



I've spent most of my career in organizational environments that held hard and fast rules about the sterile definitions of professionalism, which should be void of vulnerability or emotion; where quantitative data in polished charts and graphs was considered the only credible information to fuel decision-making; where efficiency and urgency won over authentic relationships and engagement; where trust was regularly breached and transparency was a luxury only afforded to those with the most power; where perfection was the expectation and repercussions for imperfection were swift and career-limiting.

Within these environments, if I wanted to gain access to more autonomy and decision rights, to be in the rooms where plans were being laid in service of equity for our kids, families, and communities, then I needed to hide parts of myself that make me who I am: my Puerto Rican culture and Muslim heritage, my marriage to a woman, my weaknesses, and my insecurities. I was careful about pictures displayed on my desk or discussions about my weekend. I removed my big hoops and brightly colored clothing. I slowed the pace of my speech, decreased the volume of my words, and tucked my hands in my pockets. I highlighted my elite academic background and formal credentials. I allowed colleagues to shorten my name instead of learning to pronounce it. This sort of covering and assimilation is what it took to succeed in these environments. In the end, I did succeed, but the personal cost was monumental. I was tired and raw and my reserves were drained.

So, I came together with a small group of fearless colleagues to create a new, radically human environment where we honor the history that brought us to this moment; where we create space for deprogramming and healing from the pain and trauma that we previously experienced in white dominant culture work environments; where we bring as much of ourselves as we are willing to generously share; and where ultimately each person can thrive.

We envision a day when organizations working toward social justice are equipped to make their maximum impact because:

- They build radically human internal cultures where the experience of belonging, trust, and connection is the norm.
- They attract phenomenal talent – many of whom share perspectives, identities, and experiences with the communities served – and support these folks to excel and stay over time.
- They surround their staff with internal structures, systems, and behaviors experienced as fair and model internally the equity that so many organizations are working toward externally.

We are honored to do such meaningful work alongside an ever-expanding group of partner organizations and look forward to sharing what we learn along the way!