



# Earth Leadership Cohort FALL 2019

What shall I do with all this heartache?  
The deepest-rooted dream of a tree is to walk  
Even just a little ways, from the place next to the doorway—  
To the edge of the river of life, and drink—

— Joy Harjo, from *"Speaking Tree"*

**The Earth Leadership Cohort (ELC)** is designed to support young adults (ages 18-30) in their leadership in a time of great ecological and social distress. ELC is an immersion experience filled with community, theory, and practices to facilitate the being, doing and living during this time of awesome “response-ability.”

Those who are alive today are the bridge between all ancestors who have come before us and all descendants who will come after us. What the world looks like for current and all future generations of all species depends in great measure on what is done within the next decade to shift the current trajectory of catastrophic climate change and ecological collapse. These crises stem from the ways many humans see and relate with the world and all living beings in an hierarchical and extractive way. The world needs our deep leadership to evolve a more affirming relationship with the entire community of life.

The primary modality that the Earth Leadership Cohort draws upon is the Work That Reconnects (WTR), known worldwide for helping to renew and empower activists and changemakers in social and ecological justice. Developed by Joanna Macy and colleagues, this dynamic, interactive body of work has inspired many thousands of people worldwide to engage wholeheartedly in a transition, a “Great Turning” as Joanna calls it, to a life-sustaining society.

ELC introduces participants to the theory and practice of the WTR. Described in the book *Coming Back to Life*, it brings a new way of seeing the world, as our larger living body, freeing us from the assumptions and attitudes that now threaten all life on Earth. The Work That Reconnects has historically drawn on three main wells: deep ecology, systems thinking, and engaged Buddhism. Originally called Despair and Empowerment Work, it invites us to befriend our feelings of pain for what is happening, and from there build strength and resilience for these times of deepening crisis.

The Work That Reconnects always follows a spiral, beginning with grounding ourselves in gratitude for the gifts and miracles of life itself. From this resourced place, we turn together to face and acknowledge the pains of this world. There are so few places in dominant society where we can honestly bring the depths of our grief, our outrage, and our terror at what is happening on and to this beloved planet and to each other as humans. Being honest and authentic with our heartache for this world often opens us to our interconnectedness, to fresh insights, and to ways of seeing and being in the world that help us discover our unique contributions.

While it is not an anti-oppression training, the 2019 Earth Leadership Cohort incorporates a deep analysis of human systems of oppression, and of ways to interrupt and transform these systems, particular in *how* we are with one another as humans. In addition, the program is informed by ecopsychology, trauma theory, neuroscience, contemplative and council practices and the importance of play!

The connections cohort members form among themselves, with the facilitation team, and with over 40 ELC alumni from previous cohorts have been an enduring support for many participants (ELC I in 2014, ELC II in 2015, ELC III in 2016, ELC IV in 2017). In 2018, the facilitation team took a break to reflect, revise and re-vitalize. We are delighted to be gathering a fifth Earth Leadership Cohort.

ELC V is a cumulative experience that grows over three sessions; it is essential to the group that all participants attend all three weekends:

August 29 - September 3, 2019

October 25 - 27, 2019

November 14 - 17, 2019

The first meeting of the cohort will include a five-day retreat just for the cohort at Starseed Sanctuary in Savoy, MA, August 29 - September 3. The group will be guided through the spiral of the Work That Reconnects, opening to the planetary realities of great suffering and rapid destruction and magnificence of the web of life. The work is personal as well as interactive, inviting fresh insight into our roles in the Great Turning and new possibilities for collaboration.

The second meeting will join a larger intergenerational group for the annual Interhelp fall weekend, October 25-27, at Woolman Hill in Deerfield, MA. The [Interhelp Network](#) is a northeast regional Work That Reconnects network. This weekend will also follow the spiral of the Work That Reconnects, under the leadership of ELC alumni from the first four Cohorts.

The final meeting will be just for the Cohort, November 14-17, again convening at Starseed Sanctuary. There, the group has the opportunity to reflect on the rich experiences of the previous workshops, to practice facilitating WTR practices, and to begin to integrate new perspectives into their personal and professional dreams. The retreat is also a time for gathering resources, ideas, and support for “going forth” into the world as empowered change agents, healers, and compassionate listeners. As a community, the members decide how they would like to keep in touch and support one another in realizing their short-term goals and long-term visions. Alumni from the first four cohorts have organized several reunions and co-facilitated a number of Work That Reconnects workshops for the public. They have also formed an “Earth Leadership Community” and welcome future ELC alumni to join.



ELC II with Joanna Macy, 2015  
At Rowe Conference Center



The first Earth Leadership Cohort, 2014  
At Rowe Conference Center

## What some alumni are saying about the program:

*"Earth Leadership Cohort gave me a spiritual, communal, and practical foundation for weaving profound transformation into my organizing work. There is great empowerment in naming and claiming the full range of emotions we feel around the state of the world. Start here." – Adin, Hampshire College Student - ELC III*

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*"After 6 years of work as an environmental educator, the Work That Reconnects gave me a transformative and deeply needed shift. It helped me understand myself not as a single individual fighting a win/lose battle, but as an aspect of Life's natural inclination to heal itself. The ELC facilitators are wise, skillful, loving, and humble. The fellow participants are inspirational. What happens when we connect with others over our shared love of life on this planet is nothing short of magical.*

*We've created a space where we can breathe, dance, cry, give thanks, rage, sing, and gaze in wonder. The community we formed in ELC is still going strong, and growing, long after the program itself ended. We are in this for the long haul, and the Work That Reconnects is a key piece of what can sustain us along the way." – Daniel, Environmental Educator - ELC II*

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*"The Earth Leadership Cohort was a totally transformational experience for me. On the first weekend, I arrived burnt out from climate change organizing, barely able to hold myself together emotionally. After the first weekend, I already felt a little bit lighter, a little bit more able to deal with the deep pain I had been feeling for myself and the state of the world. By the end of the third weekend, I was fully recovered and newly excited and refreshed to not only continue my work, but to incorporate the Work that Reconnects into the future of whatever I do. If you are an activist, organizer, or anyone who feels pain for being in the world that we live in, I cannot recommend this program enough. You will leave not only feeling more able to emotionally and practically step into a place of peace while creating change, but you will also have an incredible new community of fellow change makers." – Sophie, Film Director - ELC I*



ELC III at Starseed Sanctuary, 2016  
Savoy, MA



ELC IV at Starseed Sanctuary, 2017  
Savoy, MA

## About the ELC V Facilitation Team

This team has been working together since the development of the first Earth Leadership Cohort in 2014, the brainchild of former ELC facilitator, Kirstin Edelglass. Each facilitator brings a rich background of related experience and abundant ideas for keeping the work fresh for each unique group.



**Aravinda Ananda** is a social ecologist whose life's work is to support a *Living rEvolution* - a global movement of healing and transforming human relationships with life on Earth to be mutually enhancing. She has been working on a book of that title for the past 12 years. She has eight years of experience facilitating *Work That Reconnects* and other modes of experiential learning, all of which help integrate our intelligences and ignite our love and passion for healing the human-earth relationship. She is a member of the Interhelp Council, a northeast regional Work That Reconnects network; was one of the founding weavers of the global Work That Reconnects Network; and has been a part of many *Work That Reconnects* co-facilitation teams. Aravinda was one of the guest editors of the special issue of the *Deep Times* journal on the impact of race and culture on the Work That Reconnects, and has played a leadership role in exploring power, privilege and oppression in Work That Reconnects spaces. In July 2018, she helped convene a month-

long Regenerative Culture living laboratory with a special focus on how we are with one another. Each day she feels honored to increasingly live the rEvolution in her own life and support others to do the same.

**Markie Babbott** is a psychologist in Northampton, MA whose theory and practice continue to evolve; she integrates psychodynamic, feminist, and queer theory as well as neuroscience and trauma-informed approaches. Following her interests in mindfulness, creativity, Buddhism, and nature-based ritual, she pursued a master's degree in Ecopsychology from Naropa University through the Transpersonal Psychology Department (2011). She has been fortunate to study with Joanna Macy many times since 2007 and is grateful to have been a part of the ELC I, II, III and IV. A published poet, she volunteers with the Connecticut Watershed branch of River of Words, a place-based educational approach that integrates poetry and visual art for K-12 students. In addition to spending time with her two adult children and fabulous canines, she loves tending her plot in the local community garden and hiking up mountains.



**Joseph Rotella** is a musician, small business owner, activist, and lover of life. As a small business owner he has used this position in society to advocate for a better world. He has been vocal on various social justice and environmental issues and has had letters to the editor published, spoken on the radio, and testified at the MA state house. He has studied with Joanna Macy numerous times, is a member of the Interhelp Council and has been facilitating the Work that Reconnects since 2011. Over the last few years, he has delved into the study of how power, privilege and oppression show up in many systems of society, even well-intentioned progressive ones. He lives in Watertown, MA with his wife and enjoys spending his spare time making kombucha, keeping bees and growing and preserving vegetables.



**ELC Assistants** are members of a previous cohort who join the facilitation team in a special bridging and support role. We are delighted to have Marco Soulo and Signature MiMi as the ELC V assistants.



**Marco Soulo** is a lyricist, poet, Hip-Hop head, multi-instrumentalist, creator, cultivator, motivator and soul full being that creates original and collaborative works usually through the mediums of Spoken Word Poetry and Hip-Hop. He is a member of ELC IV cohort and is one half of the eclectic duo Signature Soul. Growing up in the North side of Atlanta, as a first generation immigrant, Marco was blessed to be immersed in a diverse community of immigrants that has helped shape and broaden his culture and perspective. As an adolescent Marco had a penchant for music, words, and design, then ironically decided to study mechanical engineering at Syracuse University. While studying he reinvigorated his love for music, which helped him through his studies, and found the strength of his voice through Hip-Hop and Poetry. Towards the end of his college career Marco started to facilitate creative expression workshops with veterans in the VA hospital, where he first experienced how empowering self

expression can be for healing and for cultivating community. It became apparent to him how important this work is and he decided to focus sharing this with any community that desire such experiences. Since then, Marco continues sharing poetic bars and facilitating creative expression workshops with the intent of raising the collective consciousness one soul at a time (himself included). Marco help found Youth Voices Matter, a movement and platform for youth to share their voices. He has also facilitated spaces in collaboration with Seeds of Peace, Yes! World Jam, nonprofits, schools, community centers, justice centers, etc. Most of Marco's journey nowadays can be followed through Signature Soul's website at [www.signaturesoul.love](http://www.signaturesoul.love).

**Signature MiMi** is a Poetic Being, Creative Expressionista, Community Builder, Linguist, Philosopher, and Peace-full Soul. She brings soothing rhythm and resonance to her poems & spoken word offerings. MiMi has been sharing her poetry and passions for over 13 years and speaks intuitively about her creative evolutions. MiMi graduated from Syracuse University where she studied Information Management and Technology, Global Enterprise Technology, and Asian/Asian American Studies. She also continued on to pursue a Masters in Library Information Science with a focus on School Media and Collaboration. MiMi is a proud Alum of the poetry program Verbal Blend and a Co-Founder of Nu Rho Poetic Society (est. 2011), two groups she credits with empowering her to find her voice and share it with others. In 2014, MiMi released her first project: "Only Poetry Could Have Brought Me Here," an EP of spoken word pieces that reflect on MiMi's early journey. Currently cultivating creative juices and justice in the northeast, MiMi has dedicated her voice and gifts to empowering others, especially youth. She has worked with Seeds of Peace Camp since 2016 as a camp counselor and dialogue facilitator. She also helps organize Jam gatherings through YesWorld! around the Asian and Pacific Islander diaspora. MiMi is an alum of Earth Leadership Cohort IV and is intrigued by the Work That Reconnects. She incorporates WTR in her practices and finds joy in exploring serendipitous connections to earth's magic. MiMi and her partner Marco Soulo (also known as Signature Soul) facilitate creative expression workshops and creative gatherings. They offer creative consulting and facilitate dialogues and community conversations. Together they share poetry and music to uplift and inspire communities and to provoke action towards a life-sustaining world full of creativity and synergy. To connect – please visit [www.signaturesoul.love](http://www.signaturesoul.love).



# Becoming a Member of the Earth Leadership Cohort



Young adults, ages 18 to 30, interested in participating in this 3-part program are encouraged to **send a completed application by May 31, 2019**. Download at: <https://interhelpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ELC-V-Application-final.pdf>

The learning community grows stronger and more effective over the course of the meetings. For this reason, **participants are asked to commit to attending the entirety of all three meetings:**

August 29-September 3; October 25-27; and November 14-17. If there is an interest in further peer support, the cohort may choose to continue meeting after the formal program has ended and also join the alumni network of the Earth Leadership Community.

Cost and scholarships: The total cost for tuition, room, and board for all three cohort meetings is \$1150. A central goal of the program is to provide sufficient scholarships to make the opportunity accessible to anyone whose application is accepted. Applicants who would like to apply for a scholarship may complete the Scholarship Application found at the end of the program application.

Transportation: Participants are responsible for arranging their own transportation to the retreat centers where the trainings are held. (Ride sharing may be possible for some.)

Locations:

The first and third meetings, August 29 - September 3 and November 14 - 17, are at Starseed Sanctuary, 662 Chapel Road, Savoy, MA.

The second meeting, October 25-27, is at Woolman Hill, 107 Keets Rd. Deerfield, MA.

Arrival and departure times:

Arrival time on August 29<sup>th</sup> is between 4 and 6 p.m.; departure time on September 3<sup>rd</sup> is 4 p.m.

Arrival time on October 25<sup>th</sup> is between noon and 1 p.m.; departure time on October 27<sup>th</sup> is 4 p.m.

Arrival time on November 14<sup>th</sup> is in the evening, in time for dinner, but arrival time is flexible and there will only be an optional program after dinner. Departure time on November 17<sup>th</sup> is 4 p.m.

Accommodations and meals: Accommodations are shared dorm rooms. Tenting is also an option. Vegetarian meals are provided and an effort is made to accommodate special dietary needs.

Accessibility: The facilities used for this program are not wheelchair accessible; there are a few steps to get into the buildings, and the bathrooms are not handicap accessible. Please email us at [earthleadershipcohort@gmail.com](mailto:earthleadershipcohort@gmail.com) with any other questions about accessibility.

Questions: Please send questions via email to [earthleadershipcohort@gmail.com](mailto:earthleadershipcohort@gmail.com)



## Speaking Tree

*I had a beautiful dream I was dancing with a tree.*

—Sandra Cisneros

Some things on this earth are unspeakable:  
Genealogy of the broken—  
A shy wind threading leaves after a massacre,  
Or the smell of coffee and no one there—  
Some humans say trees are not sentient beings,  
But they do not understand poetry—  
Nor can they hear the singing of trees when they are fed by  
Wind, or water music—  
Or hear their cries of anguish when they are broken and bereft—  
Now I am a woman longing to be a tree, planted in a moist, dark earth  
Between sunrise and sunset—  
I cannot walk through all realms—  
I carry a yearning I cannot bear alone in the dark—  
What shall I do with all this heartache?  
The deepest-rooted dream of a tree is to walk  
Even just a little ways, from the place next to the doorway—  
To the edge of the river of life, and drink—  
I have heard trees talking, long after the sun has gone down:  
*Imagine what would it be like to dance close together  
In this land of water and knowledge. . .  
To drink deep what is undrinkable.*

~Joy Harjo, from *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*, 2015

Joy Harjo was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma on May 9, 1951, and is a member of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation. In 2015, she received the Wallace Stevens Award, given for proven mastery in the art of poetry. She was elected a [Chancellor](#) of the Academy of American Poets in 2019.