A Case for Care: Questions and Answers from a Movement in Motion

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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UPoor	University of the Poor
ISS	Institute of Social Studies

Abstract

Social movements across history and geography have fought for systemic liberation from all forms of oppression, realizing that society cannot be transformed under the pervading economic, political, and social forces which control the lives of the poor and dispossessed. However, these same forces of oppression inflict harm and trauma onto people which gets expressed in the body and manifests in disorganizing dynamics within movements. This research examines how organizations within one revolutionary movement network in the United States, the University of the Poor, have developed their own theory and praxis around care, whose purpose is to process and transmute the tensions that inevitably arise in movement work due to the oppressive context within which the movement is embedded. This research combines Marxist political economy with contemporary literature on embodiment and trauma, ethnographic participatory observation, and qualitative, semi-structured interviews with movement leaders to examine practices of care and how these practices contribute to the movement's goals. Through these approaches, this study discovers that care is a key component of movement building, as it works to preserve, develop, and transform leaders, attune the body to new dispositions for interacting with each other, build movement structures which embody revolutionary values as opposed to that of the hegemonic system, and create the conditions of what the movement is fighting for in the here and now.

Relevance to Development Studies

As capitalist modernity produces crises of economic, social, and ecological degradation, the need for revolutionary resistance is intensifying. This research contributes to literature on the linkages between development and social justice, while disrupting narratives which claim that the need for development is reserved for the Global South. By discussing how the structures of 'developed' societies dispossess people from their health and well-being, this research shows how mainstream approaches to development can sometimes do more harm than good. Thus, this research contributes to new imaginaries by drawing on the wisdom of one movement network, offering radical alternatives for how people can care for themselves and each other while influencing the trajectory of society.

Keywords

Care, community care, body, trauma, somatic, social movement, healing.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Contextual Framing

In the United States alone, there are 140 million poor and low wealth people who face precarious living conditions, continuous survival emergencies, and unprecedented labor exploitation (Executive Summary, 2020). Global "capital has an antagonistic relationship with the dispossessed and poor all over the world and affects people on many fronts – healthcare, jobs, housing, food insecurity, militarism, environmental crisis, racial, gender, religious oppression, and more. The poor are the social embodiment of all these social ills, bearing the brunt of all of them" (University of the Poor, 2021). These forms of structural oppression, as well as the capitalist, white supremacist, patriarchal, colonial system that creates them, are pushing our bodies to extreme levels, imprinting upon us, and inflicting trauma (Marya and Patel, 2021, p. 16). "Systemic inflammation [in the body] and its accompanying diseases have increased dramatically across industrialized societies" (Marya and Patel, 2021, p. 16), ranging from increased chronic diseases, ailments of the heart, mind, and spirit, as well as a state of collective, prolonged disembodiment which characterizes the working class (Davis, 08.01.2022). Orthodox Marxist tradition asserts that liberation from the society that makes us sick is achieved by organizing a revolutionary class who can seize state power, dismantle the ruling elite, and thereby restructure society, particularly by gaining control and ownership of productive forces (Marx, 2008, p. 50), thus eradicating capitalism and emancipating our communities, families, and ourselves. While the pervading economic structure must be destroyed, this paper explores the notion that the transformation of society "cannot be accomplished without intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal work" (EmboDegrowth Lab, 2021) because "systems such as patriarchy and trauma expressed in the body tend to foster each other" and keep each other alive (ibid).

This paper draws on Marxist political economy and contemporary embodiment and trauma literature to explore how organizations within one revolutionary movement network in the United States, the University of the Poor (UPoor), have developed their own theory and praxis around 'care.' Care is a deep aspect of their political strategy, an approach that builds on historical revolutionary experience that recognizes "our best resolutions will remain scraps of paper if we lack the people who can put them into effect" (Dimitrov, 1972, p. 17). This research is informed by interviews and participant observation with 40 leaders from across the movement network. Participants potently expressed the tensions of their work:

"we will defeat ourselves before the ruling class does" (Patricia, 08.08.2022), and "if we are just offering social, political, or structural answers, and there isn't support for people's daily struggles and traumas, then those issues will undermine the work" (Roger, 08.03.2022). But they also express possibilities for fusing care across all aspects of the work, building a vision in which the movement may serve as a space of healing by returning the fragments within ourselves and society to wholeness (Maté, 2022, p. 55).

1.2 Description and Justification of the Research

This research explores how one revolutionary movement network in the United States utilizes 'care', a theory and praxis developed within the movement, to center the preservation, development, and transformation of their leaders, build movement structures which embody the values of what they are fighting for, and create the conditions they desire from liberation in the here and now. Building on embodiment theory as well as Marxist analysis, this research seeks to understand how living in an oppressive society inflicts trauma that not only results in external disorganizing dynamics within and amongst leaders, but also calibrates the body to reproduce the structures in which we are embedded. Movement leaders, like the poor and dispossessed[1] in its entirety, face ongoing attacks by the ruling class, such as systemic poverty, racism, militarism (A Moral Policy Agenda, 2020), shame, individualism, or feeling insecure about one's worth and ability, all which emanate from dominant logics that instil fear and mistrust towards one another. However, by prioritizing and utilizing care, the UPoor network is developing a means of transmuting the tensions and conflicts that arise, to create new approaches and dispositions for the future. Ultimately, this research paper aims to make 'a case for care' arguing for the importance of care in movement building, a body of work which is essential to win revolutionary transformation.

There are many contemporary scholars and activists discussing the importance of fusing 'healing' with organizing, such as Staci Haines, adrienne maree brown, Alicia Garza, Resmaa Menakem, or Rae Johnson, to name a few. However, there is very little academic literature which combines theory with practice by exploring grassroots processes that movements in the United States have developed themselves. These processes are built to respond to the immediate needs of organizers while supporting their long-term development, in ways

[1] The poor and dispossessed is a concept developed within the movement which subverts the hegemonic understanding that class is defined by income. Rather, the poor and dispossessed encompasses everyone in the United States who does not own and control the basic economic institutions of society. Instead, these people must join the workforce to earn money to survive. This understanding is deliberately much broader than what the Federal Poverty Line acknowledges as being poor in the U.S. (Theoharis, 2016).

that are collectivized, politicized, and de-commodified. While some work emphasizes the application of somatics and other modalities which require licensure, fee for service, and 'professionalization', this research highlights the work of a movement that has developed their own concept and non-commodified practices of care. It demonstrates that the body can shift through a wide variety of experiences, which can include specific modalities and healing techniques, but may also involve rituals, spiritual practice, art, shared listening and vulnerability, taking political action together, and more.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions guiding this research process are as follows:

Main Research Question:

> How does incorporating care as a part of political strategy in revolutionary movement building contribute to achieving the systemic liberation that movements are working towards?

Sub Research Questions:

1. In what ways are leaders of the University of the Poor impacted by the social, economic, or political contexts within which they are embedded?
2. How does the well-being of these same leaders affect the overall work and success of the movement, and what solutions or interventions are they proposing?

1.4 Approach to Research

The data, discussions, and findings presented in this research paper come from a series of qualitative, semi-structured interviews as well as ethnographic participatory observation that I conducted from July 19 – August 20, 2022. While this project is my own and not a formal collaboration with any organization, I mainly interviewed leaders in and observed the movement-building organizations of the network of the University of the Poor (UPoor) in the United States. The UPoor is a collective whose mission is "to unite and develop leaders committed to the unity of the poor and dispossessed across color lines and other lines of division, so as to build a broad-based and powerful movement to end poverty" (University of the Poor Concept Paper, 2021). I gained access for the interviews (both individual and group) based on my positionality within the UPoor network, which I will discuss more in the following section. The UPoor is a nationwide network, and selecting which organizations

and individuals to engage with required careful analysis of the network structure as well as my own capacity. I began by limiting my outreach to the eastern part of the United States, as I would be doing fieldwork in person, and driving to the West coast was too costly and time-consuming.

My sampling strategy was then determined and put into motion in accordance with the topic at hand. I first reached out to organizations that have care infrastructure to identify key informants (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 31), which were typically leaders and organizers who hold responsibility around care, such as by serving on the organization's care team. Additionally, some snowball sampling (ibid, p. 6) was used with long-standing members of the UPoor. They helped me to identify other key informants who had interest or expertise on various components of my topic, such as somatics, bodywork, or specific branches of care like spiritual care or movement chaplaincy, even if these individuals were part of organizations that did not have care infrastructure. Finally, I had interest in attending a project of survival[2] event to see how the movement cares for the masses in addition to leaders, so I reached out to organizations who I knew incorporated projects of survival as part of their organizing. A full list of the organizations I recruited from is viewable in Appendix A at the end of the report.

Qualitative interviewing was my primary mechanism of data collection, as it was the most effective way of gathering large amounts of information from experts on a niche topic in a short period of time. Most of the interviews took place in person, as I travelled by car and met the interviewee in their home, their workplace, a nearby park, or a local café. Four interviews took place virtually, due to scheduling difficulties or geographic distance. In total, I conducted 19 individual interviews, three group interviews (one with three participants, and two with two participants), and one focus group conversation which had seven participants. I also attended two organizations' care team meetings where I was able to be an attendee, observer, participant, and researcher, as I learned about the regular operations of the care team while asking questions relevant to the research. Finally, I attended and volunteered at one event, a project of survival back-to-school distribution, where I used participatory observation to witness community care in action. In total, I formally spoke with 40 people for

[2] Project of survival is a movement term to describe the process in which the poor and dispossessed organizes to take "lifesaving action" to meet their basic needs when the state fails to do so (Sandweiss-Back, 2020). Different from mutual aid and charitable service delivery, projects of survival are overtly political. They involve exposing the "moral failures and contradictions of governing systems", politicizing people and organizing them for a revolutionary movement, and making demands on the state (ibid).

the data collection, which took place across seven states in person, namely Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, and North Carolina, and Washington state remotely.

All but three interviews were audio recorded with a simple recording device for the ease of data collection. I am aware of the possible risks associated with audio recording, such as intrusiveness, distraction, and potential breaches of privacy (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 70). However, audio recording was essential, allowing me to be more present in the conversation, collect and portray data accurately, and contextualize quotes by listening back to the full conversation. I intentionally chose to use a low-tech audio recording device as opposed to my cell phone to avoid the distraction of having a phone present and to better protect the interviewees' privacy. Consent for recording was requested and given orally at the start of each interview, after informing the interviewee that their names and any potentially identifying information would be kept confidential to the best of my ability (as I have used pseudonyms for all interviewees) and that they would be given the opportunity to review the draft and offer changes to the anonymized quotes that I included. While I did use an interview guide to facilitate conversations, the level of formality of each interview varied depending on the situation. I adjusted questions or focused on certain aspects of the interview guide based on what I knew about the participants' backgrounds, trying to emphasize their area of expertise pertaining to the general topic. Thus, the interview guide acted as a list of suggestions for orienting the conversation and not a strict guide.

1.5 Reflexivity, Limitations, & Ethics

Reflecting on my positionality within the UPoor is essential to understanding how this research paper came to be. I first became connected to the network in 2016 through an undergraduate professor who was a long-time member of the UPoor. From 2017-2020, I participated in collective studies that the network facilitated and served on the Kensington Welfare Rights Union subcommittee of the Kairos Center's education committee. In the summer of 2021, I was invited to serve on the Cadre Care Subcommittee of the UPoor, a subcommittee whose aim is to study, document, and contribute to the network's knowledge, historical analysis, and praxis around the care of movement leaders. Thus, I have a five-year-long affiliation with the UPoor and served on the cadre care subcommittee for one year prior to beginning this research, which familiarized me with the issues being discussed and questions being

asked by the other subcommittee members as well as by organizations within the network pertaining to care.

As a researcher, I am not without biases, inclinations, and interests of my own. While traditional, positivist research aims to create distance between the researcher and researched while erasing all forms of emotional subjectivity (Lavallée, 2009, p. 23), I came to the research process knowing that my interests differed some from the questions being asked around care within the network, which initially caused me great strife. For example, some groups within the network were thinking about issues of capacity regarding care – how can we provide enough when the need is so great? Where do we draw the line in terms of who to channel our efforts towards? Others were thinking about how care work should be oriented – what are the attacks and afflictions leaders are facing, and how do we grow our care work to meet those needs? How can we collectivize knowledge around care across the whole movement network? Throughout the research process, I did end up spending ample time on questions such as the ones described above, out of a strong desire for the project to serve a larger political purpose beyond my own individual research interests (Potts and Brown, 2005, p. 255).

However, my initial inspiration for the project stemmed from my personal experiences and navigating challenges with my own body within a medical system that fails to orient individual diagnoses within larger social structures and that ignores the roots of health challenges in internalized oppression. I was pondering questions like: What are the internal wounds that people involved in the movement struggle with? Where do they come from, and how do these affect us and the political work at large? What are the political implications of trauma? And how can healing contribute to the systemic change movements are working towards? To bridge our investigative interests, I have done my best to fuse the network's questions with my personal questions by utilizing the body as a lens through which to understand the experiences of movement leaders and the theory and praxis of care.

Another essential component of this research process is reflecting on its limitations. The first limitation I must highlight relates to my lack of experience as an organizer. Despite my five years of connection with the UPoor and four years of justice-oriented work in Montana, I have little to no experience in the basic activities of organizing, such as door knocking, base building, or planning political actions. Given my limited experience, some ideas that I presented to interviewees were clearly not applicable. While this did not necessarily present

a problem in the research as I was able to pivot my questions, it does shed light on how the analysis and lessons in this research could have been deepened and clarified further if I had more 'boots-on-the-ground' experience with organizing prior to doing the research. A second limitation can be found in the research process itself, relating to challenges of timing. The weeks of my fieldwork were overwhelmingly busy, and while doing in-person fieldwork had many more benefits than drawbacks, it did create a frenzied research context in which I was either conducting an interview or driving long distances every day. I was not able to build in days between interviews to sit with the data, contemplate any changes in direction the project needed to take, or take stock in what I had collected and what I still needed, likely resulting in gaps and findings which are more superficial than what was possible. One final limitation relates to my skills and approach as a researcher. Upon re-listening to all the interviews as I reviewed the data, I noticed instances where I over-spoke, sometimes to the point of not listening to the interviewee, not responding compassionately to what they shared but rather immediately changing the subject, or instances where I took up as much airtime (if not more) than the interviewees did. While I believe my intentions behind this were positive, as I wanted to avoid being a distant researcher who would extract information while not sharing or giving anything of herself (Kovach, 2010, p. 42), I believe a more relaxed approach in which I allowed the interviewee to steer the conversation while responding occasionally would have been more effective.

Finally, it is essential that I reflexively consider the ethics of the research. At the start of the research process, I felt committed to not focusing on stories of pain and suffering throughout my conversations, but rather on peoples' resilience and resistance (Tuck and Wayne Yang, 2018, p. 2). However, despite my intention, I still found myself falling into this trap. Thus, a major ethical consideration is the gravity and potential consequences of critiquing a movement building network in the public eye, given the reality that the struggles of leaders both within and outside movement spaces was a core aspect of many of my conversations. Social movement organizations are already at risk of scrutiny and attacks by the ruling class and other counter interests that aim to crush revolutionary transformation. Producing a writing piece which has criticism embedded within it could potentially be misused for destructive purposes (Marx, 1979). The information could also be misused by disgruntled individuals within the organization itself (ibid). Writing critically about a movement that I am involved with also has the potential to harm the relationships I have with others in the network if they are not pleased with how I have done the analysis or represented the data. To mitigate these risks and maintain an ethical approach to the research, I have deployed a

variety of strategies. First, I've done my best to illustrate the ways in which movement spaces are healing and to highlight the processes and practices through which the movement works to heal ruptures that inevitably happen. While movements are not exempt from the afflictions of society at-large, I have tried to emphasize that they contain immense potency to serve a prefigurative role of embodying the future they are fighting for (Yates, 2021, p. 1034) and as spaces of healing and transformation of the conflict that arises by living in this world.

A second tactic I have used to mitigate risk and encourage an ethical process is to abide by particular values. Specifically, I have aimed to take a relational approach to the research (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). Because I chose to do my project within a network in which I am already embedded, I had a prior relationship with many of the interviewees, or at the very least we had numerous mutual connections. While I chose this project out of my own interests, I also chose it from a place of consideration and accountability for what could be applicable to the work of the movement. Relational research also requires that the researcher continuously circle back to the participants (ibid), make space for them to shape the process, and welcome their influence on the analysis and findings (ibid). While the time limits of the MA program have made this challenging, I have done my best to maintain relational accountability by providing all interviewees with a copy of the notes or transcript of their interview, sending all interviewees a copy of the draft and welcoming their feedback, and incorporating as much of their advice as possible. Upon completion of the research paper, I will continue to share the findings in whichever ways are most appropriate, such as by creating a different shareable format of the findings, having one-on-one conversations about the findings, or whatever is requested of me. Ultimately, it is my hope that this research was not extractive (ibid) but rather generative, a space to share and process ideas that can enrich the movement's future efforts.

A final ethical consideration relates to the content expressed in this report. As aforementioned, this report does contain challenging information of people sharing stories of struggle, overwork, and general dissatisfaction with their time in movement spaces. However, it is essential to highlight that concerns do not reflect the UPoor network as a whole and oftentimes were only present in one or two organizations. I have deliberately chosen to use organizational names selectively, not revealing names of individuals or organizations in more sensitive cases due to privacy considerations, but also to avoid hierarchical logics of comparison or ranking. Rather, I aim to discuss findings in broad terms which can then be reflected

on holistically. Finally, since I aim for this report to serve political interests rather than contribute to mainstream academic knowledge, I will not attempt to publish it.

1.6 Structure of the Paper

Chapter one contains the research topic, research questions, contextual framing, methodology, and limitations. Chapter two is a theoretical framing which underpins this research. Chapters three, four, and five explore challenges within movement and the various dimensions of care used to address them. Chapter six concludes the research and offers questions for future study.

Chapter Two: A Theoretical Framing of How Oppression Makes Us Sick

2.1 Defining Concepts

To truly understand the importance and significance of care in revolutionary movement building, we must begin by understanding the economic and social forces which dispossess the body. Healing traditions from across the world have different conceptualizations for how the body is impacted by its environment. One understanding comes from African spirituality, which uses the concept that disease comes from dis-ease, referring to a disharmony in the body, or a form of unease that indicates the body is without proper function due to life and world circumstances (Somé, 1998). Dis-ease of any form, from any cause, can lead to disease if it goes unaddressed for too long (ibid). Another paradigm comes from the Lakota philosophy of well-being, which understands that a person's health or lack thereof is directly related to the health of the larger community, such that when the community is healthy and thriving, so are its members (Our Mission, 2022). Treatment does not involve a decontextualized, individual regimen but rather asks what in the surrounding community created this imbalance in the first place, thus "restoring lost harmony to the entire group" (Langness, 2017).

These explanations are powerful depictions of how external environments impact the body. Healing traditions from around the world, much more so than conventional Western understanding, depart from the position that ailments begin through the body's interaction with other forces as opposed to just resulting from an individual's behavior (Maté, 2022, p.42). However, to avoid the risk of appropriation, this research paper will use the concept 'trauma' to describe the consequences the body experiences from existing in a sick society. It is a term used and accepted by practitioners and scholars in the U.S. context, such as distinguished physician Dr. Gabor Maté. According to Maté who specializes in trauma, addiction, and childhood development, "trauma in its Greek origin is 'wound'. Whether we realize it or not, it is our woundedness, or how we cope with it, that dictates much of our behaviors, shapes our social habits, and informs our ways of thinking about the world" (Maté, 2022, p. 63). Trauma is an "inner injury" that happens inside the body, rather than the event itself (ibid, p. 60). It is experienced by everyone and is "a foundational layer of experience in modern life" (ibid, p. 54) due to the oppressive social, political, and economic context in which we live.

Extreme events of abuse, violence, and incarceration, as well as any experience of marginalization in society can be traumatic. However, according to renowned author and psychotherapist Dr. Nicole LePera, it does not require a catastrophic event to be remembered by the body. Many common childhood experiences which result from a dysfunctional society can register as trauma, such as having a caregiver who struggles to communicate their needs, regulate their emotions, model healthy boundaries, or who has staunch expectations on who their child should be (LePera, 2021, p. 48-54). Finally, when using the term 'body', this essay departs from the understanding of the "oneness of the human *psyche*, (mind and spirit) and the *soma* (the body)…a synthesis of behavior, psychology, and biology…[that] the mind and body [are] intricately linked…despite Western medicine's artificial cleaving of the two" (Maté, 2022, p. 114-115). Neuroscientist Candace Pert has coined the term 'bodymind' to illustrate this link (ibid, p. 116). However, for the ease of semantics and readability, I will use body, with the understanding that body encompasses our whole being. I will intentionally avoid categorical representations such as physical, mental, or behavioral health because these scholars advocate that all processes that occur in the body are inextricable from one other and do not occur in isolation or in parallel (idib, p. 116-117).

2.2 Marxist Analysis of the Body-Society Connection

Marxist political economy provides one analysis on how the systems of society create trauma in the body. While Marxist political economy is structural in its essence, it recognizes the body itself as a site of struggle, as human workers are continuously being dispossessed and exploited through capitalist relations, facing deep somatic consequences. In chapter ten of *Capital Volume One,* Marx begins to discuss this phenomenon by describing the "working day" (Marx, 1999) and emphasizing that the essence of insatiable capitalist production compels the owning class to maximize the limits of the working day, "[making it] as long as possible…forcing the worker into a trap of endless laboring in the pursuit of expanding capital" (ibid). In this sense, capital crushes all human boundaries. "It usurps the time for growth, development, and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight…It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, reparation, and refreshment of the bodily powers to just so many hours of torpor as the revival of an organism, absolutely exhausted, renders essential" (ibid). Through this process, capitalist production inflicts harm on all those forced to labor within it, causing physical deformities of the spinal column (Engels, 2005), liver and kidney diseases, premature aging,

infections of the digestive tract due to malnutrition, drunkenness and addiction, pneumonia, asthma, other autoimmune diseases (Marx, 1999), along with even increased crime and arrest, all ailments associated with overwork (Engels, 2005).

In chapter fourteen of *Capital Volume One,* Marx describes the impact of mechanization on the body. The division of labor deepens, which subjects workers to doing very repetitive, minute tasks continuously. He notes that the more detailed a person's labor becomes, the more their intellectual and emotional acuities deteriorate (Marx, 1999). Marx states this subjugation is intentional because highly skilled workers do not fit as well in the "mechanical system" of capital and thus are of high risk of rising against the cycle of exploitation (ibid). In *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844,* Engels writes about how capitalist development and urbanization centralizes the population into crowded cities with poor air quality, creates buildings without ventilation systems, and facilitates polluted waterways and cramped living spaces (2005). He asks, "How is it possible, under such conditions, for the lower class to be healthy and long lived? What else can be expected than an excessive mortality, an unbroken series of epidemics, a progressive deterioration in the physique of the working population?" (2005). Engels even discusses death by overwork. He notes that when one person kills another person, the judicial system classifies it as manslaughter. "But when society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet", society hesitates to call it what it is – murder" (2005).

Marx referenced those who are disproportionately impacted by capitalist exploitation when he notes the "barbaric horrors of slavery" and how most capital accumulation historically has happened on the backs of Black and Brown people, as "sometimes the using up of [the slave's] life in 7 years of labour became a factor [calculated into the system]" (Marx, 1999). Marxist feminist scholars like Maria Mies and Silvia Federici unveil that when females were integrated into capitalist production, their labor was violently extracted as they were given disproportionate amounts of work and endured extreme levels of abuse (1986, p. 145-146). These scholars connect primitive accumulation to the differentiated working class, noting that the exploitation of workers for capital accumulation did not occur evenly but rather within hierarchies along the lines of gender, race, and age (Federici, 2005, p. 63-64). In addition to market labor, the task of maintaining the survival of the working class has historically been thrust onto women through their unpaid social reproductive labor, including care and domestic work, supporting families and households, and more (Federici, 2018, p. 31).

Finally, Marxist thinker and practitioner Rudolf Virchow was one of the founders of modern immunology. As a physician, Virchow witnessed famine, disease, and catastrophic conditions for the urban poor during the Revolutions of 1848 in Germany. A significant contribution was his theory that disease is not generated from within the body, but rather is the body's reaction to an external stimulus (Marya and Patel, 2021, p. 38). He spoke out against racial hierarchy and highlighted the importance of social conditions, emphasizing that "oppression would lead to more pronounced manifestations of disease, and justice would enable healing" (ibid). Marxist political economy provides tools for understanding systemic exploitation at the level of the class, and also offers concepts for understanding the experiences of individuals, such as overwork, lack of fulfilment, or a hollowed-out state of being.

2.3 Contemporary Analysis of the Body-Society Connection

Contemporary scholars, activists, and practitioners also discuss the ways in which large social and economic forces inflict trauma on the body. The fact "that social life bears upon health is not a new discovery, but the recognition of it has never been more urgent" (Maté, 2022, p. 30). It is now widely acknowledged that the United States was founded on trauma, born on the genocide of Indigenous nations and enslavement of Africans (Mohatt, et al., 2014, p. 129). Staci Haines, author of *The Politics of Trauma,* discusses how our conditioning and particularly our pains and our privileges are largely determined by sites outside of ourselves, namely family and intimate networks, community, institutions, social norms and historical forces, and finally spirit and landscape (Haines, 2021, p. 361-362). Gabor Maté goes as far to say that childhood trauma is the number one root cause of all forms of chronic illness" while noting struggles like addiction are a consequence of societies rooted in isolation and individualism (Pain Society of Alberta). Dr. Rae Johnson, author of *Embodied Social Justice,* articulates that oppression is traumatic, and that systems like racism and patriarchy carry immense power to have a "deeply felt and potentially enduring impact on our bodily sense of who we are" (Johnson, 2021).

Another contemporary example is the work of Rupa Marya and Raj Patel. Their book *Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice,* examines how the forces of capitalism, colonialism, and supremacism inflict harm to the human body. They provide case studies from around the world to connect structural oppression to disease in the eight major organ systems (Marya and Patel, 2021, n.p.). They emphasize that the capitalist system is designed so that certain bodies experience health crises more than others, and that this points to "questions

about power, injustice, and inequity…bound in modern medicine within questions of colonialism" (ibid, p. 13). Finally, Marya and Patel connect to the everyday lived experiences of people, noting that, "experiencing daily trauma at the hands of law enforcement, acute poverty, hunger, discrimination, forced displacement, and disproportionate exposure to toxins – it all makes people sick" (ibid, p. 9). Thus, these authors all acknowledge that "chronic illness… is to a large extent a *function* or *feature* of the way things are and not a *glitch;* a consequence of how we live, not a mysterious aberration" (Mate, 2022, p. 29).

For decolonial scholar Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, dispossession of the body begins in the epistemic domain, where knowledge is created and internalized (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 1-2). He shares how hegemonic forces of the West have historically controlled the production of knowledge, and in the process demarcated what ways of being, doing, and living are acceptable by the colonial gaze (ibid). For example, some pre-colonial cosmologies involved more fluidity in gender expression and sexual behavior. However, within contemporary Western society, we now face binaries, categories, and boxes through which to identify and understand ourselves (Trejo Méndez, 2021, p. 10). This process is operationalized in "medical praxis, research, and knowledge" which pathologizes all ways of being that fall outside of white-hetero-cisgendered existence (ibid). This creates an "embodied, affective, and epistemological injury" (Ureña, 2019, p. 1649), as people internalize that they are inferior or lacking through the erasure of their identity. Here, it is understood that people are slowly and deliberately denied their very personhood, not through external and material conditions, but rather in an insidious, intangible way as social norms and cultural expectations seep into the hearts and minds of those who exist in the margins of society.

Without proper resolution, trauma has cumulative effects and can (unknowingly) be passed down generationally. In his book *It Didn't Start with You* (2016), Mark Wolynn provides the example of one of his patients, a 19-year-old boy who had debilitating insomnia and episodes of feeling freezing at night. The patient's symptoms remained until he learned about the morbid death of an uncle he had never met, who froze to death in a snowstorm as a 19-year-old (ibid, p. 38-39). The patient was "unconsciously reliving aspects of [his unknown uncle's] death" 30 years later (ibid, p. 39). The work of both contemporary and Marxist authors suggest that the inflammation and psychosomatic pains humans experience are linked to the oppressive structures within which we are embedded. Thus, this project draws from these scholars to attempt to understand the connections between individual pain, trauma, or illness with the broader structures of oppression under capitalism.

Chapter Three: The Body is a Microcosm of Society

3.1 Trauma, Disorganization, and Movement Leaders

As described in the previous section, contemporary scholars of the body-society connection see the body as constantly under attack by the structures of society. These scholars suggest that trauma on many levels brings stark consequences, from disease, to chronic disembodiment, to identity ruptures and wounds of the heart, mind, and spirit. While trauma caused by oppression can have devastating effects on the lives of people, their family and social networks, and entire communities, it also affects the movement in deep and nuanced ways. As was explained through Marxist and contemporary analysis, "the body is our first environment" (Bauhardt, 2019, p. 11) and thus it is "the material place through which we experience the world and where memories, knowledge, violence, and resistance reside" (Harcourt, 2021). Thus, the poor and dispossessed class of society is not left unscathed by the system in which we live.

In this section, I introduce the experiences of movement leaders, collected in my interview process from July 19 – August 20 across the east coast. Interviewees linked to the body-society framing when they noted that the compulsion of capital reduces their multidimensional body to "a body that produces" and a "body that others have power upon" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). One interviewee noted that the capitalist economy manipulates people such that "we are only allowed to survive. We cannot question things. We are only here to reproduce, and we become a minimal expression of ourselves as human beings. That's what our whole class is going through, just being reduced to meeting our physical needs which is the absolute minimum" (Davis, 08.01.2022) Several interviewees explained the foundational aspects of what the body-society connection means for the movement, by observing that "people's personal issues are some of the biggest obstacles, because everybody brings their life experience to the table. And while people might have really good intentions, they've been programmed to operate a certain way" (Gia, 08.02.2022).

Thus, people come to movement participation carrying baggage and wounds from the challenging experiences they live through on a day-to-day basis within capitalist modernity and within their immediate familial and community environments. Interviewees pointed out many afflictions of movement leaders, beginning with tangible crises such as financial emergencies, housing instability, incarceration and abuse by the criminal justice system

(Casey, 08.05.2022), or issues with work or childcare (Jackson, 08.09.2022), as well as relational challenges with loved ones (ibid). They also discussed intangible challenges, such as burnout (Gia, 08.02.2022), having a lack of confidence, struggles asking for help or wanting to do everything on one's own, fears around door knocking, feelings of self-shame and blame which keep people stuck, or overcommitting and taking on too much (Sam and Alex, 08.11.2022). Others spoke to the desire to be liked getting in the way of organizing work, perfectionism, lack of political discernment (Drew, 08.15.2022), individualism, being judgemental towards oneself, challenges with ego and wanting to seem like the smartest person in the room (Jay, 07.31.2022) or invalidating one's own feelings and experiences of hardship (Kendra, 08.02.2022). Several interviewees spoke about the struggle of 'martyrdom' in movement work, or the tendency to sacrifice one's own well-being which leads to burnout. One individual described their experience when they said,

> *"I have the complete model of martyrdom... It's not that people don't need to consecrate their lives to this work and be in it for the long haul, but you can be in something for the long haul and not live moment to moment in a way that you're so burnt out that you are grinding your teeth constantly and self-sabotaging…I know it's walking a line because we are up against these systems and structures that will take everything from us and make us feel like it's our own fault…I was wearing six different hats, and when I had some space away from the constant crisis of the front-line stuff, I was like oh, you would do this stuff better if you weren't crushingly anxious all the time and paranoid"* (Casey, 08.05.2022).

Tendencies that show up within movement leaders are bred through social norms, early childhood experiences, and the conditions of society. One interviewee noted that their tendency to overcommit in movement work "comes from early family dynamics, like wanting to be liked and thinking that the way to earn love from my parents was to be really successful" (Alex, 08.11.2022). Additionally, it is well-illustrated by many contemporary Black, Indigenous, and feminist activists that patterns like perfectionism, the notion of there being one best way to accomplish a task, or individualism are all values bred in white supremacy culture (Okun, 2022). As noted by one interviewee, "the body is a microcosm of society, and it shows me the larger system in the everyday experience" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). Thus, the

struggles we see arise for movement leaders cannot be understood separately from the system which shapes them.

Another main challenge faced by movement leaders which also inhibits the process of developing future leaders is that of chemical warfare – a concept coined by the movement which refers to a systematic effort by those in power to distribute drugs, alcohol, opioids, or other addictive substances for the sake of profit and to disorganize the poor and dispossessed. A journal article published by the UPoor notes that chemical warfare is "class warfare" which is used "to disorganize, isolate, and stigmatize the poor and dispossessed of this country. It is a way the power structure of this society chooses – concretely as well as rhetorically – who is worthy of life" (MacLaren, Martin, and Scott, 2020). Several interviewees discussed the impact of chemical warfare on the movement, by noting there are leaders within organizations who are debilitated by their addiction (Noah, 08.10.2022). Another noted that "our class is a class in crisis, and we are self-medicating. We have people who can't attend a meeting at 6pm because they are drinking by then. We have people who couldn't come to [the rally on] June 18 for two days in D.C. because they wouldn't be able to access their drugs on the trip. That is what we are up against" (Jay, 07.31.2022).

3.2 Confronting Crisis with Care

Oftentimes, our personal struggles are what bring us into movement spaces in the first place and serve as fuel for being politicized, despite being troubling or disorganizing. Nonetheless, these struggles must be handled with intention to prevent them from undermining the integrity and success of the movement. The UPoor network has developed a theory and praxis around "care" which allows them to both meet the immediate needs and emergencies of leaders when they arise, while supporting them through processes of deep transformation and healing. A leader who focuses on care within the movement network notes that "the system treats us poorly. It comes across as blaming us and being critical of who we are and the choices we are making. But we operate from a totally different framework. We start with looking at the fact that we are not born with these struggles. They are put on us by this society, and we try to think about how we can free ourselves from them instead of just writing people off. Everyone has struggles, and we are realistic of what we can expect from people under the conditions of their lives. So, we come from a whole different set of assumptions than what society teaches" (Jackson, 08.09.2022).

3.2.1 What is Care?

The concept of care is well-represented in academic literature and can be found in countless sociological writings. For example, sociologist Joan Tronto discusses an "ethic of care" which is "an approach to personal, social, moral, and political life that starts from the reality that all human beings need and receive care and give care to others" (Ethics of Care, 2009). Other understandings of care depart from the Marxist concept of social reproduction, or how "care work", that is "the work that must be done to produce and reproduce people" is exploited, unpaid labor often performed by women, which upholds capitalism and allows the continuance of the workforce and hegemonic institutions such as the state and market (Rodríguez Enríquez, 2012, p. 24). While these definitions usefully illuminate diverse understandings and applications of the concept, this research uses a concept of care which originates in the lived, embodied experiences of movement leaders within the UPoor.

There is no single uniform definition of care that is used by everyone across the movement network, and sometimes other terms are used interchangeably, such as community care or cadre care. But my fieldwork documents an emergent concept of care as both a theory and praxis developed within the movement. This concept centers around the preservation, development, and transformation of people. Care practices nourish leaders while recognizing that these leaders are not singular within their struggles but rather interdependent and co-constitutive of each other, the movement at-large, and society. One interviewee described care from their vantage point by sharing that "care is a love unlike anything else, a radical hospitality that is both spoken and unspoken and has a level of intention behind it that just doesn't exist in other spaces" (Riley, 07.31.2022). Another offered that "care returns us to our innate wisdom to care for each other and to trust that we know how to listen to and support one another" (Cooper, 08.01.2022). It is both an approach and a set of concrete practices which are used to meet the needs of movement leaders as they arise, develop them as leaders, build cohesion and resilience among leaders, and shape and sustain the movement for the long haul. Finally, care must be politicized. One organization shared how they were grappling with this when they said, "it's difficult to meet someone's needs, but it's that much more difficult to show people that the reason we need to do this is because we have a system that regularly fails us" (Tyler, 08.12.2022). Thus, care is most effective as an organizing approach when combined with political education.

3.2.2 Trajectory of Care

The importance of care in revolutionary movements has been discussed and recognized historically. One reference point on care comes from Georgi Dimitrov, in his work entitled *Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism,* a concluding speech he provided at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. In his speech, he noted that the question of the cadre was given no attention at the Congress, while outlining the attacks they face, as "the enemy hunts down, murders, throws [cadre] into jail and concentration camps and subjects [them] to excruciating torture, particularly in fascist countries" (Dimitrov, 1972, p. 17). He emphasized the task at hand, including "constantly replenishing the ranks, cultivating and training new cadres, as well as carefully preserving the existing cadres" (Dimitrov, 1972, p. 17) while deconstructing the key question of what a policy regarding cadre entails.

He noted that such a policy includes studying the people to defend against those who may "turn out to be agents of the class enemy", strategically promoting cadre through the leadership ranks, tactically using cadre based on their strengths and weaknesses, correctly distributing cadre geographically, providing systematic assistance to cadre, such as "friendly check-up[s], [corrections] of shortcomings and errors, and in concrete day-to-day guidance of cadres", and finally, "care for the preservation of cadres… and promptly [withdrawing] Party workers to the rear whenever circumstances so require and replace them by others" (ibid, p. 18-19). Additionally, the International Labour Defense organization provided both "material and moral assistance…[to revolutionaries, which] saved the lives and preserved the strength and fighting capacity of thousands upon thousands of most valuable fighters of the working class in many countries" (ibid, p. 20). Dimitrov clearly articulates that as the material conditions of the working class become progressively more severe, revolutionary work around the care of cadre will grow rapidly in its importance (ibid).

In the current context within the UPoor, a shared trajectory has emerged in which a theory and praxis of care was developed in response to the crisis of capitalism and how this crisis dispossesses leaders in many dimensions. One interviewee commented that care as a body of revolutionary work within the UPoor network was the "squeaky wheel" (Noah, 08.10.2022) which needed urgent attention and development. Care is not uniform across the movement network, with some mass organizations having very sophisticated infrastructure, including care teams, organizational policies, an overall vision and approach, and concrete practices that are part of their organizing. Other organizations have no infrastructure at all. However, in most instances, those who do have care well established in their organization

generally agree that care work must prioritize the leaders in the movement due to limited capacity (Noah, 08.10.2022) Some described that taking time for care and giving it legitimacy within movement was challenging at first, wondering whether they should be taking away from rallies or protests to do this work. However, soon care proved to be something hungered for across the network, and something that needs further cultivation to have a strong presence throughout the network in its entirety.

3.3 Care for the Preservation, Development, and Transformation of Leaders

As described in section 3.1, many people enter into movement spaces bearing the conditioning and imposition of society, whether that be in material or immaterial ways. However, interviewees spoke to the act of being politicized in movement as an experience of care in itself. One example from an interviewee is: "I got involved at probably one of the lowest points of my life. I was going through a lot of personal crises, coming to terms with a lot of things and getting a reality check of sorts. But I was feeling so low about myself, until one day I was invited to go door knocking. I am a clear case of joining an organization being able to empower people and put them on more firm footing" (Alex, 08.11.2022). Many people come to movement with a sense of powerlessness or cynicism, feeling like nothing ever changes or that people do not have enough proximity to power such that they can shift the status quo of society. But by getting organized and being connected to collective political power, this paralysis becomes transformed. One interviewee shared that "it transformed my whole life to shift how I understood the way the world works, and how I can impact the direction it is going" (Drew, 08.15.2022). Other interviewees spoke about coming to movement with challenges of self-loathing or feelings that they must be broken in some way due to their circumstances. However, through political education and collective study, they realized that there are systems in place which create poverty. Thus, "studying together is healing. When you study history and economics and big tomes of theory together, you realize, damn, this is not my fault!" (Jaime, 07.28.2022).

> "*I know that I've worked my entire life as hard as I could to try and be independent and always felt like I could be independent. But something happened to me that I had no control over. The way the system is designed created the problem. I think other people need to understand that too because automatically we blame ourselves for everything. Oh, if I hadn't done this or that, then my life would*

be better. But I try to dissuade people from that notion. If you look around you, did all these people make so many mistakes that put them into poverty? That's fucking impossible if you think about it. The system is designed so all the money goes in one direction" (Gia, 08.02.2022).

Just the experience of being involved in movement spaces can be liberatory and healing, as feeling like your presence matters, having comrades who care about you, and working purposefully towards a common vision can break cycles of isolation and destruction caused by the system. One interviewee noted that "I've had a bunch of things happen to me since I joined [this organization]. And they never let me fall. And just knowing that makes me a much stronger and kinder person. Because when you know that you're being taken care of, you have capacity for helping other people. That's what the universe needs to be about" (Gia, 08.02.2022). Another interviewee explained how the movement is a powerful space to transmute our struggles into productive action. They noted that "every single piece of the work is contributing to moving people through their shame, or humiliation, or denial, or whatever it is…whether it's community care, the project of survival this weekend, the base building blitz next weekend, or whether it's the summer study or the HRC meeting, everything is moving people through" (Noah, 08.10.2022).

However, in addition to involvement in movement being an act of care in itself, organizations within the UPoor network have also instituted specific practices around care to respond to the needs of movement leaders, with the goals of centering the preservation, development, and transformation of cadre in their organizing work. As described, many movement leaders face financial crises of all kinds. One leader articulated that care is part of the "stick and stay". They noted that "so many people are struggling that if we can't support people through crises then we will lose them" (Riley, 07.31.2022). One example of financial support offered within both the Vermont Workers Center and Put People First! PA is the Community Care Fund, which is a fund through which movement leaders can apply for financial support to meet their basic needs during difficult periods in their lives. One interviewee shared their experience having benefitted from the Community Care Fund. They explained that "I was out of work for three months last winter from [an injury]. I was going to food pantries to feed myself, but getting money through the organization helped me pay my rent until the rental assistance that I had applied for came through" (Kendra, 08.02.2022).

In addition to meeting leaders in their financial crises, Put People First! PA has developed a practice called Peer Support, which is designed to support leaders in other dimensions, through the struggles and experiences of their internal worlds. Peer support is both a framework and a practice through which movement leaders participate in collective listening and emotional release. "The theory and framework is about humans, who they are, how they get hurt and how they heal, or how they regain access to their full intelligence…there are tools for how you listen to each other in a way that allows people to release emotions and to clear up confusions in their past that hang onto them" (Noah, 08.10.2022). Peer support takes an orientation similar to that of many trauma-informed and body-centric approaches, recognizing that childhood experiences, emotions, ancestral trauma, or other internal wounds have behaviorial manifestations. Instead of trying to control or change the behavior through the rational mind, peer support creates a container for people to transform inner wounds such that troublesome behaviors then naturally shift on their own, which has deep implications for the individual, both in their everyday lives and in their movement work.

Our early conditionings, maladaptive tendencies to fight, flight, freeze, appease, or dissociate, or unconscious programming and automated responses all impact the integrity and effectiveness of movement work. Some organizers shared how their time engaging in peer support has allowed them to become better organizers, such as by "being able to listen without needing to prepare a response or argue back" (Alex, 08.11.2022). Another organizer shared that peer support has provided a space for them to be "vulnerable and raw" noting that "in the classes…one person does a mini session, and everyone is watching on zoom. And it's really intense to cry in front of that many people if that's what happens. And it definitely fights against my own individualism stuff, which is one of the biggest things I have to work through, that I'm different and special and no one will understand me or accept my needs. That has to do with childhood stuff and societal stuff, but it really helps me stay in the organization" (ibid). By creating a space for healing, peer support puts more power behind organizers, "helping them to get more access to themselves, to their intelligence, to be less manipulatable, less triggerable, and less confused by all the upsets that happen in the work" (Noah, 08.10.2022).

Peer support also "distinguishes between the person and their patterns or the struggles that they carry…what is it that I struggle with that keeps me from being a cadre? That keeps me from being a leader or a coordinator in this organization? What are the things that block my development, whether it's my anxiety, my terror, fear, whether it's my self-hate or

blame, whether it's my addiction and substance abuse, or my ADHD, whatever. What are the roots? And how do we move you through that? Because we don't assume that's your inherent nature. We assume that you were subjected to that, and that you've been waiting your whole life to get out from under that. And through collective action and collective study and these specific practices that are about healing and release and development, then you will move through that" (ibid). Peer support is an incredibly potent and powerful practice, not only for its healing capabilities, but also because of its subversion to capitalist ideology on the body, which centers the individual and a patient-practitioner hierarchy in healing (Trejo Méndez, 2021, p. 13) as well as the belief that our struggles are our identities or just part of our lot in life, something that we either were born with or developed over time due to poor lifestyle choices. Rather, peer support has political intentions by "shining a light to help us see that our patterns are related to a larger system that does not want us to be our healthiest selves" (Alex, 08.11.2022). Peer support not only offers deep and lasting transformation but also presents a new framework through which to understand healing and disease.

In addition to contributing to the internal care and transformation of movement leaders, it also serves as a form of leadership development. Some interviewees noted that the movement tends to over-emphasize intellectual development while not giving enough attention to other dimensions (Casey, 08.05.2022). One individual described that:

> *"Our opposition is coming at us from every angle and attacking from every angle, so we need to be developing every angle. If we don't have defenses developed, not just intellectually, but psychologically, emotionally, real defenses, which requires building up not just our ability to put up with bad things but knowing how to draw deeply on your own joy and power… if we don't develop that in people, we are not going to win. It's not just about convincing people with an intellectual argument. It's developing that stuff which is spiritual work or psychological work. It's building communities that are actually taking care of each other in a real way and leveraging as much as we can to make that possible*" (Casey, 08.05.2022).

Peer support is not widely instituted within the movement but rather is mainly concentrated in one organization. However, the need for leadership development outlets that go beyond the intellectual realm is vast and urgent. While CEO's and corporations have

trainings on emotional awareness and intelligence, practices like peer support also serve as a training ground for the poor and dispossessed, to cultivate the inner resilience needed to stay present and motivated in the long-term fight for liberation.

Chapter Four: The Body and the Movement as Co-Constitutive

4.1 Trauma and the Political Landscape

As illustrated throughout chapter three, care is an essential component of revolutionary movement building because it is an aspect of the work which focuses on the movement's most precious resource – its people. Care serves to preserve, develop, and transform leaders from the societal trauma they endure which equips them for the battles they will face in their organizing. Care also harnesses the power of the body as a vehicle through which to transform oneself and the organizing work at-large. The work of contemporary decolonial scholar María Lugones offers a second key rationale for care in movement building. Lugones writes, "My body has come to know and experience the dominant gaze in different 'worlds'…the ones where I am dehumanized and the ones where I have failed to delink from such gaze, therefore reproducing it or being unable to challenge it" (Trejo Méndez, 2021, p. 8). According to Lugones, living within a sick and oppressive society inflicts trauma and fuels disorganization in movement spaces, while calibrating the body to reproduce these same structures unconsciously. This notion can also be seen in contemporary Africana phenomenological social analysis, which recognizes "both the impact of the social world on the emergence of meaning and human identities, and how individual situations relate to the development and preservation of social and political institutions. [Thus,] the influence between self and society…moves in both directions" (Ureña, 2019, p. 1655).

Both of these arguments assert that because we live in a society which dispossesses the body in many ways, we knowingly and unknowingly are conditioned to function in accordance with the rhythms of the hegemonic system, and this sometimes seeps into movement spaces. In alignment with this theory, a main theme in my interviews is how we sometimes reproduce the system in the movement without meaning to. This happens in the political landscape at-large, our interpersonal interactions with other leaders, and through our approaches to our organizing work. One interviewee explained that "the system is embodied in us" and "we replicate the same systems we are trying to change" when we have a lack of emphasis on the micro, or the inner workings of the daily lived experiences of organizing and are only focused on changing macro level systems (Jesse, 08.04.2022). Interviewees throughout the UPoor network suggest that care serves as an antidote to reproducing such hegemonic behaviors. It is a vehicle through which we can "teach the body new ways of

existing in space" (ibid) such that we can unlearn long-engrained patterns. This chapter discusses how the system is unconsciously reproduced in the movement, and how the movement uses care to re-condition ourselves to new ways of being.

The most fundamental place this vicious cycle can be observed is in the political landscape at-large, where the movement is working to organize and disrupt this pattern by politicizing people. One example comes from Marxist scholar and psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, who explored the repercussions of structural oppression via the field of sexuality and family dynamics. In his work, he made key theorizations, such as the connection between the patriarchal family and peoples' internalized power relations which impact their political behavior (Reich, 1934). He hypothesized that as people internalize the power relations in their hegemonic nuclear family, they unconsciously seek to replicate this authoritarian leadership in society, operationalized in their voting patterns (ibid).

Links can also be observed between trauma and right-wing populism. In the last several years, a resurgence of alt-right political leaders and conservative narratives have scapegoated poor and marginalized people for social problems that have structural roots (Frankel, 2015, p. 360). Electoral maps show that while low-income voters turned out more for Democratic candidates in the 2016 election, support for Donald Trump by these same voters increased by 16 points from the previous election cycle with Mitt Romney as the Republican candidate, despite Trump's demonization of the poor and threats to cut essential public programs (Slevin, 2016). While there are many explanations which aim to rationalize this phenomenon, trauma is rarely discussed. Frankel (2015) integrates Ferenczi[3] psychology, trauma, and political behavior (Frankel, 2015, p. 359) to hypothesize that far right-wing authoritarian political leaders prey on and exploit people's trauma. This dynamic is exemplified by arguments in favor of deporting immigrants who are allegedly stealing American jobs or in favor of cracking down on criminal behavior and public safety. Such leaders speak to and provide easy answers for people's deepest fears, feelings of shame, and everyday struggles, as many rural communities are economically and socially devastated. Frankel shares how through psychoanalytic trauma theory we can see that support for these authoritarian political candidates is a "traumatic reaction [called] identification with the aggressor…[where] they would subordinate themselves to the will of the aggressor" to seek comfort and safety (ibid, p. 360).

[3] Sandor Ferenczi was a psychoanalyst who made contributions to the field of humanistic psychology. He specialized in unconscious functioning and the importance of practitioner-patient relationship, and developed several psychoanalytic concepts, including Identification with the Aggressor (About Ferenczi, 2022).

Another interpretation comes from scholars Salmela and von Scheve (2017). Their *Emotional Roots of Right-Wing Populism* discusses the political economy backdrop of the rise of the radical populist right, including globalization, neoliberalization, and austerity politics. They acknowledge that these factors alone cannot explain the rise of the New Right, but that people's emotional processes must also be considered (p.567). Specifically, they note that emotional processes connected to perceived or real threat of identity serves as fuel for the radical right. These include fear or shame around "not being able to live up to salient social identities and their constitutive values", particularly in capitalist modernity where "responsibility for success and failure is increasingly individualized, and failure is stigmatized through unemployment, receiving welfare benefits, or labor migration" (ibid). They point to a mechanism through which emotions impact political behavior called *ressentiment,* which "explains how negative emotions – fear and insecurity specifically – transform through repressed shame into anger, resentment, and hatred towards perceived 'enemies' of the self and associated groups like refugees, immigrants, the long-term unemployed, political and cultural elites, and the mainstream media" (ibid).

Reich, Frankel, and Salemela and von Scheve's explanations illustrate how the learned patterns in our bodies lead us to reproduce the very structures which dispossess us, such as when deep fears and shames play out in people's political behavior on a mass scale. Other contemporary activists share how 'normative' social behaviors that exist today such as cancel culture or "identitiarianism" can be understood as collective responses to pre-existing traumas and collective mechanisms of re-traumatization (Lockett, 2020). Chua (2018), renowned lawyer and scholar, describes "political tribalism" or how when groups of people feel threatened, they "retreat into tribalism…close the ranks and become more insular, more defensive, more punitive, more us-versus-them" (n.p.). While identity politics have important intention and purpose around visibilizing the specific "experience and oppression of historically marginalized minorities", they can also result in "Oppression Olympics" (ibid) through which movements end up fighting against each other, trying to gain small victories for their target demographic as opposed to orienting around a united front, a revolutionary restructuring of society to eliminate the system which sowed these divisions in the first place.

4.2 The Interpersonal: Disorganizing Dynamics Amongst Leaders

In addition to the political landscape at-large, the unconscious reproduction of oppressive structures and tendencies can also be observed inside the movement itself, particularly in situations without care in place. One interviewee affirmed the threat of reproducing the structures we are fighting against when she noted that "care is one of the most important things in movement because without care, we fall into the capitalist way[4]" (Riley, 07.31.2022). Specifically, this phenomenon can be observed within interpersonal interactions. For example, some interviewees shared about navigating disagreements regarding organizational goals, as some leaders want the agenda to focus more on particular demographics or issues as opposed to broad-based efforts. Interviewees raised the challenges of moral fusion organizing, which is a concept used to describe the organizing praxis of the UPoor network. Moral fusion organizing is a form of organizing that seeks to build relationships across all lines of division to unite the poor and dispossessed in a broad-based movement to end poverty. In its essence, moral fusion organizing is an act of care, an antidote to identity politics or cancel culture, going beyond silos and short-sighted battles.

Interviewees shared that successfully doing moral fusion organizing in a deep way is very difficult. They described that it includes a lot of messiness and opportunities for people's long-standing trauma to surface. Interviewees mentioned power struggles within movement, such as having too many main decision makers being people from the wealthier strata of the class, whose ideas dominate over others' but are not entrenched in the realities of the poor (Jay, 07.31.2022). Others noted challenging interpersonal relations between leaders who are of higher and lower economic sections of the class, as sometimes wealthier leaders look down on others or give unsolicited advice (Gia, 08.02.2022). Others explained that "poverty steals time" (Kyle, 08.12.2022) and while it is real that people have many competing obligations, there can also be a pre-conceived notion that poor people don't have time to be involved, which ends up undermining their capacity in the movement, and thus not prioritizing their leadership (Emma, 08.12.2022). One additional phenomenon was coined as "O'Dearism" which is when richer individuals join the movement "to feel good about themselves, and it becomes disorganizing" (Jay, 07.31.2022). Scholar, activist, and somatic practitioner Staci

[4] Capitalism is more than an economic system. It also has inherent values, relational tendencies, and modes of operating which shape society. Some of the features which characterize capitalism are: competition, individualism, linear growth, scarcity narratives, endless consumption and profit worship, ego, speed and efficiency, non-accountability, stoicism or endless laboring without complaint, hierarchy, materialism, and domination over people and nature (Armbrust, 2022).

Haines articulates that territorial battles over issues, power struggles, or hierarchical relationships showing up in movement spaces are not surprising because they mimic the systems we are conditioned by, noting that "power-over economic, political and social systems concentrate safety, belonging, dignity, decision making, and resources within a few elite…power-over systems do harm and cause trauma…[and] we are shaped by [these] power-over conditions, as we come to embody them, both unconsciously (mostly) and consciously (some) in our movements" (Haines, 2019, p. 119).

Finally, issues of race and racism appear in some movement spaces which undermine the integrity and effectiveness of the work. One interviewee shared that, "Everyone comes with their stuff, and guess what I end up doing? Mediating conflicts, power struggles, white privilege, white guilt. There is no structure for holding all this right now, so it just blows up at you" (Martin, 07.19.2022). Another noted that they need to continuously change themselves and adjust their behavior, so as to not make white people feel shame or uncomfortability (Jay, 07.31.2022). Others reflected on the fact that "some traumas are so deep, especially around relating across difference…our organization is diverse, but in some spaces, it is whiter than the population. I imagine that makes it hard for some Black people to join. How can we cross over to build trust?" (Sam, 08.11.2022).

Some scholars take the position that the social construct of race was initially created through the infliction of trauma, as colonial powers worked to pin poor Black and poor white people against each other, positioning poor white people slightly closer to power, and instilling this system through torture, starvation, castration, and death. This led to poor white and poor Black people beginning to believe over time that they were each other's enemy as opposed to the big plantation apparatus (Fields, 1982). According to Resmaa Menakem, Black therapist and somatic abolitionist, this racialized system of white supremacy is still remembered by the body today, and thus it is not surprising that it shows up in our interactions with other leaders. Menakem explains, "the vital force behind white supremacy is in our blood – literally – and in our nervous systems…we need to begin with the healing of trauma – in dark-skinned bodies, light-skinned bodies, our neighborhoods and communities... Social and political actions are essential, but they need to be part of a larger strategy of healing, justice, and creating room for growth in traumatized flesh-and-blood bodies" (Menakem, 2017).

While interpersonal conflicts present a challenge to the movement, organizations in the network are developing practices to process these challenges among leaders. According to the Put People First! PA care team, conflicts that arise between leaders within movement work are not reflective of who people truly are and what their values are. They note that, "If we had never been hurt and didn't have to live with the effects of the ways we have been hurt, then our natural way of relating to each other would be to enjoy each other, connect, and be enthusiastic about working together" (Jackson, 08.09.2022). Nevertheless, the movement serves as a space to heal the fissures of society and ourselves, as we can unlearn engrained patterns through care while teaching the body new rhythms for how we relate to one another, with care looking a variety of ways. Several interviewees noted that "the collective action of the poor" is a form of community care for one another, for humanity and the planet (Noah, 08.10.2022). Taking action together across difference is incredibly powerful for healing the divisions instilled in the poor and dispossessed by the ruling class. "We can try to sort these things out mentally in the realm of ideas, but we actually know it's a lot more effective, a lot more transformative, if you can just get people together in a space…because these ruling class ideologies are not just ideologies, they're ways of being that are part of our body too" (Alex, 08.11.2022).

While they acknowledge that the process of healing long-held beliefs about other people is slow and nonlinear, some interviewees shared seeing changes within their organization and their leaders. One interviewee explained that individuals they organize with who used to make challenging racially charged comments are now showing up to [the organization's] events. Another individual shared their own experience that door knocking allowed some of their fears and beliefs about small town, rural white people to shift. They shared that, "I grew up being taught how these people are backwards, that they don't care, or they are not intellectual. And I've gone on a day trip to a more rural place with other white queer people…and everyone is scared and worried that we're going to get hate crimed! And, of course, that happens to people, but we knock on the door, and we're like, do you think healthcare is a human right? They had Trump flags outside, and I was really scared. And the lady said yes! And she opened up about her experiences. She is a real human with the same needs as anyone" (Sam, 08.11.2022).

Another approach through which care is applied to situations of infighting is through political mediation processes. Multiple organizations deploy mediation in times of conflict and report that it is essential for retaining leaders through these turbulent moments. Put

People First! PA's approach to political mediation involves a policy called Member to Member Conflict and Harm in PPF-PA, which is a month-long (with some variation) process that involves a series of meetings through which political mediators help the parties in conflict to navigate through the situation. The meetings include uninterrupted sharing of experiences, repeating back to confirm understanding, acknowledgement of the roles played in the situation, discussion of next steps, notation, and political grounding which frames each conversation. The political framing is particularly potent, and I have included an excerpt of it here:

> *"As a mass organization of the poor and dispossessed that develops leaders across different sections of the working class, we know that our members have had to navigate violent societal terrains. We all enter this organization with many hurts and many strengths, and each of us has at some point (past, present, or future) hurt and been hurt. We do not subscribe to "cancel culture," which focuses on individuals as problematic and disposable. We understand an individual's behavior and the co-creation of harmful situations to be symptomatic of systemic structures and oppressive capitalist culture" (*Policy, 2021).

A revolutionary approach to conflict mediation such as this one has the potential to subvert capitalist ways of being which condition us to dismiss or avoid one another and instead engage in reparative measures with intention and bravery, while emphasizing the value of restoring human relationships. Such a process aims to heal damage between comrades and by society, but also orients the body towards a new way of relating with one another.

In addition to political mediation, interviewees also described other approaches, such as developing a culture of care across all movement spaces. Many ideas were shared for what comprises a culture of care, such as bringing awareness, harm reduction, and sensitivity to the forefront, such that we are "acknowledging the differences in our experiences and can trust we will be seen in our harms" (Clark, 08.07.2022). They explain that this means setting up accountability in movement spaces, recognizing upfront that people have different lived experiences and material realities, while also taking responsibility for our own patterns, wounds, or sensitive spots that are easily triggered (ibid). A culture of care creates space and

responsibility for knowing oneself, such as "knowing you're a fighter, or you're too timid. Or you have trouble taking initiative or else you get in there and blow things up and send things sideways without meaning to, still with good intent. We have to know ourselves and our wounded places to be good organizers" (Patricia, 08.08.2022). Interviewees noted that a culture of care provides freedom to question without fear of being judged (Davis, 08.01.2022), while emphasizing accessibility to everyone at organizational meetings and events (Kendra, 08.02.2022). Another offered that situations of frequent conflict can be avoided by regularly building in "a connection to vision and purpose and a knowing that we are part of something that is bigger than the vehicle that is carrying it right now" (Drew, 08.15.2022). By helping people remain connected to the vision of what the movement is working towards, petty ego drives or upsets over small things are more likely to fall by the wayside, as more important priorities come to the forefront. Even as oppressive dynamics like racism or power struggles seep their way into movement, care practices such as taking action together, political mediation, and developing a culture of care throughout the network offer possibilities for greater cohesion in struggles for liberation.

4.3 The Structural: How the Movement Mimics the System

Social trauma manifests in movement work in leaders' personal struggles and in interpersonal relationships. In addition to these domains, this process can be observed in the organizing work itself and how the movement takes shape over time. In her book *The Politics of Trauma,* Staci Haines asserts that "organizing to transform social and economic conditions and healing are very different processes and take very different skills and strategies. Yet, they are related. While personal and systemic transformation require unique methods of change, they are deeply co-serving, and they need each other to be successful" because healing processes that occur without structural change efforts do not eliminate the root causes of our harms (Haines, 2019, p. 43). Meanwhile, social movement work which excludes healing may run the risk of replicating the very forces we are working to dismantle (ibid). Thus, healing in and through movement is essential to ensure that the movement structures we are building fully embody the revolutionary values we hold, both consciously and unconsciously, and not that of our automated conditioning (Gerber, 2021, p. 183). One interviewee opened this discussion by bringing up possible discrepancy between stated movement values and how the work sometimes takes shape in reality. They shared:

"What are the core values of your community, and how much time do those expressed values actually take up? How valuable are children? How present are they? How valuable is healing? How much is that practiced, or how much time is built in for that? Or is everything all in your head, with every session designed to be brain work of a very set kind? We are all walking around here up to our eyeballs in PTSD, and it makes it hard to be present and not locked into crisis to crisis to crisis. Analytically and intellectually, I think we do some breaking out of that. But physically or spiritually, I don't think we do" (Casey, 08.05.2022).

This section will examine movement structure, acknowledging that the system's influence on our bodies creates discrepancies between how the work plays out and the essence of the revolutionary agenda we are fighting for. It will also discuss care and the practices and rituals taking place within the movement to address these discrepancies, harmonize, and heal. One of the first concerns brought up regarding movement structure relate to the "movement becoming corporate", or operating in a way that can overwork people, tokenize people, or reinforce the culture we are trying to work against (Logan, 07.29.2022). An interviewee shared a powerful description of this as depicted below:

"Ever since Covid, when even the water and rivers were healing because we took this breather, I started to see elements of the movement being like a corporation, like working. Because you are expected to be somewhere at a certain time for a certain amount of time. There is really no vacation time. I mean we worked 500 days straight fighting together towards June 18. And when we got back, I said okay, everyone, now we are going to take some time off. And do you know there was pushback? I said we have got to honor ourselves and take some time off, but people didn't want to. Because we were raised in this US system of pragmatism of always having to do do do, we don't know any other way. It's the most difficult thing to break and unpack, and so when we are talking about movement building and the elements of this society and of Corporate America, people don't know any other way because our value is tied to doing the work" (Lewis, 07.29.2022).

A few interviewees shared their stories of burnout in movement spaces where rest and slowing down was not possible. One interviewee said, "I'm over here suffocating and dying, and you are only concerned with what I can produce…but I felt the spirit moving through me, and spirit said, *'I did not call you to be a humanitarian and not be human'*. So why am I gonna kill myself? The movement will move on. That for me was the confirmation that God said no, I definitely have called and ordained you to do this work, but also you are human, and I expect you to live and thrive" (Logan, 07.29.2022). Another interviewee shared that among their many movement responsibilities, they previously did a lot of writing for an organization. But they got to a point where "I couldn't even string a sentence together anymore…. I hit a well-being wall, and I couldn't function. So, I have been thinking since then about how to be in this at a different pace and with a different approach. Not because things are getting better, but because none of us are gonna be real helpful to this movement if we keep dying off before we're 60" (Casey, 08.05.2022). As this same interviewee noted, the tendency towards burnout and overwork is not just an issue of individuals pushing themselves but relates to how the movement is shaped over time.

> *"People are coming at things from really different places, but I think we do have a lot of shared programming…we have to own that in our movements that are a bunch of us who are groomed from an early age to carry a lot of invisible work, and then there are some of us who aren't. And I know for myself, I was groomed very young to carry things that were not my responsibility, in terms of work, in terms of relationships, in terms of the emotional well-being of everybody around me. You learn some things that make you a good organizer because you are that tapped into people all the time. But you have to look at some of the things that are making me really effective in this moment…are they also killing me? Do I know how to ever set them down? Is my whole identity wrapped up in things that only pour out? It's not an individualist question but a way of looking at this culture and these structures we are building together and ask who is actually served by this? Are we creating structures and systems where our leaders will always be cannibalized? Because we can't do that, nothing will ever last. There are communities, cultures, and histories in pockets all over where there is something different on offer that you can draw from, but that is not our default in movement work"* (Casey, 08.05.2022).

Leaders' experiences of burnout stem from movement structures which do not embody the values of the movement. As one interviewee pointed out, "everybody has a right to live. But what does living mean? I think we have to start practicing those conditions right now…if we want life that allows for flourishing and restoration, then our movement spaces and organizations have to prioritize that too. We cannot work in a capitalist framework to end capitalism" (Clark, 08.07.2022). Interviewees also highlighted the urgency culture that exists in some spaces such that "there is no press pause button. It's just like what do we do next? We need to figure out self-preservation" (Channing, 07.29.2022). Others coined the notion of automation vs authenticity and explained that movement spaces which are constantly on the "defense" fighting fires as opposed to stepping back and strategizing on what needs to happen, are operating in automation which does not serve the movement's highest good (ibid).

Some interviewees noted that attempts to take breaks sometimes get filled with "business as usual", as people are still trying to schedule meetings and move the work forward (ibid). Others spoke of "pragmatism" and nonstop forward momentum as an escapist mechanism or a survival strategy (Davis, 08.01.2022). One noted that big pushes in movement work are important and inevitable, but coming down from them should be orchestrated with attention and care. They shared that for several weeks after a big push, "I was really haunted by a lot of stuff. I had nightmares, trouble sleeping, and a hard time connecting with my body again. A lot came up in the quiet. How can we think of rest and time off as not just having fun but also support each other through the stillness? I think sometimes people keep going because if you're still, everything will come to the surface, and that's actually really hard" (Clark, 08.07.2022).

Finally, interviewees talked about patterns engrained in certain movement spaces which mimic how the system would treat us. One individual references tokenization or sometimes wondering, "am I just a Black face?" (Jay, 07.31.2022), also noting that "it does sometimes feel superficial or like we are taking away from our class's humanity when we say, oh we need a female Dominican cab driver from the Bronx to speak!" (ibid). Interviewees discussed the fine line of building a broad-based intersectional movement in a way which is representative or checking certain demographic boxes versus building a movement which is authentically led by the most impoverished sections of the poor and dispossessed class. Another interviewee shared that "I see waves of it feeling superficial, and not intentionally. We need people to speak, and we might help them prepare. But it's like, what do they actually

want to say? We feel like we need to help them prepare so that it hits these specific points, but why are we holding on to that thing having to happen anyway?" (Clark, 08.07.2022).

A few interviewees expressed a belief that movement work can sometimes feel extractive. One shared that "we are part of the oppressors the way it's set up…we don't compensate for gas, or we change the agenda at the last minute and then someone who was prepared to speak is now excluded, and I have to cover up for it" (Martin, 07.19.2022). Another experience came from a movement leader who provided testimony at a national rally. They explained that, "I suffer from anxiety really, really bad from trauma. And someone asked if I would speak, and I said no, I don't want to. But we can't get anyone, they said. We need it. So I did. But I had so much stomach anxiety from the crowds, and everybody said, oh, you spoke so well! But I was screaming! And then it was over, and there was no one around me. What is lacking? We aren't taking care of each other" (Lewis, 07.29.2022).

While describing these various experiences, interviewees also recognized a tension inherent in movement, which those doing care work must grapple with. This is the reality that "there is no such thing as fighting for our liberation without sacrifice" (Emma, 08.12.2022). Interviewees shared that there is a distinction between "self-care which is very individualistic, corporate and [sends the message] that my healing comes from me disengaging from this process" vs care which still moves us in the direction of collective liberation. There is a balance to strike, such that "we can't sacrifice ourselves and our health, but we must know that there are sacrifices, and we won't always be comfortable. It's a tension we can never resolve completely because we are fighting a system which is always exploiting" (ibid). Nonetheless, experiences described throughout chapter four articulate what can happen when care is not explicitly present, as we fall into "reproduc[ing] the system every day in our bodies because we are programmed that way consciously and unconsciously" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). However, one interviewee noted that because the body shows us "the larger system in the everyday experience, it is also the closest possibility for us to create massive change in the system" (ibid). This interviewee explained how we are both birthing new futures while simultaneously moving through the current conditions, and to shift the moral arc of society, we must "unlearn our bodies" through care and rituals which break the typical patterns of our everyday lives, while sensitizing and awakening us to new possibilities (ibid).

One powerful form of care for unlearning capitalist ways is spirituality and relationship to the divine. An interviewee commented on the role of spirituality in embodied

knowing and being. She shared that while many proselytizing religious spaces bring "dysfunction and harm with them, they do also bring lessons of how we teach the body new things" while providing an alternative vehicle to metabolize trauma into something else (ibid). For others, it was important in movement spaces to have a moment of silence, read a poem, or do some other ritual to invoke the spirit, be it the ancestors, or people who have died to call on spirit to guide us (Logan, 07.29.2022). The act of beginning meetings or gatherings with a practice which invokes the *feeling* of the movement in our bodies is known as mística[5], and it is well-practiced in many spaces across the network. The UPoor network has also built organizations including the Freedom Church of the Poor, La Iglesia del Pueblo, and Freedom Shul, which serve as "spiritual homes for movement leaders" (Ash, 08.04.2022). In these spaces, people of all faith and non-faith backgrounds may gather to connect with one another. Another interviewee described practices like spiritual direction and movement chaplaincy, and the power of having lay chaplains who can provide spiritual care while creating systems and networks to hold people in their sufferings, checking in on them every day when going through hard times (Clark, 08.07.2022).

Network leaders also discussed the concept of ancestry as a form of care that disrupts a colonial capitalist orientation. One interviewee shared that, "you learn as you lead, and you walk as you talk. And that's why I come back to rituals and what are the ways that I'm helping this body and this mind and this whole being birth what's coming. I have an altar in my room, and so every morning I check in with my ancestors, constantly reminding myself of the lineage, the history, the possibility of hurt, but also the healing that is possible in everyday" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). They described dimensions of movement and ancestry, such as: learning the history of our ancestors' struggles; understanding the lessons or unresolved traumas of our ancestors that show up in our own bodies and our movement work; and cultivating the notion that we will be ancestors for someone else, as indigenous teachings tell us we must recognize the impact of everything we do on the seven generations that come after us (ibid). Both ancestry and spirituality in movement also link to relationship with nature, as well as relationship to gut and intuition, cultivating the sense that we are all "vessels of something bigger than ourselves" (ibid), which are sensations which can be challenging to access in times of chronic busyness and forward movement.

[5] Mística was originally developed within the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement, as "a public, expressive dramatic performance [which draws] on Christian mysticism, [as] a way of making contact with a transcendent reality" (Hammond, 2014, p. 372). Mística was used to "[fortify] activists with the high commitment needed to engage in land occupations" and other political actions (ibid).

Another form of care practiced within the UPoor network is that of arts and culture. Several interviewees shared the notion of how "the experience of singing with others changes something inside you" (Taylor, 07.31.2022). One leader articulated their experience with arts and culture in their organization when they said, *"*We always emphasize that it's a ruling class idea that only artists can do art or that you have to have some talent to do art, when really everyone does creativity in different ways. And we have arts and culture nights that are always so moving. People just share what's inside them and are met with love and support, and people cry. It's really nice, and it is tied to healing*"* (Sam, 08.11.2022). In addition to arts and culture, interviewees spoke about the importance of taking the time to celebrate collectively and to tap into pleasure, joy, and hope within the current conditions. "Burnt out and shell-shocked people cannot change the world" (EmboDegrowth Lab, 2021) and contemporary feminists and activists like adrienne maree brown affirm that social justice work should be fused with pleasure and creativity in order to be sustainable in the long term. brown asserts that pleasure is "a politics of healing and happiness" in itself, suggesting that efforts towards social change should be reframed outside the understanding of being 'work' (brown, 2019).

Finally, interviewees discussed the importance of collective grieving. One individual shared that "we have a movement full of people who are legitimately super traumatized and carrying decades and decades of grief and have found ways to manage that or found powerful creative outlets. But we don't make as much room as we need to for people's grief and people's joy in the present moment" (Casey, 08.05.2022). They emphasized that:

> *"Funerals are maybe the most important part of our organizing. There are clergy groups who will say here are the homeless people who have died on the street, and we are here to remember them because nobody else is. But that is almost never true. Almost always those who died on the street have a lot of people who love them and want to have a service for that person, not just lumped into a group service. Making it clear that this person has never been forgotten, and we all know them as a very powerful person. It is a way of being politicized and a way for people to see their own power and to know that when I go, people will be there for me. I'm not a forgotten or a throw away person"* (ibid).

Grief and grieving take many forms, and interviewees are ongoingly thinking through how to collectively process grief. "What would it look like in movement spaces, to acknowledge and name and hold the grief we are experiencing collectively? (Clark, 08.07.2022) How do we think through different faith traditions of what rituals our traditions already offer us and where there's a lack?" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). Practices like spirituality, connection to ancestry, mística, arts and culture, and collective celebration and grief are all aspects of movement which break the regular cycles of organizing work and orient us in new directions. All these practices serve to "heal multiple forms of alienation, in order to allow broader and deeper changes to happen", with alienation being understood as "the experience of being cut from our bodies, our souls, our species-being…as well as from others, ecologies, and the more-than-human worlds" (EmboDegrowth Lab, 2022). It is through processes of deep healing and transformation that unconscious behaviors and automated conditioning begin to shift. Thus, interviews evidence that although there are experiences of overwork, interpersonal conflict, or tokenization in movement, forms of care also exist. These practices focus on reconnecting to the body and the interdependency of our bodies with other bodies, with nature, and with the divine. These practices may be a portal through which we can transform capitalist patterns into new dispositions, grounded in a knowing and a power which is bigger and deeper than anything we can experience or understand in the material dimension.

Chapter Five: To Embody is to Enact the Change Here and Now

5.1 Care as a Practice for 'Everyday' Movement

In chapters three and four, I have explored the necessity of integrating care as part of political strategy in revolutionary movement building. Care serves to preserve, develop, and transform leaders through struggles imposed by society. It also acts as a gateway through which interpersonal conflicts and movement structures can be metamorphosized into new approaches and ontologies that subvert capitalist ways. A final rationale for care comes from an interviewee's contribution, which asked, "How do we shift trajectories? In the everyday, as we embody the world we say we want to live in within our current conditions" (Jesse, 08.04.2022). Care is how "we build the world we want to see" (Gia, 08.02.2022) while fighting for systemic liberation. This dimension of care can be understood through the lens of embodiment. To embody can mean "to enact the change in our own daily practices and activities…[which serves as] a way of closing the temporality gap between longer-term visions of structural change and here-and-now prefigurative action" (EmboDegrowth, 2022). Care allows us to transform ourselves, our relationships, and the essence of the movement at large. It is also a vehicle through which we can build new worlds through our everyday existence. Care holds importance and potency because it localizes the movement, moving from the systemic and structural to the personal and interpersonal. All the care practices discussed thus far enact much needed change in and through our bodies, in the present moment and in the present conditions.

In *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People,* Cheryl Sanders emphasizes that the empowerment of people and their moral agency is a key aspect and often a missing piece of liberatory movements (Sanders, 1995, n.p.). Sanders is the pastor at Third Street Church of God in Washington DC, which is across the street from the U.S. Capitol. She explains that every single day there is a protest or a rally taking place. Not a single day goes by without some form of collective political action, and she asserts that while fighting hegemonic structures is essential, much more political work must be directed towards the people themselves, to help them feel their dignity and worth, to resource them in whatever ways are necessary and make sure their needs are met (ibid). One interviewee shared this perspective explaining that "empowering people is ultimately what is going to help us get to the change that we need. When people know they have the power to change, and they have the care and the

love they deserve, then they can work together to make change…so I think we need to see organizing around the care of people as the number one priority (Logan, 07.29.2022).

Organizing to prioritize the care of people takes many forms. It can include all the practices mentioned in this report. In addition, multiple interviewees referenced the 'everydayness' of movement, or the ways we build organized communities and networks that care for each other. The 'everydayness' can include sharing meals together, telling jokes and laughing together, sharing stories with one another without the pressure of time, collectively caring for children, or checking in regularly and cultivating relationships with each other outside of movement work (Jesse, 08.04.2022). "So much can come from just one interaction", but these kinds of practices are often done ad hoc as opposed to in an organized and intentional way as part of care infrastructure, likely due to capacity constraints (ibid). The Vermont Workers Center care team has implemented this form of care by prioritizing keeping up with their comrades' lives outside the movement. Every time the care team meets, they discuss the pressing issues in their members' lives. They take note of things that need to be celebrated, commemorated, grieved, or supported. For example, they send out care cards for significant events, such as when someone has experienced a loss or had a baby. They initiate meal trains for those who need added support during a challenging period in their life. Most importantly, they try to maintain "humanness and realness" within the organization, which interviewees suggested makes them feel heard and like they matter (Kendra, 08.02.2022).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

Capitalist modernity as well as its structural counterparts, which include systemic racism and white supremacy, patriarchy, ongoing coloniality, militarism, systematic degradation of the planet, and religious nationalism, all serve to dispossess the body in material and immaterial ways. "The body is a battlefield, and our bodies will be under attack as long as this system is still around" (Alex, 08.11.2022). The UPoor is one movement network in the United States contributing to the fight for liberation. However, the constant attacks faced by the poor and dispossessed undermine the work of revolutionary movements. Thus, through the lenses of embodiment and Marxist political economy, this research project sought to understand how movement leaders in the UPoor network are impacted by the social, economic, and political contexts within which they are embedded, what these impacts mean for the success of the overall movement, and how a theory and praxis of care may contribute to movement victory. Drawing on wisdom from leaders in the UPoor movement network through qualitative, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, this research discovered that by living in an oppressive and sick society, movement leaders face a variety of personal struggles, such as poverty, housing instability, addiction, or ailments of the heart, mind, and spirit. As society inflicts trauma onto people, ruling class logics become embodied in the movement, within leaders themselves, interpersonal interactions among leaders, and in how the organizing work takes shape.

While disorganizing dynamics do exist, this research makes 'a case for care' in revolutionary movement building, discovering that care, an applied theory and praxis developed within the network, serves as an antidote to this disorganization, by preserving, developing, and transforming leaders. Care also has the potential to teach the body new dispositions such that interpersonal conflicts and internalized capitalist approaches can shift, and create the conditions we are fighting for in the here and now. However, this study is not meant to be exhaustive. Emphasizing care in no way demeans the radical importance of collective political action, nor do I suggest that if we care for each other, we can avoid the real risks faced by the poor and dispossessed every day in movement. This project acknowledges that there are many social forces at play which disorganize and crush movements, creating far bigger challenges than what a localized care team can address. We are not only up against ourselves and the ways in which the system dispossesses the body in its insular context, but we also

face threats like deportation, incarceration, and even assassination. Rather, this research presents *one* component, one small piece of a much larger puzzle in achieving liberation, and one that is sometimes overlooked or underestimated. As we continue our revolutionary battles, care allows us to hold and transmute the tensions, contradictions, and conflicts that arise within ourselves, each other, and the movement at-large, such that we can better resource ourselves through our fight for a new society.

6.2 New Ideas and Questions for Further Study

This research process generated new ideas. As I listened, interviewees 'took stock' in what is already happening in the movement regarding care and what future developments could be useful. One key gap is around the issue of chemical warfare. Interviewees suggested that the movement needs its own institutions and approaches for dealing with challenges of addiction (Noah, 08.10.2022). Interviewees also spoke to the necessity of 'movement practitioners,' which could take several forms. A collective of practitioners within the movement could dedicate some of their time and services to helping movement leaders. New institutions or physical spaces could be created for movement participants to address various health challenges, and these clinics could also serve as spaces for politicizing and base building (Roger, 08.03.2022). Interviewees suggested that in addition to primary care, such clinics could offer bodywork, reiki, and other modalities which are typically private pay or only accessible to the wealthy. One interviewee raised important questions around fee for service, boundaries or levels of professionalism and confidentiality, and how various healing modalities can be democratized such that they are available to the most impoverished sections of the poor and dispossessed (Patricia, 08.08.2022).

Other interviewees spoke to the importance of reclaiming indigenous paradigms and techniques when building out care infrastructure (Davis, 08.01.2022) and making sure there many options available for people to process their experiences. For example, while peer support is a powerful and transformational tool, it is only one tool, and the movement would benefit greatly from integrating other forms of release to better suit a variety of people's preferences (Patricia, 08.08.2022). In addition to these forms of care work, interviewees expressed the need to expand projects of survival. While oftentimes projects of survival focus on people's tangible, material realities, a few interviewees noted the importance of non-material projects of survival, such as a clergy council for the homeless, spaces of rest where the

poor can come and "just be, without the oppression of time or need to be caring for others", (Logan, 07.29.2022) and spaces to fill the needs of people beyond physical survival needs.

Interviewees also articulated questions for further inquiry around care, such as:

1. How can we build the capacity and infrastructure of care, as the need far exceeds what the movement can provide?
2. How does care intersect with leadership development?
3. How is the care we are already doing contributing to movement outcomes? Is there a way this can be measured? Should it be measured?
4. Given that there is no magic formula on how to do care, how can we best support organizations in developing their own practices and processes?
5. What boundaries must be drawn around care, in terms of what must be addressed outside of movement spaces?

This project created time and space to discuss care, an aspect of movement that is newly budding in the UPoor network. However, it is only a small fragment of what is possible and necessary, both practically and theoretically. It is my hope that this project may serve as a portal to new frontiers in the development and evolution of care, as we continue the fight for justice and liberation.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of Interview Organizations

- Vermont Workers Center (VT)
- National Union of the Homeless (MA)
- Kairos Center for Religion, Rights, and Social Justice (NY)
- University of the Poor: Cadre Care Subcommittee (nationwide)
- Chaplains on the Harbor (WA)
- Put People First! PA (PA)
- United Workers Association (MD)
- Raise Up the South (NC)
- BeLoved Asheville (NC)
- Massachusetts Poor People's Campaign (MA)
- North Carolina Poor People's Campaign (NC)
- Illinois Poor People's Campaign (IL)
- New York Poor People's Campaign (NY)

Appendix 2. Profile of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Date of Interview
Patricia	August 8, 2022
Roger	August 3, 2022
Riley	July 31, 2022
Taylor	July 31, 2022
Gia	August 2, 2022
Noah	August 10, 2022
Jesse	August 4, 2022
Davis	August 1, 2022
Sam[6]	August 11, 2022
Alex	August 11, 2022
Casey	August 5, 2022
Jackson	August 9, 2022
Drew	August 15, 2022
Jay	July 31, 2022
Jaime	July 28, 2022
Kendra	August 2, 2022
Martin	July 19, 2022
Clark	August 7, 2022
Lewis[7]	July 29, 2022
Logan	July 29, 2022
Channing	July 29, 2022
Ash	August 4, 2022
Tyler[8]	August 12, 2022
Emma	August 12, 2022
Kyle	August 12, 2022
Cooper	August 1, 2022

[6] Sam and Alex were interviewed together.
[7] Lewis, Logan, and Channing were interviewed together.
[8] Tyler, Emma, and Kyle were interviewed together.

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