

# STATELESS

A race against time. A time against race.

a film by Michèle Stephenson

HEALING GUIDE



## STATELESS

Michèle Stephenson's documentary ***Stateless*** tells the story of grassroots organizer and attorney Rosa Iris as she works with Dominican families of Haitian descent who've been stripped of their citizenship. Rosa's encounters with these families and individuals reveal the complex history between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and tensions related to politics, identity, race, humanity and belonging—a history that informs present-day politics and the safety and privilege of people in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. As the Dominican Nationalist Movement works tirelessly to police the borders into the Dominican Republic, attempting to keep Haitians out, those with Haitian ancestry work even harder to legitimize their existence and value in a system and a political structure that seeks to limit their possibilities and humanity.

Watch the film here: [nfb.ca/film/stateless](https://nfb.ca/film/stateless)



*This guide was created as an offering to support community approaches to collective processing, and a direction towards healing after screening **Stateless**. The guide offers you the opportunity to engage with your audience once during the screening and to create experiential workshops afterwards, in order to deepen the work.*

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## THIS GUIDE CAN BE USED TO EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

1. White supremacy, ultra-nationalism, and [racial capitalism](#) on a global scale:  
*"These expressions of hate can lead to physical violence."* – Rosa Iris
2. Anti-Haitianism: *"Someone called me Haitian because of my skin colour. They called me Haitian as an insult. I answered, 'Why would that upset me?'"* – Elias
3. Anti-Blackness: *"Or a plan to whiten the population. Their problem is with Blacks, not whites."* – Juan Teofilo
4. Xenophobia: *"The Haitians have a plan that the Dominican Republic take care of their citizens."* – Gladys
5. Mental wellness: *"Maybe nothing was physically missing... But they stole my peace of mind, how do they pay for that?"* – Juan Teofilo
6. Fatherhood: *"They say mothers feel the deep connection with their children. But I have a special connection with my children. I can feel when something happens to them."* – Juan Teofilo
7. Duty: *"I decided to run for congress. As a mother I have to leave my son, but the conservatives want to limit the freedom of Dominicans of Haitian descent."*  
– Rosa Iris
8. Voting: *"I could give you 50, 100 pesos to go vote, but if you vote for someone who serves the community, you'll get so much more!"* – Rosa Iris
9. Government: *"Who will help me feel safe? The State? When the State is the one persecuting me?"* – Juan Teofilo

## A NOTE FROM THE HEALING GUIDE CREATOR, CLARIVEL RUIZ

The author uses we, us, you as personal pronouns.

We are not an expert, for “expert” could have the connotation that someone has arrived at a definitive knowing, or that we somehow have become the authority on this topic. In creating a hierarchical structure reinforced through patriarchy and misogyny, the Father knows it all. He is the ultimate authority, and that ideology is upheld in colonized countries. He is forcing the people to move in constrictive circles given by their influence and the demands of the state, which are not necessarily for the benefit of the people.

Instead, we envision our journey into healing by releasing ourselves from past constraints, a reconciliation with understanding the multiple truths to unleash and propel ourselves into a new future of possibilities. We envision those who take on this journey as being akin to the Fool represented in a tarot deck, encompassing both the beginning and the ending. They witness and are in motion, constantly evolving, without the burden or significance of the past. As the wheel of life turns, what steps will they take? What lessons will be unlearned to learn new things and to gain wisdom?

In many Indigenous communities, an attribute of the Joker, the clown or trickster, is used to open up the communications between people and deities, sweep any negative energy out of communities, and bring laughter to difficult situations. Augusto Boal also uses the Joker in his Theatre of the Oppressed technique—the person who facilitates and can change the scene at a moment’s notice. As they witness and facilitate the learning, the symbolic significance is not lost on us; they create the portal to begin unlearning and healing from oppression, as is done in many Indigenous communities.

We hope this guide allows you to tap into your wisdom, deepen your empathy, ask yourself difficult questions, and uncover your biases and prejudices. Although the documentary ***Stateless*** is about the harsh conditions in the Dominican Republic for Dominicans of Haitian descent, this is a worldwide story. Twelve million people around the world are stateless. Approximately every 10 minutes, a child is born stateless. And at any given moment, for any given reason, any

government can arbitrarily choose to change the laws against its citizens. Human-rights defenders, journalists, activists, advocates stand against that happening. Therefore, we must all be vigilant against governments and people who would disenfranchise and denationalize those they deem unworthy because of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability and so forth.

This healing guide is intended to be used after watching the film and in conjunction with the discussion guide. The intention is to extend the amount of time you spend with the movie to investigate your mind, body and spirit, and allow your body to guide you in discovering internalized biases and racialized views you have. The body holds on to many stories we have experienced, and many times those stories are not the truth, just a fragmented perspective about the self, another person or a community. It is time to put those aside to learn new ways.

*“Man of my homeland  
wanderer  
traveller  
fatigued vertebrae of the Antilles  
here I give my hand to serve as a bridge  
between our cries  
for you to rest your head  
place your heart on the sores  
and listen silently....”*

*– Jacques Viau Renaud, 1965*



STEP 1:  
FOUNDATIONS FOR HEALING

## PREPARATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

### RITUAL

You are creating ritual space. Consider this a portal that allows energy to move and alter our bodies, thoughts and spaces. Clearing space also makes room for new thoughts that lead to new actions. **Stateless** will undoubtedly conjure dynamic emotions and questions for all participants (including you, the facilitator).

### ENERGY

Every living being holds energy. We vibrate at a frequency and can feel these frequencies whether they are low, high or in between. The spaces we inhabit can retain those frequencies as well. This is why we suggest that you ground yourself in the space, harmonize your body, and cleanse the area before you begin.

### CLEARING

Cleansing for your body can be a simple bath of Epsom salt or sea salt, or much more elaborate with rose petals, honey and milk. Choose a culturally relevant way to cleanse your body and space. You can use incense, cologne, bathing in a tub, pool, or ocean, always bringing the intention of self-love and peace to your heart, mind and body.

### CLEANSING

Cleansing your mind. You should try to plan time ahead of the screening to prepare yourself and your space, and to ground yourself in intention ahead of the screening and healing workshops. If you are settled in your body, others will automatically attune to you, creating an atmosphere of inquiry, comfort and trust.

### LOVING KINDNESS

Bring grace, compassion and ease to your heart if discomfort surfaces. Ground yourself by planting your feet firmly on the floor. Wiggle your toes, tap your heart centre lightly, or place one hand on your belly and the other hand on your chest, watching the rise and fall of your body as you inhale deeply. Reflect through journaling and discussion with your peers. Always have cold water to drink before and after the screening, as a cleansing ritual.

### COMMUNITY

Who will be your support system during the screening? Inevitably, there may be difficult conversations or emotions that present themselves during the screening. Please ensure you have at least one other person in attendance to offer you support during the screening. Use a gesture, word or a small notebook to ask for assistance.





STEP 2:  
THE PROCESS

## SHARING SPACE, HOLDING SPACE

### Consider the following for setting up the space:

Powerfully set up the ritual and cleanse the space before the screening.

- Air out, sweep and clean the areas for the screening. Mop the floor and add lavender and sage essential oils to the floor cleaner.
- Prepare any adjacent rooms (for break-out conversations, caregiving stations, or meditation and reflection).
- Cleanse the air by burning sage, rosemary and lavender incense bundles.
- Set out flower arrangements, plants, a bowl of water or candles.
- Invite participants to bring a meaningful item and place it alongside the flowers, water and candles.
- Play energetically lively music that brings waves of peace and love to the space.

### Consider establishing community agreements:

Those who are in attendance may not share the same views, values or opinions. It is crucial to validate people's lived experiences; however, we encourage you to be firm in your resolve and ensure the space is tolerant, civil, forward-looking, and refuses violence.

Building trust is about setting healthy boundaries and expectations so that all who enter the screening space are aware and agree to participate under the defined parameters. Equally, all have a voice in determining those expectations. Invite audience members to create the community agreements. Request that they write out their agreements on the community agreement display or use sticky notes they can post. Afterward, you can incorporate the agreements into the program's welcoming portion. Here are some [sample Community Agreements](#) for your reference.

## Additional Suggestions for Organizers/Facilitators

**Giving Care:** Audience members may unexpectedly feel overwhelmed during the screening and may need to exit to take care of their emotional needs. Before the beginning of the screening, inform participants where they'll find restrooms, water stations and emergency exits. If possible, set up a rest area where participants may gather to reset and refresh, providing the necessary space to self-regulate and destigmatizing the importance of needing and giving care. Ensure the rest area has water, food and writing and drawing materials to reflect or relax, essential oils to lift spirits, lotion for soothing palms and pipe cleaners to fidget with.

**Medical Support:** If possible, invite certified personnel and counsellors from schools, organizations and medical establishments to volunteer, offering support and aid during the screening, acting as consultants, not as professionals providing their services for a fee. They can support community members experiencing distress and guide them towards relief. Please provide a list of medical or health centres that provide free or nominal-charge mental health services for those in need.

**Trigger Warning:** Time does not exist for the brain when we relive traumatic moments. Something that happened 20 or 10 years ago, or an hour ago, is experienced as if it is happening in the present moment. Inform audience members they may be viewing content and participating in a discussion that may cause worry, upset or anxiety. It is critical to be responsible for taking care of their needs in a conducive manner.





STEP 3:  
BUILDING UNDERSTANDING



## STATELESSNESS, A HUMAN-RIGHTS ISSUE

*This section will provide background knowledge and context for you and your community to share a foundation of understanding before you engage in dialogue.*

*“De esos Haitianos, soy orgullosamente descendiente de esos Haitianos que luchan cada día por sacar adelante a su familia. Esos que lucharon y nos hicieron libres y siguen hoy en pie pagando esa osadía. Oh bendita osadía que nos dio la libertad.”*  
– Ana Beliqué

*“Of those Haitians, I am proudly a descendant of those Haitians who fight every day to raise their family. Those who fought and set us free and continue today to pay for that daring. Oh, blessed daring that gave us freedom.”* – Ana Beliqué

### WHAT IS STATELESSNESS?

Statelessness is a human-rights issue. All people worldwide, in every nation and country, deserve the freedom of having a nationality and citizenship.

*“The right to a nationality is a fundamental human right. It implies the right of each individual to acquire, change and retain a nationality. International law provides that the right of States to decide who their nationals are is not absolute and, in particular, States must comply with their human rights obligations concerning the granting and loss of nationality.”* – United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

As defined by the United Nations in the 1954 Convention and the 1961 Convention, “the term ‘stateless person’ means a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”

### Stateless people deserve the right to:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Citizenship | 8. Identity papers  |
| 2. Education   | 9. Travel documents   |
| 3. Religion    | 10. Freedom of movement   |
| 4. Employment  | 11. Banking   |
| 5. Association | 12. Marriage  |
| 6. Housing     | 13. Non-discriminatory administrative assistance to facilitate naturalization |
| 7. Health care |   |

Over 12 million people worldwide are experiencing statelessness, whether refugees in other countries or their country of birth, estimates the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

## WHAT CAUSES STATELESSNESS? (INFORMATION BASED ON [UNHCR.ORG](https://www.unhcr.org))

These are the key factors that cause statelessness in various countries throughout the world:

1. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, language or gender is linked to prolonged and extensive statelessness in the country of birth.
2. Changes in the laws based on discriminatory standards leaving most minority groups stateless.
3. Gender discrimination in nationality laws causing childhood statelessness.
4. Twenty-five countries do not allow women to pass on their nationality to their children equally as they do men. As a result, children are left stateless when fathers are stateless, unknown, missing or deceased.
5. People are excluded and left behind when there are gaps in nationality laws that are not carefully written and correctly applied.
6. The country does not permit nationality based on birth alone, and if the country of origin does not allow a parent to pass on nationality to children born abroad.
7. In countries where nationality is only acquired by descent from a national, statelessness will be passed on to the next generation during the emergence of new states and changes in borders.
8. In some countries, citizens can lose their nationality simply from having lived outside their country for an extended period.
9. Being undocumented is not the same as being stateless. However, a lack of birth registration can put people at risk of statelessness. A birth certificate provides proof of where a person was born and parentage—critical information needed to establish nationality.

## STATELESSNESS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

*Jus soli is a Latin term that means “law of the soil,” referred to as birthright citizenship. It is the right of anyone **born** in the territory of a state to nationality or citizenship.*

*Jus sanguinis is a Latin term that means “right of blood” and refers to a person who acquires citizenship through their parents or ancestors.*

**Stateless** provides a first-hand account of the desperate situations people find themselves in when birthright citizenship is stripped away, leaving a population considered undesirable by the nation in turmoil. These discriminatory racial practices are arbitrarily imposed in violation of their right to nationality; instead, Dominicans of Haitian descent face a battle to prove their right to citizenship against a system determined to expel them. They continue to persevere, facing constant cultural attacks, intolerance and racial prejudice, desperately fighting against a plan formulated to deport, malign and eradicate them.



## What Caused Statelessness in the Dominican Republic?

The Dominican Republic and Haiti have a long, complicated, and tumultuous relationship going back to the invasion of 1492 in the Western Hemisphere and the subsequent brutalization and genocide of Indigenous people in the part of the world that would come to be known as the Americas and the Caribbean.

The colonization of the island's western side by France begins in 1625, threatening Spain's claim to the totality of Hispaniola.

1804: Haitian Revolution.

1822: Haiti and Santo Domingo became Spanish Haiti under one union.

1844: Spanish Haiti declares independence from Haiti, becoming the Dominican Republic.

1861: The Dominican Republic reverts to Spanish rule.

1865: The Dominican Republic wins its independence from Spain, and all those born in the Dominican Republic are given *jus soli* or birthright citizenship.

1915: Haitian president Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam is assassinated; the U.S. intervenes and dominates Haitian economic affairs, causing the agricultural sector to stagnate. Haitians migrate to the Dominican Republic for agricultural work, resulting in the automatic Dominican citizenship of their children born on Dominican soil despite discriminatory practices based on skin colour, economic class and family's migratory history. And difficulty imposed to obtain identity documents that confirmed their children's Dominican citizenship.

1929: "In transit" was used to exclude Dominican nationality for children born to foreign diplomats and for those visiting and leaving the country for other destinations.

1939: Migration Regulation No. 279 is passed, stipulating, "Foreigners endeavouring to enter the Dominican Republic with the principal purpose of proceeding through the country towards another country shall be granted the privileges of 'transients.'" They would not be recognized as immigrants and would be given up to 10 days to pass through the country. The Constitutional Court in Judgment 168-13 reinterpreted "in transit" to mean a period of a decade and established migratory law to delegitimize Haitian descendants born in Dominican territory.



1978: The Dominican Republic agrees to guarantee children the right to receive nationality and prohibits arbitrary and discriminatory denial of nationality through the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights.

2004: “In transit” was adjusted, introducing *temporary workers* status, with the majority coming from Haiti irrespective of their length of time in the Dominican Republic. In addition, General Law on Migration No. 285-04 included “non-resident” foreigners’ “*constancias de nacimiento*,” or certificates of live births registry (in pink), distinct from the certificate used for Dominican citizens.

2005: General Law on Migration No. 285-04 constitutionality was questioned; the Supreme Court of Justice interpreted “*foreigners in transit*” to include individuals without a residence permit. In other words, people in an irregular migratory situation, regardless of decades spent living in Dominican territory or having children; those lacking residence permits were not entitled to Dominican citizenship even if they were born in the country.

2007: Resolution 12-2007 was created by the *Central Electoral Board* (“JCE” for its acronym in Spanish), which initiated the “*Registry of the Birth of a Child to a Foreign Non-resident Mother in the Dominican Republic*.” This parallel registration system began recording the “*constancias de nacimiento*” certificates of live births (in pink) to deny citizenship to migrants and foreigners, and fails to recognize the discrimination, delay by JCE officials, or loss of documents, etc., to prove their residency in the Dominican territory.

2010: The Dominican Constitution was amended, creating an exception to Dominican nationality under the *jus soli*, birthright citizenship, to children of individuals “*who reside illegally in Dominican territory*.” The JCE applied the new constitutional amendment retroactively, denying Dominican nationality to people of Haitian descent born before 2010 who had not yet obtained Dominican identification documents.

2013: The Constitutional Tribunal of the Dominican Republic, on September 23, issued Judgment 168-13, denationalizing hundreds of thousands of its citizens because they were the children of “*non-resident foreigners*.” The decision applied retroactively to generations of people born in the Dominican Republic between 1929 and 2010, leaving the citizenship status of these people and their descendants in limbo.

Judgment 168-13 earned condemnation from Dominican civil society and international human-rights bodies, including the Inter-American Court and Commission of Human Rights.

2014: Under heavy criticism and intense national and international scrutiny, the Dominican legislature passed Law 169-14 in an attempt to restore citizenship to people registered as citizens before Judgment 168-13, known as “Group A,” and a path towards naturalized citizenship to people not registered as citizens before Judgment 168-13, known as “Group B.” Creating these groups arbitrarily and unnecessarily complicates an already problematic situation.

2017: Law 169-14 has not been the solution to the barrage of constant obstacles that Dominicans of Haitian descent face even as registered Dominican citizens. The majority are still without valid identity documents three years after Law 169-14 has passed. Many in “Group A” have been “re-registered” as citizens in a separate registry that lacks legal basis, marking them literally and symbolically as second-class Dominican citizens.

2020: Former President Danilo Medina naturalizes 750 people born and raised in the country and previously deprived of citizenship due to the immigration status of their parents.

Thousands of people continue to not be recognized as Dominican citizens under these laws, while over six thousand continue to wait for naturalization.

(Timeline based on [rfkhumanrights.org](https://rfkhumanrights.org))

## First-Hand Experiences of Statelessness

*“In this country, I am not Dominican, I’m not Haitian, I’m not French, I’m not anything because I don’t exist, this leaf that you have in your hands means more than we do.”*  
– Genaury, Batey 8

*“I feel like a person that... how do I explain it to you? Someone who doesn’t have papers is equal to a dog.”* – Soraida, Batey 8

*“What do I feel? Shame, because if you don’t have a cédula [identity card], you are nobody in society, in society you are less than nothing.”* – Yafreisi, Batey 8

*“Without a cédula [identity card], without documents, I tell you, I feel bad, bad. My daughter can’t register her daughter because of my problem.”* – Altagracia, Batey 4

*“Last week they sent me a letter from the AFP [pension office] and I can’t believe that a person with 35, 40, 60 years using a cédula, and now there is a problem with the cédula ... In which country is this done? A group of people that have spent all their life with a cédula, and now they are saying that it has problems.”* – Enrique, Batey 5

Excerpts from Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Report

Dominicans of Haitian descent are haunted by the spectre of the past that is ever-present—paying for the price of their ancestors’ audacity in fighting for liberty instead of bowing to a slow torturous death at the hands of colonial slave masters. Constantly visited by shackled phantoms and maimed ghosts perpetually in motion, attempting to escape a historical narrative that deems Blackness unworthy. No amount of plastered makeup will cover up the masked civility that necessitates brutalizing an African presence.

**Stateless** begins with the legend of Moraime, running for her life on a bloody night in October, recounting the tale of the dictator Trujillo, who *“decided to whiten the race and fix the so-called Haitian problem. He murdered many, including Moraime’s mother, because of the colour of their skin.”*

Eduardo Duran calls this pervasive demoralizing historical intergenerational trauma a *soul wound*. “When trauma is not dealt with in previous generations, it has to be dealt with in subsequent generations. Thus, not only is the trauma passed down intergenerationally, but it is cumulative. Unresolved trauma becomes more severe each time it is passed on to a subsequent generation.”

As we have witnessed, this historical trauma continues to haunt Dominicans of Haitian descent who are stigmatized and discriminated against, reinforcing stigmas and stereotypes that cause inequality. The insidious usage of demoralizing themes robs people of their humanity. *“Haitians here commit murder, assaults; they chop people up because that’s the way they operate,”* states Gladys in the documentary. It is a pervasive theme, frequently repeated, demonizing Haitians and their descendants with false accusations of invasion, illegal migration and settlements.

Amnesty International makes the distinction that “discrimination occurs when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment.” Discrimination can be associated with social interactions protecting more powerful and privileged groups while marginalizing others. It takes place with everyday slights or micro-aggressions and structurally through overt racism.

According to a 2015 study conducted by Health Services Research, and published in 2019, discrimination increases depression, anxiety and psychological stress. It also negatively impacts self-esteem and self-efficacy, and disrupts personality traits. In addition, discrimination can increase negative emotions and lack of trust, and lead to a decrease in organizational performance, exacerbating mental health risks over time.

Equally, human-rights defenders find themselves in the difficult position of being threatened and intimidated by ultra-nationalists, without the support of the Dominican government to end these extreme levels of harassment. They verbally and physically attack journalists and

activists, attempting to discredit them by calling them anti-Dominican, pro-Haitian, and traitors to the State on social networks and the media, causing an elevation of fear, distress and anxiety.

### How do we begin to heal soul wounds?

The process of healing begins when we understand that healing begins in community through a culturally competent lens. We are all healers when we tap into our understanding of our humanity, giving grace and compassion to each other as we traverse through the muck of our minds. Next, we must identify the different factors that trigger our brain's survival mechanisms when we feel we're under duress and the different approaches to calming our nervous system, reconnecting our brain stem to our prefrontal cortex. Lastly, we must recognize violence as a historical inheritance and acknowledge intergenerational issues.

We believe one of the ways to address healing is through artistic practices. We hope this healing guide can be an introduction to such an approach, one that deepens your desire to dive into expanding your knowledge, wisdom and healing.

*Oye el pobre poeta,  
un corazón, ¡tan entero!  
-cantar en medio de las heridas  
sin comprender la marca de la tierra  
sin probar de su futuro dividido.  
Hear the poor poet,  
a whole heart, so complete!  
-Sing in the midst of wounds  
without understanding the lay of the land,  
without tasting of its divided fruit.  
- Manuel Rueda, *La criatura terrestre*, 1945-1960*



A photograph of a vast field of tall, green grass, possibly a rice paddy, under a cloudy sky. The grass is dense and reaches up to the horizon. In the distance, a line of trees is visible against the sky. The overall tone is somewhat muted and atmospheric.

## STEP 4: HEALING WORKSHOPS

*These workshops are intended to last 60-90 minutes and to suit the unique needs of your community. Throughout this section you will find several options for harmonizers, warm-ups and activations. You can pick and choose which to engage with and create multiple healing workshops that are appropriate for your space and community.*

Since time immemorial, humans have been sharing stories, from wall art dating back 44,000 years ago in Indonesia and Western Europe, to hand stencils and figurative animal drawings, to our most technologically advanced 3D visual, theatrical and cinematic renderings.

Humans have an innate desire to share their experiences. In this sharing, we allow ourselves and community members to better understand the world around us, including this full and lush life inside our brains. In addition, our imagination provides a mind-body environmental link to explore other people's lived experiences, expanding our empathy, compassion and perspectives.

Whether literary or theatrical, the artistic process is to engage people into tapping into the production of power, critical thinking and curiosity to transform the individual at the community level. Those insights will guide the individual toward actions that benefit the community. Art allows for the process of shifting ideologies. Looking within has the participant investigate truths that are contrary to the benefit of the individual at the community level. Transformation happens when new actions can be taken that are given by the future and not the past.



## Harmonizers (3–5 mins): Use as First Step in Workshops

Harmonizing the space before you begin any workshop is important as a means of calming the nervous system in our bodies. When one person is calm, other bodies pick up that energy, allowing all bodies to relax in the space.

### Harmonizer A:

**Gratitude** – A harmonizing activity that you can activate, virtually or in person; it allows for the “presencing” of people, places and activities that have brought us joy and actions that have helped us on our journey of life. Gratitude can connect us to the challenges we have encountered and superseded. Researchers are finding that gratitude allows for less stress, less depression, and more forgiveness, compassion and conscious social awareness, including the ability to be cooperative with non-family members. (Virtual, Seated, Movement)

### Harmonizer B:

**Breathing** – Place one hand on your belly, the other on your chest. Watch your hands rise and fall with each breath. Notice when you breathe fully. Allow the breath to move through your body, scanning each section and consciously visualizing the breath, easing any tensions. Imagine the nourishing energy of the earth coming up into your body as you inhale. As you exhale, imagine the breath releasing gratitude, visualizing energy pouring through the top of your head back down to your feet and the earth below you. (Virtual, Seated)

### Harmonizer C:

**Palm Massage** – With or without lotion, an intentional massage to your hand can be soothing. Pay close attention to pressing your fingers into your palms, moving your wrists around, and massaging each finger, stretching each finger individually, or intertwining your fingers together to give a good stretch. Studies have shown the importance of massaging the body, which releases endorphins. A palm massage can lessen anxiety, pain and improve your disposition. (Virtual, Seated, Movement)

### Harmonizer D:

**Humming** (tuning your body) – Sound is a potent medium that allows us to energize, calm and connect to our bodies and other people as our autonomic nervous systems are activated. You can hum or vocalize sound-shifting modulations as you breathe, hum or sing. Feel the difference between humming in your diaphragm or your chest. (Virtual, Seated)

### Harmonizer E:

**Movement** – You can choose to either sway in your seat or stand up and walk around the space. Arm’s-length distance. You can start slow and ask people to pick up their pace as you mill around and change the speed. As you continue to walk, greet each other with your eyes. Make eye contact and say hello with your eyes. Next, greet each other with a light gesture of the body. Ask for consent non-verbally with your eyes. Touch each other lightly. Next, extend your hand to people and ask to be greeted. Wait for consent from the other person. And continue to walk amongst each other towards completion. (Virtual, Seated, Movement)

## Warm-Ups (10-20 mins): Use as Second Step in Workshops

The warm-ups are an opportunity for people to acclimate to each other and begin building trust—trust for the energy of the space, trust in relationship with each other, and trust within your own mind and body for the activities to come. We begin by opening ourselves up to the information the body has stored for us. In allowing the body to move as much as possible, you enable answers to arise from within, providing solutions and guidance to the mind. The intention is to begin listening to your gut and heart, as listening alters your framework.

We are consumed by internalized biases that have been given to us by the media, government, educational systems and family. Who are you without all those conditions imposed by society? Who are you without the impositions of the past? Our minds have been programmed to believe “other” people are the enemy. Now with the continued investigative work of neuroscience that validates thousands of years of study by Eastern and Indigenous shamans and healers, we have the technology and tools to shift those thoughts, calm our minds, and create a liberatory future. So you begin this journey to heal from the states of oppression, bringing forth compassion, wonder and love.

As you engage with these warm-ups and deepen the conversations, continue to investigate the psychological impact of trauma and the people who are experiencing statelessness in the Dominican Republic and the world. Continue to reflect and inquire into your mindset with a light heart as we move to disappear disempowered states that inhabit our bodies individually and communally.

### Activity A

#### MOVEMENT

Mirror

### Activity B

#### SOUND

The Siren’s Song

### Activity C

#### VISUAL, WRITING

Black Men Cry Too



## Warm-Up Activity A: \*Mirror (movement)

Allow people to pair together. One chooses to be Player A or Player B. Allow the players to self-select who will mirror the other player. Then allow the players to gaze into each other's eyes to acclimate. Both players should maintain eye contact throughout the whole experience. If Player A begins, they will mirror Player B. Encourage slow and sustained movements to start, with simple actions like washing face, brushing teeth, braiding hair, fixing clothes, or playing a sport in slow motion. After a set time, ask students to switch leaders. Eventually, pairs can be encouraged to switch back and forth where neither person is leading. Try experimenting with different levels, moving towards the ground or stretching high above your head or to the left and right.

### **Adjustments:**

**Virtual:** You can pair people into break-out rooms. Allow people to choose whether they will mirror each other from the shoulders up or from the waist up. And follow the above instructions.

**Seated:** Pair people facing each other with knees close together. And follow the above instructions.

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Complete activity and allow your body to inform you of what you experienced. What is it communicating? What messages does your body have for you? Allow the information to arise from within your body.

### **Reflect, contemplate the activities and share out:**

- What was the experience like during the mirror exercise?
- What does the mirror activity have to do with trust?
- What does the mirror activity have to do with power?
- Did you experience a loss of power? Was there cooperation? If no, what were you experiencing? If yes, what was the experience like?
- How is Gladys a mirror of Dominican society in **Stateless**? Is she a mirror of society in general?
- What would have to happen in a society to create statelessness?

## Warm-Up Activity B: \*The Siren's Song (sound)

Everyone gathers in the centre of the room, standing, and closes their eyes. Begin the process by listening to your body for the experiences associated with oppression currently or from the past. Then, someone chooses to begin by emanating a sound related to the form of oppression they experienced. It can be a cry, a wail, a groan, a shout, a howling, etc. The facilitator will gather the first person who has a distinct sound and place them in one corner of the room. Then, each person the facilitator chooses will have an unmistakable sound that is different from the others. Four people will be chosen and placed in different corners of the room, continuing to make the sound of their oppression. With eyes closed, the remaining participants will listen to the sounds coming from the four corners and choose one of the corners that sounds similar to their sound.

Once the groups form, everyone opens their eyes and sits in a circle. Inside their respective groups, each person will share their stories. Why they choose their sound and what form of oppression they experienced.

### ***Adjustments:***

**Virtual:** This may take some adjustment to create. If you can, place people in individual break-out rooms or ask people to produce their sounds one at a time in the main room. As the facilitator, listen to each sound and choose which person to place into four separate break-out rooms. Then, have participants listen to each person in the four different break-out rooms and decide which space they will join based on the similarity to their sound. Once everyone is in their break-out room, have participants share their thoughts about their sound and their oppression.

**Seated:** Ask people to sit in various places in the room. Please continue with the above prompt, asking participants to create a distinct sound that reminds them of the oppression they experienced. Have four seats in each corner and choose a distinctive sound that is different from each other. Then ask participants to form a group around the sound that is similar to theirs and share their stories.

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Ask participants to gently tap their bodies with either a left or right palm or hand curled into a light fist. Then proceed to tap their right arm with their left hand to the shoulder. Switch. And proceed to tap their calves, thighs, chest to connect back to their bodies.

**Reflect, contemplate the activities and share out:** Ask participants to journal for five minutes with their unfiltered thoughts, allowing their pen to flow across the paper without stopping, scratching out, or rethinking what they are writing. Write for a full five minutes consistently. Then, answer the question, How have you been oppressed? And what was the experience like in finding people who had similar sounds? Finally, ask participants to share what they learned through this process.

## Warm-Up Activity C: Black Men Cry Too (visual, writing)

You are creating a gallery exhibit. You can gather photos from magazines, print from online, and place them strategically on the wall with a distance of three to four inches between each image. Choose images of Black men. Have participants begin to notice their bodies as they gaze at the pictures of the Black men on the walls.

Each person will slowly gaze at the photos presented and answer several questions in their journal.

1. What is your first thought as you gaze at the face in the photo?
2. What sensations arise inside your body as you gaze at the face?
3. How does the image make you feel?
4. What message is being conveyed in the photo?
5. How do you think the person in the photo is feeling?
6. What is the message being communicated by their facial expression? Their eyes?
7. In three sentences or less, what is the meaning of this photo?
8. In three sentences or less, imagine and tell us who the person in the photo is.
9. In three sentences or less, what happened in the moment before the photo was taken? What was the person thinking or feeling?
10. In three sentences or less, what happened after the photo was taken?
11. Do you feel connected to the person in the photo?
12. What does your body feel as it looks at the face in the photo?
13. Which person/image do you feel most connected to? Why?
14. Do you empathize with any of the people in the photo? Why?
15. Which image stands out from the rest? Why?

**Adjustments:**

**Virtual:** In a virtual space, you can share your screen with preselected photos you searched on the net and downloaded, and ask the participants to gaze at the images one by one as you ask them to write down the answers to the questions you ask. End with drinking water.

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Drink water. Rest your gaze. Breathe in deeply.

**Reflect and contemplate about the activity:**

People have many assumptions and judgments. But, unfortunately, many do not realize they have these biases based on social conditions and past incidents.

Ask participants to share: What is the meaning you make about a person who you meet for the very first time? What is the meaning you make about a situation based on your interpretation of events? What is the meaning you make about people or a culture? What is the meaning you make based on the information passed down to you from your parents? What is the meaning you make based on the knowledge you attained from school? What is the meaning you make based on the people you associate with? Who has assigned these meanings? How does your body feel right now? What sensations do you feel, and where is it located in your body? What message is it communicating to you?





## Activations (30-45 minutes)

The extended activations intend to continue deepening the work that you began during the warm-up activity. In these various activations, you allow for the physical and emotional presencing of oppression, engaging with the structural form of power and embodying someone else's life perspective. These activities will support the participants to view outwardly how structural oppression harms the body and community members. In addition, they call attention to the inward impact of internal bias and the harm of believing negative stereotypes that are imposed by media messages and institutions that deem certain people as "undesirable strangers" or "foreigners."

As we begin dealing with these societal narratives that pervasively exist inside our communities, changing our views, and investigating how we use language to create these negative stereotypes, we can start dealing with the effects and heal from the structures of oppression with grace, love and ease.

### Activation A

#### MOVEMENT

One person we fear, one person is our protector

### Activation B

#### SEATED AND MINIMAL MOVEMENT

Great Game of Power

### Activation C

#### THEATRE

Embody A:  
Rosa Iris and Government Official

### Activation D

#### THEATRE

Embody B:  
Juan Teofilo and Male Officer

### Extended Activation A:

#### **\*One person we fear, one person is our protector (movement)**

In this movement workshop, you will ask the participants to choose one person to be “afraid of” and a different person to be “the protector.” These people are unaware of the roles the participants have assigned them. When the activity begins, ask participants to roam around the area. Silently, the participant must keep a significant distance between themselves and the person they fear. After a brief time, you will ask the participants to keep the “protector” between them and the person they fear. Again, that person should not know you have chosen them as “protector.” After a brief time, ask them to select another person as “protector” and keep them between you and the person they fear without them knowing you have assigned these roles to them. After a while, ask the participants to freeze.

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Ask the participants to take in a series of deep breaths to allow the sensations of apprehension or fear they may have been experiencing to dissipate. Then, while standing, shake your body, legs, upper body, arms, hands and whatever feels good, shake it out. Allow your body to tremble as you continue to breathe in deeply.

**Reflect and contemplate about the activity:** After regulating the body, ask the participants a series of questions: Who successfully evaded the person they chose to fear? What sensations started manifesting in your body? How did you react to the situation? What did you notice happening in your body? Your mind? Were you able to look at the person? What was the difference in your experience when you had a protector between you and the person you feared? Did the sensations ease from your body? Or did your senses become even more heightened? During this exercise, what thoughts did you have? Was there something that you continuously kept thinking about? How does this exercise relate to thinking of someone as being a “foreigner,” “different,” or “strange.” What would your experience be if the “enemy” was the country you were born in and you had no rights to citizenship?

## Extended Activation B:

### **\*Great Game of Power (seated and minimal movement)**

#### **Needed: 1 table, 6 chairs, 1 bottle**

One at a time, ask the participants to rearrange the table, six chairs and one bottle. The objective is to make one of the chairs the most potent chair out of the six chairs, table and bottle. You can arrange the chairs, table and bottle in different configurations: lying sideways, upside down, on top of each other, etc. Every item must be utilized in the space by the participants.

Allow the group to run through various scenarios until finally, through consensus, the group will choose which scenario clearly has one chair hold the most powerful position. Afterward, one participant will enter the space without altering anything and take up the most powerful position. Then, one after another, participants will attempt to place themselves in the most powerful positions, trying to take away the power from the first person's position.

As items are shifted and rearranged, ask the participants:

What do you see? How would you describe the way the chairs are positioned? Which chair has the most power? Why? What doesn't give it power? The relationships of the items, what does it make you think of? What do the positions represent to you? Why do you believe that? What makes you believe that? Allow the discussion to continue until all ideas are exhausted.

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Gently sway in place, allowing the body to rock back and forth or side to side while breathing in gently.

**Reflect, contemplate the activities and share out:** Ask the participants to journal any thoughts they may have about what they experienced.

In discussion:

- Describe which chair had the most power during which iterations.
- What experience in their own life gave them power and why?
- Who are the communities in **Stateless**, and how are they interconnected?
- How does power (or lack of power) impact these community members?
- How did you take power back in a situation where you experienced very little, limited or no power?
- How do the images of the chairs relate to the character situations in the movie **Stateless**? Does Rosa Iris have power? Why or why does she not have power? Does Juan Teofilo have power? Why or why does he not have power?
- How is Gladys attempting to assert power? How is her political group/members asserting power?
- What is the impact of Gladys's group asserting power in this way?

## Extended Activation C: Embody A – Rosa Iris and Government Official (Theatre)

Participants pair up. Participant A will act as Rosa Iris, and Participant B will be Government Official. The participants will act out the scene three times in total. They will begin again, deepening the process of reflecting and understanding their character's point of view. What does the character desire? What does the character want, with what result? What action needs to be fulfilled and why? What is the point of conflict between these characters? What happened before this scene started? What will happen after it ends? Finally, ask the participants to switch characters and begin the process of discovery again.

Rosa Iris: *He's Dominican. He has his birth certificate and declaration. He has his documents. He even studied here.*

Government Official: *This is Clenol's paperwork?*

Rosa Iris: *Yes, Clenol's.*

Government Official: *But Clenol doesn't speak Spanish.*

Rosa Iris: *He doesn't speak Spanish?*

Government Official: *I mean he doesn't speak Spanish clearly.*

Rosa Iris: *Speak with him.*

Government Official: *But I already asked him.*

Rosa Iris: *He is not a migrant. He is a Dominican citizen like you and me. We can't discriminate against our compatriots.*

Government Official: *Never, never! I am the last one to discriminate.*

Rosa Iris: *You're calling him a foreigner. I am so frustrated by this. He was born here. Let's be clear. We're not talking about a Haitian national. A person born in Haiti needs to be distinguished from their child who is born here.*

Government Official: *You've come here prepared for a fight, I need to fight back too. Because I have my own evidence to defend myself.*



**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Drink water. Sit or lie down. Allow the participants to reflect on the activity silently and to notice what showed up in their bodies. Notice if you feel anxious, upset, disconnected, engaged. Just notice whatever emotions you are experiencing. Allow for rumination and speculation.

**Reflect and contemplate about the activity:** In small groups of four, each person will have four minutes to express how they felt about their experience being Rosa Iris and the Government Official. One of the participants will keep time for each other as they share. The participants who are listening are not to interject, ask questions, begin a dialogue. Their task is to listen to each person who is speaking without interrupting, initiating side comments, explaining or defining. The person sharing uses the entire four minutes or waits until the time expires if they complete sharing before the four minutes concludes. After everyone has shared, the group discusses their experience. Some questions to ask during the discussion portion: What did you notice about being Rosa Iris? What did it feel like being a Government Official? Did you notice being oppressed? Did you notice being the oppressor? What was the conflict in the scene? What did your body experience? What does it feel like being in Rosa Iris's situation? What does it feel like to be seen as undesirable, unworthy or different?

### Extended Activation D: Embody B – Juan Teofilo and Male Officer (Theatre)

**Enact and practice the activity:** Participants pair up. Participant A will act as Juan Teofilo, and Participant B will be Male Officer. The participants will act out the scene three times in total. First, they will begin again, deepening the process of reflecting and understanding their character's perspective. What does the character desire? What does the character want? Are the desired results produced? What action needs to be fulfilled and why? What is the point of conflict between these characters? Imagine what happened before this scene started? What will happen after it ends? Continue to reflect. Finally, the participant will switch characters, beginning the process of discovery again.

Juan Teofilo: *Greetings.*

Male Officer: *Tell me about your problem.*

Juan Teofilo: *Well, my ID card was cancelled.*

Male Officer: *How old are you?*

Juan Teofilo: *44. The registry says I was born in '72, but that's wrong. It should say '73.*

Male Officer: *Let me explain this to you so you understand. There's no point in you coming here to argue—*

Juan Teofilo: *But you don't know that.*

Male Officer: *No, no, you know what the problem is. Don't pretend like you don't know. But... First of all, the birth certificate they issued for you is illegal. Second, Sonia is not your mother.*

Juan Teofilo: *Sonia is my mother. Her registration is inconsistent. It should say '60 but it says '65. She was declared late.*

Male Officer: *If she was born '60, in 1972 that's twelve years.*

Juan Teofilo: *I was born '73.*

Male Officer: *She had you at 13?*

Juan Teofilo: *Yes, look. I also have here the Dominican ID card of Ana Gregorio Fortuna. Let me see if I can find it. Here it is. She is my grandmother, everyone knows her in Mojarra and Elías Piña.*

Male Officer: *You have all these unexplained issues. Because a girl who is born in 1965 would have had to be 7—*

Juan Teofilo: *No, no! She wasn't born in 1965, she was born in 1960!*

Male Officer: *But that's what it says.*

Juan Teofilo: *What the certificate says. And that's what I want to correct and I want to know how. If you want I can find the way to—*

Male Officer: *No, no, this has nothing to do with me, this is your problem. I don't know if you understand me, but this is your problem that you will need to... to... document... I'm not...*

Juan Teofilo: *I have to prove that she is my mother. That's what they're questioning.*

**Conclude activity and regulate the body:** Drink water. Sit or lie down. Allow silent reflection, noticing what showed up in your body. Notice if you feel anxious, upset, disconnected, engaged. Just notice whatever emotions you are experiencing. Allow your body to process what it is experiencing. Allow yourself to be in this moment. Allow for rumination and speculation.

**Reflect and contemplate about the activity:** In small groups of four, each person will have four minutes to express how they felt about their experience being Juan Teofilo and the Male Official. One of the participants will keep time for each other as they share. The participants who are listening are not to interject, ask questions, or begin a dialogue. Their task is to listen to each person who is speaking without interrupting, initiating side comments, explaining or defining. The person sharing uses the entire four minutes or waits until the time expires if they complete sharing before the four minutes concludes. After everyone has shared, the group discusses their experience. What did it feel like being Juan Teofilo? What did it feel like being the Male Officer? Who was the oppressed? Who was the oppressor? What was the conflict? What did your body experience in the scene? What does it feel like being in this other person's situation? What does it feel like to be seen as undesirable, unworthy or different?

## Closing Workshops with Care

As you conclude your workshops, bring everyone together and ask each person to reflect and share in groups or individually:

1. **Mind:** What new thoughts can you have around the issues of statelessness, oppression and discrimination?
2. **Heart:** What new sensations can you have around the issues of statelessness, oppression and discrimination?
3. **Mouth:** What new words will you use or create to empower community members dealing with statelessness, oppression and discrimination?
4. **Hands:** What new actions will you take today or tomorrow to empower community members coping with statelessness, oppression and discrimination?

\*Work created by Augusto Boal from Theatre of the Oppressed.



## Resources and Recommended Reading:

For more information on **Stateless** and related themes, please review [POV's Delve Deeper Reading List](#), [Discussion Guide](#), and NFB's [Mini-Lesson](#) created specifically to support deeper engagement with the documentary.

Review the full text of the [Convention Relating to the Statutes of Stateless Persons](#), published in 1954.

Review the full text of [Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians](#).

Familiarize yourself with [Trauma-Informed Care for Displaced Populations](#).

Read the full text of the March 2020 Institute of Statelessness and Inclusion's Report, titled [The World's Stateless: Deprivation of Nationality](#).

To learn more about how statelessness impacts children, read [How Statelessness in the Dominican Republic Limits Children's Access to Education](#).

Access the 2015 Inter-American Commission of Human Rights report, [Situation of Human Rights in the Dominican Republic](#).

Read [Dreams Deferred: The Struggle of Dominicans of Haitian Descent to Get their Nationality Back](#).

Learn more about the [UN's Conventions on Statelessness](#).

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## Bio

**Clarivel Ruiz** (we, us, you), child of the African and Indigenous Diaspora, parents from Ayiti Kiskeya (a.k.a. Hispaniola, a.k.a. the Dominican Republic and Haiti), raised in NYC on the ancestral bones and covered shrines of the Lenape people. In 2018, we initiated Dominicans Love Haitians Movement, Inc., an arts non-profit agency to heal from colonialism's traumas. Our goal is to restore the rights OF ALL PEOPLE, HAITIAN AND DOMINICAN, to live in an inclusive environment free from harmful negative narratives, perceptions and propaganda that negate our commonalities and humanity through anti-Blackness, anti-Haitianism and xenophobia. Our purpose is to give rise to ways to counteract these divisive ways of thinking and being.

An artist, educator, and coach with over 15 years of experience creating media programs as a former director at DCTV, a non-profit agency, supporting students as a facilitator at Boricua College, and guiding people to live a life they love through participatory engagements.

We are alumni of Hemispheric Institute's EmergeNYC, Culture Push's Fellowship for Utopian Practice, and the Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship at CCCADI, as well as a former participant in the Civic Practice Seminar at the Metropolitan Museum, a 2019 Brooklyn Arts Council Award recipient and an MFA graduate of CUNY, City College.