



MA Expressive Arts Therapy Program, California
Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA

The Laundry of Life: Sharing Wisdom across the washing line

By Shoshana Simons, PhD & Danielle Drake, MA

Narrative Collective Practices

- Practices that have developed out of work with individuals, groups and wider communities of people facing trauma
- Developed in many cases by lay community members and not “professionals”
- Drawn from metaphors that resonate with the contexts of the everyday lives of given groups and communities
- Includes “Tree of Life”, “Team of Life”, “Rhythm of Life”, “Recipes of Life” and our homegrown “Laundry of Life”
- Collective narrative maps and timelines which enable people to trace histories of events affecting their lives and map their past and future contributions to changing the course of that history

Individual and Collective

- The collective practices are designed to include both individual and collective experience
- Draw from narrative re-membling practices to access local knowledge and wisdom as a resource for handling challenges
- Draw from familial/cultural stories, songs, dances that have or could play a role as resources in sustaining people through challenges
- Include documents of identity



California Institute of Integral Studies

□ Presenters:

Shoshana Simons, CIIS Core Faculty and Program
Chair, MA Expressive Arts Therapy Program

Danielle Drake-Burnette CIIS Core Faculty, MA
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Plan for the Morning

- What is Laundry of Life?
- Laundry of Life: A Vignette
- Being a Drama Therapist in the Dominant Psychotherapy Field: Experiencing The Laundry of Life

What is The Laundry of Life?

- A playful narrative collective arts practice that generates new ways to approach existing problems facing groups and communities

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A “home grown” narrative collective practice, co-created by Danielle Drake-Burnette and Shoshana Simons at California Institute of Integral Studies’ Expressive Arts Therapy program, San Francisco. Initially developed to work with the entire staff of Glide Memorial Church’s Family, Youth and Childcare center (FYCC) as part of the annual whole system arts-based retreat



The Laundry of Life uses a multimodal arts approach to generate new storylines for addressing problems facing groups and communities. Modalities include visual art, poetry, Playback Theater, dance, singing, guided visualization



The Laundry of Life helped the FYCC workers to bring forth their collective wisdom across intergenerational, intercultural, multi-gendered spectra in the service of building a stronger sense of community to lean into in challenging times

Accessing Intergenerational Wisdom



Laundry of Life: Examples of Application

Since 2011 we have trained 60+ students in the approach

Used to generate intergenerational wisdom in queer communities in San Francisco

Used with therapists and social workers in London to stay connected to their ethics, beliefs and values in their practice in the face of “managed care” mandates

Used with staff dealing with addiction, frequent deaths and violence in their highly socially and economically stressed community

Used to access women’s wisdom in Mexico



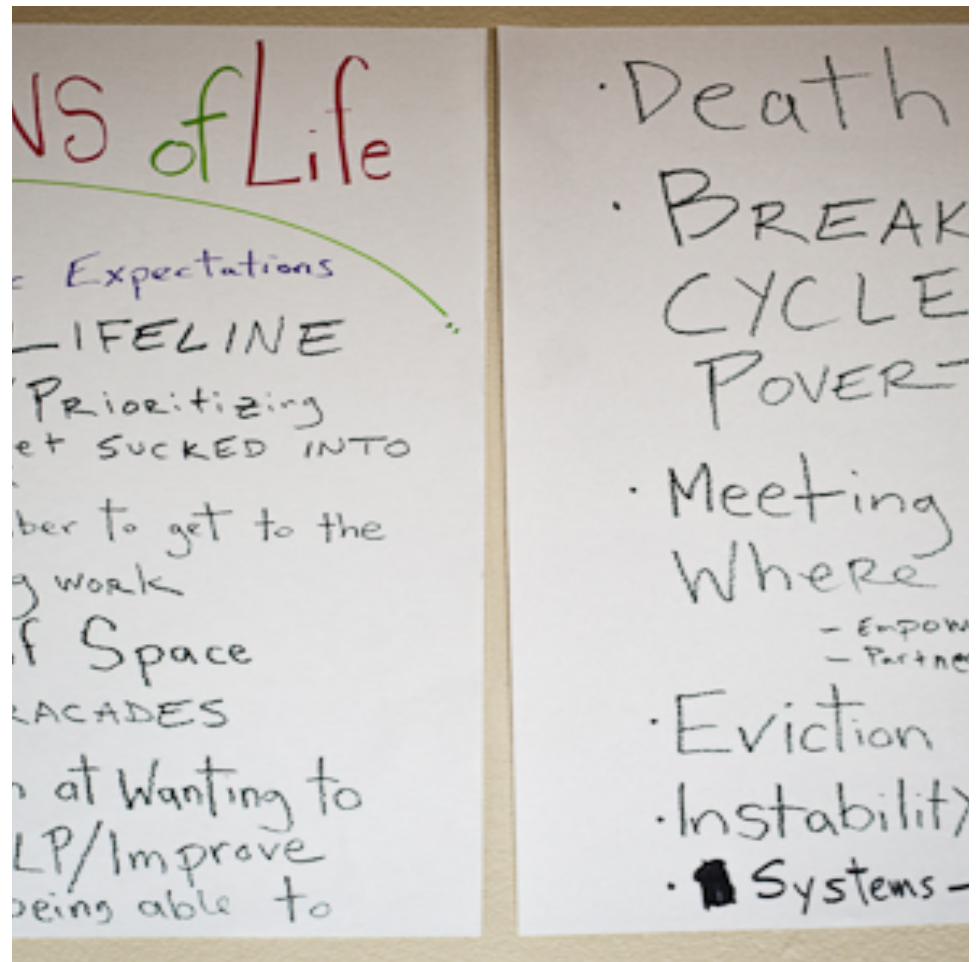
Laundry of Life: Steps in the Process

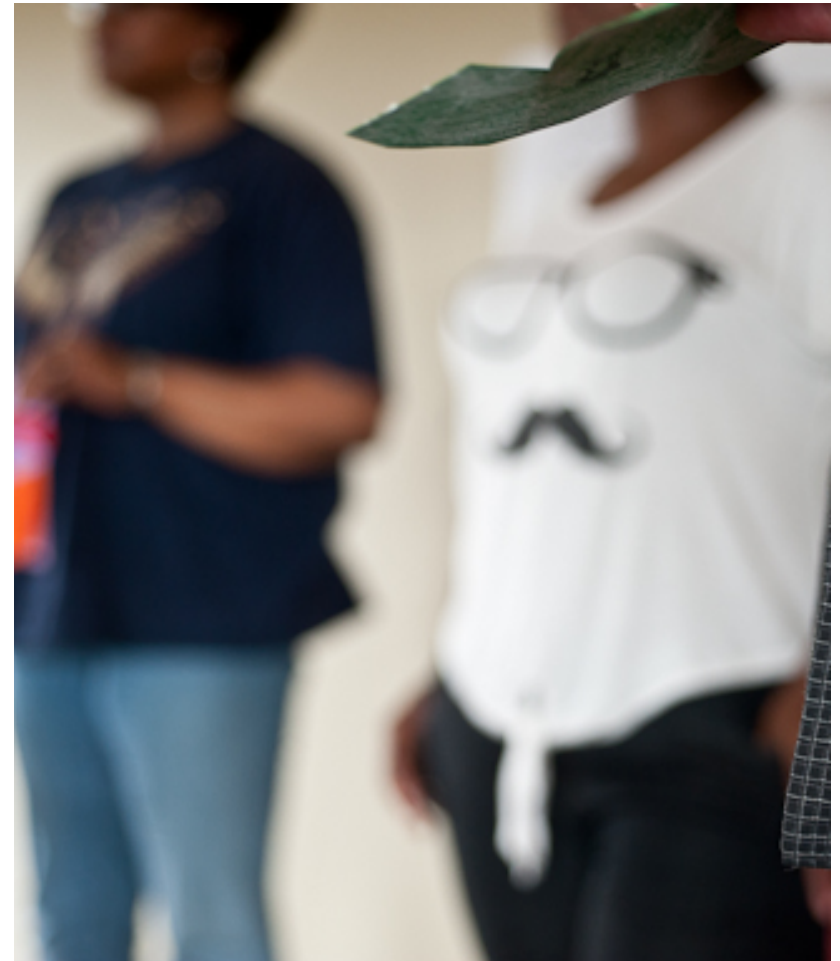


1. Poem: Freedom aka “All My Clothes have Been to Jail”
2. “Identifying the Stains of Life” Identifying challenges and their impact through guided imagery followed by another arts modality appropriate to the group
3. “First Washing Cycle” Hearing out the challenges
4. “The Rinsing Cycle” Immersing our challenges in the cleansing wisdom waters of the past using storytelling
5. “Wringing Cycle” Drawing out the essence of wisdom through the Six Word Wisdom Gem
6. “Hanging out the Washing to Dry”: Sharing our wisdom using spectragram
7. Coll-Expression: Showing off our fresh outlooks through enacted preferred future scenarios

Vignette: Glide Supportive Housing

- Daylong Retreat to build team, identify challenges, address burn out, promote self-care for staff working in community challenged by HIV, drug addiction, severe and persistent mental and physical illness and frequent deaths





Six Word Wisdom Gem



Sharing Wisdom Over the Washing Line



Wisdom Washing Line



Collexpressing of Collective Wisdom

