

## Reflections from ELC V

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Some of the more common words used to describe the ELC V experience are: Community, work, together. Our experiences, while shared, are not identical. Every person in our cohort had a unique experience. Each person entered our space with different experiences, understandings, and beliefs. During our cohort sessions, we learned, lost, hurt, and healed. Not one of us left the ELC V space the same as we entered it.

Our cohort was asked to describe what they were most grateful for and most pained by during their ELC experience. The responses were, of course, varied but there were certain themes that were present in every response. Throughout our time with the Work that Reconnects and the Spiral, there was acknowledgement that there was a lot

of work to be done. We all confronted questions about the world, ourselves, and ourselves as a part of this world. There were thanks given for the community we created and the ability of that community's container to hold so much. There is deep gratitude for our facilitators, Aravinda, Joseph, and Markie, and our assistant facilitators, MiMi and Marco, who gave so generously of themselves to nurture our growth. Each of them brought deep courage, wisdom, and love to our time together. Their care empowered us to experience life-changing connection, insight, and growth. For the heartfelt facilitation, the meticulous planning, the glorious meals prepared with joy and reverence for the web of life, the hard conversations, the grace when we were reactive or showed up late, the willingness to grow the Work to disrupt white supremacy, the laughter, and the sheer bravery it took to guide this group through this process, we say thank you. You have given us a precious and unforgettable gift.

There is also profound gratitude for the generosity and faith of the Interhelp community, whose support made it possible for us to take part in ELC V. It is a profound act of love to invest in the

learning and growth of those you've never met. Thank you for believing in us, connecting with us, and supporting us.

The pain points that the ELC V cohort members shared with us had a common theme of regret around unintentionally causing pain within this community and questioning the dynamics in POC-minority spaces, as ours was. Our facilitation team supported us in examining how we were relating with each other, especially around power, privilege and oppression. People of the global majority on our facilitation team and in our cohort took risks to bring attention to moments of harm. And yet moments of harm continued to happen. We continue to grapple with questions around unintentional harm. What is our responsibility to each other? What is our responsibility to ourselves? What is our responsibility to our world?

While we were assembling this reflection, our world was transformed by the novel coronavirus. We are living through an unimaginable time that is sometimes scary, sometimes hopeful, and straining in many ways. Every day that passes in various stages of lockdown is a reminder of the deeply ingrained Industrial Growth Society's cisheteronormative white supremacist extractive capitalist patriarchy. We asked ELC V cohort members about what they were grateful for and what's most painful for them during this pandemic. During this difficult time, cohort members were grateful for community and connection; finding togetherness during a time of physical separation. The pains that cohort members shared were micro and macro in scale: media silence on anti-Asian sentiment and violent attacks, frustration over the lack of cooperative action taken by government bodies, and sorrow for lives lost and the suffering our human family is experiencing.

The ELC V cohort lifted the veil during our time together. Our community container held a lot of messiness, uncertainty, and anxiety. We felt connection and community, and we also felt a lot of pain. Our known and unknown histories as individuals and those of our communities informed what we learned and what we've taken back with us. Transformation and growth are encouraged and nurtured by learning in safe spaces, with communities that accept us and ask us to grow our understanding.

The veil is continually lifted in this pandemic. The continued rediscovery of what's true and what's possible is both a thrilling and anxious sensation. The coronavirus is showing in stark relief the contemporary segregation of our country; African Americans make up 6% of this country's population, but [40% of the coronavirus deaths](#). This crisis, like many others, will disproportionately affect POC. At the same time, where there is disappointment, there is also hope. There are opportunities for creating equitable, life-sustaining communities. There exists a relentless hope and optimism during this time in ELC V cohort members and the world over.

Now we've gone forth: We have left our physical cohort and have returned to our communities, some of which look very different now than they did two short months ago. We've gone forth to live in a greater community: How and who do we need to be in this Great Turning? In this pandemic, how are we going forth? We are connecting and supporting one another around climate action and solidarity with targeted communities. For many of us, and hopefully more of our human family, this is a time to evaluate what truly matters to us.

Our time together was not perfect: It was messy, painful, and asked a lot of everyone. There were wounds from our time together; there are still wounds from our time together. But we were together. The ELC V cohort is grateful for the time spent with one another, including our weekend at the Interhelp gathering. Our cohort, our community, is stronger for it. Our own communities are stronger for it. We can use what we learned, and are still learning, to help our communities during this pandemic: New language, new friends, and new ways of being with ourselves and with one another.

*Thanks to Erin East for the image, which is a photo of her beautiful needlepoint depicting a bunch of beets! Erin's vegetable puns were an important part of the ELC V experience.*