



Healing Dialogue and Action

Bringing together people wounded by violence.

Community Healing Model

The Landscape:

The death of George Floyd and countless other People of Color at the hands of law enforcement is a call to action for our entire country to re-envision a system of policing and criminal justice grounded in equity that provides opportunities for healing after harm for everyone impacted: survivors, responsible parties, family members, law enforcement, and the community at large. This is a time for action, and it must also be a time for healing. It is crucial that as we step up to reform laws and reorganize government agencies, we acknowledge and address the intergenerational trauma imposed on Black and Brown People by the police and the criminal justice system as a whole. We understand that pain that is not transformed is transmitted.

“Pain that is not transformed is transmitted.”

If we fail to provide adequate opportunities for healing for people impacted by violence, the effects of their trauma will manifest in other ways. If these individuals do not go on to inflict harm on others, their pain will likely be inflicted internally through addiction, mental and physical illness, an inability to maintain employment...the list goes on.

The Healing Dialogue Model:

Healing Dialogue and Action (HDA) is an organization of directly impacted individuals that creates healing spaces and advocacy opportunities for family survivors of homicide, incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated people, and communities affected by violent crime. We advance Transformative Justice through education, advocacy, and healing while working towards a world free from violence.



Healing Dialogue and Action serves all those affected by violent crime with a particular focus on family survivors of homicide. HDA offers Restorative Justice and healing workshops in prison and the community, facilitates Victim-Offender Dialogues alongside CDCR, assists people directly impacted by violence in the development of their leadership and facilitation skills, and organizes Transformative Justice Symposiums. Transformative Justice Symposiums bring policymakers, survivors, responsible parties, and advocates together to collaborate on policy change that transforms our society's response to harm from a punitive model to a healing model. All of HDA's programs are offered in English and Spanish.



Family survivors of homicide and men serving life sentences gather to share their stories with each other and policymakers during an HDA Transformative Justice Symposium at Lancaster State Prison.

Healing Dialogue and Action's unique approach to healing bridges adversarial divides between victims and offenders to create space for compassion and sharing without judgment. HDA's history of collaboration with individuals on all sides of violent crime, including law enforcement, makes us uniquely qualified to organize a community-led response to police violence that balances healing and action.



HDA gathers on the one year anniversary of the death of one of our member's children. The 18-year-old boy was shot and killed by the Los Angeles Sheriffs.

HDA recognizes that the pain families experience when their loved ones have been killed by law enforcement is especially acute. For these families, there is rarely justice and law enforcement agencies often obstruct their ability to access records detailing their loved one's death. The institutions that claim to protect them are the same ones that took their loved ones life and obfuscate the answers they need to begin healing. HDA meets the unique needs of survivors whose loved ones were killed by law enforcement in ongoing weekly support groups.

Meeting this moment: Listening Circles

Our first action must be the creation of **safe spaces** where the voices of those who have most directly experienced structural racism can be heard and acknowledged by people representing the institutions that are responsible for that harm. Informed by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other Restorative Justice models, HDA proposes that Listening Circles be established across Los Angeles County where victims of police brutality and other forms of state violence are invited to sit in circles with government officials and law enforcement to share their stories. To create spaces that realize the healing power of narrative and truth-telling, HDA will consult with contemporary storytellers like Bryan Stevenson, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Killer Mike, Aqeela Sherrills, and Ava Duvernay.

How Listening Circles Work:

In these circles, there are no badges, no uniforms, and no labels. The impacted parties will be invited to speak, the law enforcement and government officials will be invited only to compassionately listen, learn, and honor the stories being shared. Community members who have grievances, who thought their grievances would never be recognized, and certainly never addressed, will have the opportunity to be seen and heard.



Listeners accept what others communicate, and validate their perceptions. In this way, listeners seek to humanize the 'other'. Listening Circles cut through barriers of defense and mistrust, enabling both those speaking and those listening to see themselves in a new light. During this process, fear and mistrust is reduced, and participants establish relationships and partnerships that aid their personal healing. Furthermore, Listening Circles offer opportunities to develop a collective vision for systemic reform efforts that become part of the healing journey that our communities need and deserve.

The purpose of these circles is to provide opportunities for those harmed to be seen and heard and an invitation for everyone in the circle to connect with one another's humanity. The County/State, including law enforcement, must appoint staff members to serve as compassionate listeners at these gatherings. Prior to their participation, these individuals must be trained in compassionate listening and be prepared to make referrals to other services, i.e, mental/emotional health, housing, etc. Before establishing listening sessions, HDA will outreach to impacted communities to identify their elders, intervention workers, and other non-traditional, culturally sensitive, community healers to be a part of the work and ask them to invite their Community Members to participate in circles.

These listening sessions should be facilitated by people who have also been impacted by violence and/or incarceration. Their identity in the community garners kinship and invites trust and connection in ways that psychologists and social workers cannot.



An HDA Transformative Justice Symposium at Chowchilla Women's Prison

“ **Hurt People hurt people, Healed People heal people.** ”



After initial participation, we will invite community members who have shared their stories in these circles to learn the art of facilitating circles and provide them with other opportunities for civic engagement that can help transform their pain into political action. HDA will identify facilitators and partner with other organizations to train facilitators and state-representatives in compassionate listening and Restorative Justice to prepare them for these circles.

After those harmed have the opportunity to express and feel validated in their pain, sadness, and rage, and law enforcement and government officials have the opportunity to better understand and validate their experiences, we can then begin the work of co-creating new systems that work in the best interests of all people. We do not claim to have all the answers for what these new systems will look like, but we do know that the process of designing them must include those who have been harmed by our outdated systems to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

The Impact:



Families with loved ones incarcerated at an HDA Day of Healing.

Our experience bringing people on both “sides” of violent crime together has proven time and again that when we speak with honesty and listen with compassion, we realize that we all share the same pain. When we connect with one another’s humanity, our brokenness unites us rather than divides us. HDA has helped survivors of crime and responsible parties transform the worst experience of their life into a source of strength and resiliency. Many go on to form friendships with people on the “other side” of violence and work towards structural change together.



These listening sessions have the potential to heal unresolved trauma and empower survivors of police brutality to work alongside legislators and law enforcement towards change. These listening sessions give law enforcement and elected officials the opportunity to understand the devastating impact of police brutality on a more personal level. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Government officials will only be able to implement sustainable systemic solutions that make communities safer for everyone if they understand the real human impact of the trauma that has been experienced and take meaningful strides to regain community trust.

If implemented with integrity, listening sessions are a critical opportunity for law enforcement to develop a shared understanding with the community and begin rebuilding trust. We believe this practice has the potential to serve as a model for cities and states across the country on how to engage in reform work with accountability for past harm while centering the ownership and lived experiences of the community.

***Healing Dialogue
+
Action
=
Change***



HDA Victim Awareness Class Graduation at Lancaster Prison