

I am accepting the nomination to run for the position of AKRI board member. I bring experience as a board member of educational non-profits, as a Minister for Healing and Healthy Environments, as a trauma resolution practitioner, group relations conference director, and teacher educator. However, in the paraphrased words of Lilla Watson, I'm not here to waste my time trying to help AKRI. I am here to work together with others because I see that my liberation is bound up in others' and in AKRI's liberation.

Since the early 2000s, my group relations experiences have mostly been associated with centers or university conferences. My early extended involvement with AKRI came through my certification process that was made more tolerable because of the mentoring I received from Beverly Malone. I was aware then and even more so now of the dearth of Latinx mentors in the AKRI system. Through my participation in a Latinx group relations leadership development study group in the past year, it has become clearer to me that we need to expand our mentoring pool as well as rethink our certification lens regarding what conferences or experiences count toward certification. Some of you may have engaged with the Latinx study group in the recent AKRI Dialogues presentation. I'm happy to say that this group is continuing and growing. It is a testament to what leadership development can be without a clear sense of support from AKRI and what should be integrated to some degree in AKRI.

My experiences directing conferences both on the ground and online inform my sense of what could be improved from AKRI's perspective. My most recent directing experience was an online conference, *Activism as a Spiritual Practice: A Latinx led leadership event* (<https://www.latinxgr2021.com/>). I experienced what seemed to be a delay around the actual authorization for the conference that impacted our conference promotion. The valuation of the conference as experimental also meant that some of my staff who are in the certification process could not count their work towards certification. I believe that these kinds of experiences in the past led to centers or universities splitting away from AKRI. I value integration and I would like to see greater inter- relationship or 'interbeing', as Thich Nhat Hahn describes it between AKRI and centers and universities. I would like to see greater support from AKRI and centers to local conferences. I say this because, as a director, my priorities have been to maximize access for participants who might not typically participate in in conference learning and offering meaningful remuneration for staff. This has meant that the sponsoring organizations, in my mind, should not use conferences as a fundraiser, expecting something back from conference fees. As a current staff member for the national conference, I see that the expectation of returning a significant part of the budget to AKRI is a kind of using the conference as a fundraiser and re-enacting a kind of colonization relationship. I think AKRI and centers can reimagine solutions to generating funding and

partner differently to promote conference learning and directing.

I thank all who vote, all who continue to participate in group relations conferences, all who continue to identify or affiliate with AKRI or with centers and who continue to work for organizational and systemic reformation and transformation. I will be involved in the ALIVE conference and will miss the opportunity on July 10 to interact with you.

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