

LOTUS



LEADERSHIP LAB

Final Report

June 2026

Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sisterhood is the Key

The Lotus Leadership Lab was a two-week intensive leadership, healing, storytelling, and advocacy program created to invest in the next generation of transgender women of color leaders in Los Angeles County.

Developed and facilitated by Vanessa Cervantes and Addison Rose Vincent for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, the Lab brought together ten emerging transgender women of color leaders for an immersive experience centered on healing-centered leadership, community building, storytelling, mentorship, and personal transformation.

Held from May 19–29, 2026, at Peace Over Violence in Los Angeles, the program combined eight full days of intensive workshops, presentations, wellness activities, creative expression, and leadership development with two community-based leadership experiences: Trans Joy Day on May 31, and a public graduation ceremony and art exhibition at LA Pride on June 14.

The Lotus Leadership Lab was designed in response to ongoing barriers experienced by transgender women of color, including social isolation, discrimination, economic instability, limited access to leadership development opportunities, and a lack of affirming spaces dedicated specifically to their growth and wellbeing. Through a competitive application process, more than forty transgender women of color from across Los Angeles County applied to participate, demonstrating a significant demand for culturally responsive leadership programming designed specifically for this community

The curriculum intentionally integrated healing and leadership development, recognizing that sustainable community leadership requires both personal wellbeing and collective empowerment. Participants engaged in workshops on trauma, healing justice, mutual aid, community care, storytelling, advocacy, leadership styles, intergenerational leadership, and community organizing. The curriculum was further enriched by presentations from transgender women leaders, wellness practices including yoga, meditation, and sound baths, and activities exploring the rich history of transgender communities in Los Angeles.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the program, participants received comprehensive support designed to reduce barriers to participation and foster a culture of care. This included daily meals and snacks, transportation assistance, art supplies, wellness resources, professional development opportunities, and a stipend upon successful completion of the program. Participants also received professional headshots, leadership resources, self-care supplies, and books focused on transgender history and storytelling.

A central component of the program was the development of participant-created artwork exploring the theme, **“What would Los Angeles look like under my leadership?”** Through mixed-media projects, participants reflected on their experiences, identified community challenges, and envisioned transformative futures for themselves and their communities. These works were ultimately showcased at the Trans Galleria exhibition during LA Pride, where thousands of community members viewed the participants’ artistic visions and leadership perspectives.

Evaluation data demonstrated overwhelmingly positive outcomes across all measured indicators. **Participants reported increased confidence, resilience, leadership development, community connectedness, trust in others, knowledge of transgender history, access to mentorship, and confidence in advocating for both their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their communities.** Survey results also demonstrated strong gains in participants’ sense of belonging and community connection, with participants consistently reporting that the Lab had a positive impact on their lives.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Lotus Leadership Lab was the creation of a lasting sisterhood among participants. What began as a cohort of strangers quickly evolved into a network of mutual support, friendship, mentorship, and collective leadership.

Participants repeatedly described the Lab as one of the first spaces where they felt fully seen, affirmed, celebrated, and connected to other transgender women of color.

Through shared learning, healing, creativity, and community engagement, participants built relationships that continue beyond the formal conclusion of the program.

The success of the Lotus Leadership Lab demonstrates **the importance of investing in leadership development opportunities created by and for transgender women of color.** By combining healing, leadership, storytelling, mentorship, and community engagement, the Lab not only strengthened individual participants but also contributed to a growing network of leaders committed to creating safer, healthier, and more equitable futures for transgender communities throughout Los Angeles County.

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Why the Program was Named “Lotus”

The name Lotus Leadership Lab was chosen to honor both the legacy of transgender women who came before us and the future leaders emerging today.

The Lab takes its name from a sisterhood formed in Los Angeles in the early 2000s by a group of transgender women, including Queen Victoria Ortega, who later served as a mentor for the inaugural Lotus Leadership Lab cohort. Inspired by the film *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the group created the name **League of Transsexual United Sisters, forming the acronym LOTUS**. Over the following decades, members of this sisterhood became respected leaders, advocates, organizers, mentors, and community builders who helped shape and strengthen transgender communities throughout Los Angeles.

When creating the Lotus Leadership Lab, we wanted to honor that legacy of sisterhood, leadership, and community care while also creating space for a new generation of transgender women of color leaders to grow, connect, and thrive.

The lotus flower itself symbolizes resilience, transformation, growth, and beauty. Just as a lotus blooms despite difficult conditions, transgender women of color continue to rise, lead, heal, and create change despite the barriers they face. **The flower represents not only personal growth, but also the power of community, possibility, and renewal.** Most importantly, the lotus symbolizes blooming.

Through healing, leadership development, mentorship, storytelling, and sisterhood, participants were encouraged to recognize their own power and potential. The Lotus Leadership Lab was named not only to honor a historic sisterhood, but to celebrate the blossoming of a new one.

ABOUT THE LOTUS LEADERSHIP LAB

Program Overview

The Lotus Leadership Lab was a two-week intensive leadership, healing, storytelling, and advocacy program created to empower and invest in the next generation of transgender women of color leaders throughout Los Angeles County. Developed and facilitated by Vanessa Cervantes and Addison Rose Vincent, **the Lab brought together ten emerging transgender women of color leaders for an immersive experience centered on healing-centered leadership, community building, mentorship, creative expression, and personal transformation.**

The program was designed in response to the unique challenges facing transgender women of color, including social isolation, discrimination, economic instability, barriers to leadership opportunities, and limited access to affirming spaces dedicated to their growth and wellbeing. The Lab sought to create a space where participants could strengthen their leadership skills while also building meaningful relationships, exploring healing practices, deepening their understanding of community history, and envisioning the futures they wish to create for themselves and their communities.

The intensive took place over eight full-day sessions from May 19-29, 2026, at Peace Over Violence in Los Angeles, California. Following the intensive, participants completed two community-based leadership experiences: **Trans Joy Day on May 31, 2026, and the Lotus Leadership Lab Graduation Ceremony and Trans Galleria Exhibition at LA Pride on June 14, 2026.** Together, these experiences provided participants with opportunities to learn, practice, and publicly demonstrate their leadership.

Program Vision

The Lotus Leadership Lab was founded on the belief that healing and leadership are inseparable.

For transgender women of color, leadership often emerges through lived experiences of resilience, survival, advocacy, caregiving, creativity, and community building. The Lab recognized that many traditional leadership programs focus primarily on technical skills while overlooking the personal healing, community connection, and self-discovery that make sustainable leadership possible.

The program therefore embraced a **healing-centered leadership framework** that encouraged participants to explore not only how they could lead others, but also how they could care for themselves and their communities in the process.

ABOUT THE LOTUS LEADERSHIP LAB

The Lab's vision was grounded in several core beliefs:

Healing is leadership

Storytelling is power

Leadership can take many forms

Trans women of color deserve opportunities to thrive

Community care is essential

Our histories matter

Our futures matter

Participants were encouraged to see themselves as part of a larger lineage of transgender women of color leaders, artists, organizers, healers, advocates, and changemakers who have shaped Los Angeles County and communities across the country.

Program Objectives

The Lotus Leadership Lab was designed to achieve six primary objectives:

- **Strengthen Leadership Skills:** Equip participants with leadership frameworks, communication tools, advocacy strategies, and problem-solving skills that prepare them to lead within their communities.
- **Promote Healing and Wellbeing:** Introduce participants to healing-centered practices that support resilience, emotional wellbeing, self-reflection, and long-term sustainability.
- **Foster Storytelling and Self-Expression:** Provide opportunities for participants to explore their identities, experiences, values, and visions for the future through storytelling, creative expression, reflection, and art.
- **Build Community and Sisterhood:** Create meaningful opportunities for participants to develop relationships with one another while fostering trust, belonging, accountability, and mutual support.
- **Connect Participants with Mentors:** Facilitate direct engagement with established transgender women of color leaders who could share their experiences, wisdom, challenges, and leadership journeys.
- **Cultivate Future Community Leaders:** Support participants in identifying community challenges, imagining solutions, and developing the confidence necessary to advocate for themselves and others.

ABOUT THE LOTUS LEADERSHIP LAB

The Lotus Leadership Model

The Lotus Leadership Lab utilized an intentionally designed model that integrated healing, leadership development, history, mentorship, storytelling, and community building. Rather than separating healing and leadership into distinct tracks, the program alternated between Healing Days and Leadership Days across the two-week intensive.

Healing Days focused on helping participants deepen their understanding of wellness, trauma, resilience, and self-care. Each Healing Day included immersive healing experiences such as yoga, mindfulness, meditation, sound baths, breathwork, movement-based healing practices, creative expression, and guided reflection. These activities were complemented by educational presentations exploring topics such as healing justice, trauma, safety, joy, and community care.

Healing Days also emphasized the importance of integrating healing into leadership practice. Participants explored how personal wellbeing, emotional awareness, and collective care can strengthen leadership and community impact.

Leadership Days focused on building practical leadership skills and strengthening participants' confidence as emerging community leaders. Sessions included leadership training, communication strategies, narrative power, relational leadership, collective care, advocacy, boundary setting, and collaborative problem-solving. Participants engaged in group exercises, role-playing activities, discussions, support groups, and leadership development exercises that encouraged them to think critically about the challenges facing their communities and how they might contribute to meaningful solutions.

Together, the Healing Day and Leadership Day framework reinforced the idea that effective leadership requires both personal wellbeing and community responsibility.

Mentorship and Intergenerational Leadership

A cornerstone of the Lotus Leadership Lab was the integration of mentorship from established transgender women of color leaders.

Each day of the intensive featured a dedicated mentor presentation during which participants heard directly from leaders who shared their personal stories, lessons learned, leadership

ABOUT THE LOTUS LEADERSHIP LAB

journeys, and reflections on healing, advocacy, and community service. These conversations provided participants with access to role models whose experiences reflected their own identities and aspirations.

Mentors included:

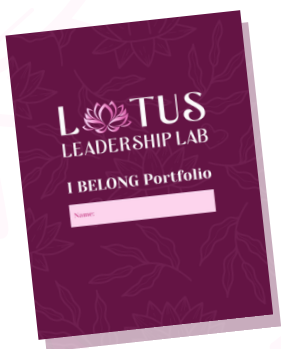
- Queen Chela Demuir
- Jia Ryan Olaes
- Maria Roman-Taylorson
- Jazzmun Crayton
- Khloe Rios Wyatt
- Calypso Jete
- Vanessa Cervantes
- Queen Victoria Ortega

These mentors represented diverse leadership pathways and demonstrated that leadership can emerge through advocacy, organizing, storytelling, entrepreneurship, community care, education, public service, and artistic expression.

Honoring Transgender Women of Color History

The Lotus Leadership Lab intentionally incorporated historical education into every day of the intensive. Each session included a presentation highlighting the contributions, resilience, and leadership of transgender women of color throughout history. Participants learned about historical figures who challenged injustice, organized communities, cared for one another, and helped create pathways for future generations.

By exploring these stories, participants gained a deeper understanding of the historical foundations of transgender advocacy while recognizing themselves as part of an ongoing legacy of leadership and resistance.



The “I Belong” Portfolio

Throughout the intensive, participants completed the I Belong Portfolio, a guided workbook designed specifically for the Lotus Leadership Lab.

The portfolio served as both a learning tool and a personal reflection space. Through journaling prompts, storytelling exercises, leadership reflections, creative activities, and visioning exercises, participants explored their identities, values, leadership styles, healing journeys, and aspirations.

ABOUT THE LOTUS LEADERSHIP LAB

Participants used the portfolio daily to process new ideas, document their growth, and begin imagining the futures they wished to create for themselves and their communities. Dedicated portfolio time was incorporated into every day of the Lab, ensuring participants had structured opportunities for reflection and integration.

Support Circles and Community Building

One of the defining features of the Lotus Leadership Lab was the intentional creation of space for relationship building and collective care.

Each day included a 75-minute support circle facilitated through a trauma-informed and consent-based approach. These circles provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences, share personal stories, offer encouragement, and deepen relationships with one another.

Over the course of the intensive, these conversations helped transform a group of strangers into a close-knit cohort connected by trust, vulnerability, mutual support, and shared experiences.

Many participants later described the relationships formed through the Lab as one of the most meaningful aspects of their experience. **What began as a leadership program evolved into a lasting sisterhood that continues beyond the formal conclusion of the Lab.**

Creating a Space of Belonging

From its inception, the Lotus Leadership Lab was designed to be more than a training program. It was designed to be a space of belonging.

Participants were welcomed into an environment grounded in compassion, respect, confidentiality, accountability, accessibility, and care. They were encouraged to bring their full selves into the space without fear of judgment, competition, or exclusion. The program emphasized that participants did not need to be perfect, have all the answers, or present themselves as fully healed in order to be leaders. Instead, they were **encouraged to embrace their experiences, honor their journeys, and recognize the value they already bring to their communities.**

This commitment to belonging ultimately became one of the defining characteristics of the Lotus Leadership Lab and laid the foundation for the deep relationships, personal growth, and collective leadership that emerged throughout the program.

COMMUNITY NEED, OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

Responding to a Community Need

The Lotus Leadership Lab was created in response to the ongoing challenges and barriers facing transgender women of color throughout Los Angeles County.

While transgender women of color have long served as leaders, advocates, caregivers, artists, educators, and organizers within their communities, opportunities specifically designed to support their leadership development, healing, mentorship, and professional growth remain limited. Many transgender women of color continue to navigate discrimination, economic instability, housing insecurity, barriers to healthcare, social isolation, and limited access to affirming spaces where they can safely explore leadership and personal development.

The overwhelming response to the Lotus Leadership Lab demonstrated both the need for and the demand for programs specifically designed by and for transgender women of color.

More than forty transgender women of color applied to participate in the inaugural cohort, despite only ten spaces being available. The volume and quality of applications highlighted a strong desire for leadership development opportunities that center healing, community, storytelling, mentorship, and sisterhood.

Applicant Demographics and Community Characteristics

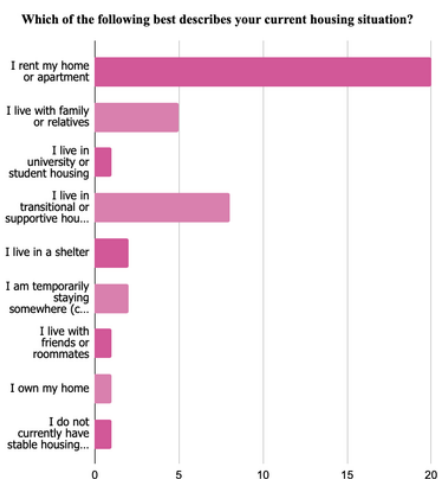
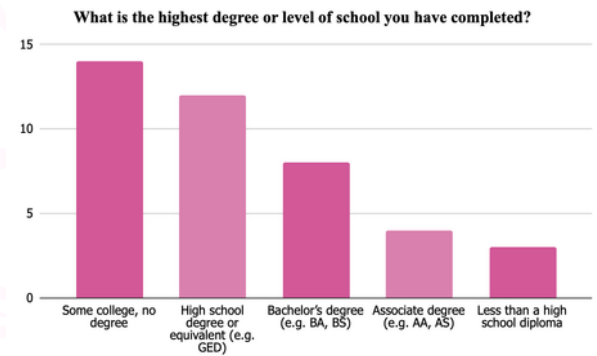
The applicant pool reflected a diverse cross-section of transgender women of color from across Los Angeles County.

A total of **41 transgender women of color applied** to participate in the inaugural Lotus Leadership Lab cohort. Applicants ranged from approximately 18 to nearly 70 years old, representing multiple generations of transgender women leaders, advocates, students, artists, healthcare workers, performers, organizers, and community members. This intergenerational representation demonstrated both the continued need for transgender leadership development and the desire for spaces that foster community connection across age groups.

The applicant pool was racially and culturally diverse. **More than half of applicants (56%) identified as Latinx/Latine, while nearly half (46%) identified as Black or African American.** Additional identities represented within the applicant pool included Asian, Indigenous, Pacific Islander, White, and multiracial identities. Several applicants selected multiple racial and ethnic identities, reflecting the intersectional experiences of transgender women of color throughout Los Angeles County.

COMMUNITY NEED, OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

Applicants also represented a wide range of educational experiences. While nearly one-fifth of applicants (20%) held bachelor's degrees, **the majority reported either some college experience (34%) or a high school diploma/GED (29%) as their highest completed level of education.** These findings demonstrate that leadership potential exists across educational backgrounds and reinforce the importance of creating leadership development opportunities that are accessible to participants regardless of formal educational attainment.



Housing stability emerged as another significant theme. While renting was the most common housing situation reported, **only 49% of applicants reported renting their own apartment or home. Approximately 20% reported living in transitional or supportive housing, while others reported living with family members, residing in shelters, couch surfing, living in student housing, or experiencing homelessness.** These findings underscore the ongoing housing challenges facing many transgender women of color and highlight the importance of reducing barriers to participation through stipends, transportation support, meals, supplies, and other participant-centered supports.

The application process also highlighted the prevalence of disability, neurodivergence, and mental health-related experiences within the community. **More than half of applicants (51%) reported at least one disability, mental health condition, neurodivergent identity, or accessibility need.** Commonly reported experiences included learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, psychiatric disabilities, ADHD, chronic pain, and vision impairments. These findings reinforced the importance of designing the Lab through an accessibility-centered, trauma-informed, and healing-centered framework.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that leadership development for transgender women of color cannot be separated from broader issues of economic stability, housing access, mental health, disability justice, healthcare access, and community support. **At the same time, applicants demonstrated extraordinary resilience, creativity, and commitment to community leadership.** The application data revealed a community rich in talent, lived experience, and leadership potential, while also highlighting the structural barriers that make programs like the Lotus Leadership Lab both necessary and impactful.

COMMUNITY NEED, OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

Outreach and Recruitment Strategy

Recruitment for the Lotus Leadership Lab utilized a community-centered outreach strategy grounded in trusted relationships and existing transgender community networks.



A promotional flyer was developed by Co-Facilitator Vanessa Cervantes and distributed through both digital and print channels. The flyer included both a QR code and direct application link to maximize accessibility. Outreach emphasized the Lab's focus on leadership development, healing, mentorship, storytelling, creative expression, community building, and advocacy, while also highlighting participant benefits such as the \$1,100 completion incentive, meals, snacks, program supplies, graduation recognition, and swag.

Recruitment efforts included: Social media outreach; Email marketing campaigns; Community listservs; Text message outreach; Word-of-mouth referrals; Direct outreach through trusted community leaders; Community-based organization referrals

Special outreach support was provided through the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health LGBTQIA2S+ UsCC, the Trans Service Provider Network (TSPN-LA), and numerous community-based organizations serving transgender communities throughout Los Angeles County.

Outreach partners included but were not limited to:



This strategy ensured that recruitment efforts were rooted in trusted relationships and reached transgender women of color across a wide range of geographic locations, identities, and lived experiences.

COMMUNITY NEED, OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

Emerging Themes from Applications

Community, Sisterhood, and Belonging

The strongest theme across applications was the desire for authentic connection with other transgender women of color.

Many applicants described feeling isolated in their personal lives, workplaces, advocacy spaces, or broader communities. Several specifically identified the opportunity to connect with other transgender women of color as one of the primary reasons they applied.

Applicants shared the following statements:

"I don't have too many interpersonal relationships with other trans women of color so I'm hoping to leave with quite a few new sisters."

"I crave connections with other trans women and am hoping to find that."

"To be amongst trans women of color being able to socialize without being catty and learn from one another."

These responses reflected a widespread desire for spaces grounded in mutual support, trust, collaboration, and belonging.

Leadership Development and Community Impact

Applicants consistently demonstrated a commitment to community leadership.

Many described involvement in advocacy efforts, community organizing, HIV prevention, healthcare, education, street outreach, mutual aid, arts and culture, public speaking, youth development, and policy advocacy. Others described supporting fellow transgender community members through informal mentorship, emotional support, and resource navigation.

Applicants repeatedly expressed a desire to strengthen their leadership skills not for personal advancement alone, but to better serve and uplift their communities.

Applicants shared expressed the following:

"I want to be a better resource for my trans community."

"I wanna be able to open doors and hold them open for the next generation."

COMMUNITY NEED, OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

Healing, Mental Health, and Resilience

Applicants also emphasized the importance of healing and mental health support. Many described experiences with burnout, anxiety, depression, trauma, discrimination, housing instability, and the emotional burden of navigating systems that often fail transgender communities. At the same time, applicants demonstrated remarkable resilience and a strong commitment to personal growth.

Several applicants specifically requested opportunities to learn about mindfulness, self-care, healing practices, emotional regulation, and sustainable leadership. These responses strongly informed the healing-centered structure of the Lotus Leadership Lab.

Mentorship and Representation

Many applicants expressed a desire to learn directly from transgender women of color who had successfully navigated leadership roles, careers, advocacy work, and community organizing.

Applicants described mentorship not only as a pathway for professional growth, but also as a source of affirmation, guidance, inspiration, and hope.

Collectively, these responses reinforced the importance of creating opportunities for emerging leaders to build relationships with established transgender women of color leaders who could share both practical knowledge and lived experience.

Building on Existing Strengths

While the applications revealed significant challenges facing transgender women of color, they also highlighted extraordinary strengths.

Applicants described organizing protests, speaking at city council meetings, facilitating support groups, mentoring youth, creating art, advocating for healthcare access, supporting people experiencing homelessness, producing films, leading community programs, performing in drag and nightlife spaces, engaging in outreach, and creating opportunities for others to thrive.

The application process demonstrated that transgender women of color are already leading within their communities. **The need identified through the application process was not a lack of leadership potential, but rather a need for greater investment, mentorship, healing opportunities, visibility, and community connection.**

The Lotus Leadership Lab was designed to meet that need.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Overview of the 8-Day Intensive

The Lotus Leadership Lab was implemented as an eight-day intensive leadership and healing experience for 10 trans women of color held over two consecutive weeks at Peace Over Violence in Los Angeles, California. Sessions were held Tuesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and combined healing-centered practices, leadership development, mentorship, historical education, creative expression, and community building.

Each day followed a structured format that included movement and wellness activities, interactive workshops, mentor presentations, support circles, historical education, portfolio development, and reflection. **The curriculum alternated between Healing Days and Leadership Days, allowing participants to strengthen both their personal wellbeing and leadership capacity throughout the two-week experience.**

Participants were provided breakfast snacks, beverages, hot lunch by Chef Yealang, take-home snacks, journals, art supplies, fidget tools, and other learning materials each day. These supports were intentionally incorporated into the program design to reduce barriers to participation and ensure participants could fully engage in the experience.

Day One (Healing Day): Defining Trauma and Its Impacts

Day One began with yin yoga facilitated by Studio Om, creating a gentle and grounding opening for the first day of the Lab. Participants were welcomed into the space, introduced to the I Belong Portfolio, and guided through community agreements rooted in safety, dignity, accountability, confidentiality, consent, and care.

The core workshop focused on defining trauma and understanding its impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Participants explored acute trauma, chronic trauma, complex trauma, and intergenerational trauma, while reflecting on how trauma can show up through anxiety, isolation, hypervigilance, perfectionism, survival behaviors, and difficulty trusting others.

Participants also discussed why healing from trauma matters, including how healing can break cycles, restore wholeness, improve mental and physical health, strengthen relationships, reclaim choice and power, and build resilience and meaning.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Featured Mentor: Queen Chela Demuir

Queen Mother Chela Demuir joined participants as the first mentor speaker. As Founder and Executive Director of Unique Woman's Coalition, the oldest trans-led organization in Southern California, Queen Chela shared wisdom from decades of community leadership, advocacy, ballroom culture, and Black trans organizing.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Pre-Stonewall Resistance and Gender Nonconformity, 1940s-Early 1960s*

Participants explored how postwar Los Angeles became a refuge for queer and trans people while also being a site of intense policing, criminalization, and surveillance. The lesson included discussion of "cross-dressing" laws, police raids, underground bars, performance spaces, informal housing networks, and the Cooper Do-nuts Uprising of 1959.

Art Activity: *Self-Portraits as Future Leaders*

Participants created self-portraits reflecting the future versions of themselves as leaders in the community.

Support Circle Prompt:

What brought you to Lotus Leadership Lab, and what do you need in order to feel safe, supported, and open during this experience?

Lunch Menu:

Pan Seared Salmon with Garlic Teriyaki Glaze, Jasmine Rice, Assorted Grilled Vegetables, and Garden Salad.

Day Two (Leadership Day): Leadership Styles and Approaches

Day Two focused on defining leadership styles and approaches. Participants explored different ways leadership can show up, including relational leadership, collaborative leadership, service leadership, advocacy, storytelling, facilitation, and community care.

The day included leadership scenarios that invited participants to think through real-world challenges, practice decision-making, and identify how they might respond as leaders in community settings.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Featured Mentor: Jia Ryan Olaes Miramontes

Jia Ryan Olaes Miramontes joined participants as the featured mentor speaker. Through the Department Of Public Health, Jia is an advocate for the well-being of the TGI community. Additionally, Jia volunteers as Reentry advocate responding to those in the LGBTQI2-S community who are impacted by incarceration. Having served with the Transgender Service Provider Network and the LA City Transgender Advisory Council, Jia hopes to actively create progressive & inclusive change in policy for TGI identities with a focus on proper Gender Affirming care. Their presentation supported participants in thinking about leadership, identity, advocacy, and the importance of showing up authentically in community work.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Gay Liberation, Street Survival, and Early Trans Visibility, Late 1960s-1970s*

Participants explored the period following the Black Cat Tavern protests and Stonewall, while examining how trans people were often marginalized within mainstream gay liberation movements. The lesson focused on street survival, chosen family systems, ballroom and pageant culture, Hollywood Boulevard as a survival corridor, and the leadership of Black and Brown trans women.

Art Activity: *Stories of Resilience*

Participants created artwork reflecting moments of survival, strength, and resilience in their own lives and communities.

Support Circle Prompt:

What kind of leader are you becoming, and what strengths have you already developed through your lived experiences?

Lunch Menu:

Assorted Fried Chicken, Greens, Mac & Cheese, Red Beans & Rice, and Corn Bread.

Closing Wellness Practice:

The day ended with a grounding meditation session facilitated by North Ray Yoga.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Day Three (Healing Day): Survival Responses & Trauma-Informed Care

Day Three began with a sound bath facilitated by Studio Om, giving participants space to regulate, rest, and reconnect with their bodies before moving into deeper healing work.

The core workshop focused on survival responses and trauma-informed care. **Participants explored how fight, flight, freeze, fawn, and other survival responses can develop in response to harm, instability, rejection, violence, and systemic oppression.** The session emphasized that survival responses are not failures, but adaptations that helped people stay alive.

Participants also explored how leaders can create trauma-informed spaces by honoring consent, reducing shame, supporting choice, practicing patience, and recognizing the impact of trauma on communication, trust, and belonging.

Featured Mentor: Maria Roman-Taylorson

Maria Roman-Taylorson joined participants as the featured mentor speaker, sharing lessons from her leadership journey and offering insight into advocacy, community care, and navigating systems while staying connected to purpose. Currently serving as the Vice President and Chief of Staff of the TransLatine Coalition, she oversees critical social services and has served on influential boards such as the LA County HIV Commission.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: HIV/AIDS, Community Care, and Survival, 1980s-Early 1990s

Participants explored how transgender communities responded to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, institutional neglect, discrimination, and loss. The lesson emphasized mutual aid, caregiving, chosen family, community survival, and the leadership of trans women of color during a period of crisis.

Art Activity: What Sisterhood Looks Like

Participants created artwork exploring what sisterhood means, how it feels, and how it can function as a source of protection, joy, accountability, and care.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Support Circle Prompt:

How have you learned to survive, and what would it look like to be supported beyond survival?

Lunch Menu:

Alfredo Pasta with Chicken, Caesar Salad, Garlic Bread, and Fresh Fruit.

Day Four (Leadership Day): Intersectionality & TWOC Representation

Day Four focused on intersectionality and transgender women of color representation.

Participants explored how race, gender, class, sexuality, immigration status, disability, housing status, and other identities shape lived experiences and access to power.

The group activity, “Owning Your Story,” invited participants to reflect on how their stories have been shaped by systems, community, family, survival, joy, and self-definition. Participants explored how storytelling can be used as a leadership tool and how representation can challenge stigma and expand what is possible for future generations.

Featured Mentor: Jazzmun Crayton

Jazzmun Crayton joined participants as the featured mentor speaker. Her presentation connected representation, visibility, performance, advocacy, and public storytelling, offering participants a powerful example of leadership through culture, art, and presence.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Creative Resistance, Visibility, and Underground Culture, Late 1990s–Early 2000s*

Participants explored a period when transgender identity increasingly appeared through culture, politics, art, media, nightlife, and community organizing. The lesson highlighted trans performance art, punk scenes, indie media, youth organizing, nightlife, film festivals, the importance of creative resistance, and sisterhood groups like Tranny Rockstar.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Art Activity: *Goals and Dreams for 2026*

Participants created visual reflections of their goals, dreams, and hopes for the year ahead.

Support Circle Prompt:

What parts of your story are you ready to own more fully, and how can your story help someone else feel less alone?

Lunch Menu:

BBQ Chicken, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, Corn on the Cob, and Rolls.

Closing Wellness Practice:

The day ended with a grounding yoga session facilitated by North Ray Yoga.

Day Five (Healing Day): Healing Justice & Centering Joy

Day Five began with guided meditation facilitated by Studio Om. This opening practice helped participants transition into the second week of the intensive with grounding, reflection, and renewed connection to themselves and one another.

The core workshop focused on healing justice and centering joy. **Participants explored how healing can be both personal and collective, and how joy can function as a practice of resistance in communities impacted by violence, discrimination, poverty, and exclusion.**

Participants discussed what it means to create conditions where transgender women of color can experience safety, joy, visibility, rest, and opportunity.

Featured Mentor: Khloe Rios-Wyatt

Khloe Rios-Wyatt joined participants as the featured mentor speaker, sharing reflections on advocacy, community organizing, and creating systems-level change rooted in lived experience and care.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Healing, Advocacy, and Expanding Visibility, Late 2000s–Early 2010s*

Participants explored the growth of transgender-led advocacy, increased public visibility, community health efforts, and expanding leadership opportunities for trans communities in Los Angeles.

Art Activity: *Vision Board of LA Led by You*

Participants began developing their culminating art pieces in response to the prompt: *What would Los Angeles look like under your leadership?*

Support Circle Prompt:

Where does joy live in your life, and what would it look like to build a Los Angeles where trans women of color can thrive?

Lunch Menu:

Pan Seared Salmon with Garlic Teriyaki Glaze, Jasmine Rice, Assorted Grilled Vegetables, and Garden Salad.

Day Six (Leadership Day): Safer Sex, User-Centered Design & Community Solutions

Day Six focused on practical leadership, community education, and user-centered design. **The day included a safer sex workshop led by fellow Lotus participant Amor Hernandez, creating an opportunity for participant-led learning and peer leadership within the cohort.**

Participants then engaged in a user-centered design activity, exploring how programs, services, and community interventions can be designed around the real needs, experiences, and feedback of the people most impacted.

Featured Mentor: Calypso Jete

Calypso Jete joined participants as the featured mentor speaker, sharing insight into leadership, creativity, community accountability, and the importance of designing work that reflects the needs of the community.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Documentary Screening: The Queen, 1968*

Participants watched and discussed *The Queen*, a documentary exploring drag pageantry, gender expression, visibility, competition, and community formation. The discussion helped participants connect earlier histories of performance, femininity, and public visibility to contemporary transgender and gender-expansive communities.

Art Activity: *Vision Board of LA Led by You*

Participants continued developing their culminating artwork, refining their visions for Los Angeles under their leadership.

Support Circle Prompt:

What does our community need, and how can we design solutions that are rooted in listening, care, and lived experience?

Lunch Menu:

Assorted Fried Chicken, Greens, Mac & Cheese, Red Beans & Rice, and Corn Bread.

Closing Wellness Practice:

The day ended with a meditation session facilitated by North Ray Yoga.

Day Seven (Healing Day): Mutual Aid, Burnout & Joy as Resistance

Day Seven began with yin yoga and a sound bath facilitated by Studio Om. This combined wellness practice supported participants in grounding their bodies, releasing stress, and preparing for a day focused on sustainability and collective care.

The core workshop explored mutual aid, burnout, and joy as resistance. Participants discussed the difference between charity and mutual aid, the importance of community-based support networks, and how burnout can show up in leaders, caregivers, organizers, artists, and advocates.

The session emphasized that rest, joy, boundaries, and sustainability are not separate from leadership; they are necessary for leadership to continue.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Featured Mentor: Queen Victoria Ortega

Queen Victoria Ortega joined participants as the featured mentor speaker, sharing wisdom from her leadership journey and encouraging participants to continue investing in themselves, their communities, and their futures.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Documentary Screening: Paris Is Burning, 1990*

Participants watched and discussed *Paris Is Burning*, exploring ballroom culture, chosen family, survival, race, class, gender expression, and the cultural contributions of trans women and queer people of color. The film created space for conversations about sisterhood, performance, resilience, visibility, and community legacy.

Art Activity: *Vision Board of LA Led by You*

Participants continued building their culminating art pieces and began preparing their work for public presentation.

Support Circle Prompt:

What helps you sustain yourself, and how can we care for one another without burning ourselves out?

Lunch Menu:

Alfredo Pasta with Chicken, Caesar Salad, Garlic Bread, and Fresh Fruit.

Day Eight (Leadership Day): Legacy & Intergenerational Leadership

Day Eight focused on legacy, intergenerational leadership, strategy, and preparation for the community events that would follow the intensive. Participants reflected on what they had learned, how they had grown, and what kind of leaders they were becoming.

The group activity, “Strategy Creation and Pitch,” invited participants to identify a community issue, develop a solution, and practice presenting their ideas. This activity allowed participants to apply the leadership, storytelling, healing, and design skills they had built throughout the Lab.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Participants also finalized their culminating artwork, artist statements, and bios for the Trans Galleria exhibition. The day included a professional photoshoot with photographer Pup, allowing each participant to receive professional headshots for future leadership, employment, advocacy, and creative opportunities.

Featured Mentor: Vanessa Cervantes

Vanessa Cervantes joined participants as the featured mentor speaker, sharing reflections on intergenerational leadership, community responsibility, sisterhood, and the importance of continuing to lead with courage, care, and authenticity.

Los Angeles Trans History Lesson: *Documentary Screening: The Stroll, 2023*

Participants watched and discussed *The Stroll*, a documentary centering the experiences of transgender women who built community, survived, and organized in New York City's Meatpacking District. The discussion focused on survival, economic justice, violence prevention, community care, memory, and the importance of preserving trans women's histories.

Art Activity: Vision Board of LA Led by You

Participants completed their culminating artwork responding to the prompt, "What would Los Angeles look like under your leadership?"

Support Circle Prompt:

What legacy do you want to build, and what message do you want future generations of trans women of color to know?

Lunch Menu:

BBQ Chicken, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, Corn on the Cob, and Rolls.

Closing Wellness Practice:

The day ended with a grounding yoga, meditation, or sound bath session facilitated by North Ray Yoga.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

On Day Eight, our photographer Pup offered a complimentary photoshoot to the participants of the Lotus Leadership Lab.

The photoshoot included professional headshots that participants could use for social media, employment opportunities, and auditions. It also included group photoshoots to celebrate the sisterhood that emerged over the course of the Intensive.

Adrienne

Ambrose

Amor

Ariana

Cielo

Faye

Jasmin

Jo'el

Mikayla

Violeta

The Lotus Sisterhood 2026

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Community Leadership Day: Trans Joy Day

Following the eight-day intensive, **participants applied their leadership skills through participation in Trans Joy Day on May 31, 2026.** The event was a collaboration between FLUX, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's TakeActionLA2026 campaign, Lotus Leadership Lab, and numerous community partners.

The fifth annual Trans Joy Day was the most successful Trans Joy Day to date, with 550 RSVPs and approximately 350–400 attendees. **Participants supported the event through volunteer leadership roles, including registration, participant navigation, hospitality, community engagement, activity support, and stage support. One participant provided free hairstyling services, while another supported the evening program as an emcee.**

The event included free food, music, dancing, community resource tables, HIV and STI testing, groceries, massages, nail services, hairstyling, makeovers, community art activities, affinity spaces, photography, and opportunities for transgender and nonbinary community members to gather in joy.

Event outcomes included 550 RSVPs and surveys, 350–400 attendees, 100 grocery distributions, 116 HIV and STI tests completed, four people linked to PrEP services, and one person connected to HIV care services.

For many participants, Trans Joy Day was their first time volunteering at or simply attending a large-scale transgender-centered public event. The experience allowed participants to practice leadership in real time while building relationships with community members, service providers, nonprofit leaders, and other transgender and nonbinary people across Los Angeles.



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Graduation Ceremony & Trans Galleria Exhibition

The Lotus Leadership Lab concluded with a public graduation ceremony and art exhibition at LA Pride on June 14, 2026.

The graduation ceremony took place on the LA Pride stage and was led by Vanessa Cervantes. During the ceremony, Vanessa provided context about the Lotus Leadership Lab, spoke about the importance of investing in the next generation of transgender women of color leaders, and introduced each participant as they graduated.

Each participant was celebrated with flowers, a certificate of completion, \$1,100 honorarium, and three swag bags:

The Lotus Leadership Lab swag bag included art supplies, journals, writing utensils, 3 different t-shirts, a tucker or gaff from TuckItUppp, a gold lotus necklace, stress balls, fidget toys, a battery pack, stickers, glitter, and other supplies.

The Unique Woman's Coalition self-care bag included wellness and self-care items such as skincare products, makeup, bath bombs, and a Subway gift card.

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation bag included *Redefining Realness* by Janet Mock and *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker, providing participants with both a storytelling model and broader historical context for their leadership.



Lotus Leadership Lab Swag Bag Contents

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the graduation ceremony, participants showcased their culminating artwork through a Lotus Leadership Lab takeover of Trans Galleria, LA Pride's annual activation centering transgender and nonbinary art. Each participant's artwork responded to the prompt, "What would Los Angeles look like under your leadership?" The exhibition also included each participant's artist statement, self-written bio, and professional headshot from the final day of the intensive.

The Trans Galleria exhibition welcomed more than 5,000 visitors, while the LA Pride graduation ceremony took place before an estimated 15,000 spectators. **Together, these experiences provided participants with a powerful public platform to share their leadership, creativity, stories, and visions for Los Angeles.**

For many participants, this was their first time being celebrated publicly on a major stage. The graduation and exhibition served as both a culmination of the Lab and a public affirmation of the leadership, brilliance, creativity, and future impact of transgender women of color in Los Angeles County.

PROGRAM IMPACT & PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Overview

The Lotus Leadership Lab was designed to strengthen healing, leadership, storytelling, and community connection among transgender women of color in Los Angeles County. Post-program survey results demonstrate that the Lab achieved these goals at exceptionally high levels.

All ten participants reported that the Lotus Leadership Lab had an overall positive impact on their lives, with every participant selecting the highest possible rating when asked about the program's overall impact. Participants also reported significant growth in leadership confidence, resilience, community connection, healing practices, advocacy skills, and understanding of transgender history.

Healing, Mental Health & Resilience

One of the strongest outcomes of the Lab was participants' increased confidence in navigating mental health challenges and accessing support.

Participants overwhelmingly reported that they:

- Know what to do and who to talk to when facing a problem.
- Feel comfortable seeking mental health assistance when needed.
- Know how to schedule appointments with mental health professionals.
- Feel safe accessing mental health services.
- Know how to advocate for their own mental health.
- Know how to advocate for the mental health needs of their communities.

Participants also reported increased understanding of healthy coping strategies, the ability to distinguish between positive and harmful coping mechanisms, and confidence in using healthy coping skills during periods of distress. These findings suggest that the Lab successfully provided participants with practical tools for emotional regulation, self-advocacy, and long-term wellbeing.

Perhaps most notably, 100% of participants reported feeling more resilient because of their participation in the Lotus Leadership Lab, with everyone selecting the highest rating.

PROGRAM IMPACT & PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Leadership Development

Leadership growth was one of the most significant outcomes reported by participants.

90% of participants selected the highest possible rating when asked whether they see themselves as leaders in their communities, while every participant reported feeling more confident because of their participation in the Lab. Participants also overwhelmingly reported feeling inspired to advocate for their communities and developing stronger leadership skills through the program.

In addition, every participant reported that they developed as a leader in their community through the Lotus Leadership Lab, resulting in a perfect score across all survey responses.

These findings suggest that participants left the Lab with a stronger sense of self-efficacy, leadership identity, and readiness to take on visible roles within their communities.

Community Connection, Sisterhood & Belonging

The strongest theme that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative survey data was the creation of sisterhood and belonging.

Every participant reported that they gained a sisterhood of transgender women of color through the Lab. Participants also reported feeling more trusting of others, more connected to their communities, and more inspired to advocate alongside community members.

Participants repeatedly referenced sisterhood as one of the most meaningful aspects:

"Truly my favorite thing I've gathered from the Lotus Lab besides everything I've learned is the sisterhood I gained while being a part of the program. There is such a sense of community and belonging amongst them that I feel will last a lifetime."

"I enjoyed finally meeting other trans females and gaining sisterhood. I enjoyed being a part of community."

Participants consistently identified relationships with other trans women of color as one of the most impactful aspects of the experience, demonstrating that the Lab successfully addressed social isolation while fostering authentic community connection.

PROGRAM IMPACT & PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Mentorship, History & Knowledge

The mentor series and history curriculum also produced strong outcomes.

Participants overwhelmingly reported gaining mentors through the Lab and increasing their knowledge of transgender community history. Nearly every participant selected the highest possible rating for both outcomes. One participant specifically highlighted the history curriculum as her favorite component of the program.

The combination of mentor presentations and Los Angeles trans history lessons helped participants understand themselves as part of a larger legacy of leadership, resistance, creativity, and community care.

Storytelling, Healing & Creative Leadership

The Lab intentionally positioned healing, storytelling, and creativity as forms of leadership. Survey responses indicate that this framework strongly resonated with participants.

Every participant reported that they developed as:

- A healer in their community.
- A leader in their community.
- A storyteller and artist in their community.

These perfect scores demonstrate that participants not only gained knowledge and skills, but also experienced a shift in how they view their own roles within community. **Participants left the program seeing themselves as people who can lead, heal, create, advocate, and inspire others.**

Taken together, these findings suggest that Lotus Leadership Lab did more than provide leadership training. **It created a healing-centered community where transgender women of color could build relationships, strengthen their leadership identities, deepen their understanding of history, develop practical wellness tools, and envision themselves as leaders capable of shaping the future of Los Angeles County.**

FEEDBACK & OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

How the Program Can Evolve

Participant feedback regarding the Lotus Leadership Lab was overwhelmingly positive. Across surveys, participants consistently described the program as impactful, affirming, educational, and transformative. Many participants specifically highlighted the sisterhood they developed, the safety of the space, the mentorship opportunities, and the opportunity to learn about transgender history and leadership.

Several participants indicated that they would not make any significant changes to the program:

"Everything went above and beyond satisfactory."

"Honestly not really any notes. I loved it overall."

"The Lotus Leadership Lab had an overall positive impact on me."

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, participants and facilitators identified several opportunities for future growth and expansion.

Extend the Length of the Program

The most common recommendation was to provide additional time together. Many participants expressed that the two-week intensive ended just as relationships, trust, and momentum were reaching their fullest potential. Participants frequently shared that they wished the program had lasted longer or included additional opportunities to gather following the completion of the intensive.

The strong bonds that formed among participants suggest that future cohorts could benefit from an expanded model that preserves the intensive structure while creating additional opportunities for continued engagement, leadership development, and mentorship.

Increase Ongoing Mentorship Opportunities

Participants reported that mentorship was one of the most meaningful components of the program. Future iterations could expand mentorship opportunities through structured alumni engagement, one-on-one mentorship matching, leadership coaching, professional development workshops, or periodic mentor gatherings.

Since the completion of the program, facilitators and participants have continued to stay connected through group text messages, social media group chats, and individual mentorship relationships. Participants have continued to share employment opportunities, community events, resources, and mutual support with one another, demonstrating a desire for sustained engagement beyond the formal program period.

FEEDBACK & OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Expand Community Leadership Opportunities

The Trans Joy Day volunteer experience and LA Pride graduation ceremony were frequently discussed as highlights of the program. These opportunities allowed participants to apply leadership skills in public settings, engage with community members, and gain visibility as emerging leaders.

Future iterations of the Lab could incorporate additional community-based leadership experiences throughout the program, allowing participants more opportunities to practice public speaking, advocacy, event leadership, community organizing, facilitation, and creative expression.

Continue Investing in Healing-Centered Spaces

One of the strongest themes emerging from participant feedback was the importance of having a space created by and for transgender women of color.

Participants repeatedly described the Lab as a rare environment where they felt safe, affirmed, understood, and supported. Many shared that it was their first time being in a space with so many other transgender women of color where competition and scarcity were replaced by collaboration, healing, and sisterhood.

The success of the program reinforces the importance of continuing to invest in culturally responsive, trauma-informed spaces where transgender women of color can build leadership skills while also experiencing belonging, joy, and community care.

Facilitator Reflection

An additional lesson learned from implementation was the effectiveness of the intensive model itself.

The original contract envisioned leadership sessions spread across several months. However, facilitators intentionally redesigned the program into an eight-day intensive format based on prior experience working with transgender communities and leadership programs.

This decision proved highly successful. The intensive structure allowed participants to build trust quickly, maintain momentum, deepen relationships, and engage consistently with the curriculum. Attendance remained strong, participant engagement remained high, and meaningful relationships developed rapidly throughout the cohort.

Future iterations may benefit from maintaining the intensive model while extending the overall program length through additional leadership labs, alumni gatherings, mentorship opportunities, community events, or advanced leadership cohorts.

CONCLUSION

A Sisterhood in Bloom

The inaugural Lotus Leadership Lab exceeded its intended goals and demonstrated the transformative impact of investing in transgender women of color leadership.



Over the course of eight intensive days, ten transgender women of color came together as strangers and left as sisters. Through healing-centered workshops, leadership development activities, historical education, mentorship, creative expression, community engagement, and shared experiences, participants strengthened their confidence, expanded their leadership skills, deepened their understanding of community history, and developed lasting relationships with one another.

The quantitative outcomes from the post-program survey were remarkable. Participants overwhelmingly reported increased confidence, resilience, leadership capacity, community connection, mental health awareness, and knowledge of transgender history. Every participant reported that the program had a positive impact on their life and that they developed as a leader, healer, and storyteller through the experience.

Yet some of the most meaningful outcomes of the Lotus Leadership Lab cannot be fully captured through survey data alone.

From the earliest days of the program, participants repeatedly expressed how rare it felt to be in a space created specifically for transgender women of color that centered abundance rather than scarcity, collaboration rather than competition, and healing rather than survival. Many participants shared that this was the first time they had been in a room filled with other transgender women of color where they felt fully safe, supported, and understood.

The strength of the relationships that emerged throughout the intensive quickly became one of the program's most significant outcomes. By the third day of the Lab, several participants had already begun attending community events together outside of program hours, supporting one another's performances, celebrating one another's accomplishments, and forming friendships that extended beyond the classroom. **What began as a leadership cohort evolved into a genuine sisterhood.**

This sisterhood continued long after the conclusion of the intensive. Throughout the program and in the month that followed, participants remained connected through text messages, social media group chats, community events, and ongoing mutual support. Participants

CONCLUSION

regularly shared employment opportunities, housing resources, leadership opportunities, community events, and words of encouragement with one another. They celebrated each other's successes, showed up during moments of challenge, and continued building the relationships that began during those two weeks together.

The mentorship component of the program also produced tangible outcomes. One participant secured employment after developing a connection with a mentor working at a prominent transgender-led organization in Los Angeles. Other participants continued to seek guidance, career advice, and professional support from mentors they met through the Lab. **These relationships demonstrate the importance of creating intentional opportunities for emerging leaders to connect with established community leaders.**

The facilitators likewise continued supporting participants beyond the formal conclusion of the program. Participants reached out for assistance navigating housing instability, employment challenges, educational opportunities, legal concerns, and personal hardships. In one instance, a participant shared how grateful she was for the support she received from the facilitators while navigating housing challenges during and after the Lab. These moments reinforced that leadership development is not solely about building skills—it is also about building relationships rooted in trust, care, and accountability.

Perhaps most unexpectedly, the impact of the Lotus Leadership Lab extended beyond the participants themselves.

As co-facilitators, we entered the program hoping to create a transformative experience for the cohort. **What we did not anticipate was how deeply we would also be transformed by the experience.**

Throughout the two weeks, participants frequently referred to us not simply as facilitators, but as mentors, big sisters, aunties, and chosen family. One participant affectionately began referring to us as her Titis, sharing that she viewed us as auntie or mother figures and trusted guides within the community. These moments reflected the depth of connection that developed throughout the program and the profound sense of care that emerged among everyone involved.

The program also renewed our own hope in community, sisterhood, and the future of Los Angeles. Witnessing ten transgender women of color support one another, share their stories, dream boldly, engage with history, develop leadership skills, and envision new possibilities for themselves and their communities served as a powerful reminder of the brilliance that already exists within transgender communities.

CONCLUSION

The Lotus Leadership Lab was built on the belief that transgender women of color are not simply future leaders; they are leaders right now. They are artists, healers, advocates, organizers, caregivers, storytellers, visionaries, and changemakers. The role of the Lab was not to create leaders, but to invest in leaders who already existed and provide them with the resources, relationships, mentorship, and support necessary to continue growing.

The success of the inaugural cohort demonstrates both the effectiveness of this model and the ongoing need for leadership development opportunities designed by and for transgender women of color. The relationships, skills, confidence, and sense of belonging cultivated through the Lotus Leadership Lab will continue to ripple outward through participants' families, workplaces, communities, organizations, and movements for years to come.

While the eight-day intensive has concluded, the story of the Lotus Leadership Lab is far from over. **The sisterhood created through this program continues to grow, and the leadership journeys of these ten remarkable women are only just beginning.**

Thank you for gifting us the opportunity to build and lead this incredible program, and we look forward to future opportunities to serve our community and continue empowering the next generation of leaders for our community!

With joy, pride, and gratitude,



Vanessa Cervantes (she/her)



Addison Rose Vincent (they/them)