

*Organizing Sikh spaces in
support of the M4BL:*

Mapping our Roles in a Social Change Ecosystem

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[part one] weavers, experimenters, frontline responders, visionaries, builders

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The Social Change Ecosystem Map



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Weavers: I see the through-lines of connectivity between people, places, organizations, ideas, and movements.

A weaver in Sikh spaces focuses both on connecting communities within the Sikh sangat and outside of it. Help the Sikh community understand the necessity to support the M4BL by making clear the ongoing and potential sites of connection between Sikh and Black communities' fights for liberation.

- Make it your craft to familiarize yourself with the ins and outs of what makes our community tick so you can connect it with local community needs (in and out of Sikh spaces).
- With each community gathering and commemoration, create space to tie saakhis and gurbaani to ongoing oppression to find points of action. For example, on bandi chhor divas, use Guru Hargobind Sahib's example to make an action plan for Sikhs to become activated for prison abolition.
- Help sangat members find local No New Jails chapters, research how local funds are being allocated towards police and prisons, or see how we can support detainees in local ICE facilities with legal aid or resources upon their release.



Experimenters: I innovate, pioneer, and invent. I take risks and course-correct as needed.

An experimenter in Sikh spaces removes the need for perfectionism or the fear of being seen as vulnerable, igniting a spirit of curiosity and learning within the community. Just because Sikhs have not yet figured out a pathway to eliminating anti-Blackness within ourselves does not mean we need to be complacent through silence in our comfort zone of safety and privilege. Experimenters inspire our community with the creative spirit of abolition.

- Encourage community members to work towards eliminating colonized mentalities and develop new pathway to pioneer a generation of radical organizers and activists in the Panth.
- Hold a skill-building and career seminar that draws upon legacies of revolution in Sikh history while also bringing in those in our community who are often silenced or thrust aside for voicing their stances against anti-Blackness, queerphobia, and misogyny.
- Encourage community members to learn to take risks and invent new pathways for Sikh existence in the diaspora.



Frontline Responders: I address community crises by marshaling and organizing resources, networks, and messages.

A frontline responder in Sikh spaces ensures that our most urgent and immediate needs are being addressed so that we can move towards a collective future vision, imagined by our visionaries and crafted by our builders. Working together with weavers to take stock of the community, frontline responders can navigate the web of trauma and harm by focusing on overarching oppression that manifests as various iterations of white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

- Move our community from a place of trauma and fear-based reactionary politics to proactive community connection.
- Rather than waiting for a hate crime to occur to call upon those who we think will protect us, work together with other racialized and oppressed communities in our locality to develop a network of mutual aid and find ways to protect and care for those who are most in need within each community. The overlap might surprise you!



Visionaries: I imagine and generate our boldest possibilities, hopes and dreams, and remind us of our direction.

A visionary in Sikh spaces can work to bring our gurdwaare to their highest potential as a hub for community reflection, organizing, and care like Guru Sahib imagined. By reimagining our community through the framework of Khalsa Panth, rather than social distinctions, visionaries must remind Sikhs that the only significance we hold in worldly identities is challenging the oppression that is manifested through them.

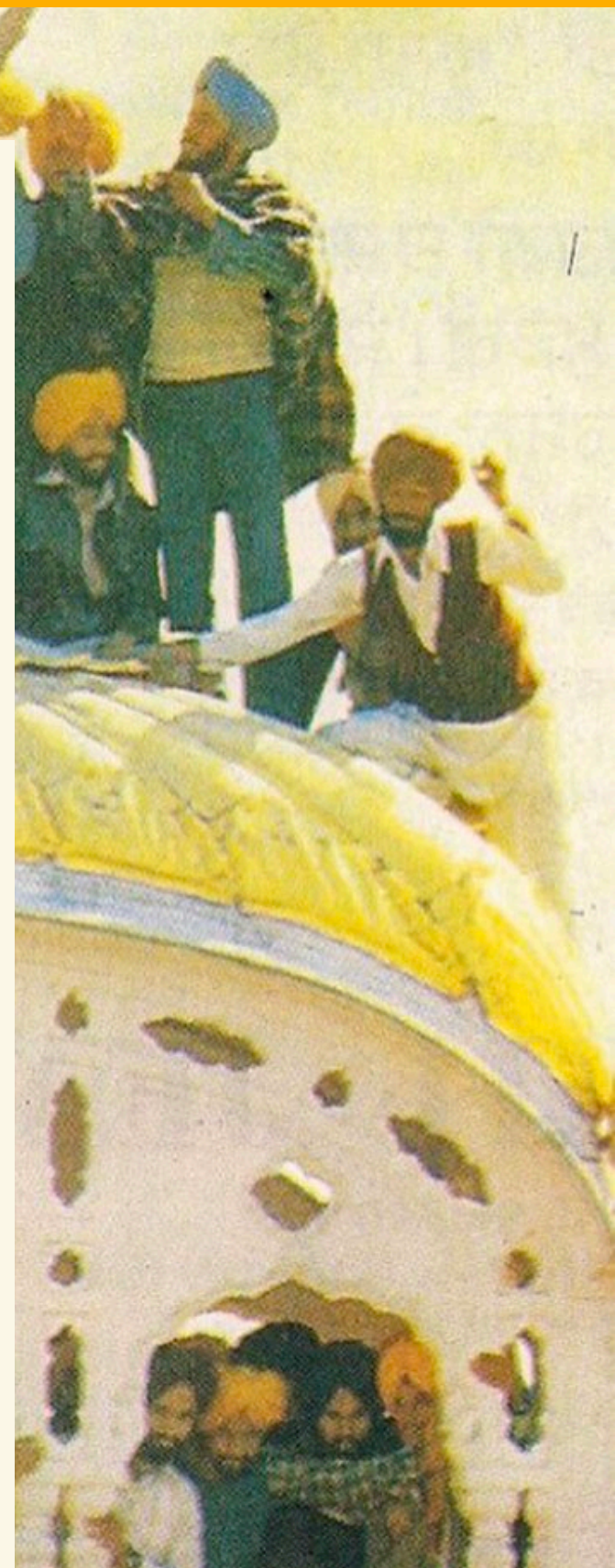
- Recreate agency by asking, what does the future look like for a healthy Sikh community?
- Reimagine the expansiveness of our Sikh spaces and community by not limiting our spaces to Punjabi Sikhs only (and thus excluding or being suspicious of Black Sikhs).
- Hold a community conversation where you create space for us to dream and imagine a future in which we are not simply afraid for our own safety, but have returned to our sovereign roots as revolutionaries.
- Reignite the passion for resistance and resilience within so that we can remember how we used to live without a care for power or rule. We just want all people to be free.



Builders: I develop, organize, and implement ideas, practices, people, and resources in service of a collective vision.

A builder in Sikh spaces works with various parties across the community to bring us towards the realization of a world that is no longer committed to anti-Blackness and white supremacy. Spotting the skill sets and potential in various community members, especially those who are not already utilized as leaders or change makers, allows builders to cultivate a vision of the community that is not possible in its current state.

- Recentering Sikhs on our collective vision for ਸਰਬੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ (sarbat da bhalaa) to move the community towards action that is actively against institutional anti-Blackness rather than passively accepting the state of white supremacy and working from a place of reactionary politics.
- Develop a community workshop space where everyone is trained to identify their skills, knowledge, and resources, and then are guided towards understanding how it can serve its purpose in fighting anti-Blackness.



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[part two] caregivers, disrupters, healers, storytellers, guides

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Caregivers: I nurture and nourish the people around me by creating and sustaining a community of care, joy, and connection.

A caregiver in Sikh spaces finds ways to cultivate a practice of community care that is not rooted in anti-Blackness and/or assimilating into whiteness through savior mentalities. Work together with disruptors to eliminate practices that are not coming from a place of care and collective liberation, like inviting the police to learn about Sikhi or protect the gurdwara, or viewing langar as a way to create awareness about ourselves.

- Identify radical institutions and ethics of care within Sikhi and use them to provide care to those who are at the forefront of protecting our humanity.
- Provide langar to protestors, use the gurdwara as a shelter for those who are either targeted or erased by the state (undocumented folks, protestors, survivors of domestic violence, homeless queer youth).
- Remind our community that it is through a practice of cultivating love and larger community, rather than only looking out for ourselves, that we can practice Gurmat.



Disruptors: I take uncomfortable and risky actions to shake up the status quo, to raise awareness, and to build power.

A disruptor in Sikh spaces pushes the community to be better rather than fall into the comfort of what has always been done. What norms do you see around you? What has been left unquestioned? What seems to not be working but has been left untouched?

- Your challenge is to push against the tides of power and privilege within the community to move us to a new normal. Disruptors are constantly pushing the Sikh community to serve Guru Sahib by fighting our internalized anti-Blackness and white supremacy, no matter the time or space.
- Look at the gurdwara committee, Khalsa School leadership, or camp organizing group near you; are they incorporating some sort of task force on how to challenge anti-Blackness in the Sikh community?
- Where are community funds going that are self-serving instead of doing true seva?
- Challenge leadership to reallocate community funds towards local bail funds, supporting Black youth organizations, and, *please*, stop hiring police to “protect” the gurdwara!



Healers: I recognize and tend to the generational and current traumas caused by oppressive systems, institutions, policies, and practices.

A healer in Sikh spaces can take many forms. While our community has a deep need for formally trained healers to address historic, intergenerational trauma, we also need natural healers to lead us to a place where we can understand our liberation is deeply tied to the M4BL, not in spite of it.

- Plan healing circles around different needs in your gurdwara. Draw strength from the healing justice movement to “reimagine wholeness.” Some sites to focus your healing are on eliminating...
 - For youth—fear of Othering by drawing strength from Black liberation movements and other communities of color instead of searching for ourselves in whiteness.
 - For women—internalized misogyny and trans-exclusive mentalities to stand together against gender-based violence (physical, verbal, and spiritual).
 - For men—internalized fear of inadequacy that drives a desire to find power in oppression rather than love and humility.



Storytellers: I craft and share our community stories, cultures, experiences, histories, and possibilities through art, music, media, and movement.

A storyteller in Sikh spaces draws upon the most essential parts of our legacy; by building strength, resilience, and clarity through oral history and narrative, storytellers can use emotive and creative spirit to energize the community into a space of humble and revolutionary action.

- Hold an open mic night through the Khalsa School where all participants are asked to use Sikh narratives, ethics, and frameworks to cultivate a new story of Sikhs fighting against anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and institutional racism.
- Through art, storytelling, and creative community space, write and develop a new narrative of Sikh resistance and revolution about standing up against anti-Blackness and supporting the M4BL that is more authentic to Sikh traditions of revolution.
- Publish the pieces shared as a zine to be distributed amongst the sangat for ongoing conversation.



10 Guides

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Guides: I teach, counsel, and advise, using my gifts of well-earned discernment and wisdom.

A guide in Sikh spaces needs to always remember our original and primary guide: Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Serving as a guide to the Sikh community in being an ally for the M4BL, your primary task is to recenter the community on gurnat and gurbaani as the driving force for all action that the Sikh community takes.

- Utilize Sikh educational spaces to help the community focus on understanding and applying Guru Sahib's timeless message to challenging anti-racism and organizing against anti-Black institutions and structures.
- Develop consciousness-raising opportunities at camps, Khalsa schools, and gurdwaras to strengthen the Sikh community's own vision of radical sovereignty and root us in Guru Sahib's vision of justice as we find the ways that Sikhs can serve selflessly and fill in the gaps with current organizing demands in the M4BL.
- As a community anti-racist educator, cultivate a curiosity and humility to learn and self-educate as part of a lifelong dedication to ending anti-Blackness.

