



A Mural of Mentors and Ancestors

Overview: This is an activity in which the participants create a visual tribute to the ancestors and mentors who have helped shaped them as activists and feminists, and in which they reflect together on leadership and facilitation qualities needed for feminist movement building.

Purpose: This exercise can be used at different moments – at the start of a workshop for personal introductions and building a sense of community or at a specific moment to introduce the topics of leadership, facilitation or women’s rights struggles over time. It also can be used to probe people’s activist and feminist journeys as a way to begin a conversation on feminism. By paying tribute to mentors, it brings their energy, history and spirit into the room and highlights some important qualities for leadership and facilitation.

Time: 1 hour

Materials and Space Needed:

- Space on a wall or in a visible place to create mural
- Colored paper, big enough for name, qualities and photo or image
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Flip chart
- Newsprint
- Markers

Credit: Adapted from Alda Facio’s work with IFUN and JASS Mesoamerica





Process:

- Introduce the activity. Hand out paper and direct people to the supplies on hand for decorating their mural pieces. Prior to the workshop, you can ask people to bring a photo or image of a mentor/ancestor that they would like to highlight, explaining the idea of the mural.

Individually:

- Ask everyone: Think back over your life, select one particular woman who has been very meaningful in your development and growth as an activist, someone who has helped you understand women's rights, inequality, gender, or feminism. Think about her qualities that have inspired and challenged you. She can be a woman you know personally, a public figure, or someone from a different time in history.
- *Note: As a facilitator, you should create a mural piece as well. To save time and keep things fluid, the following instructions should be written on flip chart:*
 - On a colored piece of paper, write:
 - Her name
 - Country
 - 1-2 words that convey her special attributes or qualities
 - *Optional: attach a photo of her to the mural piece or a symbol that represents her qualities and attributes*

In plenary:

- Have people tape their mural piece on the wall one by one, introduce themselves, then share their mentor's name, her relationship to them, one or two qualities that they admire about her and how she has contributed to their consciousness/awareness and activism on women's rights
- *Facilitator Note: Sometimes participants will choose their mother as their mentor-- usually only a few do this and the qualities they identify tend to be important, although some may need a bit of unpacking, like glorifying self-sacrifice, pointing out the need for balance, well-being and self-care.*
- Record key qualities and attributes on flip chart and celebrate the mentors
- Reflection on leadership and facilitation qualities: Select and pose questions to generate deeper discussion on qualities, for example:
 - Reviewing the list, what does it tell us about qualities necessary for leadership and facilitation work?
 - What are some of the most important ones? Are there some important ones that are missing?
 - What qualities do you have right now, which ones do you want to develop?
 - What do these stories tell us about struggles for women's rights, about feminism?



- As facilitator, ask for any wrap up comments from group, then summarize key participant points, emphasizing that no one can be expected to have all these qualities, hence the need for strong team work and shared facilitation. By understanding our own attributes and talents, we can better strengthen them and seek out colleagues who complement our particular set of qualities so that we can more effectively share leadership and facilitation – from individual energy and action to collective synergy and collaboration!

Additional readings: See Valerie Miller in her piece with María Suárez on “Resonance and the Butterfly Effect”: <http://www.justassociates.org/en/resources/resonance-and-butterfly-effect-feminist-epistemology-and-popular-education>