

ACTIVITY 3:

Dreaming the Future

Any process to spark new ways of seeing, thinking, and acting needs to take us beyond our usual thought processes to touch our emotions, beliefs, longings, and dreams. These drew us to this work in the first place and will animate new thinking, approaches, and ever stronger relationships. Here we explore our dreams and collective visions for the future.

Materials: Flip charts, post-its or cards of four different colours, markers, tape, letter-size paper, different coloured paper and tissue paper, written instructions, and relevant quotes.

Plenary: Read the quotes aloud to draw people from day-to-day thinking into a mode of imagining. While some were written in particular moments such as the beginning of the COVID pandemic, they speak to any crisis that triggers the necessity of rethinking and imagining other ways of being. Feel free to use quotes from your context to invite reflections on dreams of a better future.

Our dreams have been important in inspiring change and sustaining hope and community. The simple process of envisioning a better future is a critical action in itself. As we confront the violent systems around us:

- What do we centre in our work?
- How do we shape our vision and stay true to our values?
- What stars guide us along the way to making our dreams a reality?

Step 1: Dreaming

Individually: In order to invite a creative mindset, take a walk outdoors and really pay attention to what you see, smell, and hear; or listen to music or sing; or choose another activity that takes you out of the strictly rational brain. Allow yourself to visualize your desired future.

- What is the future you dream about?
- Where are you? Who are you with?
- What are you and people around you doing?
- What is the environment like? What do you see? What colours? What sounds? What smells?
- How are you feeling?

In two to three words, fill the gaps on colour-coded post-its, one colour per phrase:

I have a dream of a future where everyone will _____ (colour 1), where no one will _____ (colour 2), and where the land and environment will _____ (colour 3). One idea or belief that feeds my dream and my work toward it is _____ (colour 4).

Using markers, pencils, coloured crayons, and/or collage, create a “quilt square” – an image on letter-size paper (of different colours, if possible) – to represent the future you have imagined.

Plenary: Each person shares their image, and these are placed one-by-one together on a wall, floor, or table to make a quilt. In turn, each person reads their colour-coded dream statements and idea or belief. As they read, group the statements on a wall into similar themes and open a short discussion.

- What do these different images and cards say to us about our visions for the future?
- What are the ways we want our lives and the world to change?
- Do you see common sources of hope? How can we use these sources of hope and possibility in our organizing and change-making work?
- What brings us together? What are some of the differences?
- What do they say about our guiding values and purpose, what we stand for?
- What do they say about our hearts and feelings?

Step 2: Reimagined futures

Our individual dreams inspire us and others but to make change we must pool our dreams and collectively reimagine the future. Imagine that you’ve teleported to 2060, a time when a better world has arrived.

Options that might invite inspiration:

Watch the video: [Message from the Future](#)

Read selections from [In a Time Not So Far Away](#)

Watch a video from the Movement for Black Lives: [Black Futures – Ode to Freedom Summer](#)

Alternatively, find examples in other languages or from other contexts.

Small groups: To show a radically reimagined world, create a five-minute role play, make a short video on a phone, or describe four scenarios that allow others to see what you see.

- What do we see?
- How do we feel?
- What are people doing differently? For economic well-being? For political and social problem-solving?
- How are communities organised?
- How do people relate to their environment?

Plenary: Each group presents their vision of the future. Discuss the futures you imagine. How do they connect to your dreams from Step 1?

Step 3: How will we get there?

Plenary: Re-read the Arundhati Roy quote. Repeat the last phrase: “We can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it”.

Display a new flip chart or screen entitled “Travelling to the Reimagined Future” with two columns headed “In order to get to this vision, what will I take? and what will I leave behind?”

Individually: Write two or three post-its in answer to each question and post them in the columns.

Plenary: Invite people to share what they posted and discuss what we’re leaving behind and what we’re taking with us. What do we learn about our visions looking at these lists?

Step 4: Values, principles, and ways of working

Building on the previous discussion, identify the core values, principles, and ways of working – both individual and collective – that will guide us toward our imagined future.

Individually: On two stickies, write:

One important value or principle that will be essential for living our visions.

One way of working or leading, or one practice that must change to enable us to realise these values.

Plenary: Cluster responses and invite discussion.

What do we find in common?

Are there any notable differences?

Summarise the discussion and read out the quotes from Johnetta Cole and Langston Hughes (see Theme 2).