

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

AMELIA BONOW:

Hi! Everybody! Welcome to Abortion Academy. We're so excited to be talking to Mariana from Inroads today about dismantling abortion stigma at the global level. Amazing. Building solidarity. Building spaces for us to connect with each other. Talk about the work that we're doing all over the world with each other. Learn from each other.

So I'm just going to start my little intro while people are letting themselves in. So, my name is Amelia Bonow. I use she/her pronouns. I'm the cofounder and executive director of Shout Your Abortion, which is a nationwide organization, a US nationwide organization, working to normalize abortion and elevate paths to safe access of legality. We make resources, campaigns and media intended to arm existing activists, create new ones and foster collective participation in abortion access all over the country.

Abortion Academy is a monthly webinar series, where we introduce our network to one of our exceptionally brilliant colleagues, and we hope that these sessions will help you deepen your knowledge, inspire curiosity, help you connect some dots between what you're navigating regionally and what's happening at the national or, in some cases, international level. And ultimately give you fresh ideas to take back into your community.

Audience members will be off camera and muted for security reasons but you will be able to ask questions in the chat throughout the session. And our speaker will be talking to us for about 40 min, and then Mariana and I will have a Q&A. And we'll take your questions as well.

And we're super excited that today is the first time that we've had a Spanish interpretation option. So in order to hear this presentation in Spanish, you will go to the bottom bar, the menu bar and the on the right hand side. For me, I click the three dots that say more, and then you will select the little globe option, and if you want to hear the presentation in Spanish, you just select the Spanish option. And then Diana and Maria will be able to tell you what Mariana is saying in Spanish. So, we're really grateful to have this option, and we hope that it's helpful.

So we are really excited about today's session. We are going to be talking about building international collective power and solidarity across the abortion justice ecosystem worldwide with Mariana Gonzalez, Communications Manager at Inroads, which is the international network for the reduction of abortion, discrimination, and stigma.

Mariana is a Venezuelan feminist, with over 10 years of experience in grassroots organizing for gender and reproductive justice, youth leadership and migrant rights.

With the Inroads team, Mariana amplifies transformative narratives for a world free of abortion, stigma and campaigns for movement building the 2023 Latin, American, and Caribbean Abortion Justice Circle, which was a regional gathering with grassroots activists, and collectives from 21 countries, and the inaugural day of action, to destigmatize abortions.

Marianna is going to talk to us about building transformative intersectional spaces for mutual learning, collaboration, healing, and community care among abortion justice advocates, and sharing thoughts about people, including funders, how people, including funders, can show up in support of the hundreds of under resourced grassroots collectives at the front lines of this work all over the world.

We're so excited to have this conversation. SYA has been a big fan of inroads for a long time, and we see our work as parallel and interconnected, and this organization and the folks that comprise it are absolutely a source of inspiration and power for us. So we're grateful to have Mariana here today, and let's get into it.

MARIANA:

Thank you so much, Amelia, really happy to be here. I have been a big fan of SYA for many years now. And also we are very happy to have many people from the Shout Your Abortion team as part of the Inroads community.

***6:06-8:00: Inaudible audio**

AB:

Oh, sorry, Mariana. The audio is a little bit messed up for you. It kind of got garbled. I don't know if maybe you want to either try headphones or not. It was fine at first, but then now it's just kind of crackling. I don't. Are you wearing headphones?

MG:

I wonder if it's my connection, like maybe share the screen. Can you hear me now?

AB:

Yes. Okay. So maybe you want to say the setup, the activity again.

MG:

Okay. So the activity to ground us in the ideal solidarity as an action. We want to do like a little poem exercise. This is an activity that is actually an adaptation of one we have done in those gatherings.

In this case, I would like you to start the first paragraph of your poem about different verbs and action that you connect with the word solidarity, always starting with solidarity is a verb. Then the second one, you could think about memories of receiving. And in the third one, you can write about memories of acting in solidarity. We have a little worksheet if you wanna do it digitally. I think my colleague Maria is gonna be sharing that in the chat.

You can copy that document, or you can take pen and paper, and take a few minutes to reflect about solidarity as a verb.

So I saw that Maria already posted the worksheet if you want to use it. And you can copy your poem in five min if you want in the Q&A. Or you can just keep it for yourself. This is a rounding for these activities.

We have two more minutes.

Okay. So thank you. Everyone who participated. If you wanna share in the Q&A box, you can do it. I'm going to share my first answer. So, you know it's not just you. I was also doing the exercise.

In my poem, I put: solidarity is a verb, to listen with a judgment. To be open, to learn to share the burden, and to hold each other with care.

So, Amelia, I don't know if you want to share yours. If not, it's okay. We can continue. You're muted.

AB:

So I did a...I was like thinking of these things, but I did not. It did not come together into a beautiful poem like yours did. It was more just like phrases.

But my verb is holding each other like both hugs and...I think, the way that we can hold each other just energetically, whether that's in person or on a zoom from across the world, and memories of solidarity.

I always will remember the first time that I saw videos of the decision in Argentina and in Ireland to restore abortion rights. And just like how much energy that gave me. I'll totally start crying if I think about it. It's just...Those things are...

It's like something I could watch for the rest of my life, and just feel so much power and so much connection. And it really, I think, gives me what I need to go out and do this work here today, you know.

And thinking about a moment that we showed up in solidarity, I thought about the Justyna campaign that was around our friend, Justyna, who was facing charges in Poland for distributing abortion pills, and we did all sorts of like art actions that were using the phrase, "Behind each one of us is 10 more", which is like a line that is taken from the Plan C documentary that came out in the United States and the Polish friends had already been using this phrase, which means I am Justyna. And so for us it was like, an additional interpretation that is like you can fuck with one of us, but behind each one of us there's 10 more, so you'll never stop us.

And I think that that is like a definition that's like how I feel about international solidarity. It makes us feel unstoppable to know that all of you are out there.

MG:

Thank you so much for sharing.

Yeah, I think that's beautiful, like 100% agree with all that. I also remember that the abortion dream team uses this tag that is "You are not alone in Polish." And that's something like a big part of their model. And their work supports people.

So that we see, in general, abortion justice works coming from solidarity, right? So like from supporting people to access abortion, supporting our communities. So that's part of the grounding that also moves our community, inroads.

So, starting from the beginning. As I mentioned, our name is International Network for the Reduction of Abortion Discrimination and Stigma. We don't use it that much anymore. But you can tell that it comes from this initial branding of people coming together. It was not enough to think about abortion policies, a version of rights we needed to all the systematizing narrative that underpin our abortion practices negative realities.

So it was that coming together, thinking about this shift in abortion narrative, and like understanding how a stigma is to produce and impact multiple levels. So why do we want... What do we want to achieve? Coming together as a community, right? As a network.

So the mission that was co-created by the people who joined the first years was: okay, we want to create a world where abortion is accessible for all and center around the needs and experiences.

Yeah, the people were having abortions, right? Because that already give us the chief that we need. We see in our scenario how often we are centering someone else's opinions or needs now that people are actually having abortions. So that's the vision we have at inroads.

So, we are a global community dedicated to nurturing abortion justice movements to dismantle abortion stigma, and its discriminatory and harmful outcomes around the world.

Like mentioned before, there are over 2,600 at the moment in 120 countries. Something important to highlight, that we actually were across all areas of the ecosystem. So, even though probably collective when you see most, because it is something that we center. Often in reality, our community includes and is openly welcoming people working all areas. So, for example, academic researchers, policymakers, feminist lawyers doing strategic litigation, artists, and advocates.

So, everyone who is involved in the justice movement. We think all of their experiences and their learnings and their wisdom is important, and also because we need transformation at every level. So that's something that I think makes it really powerful to be able to learn from all the different areas right and like, support each other. So we actively host spaces for solidarity to move to learning and collecting, and provide flexible funding and resources for our seniors, to transform our narratives, practices, and policies.

So I'm gonna give more detail on what that looks like.

But first, before this video starts loading, we're actually gonna put the video. Someone else is gonna share. So, one of the team members is gonna help me put the video on to ensure that you can hear it. But before we show it, I want to give a little introduction.

So I wanted to bring everyone here who might not be as used to be in international spaces and haven't been able to see first hand the brilliance of movements around the world. I wanted to bring you into that space a little bit. And this is a little compilation of powerful artistic music videos for movements. It's from 5 different countries. And you're gonna see the power they have. I want to say all credit goes to them. So yes, please give them all your love.

Can you see the video? I cannot hear it.

AB:

Mariana. I think we're having another sound issue.

MG:

Yeah.

AB:

Yeah, I don't know. I don't know how to fix it, but I feel like we owe these musicians better quality. But maybe we can send everyone the link to this compilation. Maybe we can put the link in the chat or and send it in a follow up.

MG:

Yes. We can share the compilation link.

AB:

Sure. And we're gonna try to fix it on our end, also.

MG:

It's okay. Let's continue. I think we can share the beauty of this little compilation, and then Maria is gonna share the link where they can learn more about all the artists. And they can also see the full video of each of them. So, anyway, it's amazing you're gonna join your own time. And that's fine. So let me just go back to my slides.

Okay. So going back to approaches, how do we approach building international solidarity and transforming, you know, the stigma?

So we focus on three key grounding approaches. So one is shifting narratives and power. Shifting narratives is already clear. But we also think that that's just always connectivity and power. You cannot really access information without shifting power, understanding that the

stigma scenarios, and, like predominant narratives in general, are reflection of power dynamics, right? Of power imbalances. So we intentionally create everything we create, we're always thinking, okay, are we shifting the power imbalances that impact abortion narratives and just systems of oppression, intersectionality. I'm gonna show a little bit how this looks in practice.

Solidarity and power building is the important part, just building solidarity, learning from each other, supporting each other, but also creating collective power. How can we join forces to drive transformation?

And then community resourcing. This is something that is vital because we know that resources are also power imbalances. Right? So, we need resources to be able to ensure that people can actively participate in the space as we created. The people can actually try. And when we are actively not only distributing resources, both are ground making, but also other funding streams that we embed in our spaces. But also like advocating for more resources. So like creating knowledge and mobilizing funding key funders to ensure that our movements get the resources they need to be able to try. I'm gonna share a little bit more about that when we go to the funding area.

A little high overview of how this translates into practice includes regional and global gatherings. In this case, I mean, person gatherings of hundreds of abortion justice people, movement leaders from all areas of the ecosystem together. Then we have multiple community spaces going on permanently built online like a permanent community. And that community, and our community in general...It's very much, truly, and rooted in having a safe space for abortion justice people so even though it's open for everyone to apply, we do have a security process to ensure that the person is actually active in abortion justice movements. And to ensure that these spaces are safe, and that, for example, we can have these amazing spaces and workshops with the chat open right which requires significant investment on the team.

Then we have fellowships which are longer term learning spaces. And through all of this we also embed community resources, right? So like funding people to be able to attend, funding people for sharing their wisdom, for going to the scholarship, and, like, not only participating, but actually sharing their experience. They are both teachers and students in that sense. So we make sure that they have the resources to do that. They have the resources to attend the gatherings. They have the resources to be panelists in our spaces. That's also a way that we see to make sure that we are moving resources towards grassroots collective, because we know, and we have some insight that we just released about it. To just sort of put data behind what we already knew, right? And everyone who works in abortion knows that grassroots are deeply underfunded. In most cases they are run by volunteers, or part of the team is volunteers. So, putting resources into everything we do, we see it as vital.

Then our official grant-making and funding streams. Collective advocacy. So we are part of many collective efforts for campaigns, for coming together at different key convenience spaces. For example, on September 28, we organized multiple organizations in many other spaces when we came together to advocate. We also create and amplify learning resources from the

amazing movement leaders in our community, and also some that we co-create with them, and are always looking at everything we do. How can we transform narrative and transformative movements at different lanes?

So getting a bit more deep on this when it comes to gatherings here. Here are some beautiful images of some of our galleries in the past years. We make sure to create this in a way that is very intentional to assure that we are actually connecting with those three key approaches, right?

So one of those is how we get a collective agenda. So every person attending our gathering is also facilitating a space or being part of a panel, or creating part of the gathering, right? So it's completely co-created. And we think that's super important. So, like everyone gets a space to share their brilliance.

We also make sure when we have this process of people applying, because you really need to apply to attend, because you need to also submit your proposal of why you want to facilitate, and what wisdom you want to bring, and what experience you wanna bring to the community.

We also prioritize people that usually don't have this opportunity. So something that sometimes surprises people [in these gatherings] like there are people, again, that all levels of ((unintelligible)) are collective. So if someone says, you know, I have already been to many international spaces, and now other people's organizations are applying, then we are most likely to fund the people who did not have the opportunity to attend.

So, that's very connected to powers or resourcing. To be able to do that and shift power, we need to make sure that we are allocating significant resources to fund the majority of the people attending. That's why at our gatherings, you can see they are usually around... If there's a smaller regional gathering, it's around 60 people, and if it's a bigger gathering right now, it will be around 150, which is small compared to other gatherings. But it's because we're very intentionally creating a way that driving transformation. We welcome more ((phones?)) to make it much bigger, with the same level of resourcing for everyone, though.

Then, we also make sure that is centering the margins. So how do we intentionally put in the center the communities that are facing multiple levels of oppression? How do we make sure that it's not just one single person, you know, like the talking person, to represent a whole community, but actually making the outreach necessary when it's necessary, or like allocating more resources to make sure that the people who are more marginalized can take center stage, and can drive transformation.

It can help other people in the movement realize that this community that we're living at, the margins, should be at the center right? And that, I think, is particularly relevant when it comes to abortion because something that we see is that sometimes this sort of compromises that movements have to make. Right? It's like... Okay, I will just settle for abortion under this condition. So only if... it doesn't have to be free... It's okay if it's up to this time, you know,

like...sometimes, we need to settle for sort of less of what we want. But what we are doing is leaving a lot of people behind, and the people who are leaving behind are usually the people who are already being oppressed by more systems of (oppression?), who have less access to resources. So we want to make sure on this basis that we are driving that transformation too.

They are rooted in care. And that sort of care at every level, from the application process, not making something that becomes super complex that takes a lot of time. From the way we treat people who are attending, the way we distribute resources. For example, something that happens a lot is that a lot of organizations prefer to make the participant buy their flight tickets, for example, and then they can offer reimbursement. But that...you know, a lot of participants cannot afford to buy their ticket upfront right? They also cannot afford to sort of shoulder the whole risk, because what usually happens like...then they buy the most affordable ticket that does not offer cancellation so then, if for some reason, they cannot attend, they lose the money right and. And that with so many other things like with the per diems, the cost of travel, insurance, so many little details, that it's important to give the (agent?) to actually care for the people who are attending.

Also something because we prioritize people that normally don't have access to these spaces. We have a lot of people that tell us that they're traveling for the first time internationally. So we make sure to also have support throughout this process to help them navigate what it means to travel internationally with different needs, and the different fears that people might have. Yeah. So actually, my colleague, who's here in the chat, did that for a lot of gatherings. Just amazing.

Like, it takes a lot of intentional work to make sure that people can actually attend, and then they feel cared for, and that this space is actually accessible.

There are many other things related to accessibility like having interpretation. For example, in our last gathering, we had a live English interpretation. While the whole gathering was in Latin America, there were people from the Caribbean so we need to make sure that people from the Caribbean can actually participate actively right? So all those little details like we are really like actively thinking about all that.

There's something else I want to mention about this. It's like the inroads community, it's open to all of the ecosystem. It's also open to the individual level is how we say it. So that means that if you join, it's not like 'I'm joining as inroads' No, it's 'I'm joining as Mariana' as a person who is working in inroads like anyone else in your collective or in your organization, can join too.

We think that's super powerful for these types of spaces. For example, it means that the person who maybe is not the ED can also go, because usually, in organizations, they prioritize sort of like the external facing when everyone in the movement is able to be in this space. Also, you want them to have access to all the resources we provide, and all the support, regardless of their position. So also very key to the way we do things.

So we give out the fellowships. We have two so far. This one was centered around artists. Some of the music videos in that compilation come from this fellowship, and in this case they were working together for six months, having to learn new spaces and circles, and also having sort of advisors on sort of like...yeah, guides who are sharing their wisdom, and who works in the arts from different parts of the world. And then they were able to work on their own projects. And throughout the whole fellowship, they received an honorary to be there, and to develop their projects.

We found that very powerful, because they have not only the opportunity to develop their project they've had in mind, but then they were able to become much stronger because they were able to have that learning process.

Many other communities allowed them to see sort of like their blind spots. It's one of the things when you work with other people, you realize the many things that you didn't know. Like you don't know what you know until you learn, right? So like that's part of what it means to be in community, and to be able to learn from each other. My colleague is sharing the information about the fellowships, too.

Okay. Now we go. Okay. Now we are in the next slide about our grant making.

So we have been a grant maker since we started in 2014. And it also came sort of the response to the community. Right? We brought all these people together. We're like, okay, how can we support what our community needs. And of course, resources were a big part of that. So we have been doing grant making for 10 years. We have tried different approaches to see what our community needs more, and always getting feedback from our community. And our current abortion community care fund that we will launch this year with that name has three (funds?).

We have the Bloom foundation, which is a small flexible funding that people can use either for core expenses, core support for care needs, but also for any projects that they might want to develop that their founders might consider too risky. Something that we know from (virtual collective?), and that they are the ones usually driving the most innovative right? Like they are the ones taking risks even though they're the ones who have the least resources to do it. But they're the one closer to the community, and they actually want to make sure that they are coping the needs. So we want to make sure that we can support them through Bloom.

Then, connected to that, we launched a new foundation which is Sustain & Respond. So again, people are taking a huge amount of risk, working, as we know, in a deeply stigmatized topic, and deeply criminalized. (Eros?) is all over the world, so the level of recent criminalization can change sharply from one country to the other. And yeah, so many people work in context when not only is abortion illegal now, but it's always being illegal, right? They're taking a huge burden of the (reason?). I want to make sure that we can share the burden, and support their resilience and support when they are not only facing a crisis, but also how they can prepare for the crisis better, right? To care for themselves, for the security of their team. So this new stream of

(funds?) we just launched this year. We are actively fundraising for that one. So if anyone here works in the funder space and would like to support that, reach out.

And then another (stream?) that has also been going for many years now is a Solidarity & Collective Power, which is focusing on having two of our groups organizations coming together, working either in a project that's gonna help them strengthen their common work, learning from each other, complimenting each other, or developing projects together. This could be organizations with the same country, or organizations in different countries or states, and so on. So there's not a filter.

So because we're...I think I already shared some information in the chat, so you can learn a little bit more about the criteria in general. This is focused on organizations and collective that don't usually have access to funding, including non registered collectives so you can see a bit more then. But that's sort of like the main filter that you will probably see.

Then we are creating learning resources with our community coming together to learn to create information about the needs, the reality is the brilliance, the wisdom. We released... I think two weeks ago, this grassroots insights document, after talking with 47 movement leaders from different countries, we've gathered some of the insight that we're sharing there that confirms something that we knew. Like how deeply (under-resourced?) community organizations are who are working on abortion. They mentioned how they mostly project based grants that, of course, do not foster overall sustainability. As we know a lot of these project based grants, they don't allow or have a very minimum like limit of how you can use the funds to support your own team, to cover salaries and compensation which is wild. So that's the organizations. But also, they mostly rely on volunteer work. And in time, material donations and those material donations often even come from the same volunteers right? Because they're passionate about the work they're doing so they are donating the supplies they need, basically. Yeah.

When it comes to collective (democracy?), we are involved in different spaces, just to highlight. One that, you know, started this year. We started with over 30 other organizations to discover the meaning of a global day to destigmatize abortions.

We wanted to have a day while they're still supporting the other days that already exist. For example, September 28, which is international safe abortion day

Once it...Oh, we certainly need to have, like another moment, to collectively shine a light on and take advantage of the media attention that comes up with this type of day actions. When we're talking about abortion and what they are. Right. Abortions are a normal part of our reproductive journeys like...that's it. We wanted to make sure that we had a day where we could talk about it. We can talk about this narrative, and we can share about how... Yeah, how we could transform our world to be very bold and not be apologetic about it.

This was created after the initial 13th-35 (?). 180 other organizations join as partners for the round. This collection of resources that you can find on our website, which is march28.org. You

really have the brilliance of our movements. So we wanted to make sure that it was like a useful space, and not just like a campaign name. So you can find here, for example, the narrative, a lot of amazing art, some of the ones in the video, but many others from different parts of the world. And if you would like to join us next year, both to mark the day, but also to share your amazing resources to be highlighted here, please do so. There is an option to join on the website there, too.

And then to close, I wanted to share some sort of common feedback we received from our community right. We have evaluations and feedback forms and spaces and everything we do. But on top of that we do every two years, an in depth evaluation will make sure that we are still connected with what the community needs, like responding to different necessities.

And here's some of the things that we hear all the time. Right? So I just put four realities because they are very common. So one is this idea of having a place that feels like a home for like abortion justice. I think this amazing movement leader from Thailand, said 'an oasis for abortion rights.' You can just feel completely yourself, unapologetically yourself, so comfortable to have difficult conversations to share during the (house?), to even talk about the stigma, how it's part of your life, because (inaudible). It's a phrase that someone said in one of the workshops and said, 'the stigma is like the weather. We all get wet, so we are all like growing up in a stigmatizing environment.' So something that is special is to have space for you to also feel safe to say, Oh, do you know I used to hold that stigma like I didn't realize I had it. To feel safe to be your whole self. Right?

Then, okay, transformative power. And this quote from Malawi. Where they're saying that:

"In our country, abortion is criminalized. When I was joining, I was afraid to even mention the word. Through this community, I have learned and evolved. I am comfortable and bold these days when talking about abortions."

This is a very common feedback that in different forms we take, people say, like how I feel most comfortable to be unapologetic, to become (inaudible). (They?) became more radicalized, but in the best possible way. That's part of the power of community coming together. Then, when it comes to the current movement, we have a quote from a movement leader from the United States who shared a little bit about how it is really transformative. And it changed them to their core to work and learn from global abortion activists. And that's definitely something I shared, too, when I joined.

And then unique and flexible funding. There is particularly not a lot of funding for grassroots orgs. I want to give the opportunity to highlight organizations that will also provide funding. So there is Safe Abortion Action Fund. They have a little bit different approach, but they also provide funding for grassroots, people workin abortion justice. Then, there's Abortion Conversation Project who has really small funding, I think, up to \$3,000 for activities, some projects related to shifting abortion conversations, and also tackling stigma.

So we have these two organizations and us. Basically, if you know of any other, please do share because we want to make sure that all this information is available. But the idea that there is not a lot of funding, and people always highlight us as basically one of the organizations that they can come to when they need something. And they need resources and support. Yeah, we hope to be honest, that they're gonna be other organizations. And like a tribal system of support for abortion justice movements.

So already closing, if you're not a member yet, join us. Members are always free. Our spaces are free, too. And like I said, we do have a security process. So please make sure, in the application to put references like links to your work, and like references that we can double check because security is one of the most important things for us. Share widely with your abortion networks, the people you work with in abortion justice. And if you're in a position to donate, or if you're a funder who wants to partner with us to move resources to abortion justice movements also please connect with us. Here's our website. We're sharing the link.

Yeah, that's it for the presentation part.

AB:

Yay, thank you so much, Mariana. Oh my gosh! That was so beautiful and inspiring, and thank you so much to Maria and Diana for interpreting. Sorry about some of the audio issues that we are not sure if maybe it was because we had a lot of hosts. I would love to hear if you are someone in the audience who used the interpretation feature, will you put like a reaction? Put a heart reaction. I would love to just see if anybody was using it. And if not-

Oh look yay, I'm so glad! Look at all of these. Yay, that makes me so happy. I'm so glad that we were able to make this more accessible for more people, which is, you know, obviously part of the whole deal. And I'm excited to have a little conversation with you, and hear questions from the audience. So you can ask questions in the Q&A feature, and... Oh! And, as Michelle said in the chat, we'll be having interpreters for future sessions as well. So we're really grateful to have, you know, had this suggested and we're excited to keep it going.

So, I guess you know, I have... I have the. It's such beautiful work, Mariana. It's really just like, my heart felt so full listening to you talk about this, and I'm just so grateful that you exist. And I can't imagine how just how many people are feeling held by these connections, you know. And I guess I wanted to talk to you about solidarity, obviously, is just the kind of the core of your work.

And it's something that we think about a lot in the United States. We look at what's happening often in places like Latin America, where we've seen, you know, transnational movements come together and achieve either huge policy wins like we saw in Argentina, or just achieve like incredible grassroots movement building victories in ways that I think in the United States we feel like, Wow, how do we do that? And often when I hear specifically, like Latin, American feminists talk about the work, I noticed that it's like often rooted just in feminism. It's not just about abortion. It's like it's rooted in feminism. So I wanted to know if you could like talk a little bit about that. I noticed in your bio, you're like 'I'm a Venezuelan feminist.' And in the United

States, it's like you don't hear people claiming that in the same way, necessarily. So I wanted to know if you could talk about just sort of like rooting your abortion work in intersectional feminism, and how that has been a...the connective tissue for so many Latin American justice movements.

M:

So I think, for something that I saw very strongly in the Latin America movement when it comes to abortion is that it comes a lot from feminist gatherings. So something really powerful that I think Latin America has is regular feminist gatherings that happen every two years. Like every couple years, like regularly these feminist gatherings happen. They try to be as accessible as possible, so it's very grassroots.

Like the last one happened in El Salvador. Like, for example, for accommodation. They have accessible accommodation and stuff like that. So they really make sure to have this space to come in together and learn from each other, so that I feel like it makes a huge difference in the abortion movement in Latin America, having a place to come together.

But then it's also about being really open to sort of question yourself and learn, and like realizing that you have privilege. How do you share that privilege? That's sort of part of this feminist grounding, too, realizing how you are not in a bubble, right? And you are part of the ecosystem, like there's so many people in different situations, and how you show solidarity to them. So, in Spanish we have a word. Now the direct translation will be between us. Sounds like college sorority, right? But in Spanish we don't have that culture. We have used the words already that basically means solidarity between women, I guess the initial. But now we also apply to trans and nonbinary people. And it's sort of this idea that you are always gonna come from that place of loss, right? So it's like this is a person that I consider my family so I'm gonna listen. I'm gonna actually try to show up the same way the same way I will for someone that I consider my family. So I do think that's a really valuable grounding that has helped the movement.

AB:

I love that thought, and you know something that SYA. One of the community sort of agreements that we say when we are bringing people together, even just in a zoom, or whatever is that we are committed to bringing people together who are approaching each other in good faith, and sort of assuming best intentions. And also that we are inviting critique and you know, like to be pushed to look at...yeah, look at your privilege, look at something you're not seeing, have your perspective (challenged?) by someone else. But, like, I think that sort of thing works a lot differently when you are feeling like someone is coming from a constructive place of love, you know, like. So I think that that as a literal way that solidarity can work is. Like, it's just an important fundamental part of the relationship.

M:

Yep.

AB:

I wanted to ask so...I was looking at the slide that you had that's like about the convening...the abortion justice convening you have, and this is kind of related to what we were just talking about, but you talked a lot about how there's basically horizontal, like the agenda is co-created by everyone and I guess you know, I wonder.. obviously these convenings, like the inroads, convenings, are not necessarily looking to generate policy, or like a set of demands or something. It's more about sharing space and sharing solidarity.

But I think. I guess I wonder about like, how much are you in those spaces, looking to come to any point of consensus or like, make a decision together, or create something together in a way that like there might be different perspectives? And like, how do you move through that, in a way that is horizontal. And, as you said, it's like centering the perspective of the most marginalized people while having it be like...are you creating things together that require a lot of decision making, and if so, how do you do that in a horizontal way?

M:

So in the gatherings we had in the past year, we have some workshop spaces that were about specific sections we wanted to have either organized by us, or by another person of the community who wanted to use a space for that.

So then, they have the space to come together to have those conversations, those agreements. But it was always sort of like a part of a wider strategy of what different organizations were doing. But in reality, the way I have experienced it is a place to spark connection. So we see how these little connections happen. And then, to be honest, then we hear about it. I, the communications person. So I...often I'm covering what our community is doing, like amplifying. And I see, like, Oh, my God! These three collectives now are working together and launching something amazing. And they're like, Yeah, we just met at a gathering. And now you're launching this.

So like we are not telling them what to do at all the space completely, but we are very intentionally making sure that they have, like a strong connection that allows them to then move forward.

AB:

Yeah.

M:

Because at the end of the day, like our priority is not to....We're not taking trade at all, because, like, we are just facilitating. We are just like facilitating our environment to drive. Yeah.

AB:

Yeah, totally. And like. Yeah, we can't do any of those things without relationship building. You know...Obviously. And I think that that goes back to what you said before about that. There is

this big bi-yearly convening of just like feminists from around, like the global South Latin America, who come together and just hang and start to hash stuff out like. There has to be...We can't just like do this shit in Zoom Meetings. That's ridiculous.

M:

Yeah. But it's also nice, just about hanging. I feel like when you make sure that you put spaces where people can feel safe, to be safe and also be brave, to be vulnerable. I feel like when you're in a conference place, when you just saw a panel right, you actually have spaces when you are sharing very vulnerable stuff about your life, about your work, and like intentionally making sure in those spaces...so like the relationship that you create stronger than just attending a panel. Do you know?

AB:

Right. Right, yeah.

M:

And that's why making it very participatory is just so key, and having space for joy too, I guess. We have like in our last gathering amazing music, like live music from two powerful feminist rappers from Columbia, who are also part of the whole gathering because they're also movement leaders doing abortion work. Music is just part of that. So it's also like, yeah, I feel like, you need to create something that is really gonna strengthen everyone there. And like make them feel like these people I actually wanna stay in touch with and work with.

AB:

Can you talk a little bit about how art and creativity are a part of this movement space for you?

M:

So I feel like. So the way the arts in general are vital for movements. Right? It's like how we change narratives is by creating new narratives. Powerful narrative, attractive narrative that connects not just in the logical power, but also in the emotional part. So like 1st of all, just valuing and appreciating artists as movement leaders, and not just sort of like the graphic designer. No, like we see just a movement leader. You know you are leading the movement with your art.

So like, then, when it comes to like applications, invitations, and being part of any space, they have the same power, like an executive director of a major organization or more, because, you know, it's more fun. So usually the workshops are more fun.

So like, that's the beginning, right? So like, if you like that from the beginning, then you're getting everything you do, and also having a space to like, teach how they do it. How to create, for example, this (?) to communicate, how to create music. In the last one, we had the same powerful rappers that played the music in our festival. They also have a session when we're doing what they call like a feminist karaoke. So they were explaining how they collectively change the lyrics of popular music to make people aware about their abortion accompaniment in

Columbia. And they were teaching everyone to do it, and people got in groups to create music together. So. And then the people brought that to their own work right? And they apply it in their communities. We definitely also apply a lot of the things we learn from those spaces, from movement leaders.

AB:

That's awesome. Yeah, I mean, I always think about like...I think it's very short sighted to just fight for policy without building community, and I think that, like art, is like the basis of that. And I feel like it's like policy is the final stage in sort of implementing change that artists have created.

And I wanna encourage anybody who is on this call and spread the word that SYA loves nothing more than seeing our messaging or graphics, or the things that we make translated into other languages, used in other contexts. You're welcome to take anything that you like. You know, if it's an artist that we are working with, if you give credit, that's great. But in general, it just makes us so happy to see our messages, and our travel around the world. So please take it and use it and send us a photo.

Another question that I had was thinking about stigma and about you know you are... How many countries did you say you have like groups? And how many countries?

M:

120, I think..24. It's now 124.

AB:

Unbelievable. So like obviously stigma...abortion stigma is...like the details of it, or like how it shows up is different everywhere, but like the foundations are often very similar. So I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about what you've learned about the commonalities of abortion stigma all over the world, and also, like what makes it show up differently in different ways. You know what I mean?

M:

Yeah, so a commonality is isolation. I think isolating at the individual level. So people who have abortion, who support abortions, sort of this like you cannot talk about it. So it's like this idea that even if it's legal in many places, you still...you're not allowed to feel proud of your work, or you're not allowed to feel proud from taking responsibility for your life and your decisions on whatever you want to do with your body. So that sort of isolation.

And then something that I noticed that I feel like I learned here is how it can show up in the discrimination in the whole healthcare system, right? So like places where it's legal. But it still is not funded when they are not like... medical students are not learning about abortion or the way they are learning abortion comes with a lot of stigma. So like we are teaching you because we have to, but. And like, how that impacts access even when it's legal.

How is it different? I notice, in countries where Christianity is not the main religion. They were always telling me, like, No, yeah, our (inaudible) choice movement is quite different, because our religion is not part of that. It's not part of the conversation at all. And at first I was kind of surprised like, Oh, wow! Really. Tell me more.

AB:

Yeah.

M:

Yeah, so, yeah, so we see how it shows up. So when they talk about it academically, they talk about how it shows under the individual level, which is all learned. How it shows at your community level. So like your peers, your close community. Both what they are sharing to you, the narrative they are sharing, and also this idea that you don't feel like you can trust them and you cannot share with them, then with the institutional level. So it's also with the practices, right? So like all these practices that oh, they need to be a mandatory waiting period for you to really think about it. That is coming from a place of stigma, right? And it's also so obvious when you compare with other healthcare and like, why you don't have the other healthcare right like, just for this. So yeah, institutional level. And then the policy level. But all these policies are always underpinned by the stigma narrative.

So you cannot really change one without the other, basically, or at least not sustainable. You can do it temporarily, but then.

AB:

Yeah. Totally.

M:

Happens like in the US.

AB:

Yeah, absolutely. I think that's a very good point of, I think, in places like in the United States right now, we're so focused on helping people get the abortions that they need. Sometimes it feels like stigma work is seen as less important than policy work or direct services work. And it's like...It's like you said. It's just a very temporary fix, like we cannot live. It's...we'll never like to have a world where abortion is truly accessible to all. If we do not eliminate stigma.

Stigma is like the foundation that bad policy is built on. And also like you know what you said about how the core, like sort of unifying feature of it across the world is isolation. And isolation can kill people, you know, like, in a number of different ways, it can kill people who are too afraid to look, to investigate their options safely. And it can. You know, it's such a powerful emotional toxin that...you know, people don't live through it, sometimes. Abortion, or any other kind of stigma like these things are real, tangible health issues.

And I think that this is another thing that's so beautiful about your work is that solidarity is the antidote, because that isolation isn't real. Right? Abortion is normal, is common in every place, in every community, in every demographic in the world.

And this stigma, this global stigma is a lie. It's a lie that is based on a fake reality, that people..only bad people have abortions. Only, you know, whatever, this kind of people, etc....That people aren't actually out there, having abortions like all the time, all day, every day, everywhere, all over the world, for every possible reason, imaginable feeling every kind of way about it, like the idea that this is a an abnormal part of life is a lie. And it's a lie that cannot withstand the truth of our collective experience. And us coming together and...you know we make each other braver. Every person that speaks honestly, speaks openly about their experience is like making the world safer for other people who can then walk through that door in the future, and wouldn't have even seen that that door exists without hearing someone else speak that way. So I think that it's like. You know, it's just...it's life saving work. It's not just some sort of fluffy cultural... like, whatever you know, feel good ladies project or whatever. It's like real life saving work, you know.

M:

I one hundred percent agree. That's what I love storytelling work and like Shout Your Abortion, and other storytellers.

But also something I wanted to point out. It's like when we not only break that isolation with them having abortions right, but also like isolation between the people who are working all these spaces. Like, we can really become stronger together. So there are a lot of people who are doing direct action, and when it comes to providing a version supporting abortion, but at the same time that also, like connecting that then with like history, telling (inaudible) with people they supported.

And then they are connecting that also with the strategic Integration, because they have those partnerships that they created. So then, for example, when someone calls them for support, and they tell them about all the barriers they found, then they can connect that information with the strategic integration for policy change. You know. So like how we kind of support each other and work together, I think is what's needed for like deep transformation. So that's why I guess what we mean when we say creating collective power, too.

AB:

Yes, yes, absolutely and like. You know, I think that we just feel so grateful to be building these relationships with groups like inroads and groups all over the world. And we really feel...We feel that collective power like we feel like the wind at our back, and we feel, you know, even just like after Dobbs...and before Dobbs, when SB8 went on the books in Texas and effectively, was like the end of Roe V. Wade before it even happened, Erin from SYA and I were in Poland with our Polish friends at Abortion Camp. And it was like the most incredible place to be in that moment to be surrounded by, you know, 60 European feminists, and mostly Polish women, who had been living in a country with total abortion bans for three decades.

And it was, I mean, I'll never forget the way that, like it felt to be surrounded by people who were not freaking the fuck out, and we're just like, No, you're like. We're gonna do it. You're gonna do it. We're doing it. Let's do it. And let's talk about how to support each other and like, get through this and. And you know, I also think about the way that Las Libres and other collectives have just stood up in this moment, and said, like, No, we're going to help. We're going to help the hundreds of millions of millions of women of reproductive age in this country that, like, we're not letting this happen.

So, solidarity is... I can't imagine our situation without global solidarity and I think... I wish so much that our movement, our US Movement, would prioritize these relationships more. And I think that, like we're often in this place of just urgency and crisis, and chaos that makes us feel like those things can be. And also the US is, you know, typically very self-centered and bad at seeing the rest of the world as important relationships to build. It's like, everyone's just so myopically focused. But...yeah, I think it's really... It's so important that we see this as a global movement on so many levels. And we get so much from these relationships.

I have one more question for you that's kind of nerdy, but..you know you talked about funding a number of times, and I mean, I know that, like the movement folks who are from the States who are watching this...probably we all have a, I think, shared idea of like what's some of the problems with funding repro projects and organizations in the United States. And I suspect that there are a lot of similarities. But I'm wondering if, like, you can just talk a little bit about obviously like Latin America is not a monolith at all, but like if you can talk about sort of some of the themes of problematic funding trends in Latin American feminists, and abortion spaces.

M:

So I think the first thing is like there's so little funding that you don't expect funding, and I think it is a barrier. So something that I saw before I joined inroads, and before I migrated from Venezuela. So like I'm from Venezuela where abortion has been illegal forever and is still illegal. And I was working feminist communications for many years, and other causes and applying for funding something that never even crossed our minds because it's just not something you count on, and something that exists basically.

Usually when you hear about it from some sort of international aid foundation, it's for very big organizations, right? With a hundred requirements. It's not really for grassroots collective at all. So you don't even think about it. You already know that you're gonna be a volunteer. So you go, and you plan your life to be a volunteer, and gather more volunteers. So that's sort of like the first step. So, in a way, that's something that I found powerful about inroads when I joined as a community member when I was working feminist communications only, I was surprised. I was like, Oh, my God! All these funding opportunities! I was like, we have been doing this work for years with no funding. And there were actually some grants that were a great fit for us, you know.

So that's I think, at least in Latin America, that's what I have seen. So what also happened is like people already assume that they're gonna do the work because they love it. So you see a lot of people that even when they get funding, they're still doing a lot of volunteer work because that's what they wanted to do anyway, right.

So in that sense he brings people who are deeply passionate, and, like already sort of...We'll do it in a very resourceful way, I guess I will say.

AB:

I guess one follow up question to that, and something that we think about a lot is like. You know, knowing that we do...we need our work to reach the most marginalized people. And also we know that in order to do that organizing with the most marginalized people like leading those efforts in their communities is like the only way to do that. And like, how do we bring folks in who are facing so much, just like material barriers to being able to go volunteer for an organization, or do unpaid organizing work, and not that it has to be unpaid. But I guess I'm wondering if you have any strategies to share about how to bring folks in like when you talk about things like these convenings where there's like great access even for folks who are like coming from really poor, like poor countries that have very little infrastructure to, you know...get them four countries away to go to a convening like, how do you address those issues, structurally?

M:

So first of all, is even hearing about it. So that's one of the issues that the communications person I see like, I want everyone to hear about it right? There's a level of privilege to hear about it. So part of it is like relying on community. So something that does exist is like a strong feminist community network in Latin America and networks in other parts of the world. So like working with those communities and making sure, first of all, that they have the information, making sure that everything we create is something that they can share.

First thing is that they hear about it. That's the first step, and then when it comes to our spaces, always prioritizing people who have less resources, who are less likely to get funded. But there still is a huge barrier like you said like this shouldn't be volunteer work. It shouldn't be uncompensated work so like actively advocating to get more funds out there is the first step to actually hear about it. And yeah, breaking the assumption that this is the way you should be just volunteering because it shouldn't, especially when you are taking so much of the burden and the risk with the least support.

AB:

Totally. I wanted to ask if you could share the...you put a on the slide about the convening there was in the upper left corner. There was this visual agenda. And I'm wondering if, like you could share it with us so we could send it. I don't know if it's private, but I just wanted to look at it myself, and then I was like, Oh, maybe we can send it out to folks cause it looks super cool. And it looked like something that again was co-created by people coming from all over the world, from all different contexts, and like managing to come together and plan their experience

and prioritize various conversations. And everyone's participating in something and leading something. And I just wanna look at it and get inspired.

M:

Yeah, I can definitely, I can definitely check.

AB:

So, Mariana, how can we...how can the folks on this call support your work? And is there anything else that you want to share with us that you haven't had a chance to talk about?

M:

So first I go to our website, join us. I feel like, if you're an abortion justice...I mean, if not, I'm biased because I work for inroads, but like, even before I work for inroads, it's like just opening your world to so many opportunities, brilliant people that just join. And that's already contributing, because you're gonna be bringing your own wisdom and your own brilliance. So that's already making the community stronger.

Yeah, like, just share, amplify. If you're in a position to fund or can connect us with funders, please do. We also struggle with mobilizing resources for (inaudible) for abortion justice organizations at every level so we appreciate any leads, too.

AB:

If nobody else has questions, we can wrap it up. But I just want to say that this has been so special. SYA's signal thread is popping off, and we're just sending so many hearts.

We look forward to being in the same space as you someday in person, and giving you big, big hugs and...yeah. Take care, más mucho.

M:

Thank you so much. It's a wonderful space. Yeah, just thank you for everything you do. I love it. I have mine from the last gathering.

AB:

Nice.

And thank you. Maria and Diana, for your look at all of these hearts! Look at all of this beautiful abortion, solidarity, worldwide.

Really, just like makes...It makes me feel so good like this...whenever people are like. You know, people will be like, thank you for your work. It's got to be so like hard. I'm like, you know, it feels amazing like nothing could I? I feel like nothing could ever feel this important and like. It's like a holy thing that we do together, and I just...I just love...I just love everyone here, and I'm so grateful for all of you, and to be doing this work alongside you, and we're gonna win. I'm positive. We're unstoppable. Look at us.

Okay, thank you so much, Mariana. Have a good rest of your day. Okay, bye everyone!

M:

Thank you, everyone.