




SHIFTING POWER FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Lessons on Becoming Member-Led
from Mujeres Unidas y Activas



We value the leadership
of immigrant women and
we seek to construct an
organization that is able
to develop and support
our leadership not only to
advance, but to live our
mission.

(from MUA's Philosophy on Identity and Leadership)



RoadMap's mission is to strengthen social justice organizations and the social justice sector through capacity-building, peer-learning and field-building.

Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis, courtesy of Reimagine!

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from Mujeres Unidas y Activas**

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We would like to acknowledge the many people who made this report and the good work of Futuro Fuerte possible. First of all, we are deeply grateful to the dignified and fighting spirit of the immigrant women who are a part of Mujeres Unidas y Activas. It is their voices, their vision and their commitment to justice—not just for immigrants but for all vulnerable people in the US—that fuels MUA's work and our work to build leadership skills so that those at frontlines of the struggle can lead organizations.

We are grateful to all the MUA staff and particularly to the staff who come from the grassroots, for trusting us to support their personal and professional growth and to the MUA leadership team for their countless hours of work providing feedback to the Futuro Fuerte Initiative. Futuro Fuerte would not have been possible without the innovative work that leadership trainers, grassroots power builders, race equity warriors and organizational development consultants have done. We borrowed, upgraded and created new tools to address the needs of monolingual immigrant women that also bridge the needs of US-born bilingual staff. We particularly want to lift up the Social Transformation Project, VISIONS INC. The Midwest Academy, and Rita Sever whose work was foundational in our creation of Futuro Fuerte.



Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez

We extend special thanks to outside readers Elena Letona, Lisa Moore, Margi Clarke, and Karie Brown for their feedback and insight. This group of committed movement builders provided a much needed outside perspective that allowed us to pull out more clearly lessons learned that can be applicable to other movement-leaders. They, like us, share a commitment to have movement organizations, walk the talk and make room for those most impacted to lead in more significant ways.

We also want to highlight and express our gratitude to the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, the NOVO foundation, MEV (Move to End Violence), and Blue Shield of California Foundation for their leadership in investing in capacity-building in a meaningful and sustaining way. The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund and Hidden Leaf Foundation also provided support to publish this report. Thank you for seeing the importance of sharing learnings in a movement building way.

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Ana Perez

Emily Goldfarb

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This report was written by Monica Regan, with contributions from Ana Perez, Emily Goldfarb, Kathleen Coll, and MUA's Leadership Team. It was edited by Jess Clarke, Reimagine! Movements Making Media and designed by Design Action Collective. Photos by Rucha Chitnis were originally published in the photo essay "Scenes From Domestic Worker Organizing", in *Race, Poverty & the Environment* (RP&E), Volume 20-2 Alive!

CONTENTS

About Mujeres Unidas y Activas 7

About RoadMap 7

I. Introduction 8

Who Leads and Why Does it Matter?
What Does It Take to Shift Power from the Inside Out?
What Does Success Look Like?
What Are Key Implications for the Field?

II. Who Leads and Why Does It Matter? 11

How Did We Get Here?
Evolving from Member-Based to Member-Led
“Building the Bench” for Sustainable Leadership

III. What Does It Take? Building MUA’s Leadership Capacity for a Strong Future 15

Laying the Groundwork
Futuro Fuerte Design: A Transformational and Equity-Driven Approach
Futuro Fuerte Scope: Organization-Wide Transformation
Futuro Fuerte Methodology: Comprehensive Training and Experiential Practice

IV. What Does Success Look Like? 22

Growing New Leadership: From Member to Staff to Organizational Leader
Deepening Leadership: Owning Positional Power and Inspiring Others
Walking the Talk: Shifting Relationships to Power and Privilege
Moving the Mission: External Alliances Begin to Transform
Staying Resilient Through Fear and Conflict
Managing Executive Transition: Building a Pipeline of Leadership
Next Steps for MUA
Internal Agents of Change: “Coordinadoras de Bienestar”

VI. What Are Key Implications for the Field? 34

1) Organization-Wide Commitment; Support from Partners and Funders
2) Deep Investment of Time and Resources
3) Customized Capacity-Building Support and Internal Agents of Change
Roadmap to Change: Member-Based Organizations to Member-Led Organizations
Lessons and Levers for Organization-Wide Transformation (Chart)

Appendix 40

Futuro Fuerte Content and Methodology
1) Full Staff Training Sessions and Retreats
2) Small Group Clinics/Peer Learning Circles
3) Individual Coaching



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MUJERES UNIDAS
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ABOUT MUJERES UNIDAS Y ACTIVAS

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2020. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, MUA is a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women with a double mission of promoting personal transformation and building community power for social and economic justice. With a budget of over \$2.5 million and 26 staff -- along with over five hundred grassroots members -- MUA achieves its mission through a combination of strategies, including:

Direct Services and Mutual Support: MUA's immigrant leaders and staff offer one-on-one peer support and group counseling, referrals and accompaniment to other community resources, domestic violence and sexual assault intervention.

Community Education and Training: MUA strengthens members' economic security and leadership through ESL classes, workers' rights education, and job readiness training workshops for Latina immigrant Childcare Providers, Housecleaners, and Home Healthcare Attendants.

Member Empowerment and Leadership Development: Through political education workshops and leadership trainings, MUA members find their voices, make links between personal problems and broader social and economic injustices, recognize their own strength, learn organizing skills, and build community and collective power.

Community Organizing: Working in diverse alliances on the local, regional, national and international levels, MUA provides critical leadership and mobilizes their base in campaigns to win immigrant, workers' and women's rights.

ABOUT ROADMAP

RoadMap is a national network of organizational development consultants and coaches dedicated to serving social justice organizations and alliances. In addition to providing consulting services, RoadMap serves as a forum for peer exchange and innovation, developing and testing new strategies to build healthy and sustainable social justice organizations, networks and alliances.

Our partnership with MUA in the design and facilitation of the Futuro Fuerte (Strong Future) initiative is an excellent example of the way that we undertake innovative approaches to foster lasting organizational change. Futuro Fuerte provided opportunities to deepen and evolve beyond existing process and practice for both the consultant team and the MUA staff, testing and refining new strategies and tools together over a long period of time. We draw many lessons from this experience, which will be shared throughout our RoadMap network and integrated into our work going forward. RoadMap has recently launched a new initiative, The Beacon Project: Lighting a Path to Organizational Resiliency, to build a cadre of trained leaders who are empowered within their institutions or coalitions to be catalysts for sustained change and resiliency. Lessons drawn from Futuro Fuerte, where we have been working with MUA's internal beacons—las coordinadoras del bienestar (Wellness Coordinators)—will directly inform the Beacon project.

I. INTRODUCTION



Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis

In the ongoing work to bring about social justice, many movement-building groups are looking inside their own organizations to ask: Who leads? How is power used? Are we *living* our mission even as we work to bring it into being in the world?

Building leadership and lifting up skills from the lived experience of those most directly impacted by inequity and injustice is essential for long-term change and effective movement-building. While many movement organizations make an active commitment to building leadership in the communities they organize, relatively few member-leaders hold positions of strategic

leadership *within* organizations. For groups making an explicit commitment to being member-led, what does it take to fully realize that vision?

This report shares experience from one organization's journey. Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA)¹ is a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women with a double mission: to promote personal transformation *and* to build community power for social and economic justice. (See box, previous page.) For over 25 years MUA has been committed to leadership from grassroots members and to creating member-led decision-making structures. To fully embody and uphold their vision of becoming a predominantly member-led organization, MUA recognizes time and resources must be invested in developing member leadership at multiple levels of the organization's work including: grassroots base-building, internal operations and management, fundraising, public speaking and outreach, and coalition-building with movement allies.

MUA's Futuro Fuerte (Strong Future) initiative was born out of this commitment. Over a period of three years, the initiative has strengthened MUA's staff leadership, professional development and internal practices to become a more sustainable and successful Latina immigrant-led organization. MUA's nuanced and complex approach aims at creating a model that lifts up immigrant women's leadership and self-determination at every level of the organization, while also actively creating and promoting solidarity and shared leadership with US-born women.

¹ <http://mujeresunidas.net/>

MUA partnered with RoadMap consultants Ana Perez² and Emily Goldfarb,³ long-time allies and organizational development practitioners, to design and facilitate Futuro Fuerte. RoadMap⁴ is proud to collaborate with MUA to document and share this work as inspiration to other movement-builders and allies.

Grounded in lessons from MUA's experience and the Futuro Fuerte process, RoadMap produced this report, *Shifting Power*, for other movement organizations, capacity-builders and funders to share lessons and insight on the following questions:

Who Leads and Why Does it Matter?

The missions of social justice organizations speak to building power in marginalized communities to transform inequity and injustice. But unless we critically examine who leads and how power is used internally—incorporating an understanding of the impact of oppression at the individual, interpersonal, cultural *and* institutional levels—we run the risk of replicating those same systems inside our organizations. This, in turn, creates unhealthy dynamics that can erode relationships, impact sustainability and hinder our effectiveness externally. MUA's work to confront and interrupt these dynamics provides a strong example and rationale for internally-focused capacity-building to transform leadership structure and practice. Based on this experiment and years of experience, we believe that internal practice is inextricably linked with external effectiveness; that a group's work to intentionally build pathways from their base to strategic organizational leadership will lead to increased sustainability, alignment with purpose and values, and more powerful impact.

What Does it Take to Shift Power from the Inside Out?

To effect systemic change and meaningful power-sharing throughout the organization, Futuro Fuerte was designed with a transformational approach that required organization-wide engagement. The consultant team looked for ways to create change in each of the three domains of organizational life—hearts and minds, behavior, and systems/structure—and to support mutually reinforcing shifts in a continual cycle. Toward those ends, Futuro Fuerte implemented a multidimensional methodology, building on teachings and practice using three core modalities: training and tools for all staff, small group clinics for peer learning, and individualized coaching. For meaningful integration of anti-oppression principals and lasting shifts in internal power dynamics, a racial justice and equity-centered framework guided all aspects of the Futuro Fuerte process.

What Does Success Look Like?

Over a three-year period, Futuro Fuerte succeeded in creating shifts within MUA on multiple levels:

- » **Building pathways from member to staff to organizational leader:** MUA is growing new leadership with additional members hired into staff positions and existing staff from the base taking on new roles with increased responsibilities. One significant shift is the promotion of a long time member into the role of Executive Director.

2 <https://roadmapconsulting.org/consultants/ana-perez-consultant/>

3 <https://roadmapconsulting.org/consultants/emily-goldfarb-director-and-consultant>

4 <http://roadmapconsulting.org/>

- » **Deepening leadership and ownership of positional power:** Women already in positions of leadership are fully stepping into supervisory responsibilities and becoming strong mentors to newer staff, inspiring others to see their own power and potential.
- » **Shifting relationships to power and privilege:** Futuro Fuerte opened new lines of communication and understanding across differences of class, education, race and immigration status, and supported healthy power-sharing dynamics.
- » **Linking internal practice to movement impact:** Immigrant women staff leaders are increasingly present in leadership roles outside the organization, transforming MUA's alliances and shaping strategy in the broader movement.
- » **Laying the foundation for a smooth executive transition:** When power and information isn't concentrated at the top, it is easier for organizations to manage executive transition. When MUA's Co-Director (a non-immigrant white ally) began planning her transition off the team after 14 years, the Futuro Fuerte tools already in place generated a collective process for preparing for change, involving immigrant women on the staff and Board from the start.

Shifting Power shares concrete examples and perspectives from staff at all levels of the organization on the impact of Futuro Fuerte, and highlights leadership journeys of four MUA staff members to illustrate the shifts in more detail.

What Are Key Implications for the Field?

For organizations working to integrate member leadership at all levels, lessons from Futuro Fuerte offer several key takeaways:

Shifting power from the inside out is a transformation that requires organization-wide commitment and support from partners, funders and allies; deep investment of time and resources; and customized capacity-building support and internal agents of change to ensure ongoing integration of member leadership across the organization. With this report, RoadMap also offers to the field a new framework on the evolution from member-based to member-led organizational structure, culture and practice, with examples of levers of change and specific benchmarks, steps and support needed along the way.

Shifting Power seeks to situate MUA's example within the context of a broader movement, offering lessons, perspectives and questions for continued exploration by other movement leaders, funders and capacity-builders who are committed to supporting transformative change for equity and justice in our organizations, our alliances, our society as a whole.

Just as this work is ongoing within MUA, we hope this report will be an opening to continued dialogue and a rich sharing of ideas and inspiration.

II. WHO LEADS AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?



Before Futuro Fuerte, we immigrant women felt forced to step up to leadership and we resisted it and when we failed, we felt humiliated. Yet no one talked about it. We would give in to dependence on the English speakers, or “professional” women. So we would end up doing the cleaning and tidying up. We now recognize that we were afraid to take on leadership, to make an agenda, to use our English skills. As a group, we talked about how this pattern was disempowering us. We now have become more conscious of our roles, and of the fact that we have job descriptions that have to be fulfilled, but that goes hand in hand with more support and professional development. **(Juana)**

For social justice organizations committed to building power in marginalized communities, who leads and how power is used are critically important questions.

According to a Nonprofit Quarterly Report, only 18% of nonprofit professionals, 10% of EDs, and 5% of foundation CEOs are people of color. If we were to also look at class, formal education, immigration status, predominant language, and sexual orientation as lenses to examine reflection of communities served by an organization’s leadership, we believe these numbers would dwindle to far lower percentages.

Most of the non-profit sector relies on leadership models from the dominant culture. Leadership qualities traditionally valued in the corporate sphere—e.g. fast-paced, independent and self-directed, efficiency and outcomes-driven, formally educated, strong command of English— are rewarded with promotions and greater power.

When leadership expectations and structure in a social justice nonprofit are shaped predominantly by mainstream cultural standards, this may have the unintended consequences of reinforcing dependence and powerlessness.



Photo Credit: Brooke Anderson

Leadership of members from the base brings not only the wisdom and experience of those directly impacted by the issues we're working to transform, but may also bring leadership traits that are important, but undervalued, such as relationship and community-building, deep listening, as well as nurturing and supporting the development of others.

How Did We Get Here?

In MUA's case, questions about internal leadership came most acutely to the surface during a period of rapid expansion. In 2008, MUA was a small staff of six—four immigrant women (three from the base) and two non-immigrant women. Within a year, the staff had nearly doubled, and as MUA continued to grow (today, there is a full team of 26), staff and leadership recognized some patterns that were difficult to confront and interrupt.

In the first waves of expansion, though hiring women from the membership base was an implicit priority, the immigrant women who joined staff filled mostly direct service positions. When it came to filling external-facing roles—such as fundraising and coalition building—U.S.-born/U.S.-educated Latinas or white allies with English-language and professional skills were hired.



We realized we were doing what many groups do—hire folks from the base for service work, but find organizers from outside the community. We felt uncomfortable, but didn't know how to do it otherwise. We had no clear criteria about who and how to hire, or what it really meant to be immigrant-led, or how to get there.

(Andrea)

MUA's expansion grew out of the organization's strengths and successes as well as exciting new opportunities to participate in broader systemic-change efforts—core to MUA's mission. But the pressure to grow quickly to meet external demands without a clearly articulated vision or process for creating sustainable, shared leadership internally led to unspoken tensions.



As we grew, we experienced new dynamics amongst the larger and more diverse staff. We noticed more differences between the U.S.-born and educated staff members and immigrant staff members who came from the membership—inequalities of English language, computer, professional skills and differences in modes of interaction, behaviors, attitudes that were affecting leadership of the organization and how we felt working together. There were difficult, important conversations about some tensions and divisions among us that we dreaded, but that needed to happen and motivated us to bring in support to facilitate a process. **(Maria J)**

Evolving from Member-Based to Member-Led

One of the keys for MUA to move forward in a healthy, transformative way was examining and addressing the internal dynamics through a racial justice and equity lens.

The missions of social justice movement organizations speak to confronting and transforming systems of oppression. But until we understand and act on the impact of oppression internally—at the individual, interpersonal, cultural *and* institutional levels—we are often replicating those same systems in our organizations. This, in turn, creates unhealthy dynamics that can erode relationships, impact sustainability and hinder our effectiveness externally. If our work is focused on campaign wins at any cost—at the expense of a commitment to critically examine how leadership and power operate internally—we may achieve short-term gains, but we are not creating just systems or sustainable movements.

Strong member-based organizations prioritize building political and campaign strategy grounded in the lived experience of those most affected by the issues we're working to transform. We know what that looks like externally in effective campaign work, but how are those same values expressed in the internal structures of our organizations?



We started asking what it would look like for immigrant women to also be at the forefront of our organizing [and] fundraising work—not just providing testimony in those efforts, but in the lead, articulating and shaping strategy. **(Andrea)**

As MUA looked more deeply at what it would take to become more fully member-led—opening leadership pathways from the base to ALL levels of the organization—they knew that it wouldn't be enough to hold immigrant women's leadership as a broad value; success would require systematic examination of how power was used and distributed among staff and a willingness to make shifts in overall leadership structure and culture. They recognized a need for a clearly articulated vision for leadership inside the organization—including roles of immigrant women and their allies. They also recognized a need for significant investment in staff professional development: building new skills and self-confidence to ensure success of former members in staff roles, and strengthening supervision practices and ongoing internal support systems overall.



Futuro Fuerte's primary goal is to build the skills of immigrant women from the base so that we can see ourselves as leaders and feel confident in our work. And ultimately that benefits our whole team. **(Lulu)**

“Building the Bench” for Sustainable Leadership

A strong commitment to shared power and leadership development at every level, combined with structures to support success of new leaders coming in, profoundly impacts sustainability, making our organizations better prepared to weather transitions and challenges from inside and out.



When we develop the leadership of immigrant women within the staff, we make sure that our organization continues to function even if individual staff members transition out of the organization. It opens up the possibility to internally hire grassroots Latina immigrants, which is central to the philosophy of our organization.

(María J.)



At this moment, when our organization is growing, we have to strengthen our staff and make sure that the decision-making power is well distributed. It is important to include the voices and experiences of members who are now part of the staff, which may be different from the perspectives of the founding members. **(Aide)**

More leaders from the base in positions of strategic leadership inspire others to step into their own leadership and authentic power. A strong leadership pipeline ensures multiple generations of leaders coming into the organization prepared and committed, already carrying institutional memory as well as bringing deeply rooted perspectives, energy and ideas.

A focus on member-led structures and practices *inside* social justice organizations strengthens capacity and sustainability. Ultimately, we believe stronger, more sustainable organizations will accelerate social change at the movement level.

What does it take to bring this vision into being and what does it look like in practice? MUA's experience provides helpful lessons and examples.

III. WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

Building MUA's Leadership Capacity for a Strong Future

Laying the Groundwork

At the heart of MUA's readiness for change was a courageous internal reflection and acknowledgment of some challenges and patterns around leadership and power that emerged as the organization grew, and a willingness to commit to further work—from the inside out—on becoming the organization they envisioned.

MUA was also ready to engage in Futuro Fuerte with the support and groundwork laid through investment in organizational visioning, planning and leadership development in previous years. The Haas Jr. Flexible Leadership Award, the Novo Foundation's Move to End Violence organizational development program, and the National Domestic Worker Alliance's SOL (Strategy, Organizing and Leadership) program and numerous others invested in capacity-building to strengthen the systems, strategy, people, structure and overall effectiveness of the organization.

In 2005, MUA made a commitment to build and support a constituency-led Board of Directors, with at least 51% grassroots members. MUA has invested in significant skill-building and leadership development to empower their members to assume all of the traditional roles and responsibilities of non-profit governance, making their board an effective model of truly giving voice, capacity and authority to community members. Over time, MUA's capacity-building work yielded clarity and consensus on their pathways forward, and built the institutional momentum needed to formalize an ongoing, transformative leadership initiative—Futuro Fuerte.

The concrete instigation for Futuro Fuerte grew out of the organization's strategic visioning from 2010-2012, which culminated in 2013 with a collective agreement on a *Filosofía sobre la Identidad y Liderazgo en MUA* (**Philosophy on Identity and Leadership in MUA**), a detailed vision⁵ that articulates MUA's commitment to build the skills of immigrant women so that they are effective leaders at all levels of MUA's work, while also honoring the importance of solidarity and shared leadership with non-immigrant women.



Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis

5 <http://mujeresunidas.net/es/about/leadership-philosophy/>

The *Filosofía* laid the groundwork for Futuro Fuerte with a compelling picture of success, a clearly articulated rationale, and collective values to guide the process of achieving the vision.



We value the leadership of immigrant women and we seek to construct an organization that is able to develop and support our leadership not only to advance, but to live our mission. **(From MUA's Philosophy on Identity and Leadership)**

With organization-wide clarity on the purpose of internal leadership development and shared commitment to the “for what,” Futuro Fuerte was designed in answer to the question “How do we get there?” With robust leadership development efforts already well-established for MUA’s grassroots community members, and with a constituency-led board, Futuro Fuerte was initiated to focus on addressing barriers and needs within the staff. If the *Filosofía* was going to become a reality at all levels of the organization, MUA understood that an intentional and comprehensive strategy for implementation was necessary. With the challenges and successes they’d already faced in mind, MUA worked collaboratively with their consultant team to articulate concrete goals for Futuro Fuerte.



Photo Credit: Brooke Anderson

FUTURO FUERTE GOALS

The overarching purpose of Futuro Fuerte is to strengthen the leadership, professional development and internal practices at MUA to become a more sustainable and successful Latina immigrant-led organization. Specific objectives for the initial two-year phase (2014-2015) included:

- » Support a group of emerging immigrant women staff to be able to successfully take on supervision and program management and be ready to step into senior leadership;
- » Develop staff self confidence and skills in the areas of conflict resolution, communication and feedback, supervision, decision making, strategic thinking and more;
- » Support transformation at an individual and organizational level by connecting staff to their purpose and personal leadership vision within MUA;
- » Embed training and coaching within the context of power, race, class and privilege, with a particular focus on how Latina immigrant staff struggle with issues of positional power;
- » Integrate a transformational lens and tools to encourage lasting and far-reaching change in internal practice and external impact, building on existing leadership practices focused on healing, trauma, self awareness, political education and more;
- » Provide tools and practices to ensure that MUA creates ongoing conditions, structures and systems to support the success of all staff.

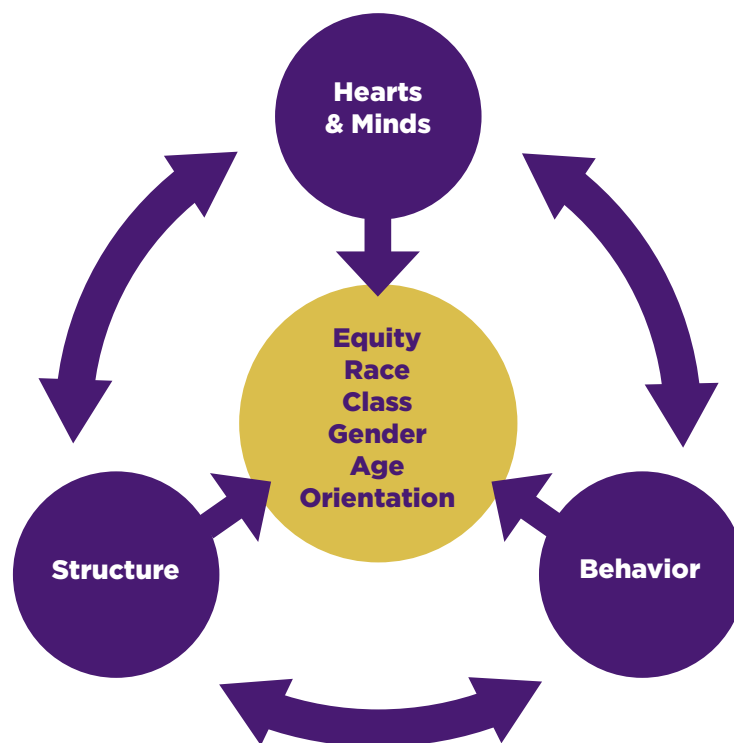


Futuro Fuerte Design: A Transformational and Equity-Driven Approach

For organizations working to evolve their structures and practices from member-based to truly member-led, what does it take to shift power from the inside out? Understanding that the realization of MUA's vision would require meaningful, lasting shifts at multiple levels, consultants Ana Perez and Emily Goldfarb incorporated a number of frameworks that tackle organizational change with a transformational approach.

Robert Gass⁶ defines transformation as “Change that is profound, radical, and sustainable; change that fundamentally alters the very nature of something.” Robert Gass’ Wheel of Change model helps identify the constellation of factors that must be attended to facilitate this deep change in a person, on a team, or within an organizational system. The Wheel of Change reminds us that to create sustainable shifts, we must work skillfully with three domains of organizational life:

- » **Hearts and Minds:** The full range of what people think and feel—their motivations, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, etc.
- » **Behavior:** What human beings actually do—their words and deeds, the actual choices they make to speak or not speak, to act or not to act; their habits.
- » **Structure:** The organizational structures, systems and processes through which work gets done.



6 <http://stproject.org/>

Futuro Fuerte incorporated and expanded on the Wheel of Change model to more fully address the purpose of the transformational work within MUA. To create and sustain meaningful member leadership and member-led organizations within a social justice context, Ana and Emily understood that an equity-driven approach would be necessary.



Central to MUA's vision is justice for immigrant women through lifting up their leadership. To this end, we integrated an anti-oppression lens and tools into all of the organizational and leadership development work. We added a new sphere to STP's wheel of change to put equity at the center of the work, informing all other areas of transformation. For example, looking only at the skills development gaps of immigrant women without holding accountable the failure of the system to provide opportunity for learning, was putting the responsibility for the gaps on the shoulders of immigrant women. And when MUA staff explored purpose, it was necessary to build in exercises that explored how privilege impacted an individual's ability to dream of a purpose that surpassed only survival. **(Emily)**

Futuro Fuerte Scope: Organization-Wide Transformation

In designing the approach for Futuro Fuerte, it also became clear that a meaningful shift in leadership would not succeed if the focus were solely on building skills and capacity of members or staff who come from the base. Transformation requires organization-wide commitment and a willingness on the part of *everyone* in the organization to look at how power is used—who is exercising it and who is not. To effect systemic change and meaningful power-sharing throughout the organization, each staff person must be supported in doing the internal work necessary to understand and transform dynamics of oppression and authentically own their power and privilege.

Ana and Emily incorporated elements from VISIONS, Inc. to address a cultural shift from a monocultural/western approach to a multicultural/equity-driven approach.⁷ This framework supported staff in understanding the differences in skill level as outcomes of the disparities in how opportunities are distributed across race, class and place of birth and not as only a result of individual achievement and effort. The following VISIONS tools supported Futuro Fuerte's goals to shift towards greater equity:

- » **Guidelines for Cross Cultural/Power Communication** – a set of value and behavioral expectations that could be applied at a personal level and in all spheres of organizational life.
- » **Historically Included and Excluded Groups** – a theory that lifts up how oppression dynamics occur historically and currently and who benefits and who is targeted by oppression depending on the category (race, gender, sexual preference, etc.).

⁷ <http://visions-inc.org/>

- » **Modern Oppression and Internalized Oppression Behaviors** – tool that names specific habitual behaviors people on both sides of the oppression dynamic engage in.



The VISIONS tools allowed MUA to explore the “natural order” of who did what and why. Those with more privilege at the organization were supported to use their privilege in ways that ultimately shared power, and those with less privilege were supported to step up and own their power. For instance, as they looked at the roles individuals took on for a fundraising event, immigrant women always picked doing the manual labor jobs—cooking, setting up the room and washing dishes. US-born and formally educated women planned the program, managed the event and greeted donors. By challenging the values, beliefs and habits that led each group to self-segregate by tasks, MUA staff were able to develop strategies at the systems and structure level that interrupted these dynamics. **(Ana)**

MUA’s mission and long-standing commitment to personal transformation and healing laid the groundwork for the depth of engagement and vulnerability the Futuro Fuerte approach would demand. In addition, some of the tools and processes from previous training programs—including Novo Foundation’s Move to End Violence and National Domestic Worker Alliance’s SOL program, led by Generative Somatics—had prepared MUA staff leaders for transformative work through mind-body practices focused on equity and liberation, including breath-work, self-care, movement, art, writing and music. Ongoing transformational change is hard work, demanding strong inner resources and a culture of care and mutual support. Dismantling oppressive dynamics can often activate anxiety stemming from internalized trauma. With an awareness of these challenges and a commitment to supporting healing and wellness for each member of MUA, Futuro Fuerte also incorporated mindfulness practice such as meditation, indigenous spirituality and physical movement to deepen and integrate transformative shifts in a supportive, holistic way.

Futuro Fuerte Methodology: Comprehensive Training and Experiential Practice

In designing Futuro Fuerte’s methodology, the consultant team looked for ways to identify and address the critical elements in each of the three domains of organizational life—hearts and minds, behavior, and systems—and to support mutually reinforcing shifts in a continual cycle in which changes in one domain evoke and reinforce change in the other two. Toward those ends, Futuro Fuerte implemented a multidimensional approach, building on teachings and practice using three core modalities:

- 1) Full Staff Training Sessions and Retreats** built organization-wide commitment and competency to move together toward shared goals and fostered a collective learning environment where immigrant women’s leadership is prioritized.



Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis

2) Small Group Clinics/Peer Learning Circles went deeper on a topic introduced in the larger trainings and/or focused on individual experiences, sharing successes and challenges of trying on new practices and providing peer-to-peer advice.

3) Individualized Coaching created a space for individuals to tackle and unlearn patterns that are barriers to transformation, specifically focused on each person's individual goals, challenges and needs.

The purpose, summary of topics covered and key lessons learned from each component are detailed in the Appendix.

IV. WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



Photo Credit: Rucha Chitnis

Since Futuro Fuerte began, MUA has made significant shifts towards realization of the organization's vision and philosophy of leadership. Today, out of a staff of 26 people, a total of 25 staff identify as Latina and 20 staff members are immigrant women. Fifteen of the staff are formerly from the membership, and five are immigrant women who did not come directly from the base. Additionally, MUA's staff includes five U.S.-born Latinas and one U.S.-born white ally.

In focus groups about the effectiveness of Futuro Fuerte, MUA staff shared perspectives on the impact of the program, including: their sense of purpose and their own unique expression of leadership; shifts in internal

dynamics and communication practices; the value of new support systems and structures to ensure staff development and success; and concrete changes in how MUA engages and who represents the organization in external campaign and movement-building work.

Growing New Leadership: From Member to Staff to Organizational Leader

MUA has hired six new immigrant women staff from the base since Futuro Fuerte began. One outcome of the Futuro Fuerte process has been a deeper recognition that members joining staff face a significant adjustment to nonprofit organizational culture and roles—not only a whole new set of expectations and responsibilities to meet, but also shifts in the relationship dynamics between them and other members.



Futuro Fuerte has helped me transition from member to staff. This is a drastic change, as it implies more responsibility as well as working with the members from a different place. I have acquired tools for managing groups and resolving conflicts that have given me more confidence in my new role at MUA. **(Verónica)**

MUA's leadership recognized that they needed to create more realistic job descriptions and put expanded support systems in place. New members joining the staff now have the benefit of a day-long orientation to Futuro Fuerte goals and process. In addition, MUA has committed to providing individual coaching to support them in their transition, identify leadership goals, gain tools to navigate new roles and conflicts, and learn new skills. Futuro Fuerte has also focused on strengthening supervision so that managers supervising new staff are better prepared to provide the structure and support they need to be successful.

MUA's vision for becoming a more fully member-led organization demands support not only during the *initial* transition from the membership base into a staff role, but also prioritizing leadership growth opportunities for immigrant women staff in an ongoing, intentional way. During the Futuro Fuerte process, a number of immigrant women staff gained the concrete skills and confidence necessary to take on new responsibilities. The table below provides some examples of concrete shifts in roles of former members in staff positions who are stepping into increased organizational and strategic leadership.

Futuro Fuerte Staff Development Chart

Immigrant women staff from base	Role before Futuro Fuerte (FF)	Specific skill/shift supported through FF	New Leadership Role/ Additional Responsibility
Miriam	Volunteer Peer Counselor and Group Facilitator	Strengthened self-confidence to be able to support members in navigating racist police and social services; setting limits and prioritizing self-care when supporting women in trauma; stepping into supervision of volunteers and interns.	Full-time Domestic Violence Program Coordinator responsible for supervision and planning and running a day-long conference for over 250 people.
Laura	Program Assistant	Provided training on using email and managing spreadsheets, coached on how to supervise staff.	In 2016 moved into new role as Programs Coordinator, supervising two staff from the base, in 2018 joined the staff Leadership Team.
Lulu	Grassroots Fundraiser	Strengthened ability to provide feedback, create workplans, set personal limits, and guide staff in implementing Futuro Fuerte work.	Wellness Coordinator responsible for integrating Futuro Fuerte tools at all meetings and retreats
Monica	Volunteer Peer Counselor	Strengthened self-confidence that resulted in ability to plan and facilitate a crisis counselor training for 20 women; work in collaboration with other agencies, speak to the media, and supervise volunteers.	MUA Sexual Assault Program Coordinator responsible for planning and implementing trainings for MUA and allies, program promotion, and supervision of MUA volunteers
Enma	Part-time Outreach Associate	Provided training on computer use, keeping a calendar of appointments, time management, program data tracking.	Moved to full time role as Immigrant Rights Organizer, managing deliverables for two city contracts.
Maria	Childcare Provider	Strengthened ability to provide direct supervision to childcare providers, including skills and self-confidence to hold providers accountable via courageous conversations and goal setting; design and implement monthly trainings for a team of 15	Childcare Program Coordinator, responsible for program design, implementation and supervision
Veronica	Community Leader	Strengthened self-confidence to transition from member into a staff organizing role leading MUA's efforts to educate domestic workers about their rights and mobilize them to participate in MUA's campaigns.	Workers' Rights Outreach and Education Organizer



Deepening Leadership: Owning Positional Power and Inspiring Others

With support from Futuro Fuerte training and coaching, women already in positions of leadership in the organization are deepening ownership of their positional power, fully stepping into supervisory responsibilities, and becoming strong mentors to newer staff. MUA staff are also seeing how powerful shifts in one staff leader directly supports the leadership pathways for others, how growing leadership of one immigrant woman inspires others to see their own power and potential.

“

Futuro Fuerte has helped me develop a type of leadership that is not based on personal prominence, but that opens up spaces for other leaders to take on bigger roles. It has helped me become a better listener and allow myself to disagree. It has pushed me to become a leader in different ways. **(Ariana)**

“

After this process, immigrant women are seen as the protagonists in the organization and in the leadership role they play—running meetings, writing reports and being computer literate. Not every immigrant woman is there yet but many are and more importantly, when we see immigrant women taking subordinate roles we call it out and we make changes. **(Juana)**

“

I take time to invest in supervision. As an ally, I see, name and address privilege and power dynamics. As a supervisor I now have a lot of tools at my disposal, as do others in the team. I have also been having courageous conversations so communication is much more direct. **(Karina)**

Maria came to the U.S. at age 19 from a small community in Jalisco, Mexico, and joined MUA a few months after she arrived in San Francisco.

- 1989** Founding Member
- 1994** Hired as SF Office Coordinator
- 1999** Coordinator of MUA's new Oakland office
- 2004** Transitioned to Coordinator of Support Programs
- 2007** Promoted to Director of Programs
- 2009** Joined MUA Leadership Team

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Maria Jimenez

“I’ve learned to embrace that in MUA, I have power.”



Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez

“In my life there have been many times when I’ve felt powerless and that I didn’t even have the right to open my mouth. So no wonder I was afraid to own my power. As a Latina and an immigrant, I came to the conclusion that I should let the others do the work of facilitating the retreats and meetings, taking notes and doing work on the computer. I was more comfortable preparing the food. Through Futuro Fuerte, I discovered how I like to hide and deny the power that I have. I didn’t want others to know that I was the one making hard decisions—like firing people. Internally, I had to face my doubts about whether I was making good or bad decisions, and externally I would blame the other members of the leadership team for unpopular decisions. Before Futuro Fuerte, it was easier for me to say ‘well, that decision got made by the co-directors and they are the ones who do it all, for good or ill.’ I did not see how not taking responsibility for my decisions created tension between the staff and the two co-directors and eroded their trust in me as a manager. I learned to embrace that in MUA I have power, and I’ve worked to know what to do with it. Now, I proudly take responsibility for the decisions I make (even the hard ones) and my team respects me even more.”

Walking the Talk: Shifting Relationships to Power and Privilege



The most visible difference I see so far is that people communicate in a much more open way and with fewer prejudices. Opening up space to be able to talk about difficult things, talk about the reality of each person, how we work together, what we need to do together to reach our goals at MUA has been very powerful. **(Lulu)**

Futuro Fuerte opened new lines of communication, awareness and understanding across differences of class, education, race and immigration status, as well as role/level positional power within the organization.



“The first time we did the power and privilege chart, it was an uncomfortable moment for me. The chart has two columns; you pick where you fall into either of these two categories. As a child of Mexican immigrants growing up in Chicago, I had always perceived myself as not coming from a privileged background. But then to see my chart and to see some of my immigrant coworkers’ charts, I saw that I have all of these advantages in our world over them. And I understood that this is how my coworkers had been perceiving us (US-born women) the whole time. It allowed me to own how speaking English, being born in this country and having a university education have given me skills I took for granted. When the immigrant women spoke up about feeling oppressed by us, I used to not understand. After Futuro Fuerte, my coworkers understood that just because we grew up in this country speaking English, I did not have it as easy as white people had it here. Getting to this mutual understanding has allowed me to step up as stronger ally to my immigrant coworkers who come from the base. I use my power and I don’t feel intimidated.” **(Aide)**

With a more nuanced understanding of how power and privilege operate in US society, MUA staff have been able to build a deeper respect and recognition for where each woman is coming from, what obstacles she has faced, and what unique perspective she brings to the shared vision for MUA’s work.



Futuro Fuerte has been so important here because we have people from so many different backgrounds at MUA. It has helped us become more conscious of the ways that things like privilege and other differences affect each person’s relationship to their job, and that helps lift up the particular kind of support they might need. **(Erika)**

Overall, with more honest and courageous communication about internal divisions that had previously been unacknowledged, many staff spoke to an increased sense of freedom to bring their full selves to the work, and overall report a healthier, more transparent and mutually supportive culture that reflects MUA’s values and mission.



Before Futuro Fuerte, I was used to doing things that hurt me, made me feel bad or trapped. I had a hard time understanding the communication tools, because they were so different from what I was doing. Now that I am using the tools, and I am having brave conversations when I need to, I feel free. This work is liberating. **(Juana)**

Juana came to MUA in 1990 after suffering domestic violence and crossing the border without documents.



LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Juana Flores

“I demanded that my voice be heard and respected within MUA and outside MUA.”



Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez

“It took a lot for me to embrace that I could be one of the top leaders at MUA. Coming to that position as a member from the base and feeling that as a woman I had zero value and as an immigrant I had no right to ask or claim anything, to then having to build the confidence to be at the forefront of MUA was a big challenge for me. For years, my co-director and I would fall into a pattern where she would make all the decisions and I either did not speak up or when I spoke up my voice was not heard. My voice was not strong because I was full of doubts and fear. I found myself playing the role of a tarapete (a token); I was director in name but I did not exercise my power and did not actively participate in decision making. It was as if I had a little voice whispering in my ear voicing all my insecurities. So I would feel paralyzed and others would rescue me and do the tasks that were on my job description. Futuro Fuerte helped me realize that I needed to take my power and not be afraid to speak up. I learned the skills to quiet the inner negative voice and the skills to really do all that my position requires. I finally used my voice to say this dynamic cannot and will not continue. I am the woman who understands the needs of our members, the one who crossed the border without papers. I have the right to have my opinions determine the political stance MUA takes, who it hires and who we collaborate with. Futuro Fuerte helped me ground in myself and believe that my voice mattered and this changed everything. I now push myself to step up and demand that my voice be heard and respected within MUA and outside MUA.

“After Futuro Fuerte, I was elected to be the board president of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and I stepped into the role not as a token, but as a full partner. I was providing ideas, making decisions and really and fully occupied the space well. I felt proud of representing domestic workers in the US internationally. When I spoke at the United Nations and then worked with them to ratify the international law to protect domestic workers, I had the knowledge I needed to be an effective advocate and I used my voice to inform government officials of the plight of other workers like myself. I now travel internationally and make these links. Futuro Fuerte has helped me gain confidence to become a stronger leader both within and outside the organization. It helped me think about the ways in which I want to represent my community. It helped me get to a more confident and liberated place.”

Moving the Mission: External Alliances Begin to Transform

MUA's investment in Futuro Fuerte emerged from a commitment to *live* the organization's double mission of personal transformation and building community power, even as they work to bring social and economic justice into being in the world. At the beginning of Futuro Fuerte, MUA was struggling with a pattern that placed mostly US-born or educated women in external-facing roles. Now, with explicit attention on this issue, support and emphasis on new skills development and power sharing, immigrant women staff leaders are increasingly present in leadership roles outside the organization, shaping strategy in the broader movement. Now, eight of MUA's immigrant women staff are responsible for representing MUA in key coalitions or in partnerships with collaborating organizations. For example, MUA's Program Director is part of a statewide culturally-responsive domestic violence network. MUA's direct service staff hold critical relationships with key partners in efforts to improve access to domestic violence and sexual assault services for Latina immigrants. And MUA's new organizers have taken a seat at the table at key local and state coalitions for workers' rights and immigrant rights.

Throughout MUA, immigrant women and their allies are tapping their inherent strengths and power, challenging themselves and each other to continue to grow, to sharpen skills and stretch their leadership in new directions. Each of these steps towards transformative change directly addresses the organization's mission and strengthens the work from the inside out.

Staying Resilient Through Fear and Conflict

The tools of Futuro Fuerte have proven helpful in challenging times. After the 2016 election, many MUA members -- like immigrants throughout the US -- experienced deep anxiety and fear. For a time, MUA's advocacy work virtually came to a halt, as members disappeared from view, scared of both federal immigration authorities and xenophobic attacks from US citizens. Some MUA staff members from the membership base felt so triggered and fearful themselves that they stopped doing organizing and advocacy work.

In response to these fears, MUA held a series of staff meetings and retreats to develop a safety protocol to secure their offices from ICE raids and

to help members develop family emergency plans in case of detention or deportation. Somatic and culturally responsive tools for managing anxiety were integrated into these meetings, such as breathwork, aromatherapy, and ancestral medicine circles. Slowly but surely, MUA staff moved from paralysis to action, members returned, and the advocacy work reignited.

During this period of heightened anxiety, two long-time organizers -- both immigrant women from the membership base -- left abruptly under challenging circumstances. The Leadership Team organized a series of Futuro Fuerte meetings to encourage staff to share their concerns about what happened, allow for venting, and discuss how best to heal and move forward. The conversations also resulted in a list of HR and internal communication policies and protocols that have been integrated into a multi-year organizational development workplan.

Managing Executive Transition: Building a Pipeline of Leadership

For many organizations, an executive leadership transition can be deeply destabilizing. Some long-time staff expressed anxiety and concern when MUA Co-Director Andrea Lee shared her intention to transition off the team after 14 years of holding a strong position of leadership. However, Futuro Fuerte had prepared the organization to generate a collective process to manage this change. A Transition Committee was formed, made up almost entirely of immigrant women from the membership base on the staff and Board. RoadMap facilitated a series of meetings with the Transition Team, the leadership team, and staff to evaluate the overall leadership structure and discuss how to use the transition to strengthen the power of immigrant women on the team.

Under the new structure, the Leadership Team has expanded from four to seven people, including two representatives from each of three internal teams and the Executive Director. Additionally, more decision-making power has been delegated to the directors of each program, so that most decisions aren't delayed waiting for all seven people to meet. The new Leadership Team will rotate periodically to allow multiple staff members to develop leadership skills. The new structure is built around the concepts of distributed and collective leadership. Thus, even with an Executive Director at the helm, power isn't concentrated at the top, and staff at all levels are being groomed step into greater roles of leadership over time.

Laura Camberos immigrated to Oakland with her husband, expecting their first child. She now lives in East Oakland with her husband and three children.

- 2002** Joined MUA as member
- 2006** Organizing Internship
- 2011** Volunteer Domestic Violence Counselor in MUA's shelter collaboration with Ruby's Place
- 2012** Hired as Part-time Oakland Program Assistant
- 2013** Transitioned to Full-Time Coordinator of Member Meetings and Childcare Program
- 2016** Began supervising two staff members
- 2018** Promoted to Programs Coordinator, joined MUA Leadership Team

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Laura Camberos

"A leader is a person who works on herself."



Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez

"I have been able to identify the leader that lives within me and realize that a leader is a person who works on herself. I am exploring and getting rid of the -isms that operate in me. I now know that understanding how I have bought into oppressive messages about others impacts my willingness to want to build movement across differences. As a result of Futuro Fuerte and of understanding racism in the US, I am working closely in solidarity with other communities. This was hard for me to do. Living in low-income neighborhoods that are mixed Latino and African American, I have had my share of negative encounters with black folks. So before Futuro Fuerte I used to just write off the whole African American community, but now I understand what creates the conditions that put our communities against each other. Before Futuro Fuerte, I did not understand the Black Lives Matter movement. Now I not only understand it but I am a big champion for it. I now know that it is personal transformation and our civic-political participation that allows us all to join the struggle for the changes we want. Futuro Fuerte has also helped me dream more, to be able to say 'I can be a supervisor' even though I am an immigrant woman, in the process of learning English as a second language, and learning new technology. I feel strong, confident in my leadership, able to say 'I can grow, and others can grow with me also'.

LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

Andrea Lee

“The organization needs us to intentionally demonstrate how to build effective relationship across differences.”



Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez

“When I joined staff as the only white woman on the staff of Mujeres Unidas, as someone who was born in the US and has the privilege of citizenship, of English being my first language, as well as class and educational privilege, I had a lot to learn. I was hired as Co-Director in a role I had very little training and preparation for. I thought my job was to be there to train, support and grow someone else that could do what I was doing, and then pass it on and leave. That was arrogant because I didn’t actually know how to do the job. I also had a ton of learning to do about what it meant to work in collaboration (side by side) with immigrant women as a white person. For instance, I had to challenge my dominant culture practice of highly valuing efficiency and productivity over other ways to get the work done. It took me a long time to slow down, and not to see moving in a slower pace as being less effective. And to recognize that it’s okay to work at a different speed to make sure that everyone is together and everyone is with us. I came into this organization thinking I was humble and that I recognized when there was something I didn’t really know how to do, but I also believed all the dominant culture messages that I knew better.

For those of us who ended up in leadership in the organization who are not immigrants from our base, Futuro Fuerte provided us with a new awareness that we are not just here by chance or passing through, but that the organization needs us to intentionally demonstrate how to build effective relationship across differences. While it is an incredible strength to have an all black or an all immigrant or all Latino organization, it is also important to show how Latina immigrants can be in power-sharing relationship with white women, with women born here, with the children of immigrants.”

Prior to coming to MUA, Andrea Lee was a community organizer building women’s political power and volunteered in Guatemala doing solidarity and development work with women’s organizations.

2004

Became MUA’s Co-Director

2005

Shepherded MUA to becoming its own 501(c)(3)

2009

Transitioned from lone admin/fund-raising/finance staff to supervising a team of 3

2013

Began Supervision of Campaign Director and state-wide Domestic Worker Coalition

2017

Began planning leadership transition using Futuro Fuerte tools.

2018

Transitioned out of leadership at MUA

Next Steps for MUA

Transformational change in any organization is long-term work. Building, strengthening, and sustaining meaningful leadership pathways from the base into all levels of MUA's organizational structure is not a one-time strategic outcome, but a continual process requiring ongoing commitment and capacity.



One of the key questions related to any kind of capacity-building or leadership support is—Will this stick? What will it take so that this isn't a one-time thing, a lesson that doesn't last, a practice, skill, commitment that doesn't get embedded into the organizational culture, that doesn't live beyond this current group of staff? Organizational change efforts —be they small or big—require ongoing attention. A brief intervention of any kind rarely has lasting impact and given the turnover at organizations, even a significant change effort needs to be revisited and refreshed. **(Emily)**

Internal Agents of Change: “Coordinadoras de Bienestar”



MUA's internal Leadership Team was the body responsible for working with the consultants to oversee Futuro Fuerte during the first two years. Frequent meetings provided space to review, plan, coordinate, evaluate and identify changes and new priorities emerging in the organization. At the end of the first year of Futuro Fuerte, it became clear that MUA needed internal staff to serve as midwives to the ongoing leadership development process that would continue beyond consultant support. At RoadMap, we call that role “embedded capacity builders” or “internal agents of change” and we are experimenting with this concept in a number of projects.



Two MUA staff members now hold the roles of “Coordinadoras de Bienestar,” or Wellness Coordinators: Lulu Reboyoso, who is a former member from the base and Erika Estrada, who was hired as a “professional” staff. Erika and Lulu are now responsible for integrating Futuro Fuerte tools into every staff meeting, identifying additional staff training needs, and supporting supervisors to take on the mentoring and leadership development needs of their teams.



We can't lose what we gained in Futuro Fuerte! There is now more of a culture of growing and learning. We see our role as guides—a bridge—whose job it is to keep the tools alive, to give continuity to the practices from Futuro Fuerte. It's for us to always be remembering, practicing, learning, teaching, trying on things so that in the same way we have been changed by Futuro Fuerte, so will all of us, including new staff, continue to be changed and supported in the future. **(Erika)**

Lulu Reboyoso (top) and Erika Estrada (Bottom)
Photo Credit: Jesús Iñiguez



Erika and Lulu receive coaching from Emily or Ana from Roadmap every several weeks where Futuro Fuerte tools and practices are reviewed, organizational and staff progress is assessed, and the transfer of skills and confidence from the external consultants to the “internal agents of change” is deepened.



The coaching I have been getting (to support my role as Wellness Coordinator) helps me to more deeply understand the importance of Futuro Fuerte. The more I have to practice it with the staff and not only understand it in theory, the more understanding and confidence I have. One learns so much more by having to teach others! **(Lulu)**



We hope that Futuro Fuerte is going to be a permanent and stable program. We want to have long-term goals and practical strategies and at the same time be flexible enough to incorporate emerging needs. We trust the Wellness Coordinators to guide us and lead this project, and at the same time, we are clear that this requires every one of us to practice the tools daily. **(Juana)**

VI. WHAT ARE KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD?



Shifting power from the inside out is a transformation that requires organization-wide commitment, deep investment of time and resources, and customized, relevant capacity-building support.

1) Organization-Wide Commitment; Support from Partners and Funders

A willingness and commitment from *everyone* in the organization to engage tough questions and make shifts leads to powerful results. Many organizations with a strong commitment to member-led structures, like MUA, make intentional decisions to include allies on staff, and must work to build meaningful shared leadership across diverse histories, backgrounds and experience. In such blended staff structures, when ALL staff (staff from the base as well as allies) are supported and fully engage in a transformative process, it can be a win/win for the entire organization, with everyone functioning in more authentic, healthy, effective ways, breaking through dysfunctional power dynamics and increasing impact on issues the organization is working to confront.

But barriers to increased pathways from the base to all levels of organizational leadership exist not only *inside* individual social justice organizations. The prevailing expectations and modes of interaction in the broader non-profit field and funding streams reinforce the challenges organizations face in shifting leadership modes and opportunities to be more inclusive of those directly impacted by inequity and injustice. For example, to meet specific

expectations of the dominant culture's pace and emphasis on outcomes, impact-measurement and productivity, we place heavy priority on professional skills without acknowledgment of barriers to accessing those skills among impacted communities. Movement-wide, among social-justice funders, partners and allies, we need a deeper awareness of what it really takes to make shifts towards more member-led organizations and the investment required to do so.

2) Deep Investment of Time and Resources

According to the Talent Philanthropy Project (TPP), less than 1% of all foundation dollars nationally goes to leadership and professional development. TPP founder Rusty Morgen Stahl argues that across the entire nonprofit sector, we are grossly underinvesting in the single most important resource in social change organizations: people. Stahl goes further to warn of the consequences: *"Given the limited and apparently dwindling levels of foundation funding for nonprofit talent infrastructure, it is not surprising that the social sector suffers from poor recruitment, retention, and retirement, which could in turn be causing serious damage to performance and sustainability."*⁸ For organizations committed to building leadership from their base and creating member-led organizational structures, these issues are even more pressing and complex.

Powerful movements are built by strong, sustainable organizations. To successfully confront and transform unjust systems, we need longevity—not just staying-power, but *increased* power and effectiveness over time. All too often, investment in internal leadership development is seen as optional or secondary to external campaign work. The more clearly we can link the importance of internal capacity-building to long-term sustainability of social justice organizations and ultimately, to increased power and impact on our missions, the more we can make the case (internally and externally) for the support needed to engage in this critical work.

3) Customized Capacity-Building Support and Internal Agents of Change

Not only do base-building organizations need the commitment and investment of resources to build lasting leadership capacity, they require culturally relevant training, tools, and supports to address unique leadership and professional development needs.

Existing mainstream leadership development and professional development models are missing key pieces to effectively address the multiple kinds of transformation needed to bring member-led structures and practices fully into being. Key components of transformation and skills-building are often compartmentalized and seen as separate. In the case of immigrant women leaders, for example, there are no existing programs or resources that make effective leadership and professional development content available with a

8 Rusty Morgen Stahl, M.A., Talent Philanthropy Project and New York University, Talent Philanthropy: Investing in Nonprofit People to Advance Nonprofit Performance, *The Foundation Review*, 2013 Vol 5:3 doi: 10.4087/FOUNDATIONREVIEW-D-13-00016.1



focus on making the leap to strategic organizational leadership and building critical management skills in linguistically and culturally relevant ways.

Addressing those gaps and other needs, effective capacity-building in this context should consider these key points:

- » Leadership and professional development must be seen through and integrated with lens of equity—including race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation—and understood in terms of power, privilege and oppression dynamics.
- » Because it requires transformation at multiple levels, to effect and sustain change on the internal leadership landscape across the organization, capacity-building requires multi-pronged strategies with multiple interventions and supports at different levels, including training and tools available to *all* staff, individualized coaching, and ongoing peer support.
- » External or short-term capacity-building efforts alone are insufficient; the work must be made permanent with internal agents of change who will continue to hold, prioritize, and facilitate the ongoing work. “Embedded Capacity Builders” need support and training to get started, as well as time (and the resources to make that time possible) explicitly allocated for monitoring and supporting transformative change practices in an ongoing way.

Roadmap to Change: Member-Based Organizations to Member-Led Organizations

There is no cookie cutter approach to building meaningful leadership pathways from the base to strategic organizational leadership. Nor is the transformation to becoming fully member-led the goal of every social justice organization. For groups making an explicit commitment to becoming member-led or increasing member leadership in critical ways inside the organization, our hope is that this report offers some inspiration, new perspectives and questions for internal exploration.

As food for thought for these ongoing conversations, RoadMap is offering to the field (in the following chart) some ideas on organization-wide levers of change and benchmarks, steps and support needed along the journey towards meaningful member-led organizational culture, structure, and practice. Specific needs, entry points and depth of engagement will vary for each organization based on its own long-term vision and goals. Just as MUA's own transformation is not complete, but ongoing, we encourage each organization to consider its own priorities and readiness and engage at its own pace, understanding that the change process is long-term.

As MUA members, staff and board continue to grapple with internal leadership development in the years to come, RoadMap hopes to join them and other movement organizations, funders, and capacity-builders in a rich dialogue about struggles and successes towards our shared vision for transformative social justice.

From MEMBER-BASED to MEMBER-LED

Lessons and Levers for Organization-Wide Transformation

VISION & CORE VALUES

PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP

Defining Characteristics of MEMBER-BASED Organizations

- Members' perspectives are prioritized in identifying problems and implementing solutions.
- Experiences of those most impacted by organization's political goals are explicitly valued.

- Ongoing base-building is a core strategy; Growing the number and responsibility of leaders involved in campaigns and program work is an explicit goal and measure of success.
- There are established, resourced and sustained member recruitment, orientation and leadership development practices.
- Paid staff provide campaign and program work leadership, including strategy design and delegation of tasks and roles.

Key Levers of Change

- Commit to foster open discussions on reasons to become member-led.
- Apply an equity lens (race, class, gender, immigration status, etc.) to clarify how power and privilege are systematically playing out.
- Agree on concrete changes and how they relate to the core purpose of organization.
- Commit to raise, invest, and dedicate resources and time to the transformation process.



- Examine existing barriers to participation; develop and implement policies related to language/bilingualism, childcare and other practices to increase inclusiveness.
- Identify skills necessary for members to contribute to campaign and program strategy and incorporate these into leadership development efforts.
- Examine roles and notice conscious and unconscious power dynamics and “tokenism” in the organization: Are members assigned manual or support jobs, while paid staff are thinking and planning?
- Existing paid staff consciously make space for member-leaders and staff from the base to take on new roles; support is put in place to ensure success.
- Slow down enough to make meaningful shifts in how campaigns and programs are planned, designed and carried out.

Defining Characteristics of MEMBER-LED Organizations

- Commitment to being member-led is explicitly defined and stated in vision, mission and values; embraced organization-wide.
- Equity is proactively defined and valued. For example, lived experience is as equally valued as formal education.
- Anti-oppression values are explicitly expressed and supported in external and internal practice.

- Base-building is seen not only as critical to growing community power and leadership for external campaign work, but also as integrally connected to building leadership internally.
- Members are provided with intentional opportunities for growth; positions with increasing responsibility are explicitly open to members from the base and professional development support is in place.
- Member-leaders and staff from the base are integrally engaged in campaign and program work—from on-the-ground work to externally visible leadership (media, public-facing organizing efforts, etc.) to leading strategy development.

Grounded in lessons from MUA's Futuro Fuerte initiative and years of experience in other social justice organizations, RoadMap offers this chart as a starting place. Our rubric makes a distinction between member-based and member-led organizations—as an evolving framework to support discussion about how movement organizations can expand leadership and participation of impacted communities.

DECISION-MAKING

- Members are consulted and sometimes have a voting role in determining priorities.
- Paid staff make most decisions about programs, and the ongoing work; members are sometimes consulted.



- Examine decision-making at all levels (for internal and external work) and create clear principles and practices about inclusion, participation and power-sharing.
- College educated/US-born/white staff commit to sharing power and are supported to shift the ways they use their power and privilege.
- Member-leaders and staff from the base own authentic power and challenge internalized oppression that may hinder their ability to step up.
- Define decision-making responsibilities and lines of accountability for members, staff and board, with commitment to integrate maximum appropriate involvement from membership.



- Member-leaders and former members in staff positions lead political and strategic decision-making with broad participation from members of the base.
- Members make decisions on all issues that impact them and provide feedback to staff on other issues at the organizational level.



STAFF & BOARD COMPOSITION

- Members may have short-term internships or stipend program positions, but few, if any, members are paid staff.
- Board is primarily composed of allies and other stakeholders. It may include a member or two, but representation from the base may feel symbolic. Board continues to function status quo without significant effort to incorporate community members.

- Make explicit goal of members becoming staff; create timeline and plan to shift internal structure.
- Examine and challenge standard hiring practices. Are formal educational requirements always necessary for professional roles?
- Actively recruit members to open staff positions; assess needs and create conditions to maximize success, including clear roles and adequate support from supervisor.
- Integrate professional development with members' leadership development to ensure that more leaders from the base have skills to enter staff roles.
- Provide coaching, training, and other support for staff hired from the base so they build strategic leadership skills for director-level roles.
- Continually monitor how power is shared in the organization through a racial-justice and equity lens.
- Make explicit goal of grassroots members joining board of directors, including plans for recruitment, selection and orientation.
- Provide relevant, customized training and support for grassroots members to become effective board leaders able to take on fiscal, fundraising and policy obligations.

- 50% or more of the paid staff are former members; former members occupy key/high level positions (director level).
- 50% or more of board of directors are from the base; all are fully supported and integrated as active, engaged, contributing members.



APPENDIX



Photo Credit: David Bacon

Futuro Fuerte Content and Methodology

With a transformational vision and equity-driven values informing all aspects of Futuro Fuerte, the program addressed learning at multiple levels to shift dynamics and support concrete skills-development. The consultant team implemented a multidimensional approach, building on teachings and practice using three core modalities—full staff training sessions and retreats, small clinics/peer support groups, and individualized coaching. Throughout, a participatory, interactive approach to learning ensured that the new concepts and practices could be integrated through direct experience and practice. The consultant team drew from and adapted many existing frameworks and created new customized tools grounded in their own substantial experience in other social justice organizations. The purpose, priority content and key lessons learned from each modality are summarized below.

1) Full Staff Training Sessions and Retreats

Purpose and Content

The entire MUA staff attended 5 full or half-day sessions as well as a two-day retreat to build organization-wide commitment and competency to move together toward shared goals. The trainings were designed to:

- » Foster a collective learning environment where immigrant women's leadership is prioritized.

- » Build a shared understanding of racial equity and power and introduce strategies that counter oppression dynamics in which all can step into greater responsibility to build functional relationships
- » Level the playing field between formally educated (US and Latin America) with informally educated women; immigrant and US-born; bilingual/English Speakers and monolingual Spanish speakers.
- » Introduce transformational frameworks and practices to support leadership breakthroughs for individual staff members and to lay the groundwork for ongoing mutual support.
- » Strengthen professional development and organizational leadership skills, including management and supervision, strategic thinking and decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution, work planning and time management.

Lessons Learned

- » Emphasis on confidentiality and respect was paramount so that the space felt safe to share experiences and feelings across the many personal and positional differences in the room.
- » Communication guidelines were reintroduced at every session, with an opportunity for each person to more deeply engage in the meeting of each of these guidelines. They provided a valuable container not only for the sessions but also for ongoing communication at MUA.
- » Each session utilized role-play, small groups, pairs, relaxation, meditation and other dynamics to deepen knowledge and experience.
- » Making transparent and supporting development of the concrete skills that are required to be a successful non-profit/movement-building staff member is crucial to set up former grassroots members to succeed.
- » Creating exercises that are culturally relevant and lift up the strengths of “targets or historically excluded groups,” increases confidence and ownership over the learning process by immigrant women. It is also important to be explicit about the role of individuals in “nontargets/included groups” in the leadership development of immigrant groups, while at the same time paying attention to their learning needs.
- » A substantial toolbox of translated, culturally appropriate materials developed and documented by the consultant team over two years is a vital support for MUA staff and Wellness Coordinators in the ongoing work to integrate new leadership and professional development practices.

2) Small Group Clinics/Peer Learning Circles

Purpose

Depending on priorities identified by participants, clinics went deeper on a topic introduced in the larger trainings; others focused on individual experiences, sharing successes and challenges of trying on new practices and providing peer-to-peer advice.

Lessons Learned

- » People are more committed to their own transformation when they see that they can contribute to the learning of others and at the same time be learners themselves.
- » People are more comfortable sharing challenges and fears in small groups. Voicing common experiences helped people see that they were not alone in their struggles and increased people's willingness to try something new. ("I am not the only one that struggles with supervision.")

3) Individual Coaching

Purpose

Coaching created a space for individuals to tackle and unlearn patterns that are barriers to transformation, and more specifically focused on each person's individual goals, challenges and needs. Coaching was prioritized for the immigrant members from the base that had recently joined the staff, but others also received coaching to help them in their supervision responsibilities and other areas. Eleven staff received coaching; most received 6-7 sessions.

Lessons Learned

- » Overcoming (or at least understanding) past trauma is an important step in shifting individual behavior and increasing a person's ability to lead. Because of the depth of past trauma, not everyone is ready for full personal transformation. Coaching still can support increased effectiveness at a professional level.
- » The role of supervision and accountability by managers and supervisors is crucial in making change stick.
- » For some staff, individual coaching sessions were the most important part of the overall process. But even for those who attributed significant benefits specifically from coaching, they saw their success in relationship to the other trainings and the overall changes taking place throughout MUA. It was not coaching alone, but the integrated approach that helped support the powerful shifts taking place at the level of individuals, teams, and the organization.





MUJERES UNIDAS Y ACTIVAS

Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) is a grassroots organization of Latina immigrant women with a dual mission of promoting personal transformation and building community power for social and economic justice. A local organization rooted in the San Francisco Bay Area, MUA also engages in statewide and national advocacy work for immigrant rights, women's rights, and workers' rights. MUA is the anchor organization and fiscal sponsor of the California Domestic Worker Coalition, and a co-founder of the National Domestic Worker Alliance.

www.mujeresunidas.net



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