

*Community
Healing*

*Youth
Leadership*

CREATE

ORGANIZE



MAKE

BUILD

*Art &
Activism*

*Education &
Growth*



THE ACTION ALLIANCE

The Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance is Virginia's statewide coalition for agencies and community organizations that provide advocacy services for survivors of violence and prevention education for their larger communities.

The Action Alliance, a diverse group of individuals and organizations, believes that ALL people have the right to a life free of sexual and domestic violence.

We will use our diverse and collective voice to create a Virginia free from sexual and domestic violence—inspiring others to join and support values of equality, respect and shared power.

We recognize that sexual and domestic violence are linked to other forms of oppression, which disproportionately affect women, children, and marginalized people. Understanding the great harm racism has created for individuals, families and our communities in Virginia, we commit to building within the coalition an anti-racist framework from which to address sexual and domestic violence.

ABOUT THE RETREAT:

The Honeycomb Retreat is a **free arts and creative expression-based retreat for young advocates, activists, & movement builders ages 17-23** throughout the state of Virginia. Organized by the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance), the first Honeycomb was held from July 22-26, 2019 in Richmond, Virginia. Fellows traveled from across the state to participate, bringing a diverse set of experience and expertise with them.

For many years, the Action Alliance has been interested and excited about how to intentionally engage youth and young people in our work in the movement to end gender-based violence. In 2018, the Action Alliance held a daylong Youth Summit for young people to learn collaboratively and make connections.

The Honeycomb Retreat came out of a desire to both build on the success of the daylong Youth Summit and to create a space where **young artists, activists, and advocates from around the state of Virginia could come together for multiple days to create art, build organizing skills, and think about what individual and collective healing can look like in our movement.** Because of our deep belief in the innate resilience and power of young people, the Action Alliance wants to ensure youth voices and youth leadership are a part of this work and movement.

WHY HONEYCOMB?

As the Action Alliance staff started dreaming up a retreat for young people in Virginia, we knew we wanted a name that could hold the goals and vision for this convening.

1. C.O.M.B. is an acronym for Create, Organize, Make, and Build— all actions that we hope our fellows will engage in during the five days of the retreat, and actions we believe are a part of change.
2. Honeycomb is a fractal, a never-ending and self-similar pattern that repeats itself on the small and large scale. adrienne maree brown describes the importance of fractals in *Emergent Strategy*:

"What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system. Grace [Lee Boggs] articulated it in what might be the most-used quote of my life: 'Transform yourself to transform the world.' This doesn't mean to get lost in the self, but rather to see our own lives and work and relationships as a front line, a first place we can practice justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the planet."¹

¹ Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press.

**"I AM THANKFUL TO BE GIVEN
THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK
TRUTH & VOICE MY OPINIONS"**
- Fellow

WHO WAS THERE?

1 GRAPHIC FACILITATOR

3 ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

9 ACTION ALLIANCE STAFF MEMBERS

16 WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

(Representing organizations such as Southerners on New Ground, Richmond Sex Ed Project, Virginia League for Planned Parenthood, Empower RVA Teens, APSA - Asian & Pacific-Islander Student Alliance, and Cocarosa Apothecary.)

17 FELLOWS AGES 17- 23

TRAVELED FROM 6 REGIONS,

(Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, Eastern Shore, Hampton Roads, Southwest Virginia, & the Shenandoah Valley)

10 OF WHOM RECEIVED TRAVEL STIPENDS,

& ALL IDENTIFIED AS YOUTH OF COLOR, QUEER & TRANS YOUTH, AND/OR YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE!

“SO COOL! LOVE COLLABORATING WITH THESE GREATS!”

- Fellow



WHAT HAPPENED?

Graphic Recording by Emily Simons



Honeycomb Fellows attended 7 workshops throughout the 5 days on topics including:

- Understanding the roots of sexual and intimate partner violence, and understanding the connections between interpersonal and systemic violence.
- Consent and building consensual communities.
- Zine building to envision what fully consensual, abundant, communicative, and radically interpersonal futures can look like.
- Writing with poetic forms that pay tribute to those who are living and those who are resting in power.
- Building the connection between pleasure and sexual health.
- Learning about the legacy of plant medicine we can call upon to find sexual healing for ourselves and our communities.
- Navigating boundaries, values, and movement-related needs when organizing, the incorporation of pertinent self-care strategies within community organizing spaces, and concrete tactics that can be used to sustain oneself in movement work.
- Collaboratively using sculpture to reflect on the topics discussed throughout the week.

The days also included longer, less structured art sessions, during which **fellows worked with artists-in-residence to learn new creative skills that could support their organizing work and to respond to the content from the workshops.** During the week fellows focused on block printing, banner making, creative writing, illustration, illustrative journaling, and collage.

When fellows were not in workshops or an art sessions, they were **sharing meals** (breakfast and lunch) with staff, artists, and workshop facilitators, **taking a break in the dedicated self-care space**, and/or **participating in one of the retreat's daily practices of building community and connection** through the shout out wall (giving shout outs to other fellows, staff, artists, workshops, food, etc.) or one of the other interactive and creative practices where we explored where we're from, who supports us and how, and why movements need art. The last day of the retreat included a **Community BBQ** where the larger Action Alliance staff joined the fellows, artists, and folks from allied organizations to be in community with each other!

CLOSING & VISIONING

During the closing, fellows were asked to reflect individually, in small groups, and then in the large group on five main questions. During the large group discussion, **Emily Simons**, an illustrator, graphic designer, arts educator, and graphic facilitator, graphically recorded our conversation. Emily also lent her graphic recording skills during one of our group welcomes and the sculptural reflection workshop in addition to being available during one of the full days to share this practice with fellows and staff at the retreat.

FELLOWS WERE ASKED:

What skills do you and other young people in general bring to the movement against sexual and intimate partner violence in Virginia? What work do you want to see organizations like the Action Alliance and its members do with youth and youth organizers to fight against sexual and intimate partner violence? **What do you see as the biggest barriers in participating in movement building/organizing in the sexual and intimate violence field?** What are the resources you and other young people need to be a part of the movement? **Based on the different art skills you built and the workshops you participated in this week, what do you want to do/what are you excited for next?** What's your vision for a world without sexual and intimate partner violence?



OUR APPROACH:

The Honeycomb Retreat is grounded in anti-oppressive and trauma-informed frameworks, as well as resilience-building and youth organizing models and approaches that understand creative expression as a tool for social change and healing.

Anti-Oppressive & Trauma-Informed Facilitation: When we were planning the Honeycomb Retreat, we knew that the culture we created, the feeling our fellows had when they entered our space, and how the workshops were presented was just as important as the actual content. Anti-oppressive facilitation both acknowledges the way power, privilege, and systems of oppression create barriers for people to fully participate in meetings, trainings, workshops, etc. and uses facilitation tools and strategies such as group agreements, go-arounds and check-ins, and diverse teaching styles so that workshops can be more accessible and inclusive.¹ Additionally, a trauma-informed framework creates space for transparency and collaboration with participants; when using a trauma-informed framework, facilitators understand that the way participants need or want to engage with the workshop or material can look many ways and having tools like fidgets or Play-doh on tables, a self-care space available, and a culture in which participants can move around and take breaks when they need to.

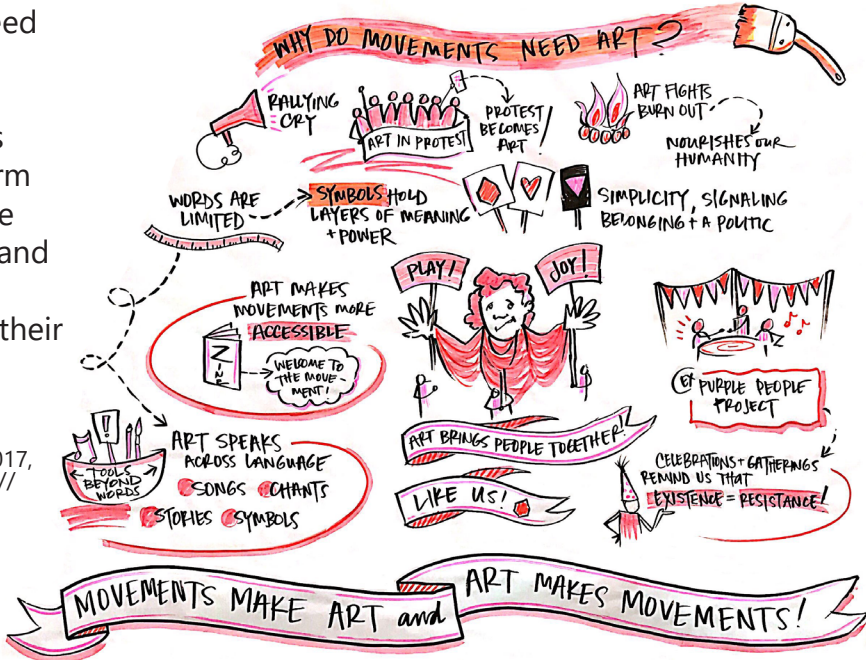
Building Resilience: Resilience is a person’s ability to “bounce back,” adapt, and transform when or after experiencing trauma. Everyone has resilience, *and* it is possible to enhance and support youth resilience by increasing their access to protective factors and decreasing their exposure risk factors.

¹ Anti-Oppressive Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA). (2017, June). Anti-Oppressive Facilitation Guide. Retrieved from http://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/anti-oppressive-facilitation/

Youth Organizing: The Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) defines youth organizing as engaging “young people in building power for social change” and using “distinct sets of culturally and contextually resonant practices to develop youth leadership within a safe and supportive environment.” Youth Organizing values youth-adult partnerships, respects youth voices, promotes holistic development, and creates a pipeline where young people can continue meaningful community leadership.²

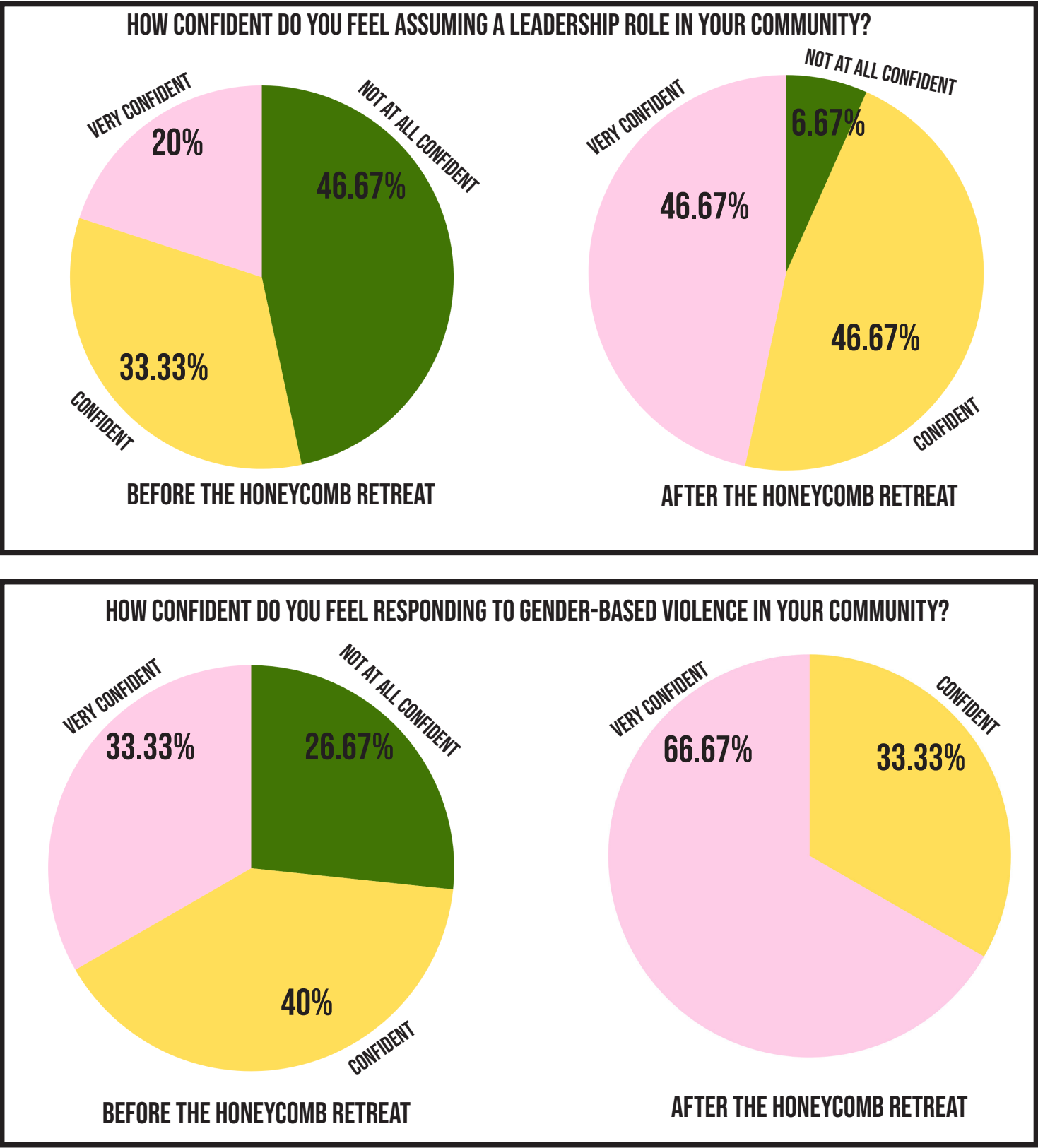
Art & Activism: The Action Alliance has long used creative expression as a tool in our trainings and the resources we create. DO YOU, our 10-week violence prevention curriculum for 13-16 year-olds, is grounded in creative expression and in each session participants draw, collage, write, and experiment on a different page of a zine that is completed at the end of all the sessions.³ When approaching Honeycomb, we wanted to harness that similar energy, as well as build upon the deep and expansive history of activists using art in their movements, from banner making to zine building to screen printing to poetry! During the retreat we asked our fellows, “Why do movements need art?” and we feel like they said it best (see below).

² Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing. (2018). Youth Organizing. Retrieved from <https://fcyo.org/info/youth-organizing/>
³ Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. (2019). DO YOU to DO SOMETHING. Retrieved from <https://www.doyoutools.org/>



Graphic Recording by Emily Simons

SOME OF OUR OUTCOMES*:



*Data collected from a Retrospective Pre-Post survey given to fellows on the last day of the retreat.

WHAT'S NEXT?

“MOVEMENTS NEEDS ART TO SHARE, TO CONNECT, TO RALLY.”

- Fellow

The Action Alliance is currently launching a Youth Action Council with the goal of creating leadership opportunities within the Action Alliance, the larger coalition, and membership. The Youth Action Council is a space where people ages 18 – 24 build their advocacy, organizing and activist skills and are provided leadership opportunities that may include building prevention curriculums, facilitating trainings, consulting with local programs who want to engage youth in their community, or working with our policy team on Legislative Advocacy Day.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional about the ways in which the Youth Action Council are a part of and have power in decision-making! Youth Organizing is an effective strategy for youth resiliency and social change, *and* this strategy has been underutilized in our field and movement. The Action Alliance hopes that building this leadership body will also allow us to provide technical assistance, training, and resources to our members on building their own youth leadership programs or take their youth leadership to the next level! The Action Alliance's Youth Action Council and youth leadership structures could also provide new and exciting opportunities for youth who have worked with local programs and create space for youth organizers to bring back the skills and frameworks they have learned with the Action Alliance to their local programs and communities.



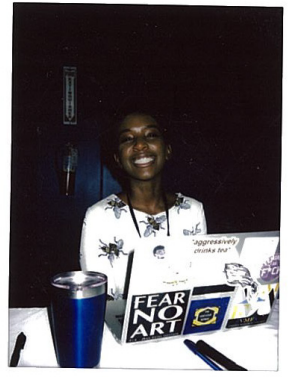
GET IN TOUCH!



LAURA



KAT



Raelyn

As a coalition, one of the ways we support members, folks in the movement, and our larger community is through technical assistance! If you are interested in learning more about the Honeycomb Retreat and how to do something similar in your community, please reach out! We are happy to share more information on planning logistics, our frameworks and approach, how we evaluated the retreat and our outcomes, youth organizing models, etc.!

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KRISTIN, LAUREL, +
CORTNEY



Emily



KI'ARA



KRISTEN



THE HONEYCOMB RETREAT IS A PROJECT OF THE VIRGINIA SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION ALLIANCE, VIRGINIA'S LEADING VOICE ON SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE.