



Action Learning Fellowship – 2020 Final Shareout Series
By Renee Bradford, ALF Fellow

From Pink Lemonade to an Obsession with Chairs: Sip, Sit and Be Held in Circle

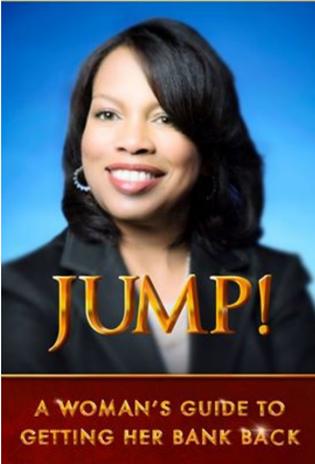
As we were preparing to host our first virtual Oasis gathering as fellows, Yi worked through the Art of Convening wheel with me and asked me how I wanted the fellows to feel. What is the experience you want them to have? My response was that I wanted them to feel refreshed, like Pink Lemonade. I wanted to be the gracious host who invited them to take their shoes off. I imagined myself inviting them to center themselves in a big comfy chair as they sip, sit, and stir with me. My deepest desire was to serve as a curator of experiences for transformative dialogue with authenticity. What follows is a reflection of how I brought my gifts out of exile to hold spaces of transformation within a trusting community.





In February, I identified three personal goals that I hoped to accomplish through this fellowship: launching the Lemonade Stand Leadership Refreshing Periscope series, A Podcast,

RENÉE BRADFORD



and an E-Book. Throughout each of those achievements, the Art of Convening written by Berrett-Kohler authors Craig and Patricia Neal, graced me with the tools to slow down and allow for the inner pauses to inform who I was becoming as a leader. Our monthly Oasis gatherings as a cohort helped me to face the challenges of building a virtual community during a time of isolation and uncertainty.

When we convened as a cohort for the first time in October, there was no way to anticipate the call to leadership that the COVID-19 quarantine would present each of us with. The Art of Convening helped me to anchor my inner dialogue to create something within the context of community to respond to the injustice sparked by the death of George Floyd. Saying yes to the moment meant that I had to bring my gifts out of exile.

Bringing my gifts out of exile

Years ago, I was a Disc Jockey (DJ). Yes, I used to spin records at a radio station. As a DJ, there were three things that were a must - you never missed a shift, your music had to have a story, and you had to hold the audience with your voice when the music was not playing.

I found myself reaching for my DJ gift when myself and 11 others embarked upon redeemthe10.com. The concept of Redeem the Ten (RTT) was birthed out of a call to action during an early morning Prayer Call. The question was asked, “What will you do with



your ten minutes?” The presumption at the time was that it took approximately 10 minutes for George Floyd to succumb to the weight of the Officer's knee on his neck. While our country was engulfed in uncertainty and uprisings, this group responded in unity to offer a virtual vigil for activists and allies.



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Use whatever privilege you have and whatever capacity you have to strengthen one another

Participate in life together

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I served as the gracious host to develop the platform and agenda for change. We co-collaborated with thought leaders, artists, musicians, storytellers, and theologians to focus on 10 themes for 10 weeks. The topics were learn, seek, correct, bring, plead, power, strength, justice, focus

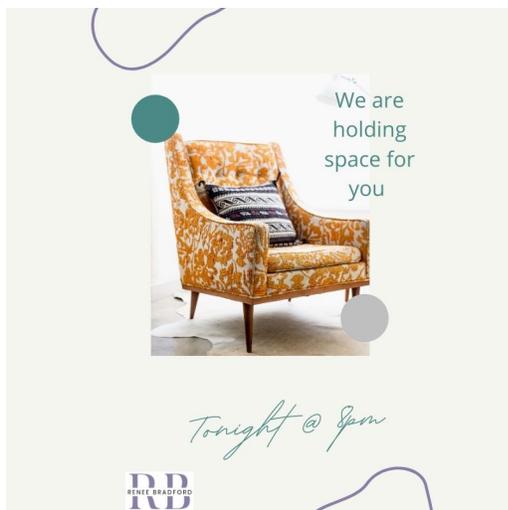


and endurance. The RTT Team emerged as platform guests who served to power the broadcasts with their many gifts including broadcast engineer, website designer, social media manager, resident educator, guest liaison, and all things administrative including coordinating strategy meetings. The height of our week was our Tuesday evening 'celebration' sessions in which we took time to reflect upon the difference we made together.

As we moved forward in our commitment to action, I found myself returning to the Art of Convening wheel weekly to pause and reflect upon:

- *Who do I want to be in relationship to others?*
- *Who am I and what am I doing?*
- *Are you okay?*

My obsession with chairs



As Redeem The Ten and the fellowship ended, I became obsessed with chairs. Not just any kind of chair, but comfy, inviting chairs that calls forth the weary, exasperated activists to take a seat. I am particularly drawn to the chairs that are structured, weighted, and reliable. One that will not bow or break under the full weight of whatever the burden is.



And since we have no need for celebration meetings at this time, I have been holding space on our virtual platform for nourishing discussions about what is fueling us right now.

I ask questions like:

- *How is your time, how is your heart?*
- *How are you taking care of yourself as you take care of others?*

On some days it feels awkward to slow down for this type of reflection, especially when there is so much work to be done in the world. But then I am reminded of the single candle that we offered at the end of each Redeem the Ten Episode. The slow flickering light serves as a gentle reminder that an inward-leading is just as powerful as an outward fight.

When I entered the fellowship, my deepest desire was to become a Curator of experiences. Through this trusted community I have become a gracious host that holds brave space.