THE FEMINIST REPUBLIK HEALING FARM
Concept Note

What is the Healing Farm

The Feminist Republik Healing Farm (The Healing Farm) was born out of the needs expressed by African Women Human Rights Defenders (AWHRDs) for a space in which holistic, African-led approaches to care and healing find a home. At the forefront of struggles for equality, inclusive leadership, land, and climate justice, AWHRDs bear the brunt of trauma, violence, and exclusion, all of which dissipate the energy and potency of feminist movements to challenge these systems. The Healing Farm provides a unique space in which indigenous and contemporary African modalities, practices and ideologies that foster individual and collective care are nurtured. It enshrines a feminist-informed approach to healing to sustain defenders and their formations. This is achieved through the incubation of African feminist ideas, knowledge, and collective organising, contributing to the broader discourse on healing justice as a feminist approach to sustaining activists and their movements. This holistic justice approach to social justice recognises the interconnectedness of political, socio-economic, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being in the pursuit of equality and liberation. It combines the need for emotional and spiritual healing as integral to the transformation of our political, social, and economic systems.



The Healing Farm: What is it? What are its offerings?

African Women's Human Rights Defenders (AWHRDs) grapple with varying degrees of trauma, burnout, fatigue, depression and physical ailments. Faced with persistent persecution, the pressure to keep doing "the work" while the traumas we all bring into the work play out in the background and foreground - unaddressed- groups implode. Implosion takes the shape of power struggles, the inability to address conflicts and the absence of accountability mechanisms that do not remind us of the rigidity of the world we seek to transform. These are not individual experiences. Their mere accumulation points to the fact that there are common roots to our pains. The Healing Farm seeks to unpack a central question around these roots and how we experience them while asking: how can we then heal from these roots and the traumas they birth as we fight to end them? This work for us is rooted in solidarity, not charity. Through this work, we transform ourselves as individuals and collectives around how we internalise and relate from spaces of trauma and how we fight to end them. Healing is about going to the roots of why we experience the world in the ways that we do, and what those experiences have done to us.

This means centering the ways in which our feminist ancestors have always had traditions for collective mental, emotional, environmental and spiritual wellbeing that have been criminalised and deliberately erased.

The Healing Farm seeks to transform our dreams of liberation and justice into reality.

How will the Farm Operate?

Healing and Collective Care are interdependent, as the self cannot be separated from the collective.

A critical insight that informed the building of the Farm is the fact that most spaces that aim to respond to trauma and harm espouse individualism that only causes further isolation and separateness, and this is counterintuitive to a radical approach to healing and well-being. Further, healing and collective care are not events or tick-boxes but rather integrated ways of living, being, and organising that are transformative. An individual approach to healing and care assumes that once individual activists have internalised wellbeing practices, these would automatically trickle down to their collectives. However, this has proven to be an ineffectual strategy in transforming activist spaces. In response, the Healing Farm invites defenders into the space as collectives (loosely defined: could include several members from the same group/collective; activists from different movements who seek to work closely, or other formations).

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." Lilla Watson - Aboriginal Australian artist and activist



These same collectives can come back to develop ideas further and experiment following a process of ideation, among other uses of the space. Often, spaces curated for conversations around healing and wellbeing are often once-off, where care and wellbeing are equated to fixed time periods or received at conferencing spaces. The Healing Farm is a challenge to that mentality; it will operate from a space of abundance, where healing is seen as a process and not a destination. The abundance is also felt in the space, its expansiveness. For once, a space will be created for African WHRDs where we will not be constantly reminded that we lack resources. That has often meant walking into small, limited spaces that are only about fulfilling immediate needs: small offices and small meeting rooms to get the work (healing) done. Subsequently, ingraining in us that beauty, expansiveness, and open spaces are not for us. The Healing Farm challenges this by creating a space where defenders will physically experience the abundance they deserve. The Healing Farm will also provide some spaces for individual defenders seeking specific trauma support, rest, writing, reading, or any other healing offering they want to engage with.
The Healing Farm is a catalyst for this political dialogue and practice. The Healing Farm brings to the fore the different ways we can experience healing that do not replicate systems of oppression. Therefore, providing an entry point to resist structures of harm. We are birthing a revolution.

The Healing Farm as a political project: The Farm will contribute to transforming structures of harm and injustice for African feminists as collectives as they fight for liberation. This is through:

1 - Building a network of grassroots healers based on energy, body, and earth-based work; health practitioners (doctors, nurses); birth workers who think about wellness and safety in ways that respond to the collective traumas we hold. It is envisioned that the Farm will provide space for healers to meet and learn from each other and their practices to deepen a political lens to healing. The Farm infrastructure will facilitate these meetings and linkages, which have always been difficult to achieve in short meetings where we need to pack up and leave after 3 or 4 days.

2 - Surfacing African healing traditions of varying modalities and practices: Rituals for grief, loss, release, song circles, and healing circles to replenish our constituencies and challenge the largely medicalised responses to grief, trauma, burnout, and other manifestations of collective harm. This is analysis and practices that AWHRDs are eager to have. The Healing Farm is a dedicated space to have these conversations and push them further to the space of practice.

3 - Providing support to collectives in unpacking the conversations they are interested in having at the Farm, and giving them the liberty to organise the conversations, debate and use the space as they see in the ways that would be most conducive to having these conversations. The Farm is uniquely placed to provide abundant space for these conversations, which activists rarely get the time to have in short meetings. Create an experimentation hub that provides the space for collectives to experience and practise the healing offerings, to plot with each other and with healers how to incorporate ancestral traditions or create new ones that would replenish movements.

4 - Shifting perspectives of what constitutes health, healing, the role of healers (not as service providers, but as strategists), what constitutes organising work, and how we use spaces in ways that make them feel like we are welcome in them.

5 - Create a Feminist Library that seeks to document African histories and experiences of collective healing and our broader feminist histories in different forms: books, movies, music, and audio exhibits. The library will also collect and archive oral histories from activists who visit the Farm and design soundscapes that transport activists to different locations and feminist historical periods, among others. The library is a challenge to the invisibilising of the histories of African womn's resistance, and how womn have always relied on healing traditions to address trauma, grief and crisis. It is critical to remember our traditions for collective emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing. This remembrance and revival is fundamental to transforming our collective traumas.

6 - Create The Feminist Museum of Memory to preserve feminist histories, narratives and experiences. The Museum will collect and exhibit feminist documents, photographs, and artwork, among other artefacts. The museum can organise film screenings, discussion circles, feminist exhibitions, and storytelling events. The museum could host virtual tours to encourage greater engagement with, and knowledge of, feminist histories.

7 - The Healing Gardens centre a connection with nature that has been stolen from us through years of extractive industries, and developmental projects that do not center on what we value - all rooted in capitalist and colonial imaginations of the rights of communities to nature and land. The healing gardens are spaces where activists can tend to the land, plant food and herbs or just experience the freedom to be in nature, and touch the land, for however long they choose.

8 - The Wellness Center is a dedicated space that offers a holistic range of meditative, somatic and reflective practices that centre healing and joy. This is a space where healers could practice their offerings and where activists are free to create and experience however, they understand wellness and joy.

9 - Community Health Center - After consultations with the community where the Farm is located, we established a health center that aims to provide critical health services to the community. The Farm's political project is not a lofty ideal; it can only be meaningful if we are in a close relationship with the community in which the Farm sits.



What are collectives invited to do?

1 - Discuss what brought them into the movement and what activated them. This includes unpacking our collective and cross-generational traumas to know what we bring into movements, and how trauma moves inside movement spaces (as conflict, distrust, abuse, calling out culture, rigidity). How does trauma affect the analysis that shapes our organising (when we move from a place of trauma, our assessments of the context and our place in it are often inaccurate)? This is a structural analysis of harms and how we have internalised them. When we have this analysis, we can design strategies that address them. **Collectives are invited to think**: what do we want to do about them?

a. This includes how we want to address harm, violence and abuse in movement spaces without relying on punishment, ostracisation, calling out, policing what activists say and how they present themselves in activist spaces, among other harmful interventions.
b. Collectives are invited to create a plan or strategies for political action: Would they benefit from exploring a healing practice? Of learning about transformative justice strategies that could be useful. What do they need the Farm to facilitate?
c. Collectives are invited to take part in the different wellness activities in the various wellness facilities on the Healing Farm to experience connection with the mind, body and spirit, at an individual and collective level.
d. Collectives are invited to explore the harm at individual and collective levels on the current state of organising due to the rise in anti-rights and anti-gender campaigns, and how they have and continue to organise differently.

2 - In response to the analysis created by the collectives, think about ways of drawing on ancestral traditions, creating new ones, and how to incorporate them into our movements and organising work. How can we blend traditional and “modern” medicine in how we think about healing and care? What is needed to incorporate healing traditions as a central pillar to our organising? Defenders are encouraged to incorporate healers in this thinking space as organisers and co-conspirators.

3 - Engage with the experimentation hub to experience different healing offerings as collectives; think about the value of these offerings. How can we integrate them into movement spaces?

4 - Connect with the land through gardening, tending to the land, and remembering what land means to our communities. This is out of the belief that land, animals, humans and the planet are deeply connected. We aim to forget the exploitation and extraction that we know too well.

5 - To ideate, co-create and develop knowledge to explore the injustices faced because of the current systems that we live in, and inform the process of disrupting (and ultimately dismantling) these structures in favour of realising a feminist world (for example, feminist economic structures that prioritise a bottom-up approach that actively rejects austerity).

6 - To access and add to a repository of African feminism and indigenous knowledge by accessing the feminist library and AWHRDs contributing to it with their pieces.

7 - Host events at the Feminist Museum of Memory to commemorate certain moments of feminist history. Defenders are encouraged to share feminist artefacts with the feminist museum.

8 - Access medical support through the dispensary, which we share with the community.