

THE POWER OF SOMATICS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

with Nkem Ndefo, Temi Mwale, Melz Owusu, and Alex Augustin



REBEKAH DELSOL: I'm really grateful to see such an incredible turnout for our talk tonight about the power of somatics for racial justice. I'm Rebekah Delsol; I'm the Director of Strategy at Healing Justice London. And we have an incredible panel tonight, that I'm excited to introduce and to speak with.

We have a panel of really incredible human beings. I'm so honoured to be chairing tonight. And so I will introduce you to them. I just wanted to repeat that we're here, in this space, to learn together. None of us are experts; we're all on a journey with the exception of Nkem, who's the most incredible, pioneering leader-and-teacher in this area.

But I certainly come new to somatics, with lots of questions and curiosity—and some healthy scepticism—but also with a feeling of just deep gratitude to be practising amongst incredible teachers and colleagues, and it's allowing me to tap into my body, to feel more present, more joyful, and more loving. We've selected people to be on the panel tonight that are also on this journey with us.

So we're working in partnership with Lumos Transforms, and our team is studying with Nkem. And Melz, Temi, Alex, and I are all part of an embodied-leadership movement-medicine programme that we're running, which is working collectively to use somatics and political education.

So now let me introduce the panel: my fabulous colleague Alex Augustin is a member of the core team at HJL, [Alex gives a double peace gesture] where he works on communications and the Reimagining Masculinities programme. Through his experience of interdependence and struggle growing up in Brent in Northwest London, he has always had an awareness of injustice and inequality. Alex writes, and has held discussions, about the psychological and emotional impact of structural harms in the Ends, and was part of the creative team behind Bayo, a mental-health club for Black communities, which launched in October 2021 in partnership with Mind, Best Beginnings, the Ubele Initiative, and Young Minds. During his time working at the Ubele Initiative, he got into a range of community- and movement-work.

Next, we have Temi Mwale, who is a racial-justice campaigner, who is committed to dismantling the prison-industrial complex and building approaches that address conflict and harm, that prioritise healing, and centre empowerment. She is the founder

of the Forefront Project, a member-led youth organisation that exists to serve young people who have experienced trauma, violence, and racial injustice by fighting for their rights, supporting them to heal, and empowering them to build communities where they are nurtured, protected and respected.

We also Nkem Ndefo, who is the founder of Lumos Transforms and the creator of the *Resilience Toolkit*, a model that promotes embodied self-awareness and self-regulation in an ecologically-sensitive framework and social-justice context. She brings an abundance of experience as a clinician, educator, researcher, and community-strategist to innovative programmes that address trauma and inequality, build resilience, and shape liberatory change for individuals and organisations throughout the US and internationally. She's particularly interested in working alongside people that are most impacted by violence and marginalisation.

Last, but not least, we've got Melz Owusu, who's a doctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge, a forthcoming author, and the founder of the Free Black University. Melz is interested in questions of knowledge and justice; how we connect the two to build more beautiful futures. They're inspired by spiritual belief-systems from across the world, and how these shed light on how to approach problems-of-today on a foundation of connectedness, embodied-ness, and love.

So, having introduced the panel, we're going to start today by having some framing around the issues and the terms, and then we'll talk a bit about people's experiences, and definitely make sure we have time at the end for questions. So as we're going through, please feel free to put any comments or questions in the chat.

I'm going to ask to start with Nkem, to open the space for us, and really give us the framing and an introduction to somatics: What is somatics, and why do we need it?

NKEM: Can I just pause, and we can actually live a little bit of it? I'd like to guide us into a connecting practice here together, before I start talking and answering your question, if that'll be okay, because 1) this is an experiential journey we're on. So everything that I'm about to say is invitational, meaning this is not about command-and-control; this is about you reaching into yourself, and anchoring what feels good and what feels not good, and stopping anything that is making you feel not good, or in that direction: worse than your baseline.

And so, what I would like to do is just invite folks to notice: What does your stress feel like in your body? Where is there tension? Where is there— Things are sped up, hurried; where there's pressure; where there might be disconnection, or numbness—and just

noticing that. And then, thinking about what you're feeling right now: Is that useful in this moment, in this space, where we're about to talk, and connect, and experience together? Or, perhaps, you're carrying a little much.

So, if you're carrying a little much, and you'd like to let a little go, I'm going to invite you to just observe your breath; whether you're breathing through your mouth or nose doesn't matter—just observing your breath. And again, if this doesn't feel good to you, stop, and do something different that does.

I'm going to take advantage of a little quirk in the human body—that, in general, when we breathe out, it slows our heart rate a little. So the next time you exhale, just lengthen it slightly. Still an easy and relaxed breath as possible; just, slightly longer, exhale and inhale. And as you do that, notice what might be shifting or changing in your internal landscape: Is there a little less pressure? A little bit more spaciousness? A little bit more ease?

[pause]

Welcome, again. So, at any point as we're going through (some of this conversation, as Rebekah had said, might be hard), that we can return— If that worked for you, you can return to that settling breath to help you connect more deeply to yourself; to be more connectable to the ideas, and the people, here in this space.

Alright, Rebekah—your question. [laughs] Want to do it again?

REBEKAH: Yeah. That was lovely; thank you for bringing us back. I was just going to ask you: What is somatics, and why do we need it?

NKEM: I mean, it's kind of a funny (not funny—haha) question—somatics is *our bodies*. And, literally, the question is "*Why do we need our bodies?*" Right?—when we think about— What has happened (through colonisation, through the split between the mind and the body, the disconnection between thought and feeling) is that we've prioritised the *cognitive* (the thought; the rational), and separated it, as if you *can* separate it, from the body, and the feeling, and the experience; we value one more than the other.

And so, to me, it's actually, even, a bit of... It almost doesn't make sense when you see it this way: "Why do we even need somatics?"—Somatics is really asking us to *bring the body back into connection*; that we are human beings; we are whole human beings, and we have experiences in our bodies that are instructive, that are valuable; and that they've been left out.

And so, I think of somatics as a return to wholeness; it's a return to wholeness, and to connect to: What is the wisdom of our bodies? The wisdom of our experience? And how can that inform us to be more connected as we move forward; as we envision a world? There's a new world. There's so much that we drag along with that that is unexamined, and the overemphasis on the *thought* is just one of those things that we're dragging with. So I think of somatics as a return to wholeness, and a way to decolonise some of our basic— So much that we do is informed by *just* the cognitive lens; and so, when we bring the body, a whole 'nother arena opens up on everything that we're touching, doing, and experiencing—alone, together, collectively.

Does that feel about right?

REBEKAH: And how do we do somatics? We had an initial practice that was us coming into our bodies, and calming; but for people that haven't experienced it before, and this is the first time they're hearing the language, or doing the practice: How would we describe the practice of somatics?

NKEM: I mean, I think... I mean, this is nothing new; there's so many things people, probably, already are doing, but they're not officially in the bucket of somatics: What are the ways that we connect to our body?—It can be something as simply when we're bathing ourselves, [rubs her arms] and you're feeling your body, and you're like, "*I'm here.*" Little activities that we do, that people don't even realise, about how we connect to our bodies. We just might go—[sharp inhale]—we *might* take a deep breath. Little things like people who crack their knuckles: How many people here have a habit of cracking their knuckles? Literally, what you're doing is activating a sensor in your joints that helps your brain know where your body is in space; it's deeply settling.

So you're practising somatics without knowing it. You'll see children who will rock: you'll just see them, and they wiggle, and they do different things; and we tell them, "Sit still! Stop that!"—They are feeling activation in their body; maybe unsure about something; maybe some fear. And what are they doing?—They're regulating that; they're using their bodies.

So there's so many ways people— Through dance—right?—When you have a feeling, you're like, "Ooh, I feel a little stiff; let me stretch."—*You're using somatics.* So I don't think we need to make this precious; this is a part of being human that we discount because we're so about: *What is the action? What am I thinking? What is the idea?* versus: *What is the being? What else is here?*

And so, there are many practices that are more *officially* in the camp of somatics (where we have more of the theory; more of the science to justify our humanity), but because we've been so disconnected from our bodies, actually— I mean, even the *thought* of me as an expert is ludicrous. I think of myself more as helping people *remember* what the *capacities* of the body are.

So I'm also trained as— In the US, midwives often were nurses as well. I know in the UK, it's different; but I'm a nurse and a midwife. And I would always think about, after birth, helping birthing—people breastfeed or chestfeed. If you think about any other mammal, do they have a whole specialist, a whole special category of profession, to feed the young?—It's *ludicrous*. So, imagining a dog, or a pig, or a horse going to a specialist to feed their young—it is *instinctive*, because there is a deep connection to the body.

And here, we've rarefied so many things that we need specialists; we need specialists to know how our bodies work again. So, how do we socialise the ideas? Remember together? And perhaps this is recovering and rebuilding, and we might even build *new* knowledge based on what we've recovered.

REBEKAH: Thank you; and thank you for the *reminder* not to be precious to this; that actually, we're doing a lot of somatics every day by finding ways to connect.

I'm going to bring some of the other team in, and ask them how they came to somatics; what's their journey been like. So, can we start with Temi?

TEMI: Sure; thank you. Thank you very much. Hi, everyone. It's really lovely to see so many people here; really excited to have this conversation with everyone. So, for me, my journey to somatics—as you've said, Nkem—the stuff that we were doing before is being labelled in that way; and I think it starts with the awareness of, "Actually, I'm already practising some of these things, maybe, instinctively; or working on these things; but it's the *labelling* part of the awareness."

But yeah: earlier last year, Healing Justice London had a really amazing Embodied Leadership programme, and there were, maybe, thirty of us who went there; and collectively, we practised together; we went through a learning journey, which was very much experiential as well. And yeah: it allowed us to reflect on this, what, for many of us, felt like a new world, and, at the same time, an old world: Remembering—as you said, Nkem—coming back to something that feels quite innate; grounding for us all.

But what I really valued so much from that space was the practices, and the knowledge that this is a journey, and the journey is about that daily practice: How do you reconnect

with the body, and how can that support the work that we're doing? How can we even *do* the work from a place of disconnection?—That's what many of us were asking; and we were all, actually, working on a lot of different issues: Racial justice; some of us were focussed on that. But there were people who were working on disability justice, and working on education rights; there were people who were working for more creative spaces.

There were so many different focusses, but I think that was really valuable—us all being in the room with all of these different lenses, but arriving at the same place, which is that: This is something that connects us all; and that's necessary for all of the change that we want to see in the world to be, I would say, linked with that integrity, which is that: There are a lot of things that we want to change, a lot of systems that we want to change, a lot of society that *needs* to change; at the same time, how do we have integrity in our own daily lives in how we relate to ourselves and how we relate to each other?

And when we're talking about— And, I guess, there's the humanising; *rehumanising* in a world that really *dehumanises* us to be disconnected from our own bodies. We practise a sense of dehumanising *ourselves*—but we're taught to do that; we're socialised to do that in this society. So it was a really, really powerful and transformative experience; I think I can speak for everyone who did it; and we've had some spaces to continue practising as a collective.

But there was the interdependence element; the mutual connection. And one of my main take-aways was really about the making of a declaration; and it really shifted my view from, essentially, seeing myself as somebody having commitments (whether that's towards racial justice, or to particular changes that I want to see in society) to *being* the commitment myself—which means everything I do, everything I am, is in service of those declarations I make; and it doesn't have to be to do with the bigger—[air quotes] the “work”—it can be personal commitments that you want to embody, and really trying to align our day-to-day practices with those changes that we want to see.

And it reminds me of fractals, or how Adrienne will talk about fractals from *Emergent Strategy*, and the idea that: This is what we do every day in our day-to-day lives; and if we can all move in that direction, that is just as valuable in terms of trying to create that systemic change that we want to see; and actually, the systemic change *won't* happen without changing *ourselves*—So I think somatics really gave us a really helpful lens, and really great tools, immediately to take away and practise, which were really, really transformative and powerful.

REBEKAH: Thanks, Temi. I'm going to go to Melz; because Melz was also on the retreat. What's been your journey?

MELZ: Yeah; blessings. Oh! Thank you, Temi; my good sis Temi. I didn't just hear what you said—I *felt* it. And I feel like, for me, that is what somatic really means, innit? Just: I experienced that in the body, and I went back to that space that we were in all those months ago that Healing Justice put on. And one of the things that I think was incredibly important about that space was seeing each other as human; and how that allows us to give ourselves the kind of licence to see ourselves as human, and as whole, complete beings: with feelings; with experiences; with just *everything*.

And I think, sometimes, in movements, we forget that the leaders are also human: with imperfections; with pain; with insecurities. And I feel like being in that space, and moving from, "Oh, I'm this person on the outside," but being *allowed* to, and being given the permission to, almost, *break down*, and just allow myself to be held. And I think that being able to engage in the process, and understanding somatics in that way, was just profound.

But I think the first place that I came to somatics was actually (I guess, ironically) through the *mind*. And the place that, I guess, I always feel safe is in academia: I love learning; I love reading—that's my thing. And the Cartesian Split is what it's often called; Descartes—"We're just a mind, and we're a body," is something that I research a lot.

And black feminists (such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Audre Lorde) have brought the feeling into this mind-body, dualistic split; and allowed us to see ourselves not just as a separate mind and body, but also as feeling things; I'm thinking about: How do we bring feeling, how do we bring the soul, how do we bring the self, how do we bring love into the research process?

And so, for me, that was, ironically, my route into it; but through learning that, I was like, "One sec!"—The penny dropped, and I was like, "I can't just do this intellectually, because then I'm not doing it *at all*." And so being able to engage in spaces like Healing Justice, and being able to be around people that are *doing* this kind of work in such an embodied way, has taught me how to move back into my body.

And just learning about spiritual practices as well: like meditation, like prayer, breath work, and so on; and being able to recognise that: I'm safe in this body; and I don't have to run out there [gestures to their right], I don't have to run over there [gestures to their left]—coming back here [gestures to their body] is actually a safe space.

And just before I finish up—one of the things I was reflecting on, as well, is: as a trans person, I haven't always felt that my body is a safe space, or my body is a space that I want to acknowledge; but through being able to, of course, transition in-and-of-itself opened up a space where I was like, "Okay, this body can move *physically* in a way that I want it to; it can transform." And being able to reconnect with my body, *as* it's transformed, and *as* it's grown into the person that I know myself to be, has allowed a gateway for somatics to open up. Yeah.

REBEKAH: Thanks, Melz. Alex. I know Alex, sadly, was ill—so you weren't on the retreat last year (and we missed you very much), but how have you journeyed towards somatics?

ALEX: Hey! I just want to say, first of all, I'm so honoured to be here; and I'm so excited to see so many people on this call. And I also just want to say: [places his right hand over his heart] Hold me, guys; because I'm quite new to talking like this; [adds his left hand under his right] so please give me grace.

So, how I came to somatics—something Farzana Khan, the exec at Healing Justice, said was that she's a *recovering dissociater*; and I want to echo that, because I had a lot of dissociative tendencies; and I—obviously, as all of us on the call will have as well—I've got trauma to recover and heal from. And I realised that things had to change.

And it's been a non-linear journey of getting into my body, noticing sensations; but I will also say, as some of us have said on the call as well, that I understood an innate sacredness of the body inherently—of the body, of the being, of the self—beyond the thinking mind; and as a wisdom that's always in us. And so I've come to a place (through practising; through learning with the HJL team; with Staci Haines, Nkem, Farzana, Rebekah—all of us; all of the people that I've come into contact with, and practised with over the last few months and years) that it's okay to weep; it's okay to shake things out; it's okay to sigh; [touches his shoulders] it's okay to get tactile with myself; to dance, stretch, fidget. And I've gained knowledge of what these things offer.

My most regular body-practice, I would say, is Muay Thai; so I practise Muay Thai, which is a Thai martial art; which, I think, offers confidence in your body; stability; you have to be mindful of the rhythm of your body; of your pace. And I also just wanted to big up my therapist, because he is also a breath-work coach; and there's some things that, through regular sessions with my therapist, I've connected with the breath.

But I just wanted to— Talking about this, I wanted to locate these practices within my experiences. And it has certainly been a difficult journey, returning to my body; there's been times when it's felt like retreading of the same ground—reminding myself I'm safe

when my nervous system doesn't feel that way. And it's been a process of feeling through these concepts, and gaining more understanding: an understanding of the non-Eurocentric lineage of these practices—doing them in community, doing them with people like the team; Nkem.

And understanding, as well: for me, one of the things that's been important has been understanding that there's nothing wrong with your body having needs, and with vulnerability; that's something that's inherent to having a body, and to being human.

And one other thing that I just wanted to talk about here, to locate, again, these experiences, and this learning about somatics has been to point to which a lot of us will have already said and alluded to: the conditions that affect our ability to heal, and to engage with these things; and I want to name patriarchy, racism, colonialism, capitalism—some of the things that, I feel, made me believe that it wasn't *for me* to know my body.

I grew up— as Rebekah very kindly mentioned in the intro, I grew up in Brent in Northwest London; I grew up in Ends; and there were experiences there of hyper-policing, of surveillance, of symbolic violence, of material deprivation, dehumanisation, interpersonal violence. So I just want to name those as well. Something that Farzana very kindly pointed out to me when I went through what I was going to talk about at this—that black masculinity, as well; and being most likely to be sectioned, but least likely to be believed experiencing pain.

And I also just want to name the kids that are excluded from school, people on benefits, incarcerated folks; I want to speak to those experiences, because I think when you have certain experiences, there's a Where you're supposed to end up; and I also don't want to play into myth-making around that (because people don't always end up there), but just to say that, when people don't get access to therapy, that diminishes...

When people don't have access to therapy, that diminishes your ability to recover; if we don't have the right support system, that diminishes your ability to recover. And we have a society that is designed around these myths, and these things; and we need the tools to be able to navigate it. So just to say, as well—those are the conditions that we need to hold. Yeah. Thank you so much, and I'll pass back to Rebekah.

REBEKAH: Thank you, Alex. There's certainly some lovely comments in the chat—people holding you, but also really feeling what you described. And it's resonated with many, so thank you for sharing, and being so vulnerable.

For me, I think one of the big things that excites me about somatics is the mixing of both the individual healing, but also moving to collective healing; and the notion of politicised somatics—that we can't have any change unless we heal together. And that connection between the self and the wider community. Nkem, I was going to ask you about politicised somatics, and how we move from the individual to the collective; and think about the impact that somatics can have on racial justice work.

NKEM: Yes. Just to humanise me about my own route—how I got here; how did I get to somatics—if I could just answer that question a little bit: so as a survivor of significant childhood-trauma, but working and organising from when I was a teen, it was 'always in motion' but 'no feeling'. Always in motion. But what I was trying to do was outrun a sense of helplessness and powerlessness.

And I just want to call this in, because I'll link it back, in my own story, to your question about the politicisation. It is a defining feature of trauma to feel out-of-control, overwhelmed, powerless, and helpless. It is a defining feature; regardless of the nature, or type, of trauma, this is the case. And so many of us are carrying trauma that is more-or less-healed; usually less-healed, because we don't have safer-spaces and supports to do the healing work.

And so for myself, this was similar—without that, I was trying to have impact. I was trying to feel power in making change; to relieve suffering. And in essence, I was outrunning my own sense of powerlessness, and when that is my motivation, I was pushing, and pushing, and pushing, and pushing. It is not sustainable; because I couldn't tolerate the feeling of feeling helpless or powerless, because it took me back to what my particular trauma was—individually, but also collectively as a black-presenting woman in the United States.

And so for me, when it became unsustainable any more, I had to face, "There's trauma here." And it was so— To drop into my body was absolute *terror*. So I'm damned if I do, and I'm damned if I don't—if I'm out of my body, and I'm pushing-pushing-pushing, it's not sustainable; and I did not have the skills with which to tolerate the terror to exist in my body. And so, I had to learn that; fits, and starts, and different ways to be able to tolerate—slowly; slowly over years—coming back into my body.

I am 52-years-old, and I can say that the safety I feel now is more than I have felt my entire life. It wasn't until, really, my mid-40s, where I was like, "Is this the safety thing people were talking about? Oh!—This is it?" Right? And so, how could I possibly envision a safe and free world if I don't even know what that experience is inside of myself? My vision will be constrained by the limits of my experience.

So I can *kind of* imagine it, but if I can *feel* it, and *be* it—this is the fractal that Temi was speaking about; the embodiment—then that was the ability to, really— the vision, the creative generation, and my capacity to be connected to people in a non-defensive way; which is— We're not getting free by ourselves; we're getting free *together*. And so if I can't have this space in myself, I don't know how I'm going to connect—with my co-conspirators, with my comrades, with my siblings—if I can't do that. So, by nature, this is politicised. And there is a huge wellness industry, which is the neo-liberal co-optation— It just loves to co-opt everything, and atomise it, and just be— It's mainly asking people to use these same somatic tools, but for the purpose to be more effective cogs in the machine; for the purpose of being more individual—"This is me, me, me; my boundaries; me, me, me."

And actually, I think it weakens people's ability to tolerate discomfort, because safety and discomfort are two different things. And so, for myself, doing/becoming— Choosing somatics was actually just a very practical, "This is what's needed to get through. If this is what's needed for the world that I want to envision, then this is what I do." And so, my healing was bound up in the political. And so, the necessary politicisation of somatics—pulling it back from the neo-liberal conception of individual, bubble-bath self-care.

One of the keys is knowing when it's safe enough to rest, and resting effectively: How are you using your tools? What does recovery look like, so you can not just live to fight another day, but to experience joy; to experience pleasure; to experience, in a prefigurative way, the world that we want to build—and we can't do that just in our heads, because, in fact, the stress and trauma will hijack you; whether you like it or not, the power of the body's ability to say, "I'm going to keep you safe, and I'm going to shut you down, make you be rigid, make you defensive."—all of the things that are not compatible with the work that we have here to do. The play!—the work and the play we have in front of us and around us. So, there you go; there's a little bit for you.

REBEKAH: Thank you. Does anyone want to come in on that? I was struck by, "How can you have a vision of what a safe and free world looks like if we don't have it in our bodies?" And that sounds like a lot of the work that many people in this call are doing. Temi? Alex? Anyone want to build on that?

TEMI: Sure, I'd be happy to. I think it really, really resonated; I'm just nodding the whole time. Another piece of the puzzle that we did at the retreat was looking at those core human-needs, which I think really ties in with what you've just said: so dignity; safety; belonging—this is what we all need, and yet, how many of us can say that we've

experienced that? And in the context of what we're speaking about today, racism directly impacts our safety; it makes us unsafe; it makes us live in society that has systems that harm us, that inflict harm and trauma on us; and that's not safe.

And it also takes away our dignity: we are not treated, oftentimes, as human beings; and that is dehumanising, which means you can't *have* dignity. And the sense of belonging: being in a country that, it feels like, doesn't want you to be there and *actively makes it known* it doesn't want you to be there. That also has an effect on the sense of belonging.

So even though we create community in the ways that we can, our communities are also impacted by those same systems. So collectively, there is so much trauma that we experience—at an individual level, but it's also at a collective level. And I think, with that in mind, I really loved everything that Alex said as well. And one thing that struck me when you were speaking, Alex, was about the kind of experiences that we have in the community, and the support (or lack of support) that is there—There's no infrastructure.

But something that I think about often is: What does that infrastructure look like? This country is not equipped. It's more than just therapy, because I can see— We could campaign for that; let's have therapies for everybody that's been impacted by these things. But who are the therapists going to be? What are they going to be—? What kind of space are they going to be holding? Oftentimes, these are the same systems that are inflicting a lot of harm as well.

And with that in mind, the way that we feel when we make space to be in touch with the things that we need—through practising, through these practices; not individually, but collectively—I think it gives us more imagination of the world that we want to build. Because as you said Nkem, it's hard to envision that when you don't have those experiences.

And so back to the retreat: some of the things that were really powerful was having an experience of what collective care could look like; and through some of the practices we did was the first time in a long time, in that way, that I had genuinely felt held: Coming to that space carrying everything; not just the personal experiences—the collective experiences; but then, adding on top of that the responsibility of doing the work, and what comes with that; what comes with holding others as well. And I think the retreat was very much focused on the leadership in the sense of: What do we need to have that embodied leadership?

In the loose sense, that everybody takes on responsibility, and everybody takes on leadership roles in different ways. And so, how can we also be held when we take on those responsibilities? And that was a really transformative experience for me, personally, because feeling safe enough in that environment to actually let go and *be* held; actually let myself *be* held.

It connects to what you were saying before, Nkem, about, "How does it feel when you go into that place if it's not familiar?" And it's not easy; it was very, very challenging, but it was also extremely transformative, and gave more a lot of imagination, then, about the kind of infrastructure that is needed, and could really support us doing the work that we are doing, and that we need to continue to do. But without that, in absence of that support—collective care, community care; those practices; the infrastructure that enables those practices—it's just not sustainable. We will not be able to win. And I think we *can* win, but we have to make sure we're doing it with longevity. And so, this was really powerful at resourcing us, and giving us ideas about what resourcing could look like.

And yeah, as I said: incredibly transformative.

REBEKAH: Melz?

MELZ: Yeah, I was about to jump in, as well. Yeah, no; thank you for everything that all of the panellists have said so far. And again, going back to that retreat: I feel like what I learnt there was that sometimes, when... Well, through the lesson of listening-to-my-body, that it may take me away from the kind of work that I do in the activist world. And I feel like, over the past, I guess, decade of my life, I've just been following what I'm passionate about, and doing the things that I feel need to change in the world.

But within that, because I haven't been connected to my body, I haven't known where my boundaries are; I haven't known how to manage my energy; I haven't known when to say no; I haven't known how to protect myself from attacks, or projections, and so on. And what moving into my body said to me is to pause. And I think that there's so much power in the interdependence that can be within these movements; not even in the (necessarily) logical, capitalist, hierarchical kind of way—just, almost, in the fabric of just living alongside other incredible people doing incredible work. Things don't have to be linear—they can be so illinear, they can be so scattered, they can be so chaotic; but there's something really beautiful in chaos.

And then trusting that if one person steps back, many will step forward, innit? And sometimes, it can feel like the weight of the world is on your back, and that so many people are relying on you; but when the body says, "Pause," it's something to truly trust. And I feel like it's being able to honour that feeling alongside honouring the mental processes that one has to go through to understand how to balance your passion, and your purpose, and so on, with how you engage in the most meaningful and loving way with yourself, as well.

Because I feel like that's what somatics, as well, is teaching me: Like, "Yo, Melz! You deserve to be loved, you know? And there's no-one else that you need to look for to do that; you need to love yourself first, innit? And what is the most loving thing you can do for yourself, right now, in this life?"—It's to pause; it's to really pause, and to just take time with myself; and just love on myself, so that I have the love to give to others, and so that I can pour love, in at another stage in life, to the things that I'm passionate about.

But nothing comes from that empty space. So yeah.

REBEKAH: Thanks so much for sharing that, Melz. And there's lots of lovely comments in the chat, saying just to honour that feeling, and to pause; recognition of how much we all need to pause.

Sorry, I saw you were going to jump in, Alex.

ALEX: Yeah, I think I have a few thoughts that, maybe, follow well from what Melz is calling us into. I mean, so, I had thought about the question of how somatics connects to racial justice; and I was thinking about some of this stuff of: Those of us in the work being, also, continuously hurt and retraumatised, potentially, through doing the work and, also, still being in the conditions; experiencing racism—that doesn't stop. Right?

And so, with this harm that happens— We've already talked about this, but there are so many things that, when we allow ourselves to reset from these experiences— Like, trauma has happened, but now it's not happening; so we can bring ourselves to settling, because if we don't do that, that can make it difficult for us to experience love. Some of the experience that I've had is, it harmed— Some of my traumas harmed my ability to have trust in myself, trust in the future, my ability to feel like I can carry on when my body feels like it's continuously betraying me.

So when we're healing as people within movements, we can understand those bodily responses. I'm *not* broken; my body is trying to keep me safe. And I'm out of that, and I'm safe now; so I can react in a different way. And some of my— So, Staci Haines (who I

wasn't at the retreat with, but I've learned so much from) calls us in to— says to us that somatics starts with: What do you long for?—and when I was reflecting on that, I was thinking about when I was in my earlier life, and I was experiencing trauma, and I was *angry*.

And I'm still angry, but there's more than one thing that you can do with that passion and anger; and in knowing it, and knowing who we are, and knowing where we are, and knowing that we have multiple choices—but also to hold that sometimes, those choices are very restricted and impaired. But having that ability to modulate, and move from experience-to-experience, having the appropriate response is a way of us building trust in ourselves, and trust in our futures; and being able to move from love, and have love within us.

Because we haven't always had to survive things—or, some of us, at least, have had moments of freedom, love, and capaciousness that we felt within our bodies: for me, it's memories of young childhood. And those embodied memories—if we can return to that place, it lets us know that it's real, and tangible, to move from a place of love; it's not a utopian ideal. And to me, that has revolutionary power, because it can make that intangible thing tangible; it can give us a way of knowing what that is—the wholeness and alive-ness that is within us. Yeah.

REBEKAH: I want to follow on from what Alex was saying. And as hurt and harmed people, we often reproduce much of what is done to us in some of the spaces that we work in. And we see so much rupture and conflict in our movements; we're constantly breaking down. Can you speak to how we would navigate conflict and harm for social-justice and other movements? I don't know if anyone wants to start to speak to that: How do we navigate conflict?

NKEM: I mean, a big part of conflict—to be able to navigate conflict—is to be able to feel our feelings and not necessarily *act* on our feelings; to have enough spaciousness within us, that we can hear one another, and hear and hold the complexity—Conflict is complex; there are often many right stories; there are many viewpoints—How do we hold that complexity?

So a few things happen: when we become activated into stress (or, even into trauma), what happens is we lose the capacity—our hearing actually changes—and we lose our capacity to hear the range of the human voice as well; we listen, instead, for low- and danger-sounds in the environment. So even to hear one another physiologically, it is *imperative* for *any* of us entering into *any* relational space—let alone a

conflict-resolution space—with the skills to settle our systems, so that we can actually, truly, hear.

So I think that that is foundational. And so when I mediate conflict, it's one of the first things: often, we may even need to do caucus work, because you might not feel safe enough in a group, or in a setting with somebody where harm has happened; so you may need to caucus separately, and make sure that you've built some of this capacity to stay more settled within yourself; you may need someone to hold that space who *has* that capacity to notice when people are activating, and guide them back into settling, so that we can stay in this open, hearing space.

But just think about what happens when you're stressed: our posture changes; we cross our arms; we lean back; we steel our jaw—right? We lose the capacity for nuanced thought; for being able to see things on different sides. And we go from a sense of connection with All and Oneness, as we rise in our stress and into trauma, it's just about: [brings her hands successively closer together] *my people; my very close people; me.* We become, I call it, a narcissism. It's not *true* narcissism; it's just a normal stress activation, that the more stressed we are, who we consider in our group gets smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and smaller.

The last thing I want to say is, I often use this concept about the *Zone of Willingness*—that wherever I am, I have a zone of my preferences, and who I am—from all of my identities, my personhood; whatever that is—I have a willingness to extend into the Zone of Willingness to meet other people. If, [with] these other people that I'm with, I feel seen, I feel valued, my Zone of Willingness is quite large. So it may not be my preference, but I'm willing to extend into that zone; and in that zone, we can actually find compromise, we can find solutions, we can find that collective, that collective space.

But if I am not seen, if I feel harmed, if I feel unsafe, my Zone of Willingness becomes very small, and everyone is in their corner. So 1) it will produce *more* conflict; and it's almost-impossible-to-resolve conflict. And instead, what you see is: somebody wins and somebody submits—This is not true conflict resolution; this is a replication of harm. And so how we need to be able to be, have the individual and collective skills to settle our systems, so that we can hear one another, so we can witness one another, which allows us to extend our Zone of Willingness into that space, that common space where we can find solutions.

So I don't know how conflict resolution truly happens without somatics; what usually happens when there's no somatics, again, is: somebody wins and somebody loses; and

the person who loses holds that inside their body, even if they say, "Everything's fine! Everything's fine! I see how logical that is," and that thing, in the body, will rise up later, and start sneaking out in your behaviour, and more harm; and the cycle of harm continues.

REBEKAH: I see lots of nodding; does anyone want to build on that?

MELZ: I'll just briefly add something: I think that was a really beautiful reflection. And I feel, like many of us, I'm still learning. I have no idea. Harm and conflict is so complex, but I think one of things that I've learnt is about how we start our relationships. So whilst, at the messy point of the conflict—I think everything that Nkem said was just so beautiful—but for my own life, I've been thinking about how I enter relations; how I connect with people. And so much of that I don't think often starts from a whole place. And I don't feel— Potentially, I don't see the other person as their whole being; and I don't feel that I've often been seen as my whole being, as opposed to, I think, what Adrienne Maree Brown calls a *movement rock star*.

And so you're just often put on a pedestal, so as soon as something to someone else's distaste happens, it's very easy to engage that dehumanising of both ourselves and each other. So I'm really interested, at this stage of my life, in coming into relation that I'm in connectedness [with]—in any form—from the fullest space, and: How can I see you as the fullest human you can possibly be, with all of your insecurities, all of your shame, all of your complexities, all of your pain, and be able to embrace that?—and: How can you, also, see me as that?

REBEKAH: Thank you, Melz; that resonated with many people. I want to ask, now, about the value of somatics in the spaces that you're working in. And this feeds into some of the questions that have been asked about: How do we practically bring somatics into the organisations, or the spaces, that we're working at? Temi, would you like to talk about the work that you do? I know you're already embracing, and thinking about, embodiment in somatics.

TEMI: Sure. How do we bring it in?—That is the question, because once you become aware of all the different kinds of practices, and you realise that, actually, this is not a training, it's not a programme; it's every-day practice, about creating spaces for people to come into that awareness, and be able to practise, and having that be part of the essence of the work, and not an add-on, or a side-part of it; fundamental, crucial; a core element to what we do. I feel that is a longer journey, and it is because there is still— I think somebody said it earlier, but our culture is around— We have a dehumanising culture. The systems that we create often model the systems, even, that

we want to change, because it's hard to imagine from a place of unknowing; of unknowingness. So I'll start by saying that.

But I think, in terms of working in the community with young people who have experienced, and continue to experience, significant harm, I see so much potential and necessity for somatics, working with young people who may have experienced serious violence; not just in the community at the hands of other young people, but also by the state, by the police, by the prison system, as well as other systems that come into contact with them. There's so much there, but the struggle is that it's not something that happened in the past that, now, we have space and spaciousness to attend to and heal; it's something that's continuous and ongoing; and so: How do we utilise somatics with the context that, actually, it's about building the capacity and the resources of us, as individuals and a collective, to respond; to the things that have happened historically, but also the things that continue to happen, and the things that we're anxious, and fearful, and afraid will continue to happen whilst these systems are operating in the way that they do.

And so I think it's about having those spaces where we can practise, and being able to introduce people to that. Grounding is something that we can do in different spaces, whether that's with a young person in a police station; or at a court, in a court building; or in a hospital room—these are all spaces in which there is harm that is there, and is present, and being able to create a space to practise even in those spaces that are harmful, I think, can be really powerful, because it builds connections in spaces that are designed to disconnect, and that are designed to dehumanise, and take away dignity; and generally, are not safe places.

And so, I think, with that, there's so much that we can do; but at the same time: Who is going to do it? And I feel that there's a lot more that we need to build in terms of our capacity to teach, to hold the space; and not just for ourselves, but: How do we build the community capacity?—I'm really mindful of that. It's not just about— I mean, most of the work that Forefront does is with young people directly, but I'm thinking broader: How do we empower the family-members, the families, to be able to practise these things? How do we empower the other environments where young people find themselves, so that this isn't just something that's happening in one unique space that's special; it has to be shared, so that it can continue?

That's bigger thinking, but for now, I think if there's anywhere where we can have sustained practice at a community-level, and introduce, for me, young people that *have* experienced significant harm, to some small practices, things that they can do— It's about action; and I think action can be really powerful. Because it's what you were

speaking about, Nkem, before: trauma, and powerlessness, and helplessness. So being able to have a tool, that someone *can* do, that actually supports them to self-regulate, to come home to who they are; and experiences of violence often take that away, and disconnect you from who you are because often, the sanctity of your Physical has been violated, and so it's really hard to then reconnect with that, especially when that is something that's still fresh.

And so, lots of thoughts; lots of thoughts that I have. But what I'm left with is: Yeah, I think it's necessary, especially for people that have experienced that type of harm; I think it will be so powerful that it can be a shared language, and a shared practice, that we can build.

NKEM: So I'd like to add on, there, some caveats: Yes, having done this in all different—running programs for refugee torture-survivors; teaching in schools, teaching teachers to teach in schools; in healthcare clinics; in community; with organisers—that: Yes, this is something that needs to be socialised, it needs to be community-based, and there also needs to be some knowledge that's imparted around it; because I see, actually, people with a little bit of knowledge doing harm, and they don't realise they're doing harm.

So I'll see, for example, somebody's like— They learned— If you notice, I started with a breathing practice. So someone learns, "Breathing is great!"—and they come in, and then they say, "We're going to do breathing," but they're still using the controlling language of the culture. So you'll hear, "Close your eyes. Breathe, and count to this." And so: What if somebody, right now, is having a traumatic reaction to that, that the person who's holding that doesn't know how to hold it in a trauma-informed way that includes, or promotes and fosters, self-agency and choice? And I see it really commonly.

Because some of the higher trauma-responses actually look very calm; we look very disconnected. So I've seen this, for example, with teachers, where they'll pull this into a classroom, and they realise— They tell everyone to close their eyes; it might not be *safe* for someone to close their eyes. And so, a kid could shut down, and look very calm, but actually being in the highest trauma-activation and dissociation. So we need to, also, share the practices, but also the knowledge of: How does stress and trauma show up?—how to foster self-agency and choice, so that people can use these practices where they are. I think there is an over-emphasis on *practices* and less an emphasis on the *approach* to understand: How do you know something works for you? How do you not know; if it's not; if it's making you worse?

Because, many times, many of these practices are extracted—just the way neoliberalism loves to—extracts them from Buddhism; deracinates; cuts off at the roots; pulls the practices of breathing, of mindfulness, away from community—the *Sangha*; pulls it away from the sacred texts; pulls it away from the teachers; puts it on apps. And it's just like, "Oh, we're going to do this mindfulness; we're going to turn inwards." And like I said for myself, having significant trauma: when I was asked to ground, and turn inwards, in spaces with people who didn't know about trauma, it traumatised me terribly because it was *terrifying* to drop in; I needed somebody who understood that those of us with high trauma-loads need to be guided gently into the embodiment.

So this, it *is* a reclamation of knowledge; it is a democratisation of these practices; and it's also the *spreading* of the knowledge of how trauma shows up, and how to safely embody—which may take a lot of time. And so I just want to tell: I was working with some youth that had been involved in community-violence in the US—lots of gangs, shot at, incarcerated; this type of thing. And I was leading a practice with choice; and this one young man says, "I don't want to do that;" and I said, "Great!"—because, often, youth are not allowed to say no—"You knew you didn't want to do that practice; good for you." And he looked, like, [bewildered facial expression] 'What!?'

So here is: We think the practice is the most important thing; it was actually the permission to anchor into himself, and then choose what he wanted to do. So then he knew he had choice—he's like, "Well, then, maybe I'll do it." And he did the practice; and the practice I was teaching is called the *Therapeutic Tremor*, which activates the mammalian reflex, that exists in all mammals, to reset stress and trauma. So I was teaching this, and he, actually, just fell asleep; and he was snoring very loudly (that's how I knew he was asleep).

So he wasn't even doing the practice, but when we circled back (it was maybe twenty youth), they were sharing; and what he said was, he goes, "I don't usually sleep, actually. Maybe two-hours-a-night," because he lives with community-violence, gun violence; it *is* the United States—we have so much gun violence.

And he goes, "I don't usually sleep; [hushed voice] but I *slept*, and I feel *great!*" (and it was only ten minutes or something); and he says, "[hushed voice] And I *dreamt* that I was in the mountains, and it was *sooo beautiful*." He had never been to the mountains! So he didn't even do [air quotes] "the practice", but he was in a community that allowed him to normalise his experience of trauma, and to have choice about how he moved. So sometimes, those end up being the most important somatic lessons. And he was able to access safety within himself, and a *vision* of mountains.

So yes to everything you said, Temi, [gestures in a circle with her arms] *and*: How do we share this knowledge, so that people can use somatics safely, and *not* retraumatise?—because there was a lot of... [pause] You know: A little knowledge can be dangerous; what's enough, that people can practise, and move quickly and safely?—Slowly when you need to.

REBEKAH: Nkem, would you mind just building on that, and telling us a bit more about the *Resilience Toolkit*? There's lots of questions in the chat about: Practically, how do we do this, and how do we do it in organisations?

NKEM: The reason why I made the *Resilience Toolkit* (and it's really a bland name: it's on purpose; it's a Trojan horse, because it can get into spaces where people say, "Oh, yeah! This is—": because the point of it is to— What I realised is that trauma is one of our root problems; racialised trauma, all trauma, is one of our root problems: traumatised people traumatise each other, ourselves; we suffer; etc.

But most people can't bridge to there—I couldn't, because I couldn't even get in my body; and some people can't even say the word—so I realised we needed a bridge—practice to grow our capacities, to be in our bodies, to listen to our bodies, to settle. And so the whole point is that it develops our knowledge base of: What does stress, and trauma, and *relaxation* actually feel like inside? How do we grow the discernment of if it's useful or not?—because sometimes, you might be in a space where you need to be on guard or appeasing; and if you know intentionally, that's what you're doing, you won't shame yourself for it; you'll recognise the reaction. But when it is safer, and you might be overresponding, how to pick a practice, and how to know it works.

And I'm interested in real-time practices, not retreat practices; practices you can use in real-time, in thirty seconds, and know that they work. And now I'm going to cough, so someone else has to talk.

REBEKAH: Thank you. And Nikita's just shared the link to the *Resilience Toolkit* in the chat, so everyone can see it. Melz, Alex, I'm wondering if you want to build on what's been said, and really think about the value of somatics in the spaces that you're working in: in education, in comms, how can you see somatics making a real difference in those spaces?

ALEX: Yeah, I can come in here. So, I'm part of Healing Justice through the Comms team. So yeah, I had a think about— My work, and doing radical comms is like— The challenges that we come up against is that these platforms are not made for us, and

we need to navigate that; when doing comms, you have to read through tragic news, and reactionary social media posts; there's a lot of being on screens, and being disconnected through being on screens; and yeah, just reflecting on how somatics makes my ability to do radical comms— improves my ability to do radical comms. When I am experiencing some of those things, like the screens—you know what I mean?—it's just that ability to come back to my body.

And also having— being able to be curious enough—curious, trusting, loving enough—to when I'm talking about difficult things, that I can phrase it in a way that it lands; I can be creative enough, and curious enough, and trusting and loving enough, to know how to phrase that, so that it *will* land. Yeah, that's me on that.

MELZ: Yeah—

NKEM: Can I [MISSED] [01:11:50] super quick?—and then I'm going to pass it to Melz. I just see people responding to the word resilience, and I want to be *very, very clear*—I am not talking about resilience so that you are stronger to take more oppression. I am *not* talking— I am talking about *reclaiming* resilience. And I, actually, am going to put it in the chat—we use a term called *alchemical resilience*. And we talk about: it's a flexible strength and increased capacity to heal, to overcome adversity, and to change systems of inequity and oppression into places where we thrive.

Because unfortunately, those of us with marginalised identities *are* tasked with the biggest job of changing this system; and we *do* need more resilience— we can be mad about it, but we *do* need it if we want to change this place, we want to transform it. So there; just a little bit. Alright, Melz; sorry.

MELZ: Yeah, no—thank you. And yeah, just to add, in terms of how I see it come up in my work: so part of my work is the practice of teaching; and I was actually teaching at my university earlier this week; and in one point of the lecture, I just paused, and I just asked the students, "How do you feel?" And they looked so confused; [laughs] like, unbelievably confused. And everyone just went quiet.

And I said, "Okay, what's your experience of me asking this question?"—and they just said, "No-one ever asks us that question; we don't understand why— It's really uncomfortable that you're asking that." And so through that, I went through, exploring Black feminist thought, and the role of the teacher as someone that should be tending, also, to the care of the spirits and souls of our students, not just their intellect.

And so through that, we went outside (because Cambridge is a beautiful city), and we just went and sat by the river to do the rest of the class; and the students were just, honestly– [laughs] They were just so confused, innit? For the whole time, they were confused; but it was such a beautiful moment. One of them came up to me afterwards, and was just like, "I've just never experienced something like this. Thank you so much for holding this space in this kind of way."

And in that vein, through doing Free Black Uni as well, we, similarly, invite the feelings of our students into the space; and it's so wild: What are we teaching people, that, every time they come into this space, they literally have to leave everything at the door, other than their intellect?—It's *such* a disembodied experience. And I was talking to them about, "What kind of people do we then become in the world?" People who are going to be the next CEO of this, or the next person that's running this— Whatever they go and do, they're going to embody this nature of disembodiment.

So even in those small ways, thinking about all the different places that— I can share the thing that I love to do (which is share knowledge), but also bring in that feeling self, and allowing people to recognise that their whole selves are important; because that's what the aim of it is.

REBEKAH: Thanks, Melz; that's a beautiful story about what you were able to give to your students; that's been reflected in the chat. I wanted to ask about joy and creativity; I think, sometimes, we're saturated with our pain, and we talk about how we use these practices to get beyond the pain; but what I've also found, and been moved by, is, actually, how much it opens up for me, and how much I *wasn't* experiencing before. So I wanted to ask each of you to share a moment of deep, embodied joy, where you've really felt it in the core of your stomach; and how did you know you were feeling it? What felt good? Alex, you've got a smile, so I'm going to come to you.

ALEX: That's one to think about. I had a smile, but that was— Yeah, maybe go to somebody else; I need a second to think about that.

REBEKAH: Deep, embodied joy: When and where do we feel that, and how do we know?

NKEM: I'll jump in. So, I have a friend who just had spinal surgery; and I was cooking for her, and I was chopping the vegetables, and sautéing the vegetables, making her a big lentil soup; and I had some music on; and I felt so *joyous*: to be alive, to feel— (she had very serious surgery) to be able to be in the position to bring her and her children food; and the music was so beautiful—and, really, this sense of care.

And I felt light in my chest; I felt– [subtly dances] Spontaneous smile, and movement; just so easy and flowing; just– [gesture from OK-gesture to open hands]
Oof!—Delicious!

MELZ: Yeah! Mentioning– Food also took me back to, I guess, what I feel: such joy. Because, do you know what?—I feel like it's in the little things in life; because I think, sometimes, I would have a propensity to wait for the most extravagant thing to happen, and then feel this joy [gestures with a flat hand above their head] that's all the way up here, but then it fizzles out; then it's like: Is it even really joy?—It's just another for of dysregulation.

So, in the– I just like– I'm a libra-rising: *I like luxury*; so anything, that– If I'm something eating something [emphasises with hand] *good*; or if I'm somewhere that is just beautiful; if the bed that I'm in is just *comfortable*, and—What's it?—everything that's on the bed [lays hands on their shoulders] just feels good on my skin: just, the little luxuries of life bring me the most joy. Honestly, anything that's on the body that feels good: [waves their hands in front of them, shaking their head] I'm getting it.

TEMI: For me, I think, the thing that came to mind first was– Literally, I call them belly laughs. I don't know, I have so many examples of it; but being a in a group of people, and, for whatever reason, something has just made everyone *erupt* with laughter; but it's that laughter really from the core. And it hurts; it actually hurts your belly, it hurts your cheeks; you can't stop; sometimes, people will start crying. And then you've moved beyond whatever it was initially, and now you're just laughing at the belly-laughing. And those moments always stand out to me; and even as I'm saying it, I can feel it in my core.

So that's an obvious example, but a smaller joy I feel: every day, when I wake up, I come downstairs and I look at my plants (I have quite a lot of them); but I just try and pay attention to them, and notice– And I always see a little new bud, or, just, something so tiny and small. And I really admire them, and it reminds me: just, the capacity for growth, and to flourish, to grow; and it reminds me that I also have that.

So I just take those little moments; it's just quiet, it's silent. I'm just looking at my plants; but it really fills me with joy, just to know that: Yeah, that's a positive change; and also that, through my nourishment and nurturing of these lives, growth is coming from that; and I can invest the same in myself, and I can also grow; and invest that in my community, and it can also grow.

So it's just a beautiful way to start the day; makes me feel very joyful.

ALEX: I've got my one now: so, embarrassingly, I like to dance to myself at home, when I'm alone; I just like to put on music; and the other night, I put on this [gestures with hands turned inwards towards their heart] super soppy, slow-jam, emotional music; and I was just dancing to myself—Innit?—but also, expressing the feelings, and... You know what I mean? Yeah, that's— For me, music, [gestures towards heart] and words, and emotions can come through [subtly dances] my body; it can come through moving to it, and getting into it; vibing. Yeah.

REBEKAH: Thank you. And there's been so many comments in the chat about the little luxuries: about the joy of dancing; the joy of cooking; the joy of plants, and growth. And I think everyone's leaving with a lovely feeling of what joy can feel like—and particularly what joy can feel like when we have it in community with each other.

I just wanted to ask everyone, before we go, for closing comments: What has the discussion brought up for you? What are you taking away? Where would you want conversations and things to go next?—Anyone happy to start?

ALEX: I don't have much, but I just want to say that this is... You know, I've heard Nkem, and Staci, and others say that this is a life-long practice; and just to say that: Yeah, this has felt so nourishing for that journey, for that ongoing, life-long work, to continue; to be in it; and to know that there's all of these people that are here for this; and these amazing speakers that I've managed to be on a panel with, somehow. Yeah, so, I think that's my thought: It's just been great, and I've really enjoyed it.

MELZ: Yeah, no, I'm— Oh, Nkem, would you like to do it?

NKEM: Nope; go, Melz.

MELZ: Yeah, no, just echoing Alex: I'm deeply grateful as well; similarly, it's a life-long journey, and I'm just grateful-beyond-belief to be on a journey to understand somatics; and I'm grateful to Healing Justice for the part that you've played in my own journey, and for every person that's played a part in my own journey—Do you know what I mean?

And it's like Nkem was saying at the start: There's no liberation if we don't have that liberation within our bodies. it's the most— Sometimes— You know when you can't even bring things into words, because they're so deeply felt?—That's how I feel about somatic healing, innit? Just being in this space where the greatest form of liberation becomes

possible when you realise you can be safe in your own body; and yeah, that you deserve so much love, and we all deserve so much love.

So yeah, I just hope and pray that we can continue to be gentle with ourselves, and gentle with each other, and just continue to extend love in every possible way. So yeah, just grateful to everyone that's been here today as well: Blessings.

NKEM: [lays hands on her chest] I feel full; I feel excitement, like I'm standing on the edge of something—something really beautiful, like it's about— You know *spring* is about to— I'm in Los Angeles; we're already seeing the buds—the buds; that energy; that we have gone deep. We've filled the sugar into our roots—our roots are *fat*; they are *connected*; they are *wide*. And with this addition of somatics (the coming back, the bringing reclamation of ourselves, the pushing) the attempt to annihilate— This annihilative energy is so far in the distance, because of how deep our roots are; and then, this staying connected, and then, this sense of the energy about to [bursting gesture from their temples] burst.

And so I'm so excited because, if you look at all the organising that has happened to date, and that's happened, in the greatest part, from the *head*—What *happens* when, individually and collectively, we are rooted in this way?—I'm just, like— The generative capacity: if this is what people have been able to generate, and then people start to feel *safer* in their bodies, they start to feel more free in their bodies, *what is possible?*—Sci-fi level; sci-fi-level co-worlding; let's *do* it. So excited.

TEMI: Yeah, that's so beautiful. It all resonates with me. I feel a real profound hope; and the hope came at the beginning of the journey for me when, as I said, I had that experience (one of them, maybe, for the first time) of: Genuinely, what does it mean to be held?—And what I mean by that is: We speak a lot— We *know* what is needed; we know we need community care, we know we need these feelings; but how does it actually feel? How can it— When it's brought into the world, when it actually flourishes and comes to fruition, what does that look like, and feel like?

And with that in mind, it gave that hope that, actually, there is a way that we can heal from all of the things that we have been through, and we are going through right now; it is possible. And I think our movements, our collectives: We just need hope because hope is what sustains us, and we have to remember (even in what you said, Nkem, before, about when you *can't* imagine, because it feels unknowing, and it's not rooted in something you've actually experienced)—The faith is what keeps us going; that, maybe, I don't have the experience to know that it's possible, but I feel somatics provides a

portal to actually being able to have semblance of the experience of that possibility, and feel it.

And from that place, I'm just truly, *truly* excited to see what emerges from that. And I *do* feel like it's all very emergent, but at the same time, that hope feels really real to me, and is making me feel really joyful right now. So yeah, I feel honoured to have been in this space with everyone, and to have this conversation.

REBEKAH: Thank you so much. I can see that resonating with so many people, moving from [inaudible] to love; to the new feelings of possibilities; to some sort of change at [inaudible] level; and this energy and excitement that we're all sharing together.

I'm going to ask you, Nkem, if you could close us out with a connecting practice that people can take away with them.

NKEM: So, just right now, drop in, and notice where this conversation has stirred in you; where is there a little sense of more aliveness?—Maybe it's bubbly; maybe it's pushing, trying to burst forth; maybe it's expansive. And notice the part of you, inside, that might be a little scared to *allow* that to be there; that's, maybe, trying to hold it back a little bit—don't get ahead of yourself.

And not to make that bad, or wrong: notice that that's part of your experience too. Maybe there's a conversation between these parts: the part that wants to burst forth, the part that wants to bubble up, the part that wants to expand; and the part that wants to hold back—Can they be in conversation with each other? Can you feel, perhaps, the tension?—But again, not making it wrong, or bad. Can you be big enough to hold both; to let yourself lean into the excitement, to lean into the future without leaving any part of yourself behind?

And, if it feels supportive, to notice your breath; and, maybe, let it lengthen that exhale a little bit; to anchor that little seed that's ready to birth forth.

Thank you *so much*. Rebekah?

REBEKAH: Thank you so much, everyone. I just wanted to send deep gratitude to our panel tonight: To Temi, to Alex, to Nkem, and to Melz; also to Grace and Rachel, our BSL interpreters—thank you for working so hard during this time; and for Bella, and Arif, and Sarah, who've been doing tech, and holding us through this.

We're going to finish slightly early to give everyone a bit of time in case they're able, tonight, to join our breath circle—Arif, if you could put the slide up—we just wanted to share some aftercare resources that we have, that are accessible to everyone. So if you haven't already, please sign up for our newsletter, that will tell us about future events going on; and particularly the event that I mention, in a few weeks, which will be on disability justice and somatics.

We have regular support spaces that we offer each week; so please look on the Healing Justice website to see what they are; and [inaudible] welcome to join them. And also, I put the link to Lumos Transforms' website as well: that they also offer individual-support and group-classes.

And then, tonight, if you're able: Farzana Khan from Healing Justice holding our weekly breath circle (although it's a breath circle, it's actually a mixture of different short, accessible practices); so, it's tonight at 21:30, and the link is there if you want to register through Eventbrite.

So, just to give my deep gratitude to everyone for coming again today; lots of love and care to everyone; take care. Thank you.