reckon with my own needs and understand where they were not being met. Self-advocacy in this organization has felt incredibly hard, in no small part because **we don't have enough meaningful feedback loops among staff!***

## PRIORITIZING STAFF WELLBEING FOR SUSTAINABLE ADVOCACY

Story circle participants emphatically shared that prioritizing staff wellbeing is essential for sustainable advocacy, as two advocates highlighted:

*We need to prioritize staff wellbeing because it directly impacts the services we provide survivors...**People need to absorb less trauma, work fewer hours, and feel connected to the broader movement for social change.***

*If I can't meet my obligations as a family caregiver AND sustain my own mental wellbeing doing this work, **I will have to leave.***

Some story circle participants shared how programs that focus on wellbeing of their staff can make a significant difference:

*I have had many opportunities for growth. I started in youth education, moved to direct service, and am now a coordinator/supervisor.*

***I feel mentored by leadership and share many of the same values as my colleagues. I do not think I could sustain myself in work like this without the team I am with.***

*I would stay at my organization because of the wonderful people who work here, including our leadership; our commitment to anti-racist organizational development and primary prevention; the supports we have in place for employees; **our organizational culture that supports us as whole people and encourages us to live into the antidotes to white supremacy culture; and being afforded consistent opportunities to grow my skillset and experience by leading new projects and through formal professional development channels.***

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

Story circle participants emphasized the importance of ongoing support and resilience-building within the workforce:

*I think the story circles will be good but I also hope we build **regularly occurring events for member staff to build resilience** - not just one time discussing the trauma of the last 3 years, but relationship building as trauma prevention/ burnout prevention.*

Promoting self-care and resilience within organizations can make a significant impact, as participants shared their hopes for better organizational structures:

*With more resources and self-care, we'll eventually provide **not only the tools but more compassion.***

*I hope my organization gets more structures and more time to handle heavy caseloads and not focus on distractions and personal disagreements that create a hostile work environment.*

## RETHINKING NONPROFIT STRUCTURES

During the story circles, Restoryation participants had several opportunities to reflect, noting the systemic barriers within nonprofit structures that often impede innovative structures, as one advocate highlighted:

*The pandemic offered us an opportunity to pause and reflect on everything, **we cannot go back to the "normal" dominant way of being - the unsustainable pace, the focus on consumerism, the individualistic ways of being.***

Participants called for significant changes in the way funding structures operate, urging a move towards more streamlined and supportive processes:

*The entirety of the way our funding structure works needs to change. We need to do differently in so many ways, intersectionality between movements in particular and funders need to support that...Way too much of our time is spent doing reports. **If they could at least be streamlined, the staffing burden would feel much better – and we could spend more time doing the work that funders actually want for us to do.** The conditions for work need to change. **Workers deserve compensation for a life worth living-things like savings and vacations. They deserve health care that's accessible and affordable. They deserve meaningful and paid time off that they don't have to fight for.** We have to start valuing our work and workers.*

Promoting self-care and resilience within organizations can make a significant impact, as participants shared their hopes for better organizational structures:

*With more resources and self-care, we'll eventually provide **not only the tools but more compassion.***

*I hope my organization gets **more structures and more time to handle heavy caseloads and not focus on distractions** and personal disagreements that create a hostile work environment.*

The insights gained from the story circles underscore the need for a collective commitment to sustainability in the advocacy field and broader movement to end gender-based violence. Addressing financial instability, emotional exhaustion, and organizational constraints, while promoting innovative practices and prioritizing staff wellbeing, are essential steps toward a more resilient and sustainable future.

I would like to  
figure out how  
to create more spaciousness  
in my work to dream up  
new and innovative ideas.

I would like to settle into  
finding a balance  
with my non-work life  
that is more sustainable  
than it has been  
for the last few years.

Restoryation Participant





After Story  
& Stories of  
Tomorrow



## Restoryation

# After Story & Stories of Tomorrow

**The primary goal of Restoryation was connection.** We wanted to provide the time and space for people in our domestic violence workforce to (re)connect – within themselves, with each other, and with the purpose and meaning of our daily work. We knew that the (re)connections would yield important insights into the current health of the field and opportunities for strengthening and deepening our commitments to survivors and to each other. And so it was.

We asked each other “what happened,” “what did we do,” “what did we learn,” “what is our path forward,” and “what is required in order to go.” The answers were not surprising, and they were rich, 3-dimensional, heartfelt, and supported by data. When referring to data sets, we often say “the numbers don’t tell the entire story.” This project invited the stories, amplified them with quantitative and qualitative data, and organized them into thematic buckets: grief and depletion, adaptation and innovation, healing and connection, and sustainability. Restoryation does not end with this report.

The numbers and narratives serve as guideposts for our continued evolution in this work – evolution in which we must be actors rather than observers, creators rather than subjects, and leader-warriors rather than victims; evolution that future historians describe as the full achievement of racial and economic justice; evolution that replaces “survival of the fittest” to “all thrive.”

We hope that sexual and domestic violence workers, policymakers, funders, community partners, and the movers and shakers of public opinion will work together to craft stories of tomorrow that:



- **Recognize sexual and domestic violence victim services as a first-response system characterized by 24/7 exposure to trauma and crisis.** Workers need adequate training and supervision, work schedules and leave time that promote resilience, compensation that is commensurate with the necessary job skills and rigor, and administrative and employment practices that preserve the dignity of each and every individual in the workforce.
- **Level the expectations of sexual and domestic violence victim services with what available funding can reasonably pay for.** This work emerged from the energy, rage, and determination of 1960's-era feminist discovery, when women volunteered to help each other anytime, anywhere, and with no financial support. The vestiges of that spirit live on. The core passion and commitment are strong, but they can no longer be exploited by policies, funding, and partnerships that demand an endless pattern of doing more with less. Our workforce cannot be comprised of career volunteers, and the material needs of survivors cannot be met by intermittent charity. It should be allowable/permissible/expected that we work according to our means. Fair and square.
- **Value the complexity, importance, and necessity of our work and workforce.** Working conditions and funding constraints must be improved and eased. We need to allow and support reasonable workloads, livable wages, healing from direct and vicarious trauma, flexible work schedules, and a balance between process and product. Funding (both public and private) should grow and shift in partnership with the work itself, and we must attend to the relationships that make that possible.
- **Hold robust equity policies and practices as the foundation for healing and change.** Ending gender-based violence is revolutionary work, and we must offer and demonstrate creative approaches to work-life balance. What if we center BIPOC lives in our understanding of “work-life balance?” What if we provide jobs that support people to have rich and meaningful relationships with family, community, and the earth? Why not?



- **Extend the survival-sustainability arc to include thriving.** Our earliest crisis intervention approaches to domestic violence and sexual assault, while necessary and transformative at the time, have produced the unintended consequence of short-term and incomplete healing. Survival and sustainability are nearly conflated to the point that what we work to sustain is individual and organizational survival. The pandemic unleashed waves of trauma and grief that humans are still struggling to metabolize. Let's create an endpoint of true thriving - for ourselves and for those with whom we work.
- **Lift up connection as a core tenet of our work.** It is time to interrupt the habit of individualized, specialized, and privatized work. Our workforce is so much more than a mass of people delivering service widgets. It started as a movement with the character and texture of liberation through healing and connection. Rapid and widespread replication of the shelter model, coupled with dominant culture and government funding, have eroded those roots. But our emergence from the pandemic isolation is accompanied by a clear and resounding call for connection. Our people want to be whole again, and connection is the fundamental building block that will get us there.
- **Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.** There are times and places for speed, efficiency, strategic shortcuts, and soundbytes, but we ought not abandon the long stories. Context matters. Pace is important. Short stories weave together. Opposing truths may, in fact, not be. Let's recalibrate the importance of now and surround it with ancestral wisdom. Invite the stories of our people, and hear them well. The story knows.

There's something about taking the time to process all that happened. I don't know that I've been in the space where all the pieces were brought together and integrated (personal, professional, the movement).

It allowed us to intentionally create a space to contain the experience of the last 3 years to be able to get a better handle on it.

ReStoryation Participant



# Future Research

DIRECTIONS AND  
IMPLICATIONS



## Restoryation

# Future Research Implications

The contributions of Restoryation story circles are profound - illuminating the depletion experienced by advocates across the country and underscoring the critical need for systemic changes to support these essential workers. As we look to the future, several key directions emerge for further research and its practical application.

This project has highlighted the urgent need to survey the field with a specific focus on collecting data that centers the needs of advocates and direct service providers. A comprehensive survey designed with the input of advocates themselves can capture the nuanced experiences and challenges they face, and the strategies they have successfully implemented to address their needs. This data is vital for promoting sustainable practices within organizations.

To truly understand the experiences of direct service workers, particularly BIPOC advocates serving marginalized and underserved communities, there is a need for longitudinal research methods. Such approaches can track changes over time, providing insights into the long-term effects of advocacy work on mental health, job satisfaction, quality of life, and career sustainability. This would involve both quantitative and qualitative methods, ensuring a holistic view of advocate experiences.

We envision a participatory research process that promotes the collective construction of knowledge. By collaborating with direct service providers across intersectional identities—BIPOC advocates, Deaf and hard of hearing advocates, disabled advocates, and more—we can ensure that the research reflects the diverse realities of those in the field.



This inclusive approach not only enriches the data but also empowers advocates by valuing their lived experiences and insights.

An important finding from the Restoryation story circles is a significant number of advocates are survivors themselves. In a sample of 633 direct service providers, 45.8% reported they are survivors. However, of those 290 direct service providers, only 60.7% (n=176) openly shared their experiences in their workplace. This highlights the need to create supportive environments where advocate-survivors feel safe and valued. Centering the experiences and needs of advocate-survivors is not only crucial for their wellbeing but also for the sustainability of the work they do.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that advocates are essential first responders. However, they often lack the structural and financial support necessary to sustain their roles effectively. Future initiatives must prioritize providing advocates with the resources they need, including competitive salaries, mental health support, and professional development opportunities.

We propose a mixed methods repeated measures survey, co-created with the community, to ensure that it accurately represents the needs and experiences of advocates. This may involve network analysis and longitudinal studies, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. Such an approach would capture the complexity of advocate experiences and provide actionable insights for policy and practice.

It is essential that mainstream, culturally specific, and grassroots organizations are represented in future research to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the field and the varying challenges faced by different types of organizations. By intentionally including a wide range of voices, we can develop more effective strategies to support all advocates.





The insights gained from this research call for a collective commitment to sustainability in the movement to end gender-based violence. Addressing financial instability, emotional exhaustion, and organizational constraints, while promoting innovative practices and prioritizing staff wellbeing, are essential steps toward a more resilient and sustainable future.



# Journaling Activity

## STICKY NOTES

# What Do I Need to Move Forward in This Work?

See pages 105-106 for data table

9.01% OF RESPONSES FELL UNDER "INDIVIDUAL"



As a final activity in the story circle, participants were invited to identify and share their top needs to move forward in this work, both personally and professionally. Each participant was invited to write their most pressing needs on sticky notes, which were then collected and coded by the Data Team.

Participant reflections were organized into themes at three distinct levels: Individual, Organizational, and Structural.

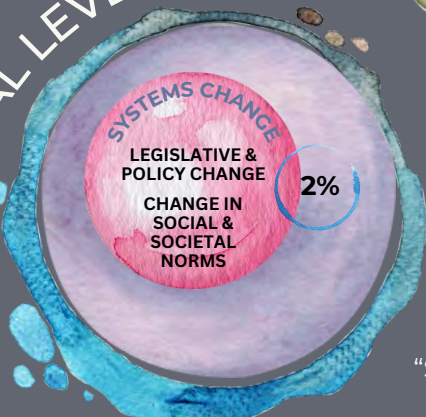
The themes illustrated here represent a sample of responses from story circle participants in two states.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL



88.78% OF RESPONSES FELL UNDER "ORGANIZATIONAL"

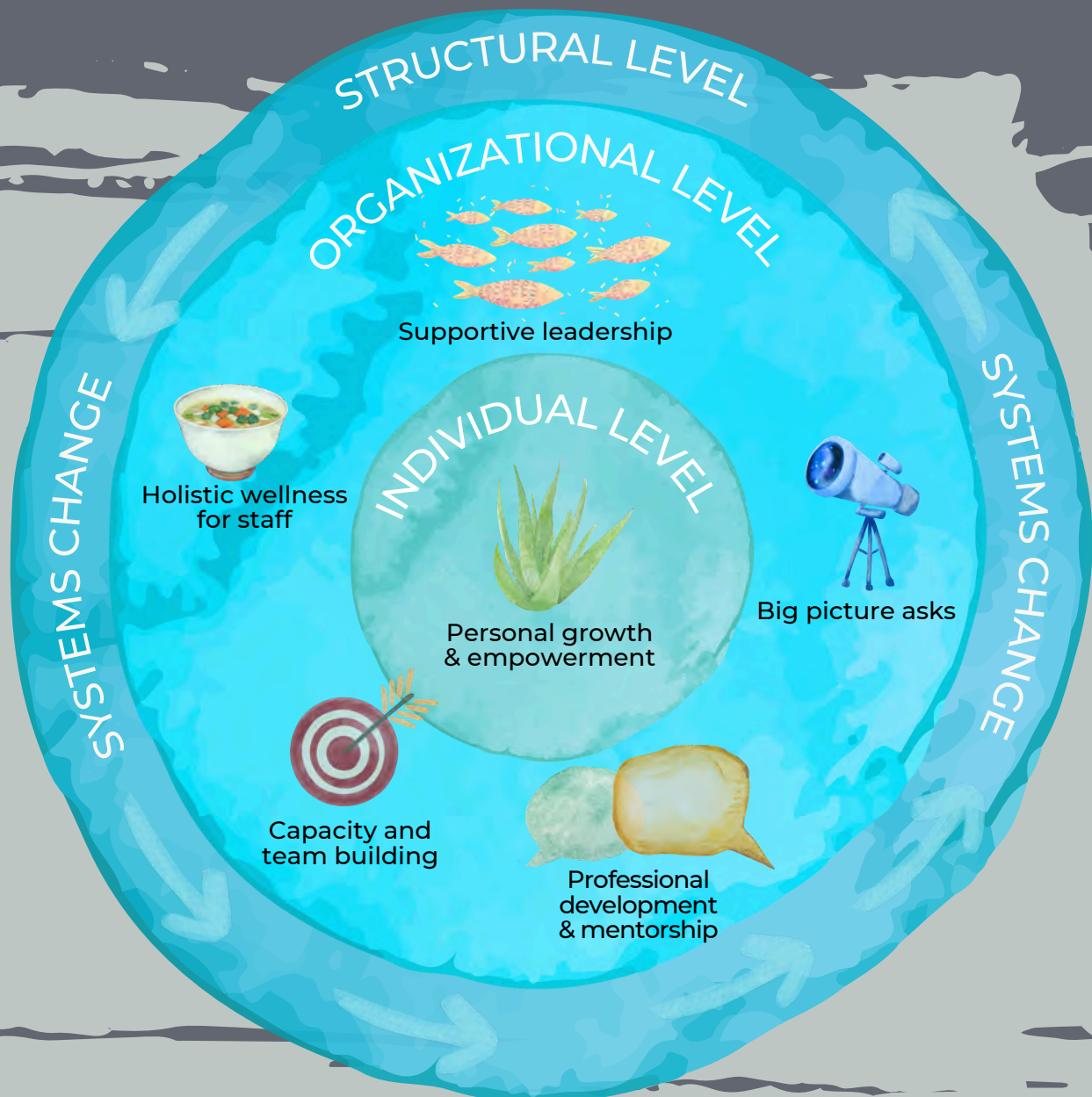
## STRUCTURAL LEVEL



2.21% OF RESPONSES FELL UNDER "STRUCTURAL"

# What Do I Need to Move Forward in This Work?

At the individual level, participants emphasized the importance of personal growth and wellbeing, highlighting needs such as a renewed sense of purpose and ongoing motivation to foster personal resilience and hope. Organizational themes underscored the need for adequate rest, mental health support, fair and respectful compensation, and supportive leadership that encourages autonomy and transparent communication. A significant emphasis was also placed on the need for a stronger sense of connection and community within their professional environments. On a structural level, participants called for major systemic changes, including legislative reforms and a shift in societal norms to effectively reduce violence and promote healing.



The world is pushing to go back to normalcy and I'm trying to hold onto the lessons that we learned...We've learned how difficult this work is and how valuable our workforce is. We have to take good care of each other and our teams so investing in our people, keeping the trauma-focused lens within our organization and not just with our clients. Creating space and time for staff to be human.

ReStoryation Participant



# Appendices

RESOURCE LIST

STICKY NOTES CODING

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

# Resource List

## STORYTELLING

Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process  
by Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Thom Hartmann | 2007

## HISTORY

Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation  
by Beth E. Richie | 2012

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Working Across Generations: Defining the Future of Nonprofit Leadership  
by Robby Rodriguez, Frances Kunreuther, et al. | 2008

## HEALING

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others  
by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, Connie Burk, et al. | 2017

Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto  
by Tricia Hersey | 2022

## FUTURE STORY

Building Resilient Organizations: Toward Joy and Durable Power in Time of Crisis  
by Maurice Mitchell | 2022

Emergent Strategy, Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds  
by adrienne maree brown | 2017

# Sticky Notes Coding

## WHAT DO I NEED TO MOVE FORWARD IN THIS WORK?

Story circle participants were invited to identify and share their top needs to move forward in this work, both personally and professionally. Each participant was invited to jot down their most pressing needs on sticky notes, which were then collected by the Data Team.

The Data Team coded a sample of sticky notes responses by gathering the sticky notes from two states: Washington and Virginia. A total of 588 sticky notes were collected from 16 Story Circles – six in Washington and ten in Virginia. The Data Team categorized these individual reflections into a structured coding system that encapsulates the diverse and complex needs expressed by story circle participants. This proposed coding structure was then shared with representatives from other participating states, providing them with a framework to similarly analyze their state-level data.

Participant reflections through this activity were organized into themes at three distinct levels: Individual, Organizational, and Structural. At the individual level, participants emphasized the importance of personal growth and wellbeing, highlighting needs such as a renewed sense of purpose and ongoing motivation – key factors for fostering personal resilience and hope. Organizational themes underscored critical aspects such as the need for adequate rest, mental health support, fair and respectful compensation, and supportive leadership that encourages autonomy and transparent communication. A significant emphasis was also placed on the need for a stronger sense of connection and community within their professional environments. On a structural level, participants called for major systemic changes, including legislative reforms and a shift in societal norms to effectively reduce violence and promote healing.

It should be noted that while sticky notes were coded under a single theme, many of the reflections could potentially fit into multiple themes, highlighting the interconnected nature of advocates' needs and challenges.



# STICKY NOTES CODING: WHAT DO I NEED TO MOVE FORWARD IN THIS WORK?

PROPOSED CODING STRUCTURE				
LEVEL	THEME	DESCRIPTION/EXAMPLE	N = 588	%
INDIVIDUAL	<b>Personal Growth and Wellbeing</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>9.01%</b>
	a renewed sense of purpose	fresh perspective, embracing uncertainty, authenticity and a strong sense of self to work effectively		
	hope	hope, faith in themselves to address challenges		
	motivation	the drive to continue their efforts with passion and dedication		
	<b>Holistic Wellness for Staff</b>		<b>132</b>	<b>22.45%</b>
	rest	importance of rest and self-care to maintain their wellbeing		
	spaciousness	more time for reflection, recharging and strategizing		
	work-life balance	balance between work and personal life		
	mental health support	need for mental health resources and supports		
	respectful compensation	call for fair and respectful compensation for their work		
ORGANIZATIONAL	<b>Supportive Leadership</b>		<b>140</b>	<b>23.81%</b>
	support	value understanding and continuous support from supervisors and leaders		
	validation and encouragement	need empathy, feeling heard, validation and encouragement for their efforts		
	transparency and accountability	open and honest communication		
	autonomy and trust	desire to feel trusted in their work "not being overmanaged"		
	creative solutions and clear expectations	creative thinking and clear expectations from leadership		
	<b>Professional Development and Mentorship</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>7.31%</b>
	guidance and mentorship	guidance to enhance their skills		
	learning and growth opportunities	training and learning opportunities		

STICKY NOTES CODING:  
WHAT DO I NEED TO MOVE FORWARD IN THIS WORK?

Capacity and Team Building		110	18.71%
increased connection and community	authentic connection, a strong sense of community, and healthy relationships with their teams		
capacity building	more staff, reliable colleagues, and a supportive team to address the demands of their work		
improved work environment	better technology, safe work areas, office spaces that meet their needs		
<b>Big Picture Asks</b>		<b>97</b>	<b>16.50%</b>
community education and collaboration	proper resources, collaborations, and supports to serve clients and communities better		
clear strategic planning	well defined strategic plan and systemic changes to address violence		
commitment to racial and social justice	need for dismantling white supremacy culture, promoting equity and supporting BIPOC staff		
commitment to prevention efforts	importance of prevention work to address violence systemically		
increased and reliable funding	need for sufficient funding to support their work		
<b>Systems Change</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>2.21%</b>
<b>STRUCTURAL</b>			
legislative and policy changes	changes in laws and policies, including housing reform		
change in cultural and societal norms	need for shifts in cultural norms to reduce violence and promote healing		



# Survey Instruments

## Pre-Event Participant Survey

Thank you for joining your peers in your state/territory and those in 24 other states/territories who are participating in this ReStoryation project. We are grateful for your willingness to share your experiences and perspectives. It should only take about 5 minutes but will give us extremely helpful information about the people participating in this process.

Your answers will all be anonymous and private, linked only by a password that you create at the end of the survey so we can link surveys together without identifying who said what.

We hope this information will be useful to states, territories, and nationally, and thank you for being part of this project!

1. What is your age?
  - 18-24 years old
  - 25-34 years old
  - 35-44 years old
  - 45-54 years old
  - 55-64 years old
  - 65+ years old
  - Prefer not to answer
  
2. What term best describes your current gender identity?
  - Cisgender Woman
  - Cisgender Man
  - Transgender Woman
  - Transgender Man
  - Genderqueer/Non-binary
  - Agender
  - Two-spirit
  - Another identity (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Prefer not to answer
  
3. Do you identify as: *(Please select all that apply to you)*
  - African American/Black
  - African
  - Asian
  - Asian American
  - Hispanic/Latinx
  - Middle Eastern
  - Native American/Alaska Native
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - White/Caucasian
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Do you consider yourself to be:
  - Straight
  - Gay/Lesbian/Queer
  - Bisexual
  - Or self-identify here: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to answer
  
5. Do you consider yourself to be a survivor of gender-based violence:

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

(IF YES) 6. Do you talk about your survivorship publicly (at work, etc) as a way to educate and connect with others?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

7. In which state/territory do you work? (dropdown)

8. Is your organization (check all that apply):

- A victim services provider
- A multi-services agency
- Legal services
- Community organizing/social justice organization
- State/Territory coalition
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

(If coalition) 9a. Would you define your primary role in your state territory/coalition as:

- Executive director / CEO
- Administration
- public policy
- legal services
- training and technical assistance
- prevention/social change
- communications/PR
- hotline/direct advocacy
- Special projects
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

(if all other) 9b. Would you define your primary role in your agency as:

- Executive director / CEO
- Administration
- Direct Service
- Prevention
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ -
- Prefer not to answer

10. Do you work directly with survivors as part of your role?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

11. Does your organization focus on:

- Domestic violence AND sexual assault
- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault

- All crime victims
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

12. How many hours a week do you currently work at your agency on average?

- More than 40 hours per week
- 40 hours per week
- 30-39 hours per week
- 20-29 hours per week
- Less than 20 hours per week
- Prefer not to answer

13. What is your annual salary **from this agency?**

- Under \$15,000
- \$15,000-19,999
- \$20,000-24,999
- \$25,000-29,999
- \$30,000-34,999
- \$35,000-39,999
- \$40,000-49,999
- \$50,000-59,999
- \$60,000-69,999
- \$70,000-79,999
- \$80,000-89,999
- \$90,000-99,999
- \$100,000 or higher
- Prefer not to answer

14. How long have you worked at your **agency?**

- Less than a year
- years (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

15. How many years have you worked with or for survivors of gender-based violence?

- Less than a year
- \_\_\_ years
- Prefer not to answer

16. What are the primary language(s) you use (or prefer to use) at home? Check all that apply.

- Amharic
- Arabic
- ASL
- Bulgarian
- Chinese
- Dari
- English
- French
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mam
- Otjiherero
- Pashto
- Persian

- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Tagalog
- Tigrinya
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Indigenous(Please specify: )
- Other (please specify:)
- Prefer not to answer

17. In what languages do you feel proficient in communicating with survivors? Check all that apply.

- Amharic
- Arabic
- ASL
- Bulgarian
- Chinese
- Dari
- English
- French
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mam
- Otjiherero
- Pashto
- Persian
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Tagalog
- Tigrinya
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Indigenous (Please specify: )
- Other (please specify:)
- Prefer not to answer

17. How are you feeling about your work in general?

- Very energized
- Moderately energized
- Slightly energized
- Mixed
- Slightly burned out
- Moderately burned out
- Very burned out

18. How likely is it that you will be working **in this movement/field** (even if in a different position or agency) in 5 years?

- Not at all likely
- A Little likely
- Somewhat likely

- Very likely

19. What is the main reason you would likely stay in/leave this field?

20. How likely is it that you will be working at your **agency** (even if in a different position) in 5 years?

- Not at all likely
- A Little likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

21. What is the main reason you would like to continue at/leave your agency?



## Reflection Survey

At this point in our Story Circle we'd like to ask you a few questions about how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected you and your work. Having this information from people around the country will allow us to understand the impact of the pandemic more clearly, AND we hope that answering these questions helps you personally as we move into the next part of our Story Circle today.

1. Did you work at your current organization before the "stay home" orders began, related to the Covid-19 pandemic (early to mid-March 2020)?
  - YES
  - NO
  
2. How, if at all, did Covid-19 pandemic impact the way you did your work? Please check all that apply:
  - I worked from home
  - My organization primarily worked remotely with clients/membership
  - My organization stopped taking on new clients/projects (at least for some of the time)
  - My organization stopped working with clients/membership
  - My organization reduced staff hours
  - Nothing changed about the way my organization worked with clients/membership
  - other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  
3. Have you worried about your job security as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?
  - Not at all
  - A little
  - Somewhat
  - Very Much
  - Prefer not to answer

3a. Would you like to share more about that?

4. Did your organization lose staff (layoffs, resignations, prolonged illness/absence, etc) during the COVID 19 pandemic?
  - Fewer than usual
  - No more than usual
  - Slightly more than usual
  - More than usual
  - Many more than usual
  - I don't know
  - Prefer not to answer

4a. would you like to share more about that?

5. In your opinion, is your organization adequately staffed now?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

5a. would you like to share more about that?

6. As we are now moving into a new phase regarding the pandemic, how, if at all, are you being impacted? Please check all that apply.

- I work from home
- I returned to on-site work at my organization
- I work some from home and some on-site at my organization
- My organization returned to primarily working in person with clients/membership
- My organization continues to primarily work remotely with clients/membership
- My organization now works remotely and in person with clients/membership
- My organization is taking on new clients/projects
- How we do our work keeps changing and is unpredictable
- Nothing changed about the way my organization worked with clients/membership
- Other (please specify:)

6a. Would you like to share more about that?

7. Thinking about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your work, do you generally feel:

- less anxious
- no change
- more anxious
- prefer not to answer

7a. Would you like to share more about that?

8. Thinking about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your work, do you generally feel:

- less energized
- no change
- more energized
- prefer not to answer

8a. Would you like to share more about that?

9. Compared to the time before the Covid-19 pandemic, I would say my **physical health** now is:

- worse
- the same
- better
- prefer not to answer

10. Compared to the time before the Covid-19 pandemic, I would say my **mental health** now is:

- worse
- the same
- better

prefer not to answer

11. Compared to the time before the Covid-19 pandemic, I would say my general **optimism** about life now is:

worse

the same

better

prefer not to answer

12. Would you like to share more about your answers to the questions above?

13. In your opinion, which of the changes that happened at your organization because of the Covid-19 pandemic were negative?

14. In your opinion, which of the changes that happened at your organization because of the Covid-19 pandemic were positive?

Thank you! Please take a break until the Story Circle begins again. If there is anything else you would like to share please use the box below.

## Post-event Survey

Thank you for participating in this Story Circle! We would appreciate you taking a few minutes (it's short, we promise!) to let us know what you thought of it. We are still learning, and want to hear what's working well and where we can improve.

1. In which state/territory do you work?(drop down)
2. Did you participate in a virtual or in-person Story Circle?
  - in person
  - virtual
3. How worthwhile was this event for you, however you define that?
  - Not at all
  - A little
  - Somewhat
  - Very Much
  - Prefer not to answer

3a. Would you like to say more about that?
4. How comfortable were you sharing with others?
  - Not at all
  - A little
  - Somewhat
  - Very Much
  - Prefer not to answer

4a. Would you like to say more about that? Is there something that could have made you more comfortable?
5. How effective was the facilitation of the Story Circle?
  - Not at all
  - A little
  - Somewhat
  - Very Much
  - Prefer not to answer

5a. Would you like to say more about that?
6. As a result of this event, do you have any goals or hopes for how **your organization** might change?
  - Yes
  - No
  - I'm not sure
  - Prefer not to answer

6a. Would you like to say more about that? If you said yes above, what are the goals or hopes you have?
7. As a result of this event, do you have any goals or hopes for how **your work** might change?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure
- Prefer not to answer

5a. Would you like to say more about that? If you said yes above, what are the goals or hopes you have?

8. As a result of this event, do you feel more connected with (check all that apply):
- Your state/territory coalition
  - Your colleagues within your organization
  - Your colleagues outside of your organization
  - The participants in the story circle
  - Yourself
  - Prefer not to answer

9. Would you please share any reflections about how this event impacted you personally?

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FOR ALL STATES (except Virginia and Washington):

Thank you for filling out this survey! We really appreciate your time and reflections

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FOR THOSE IN VIRGINIA AND WASHINGTON STATE ONLY:

We would like to do brief phone interviews (about 20 minutes) with some of the people who participated in these story circles, about 4-6 weeks after the event.

We hope that after you've had a few weeks to think more about this experience you will have even more to share with us. You of course can change your mind at any time but if you are willing to have someone from the evaluation team\* call you in about 4-6 weeks to hear your thoughts about this experience and how it did or didn't impact your work.

Please click [HERE](#) to give us your name, best way to reach you, and whether you would prefer to be interviewed in English or Spanish. It will redirect you to a new page where you can provide us with this information.

*\*The evaluation team (Drs. Funmi Ayeni, Gabriela López-Zerón, Cris Sullivan) is comprised of three cisgender women with years of experience interviewing DV survivors and advocates. The team includes diversity across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, country of origin, languages spoken, and types of direct experience providing services to survivors.*

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Thank you for allowing us to call you to do a brief phone or video call in about 4-6 weeks. You can always change your mind but please tell us the best way to reach you:

NAME:

My Pronouns:

Best way to reach me is through: cell phone / email / both

CELL PHONE:

EMAIL:

I prefer to do the interview in:

- English
- Spanish

In which state/territory do you work?

- Washington
- Virginia

Today's Date:

Thank you so much for filling out this form. We will reach out to you in 4-6 weeks.

Every story  
I create,  
creates me.

Octavia Butler



# Restoryation

THE STORY KNOWS