



PARTNERS FOR YOUTH  
EMPOWERMENT

*Live Forum - July 19, 2018*

## INCLUSIVITY IN FACILITATION

### WELCOME

#### MALEK YALAOUI

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is an exciting format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a niche aspect of group facilitation. Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!); Goals and Agreements for today's session (hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session); 3 discussion questions and 3 case studies (posted approximately every ten minutes; answer in any order). I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the [www.pyeglobal.org](http://www.pyeglobal.org) website, as well as the files of this facebook page, in a short while. These transcripts are so great we're thinking of making a book out of them!

This month we are discussing INCLUSIVITY IN FACILITATION  
"... In diversity there is beauty and there is strength." - Maya Angelou  
In 2016, I co-founded SistersInMotion MTL (check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/sistersinmotionmtl](https://facebook.com/sistersinmotionmtl) or visit us online at [sistersinmotionmtl.com](http://sistersinmotionmtl.com)). We started as a poetry showcase of the work and wisdom of women of colour in Montreal (by women of colour I mean those who self-identify as women and are either Indigenous, Black or of African descent, East & Southeast Asian, Arab or mixed race). Since our first event, we've put on three more shows with a fourth on the way, offered writing workshops to women of colour in our community and hosted a bi-weekly open mic open to all. As SistersInMotion has grown, part of the learning curve for me has been to include ALL the sisters whether I relate to their experience or not. That means sisters across the ability spectrum, sisters of various gender expressions, sisters with different financial capacities and so much more (for more information, check out our Accessibility Statement at



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<https://docs.google.com/.../1fk75sPoAF9qUgIDMdSloeXZYiOI9hq6b...>). Every day is a learning process and sometimes the curve is STEEP but it's worth it when I look around and see everyone able to participate in ways that feel right for them. My community broadens, deepens and strengthens. So today, we're going to talk about ways to increase inclusivity in our work.

**Sunshine Turner** SistersInMotion sounds like a great initiative!

## CHECK-IN

### MALEK YALAOUI

Check-in Question for July 19 2018: (3 part answer) Look (or smell, taste, touch, hear) around the place you are in right now. What are: one thing that surprises you, one thing that brings you joy, and one thing that represents how you are feeling today?

**Malek Yalaoui** I'll join in: one thing that surprises me is how cool my dining room is right now because my apartment has been so HOT this summer, one thing that brings me joy is listening to the birds coo in the trees outside my window, and one thing that represents how I'm feeling is this cool breeze on my face - I'm feeling breezy

**Soheil Zénon** surprised by: the smell of lavender soap on my skin, enjoying: the breeze coming from the two rooms on one side of the house circulating to the other two other rooms on the other side, represented by: the calmness of my neighborhood waking up in the morning!

**Malek Yalaoui** Sounds so lovely!

**Soheil Zénon** you need to come visit my new apartment it's sooooo nice



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**Shanice Nicole** Hi! Surprised by the quietness...there's been some construction lately. The way my office is decorated brings me joy. And one thing that represents how I'm feeling would be a butterfly.

**Miik Wells** At the ferry terminal in Seattle, WA:

It surprises me how cloudy the sky is today.  
The sounds of the seagulls bring me joy.  
I feel like the sound of the waves.

**Malek Yalaoui** Feel like I'm there. Beautiful.

**Sunshine Turner** Surprise: The size of the spider that just walked across my bed.

Joy: The sound of excitement in my friend Kiran Chahal's voice on the phone, talking about a building she is planning to take over.

Feeling: The jagged rock salt texture on the outside and the warm orange glow coming from the inside of my salt lamp.

## GOALS AND AGREEMENTS

### MALEK YALAOUI

Goals and Agreements for this session on July 19 2018

("like" if you agree!)

- 1) To deepen our understanding of inclusivity in facilitation
- 2) To understand the costs and benefits of inclusivity
- 3) To learn how we can be more inclusive facilitators
- 4) To increase our options and choices as facilitators
- 5) To support each other's learning and have meaningful fun!

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.



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- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.
- 2) Be willing to entertain simultaneous truths. Rather than proving a point, try to listen to understand, and be willing to agree to disagree. At the same time, if you have a strong belief be willing to stand up for it. This will make our conversations rich!
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often. The questions move around depending on how many people are answering, so please scan the whole page for new questions now and then.
- 4) Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.
- 5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.
- 6) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.

**Malek Yalaoui** Welcome Shanice! So happy you're here

## **DISCUSSION QUESTION #1**

**MALEK YALAOUI**

Alright let's get started with Discussion Question #1: Can you think of a time you felt excluded from a group process? What did that feel like and do you remember why you felt that way?



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**Shanice Nicole** About a month ago I participated in a focus group over the phone. Everyone was together in person so I think it naturally made sense to feel somewhat excluded. It was something I was prepared for but still felt frustrating especially as I was passionate about the topic. Was challenging to speak/interject/question and sometimes follow along. But was also an interesting experience in not taking up all the space and really having to wait and/or "fight" to speak.

**Malek Yalaoui** Thanks for sharing, Shanice - that does sound frustrating. Can you say more about feeling like you had to "fight" to speak - did you feel like the focus group kinda forgot you were there or did they regularly check in to see if you had thoughts to share?

**Shanice Nicole** They did check-in with me once in a while but I feel like I spent a lot of time waiting for the right time to interject. And then also being mindful of interrupting people (which is a thing I've been trying to work on) became even more challenging because I couldn't see people's faces/body language etc. There was tension between feeling like I had so much more to say and then knowing that I don't need to say absolutely everything.

**Malek Yalaoui** I hear you - I'm working on that as well!

**Soheil Zénon** Back two years ago I used to work in a newspaper where the politics were a bit hostile to radical left ones and I remember that when I would talk there would always be this \*sigh\* physical or not of the room translating the "ah the radical/etc. is going to say something", and it always felt like my ideas were suspicious before they were even put out, or had to be met with resistance--I would never feel "listened to"

**Malek Yalaoui** That sounds really tough, Soheil. Thanks for sharing with us. How did you handle that at the time?



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**Soheil Zénon** I tried to still voice my opinion, but after a few particularly bad receptions (2 of them), I disinvolved myself from group work and just focused on my personal tasks—making videos/infographics, which ended up with me interviewing and befriending Kama so it's kind of a good ending for me lol, but definitely did not feel my heart in that group anymore.

**Malek Yalaoui** Right - that's actually a really important point to make: when people don't feel including they often end up removing themselves from the group and, as a result, the whole group suffers by missing out on their potential contributions.

**Soheil Zénon** definitely! I would've felt more inclined to propose group projects and work on fun stuff with more people but my heart wasn't there anymore

**Miik Wells** I was debriefing after a community processing weekend that I was invited into for my experience and voice. The team was one that had worked together quite a bit, so I was the new person.

When I shared what my experience was, not only was my voice the only one that received “repackaging”, but also I was told that my contribution wasn’t as valuable as I know it was.

**Malek Yalaoui** Oh wow - how did that make you feel Miik and how did you respond?

**Miik Wells** I felt angry and dismissed. I felt that way because I was speaking for marginalized voices, and as a part of a marginalized group, I was feeling the weight of what it’s like to be “included” in something, but not WELCOME.

**Miik Wells** I spoke into it with some fire. I pointed out that their reactions are exactly why there aren’t the populations they seek or the voices they need to hear in the community gatherings they convene.



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**Malek Yalaoui** Good for you - sounds like you shared some hard to hear truth that needed to be spoken and, perhaps, this is exactly why you were there in the first place!

**Miik Wells** It was. And, by doing so, I was uninvited from the role they wanted me to play for the next gathering.

**Malek Yalaoui** That's so disappointing.

**Malek Yalaoui** Shanice - have you had an experience like Miik describes? Soheil - I feel like what you shared is quite similar!

**Soheil Zénon** urg, yea it sounds very similar, sorry that happened to you Miik! Sounds totally insensitive of them

**Malek Yalaoui** Miik - how much do you think it had to do with you being new to the group vs. you bringing a marginalized perspective? There are so many facets to feeling like an "outsider."

**Miik Wells** Hmmmmm...good question.

I feel like it had much more to do with marginalized perspective, because it became apparent that I was new because I and my perspective hadn't been seen as necessary before. And, with that, they didn't know what it would look or sound like, nor how critical it would be of them.

**Shanice Nicole** Sorry you had to experience that Miik Wells! I don't know if I have a similar experience but definitely resonate with that feeling of your contribution not being recognized or seen as valuable. For me it's particularly around age/education and the perception that because I am younger and don't have a Masters or PhD I am not (as) qualified.



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**Malek Yalaoui** Absolutely, Shanice - that can be especially present in secondary education!

**Miik Wells** It upsets me so much when young people are pushed aside like that.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

### MALEK YALAOUI

Okay - Discussion Question #2: Inclusion is a very broad concept - what does it mean to you?

**Shanice Nicole** Inclusion is about feeling like not only you belong, but that a space was created with you in mind. And that accommodations are always available because I don't think 100% inclusive design without any is possible. Happy to be challenged on that though!

**Malek Yalaoui** I love that - the idea that inclusion actually starts BEFORE an accommodation is requested, that it begins with the design of an event/process. Great.

**Miik Wells** As simple as I can put it, I'd say inclusion means dynamic, healthy, emergent responsiveness to variety.

**Malek Yalaoui** Ohhh, love this! Can you flesh out a bit how you define "dynamic," "healthy," and "emergent"?

**Miik Wells** Sure. I'm navigating this convo on my phone, so it's a little challenging...

**Malek Yalaoui** Fair!! If you were to focus on one, I would ask about 'emergent' - I feel like that's a word I'm hearing more and more these days....



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**Miik Wells** Sorry, I was swallowed by post-ferry-ness...

I think of emergent as “present-tense-ness” in personal feeling/embodying, interpersonal communication, and people/skill/material resource.

It’s situational and based on the present circumstances.

Being and bringing as much to meet the moment as possible—from what the agenda is to what the activity is to what is spoken or done in an activity, in order to express the most necessary response.

**Soheil Zénon** Inclusion means for me being heard but most importantly listened to, and feeling like your ideas and your self are evaluated and considered by everyone seriously actively and passively, you are acknowledged in presence and action in your singularity

### DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

**MALEK YALAOUI**

Discussion Question #3: What are some ways you try to encourage inclusivity when facilitating? Which of these have been successful and are there any that have fallen flat?

**Malek Yalaoui** One idea I often come back to is doing a "go around" in which, when I want to hear from more voices in the room, I suggest we go in a circle and give everybody the opportunity to weigh in (if they want to of course - I always make sure to say 'pass' is a valid answer). That way, folks who are more introverted or perhaps feel less empowered to speak are given a chance to share their views.

**Shanice Nicole** Different things like:



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Sharing my suggested ground rules and asking if the group wants to add (or maybe change) any

Inviting people to share access needs in advance (if possible) and in the space

Always bring my fidget toys

Really push the idea that there are no "experts" and everyone has something valuable to share. Love the quote "No one knows everything but together we know a lot"

Have a variety of individual/pair/small group/large activities

**Malek Yalaoui** Can you explain fidget toys, Shanice -these are my fav so I want to make sure everyone know about them

**Shanice Nicole** Yes! I love them so much. A fidget toy is an object that someone can use to help stay focused/grounded/connected/present. I believe the original use was especially for folks who have ADHD or are autistic/have autism but they have been widely adopted by lots of people for a variety of reasons. As someone who fidgets and doodles a lot I very much appreciate having an item I can hold onto or interact with while listening. There are "actual" fidget toys (e.g. spinners, gadgets) but I also like using dollar store finds like stress balls, slinkies, play doh, random ass items etc

**Soheil Zénon** I haven't facilitated many, but one of the things I make sure is to pick up on non-verbal cues during discussions (mouth/cheek/eyes/eyebrow flinches), especially when one asks for closed-answer approval questions to a group ("do we all agree on this?" instead of "what do people think?")-- I find it rare that a group answer all at once can be an honest answer, and make sure people can finish what they say, if they have hangers in their tone make sure they finish that hanger, if they get interrupted ask them back to finish their thought



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**Malek Yalaoui** Absolutely. One thing I try to do to gauge the mood of large groups is thumbs up for absolutely, thumbs down for definitely not, and sideways thumbs for maybe or still have some questions. Another, to check energy levels, is to ask people to either put their hands in the air for high energy, down low for low energy or near their chests for in the middle.

**Shanice Nicole** Sometimes giving a group too many options falls flat and can be overwhelming so being mindful of this is also important. Especially cause we often think options = guaranteed inclusion.

**Soheil Zénon** that's a very good insight I didn't know thank you!

**Malek Yalaoui** Good point, Shanice. This can especially be true in cases where folks are dealing with anxiety and so too many choices exacerbates the problem or in cases where it feels like there's a "special option" for folks with accessibility needs that doesn't apply to the majority and thereby can feel LESS inclusive. It's all about context.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #4

### MALEK YALAOUI

Discussion Question #4 (last one before case studies): Are there limits or drawbacks to inclusivity? What can you do to work around these?

**Malek Yalaoui** Shanice, Soheil, Miik: any thoughts?

**Shanice Nicole** I always feel like it's hard to talk about limits or drawbacks to inclusivity because it sets up (or maybe affirms?) this dynamic of some people/needs matter and some don't (or matter less). But time and money are the ones that come up for me. Inclusive design



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requires both (I would say time more than money because with time you can find more options) but it is a reality.

**Malek Yalaoui** Right, so legit Shanice. It's definitely not always "easy" or "convenient" but that's because we live in a world that doesn't always value inclusivity as much as it should. For example, to retrofit buildings for accessibility can be expensive but that's just because they weren't build accessibly in the first place. That said, in the long run, it ends up SAVING time and money.

**Malek Yalaoui** Appreciate also that you talk about it taking more time than money - that's been my experience as well. If you start planning soon enough - and consult widely enough - a lot of the more 'expensive' last-minute fixes can be avoided.

**Soheil Zénon** I think one of the limits of inclusivity in a broad sense is time, politics and priorities -- where everyone's at in their process, where society is at generally. I think these justify the holding of meetings with selected people, whether it is for a task of healing/resistance planning that would be easier/faster with people sharing a similar experience of oppression, or to take back certain spaces (although even that can be tricky because it can exclude people who don't think of their situation in a certain way, with the right linguo too often). In a smaller technical sense I agree that money often plays that drawback in an inaccessible society where small orgs need to accessibilize their spaces with limited money, which ends up generally putting the onus on marginalized people to be able to open spaces for themselves, since we don't see that effort disseminated widely (yet?)-- not saying accessibilising is a bad thing, just that the process of it is mostly done by small orgs and people with tight budget, whereas if we were in a society involved in accessibilising generally, there would be funds granted for those orgs and spaces that would bridge that gap

**Malek Yalaoui** Very important reflections - thanks Soheil!



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## CASE STUDY #1

### MALEK YALAOUI

Okay, case study time! Case Study #1: You're facilitating a neighborhood gathering to discuss some matters of local importance. A few days before the meeting, a community member emails you to say they would like to come but they have social anxiety and are worried that they won't be able to participate in a large group space. How do you respond?

**Shanice Nicole** I would thank them for emailing and sharing that with me and affirm their experience of social anxiety. I would ask them if there are particular things they know of that would help them feel more comfortable to participate or if they would like me to propose suggestions.

**Malek Yalaoui** Asking people what they need - what a concept!

**Soheil Zénon** I would ask them if they know there are ways for them to reduce it when present physically, whether it's where they are situated in the room, if they want to be close to food, someone they know, the facilitator, I would make sure there are breathers if the meeting is long, and can communicate the number of people that will be there, and how the space looks like. If they think their physical presence would be too much of a barrier, I could propose to them texting while the session or make sure to take minutes of what has happened so they can go through it ( if the meeting doesn't take major decisions they would like to be involved in but discusses important topics they could hop in through another means, online or another forum/consultation?)

**Malek Yalaoui** Love the idea of presenting people with options, so important! And taking breaks can often be really helpful as well. Sometimes I've seen organizers designate "chill spaces" where people can go if they need a break from noise or crowds.



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Paying attention to the physicality of the space is helpful too - sometimes it's as simple as sitting near the door so people know they can slip out quietly if they need to.

**Barbara Edwards** Ask them to come with me .... not meet me, but walk in with me. Why? Because as facilitator you're normally first there, so lots of chat time. People arrive in dribs and drabs so as the crowd builds they're not overwhelmed. Little steps

## **CASE STUDY #2**

### **MALEK YALAOUI**

Case Study #2: You are brought in by a collective to mediate a tough conversation they need to have in the wake of an event they just hosted which was accused of cultural appropriation. The collective has members from all sorts of racial and political backgrounds. Some strongly agree with the accusation and believe the group needs to take action to address it while others believe that they've been unfairly labeled by people who didn't understand what the collective was trying to do. They are at a deadlock. How do you facilitate a space in which everyone is heard while also addressing the original concerns brought to the group?

## **CASE STUDY #3**

### **MALEK YALAOUI**

Case Study #3: You are asked to facilitate a creativity & healing workshop for a student group at a local college named "Women Supporting Women." A week before the workshop, someone posts on the Facebook event page asking if this workshop is for ALL women or only cis women? ("cis" applies to people who were still feel comfortable identifying with the gender they were assigned at birth). When you ask the organizers they say that "trans women who look like women" (i.e.



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people who were assigned male at birth but who self-identify as female and have undergone medical transition in order to be recognized as women by society) are welcome but that in the past trans women who do not “pass” have come to the workshops and that has been triggering for other attendees. What do you do? (FYI: for more on [SistersInMotion MTL](#)'s gender policy see below.

[docs.google.com](https://docs.google.com)

[Gender Statement | POLITIQUE D'GENRE](#)

SISTERS IN MOTION GENDER STATEMENT (Français en bas) (Resource...

**Soheil Zénon** Funny I was literally asked that question for my masculinity workshop yesterday (whether non-men could participate/women-looking people could)! For your example, I would make sure to make explicit what I mean by "women" before the event — I guess it might depend on the shape of the event, but if it's very tiny I think it might be a bit distressing for the non-women-passing folks to have that explained during the workshop. Sharing your policy and inviting people to read it before I think is a great way to do it. During the event, I think I would make sure people's pronouns are respected, and treat people no different as a facilitator — I think (hope?) the facilitator's inclusive attitude can serve as a norm for the rest of the group, or encourage people to act on their preconceived ideas if they aren't practicing what they preach!

**Malek Yalaoui** Super helpful reflections, Soheil, thank you. Yes, what I've heard gender-variant & gender nonconforming folks request in the past is simply clarity about who exactly is included in the words we are using because "women" is a broad category that doesn't mean the same thing to all people. That was a big part of the motivation behind putting out a Gender Statement for SistersInMotion. Initially we thought we were being inclusive by saying "women and femmes" but we quickly realized that this was not specific enough.



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## CASE STUDY #4

### MALEK YALAOUI

Okay, this is our last case study! Case Study #4: You are teaching at a four-day conference offered by a healing & wellness collective in another city. A week before the conference, some potential participants reach out to you personally to say they would love to come to your session but they cannot afford the cost of the conference. They say the conference's website is clear that one must purchase a pass for the entire conference in order to attend any of the individual sessions. What do you do and/or how do you respond?

## END

### MALEK YALAOUI

Well, that ends our 90 (actually more like 120!) mins together this month. Thank you so much for joining me everyone! And thank you especially to Nadia for the opportunity and her support putting these questions & case studies together. I'm leaving with lots to reflect on and look forward to continuing this conversation on-and-offline! PYE will soon post the transcript and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts. We are always open to new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist, activist and social artist friends! Don't forget to check [www.pyeglobal.org](http://www.pyeglobal.org) for upcoming trainings, too!

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PYE Global - Partners for Youth Empowerment ignites creativity and potential in youth and adults. Our Creative Community Model brings...

**Miik Wells** Thank you so very much for bringing this convo to the Live Forums, Malek!!

I wish I would have been available to participate more while you were present; but, I'll definitely take the time to respond to your questions and case studies.

Hopefully we will connect in the future!

**Malek Yalaoui** I would love that! Look forward to hearing your reflections when you get a chance 😊

**Soheil Zénon** Thank you so much Malek you rock <3 <3 <3 will also take the time to answer the remaining case studies! They're a great challenge :)

**Shanice Nicole** Thank you!

**PYE Global - Partners for Youth Empowerment** The transcript will be up on our new website along with all the others from the last five years. Check it out if you haven't done so!

<http://www.partnersforyouth.org/3rd-thursday-live-forums/Manage>

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**PYE Global - Partners for Youth Empowerment** Thank you Malek Yalaoui for hosting!