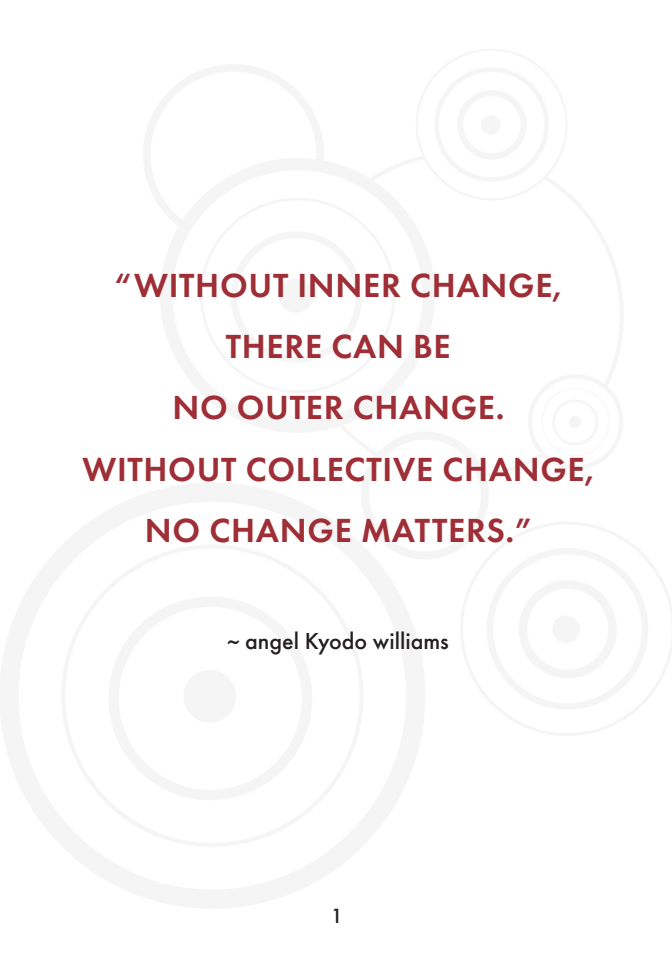


GEMSTONES IN THE SUN

Freedom Circles

The background of the entire page is a deep purple color. In the lower half, there are several concentric, glowing ripples that resemble water droplets on a surface, creating a sense of depth and movement. The ripples are centered and expand outwards, with the innermost being the most defined and the outer ones fading into the background.



**“WITHOUT INNER CHANGE,
THERE CAN BE
NO OUTER CHANGE.
WITHOUT COLLECTIVE CHANGE,
NO CHANGE MATTERS.”**

~ angel Kyodo williams

About Gemstones in the Sun, Inc.

Gemstones in the Sun [GITS] is a coalition of individuals and organizations seeking to serve as an impetus for community healing and transformation.

We create an opportunity for People of Color (POC- indigenous people, descendants of enslaved, and the immigrants of color,) to recover from the effects of internalized oppression and build a cooperative and egalitarian economy in the United States.



About Gemstones Freedom Circles

Freedom Circles are vital small Gemstones' spiritual support groups that are facilitated and led primarily in person and/or digitally by Movement Chaplaincy Team members. They are composed of POC who desire to participate in an ongoing spiritual recovery process, working together in solidarity to lessen greed and lack and to connect to a range of alternative and supplemental ways

to create a sense of security in and a deepened understanding of what true freedom involves and why it can never be denied.

Mutual support is shared as participants strive together to deepen their commitment to shedding their behaviors, practices, and beliefs based on absolute independence, to become more interdependent, community-minded, and spiritually inspired individuals. Group participants are encouraged to meditate together and to rely on discernment and risk vulnerability (being known).

The Freedom Circle model elevates the hope and reality of sacred abundant deliverance and provision. It helps us to prioritize concern for, and advocate on behalf of, the entire community and encourages sustained spiritual grounding for all to have the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential.

In safe, sacred circle environments, participants are grounded in spiritual beliefs, shifting values, hope, and solidarity. Through shared common spiritual disciplines, interfaith chaplains facilitate participant exploration of and exchanges about the steady

drumbeat of daily challenges that are prevalent in today's American culture while empathizing, sharing burdens, being joyful, and feeling fulfilled. FCs work towards the goal of reconnecting to the ancestral wisdom of POC communities to return participants to forms of mutual reliance, formal and informal support and healing networks, and co-operative entrepreneurial efforts that benefit all people and, by their very nature, addresses the root of our personal and communal recovery.



Why Freedom Circles?

X The Problem

People of Color (POC) in America often seek to find freedom, liberty, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness by working as individuals toward a goal of material gain through private enterprise. This path has not been our historical legacy as POC.

We did not originate from societies or nations that were steeped in an ethos that prized individualized and private enterprise. In order to “achieve” under

this ethos, POC are pitted against each other in a system that exploits their labor for the benefit of the enriched. Experiencing “freedom” on these terms disconnects us from our ancestry and our rich depths of consciousness.

Our Solution

FCs serve as a reminder to POC to work together in **solidarity** to lessen greed and lack while striving to share abundantly and live life purposefully. FC's serve as a touchstone for regaining a sense of unlimited potential in each member's eternal source of wisdom. As POC practice sharing with each other our stories and explore together what those wisdom sources are, we connect to a range of alternative and supplemental ways to create a sense of security in and a deepened understanding of what true freedom involves and why it can never be denied; a process that we call recovery. The essential truths shared by POC during the FC process will embolden participants to make full use of their inherent (not assumed nor granted) freedom and power to the benefit of all.

✘ The Problem

Individualism is a deeply held American myth that fuels self-doubt, isolation, depression, and self-obsession.

✔ Our Solution

FC recovery is a counter cultural source of **wellness**. In our facilitated FC communities, we practice capacity building and invoke desire by empathizing, sharing burdens, being joyful and feeling fulfilled. Attitudes of hopefulness flourish because, while in recovery, we build relationships among POC with an emphasis on meeting each other's needs together in purposeful ways. Building tangible and meaningful ways to sustain all of us as a community is the key vision of FCs.



The Problem

Good public policy only addresses symptoms, not root causes. Addressing root causes by reimagining solutions is given less attention because it's considered too time consuming and less cost effective.

Our Solution


In the U.S., only the work of healing one's own wounds in community, coupled with our outpouring of work together on collective community **renewal**, can sustain deep **transformation** within and between each community. This work must be done within time frames and in ways that are self determined and self directed by POC. Reconnecting to the wisdom of POC communities returns us to mutual reliance, formal and informal support and healing networks, and co-operative entrepreneurial efforts that benefit all people and, by their very nature, addresses the root of our personal and communal recovery.




WE ARE GEMSTONES





Meeting Structure

 Freedom Circles use the practice of holding brave space. Holding brave space is signified by:


- practicing non-judgement, deep care, and full hearted listening
- honoring each other's intuition, wisdom, and ancestry
- empowering one another in our healing journey and to live into our purpose
- allowing ourselves and each other to be imperfect and make space for growth
- being open to feedback even when it's hard
- accepting accountability for harms we have enacted within and beyond the group
- challenging ourselves and each other to stretch beyond our perceived limitations and viewpoints.


 The frequency of meetings is unlimited.


 As a rule, the duration of meetings should not be less than 30 min. or extend beyond 90 min.

 Meetings are facilitated by Movement Chaplains or by GITS trained participant-leader designees that are rotated on a regular basis.

- ❖ No religious doctrine will be promoted by GITS nor will it be permissible by anyone to use Freedom Circle meetings for indoctrination or propagandizing purposes.
- ❖ “What happens in Freedom Circle meetings, stays in Freedom Circle meetings.” Everyone present should have an opportunity to share and whatever is shared is held strictly confidential by all members of the group.
- ❖ Any person of color is welcome to join the Freedom Circle at any time and welcome to return as often as they'd like.
- ❖ Freedom Circles are only open to POC unless permission is granted with consent from all members of the circle for non-POC attendance preferably 12 hours prior to the time the meeting starts.
- ❖ To create a Freedom Circle climate of deep listening and introspection, crosstalk among meeting participants is discouraged. A talking stick can be passed from person to person as a reminder of this, should it be desired or should it become necessary to maintain meeting decorum.

 Those who do not engage safely in the group will be asked to join a healing and accountability process. For example, if the same members establish a pattern of harmful behavior, the participant-leader designee may ask a member to leave. Additionally the designee may consider providing the member with trauma-informed resources for healing.

 We encourage Movement Chaplains to support the group in creating opening and closing rituals for their Freedom Circle that are co-creative, fluid, and facilitated by rotating members, each encouraged to bring in traditions from their ancestry.

 Facilitators will begin each meeting by asking participants to collectively recite the following readings* aloud.

- **What are GITS Freedom Circles**
(15 word elevator pitch)
- **The GITS Guiding Principles**
- **The Freedom Circle Agreements**

**These readings can be found at the end of this booklet.*



Topics of discussion must remain focused on (or in some direct way related to) beliefs, shifting values and resources.

Discussions are grounded in recovery by facilitators by posing three questions during meetings.

1. Where are you struggling in your recovery right now? (Can you share about abuse, use, or loss of resources recovery, low self-worth, or identity crisis recovery, mental health or substance abuse recovery, incarceration recovery, employment termination recovery, wealth recovery, homelessness recovery, recovery from isolation, relationship recovery,... (as we are all recovering from many things.)
2. Where are you experiencing some growth and movement; something in any dimension of your recovery/life for which you are grateful?
3. What is one intention or goal you want to name for this next week?

- ❖ The intention of Freedom Circle meeting must always be to build self-awareness, deepen understanding, and facilitate mutual POC cooperation.
- ❖ POC cultural and cross-cultural expressions are welcome.
- ❖ Voluntary opportunity to offer GITS community donations is made possible.
- ❖ GITS announcements can be made toward the end of each meeting. Co-op training and opportunities may be made available. Freedom Circle topical or GITS partner related activities may be shared.
- ❖ Each meeting should be drawn to a deliberate close.
- ❖ Meeting facilities, donations and all materials must be secured by the meeting facilitator at the end of each meeting.

MEETING READINGS



What are GITS Freedom Circles

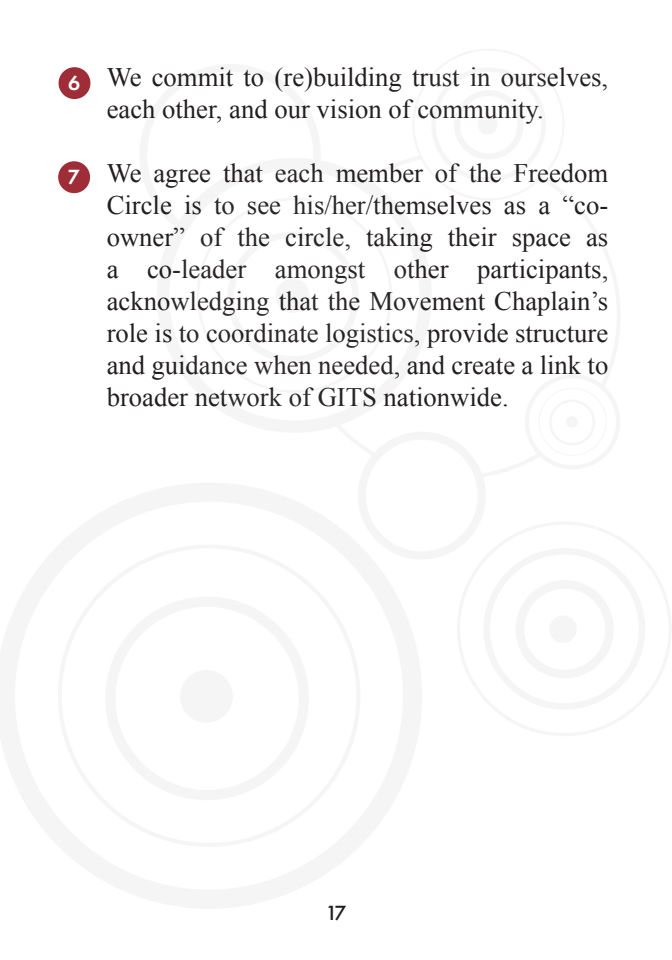
(15 word elevator pitch)

“Gemstones Freedom Circles help POC build our capacity to heal, grow, organize, and collaborate together.”



Seven Freedom Circle Agreements

- 1 We agree that each one of us has something precious and valuable to bring to “Gemstones.” *(Affirmation of cultural self-esteem and mutual respect)*
- 2 We agree that none of us carry the whole collective wisdom of “Gemstones.” *(Affirmation of humility.)*
- 3 We agree that becoming a group and spiritual growth requires that everyone be willing to be changed and change. We can’t hold on to our old stuff and expect to be made and become “newly formed” people, together. *(Affirmation of intention to be unified.)*
- 4 We agree that we “Gemstones” are all in need of recovery. *(Affirmation of a way towards healing.)*
- 5 We agree to use our recoveries as a means to lift “Gemstones” community service. *(Affirmation of belief in hope for better tomorrows.)*

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- The background features several decorative elements: a large set of concentric circles in the bottom left, a smaller set in the bottom right, and a network diagram in the upper right consisting of a central circle connected to several other circles of varying sizes.
- 6 We commit to (re)building trust in ourselves, each other, and our vision of community.
 - 7 We agree that each member of the Freedom Circle is to see his/her/themselves as a “co-owner” of the circle, taking their space as a co-leader amongst other participants, acknowledging that the Movement Chaplain’s role is to coordinate logistics, provide structure and guidance when needed, and create a link to broader network of GITS nationwide.

Freedom Circle Guiding Principles

- We are inspired by our ancestors and that which spiritually guided them. Claiming and bearing witness to our ancestor's wisdom helps to ground our commitment to divest from a culture that worships money and things. In doing so, we choose to live with a sufficient amount of resources so that we participate in community with neither fear of lack nor the craving of greed.
- We are intentionally interfaith, inclusive/diverse, excluding none who value, protect and promote egalitarian ideals/practices in community, this mission, and its stated intention(s).
- We work to protect, lift, and employ the most vulnerable among us in society, no matter their place of origin, native tongue, culture, ethnicity, race, age, ability, acuity, gender, faith, standing, or orientation.
- We commit ourselves to be nonviolent and promote nonviolence. We seek and support peace with justice for all. We will 'speak truth' in love to power and honestly with each other.

- We strive to listen well. We pool resources, will make use of them wisely, are resourceful, and are willing to leverage privilege for the greater good of all. We will respect ourselves and others; we strive to be open, affirmative, and transparent.
- We care for the earth and all living creatures and strive for optimal sustainability.
- We are an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet our common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations. We share in common our experience of our democratically controlled proliferation of holistic relationships and newly formed ventures that sustain healthy beliefs, practices, services, and promote products for people, not profit. We strive to both abide and balance personal and commonly held needs and boundaries.
- We are nurtured/sustained by and grounded in agape love.

Contact Us

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