

## Co-Director Roundtable, Experiences of Three Survivor-Serving Organizations Closed Captioning Transcript

>> MONICA: Good morning, good afternoon. We'll start in a minute. Thank you for joining.

[Pause].

>> MONICA: Good morning again, good afternoon. Thank you for participating. Okay. Today's webinar roundtable will feature three organizations who will share their experience with codirector leadership model.

[Speaking Foreign Language]

we will start with instructions for interpretation into Spanish, captions and sign language in English is also available and provided. And I will turn it over to the interpreter who will provide some guidance.

>> Thank you, Monica. Good morning, my name is Sandra and I'm with my co-interpreter Annabel. We will be your Spanish interpreters for the day for this session. And we will also have American Sign Language interpretation available. I will now give you some instructions to access the interpretation feature on Zoom. And I will do it in English and Spanish, so first I will do it in Spanish and please select your language to be able to hear us.

[Speaking Foreign Language]

so I'm going to give you the instructions to choose your language in English. If you're on a computer please go to the globe icon that you will see at the bottom of your screen and click on that icon and select the language interpretation. Then choose your language channel, in this case English. If you're joining from a Chromebook computer or a phone, you won't have access to this feature because you need the Zoom app to access it. If you're on a tablet or mobile device, select the three dotted menu with the words more that will appear on your screen. You will see it pop up with the selection, and then select English. Make sure to not mute original audio or you won't be able to hear the session. We remind you to speak at a regular pace and if you have any questions or issues accessing this interpretation feature, please let us know on the chat. And with this, we're ready to start. Thank you very much.

>> Hi, everyone. Just one second, I believe we are straightening out of the ASL interpreter's video.

>> I'm still trying to figure it out, I'm sorry.

[Pause]

>> ABBY: While we're waiting, maybe all of the participants who are here with us today can share a little bit about who you are and which organization you're joining from in the chat.

[Pause].

>> ABBY: Thank you so much for joining us today. LC, I see your video. Are we starting with you? Are we good to go?

>> I see that Mackenzie's back in the room so we can start with them like we planned.

>> ABBY: Okay, great. Thank you so much. Okay, here we go. Hi, everyone. First I want to thank our interpreters so much and our captioner who are here with us today. We will periodically share information about how to join a language channel in the chat and if at any point you need assistance with that, we have my colleague Vivian Baylor here who should be able to help.

So you request just chat us about that and we'll try to get it figured out. And so thank you so much to all of you, again, for joining us today for part 2 of our webinar series. This webinar is part of a project titled the Supporting Organizational Sustainability institute supported by the U.S. Department of Justice office on violence against women. My name is Abby Larson, and I use she/her pronouns and I'm going to be facilitating the webinar today. I'm really looking forward to hearing from all three of the organizations we have with us here today. I really admire the work that they do and what they bring to this field and just broader antiviolence work. This webinar series came about because we know many domestic and sexual violence organizations operate with a traditional hierarchical structure where decision-making power is concentrated at the top with maybe just one executive director or CEO. However, we know that this model can sometimes lead to significant power imbalances and burnout among both staff and the executive director themselves. It can also hinder the organization's ability to fully leverage the skills and expertise of everyone on staff, including volunteers as well. So we think as survivor-centered organizations that it's really critical to continually assess power dynamics in our work and model the way that we aim to build power among survivors in our organizations. Codirector models offer unique approach to leadership that emphasizes shared decision-making, collaboration and power sharing. So by having two or more codirectors –

>> Speaker, I'm sorry to interrupt you. Could you please slow down? Often when we're reading or we're nervous we speak at a lot faster pace. And just remember Spanish is about 30% longer.

>> ABBY: Yeah, sorry. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> ABBY: So codirector models offer a unique approach to leadership that emphasizes shared decision-making, collaboration, and power sharing. So by having two or more codirectors, each with their own areas of expertise and lived experiences, organizations can more effectively harness the diverse perspectives and experiences of their team members and foster a more inclusive and equitable organizational culture. All of which can ultimately lead to more inclusive and impactful decision-making. So I'm joined by my team here with the SOS department, Monica Arenas who you'll hear from later on, and also Vivian Baylor. So before we get into it, I just want to cover some of our learning objectives too. As a result of this roundtable, participants should be better able to explore codirector leadership models, values, and approaches used by organizations serving survivors of violence and trauma. Identify strategies for exploring co-leadership in our organization. And discuss tips for navigating communication, accountability, transparency, and decision-making processes. So we're going to start with a poll. We'd love to hear who is in the room with us today. So if your role is as a member of the Board of Directors or chief executive staff, if you're in a senior management or senior director role, something similar to or in middle management. If you are frontline staff, a client, or a survivor or a community support partner. We'll give you just a few seconds to share, and then we'll share those results. [Pause].

>> ABBY: Okay, we can go ahead and share those results. Looks like the majorities of you are in middle management positions with some folks who are either on Board of Directors or executive directors. And then some senior management folks as well with a few frontline staff and a couple community support partners. Thank you so much. All right. And so as a review from part 1 of our webinar, we shared some different frameworks for leadership. So the one at the top being one of the more traditional forms and probably one of the most common being hierarchical.

So one executive director. We also have shared positional leadership, which is what most of the organizations here with us today operate from. And then we have shared team centered, so that looks a little bit different where there might be distributed leadership and decision-making across levels. There's also collective models where there might be no one in technically a leadership position at all. Matrix is where some individuals might report to more than one supervisor across different groups. And then there's also networks as well. So we would also love to hear from you what type of leadership structure your organization has. So we have one more poll for you. And if you have an organizational structure that really doesn't fit in any of these categories, please feel free to go ahead and share that in the chat as well.

[Pause].

>> ABBY: Let's go ahead and share the results. I see some people in the chat are not familiar with these structures. I have some resources that we'll share at the end if you're interested in learning a little bit more. But it looks like most of you are coming from hierarchical organizations with quite a few folks from shared positional leadership. So that's great. We would really love to hear your thoughts and your experiences in the chat as we go throughout the webinar today as well. And even some people joining with a shared team centered and distributed leadership. I believe part 3 of our webinar series has organizations that would probably fit most closely into that category. One collective and a couple matrix models. Great, thank you so much. Okay. So next I would just love to introduce our presenters for today. We have three incredible organizations working towards ending violence, promoting safety and healing in our communities, and they all practice codirector models. So we're going to start with Community United Against Violence or CUAV, which is a Bay Area based organization that has been working to support LGBTQI2S communities in their efforts to transform violence and oppression. After CUAV, we'll have another Bay Area based organization WOMAN Inc., and they also provide services to survivors of domestic violence and its intersections. And then finally we'll have VIDA, which are is the only legal services organization in Florida focused primarily on helping immigrant survivors of violence. So together these three organizations bring a really diverse set of experiences and perspectives on ending violence and promoting power sharing. So we're honored to have them join us and I'm really looking forward to learning from their experiences and insights, so I will hand it over to CUAV.

>> PABLO: So hi, everyone, Pablo here from CUAV. One of the co-executive directors. And Lidia, if you want to introduce yourself.

>> LIDIA: Hey, everyone, my name's Lidia Salazar. I'm the other co-executive director at CUAV.

>> PABLO: And as the slide says, we've been based in San Francisco for a lot of years. What is that now?44? Math is hard sometimes. And we also have had different coalitions that we've been a part of that have been national and then some that have been state based, California based. So we mainly do our work in San Francisco. Could we have the next slide. So we're here today to talk about our experience at CUAV as an organization that is primarily a direct service organization but part of our trajectory has been to also implement a membership model into our organization. And so the slide that you see here is the trajectory that we took, actually, which might seem like, to some folks, like maybe the reverse where we were a single executive director leadership model with, you know, a board of ten or 12 people that we actually did a thorough strategic planning process that actually had bumps and starts that took three years for a variety of reasons. We became a collective, the opportunity arose which the -- the 2008 recession happened. And CUAV lost a lot of funding and we went from a staff of 14 to a staff of six. And the

people that stayed, we decided that we wanted to have a horizontal leadership collective model, which took us, you know, at least a couple years to hash out the beginning. But then we eventually became a codirector, so for some people the experience might be in the reverse where you go to a collective -- from a collective -- go from a directorship to a collective model. But, you know, that's something for you to -- to digest and think about, right? Lidia, anything you wanted to add at this point?

>> LIDIA: Just wanted to say that it wasn't a linear process and for us it was something that was really assuring around that is that we're a healing organization that supports survivors. So for us, that was kind of something to look forward to, like, healing isn't linear, this process is not going to be linear, so we were really intentional about checking in with each other around how this process was going. So we had numerous staff meetings and a lot of feelings came up and we made space for that to -- to allow for some of that culture shift to happen as well, to not just focus on professionalism, but also get connected to one another and acknowledge where we're coming from. And that's really where -- where all of this was birthed from, just paying attention to oppression and how that has impacted a lot of nonprofit structures and how we really wanted to do that culture shift work to envision something different where we can uplift voices that weren't necessarily centered at the time. So at CUAV right now our staff of still very small staff, and we are -- we have direct experience of either systemic violence or interpersonal violence and we're a staff of all people of color, queer, and trans folks.

>> PABLO: We can go to the next slide. Thank you. Did you want to start this one, Lidia?

>> LIDIA: Some of our values include liberation, healing, mutual safety, transformation community, and leadership. And transformation for us means doing the systemic transformation, shifting that culture again and envisioning and practicing something different and I think the other one that I really wanted to point out is leadership. And so Pablo mentioned this earlier, that we're not just practicing leadership within our staff structure, but we're also practicing developing the leadership of survivors of violence that are coming into our center. So that means we're doing leadership development with folks that might not have -- be at the tables when it comes to coalition work, when it comes to talking about immigration or folks that are formerly incarcerated and usually get left out of these conversations even though they identify as survivors of violence. So for us, leadership is something that's fluid throughout our organization from staff to the folks that we support.

>> PABLO: And these values came out of -- excuse me, came out of also the three-year strategic planning process that CUAV went through right as we were, you know, experiencing the recession and experiencing loss of staff. And it was a strategic planning process that literally took us a couple of years, but it was really focused on not doing -- not creating an organization's structure solely for the sake of direct service provision, but that it is about what are the values that we want and would hope that survivors would adopt into their life as well. And that it was a long process. So moving from an organization that also was like we're not going to have a revolving door of clients, but we're actually wanting people to invest time and years in their healing. And if that meant they're spending time and years with CUAV doing this healing work for themselves, that was okay. A lot of us work in organizations and live in organizations where we have an -- we're expected to deliver these deliverables and we're supposed to, you know, help hundreds of survivors a year. And that is really great. And also like Lidia said, where are the leadership opportunities and opportunities for extended healing beyond those eight weeks of service provision that they get typically, you know, when they're in crisis. So that's some of the ways in

which we are looking at these values as long term within the organization, but also within the people that we're helping. And we can go to the next one. And this is some of the drawn out organizational strengthening strategies that we prioritize as an organization. We also worked early on in our existence as a collective. We became part of a cohort with the Women's

Foundation, the organizational strengths funding that they developed there, and we worked with them for a couple of years in terms of, like, giving the organizations an opportunity to work within and about themselves. So it was also, like Lidia said, a lot of staff meetings back then, but sometimes we have all-day staff meetings. Which meant that we actually have to be okay with stopping the work for a bit and, you know, taking, you know, sometimes a week, two weeks, taking a day out of every week for months to just talk about the structure of your organization and really hashing out what that means. And CUAV back then had -- had what we called a transition team. So we actually asked folks from other organizations who have leadership in other organizations to help us. So they partnered with different staff on our -- in our collective team, and we each had, like, a community partner that we worked with to -- to design what our particular section of our organization was going to be. And my example, I was operations and so I worked with someone at another organization who worked in operations. That was their strength in budgeting, and I learned from that person and was guided by that person. So all to say that all of these strategies were to really just almost in a way kind of dismantle a lot of what we had before at CUAV and restructure it. And not reinventing the wheel, per se, having that, like, mentorship from people who are doing this work already in community and who we respect and we admired how they were doing the work. So it even went into us, for example, creating a culture manual that it was an internal culture manual that was as -- as -- right next to our personnel policies manual, because every 501(c)(3) has to have one of those. But what's our cultural manual? What do we want our communication to be in the organization? How are we making decisions? How were we back then bringing someone in to be part of the collective some of all these kinds of decision-making processes and working with our board and, you know, there was -- there's a lot of fits and starts and stops in terms of this process, but it was a, in a way, kind of almost redesigning your entire organization.

>> LIDIA: Yeah. And one -- one thing that I wanted to point out here that I always come back to is the anti-oppression agreement that we have at CUAV. So we made time to go through this -- I believe it's like a five-page document around personal understanding, interpersonal relationships, and programming organizational work. And looking at all of that and having some grounding practices around how to address oppression as it shows up in our organizations and how -- how to seek support. So one example would be agreeing to engage in anti-oppression work. This can look like engaging in a few meetings outside of the organization to get support around how does our positional power impact others. And what are some direct healthy communication skills that we can develop in order to have these difficult conversations. And so this is something, again, that we go over with all staff, board members, members at the organization. And one thing is that the survivors you'll hear us mentioning participants -- participants when we're referring to them is the people that are coming in for services. The survivors that are coming in for services, we call them participants because they're participating in their own healing. And we have this pathway to leadership where they become members where any get to develop their leadership skills. And so they also -- they also go through this anti-oppression agreement with them. And this is a practice that we have at CUAV, so we're constantly coming back to this. We reread it at least once a year



together. And then the other piece around decision-making process is that we have -- we try to be as clear as possible and make changes along the way as needed, but we have a decision-making tree. So there are a few things -- levels of the branch, the tree -- the trunk, and the root decision-making. And they all pertain to different levels of decision-making. So an example of a root-level decision would be whether or not to change our personnel manual or culture manual and that would have to involve conversation with all of the staff, but the decision-making would be made between the codirectors. But again, this would be a conversation with all staff gathering input. And then the trunk decisions would be around communications and what we're presenting and putting out to the rest of our communities. And Pablo, please remind me of other -- other trunk and branch-level decisions because I'm kind of blanking right now.

>> PABLO: Like programming could be something that we would do within the trunk, because the program folks would have a lot of decision-making in terms of, like, their experience and as well as like their skill set, right? And it's also creating buy-in, so something you also want to consider all the time is, like, you know, are we able to create buy-in? And then, you know, a branch decision could be, you know, something else like, you know, are we going to say a staff member, you know, is going to not approve somebody for services, maybe. That's something that, you know, an advocate can make that decision, it doesn't have to involve everyone. Of course they would want to process that decision, they may want to process that decision with us later, with their supervisor. But really like in that moment we trust that the skills that that staff person has in determining that -- in making that decision, which that's part of their responsibilities, right?

>> LIDIA: Yeah. Thank you, Pablo. And this other piece around ongoing team learning, we like to implement or be intentional about our political education as a whole. So we make room within our staff meetings or often have meetings on the side to talk about anti-oppression, to talk about the current political landscape and how that's affecting us personally and how that's affecting our work and the people that we serve. And so that is one example of our ongoing team learning. But there's also things around trauma stewardship and how we take care of ourselves and address vicarious trauma and do the work of getting to know each other as people, as humans, as people that have gone through violence and may continue to experience violence because of our -- our identity. So all of that is really important work for us that we have to make time for to prevent burnout or to be able to address burnout when it does happen. And I think we can go to the next slide. Yes, thank you.

>> PABLO: I can start us off on this one. Challenges in our journey. These are some of the challenges I think we've shared with -- with Futures before, we had a previous work chat with Futures. You know, in our journey I think some of this really has to do I think a little bit more with our collective structure, but when we transitioned into a collective structure. But I know that for sure it also was manifested itself when we were transitioning to be a co-executive directorship. But definitely underestimating the level of effort it required for a transition. When we became a collective, it took us a lot of time and for obvious reasons we, you know, we had lost half our funding and we lost more than half our staff. We had let, you know, we had also lost most of our board. So that was an interesting dynamic. And I see that we have four more minutes, okay. So please enjoy these challenges in our journey that are on your screen and, you know, we of course would love to chat on the side with anyone else. But -- and it highlighted at least for me that we, in our culture, we don't really -- we don't really mentor or teach people how to work collectively in, like, our schools and our college experiences, out in community. I think this is something that maybe is being -- there's pushback with unionization of Starbucks and places like

that that we're seeing there's collectivity that's starting to bridge in these places and that's very necessary. And yeah, we'll totally share a lot of decision-making trees and bringing agreements that we've used over the years. And anything else that you wanted to say, Lidia, about these challenges?

>> LIDIA: No, I think that's good. Again, you're welcome to reach out to us individually if you have any more questions about this.

>> PABLO: I don't remember if we had one last slide or we're transitioning.

>> LIDIA: So this one around lessons and strengths, staff equal power relationships creating a safe space for sharing, aside from supervision, we really encourage staff members to have one-on-one check-ins with each other to be able to support each other, to maybe make a proposal when they're not feeling comfortable talking to the codirectors or -- or, you know, just having more support. And I know for other organizations, that can -- that happens a lot. Might be intimidating to be -- to propose a collective structure, to propose a co-directorship if -- if you're already feeling like the -- the executive team is not going to support it. So gathering input and support from others in your organization can be really helpful. Sustainable and infrastructure support grant, Pablo, did you want to talk a little bit about this one?

>> PABLO: That was the one that I mentioned before that we received from the Women's Foundation, the strengthening organizations funding. But looking for something like that is also very helpful because you now have this third party involved and, like, where it could take a little bit of pressure off of the interactions within staff to be able to have a third party not mediate, but actually maybe to lesson and create more space in which -- and opportunities. Which also means that you may have to pause a little bit of the work that you're doing, you know. You may have to refer clients out. You may have to create more space in your staff plan. And interactions with each other to be able to do this. But that is also something that we encouraged -- have always encourage and we did ourselves, sometimes you have to slow down.

>> LIDIA: Yeah. This other piece around survivor mobilization, engagement and empowerment, again, besides direct services, we do community engagement in order to address the many issues that are impacting the survivors that we're supporting. And so we, again, make time for -- or make some opportunities for survivors to also let us know what they're needing and wanting to see shift within our organization. And the other thing around importance of partnerships, especially when you're needing support to make these [broken audio] there are other organizations that are doing this work. And maybe not formally, but a lot of our Indigenous communities and culturally have collective leadership shared models that are -- that can be really helpful in making these culture shifts.

>> PABLO: And then the last point there is what I had shared before about our organization actually had a transition team from, you know, these different folks from different organizations, people that we trusted to be like come and mentor me on this. Like I had never built an entire budget for an organization before and I had to have someone teach me because those were not things that I learned within CUAV. Those had been siloed off to different people and now I had to take it over. And the same with, like, program assessment, like we have to do it ourselves and how do you do that when, you know, when we became a collective, it was mostly the line staff that stayed and it was all young people that stayed. And it was just two of us who were older that -- and had been there longer, been there ten years that stayed. And we were not necessarily upper management. So those are the people that stayed. So yeah.

>> LIDIA: Yeah. One last thing that I wanted to say that I love coming into CUAV as a wellness organizer providing direct services is that there was so many opportunities for me to grow and my -- I don't have a college degree, but the -- but CUAV saw the value in my personal experience as a survivor and my professional experience working with survivors for all these years. And so it was something that we continued to -- to support staff in increasing their skills and truly allowing -- trying to allow them to bring in their own talents and skills into the organization. That might not exist at CUAV. So valuing each other again as a people we are instead of just this professional way of looking at things.

>> Great. Thank you so much, Pablo and Lidia. Appreciate you sharing your experiences and really resonate with how much -- the transparency and thought that goes into your decision-making processes too and I'm seeing a lot of appreciation in the chat for you being willing to share some of those resources, including your anti-oppression agreement that you have too. So thank you so much. So before we transition to our next presenters, WOMAN Inc., I'd love to hear from you all in the chat how your organization shares power and nourishes emerging leaders. And you know we're not just talking about people who necessarily have positional authority in the organization, but also with survivors, frontline advocates, really anyone. And yeah, just some of the strategies that you use. So as you're thinking about that and typing out your responses to share, I'm going to hand it over to WOMAN Inc. to share about their experiences. And just a quick note too, we should have some time for some Q&A at the end, so I'm saving the questions.

>> MARY: Thanks, Abby. Thanks, Lidia and Pablo. So yeah, my name is Mary Martinez, I'm, as you can see, I'm one of the codirectors at WOMAN Inc. And Jill, if you want to say your name.

>> JILL: I'm Jill, that's me in that photo.

[Laughter]

>> MARY: Yeah, just to share a little bit about WOMAN Inc., like who we are. So the slide actually kind of shows our -- like our timeline at the organization. I did start as a volunteer, went through the 40-hour training, worked on the support line and then moved my way through different roles. And we -- so WOMAN Inc. -- sorry, I'm going to try to slow down because I know I get really nervous and I don't want to make it harder for the interpreters. We -- WOMAN Inc. stands for women organized to make abuse nonexistence. We are based in San Francisco, have been working with survivors since 1978, and, you know, we are small and mighty. We have a full-time staff of seven. Everyone but one person started as a volunteer kind of like similar to me, like at the organization working on the support line and who are now in leadership roles like program managers. And essentially, we offer services for our survivors and their support network. And you know, we do this via, like, support groups, therapy, 24-hour support line and we focus also a lot on, like, participant -- survivor participant leadership. So there's a lot of focus on healing, on building up survivors' self-esteem so that they can, you know, start making choices for their own, like, what is right for them. And we're really big on working with community partners on -- like right now there's a big focus on divesting from law enforcement and child protective services because we know how much harm these systems do or how much harm they are for survivors. And so yeah. I mean, there's a lot but I want to keep it short so we can get into, like, more about the codirector model. So next slide, please.

>> JILL: Okay. So sorry, of course, as Murphy's law would have it, I opened up the wrong page of notes. What are you going to do? So our journey to this co-directorship was a very slow and iterative process. I think you're going to see some connections to CUAV here and we'll get into



that a little later. A little more intentionally. But yes, this is an almost decade-old story and there are some key milestones listed on this slide here. But it all started back in 2012 after a fiscal crisis. And there was a shift in leadership and I was asked to step in as the interim executive director. It was kind of amazing because the remaining staff stepped into their own collective power and kind of told the board that they wanted me in that role. I just want to say that the previous executive director's missteps notwithstanding, you know, she didn't lean into a team approach in her leadership, in part because of the structure didn't really allow for that. And at the end of the day, she was held accountable not only for her own actions, but looking back I can see, I think she was scapegoated somewhat for the failings of capitalism and what happens when we try to emulate for-profit structures in a nonprofit world. And those were set up intentionally to be different, right? To look and feel differently. So the leadership team was created at that point. And together we leaned heavily into transparent shared decision-making and consensus. I'd say that was our first kind of big thing we did together. We understood and still understand, you know, consensus does not mean that we all get what we want, it speaks more to a process and a space that we build together and allows each person to weigh in and really be heard. To help scaffold this approach, we adapted the rapid decision-making tool to kind of work for our way of running the organization. It was originally created by Bridge Span. And using this tool allows folks most impacted by the decision at hand to hold the majority of the decision-making and power. So in co-creating our consensus space, we found that we shared many values that were pivotal to our decision-making. And thus began about a year-long process of creating our cultural praxis. Of course, I was also in really great communication with Pablo at the time so if you're picking up on the similarities between a cultural praxis and a cultural manual, yeah, Pablo and I talked about it and he was like, hey, you ever thought of this? So it's more than a statement of our core values, it's an exploration, really, of how we live these values at our organization and the world. And it clearly states to the world and the community who we are as an organization. And this work really informed our next project. And that's the theory of change. So the cultural praxis, if I'm remembering correctly, was like 2014 and we revised it a bit in 2017. We're due for another revision now. And the theory of change happened in 2018. So we really wanted to take some time to create our North Star so that it could inform our objectives and outcomes versus, you know, just a strategic plan. And throughout this process, it became really apparent that this hierarchy of, like, high at the time I was the White executive director holding the lion share of the positional authority and was expected to kind of represent our work out in the community. And it just felt more and more congruent as to who we were as an organization and who we are. And how we operated truly as a team sharing decisions, sharing power, sharing leadership. So that's, I think, when that push for a co-directorship really took some deep root. And we all supported a co-directorship as a leadership team, and the first attempt at implementation was not a success. So we brought it to the board, Mary and I specifically, and they essentially vetoed the idea. And, you know, that's fair. Hey, essentially I think they kind of saw this as the creation of a very expensive executive director position. And really, you know, their concerns were financial. And we went through a financial crisis that, I get it, but Mary and I started kind of working on populating the board with direct service volunteers who we knew had faith in this shared power and this -- or vision as a team. We really worked hard to raise some unrestricted funds, and we did that with, like, different campaigns, individual donors, core operating grants, and some fee-for-service projects, and we eventually built up about six months of core operating reserves. And finally, that made our board feel more comfortable to take this

leap of faith with us and we officially implemented the co-directorship? 2021. Although there were many ways we were already operating that way. But official 2021, July 1, 2021, was when we became a co-directorship. So throughout, we took advantage of our relationship, really, right, as a team. We navigated this process together. Wasn't always comfortable, but it was always intentional and we always saw it as an experiment. And we built that trust, we encountered challenges, and you know, it's -- nothing's over, right? Again, it's an iterative adaptive process. But we think this helps us take one steps, three or four steps away from White Supremacy dominate culture. And Mary's going to speak more about some of our core values now. Next slide. Thanks.

>> MARY: One thing I want to add quickly, but you don't have to go to the -- back to the other slide, is it -- as Jill mentioned, we went through these processes together and there are challenges, yes, it was hard. We had conversations centering race, talking about just, like, racial dynamics and at the time the makeup, like who was there at the organization looked a lot different than what it looks now. Which the majority of us -- well, all but one, Jill, were all women of color and so it was hard, but it was good. It was like that generative conflict where it's like we're learning and unlearning and we're doing it together and -- and even with the theory of change process, we were very intentional about, like, this is not only Mary and Jill leading every day-long meeting in order to -- for this theory of change process, but we're each going to pair up all the staff -- the leadership team and each pair is going to lead a day. It's more because we know that everyone has something to contribute, and we want to honor that. So as we move to this more shared leadership and this codirector model, these are the values that we center and continue to center. And I'm going to go through each of them and share an example of what that looks like at the organization. If we look at intersectional feminism, so essentially it's like inner work with survivors, survivor participants, and community partners, part of the work is to recognize how -- like different aspects to our identity, our identities. And how that's going to affect how we experience the world. Oh, wow, okay. I just saw the time. Okay. Sorry. We're going to experience the world and including the barriers that we have to face. I'm going to keep that short because we have seven minutes left. Accountability, that this is like a lot I can say here, I'm going to try to keep it short. I guess one thing I want to name here is so many -- so many -- especially women of color, women of color are -- we just need to be -- we practice being accountable to ourselves and each other and as an organization, knowing that so many women of color, especially Black women have been pushed out of the domestic violence field. And I'm sure other sectors as well and we need to own that and be responsible for that and that includes, you know, not only the White folks, but like those of us who are people of color who maybe were also replicating those patterns as, like, a survivor tactic. But we need to be -- hold ourselves to that and learn from that. And as an organization, we know vicarious trauma, we know that's real and some things that we, you know, we have staff, we have a culture where we're working 35-hour work weeks, a flexible work schedule, we're very supportive of each other and those -- yeah, we just try our best to be -- lean into that more. Okay. I'm going to share here. With sharing power, I think I mentioned this. We know that, you know, we are a leaderful organization and everyone has something to contribute, so we will work with the leadership team on bolstering, like, you know -- amplifying their strengths. Like what are some opportunities that they can access that we will basically give, you know, the green light. Like basically do what you need to do, you have something to offer here and we see that and you do you and the organization will support it. And then the divesting

from White Supremacy culture, sorry, I meant to spell that out, WSC, White Supremacy culture, White dominate culture, we, you know, we're trying to move away from focusing on, like, the individual, rather the community. Perfectionism, the sense of urgency, which we see a lot in this field. There's like only one right way of doing something. Your worth is only -- your worth is based on how much you produce. We're trying to divest from that and -- and not only with -- as a team and with partners, but with the survivor participants as well. Like it's -- it kind of goes back to accountability. Yeah, just moving away from that. Sorry, lost my thought there. I'm going to pause there and see if, Jill, there's anything you want to add to that. Sorry if I'm talking so much.

>> JILL: It's okay. No.

>> MARY: Okay. We can go to the next slide, then.

>> JILL: Okay. So you know, I think we can kind of synthesize this. We're asked for kind of our practical steps that we took to make this transition, you know, here and there. And it's hard because, you know, we don't know what any organization's specific challenges might be in moving toward a shared leadership model. I mean, the people involved might not even know what they're going to be. I didn't, you know, just speaking from the I. And it's a very natural and logical question, like how do you do it? And I kind of -- we kind of talked about how coming up with these tangible steps and processes can kind of hit to like a head space when so much of the work is actually heart-based work. The head space work is easier, work plans and all that, at least its easier for me sometimes as a Capricorn. But that heart space stuff is hard. It's like that re-co-creation where it can be shared and there's a level of transparency there. That's more difficult. We actually do have a lot of the tools that we used just like we're totally open to sharing them. I would say one thing really again and again I've mentioned it to delve into is that power dynamic that's present in the organization. And making these connections with people who work at organizations that have structures that might be inspirational to you and you might like to emulate in some way, shape, or form. We certainly have done that and continue to do that. Also I think it's really important quickly to point out that for those of us with majority of positional authority, we need to really kind of be real with the fact that we can put the kibosh on this just like that. Whether we do it directly or indirectly. And so really kind of, like, being mindful of that, I think, is important. And getting real about our relationship with, like, our professional power and our personal relationship to power. We -- if we don't do that work on ourselves and kind of build that self-awareness and heal some of that, it makes us work that much harder and kind of set systems up potentially for failure. So I'll just share like during this process I was in and out of therapy for lots of reasons, but it did help me build a level of self-awareness around my personal and professional kind of relationship with power. It made letting some of that go a lot easier because I was building my personal power along the way. And I encountered the awareness of, like, I had some resistance to letting that power go. And it was somewhat surprising, but I kind of had that space outside of the organization to kind of play with that and unpack that so the team didn't have to absorb that for me, I hope. And obviously talk therapy is not the only option here. There are a ton of really intentional healing practices that exist out in the world, you just have to kind of find what makes you sing. I think without that work I might have unintentionally oar intentionally at some point, I don't know, really kind of sabotaged some of this work along the way. So can't recommend that.

>> MARY: Sorry, I didn't mean -- oh, okay. I'll add this point really quick. So from my perspective, there was some reservation on my end stepping into this role. I think part of it is what Jill has

covered, it's like I'm stepping into a role that someone has been in for eight or nine years already and that was big on top of -- you know, we can name all the things, Impostor Syndrome, capitalism, all that life stuff that comes up. But I realize and I'm still learning to do this is that I needed to step into my power, you know, take up space as a queer woman of color and -- and make this role, you know, make it my own. Like define it for myself and it's challenging, but it's, you know, the benefits outweigh the challenges and that -- that -- I know we're at time, so again, like if anyone wants to connect with us offline, feel free and we will share, like, all these tools that we have that we use. I just wanted to say that part. So that's us.

>> JILL: Thank you.

>> MARY: Thank you.

>> ABBY: Thank you so much, Jill and Mary. I really wish that each organization here today had an entire webinar just to talk about your processes and your values because so much of it I feel like we could really talk about for so much longer. So I just love also you naming the role that capitalism plays in our structures and also, Mary, you too sharing some of what you went there of taking on that codirector role too. Just appreciate you sharing that. I think -- so for time's sake, we were going to have you all share just because you might have picked up on that part of why we have both CUAV and WOMAN Inc. is because CUAV did guide WOMAN Inc. through that process. I'm thinking we can come back to that at the end if that's okay with you all, if we have time for that. And get into having VIDA share about their experiences and then, yeah, I'm hoping we can have time to answer some more of your questions as well as hear more about your working relationship together as you developed those models. Yeah, I'm going to and that over to VIDA.

>> ANA: Mellow, everybody, my name is Ana Isabel Vallejo, I am a codirector at VIDA right now. We are the only organization in the State of Florida with the sole mission of providing legal representation on immigration matters to immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking. We have been in existence since 2011 and we are primarily focused on providing services in South Florida, but we also provide services in the middle of the state where there are some rural communities that don't have access to legal representation. Maria, you want to introduce yourself?

>> MARIA: Yes. Hello, everyone. As Ana mentioned, I have been a codirector of VIDA and a cofounder and I am a cofounder since October 1st I became board member and professionally I moved to a different position in a national organization. But my commitment to VIDA continues through the role as a board member. We will explain how this role took us where we were and where we are now. So I don't know, Ana, you want me to say anything else or we just -- yeah, I think because of time we better go in the presentation.

>> ANA: So I'll just -- we founded -- VIDA was born in 2011 out of -- we were five cofounders of the agency, all attorneys who work together in a larger umbrella immigration rights organization. And at the time that we founded VIDA, we saw a need for an organization that really focused on solely providing services to immigrant survivors. And the larger organization we were a part of a team where we had been working together. But there were some conflicts of interest that we saw not only in the clients that we represented, particularly when we had smaller communities where the survivor was seeking our services and at the department that we were working on, but then, you know, the aggressor was seeking the services of our -- the larger organizations detention team. So there was some conflicts of interest that made it apparent that really the need for an organization that was providing solely service to immigrant survivors was necessary. We also



found that there was conflicts of interest in the aspect of that we had general immigration attorneys celebrating the fact that they may have been able to get somebody who was accused of an aggravated assault on their spouse, on a domestic violence aggravated assault, they were celebrating that they were able to get them immigration status. And we were kind of feeling like that didn't really jive with the values that we were trying to move forward within the community. So we created a spinoff of a team that was already working, and we -- so we cofounded. And at that time, we started with -- it was three codirectors, but only one of them was paid. And three codirectors and one paralegal. One of them was paid and then the other two codirectors were providing services volunteered and one of the codirectors was working somewhere else and working -- dedicating their time in the evenings to getting VIDA moving forward. We started with three board members that were friends and that were guiding us. They were all part of other organizations that were providing services to survivors of immigrant survivors of domestic violence. And then we slowly grew. We've grown up to a team of ten in recent years we have shrunk a little bit. But we also grew as a team of ten and then we also grew our board to seven, five of which are immigration attorneys and two who are -- one is a bookkeeper, another one is a grant writer communications individual. So we also provide comprehensive legal case management to victims of trafficking and accompaniment in the entire process of collaborating with the authorities, connection with other attorneys that may be providing other legal representation and family law matters and domestic violence, juvenile court, criminal court, and/or civil matters. And we also engage in safety planning, immigration safety planning. We provide and we connect with other community partners to be able to provide some of the other services. So our services geared to being more holistic in that process. Maria Jose, I don't know if you want to add something here, if not I'll move to our strategic plan.

>> MARIA: I think I wanted to mention specifically, and I think it's leading into the strategic plan, but how we had certain beliefs and values, core values as colleagues, people that work together and we knew each other that really set the stage of how we were going to function as codirectors when we started VIDA. And I just wanted to mention something from that conversation. Our core values were vocation where we -- and I think this was something that for us was extremely important where we -- we focused not just to self professionally within the specialty, we were all attorneys and paralegals, but the idea was to achieve two improvements in the lives of the survivors and their families, the community where they were living. And the way that people communicate with each other and deal with each other on a daily basis. The other core value was access to justice. And for us was very clear that access to justice meant what the survivor desired. And so Ana mentioned that we did accompany survivors through the process of prosecuting their traffickers, if they wanted to. And so that is very important. What is the concept of justice and what meant for -- for them and how we were going to provide the service to them. And you know, so it had an impact on how we work together. So -- so this is another example of how when we decide to work together as codirectors, we needed to make sure that we had this discussion and we're on the same page. We believed in respect and -- and we -- you know, we're echoing our partners and our colleagues ahead of us that mentioned, you know, how we are all unique and we all have special things to bring to the table. Of course, when you are trying to organize the infrastructure of our organization, these values are critical. Respect, collaboration, and advocacy. And so I wanted to highlight that, that it was -- and I think sometimes we say this was unconscious but conscious, right? So something that -- how we were working before with survivors is what we brought to the table to create VIDA, which stands for voices for immigrant



defense and advocacy. And I think we can lead into -- we can talk about our strategic planning in 2013-2014 and the other.

>> ANA: So we started the agency very organically already in a three codirector model. We had, like I said, we were all attorneys and one paralegal. We had very clear ideas. We had all been working together previously, but we also had a very clear idea that we wanted to have a structure that was more horizontal from the beginning. We wanted to make sure that we connected with each other and that everybody had a place at the table. Even though in the -- in the legal world we come from an industry that's very hierarchical in nature and the structure itself is built, you know, if there's a mistake, it's the lawyer's mistake, it's not the paralegal's mistake. If the lawyer has to be supervising the paralegal and making sure that the paralegal's not engaging in providing legal advice. So despite all of that, we were all very committed and to trying to make sure that we were all working as a team and trying to level out the power structure as much as we could. So we created the codirector model and then we engaged in strategic plan in 2013 and 2014 where we really teased out how we were going to start doing this work, where the agency was headed, what needed to be done first and second and third as we were starting this agency so that we could then start securing funding for all of the positions that we wanted to secure. We also engaged in an analysis of each and every one of us as codirectors, each and every one of our strengths, weaknesses, where our opportunities were, what were the threats and what were the areas, and we will talk a little bit more about that later. And engage in an assessment of what each of us individually brought to the table. As codirectors, we all had very different experiences and different areas of focus in our immigration legal practice. Maria, I don't know if you want to add anything here.

>> MARIA: We have very little time left, so I think I'm going to --

>> ANA: Time is flying.

>> MARIA: Ask for the next slide. And we can share all of this with you. We can share our strategic plan. We are engaging now in the next step of the strategic plan with the board and -- and -- but -- we'll give you a little bit more about our history so you can have a full picture. From the three codirectors structure, which I would like to also explain that we were dividing and you can see there we divided our responsibilities as directors. But at the same time, each one of us were practicing attorneys. So this is something very different from other organizations where we continue to be practitioners and we continue to be the supervisors of our staff. And this is the challenge. It has been a challenge and continues to be the challenge through the years we -- in 2011 one of the codirectors decided to go into private practice. And I think we have to be honest and transparent that we talked about values and then we see income and I hear from the other two organizations that money sometimes trumps a lot of the good intentions, right? So the necessity to have a living wage and benefits for us, for our families really push us in the direction of moving away from the -- from this codirector structure. As someone else already mentioned, that you could be the -- the risk is that you could be seen as heavy on the top for funders.

>> ANA: Can you move to the next slide? Yeah, there you go.

>> MARIA: So Ana, I'll let you cover this area.

>> ANA: Actually, I was thinking that because you were getting into the challenges, but I think, you know, before we get into the challenges, it was really important for us to know that when we -- when we came up with our development or structure and division of areas of responsibility, we came to common agreements. And one of those was that we were going to trust each other's decision-making in the day to day of those areas that that person was going to lead. But at the

same time, we also trusted that if this was going to be major issue that needed to be resolved, we needed to be a team as codirectors and bringing it also to the staff members that were part of our organization. We, I think, have as a smaller organization the flexibility -- a lot of flexibility into kind of figuring out how we were going to do this work and deciding when it was time to include the rest of the team versus when we needed to have a conversation by ourselves first. So there was always open communication and transparency not only amongst us, ourselves as codirectors, but our team. There were sometimes -- we agreed we were going to have conflict and not be able to agree, but we decided to agree to that and agree to disagree. And we did have check-ins sometimes two, three times a day. We were in constant communication with each other. And then we always celebrated. We always met on a monthly basis prior to the pandemic to celebrate our accomplishments. Yes, there might be a lot of challenges particularly around the funding, but we also met and celebrated our accomplishments, be it the cases, being able to get donations or being able to change the policy or share also our presentations that we've done at the national and international level. Next slide, please. So you know, Maria Jose started getting into the challenges and one of them was appearing to be top heavy, particularly because our attorneys all had -- I mean, our codirectors all had salaries that were attorney's salaries. But at the same time, we were not any of us getting paid for any of our administrative work. We were getting paid for our legal work. So sometimes, you know, you do have to talk to your funders and explain to them why this codirector structure is important to have and it's not necessarily that you're top heavy, it's that you're really trying to create a space where we're all sharing the power together as a team working together. I don't know if you want to add anything else, Maria Jose.

>> MARIA: No, I think we are going to probably wait for the Q&A. Do you have the slides there? You're going to have them, we can meet with you on a one on one, Monica can connect us with you if you're interested. This isn't -- this is a fluid process, right now Ana is the sole codirector within the board, we started the process of the strategic plan to see what's going to be the next step. And we are in communication constantly. Same thing with the staff. And I think we need to also highlight that, that we consult with the staff always and the staff is composed by paralegals and clerical accounting support. But their -- their input is critical for us, especially for those that are in constant contact with survivors. Yeah. I think I'm going to stop there.

>> ANA: If I can add one more -- one more comment, is that when we were thinking -- when we have included or added our board into our agency, we've also had a way of trying to make sure that the board knows all of the staff and that the board is included in the interactions with the staff. So that, you know, again, we're trying to -- even though the board is governing board that has a certain amount of power, we're also trying to make sure that we all feel comfortable with each other so we can address the issues that the agency has because of the commitment to the location and the commitment we all have to the community and making sure that the community has access to justice.

>> MARIA: And both -- both Ana, the composition of the board, if you want to address that, that's important. The board and the staff as, you know, culturally.

>> ANA: Well, we're all -- well, yeah, we're all except for one, we have one male, but we're all women and we're all -- most of us are women of color. We have one Haitian attorney, three Latin -- four Latin American attorneys on our board. They're all immigrants and they all migrated to the United States in different ways. Then -- and then we have in our staff as well we have individuals who have -- some of them born in the United States but in the islands, in Puerto

Rico particularly. And then we have individuals -- most of our staff is composed of women of color who have migrated and might also be survivors of domestic violence or have had family -- close family members who have been survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence. So our composition of the board and the staff reflects the community that we serve and we -- again, we are all individuals that have different backgrounds in terms of our cultural backgrounds of where we grew up, but all have that commonality that we migrated into South Florida.

>> ABBY: Great. Thank you so much, VIDA, I was just making sure that I wasn't going to interrupt you at the end there. But I just really appreciate you sharing about your structure and your strategic planning process and your trajectory throughout time too. I think that's, I'm sure, super helpful to see your process and that level of detail. Really appreciate you sharing that especially with the way that your board works with your staff as well. So the time has really escaped us today because we just had so much to cover. So I'm -- I really apologize that we don't have time to go through the Q&A. There's some really great questions here, though, so I am thinking that we can save those and maybe be able to follow up about a couple of them in a follow-up email with everyone who attended and registered today, because they're definitely something that we were hoping that we could have a chance to cover. Just with Monica shared information about Part 3, which is next week. We'll be featuring two more organizations with more of a collective leadership style. And so I will just hand it over to her real quick to close us out. And to our presenters, if you have any last thoughts that you would like to share, maybe you can type those out into the chat for our group. We have about one minute left, so if there's anything else you want to share, and again, my apologies for the rushed end here, just want to make sure you're all able to get out on time.

>> MONICA: Thank you, and I thank everyone for sharing your experience and the also invite everyone to learn more about this. And I think Mujeres Unidas y Activas and DeafHope next week will share about their Board of Directors more in-depth. So that will be a good opportunity to learn about strategies. And they will share also more about working with a model that is collective leadership. The DeafHope, they have their directors are empowerment directors. They're not called codirectors, they're called empowerment directors and Mujeres Unidas y Activas has one executive director but they have a collective leadership with their empowerment leadership with their community and staff. And so please register if you haven't and then please also reach out to us for any information, let us know your feedback in the following slides. You have the slides and you have our contact information now. Please reach out to us and we also put in this -- in the chat the link to the -- I think the feedback form if you haven't seen it, I'll put it again. And also very grateful to all our presenters here today from CUAV, WOMAN Inc., and VIDA Legal Assistance. And also for your humbleness and work with the community and also for working -- collaborating with futures to share your experience. And everyone thank you for your participation.