

If, as you are engaging these elements, a clearer framework appears, or an additional piece, that's good news. Let's all be conduits of the wisdom of this planet. I think any efforts to engage the emergent brilliance of our world will help with this turning, will help with liberating humanity from its current role as a virus Earth should shake off.

So, without further ado, the elements:

Element	Nature of Element
Fractal	The Relationship Between Small and Large
Adaptive	How We Change
Interdependence and Decentralization	Who We Are and How We Share
Non-linear and Iterative	The Pace and Pathways of Change
Resilience and Transformative Justice	How We Recover and Transform
Creating More Possibilities	How We Move Towards Life

FRACTALS:

the relationship between small and large

A **fractal** is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop.

grounding in nature

"The micro reflects the macro and vice versa—Fibonacci patterns show up from space to cauliflower. The tiniest most mundane act reflects the biggest creations we can imagine."

—Kat Aaron

Tune in to the prevalence of spiral in the universe—the shape in the prints of our fingertips echoes into geological patterns, all the way to the shape of galaxies. Then notice that the planet is full of these fractals—cauliflower, yes, and broccoli, ferns, deltas, veins through our bodies, tributaries, etc.—all of these are

echoes of themselves at the smallest and largest scales. Dandelions contain an entire community in each spore that gets blown on children's breath.

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale. The patterns of the universe repeat at scale. There is a structural echo that suggests two things: one, that there are shapes and patterns fundamental to our universe, and two, that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.

I first became aware of fractals in 2004 when I was doing electoral organizing, though I didn't have the word for it. We were trying to impact the federal election, to get George W. Bush out of office. And what I saw clearly was that, at a local level, we—Americans—don't know how to do democracy. We don't know how to make decisions together, how to create generative compromises, how to advance policies that center justice. Most of our movements are reduced to advancing false solutions, things we can get corporate or governmental agreement on, which don't actually get us where we need to be. It was and is devastatingly clear to me that until we have some sense of how to live our solutions locally, we won't be successful at implementing a just governance system regionally, nationally, or globally.

This awareness led me to look at organizations more critically. So many of our organizations working for social change are structured in ways that reflect the status quo. We have singular charismatic leaders, top down structures, money-driven programs, destructive methods of engaging conflict, unsustainable work cultures, and little to no impact on the issues at hand. This makes sense; it's the water we're swimming in. But it creates patterns. Some of the patterns I've seen that start small and then become movement wide are:

- Burn out. Overwork, underpay, unrealistic expectations.
- Organizational and movement splitting.
- Personal drama disrupting movements.
- Mission drift, specifically in the direction of money.
- Stagnation—an inability to make decisions.

These patterns emerge at the local, regional, state, national, and global level—basically wherever two or more social change agents are gathered. There's so much awareness around it, and some beautiful work happening to shift organizational cultures. And this may be the most important element to understand—that *what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system*.

Grace articulated it in what might be the most-used quote of my life: “*Transform yourself to transform the world.*” This doesn't mean to get lost in the self, but rather to see our own lives and work and relationships as a front line, a first place we can practice justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the planet.

In my own life this understanding has created major shifts. Once upon a time I was a burnt out executive director, tied to my technology and my sense of my own importance. When I was with friends, family, lovers, I was still working. I thought I was awesome at multitasking. I would say urgency, obligation, and specialness were the driving forces in my life. I was using food, drink, sex, and work to numb my way through life. My work was reactive; there was often a sense of time scarcity and sprinting, of hopelessness, of not being appreciated, feeling no trust, of working with a confused vision.

My family intervened in a variety of ways, primarily by noticing aloud how little they felt me. I had gotten this feedback from others as well, that when I wasn't “on” it was hard to feel me. When I was “on” I could fill a room.

My coworkers also let me know how frustrating it was to work with me when I was so clearly unhappy.

echoes of themselves at the smallest and largest scales. Dandelions contain an entire community in each spore that gets blown on children's breath.

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale. The patterns of the universe repeat at scale. There is a structural echo that suggests two things: one, that there are shapes and patterns fundamental to our universe, and two, that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale.

I first became aware of fractals in 2004 when I was doing electoral organizing, though I didn't have the word for it. We were trying to impact the federal election, to get George W. Bush out of office. And what I saw clearly was that, at a local level, we—Americans—don't know how to do democracy. We don't know how to make decisions together, how to create generative compromises, how to advance policies that center justice. Most of our movements are reduced to advancing false solutions, things we can get corporate or governmental agreement on, which don't actually get us where we need to be. It was and is devastatingly clear to me that until we have some sense of how to live our solutions locally, we won't be successful at implementing a just governance system regionally, nationally, or globally.

This awareness led me to look at organizations more critically. So many of our organizations working for social change are structured in ways that reflect the status quo. We have singular charismatic leaders, top down structures, money-driven programs, destructive methods of engaging conflict, unsustainable work cultures, and little to no impact on the issues at hand. This makes sense; it's the water we're swimming in. But it creates patterns. Some of the patterns I've seen that start small and then become movement wide are:

- Burn out. Overwork, underpay, unrealistic expectations.
- Organizational and movement splitting.
- Personal drama disrupting movements.
- Mission drift, specifically in the direction of money.
- Stagnation—an inability to make decisions.

These patterns emerge at the local, regional, state, national, and global level—basically wherever two or more social change agents are gathered. There's so much awareness around it, and some beautiful work happening to shift organizational cultures. And this may be the most important element to understand—that *what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system*.

Grace articulated it in what might be the most-used quote of my life: “*Transform yourself to transform the world.*” This doesn't mean to get lost in the self, but rather to see our own lives and work and relationships as a front line, a first place we can practice justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the planet.

In my own life this understanding has created major shifts. Once upon a time I was a burnt out executive director, tied to my technology and my sense of my own importance. When I was with friends, family, lovers, I was still working. I thought I was awesome at multitasking. I would say urgency, obligation, and specialness were the driving forces in my life. I was using food, drink, sex, and work to numb my way through life. My work was reactive; there was often a sense of time scarcity and sprinting, of hopelessness, of not being appreciated, feeling no trust, of working with a confused vision.

My family intervened in a variety of ways, primarily by noticing aloud how little they felt me. I had gotten this feedback from others as well, that when I wasn't “on” it was hard to *feel* me. When I was “on” I could fill a room.

My coworkers also let me know how frustrating it was to work with me when I was so clearly unhappy.

In 2012 I took a sabbatical, and I realized that I wasn't upholding my end of the sacred bargain: My life is a miracle that cannot be recreated. I can never get these hours, weeks, years back. In a fractal conception, I am a cell-sized unit of the human organism, and I have to use my life to leverage a shift in the system by *how* I am, as much as with the things I do. This means actually being in my life, and it means bringing my values into my daily decision making. Each day should be lived on purpose.

This has meant increasing my intentionality about being with others. Adapting to the changes of life, yes, but with a clear and transparent intention to keep deepening with my loved ones and transforming together.

I struggle with putting the phone/devices down like most people in my generation or younger, but I am learning to savor the quality of time spent without them, in real life with other people, with my writing, being present. Or using the Internet and cellular data to build trust and connection, rather than to echo chamber deconstruction and destruction.

It has meant getting in touch with my body and feelings in real time, and learning to express them. I am learning to engage in generative conflict, to say no, to feel my limits, taking time to feel my heartache when it comes—from living in America, from interpersonal trauma or grief, from movement losses.

It has meant learning to work collaboratively, which goes against my inner “specialness.” I am socialized to seek achievement alone, to try to have the best idea and forward it through the masses. But that leads to loneliness and, I suspect, extinction. If we are all trying to win, no one really ever wins.

I am beginning to revel in the increased capacity that comes from working with and trusting others. I sleep, I center, I travel, I share. I have offered more room in my life to love, family, creating. Each day I feel more authentic, and more capable. I don't experience failure much these days; I experience growth.

I have increased my practices of collaboration and storytelling as ways to share analysis, engaging and facilitating deep small transformations that pick up and echo each other towards a tipping point, organizing based in love and care rather than burnout and competition.

At a collective level, this is the invitation to practice the world we wish to see in the current landscape. Yes, resist the onslaught of oppression, but measure our success not just by what we stop, but by how many of us feel, and can say:

I am living a life I don't regret
 A life that will resonate with my ancestors,¹
 and with as many generations forward as I can
 imagine.
 I am attending to the crises of my time with
 my best self,
 I am of communities that are doing our collec-
 tive best
 to honor our ancestors and all humans to
 come.

It's lifework, with benefits. I regularly check in with my vision for our collective future and make adjustments on how I am living, what I am practicing, to be aligned with that future, to make it more possible.

That's a little testifying and spell casting on how fractal work feels on a personal level. Here are two explorations of it in organizing work—couching fractals in the idea of what movements need today followed by a piece about how

1 Mary Hooks of Southerners on New Ground and #blacklivesmatter Atlanta offers a mandate for Black people that moves me as I build towards this life of no regrets: “To avenge the suffering of my ancestors, to earn the respect of future generations, and to be transformed in the service of the work.” I have been using this mandate in my work for Black liberation (<http://southernersonnewground.org/2016/07/themandate/>).

Ruckus, a small and mighty organization, shifted its practices to be aligned with its values.

"The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion."

—Albert Camus

Notes from "Intersecting Worlds: The One We've Got, The One We're Building, The Ones We Imagine"²

My vision is changing our *how*, more than seeing clearly our *what*. I see a how where we are all much more comfortable with change, and with our personal power to change conditions.

Some people are comfortable believing—in heaven, in socialism, in someone else's thinking. That's never quite worked for me. I learn experientially. I am so far only convinced that change is divine and constant.

Octavia Butler said, "Belief initiates and guides action—Or it does nothing."³ In her twelve novels and her short stories, she created case studies that teach how to lead inside of change, shaping change. I've been calling what I learn from her work emergent strategy. Based in the science of emergence, it's relational, adaptive, fractal, interdependent, decentralized, transformative. I'm applying it in facilitation and organizational development work.

² This section is based on notes I wrote before a keynote panel at the New Economy Coalition's CommonBound conference in June 2014. My fellow panelists were Gar Alperovitz and Gopal Dayaneni, and we were facilitated by Rachel Plattus. You can see the whole discussion at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0eI9jJRGyk>.

³ Butler, *Parable of the Sower*.

It unleashes more of the power of each person.

Because some are comfortable deferring the work of vision to others—or being the visionary talkers (I am guilty of being a visionary talker for years! Forgive me.⁴). I think, and have been gathering proof in sci fi writing workshops with organizers and activists, that we each have important pieces of the whole, so I concentrate my work on the generation of vision, the strengthening of the muscle of looking forward together.

One major emerging lesson: We have to create futures in which everyone doesn't have to be the same kind of person. That's the problem with most utopias for me: they are presented as mono value, a new greener more local monoculture where everyone gardens and plays the lute and no one travels... And I don't want to go there!⁵

Compelling futures have to have more justice, yes; and right relationship to planet, yes; but also must allow for our growth and innovation. I want an interdependence of lots of kinds of people with lots of belief systems, *and* continued evolution.

Right now we don't know what's right so much as we know what's wrong, and what we've tried. And based on how constantly surprised I still am by life every day, I suspect that will likely continue to be the case, and hopefully, perpetually resolving these major issues continues to be interesting. My mentor Grace Lee Boggs is still curious on the eve of her ninety-ninth birthday, so I'm hopeful.

Nothing that has existed so far was the right way for everyone, but there are pieces out there we can begin to imagine together. This is why Gar Alperovitz's writing speaks to me—what's between capitalism and socialism?⁶ Because whatever

⁴ See "Confessions of a Charismatic Leader" later in this book.

⁵ Paraphrasing Liz Lemon, *30 Rock* (NBC, 2011).

⁶ To read more about Gar Alperovitz's exploration of the space between capitalism and socialism, visit <http://garalperovitz.com/ifyoudontlike/>.

we build will stand on the foundations of those economic experiments. This is why Gopal Dayaneni's work appeals to me—what are the strategies we need to learn, with appropriate fear and wonder, to move our movements into right relationship with the planet?⁷ Let's learn.

I want a future where we are curious, interested, visionary, adaptive.

The community in Detroit, to which I am still a newcomer, has been in transition for decades. We are learning about tolerating, even recently—a few years ago foundations were investing in us, now they aren't as much, and it has impact. Generally we have to let go of the success that we feel, as individuals and organizations, when capitalism works for us.

Gopal convinced me years ago that we need to have a level of dystopian consideration. Certain climate realities are no longer wild imaginings, they are happening, and they are coming. (*Game of Thrones* watchers? Winter is here, and it's balmy.) Octavia Butler appeals to me because she wanted to prepare us for inevitable consequences of human behavior.

That is the context in which I enter this conversation. I don't have answers, but I am sitting with these questions:

Change is coming—what do we need to imagine as we prepare for it?

What is compelling about surviving climate change?

What is a just transition economy?⁸ What is an economy for the phase of transition from this way of relating to Earth and resources, to the way we might relate on a watered Earth, or a frozen Earth?

⁷ To read more about Gopal Dayaneni's work with the other brilliant members of the Movement Generation team, visit <http://movementgeneration.org/>.

⁸ Movement Generation taught me that *economy* simply means the management of home, of the resources of home. A functional economy is a universal concern.

How do we prepare not just for suffering, but for sharing and innovation?

How do we resource the local and still honor our nomadic tendency, our natural migration patterns (which we deny by trying to stay in only one place), our global interconnectedness?

How do we prepare the children in our lives to be visionary, and to love nature even when the changes are frightening and incomprehensible? To be abundant when what we consider valuable is shifting from gold to collard greens?

How do we articulate a compelling economic vision to sustain us through the unimaginable, to unite us as things fall apart?

How do we experience our beauty and humanity in every condition?

These are the questions that sustain my work. I believe all of you hold answers.

We hone our skills of naming and analyzing the crises. I learned in school how to deconstruct—but how do we move beyond our beautiful deconstruction? Who teaches us to reconstruct?

How do we cultivate the muscle of radical imagination needed to dream together beyond fear? Showing Black and white people sitting at a lunch counter together was science fiction.

We need to move from competitive ideation, trying to push our individual ideas, to collective ideation, collaborative ideation. It isn't about having the number one best idea, but having ideas that come from, and work for, more people.

When we speak of systemic change, we need to be fractal. Fractals—a way to speak of the patterns we see—move from the micro to macro level. The same spirals on sea shells can be found in the shape of galaxies. We must create patterns that cycle upwards. We are microsystems. (We each hold contradictions—my shellac nails vs. my desire that no one do the toxic work of nail painting, my family travel vs. my

desire not to use fossil fuels, etc.). Our friendships and relationships are systems. Our communities are systems. Let us practice upwards.

And then—what happens when we succeed? New problems? Detroit filmmaker Oya Amakisi once shared with me the words of General Baker, a Detroit labor organizer and leader, who said, “You keep asking how do we get the people here? I say, what will we do when they get here?”

Maya Angelou’s “On the Pulse of Morning” feels incredibly relevant here today:

Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.

The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of
change⁹.

Transforming Ruckus: Actions Speak Louder¹⁰

I am going to tell you a story about one organization’s transformation from good intentions to good practice. The setting is the US social and environmental justice movement.

I was the executive director of The Ruckus Society for four and a half years, starting in 2006. Ruckus has historically been the kind of organization that wouldn’t be described as feminist. Founded in 1996 on the model of Greenpeace action camps—get a hundred activists in the woods and show

⁹ Maya Angelou, *On the Pulse of Morning: The Inaugural Poem* (New York: Random House, 1993).

¹⁰ This was first published in *The Scholar and Feminist Online* Issue 8.3 (Summer 2010), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/brown_01.htm.

them how to do non-violent civil disobedience in an effective way—Ruckus was rooted in a masculine action culture.

The best way I can explain this culture is penetrative. Rather than forming long-term partnerships with communities, Ruckus was in and out with mind-blowing, creative actions. This was in line with a model of action grounded in spectacle. The politics were radical and the actions historic, but there wasn’t a sense of community ownership or engagement in the work—which meant that at a fundamental level the power dynamic wasn’t changing. The communities still come to rely on someone else to change their situation.

Over years of amazing work, coupled with critiques about the approach, Ruckus went through what could perhaps be called labor pains to bring forth the model and structure we currently have—which includes a team of women, majority queer, at the staff level.

The frustrations folks had with Ruckus are very much the frustrations alive in our movements right now—we had a vision for the kind of world we wanted to see, but we weren’t modeling that internally. We wanted strong local economies where communities felt responsible for their neighbors’ well being, but Ruckus wasn’t actually developing local direct action know-how.

Out of this moment in our history, a new program was born that transformed how we worked. It was called the Indigenous People’s Power Project (IP3). The model was to build a body of Indigenous organizers who became action experts within their own communities. In the process of getting this project off the ground, Ruckus was challenged to grow into something we couldn’t even have imagined.

We grew an immense amount.

I was honored to be a part of The Ruckus Society during this labor, this awakening, watching over a transition born of frustrations and critiques as well as an instinct that something better was possible.

We had to begin to practice deep, authentic collaboration. This meant a shift in how we move financial and human

to rea-
systems. Let us

...pens when we succeed? New problems
filmmaker Oya Amakisi once shared with me
words of General Baker, a Detroit labor organizer and
leader, who said, "You keep asking how do we get the people
here? I say, what will we do when they get here?"

Maya Angelou's "On the Pulse of Morning" feels incredi-
bly relevant here today:

Each new hour holds new chances
For new beginnings.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brushiness.

The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to take new steps of
danger'

Transforming Places Actions Speak Louder™

I am going to tell you a story about one organization that
attempted to make systemic changes in food justice. It's not me
as the CEO social and environmental justice movement.

I was the executive director of The Ruckus Society for
four and a half years starting in 2016. Ruckus had started
to see the kind of organization that wouldn't be described as
feminist. Founded in 1991 by the likes of Greenpeace and
anti-nuclear—get a hundred activists in the woods and start

- i) *More happens in the hour of Morning. To keep you from the
horizon leans forward.*
- ii) *This was the motivation in The Justice and Freedom Center and it
remained. It is very valuable movement with organizational lessons.*

them how to do non-violent civil disobedience in an effec-
tive way—Ruckus was rooted in a masculine action culture.

The best way I can explain this culture is penetrate.
Rather than forming long-term partnerships with commu-
nities, Ruckus was in and out with mind blowing, creative
actions. This was in line with a model of action grounded in
spectacle. The politics were radical and the actions historic
but there wasn't a sense of community ownership or engage-
ment in the work—which meant that at a fundamental level
the power dynamic wasn't changing. The communities still
come to rely on someone else to change their situation.

Over years of amazing work, coupled with critiques about
the approach, Ruckus went through what could perhaps be
called labor pains to bring forth the model and structure we
currently have—which includes a team of women, majority
queer, at the staff level.

The frustrations folks had with Ruckus are very much the
frustrations alive in our movements right now—we had a vi-
sion for the kind of world we wanted to see, but we weren't
making that internally. We wanted strong local economies
where communities took responsibility for their neighbors well
beyond the borders, want actual developing local direct
action leadership.

When we started to think about a new program was
when we started to see what was lacking. It was called the
People's Climate Fund in 2013. The model was to
have a group of people who became action ex-
perimenters. In the process of getting
the fund off the ground, Ruckus was challenged to grow
and expand what it could have imagined.

As a result, we did just that.

When I was a part of The Ruckus Society during
that time, I witnessed the warping over a transition born
of the need to act as a catalyst as well as an instinct that some-
thing better was possible.

We had to begin to practice deep, authentic collabora-
tion. It means a shift in how we move financial and human

resources—there are enough people out there to support the movement(s) we need, but currently, organizations are pitted against each other to access money (less and less money), rather than creating and investing together to maximize a diversity of resources from money, to people, to spaces, to skills. Because we are not investing in a shared network of resources, it is easy to let structural and ideological particularities create deep splits throughout the non-profit sphere, rendering much of our work useless.

We couldn't continue that—we had to figure out what humility looked like on all sides in order to truly collaborate. This included making room on our board for folks in the IP3 program, shifting timelines to meet community needs, with folks on all sides being able to say we didn't know how to do this, and recommitting over and over, even when it seemed too hard to continue.

One thing that was highlighted for us was that, in the direct action realm, it's not unusual to see time and energy poured into actions that are more interesting/funny/creative than they are compelling to those we are trying to reach and/or life-changing to the communities taking action. To be clear, we are moving in a good direction in being funny and creative—we want to engage people—but our standards for communities taking the risks associated with direct action must be that the experience and the results are compelling, even life-changing.

We also learned a lot about breaking down the walls between different issue areas. Indigenous communities present a clear case of economic and environmental hardship, with residents highly recruited for the military, dealing with high levels of drug and alcohol dependence and a high rate of suicide. Through this lens it's easy to see that just coming with one piece of analysis wouldn't serve the big picture.

For successful movements, we need to develop strong, action-oriented communities that understand that their analysis and work cannot be limited to one struggle. Together, we must be advancing the frontline of our vision for a

sustainable, just world. Our strategies must be more sophisticated and engaging than those of our opposition.

We learned that every member of the community holds pieces of the solution, even if we are all engaged in different layers of the work.

We learned to look for telltale signs that actions were community based. One indicator that things are off is when impacted communities and people of color get involved and they are put in the role of "performing the action," for example, having their photos taken, being spokespeople, or being asked to endorse or represent work they don't get to lead, etc., while most of the background organizing is still dominated by the folks who aren't impacted and won't be around long term to sustain the campaign or to be held accountable.

At its worst, this approach builds up hope and encourages local communities to take risks, and then abandons them with the results.

At its best, there is a moment of victory. But too often, in spite of their best intentions, those who aren't directly impacted only see the surface layer(s) of the impact, and thus come up with surface solutions that don't address the deep-seated multi-pronged need in the community.

We learned that in organizing and relationships, accountability is key for building a lasting base; when folks see change, they feel their own investment is worthwhile. We need actions that build our base, because we must reach a tipping point of folks who are on the side of justice before we reach the peak of what our planet can provide.

To be transparent, while Ruckus was in the midst of this transition, I didn't think of it as a transition from a patriarchal organization to a feminist organization any more than I thought of it as a white organization becoming an organization for people of color. I thought of our story as moving from a reactionary, surface-change direct-action organization to vision-based, systemic-change-oriented direct-action organization. But all of the above happened.

Along the way we began to practice principles that felt necessary and powerful to articulate:

- Ruckus comes where we're called, respecting local work and building long-term relationships of support. We reach out to and build relationships with groups we respect, to lay the groundwork for being called to frontline work. We do not insert ourselves into people's political or community work.
- Ruckus supports action when the community most impacted by a political, social, economic, or environmental injustice is the leader of the strategy, vision, and action.
- Ruckus supports action that builds strength and holds space for a strong community vision.
- In a successful Ruckus action, the visions and solutions are deeper and more compelling than the injustice. (We are calling for a movement-wide shift away from action that isn't grounded in a vision of deep systemic change, as that ultimately is a misuse of our time and energy.)
- We submit that no social movement in history has successfully transformed its society without direct action, and we at Ruckus recognize our historical significance and the need for our work in the movement at this time. However, the actions that have had the most impact were uniquely suited to the time, place, and political conditions. We feel the movement has gotten stuck in a tactical rut and that it's time to leap out with actions that address our current political conditions directly.
- "Transform yourself to transform the world."—Grace Lee Boggs. We aim to be an organizational model of the change we call for in the world.

Now, in hindsight, I can see how we have transformed ourselves in a way that makes our work much more relevant

as a living resistance to the dysfunctional social system in which we live. Within our small organization we have grown from a kickass, majority white, male-led environmental-issue-centered network into a kickass, female-led, multicultural, justice- AND environment-centered network.

We lovingly embrace those who brought the skills before us, and those to come, as part of the same fierce family of fearless activists with lifelong commitments to societal transformation. We are intentional about living our vision in terms of how we operate as a community in order to bring vision-based support to the movement we love. We opt for self-determination and sustainability in everything from our structure to our budgets to our programs.

We have learned that such a fundamental shift requires many small steps—having massive visions and making them attainable with specific goals that can be measured and felt both internally and by those who participate in the network and in our trainings.

We have also learned that we had to lay out our operating beliefs. Each person has a set of beliefs with which they move through the world. These are formed by their cultural, social, economic, and environmental (amongst others) experiences from birth, and they change as more experiences are added to the whole.

A group joins their beliefs together creating a set of named or unnamed ways in which they operate. We have made our beliefs very transparent at Ruckus. What we landed on was that, for the next period of history, we need to place an emphasis on:

- Impacted leadership (the leadership of communities directly impacted by economic and environmental injustice);
- Privileged support (the intentional support for impacted leadership from communities/people that can identify their privilege and want to see a rebalancing of power);

- Feminine leadership (not just women leaders, but leaders who shift our understanding of how power can be held).

These beliefs are partly grounded in the reality that leadership from these spheres is directly opposite to the leadership we've experienced for the last century and it's time for balance, and also because the most exciting organizing happening today is coming from communities directly impacted by oppressions and injustices.

As an organization, The Ruckus Society's operating principles include the "Jemez Principles" and the "Environmental Justice Principles." These principles mean we move towards our vision of sustainability and self-determination through organizing that values natural operating systems, understanding the power of uncovering the root causes of problems, and asking, "What are the root problems in my community, and what do deep, foundational, rooted solutions look like?" This is thinking from a place of healing, more than dominating others with our beliefs.

It is not enough to adhere to these values, however—we want to see our beliefs in practice.

Now, how does it feel?

Being a part of this team has been incredible. We have experienced what it's like to release any assumption that one person has all the skills needed to lead and support the work. That release—a huge relief to me personally—allowed us to begin to really weave together our strengths, rather than facing the limitations of relying on one leader to hold the vision, coordination, fundraising, and programmatic work of the group. It has allowed us to face our own personal limitations with transparency and curiosity, noting where we want to grow and not being afraid to ask for feedback.

On an average day, it feels like an extremely functional organization working for change. On the best days, it feels like the world we are trying to create, and it is marvelous.

INTENTIONAL ADAPTATION:

how we change

adaptation: a change in a plant or animal that makes it better able to live in a particular place or situation; the process of changing to fit some purpose or situation: the process of adapting

intention: the thing that you plan to do or achieve: an aim or purpose

grounding in nature

"Starlings' murmuration consists of a flock moving in synch with one another, engaging in clear, consistent communication and exhibiting collective leadership and deep, deep trust. Every individual bird focuses attention on their seven closest neighbors and thus manage a larger flock cohesiveness and synchronicity (at times upwards of over a million birds)."

—Sierra Pickett