



## Hidden Leaf Midterm Reflection: generative somatics

May 2011

Concretely documenting transformative change work can sometimes feel like an impossible task. We use all of the standard methods of evaluation including written and verbal feedback and on line evaluations. While these give us great information, what exactly counts as transformation is a deeper question and one that shows up in actions and ways of being. Yet, when we stop and observe transformation, it is often the work that reveals the most powerful and stunning images, moving conversations and courageous new actions we could ever capture.

One of the most significant ways we measure successful inner work at generative somatics is by watching for more and more embodiment in people and organizations. Although that can sound vague, embodiment can be measured by witnessing a person's (or a group's) broadened emotional capacity and ability to be with a wide range of emotions; ability to hold contradictions and respond to them from a centered place rather than reaction or trigger; ability to know and articulate one's wants, longings and visions whether they are attainable or not; and a demonstrated commitment to regular practice. We call this *new shape* and in somatics we see relationships change and deepen; connection to spirit and mystery bloom; effective, powerful action taken; and generous, compassionate moods generated. And, we literally watch bodies transform from contracted, hunched, wounded, inflated, disappeared, silenced, and caved in, to people living fully in their vertical line, taking up width, sinking into depth, and acting from their purpose. We see organizations find new ways to align, source strategy from a broader base of shared practice, and deepen trust.

We also measure the success of our work by participants' investment back into generative somatics. We are not just offering one-time trainings, but ongoing teaching and learning in practice, content and transformation. People are engaged in "path" with us, over time. They are showing up session after session, year after year and committing to become practitioners, trainers and organizers embodying this work, in their own way and place in the SJ Movement. They spend countless hours studying somatic theory and practices, demonstrating an ability to conduct somatic work individually and in groups. They dive into their own opening and healing work, showing a commitment to transformation through undoing their own "old shapes," and forwarding the work they want to do in the world. They develop an ability to talk about trauma and healing and its relevance to social justice, and be with their own and others wounds and healing. And they show a fierce commitment to healing personally, in community, and in movement helping to combat oppression, with deep faith in something better. This commitment to jointly build a transformative movement also looks like: s&t participants throwing a fundraiser to raise resources for the solidarity fund (independent of generative somatics), over 80 people applying to s&t 2011 and one third of them being second year students, senior students organizing their own ongoing practice groups, folks in Seattle and Los Angeles offering to organize somatics in their regions, 100% of invites to the s&t/ssj teacher training being accepted, etc. We count all of this, as ways to measure the success of the work and programming.

We also use transformational work internally, in our own strategy and organizational practices. Four pieces of our internal work feel particularly significant: 1) We hold ourselves as on a somatic path. When those of us who engage in this work are moving along that same path, our current conditions and our trajectory become clear, leading us to effective strategy, action and vision. 2) We are committed to individual daily practice and we engage in regular collective practice with one another. It sharpens our thinking and alignment, allows us to disagree in respectful ways, and to stay open and curious to each other and our ideas. 3) We allow ourselves to connect with all that is bigger than us, with the mystery or unknown, with spirit and landscape. We value this level of connection and depth as much as we prioritize our thinking and feeling selves. We “right-size” our humanness relative to the universe, and allow images and intuitions to enter us and inform our vision and strategy. 4) We are committed to individually and collectively opening and healing ourselves and our communities. We engage in our own healing work that is at times devastating and full of despair, but continues to show a throughway to more ease, trust, and choice. Our generative somatics Advisory Board, the Somatics & Trauma Teaching Team, and our internal organization operates from these four ways of being, producing a substantial and efficient capacity to take on and carry out a lot of meaningful work with limited resources.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, documenting transformation is inherently challenging. We use harder measures and processes including written and verbal feedback at the end of any training session, one-on-one work, or workshop, as well as from practice organizations and clients. Somatics & Trauma conducts evaluation each weekend of its year-long course and then asks students to complete an online survey at the end of the course as an overall evaluative measure. The Somatics & Social Justice Collaborative hired a documentarian to capture in a report the process of theory development and transformation occurring within the year-long process. Also, we have been working to help to define transformation from a somatic perspective. Looking at what would someone “embody” who embodies what we mean by it? We have developed standards for what an embodied practitioner or teacher/trainer should possess. Rather than days of training, or a certificate, we are looking at embodied skills and changes. We have developed Levels of Competence & Outcomes for Somatics & Trauma practitioners and students in our SSJ/S&T Teacher Training (attached to email). These tools are helping to clarify how we measure embodiment and transformation.

When we look at the field, including ourselves in it, we are unsure how to best have track transformation as a shift in capacity and way of being. We can more easily measure days trained and numbers exposed, but as we all know, transformation is non-linear. It shows up more in decisions made, trust built, the generativity of a group... We are exploring how to base our evaluations on embodied actions, emotional range, trust built, new actions taken. We also see that we should engage a process of evaluation over time- a year in, two years in, etc.

Some ideas we have for the field in terms of tracking progress of transformative work, begin as the following questions:

- ◆ **Is the conversation of transformation spreading in the social justice movement?** We would say yes, it definitely is and the US Social Forum was a glaring highlight of that, in addition to other conferences, alliances, and workgroups that have and are taking place.
- ◆ **Is there a clear understanding of what transformation means?** We ask this same question about somatics, as well. In the field we feel this is still up in the air. |

think we are all working on it from our various angles, but I don't see that we have collectively set a standard or put a stake in the ground as to what constitutes transformation (as opposed to change). One of our concerns is that transformation will be too easy, too light, and lack the depth and courage required systemic change be it personal, organizational or institutional. Internally, we have come to our own standards that we are supporting in the field. To us transformation is embodied, sustainable change, that both shows itself over time and is generalized (meaning it shows in all domains of life and under various circumstances). Transformation inherently increases people's competence, capacity and presence. It inherently brings more choice, less reaction and new action. Transformation will show in people's actions and behaviors as individuals and collectives.

- ✦ **Can we put it in action together? Even when there is uncertainty or conflict?**  
Are we only healed as individuals, or can we as organizations, alliances, and movements find our alignment, our direction, our path and take large, sustainable action.

While we think these are questions for anyone in the social justice movement committed to transformative work, we are also trying to measure our own work against these questions and ideas. While we continue to figure out ways to record how transformation happens and what it looks like when it does, we at generative somatics continue to rely on the methods we have already generated alongside a deep trust in witnessing the human spirit.