

The Dorothy Cotton Institute

Human Rights & Citizenship Education Program



***Building Global Community
for Human Rights Leadership***

Our Vision:

**The full realization
of a just and peaceful
beloved community
in which all people
understand, respect, protect,
and exercise
full human rights.**

Our Mission

- **To develop, nurture and train leaders for a global human rights movement.**
- **To build a network and community of civil and human rights leadership**
- **To explore, share, and promote practices that transform individuals and communities, opening new pathways to peace, justice, and healing.**

DCI Values: the following values underlie our efforts:

- The inherent dignity, worth and spirit of every person.
- Our shared humanity and relationship to all others (*Ubuntu*)* that give meaning to each individual life.
- The conscientious recognition of and respect for the interdependent web of all life.
- The development of self-awareness and relationship through reflection, listening, dialogue, critical inquiry, and engaged participation with others.

- Non-violence, peacemaking, reconciliation and love (*agape*) as means to change, and as ends.
- The right and responsibility of all people for engaged participation in the decisions that impact their lives.
- Diverse ways of knowing and teaching—conceptual, practical, experiential, and cultural—that honor past struggles, nurture the human spirit, and engage widespread participation.

* *Ubuntu* (Nguni language group) captures the notion that “my humanity is inextricably bound up in yours, and that what dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me.” It encompasses generosity, hospitality, caring, compassion and a sense of belonging to a greater whole.

Why focus on human rights?

- **Beyond the struggle for constitutionally guaranteed civil rights in the U.S., people are currently struggling for their full human rights, both in the U.S. and around the globe.**
- **We want to bring visibility, interconnection and strength to local, national and international work for human rights; while there is tremendous activity in the area of human rights, there is no “center” and no sense of a national or global “movement”. This creates a very unique role for the institute.**

Key DCI Components



Human Rights Education is:

- A comprehensive lifelong process by which people at all levels of development and in all societies learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.**
- All learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights.**

The Citizenship Education Program (CEP)

“The Best Kept Secret” of the Civil Rights Movement

- **A critical, but often overlooked, component of the Civil Rights Movement’s overall organizing strategy.**
- **CEP played a foundational role helping disenfranchised people recognize their own capacity, intelligence and power, and transform themselves from a stance of “victim” to full “citizenship.”**
- **1956-1961: Citizenship Schools began on Johns Islands, South Carolina and grew from there, supported by the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee.**
- **1961-1970: CEP sponsorship moves to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and spreads throughout the South. Led by Dorothy Cotton, Andrew Young, Septima Clark, Bernice Robinson, and others.**

Our Theory of Change

Take Action,
Leadership, &
Inspire Others

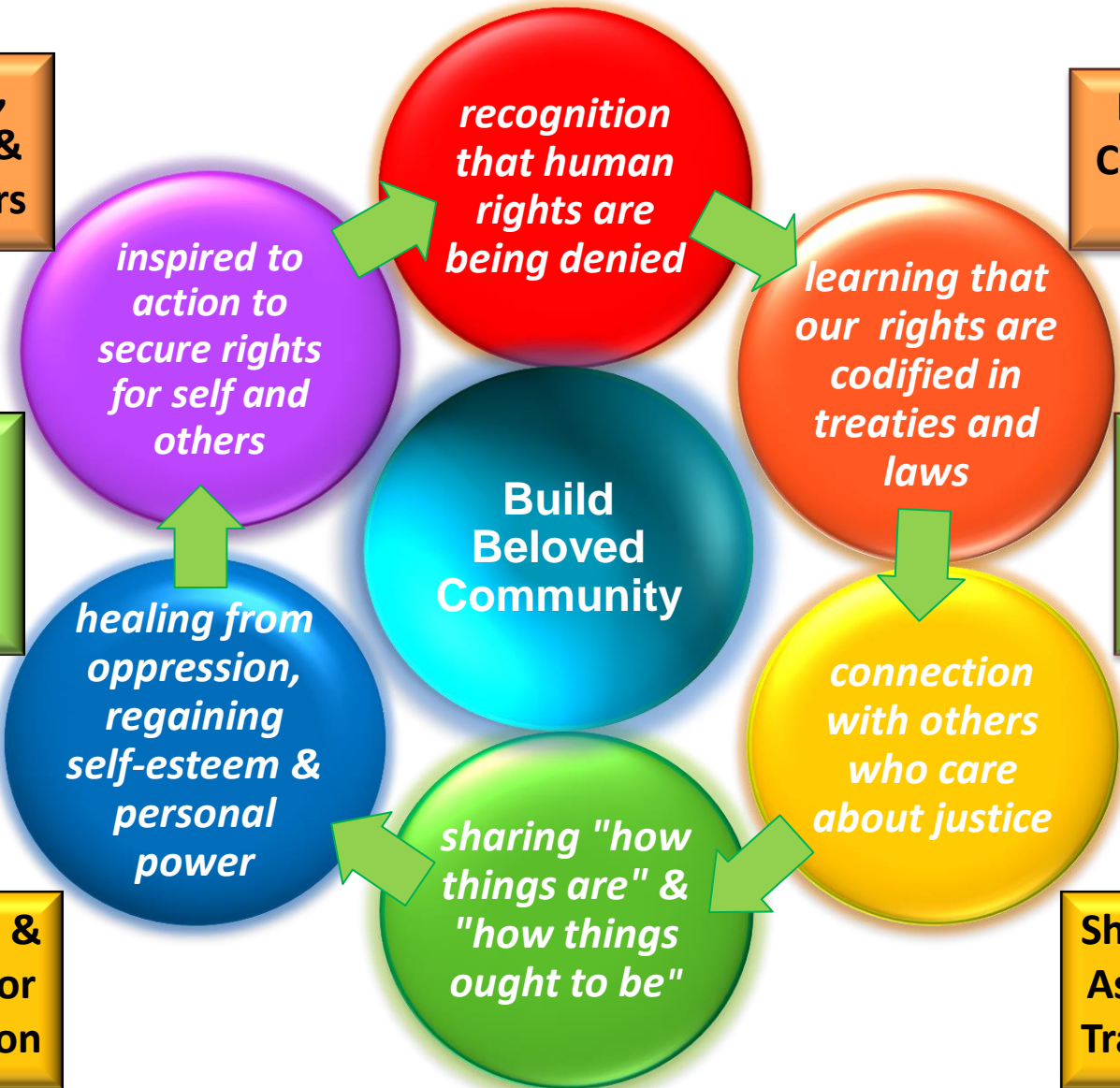
Learn about
Civil & Human
Rights

Share
Strategies &
Mutual
Support

Join a
Learning
Community
of Peers

Share Stories &
Aspirations for
Transformation

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Levels of Transformation

PERSONAL

- Move from the role of “victim” to “agency” in one’s life

INTERPERSONAL

- Practice non-violence to build a Beloved Community, where all are treated with love, compassion, and respect, and their humanity and dignity is affirmed.

COMMUNITY

- Build our community’s capacity to work for social justice.

INSTITUTIONAL

- Take collective action to transform institutions, policies and laws.



Core Principles: ***Affirming Human Dignity & Strengths***

- Appreciate the life experiences, knowledge, strengths and talents of the students.
 - Affirm students' dignity.
 - Hold high expectations for students' ability to achieve great things.
 - Tap strengths in students' cultures and traditions.
- Create a culture and climate of belonging, safety and respect.
 - Foster transformations in how students see themselves, their capacities and their relationships to each other.
 - Build caring, compassionate community.

Core Principles:

Learning In and Through Collective Action

- **Create a lived, shared experience for students of the vision for new society.**
 - **Create deliberate experiential challenges to the values and norms of the status quo.**
 - **Focus curriculum on the practical problems, skills and topics of most interest to students; address the real problems students face in their lives.**
- **Intertwine classroom learning with community-based action; help students grasp key concepts through solving practical problems in concert with others.**

Core Principles: *Living Democracy in Classrooms & Programs*

- Use interactive, participatory, inclusive methods.
- Minimize the hierarchical distance between teacher & students.
- Use question-posing to support dialogue & critical thinking.
- Ask learners what they want to learn.
- Help students see themselves as collective “experts”.



- Use student-directed, participatory action research.
- Offer experiences for self-discovery & building relationships.
- Encourage sharing students' multiple cultural perspectives.
- Foster peer learning and teaching; process learning in groups.



Dorothy C.

Citizenship Education Program Outline

- **Building community and the moral case for change**
- **Seeing how the status quo is maintained**
- **Understanding that we have rights**



- **Creating a vision for change**
- **Preparing for leadership & effective action**
- **Ongoing support and reinforcement**

Building Community and the Moral Case for Change

- Share Stories
- Build Trust and Connection
- Identify Problems & Issues of Concern
- Identify Shared Values
- Affirm that Injustice is Unacceptable



Seeing How the Status Quo is Maintained

- Identify the causes of problems
- Identify who is making decisions
- Recognize power arrangements & political structures



Understanding Our Rights

- Citizenship: a Citizen has both rights & civic responsibilities
- All people have Human Rights that should be protected by laws:
 - *Social, Cultural, Civil, Environmental, Economic & Political rights*



- Inform, empower & transform ourselves & our communities
- Use legal frameworks to create change
- Use our voices & our personal power
- Move from the role of "Victim" to "Citizen"



Creating a Vision for Change

- **What is Love?**
 - How should we view and treat each other?
- **What is Non-Violence?**
 - What is powerful about it?
 - How do we cultivate compassion?

- **What is Beloved Community?**
 - Describe how things ought to be
 - What dreams do we have in common?
 - What would justice look like?
 - Why is reconciliation important?
 - How do people share power?



Preparing for Leadership & Effective Action

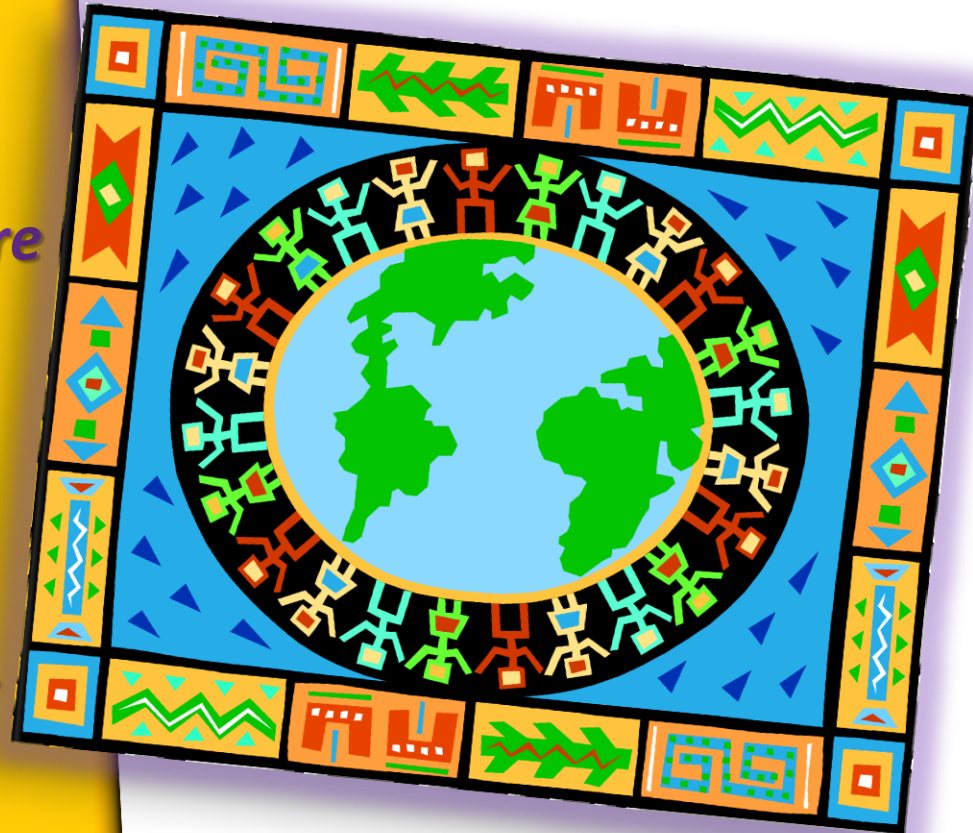
- **Imagine Change—**
What is your goal?
- *What role can you play?*
What can you do to change the situation?
- **Assess risks—pushback, consequences, violence?**
- **Plan Civic Engagement & Social Action**
- **Teach people about their rights**
- **Organize alliances, coalitions, & teams**

- **Commit to action & mutual support**
- **Mobilize vigils, walks, demonstrations**
- **Use media, petitions, write letters & articles**
- **Assert your rights & demands effectively**
- **Use personal power, inclusion, & influence to gain access & promote justice for all**



Ongoing Support & Movement Building

- *Share what we're learning—information & strategies*
- *Build a knowledge base about what's working*
- *Share struggle—bring attention to problems & initiatives, here & elsewhere*
- *Share resources—support one another*
- *Share networks—connect people to each other*
- *Build Leadership*
- *Build a Global Movement: Sustainable Justice, Sustainable Change*



Support from the DCI

- Helping to meet future training needs
- Supporting school—community teams
 - *Share what people are learning together & from each other*
 - *Trouble-shooting*
- Generating Ideas for
 - *Building democratic classrooms & programs*
 - *Innovative school – community partnerships*



- Strategies to get others involved
- Movement building
- Documentation
 - *What impact is HR Education having*
 - *on students?*
 - *on teaching staff?*
 - *How is the community benefitting?*
 - *What is working best?*
- Build the knowledge base.