The true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the oppressors’ relationships.

- Audre Lorde

Designed by The Corps Network, with the assistance of consultants Mahdi B. Davenport and Juanita C. Brown, Corpsmember Liberation and Leadership is an interactive workshop that seeks to address the impact of systemic and institutional oppression on the individual. The primary audience for this workshop are young people of color enrolled in Corps.

Corpsmember Liberation and Leadership looks to disrupt the cycle of oppression (that “piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within”). We often talk about empowering young people, but we feel we first need to address how young people of color have been affected by generations of historical trauma, which can translate into harmful feelings of unworthiness.

Our young people of color have absorbed and normalized the mis-education and mis-information that have been presented to them in many ways, including through the school system. The healthy self-image that they perhaps once had as a young child can morph into a self-image of inferiority and inadequacy. They believe that they are the problem; that they are less worthy. These beliefs are only reinforced by deficit language and approaches that are, unfortunately, part of the many systems that they encounter.

In Corpsmember Liberation and Leadership, we examine how disempowerment can manifest itself as a set of counterproductive, unconscious habits and tendencies that quietly accumulate over time. They become an internal force that moves the individual in the opposite direction of their self-confidence and makes it impossible for them to heal.

Corpsmember Liberation and Leadership looks to make the invisible, visible. No one can change a condition in their life that they cannot see or understand. This workshop gives Corpsmembers the tools to be able to identify counterproductive patterns, interrupt them, and replace them with new life-giving patterns.

This workshop is part of The Corps Network’s Moving Forward Initiative.

Photos (L to R): Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Mile High Youth Corps