Abha Thakkar

Social Change Practitioner

A community organizer, trainer and nonprofit administrator with 20+ years of experience in grassroots leadership, non-extractive community engagement, collective action, restorative justice, policy development, local food resilience and systems analysis through an antiracist lens.

Recipient of the Madison Social Justice Center Visionary Award.

CONTACT

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CURRENT VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- Dane County Food Council
- Madison Area Community Land Trust Board of Directors
- Dane County Violence Prevention Coalition

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON
Bachelor of Arts, Honors, *May 1998*
Political Science and International Relations, emphasis in South Asia.
Certificates in Integrated Liberal Studies and Global Cultures

Elementary Education, *June 2001*
Grades 1-9, Political Science

INDUSTRIAL AREAS FOUNDATION
Summer 2002
Broad-Based Organizing Training

MADISON COLLEGE
PHP Developer Certificate
December 2010
Coursework in PHP, Java, JavaScript, SQL, XML, HTML & CSS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE SINCE 2001

Mosiac LLC, Owner & Lead Consultant
March 2021 - present

- Facilitating and supporting cross-sector collective impact initiatives in multiple issue areas including violence prevention, early childhood services, land use and neighborhood-based health councils
- Workshops in grassroots and neighborhood leadership, racial justice, nonprofit management, as well as executive and board coaching
- Community organizing training and advocacy campaign design
- Nonprofit administration, capacity-building, program implementation, evaluation and assessment, and organizational and policy development through an antiracist lens
- Antiracist public policy and process development
- Non-extractive community engagement, outreach and input
- Communications, publishing and storytelling
- Harm repair, trauma-informed care, and nature-based healing
- Circle process, meeting, and strategic planning facilitation services
- Participation in Johns Hopkins Racial Equity and Economic Justice food systems learning community

Northside Planning Council, Executive Director
Northside News, Editor
2001 - 2007; 2013 - 2021
Community capacity-building and food systems development
Responsibilities

- Managed and stabilized community development and food systems nonprofit organization. Grew from 3 employees and $240,000 budget to 24 employees and $1,000,000+ budget in 3 years.
- Nonprofit program and social enterprise development, implementation and evaluation; community organizing, leadership development & capacity-building; Northside News publication; fiscal management and budgeting; operations, administrative oversight and reporting; fund development and grant writing; visioning and strategic planning; organizational development; board development and support; personnel development and management; volunteer leadership development; communications and public relations; foster and maintain external partnerships, including local government officials and government entities.

SKILLS & PROFICIENCIES AT A GLANCE

- Systems analysis, evaluation and redesign through an antiracist lens
- Nonprofit administration and organizational development
- Nonprofit program development, management and evaluation
- Teaching, training, supervision and mentoring
- Meeting and circle facilitation
- Social enterprise development and business planning
- Food systems analysis and program design
- Antiracist decision-making and democratic governance models.
- Facilitation of collective impact cross-sector collaboratives
- Grassroots leadership development
- Community organizing: intentional relationship-building, issue advocacy, strategy and tactics
- Restorative justice, trauma-informed care and healing practices
- Community-based economic development principles
- Strategic planning and visioning
- Fundraising and grant-writing
- Financial management and budgeting
- Writing, public speaking and storytelling
- Community journalism and newspaper publication
- Volunteer management
- Web application development & website design; database design
- Languages: French, Gujarati, Hindi, introductory Spanish

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE SINCE 2001

Northside Planning Council & Northside News (Cont.)
Areas of Focus & Experience

- **Stable Families, Strong Community** - supported multiple collective impact initiatives to enhance family and community well-being through violence prevention and early childhood services.
- **Community engagement in local government** - organized multiple public meetings and forums to foster awareness of local candidates and facilitate community input into public processes.
- **Land Use & Antiracism Work Groups** - convened cross-organizational collaboratives for learning and action around land use and antiracist activism.
- **Northside News** - coordinated volunteers, developed content, assisted with copy editing, design and layout of bimonthly community newspaper with a circulation of 12,500+
- **FEED Kitchens** - developed policies and management systems, raised funds, cultivated stakeholders and oversaw daily operations of 5400 sq. ft. food business incubator. FEED consistently served 80+ food businesses, over 50% of which were co-owned/operated by women and/or people of color.
- **FEED Bakery Training Program** - helped develop, fund and implement bakery job training program with 100% job placement rate.
- **MarketReady Program** - developed and oversaw program that supported 30 food entrepreneurs, primarily women and people of color, with coaching, training and business development funds to prepare them for tenancy in the future Madison Public Market. 29 out of 30 entrepreneurs completed the program successfully.
- **Healthy For All** - strategized and developed funding for food recovery program that annually rescued hundreds of thousands of pounds of prepared foods and gleaned produce for redistribution at food pantries and community meal sites throughout Dane County.
- **FEED To Go** - developed and implemented meal delivery program during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic that contracted with BIPOC-owned food businesses to help them sustain through the quarantine. Raised over $250,000 to provide over 40,000 meals to vulnerable home-bound residents through 100+ new volunteers.

The Memory Project, E-Luminate Program Co-Founder & Director
2007-2013 (2013 - current, continued as volunteer)
Supported the education of former child soldiers in northern Uganda and former slaves in India through service-learning programs at US schools.

- Oversaw the operations and development of Books of Hope in which over 20,000 American students wrote and illustrated hand-made books in their classrooms that were sent to 18 “sister schools” in Uganda and India. Shipped 25,000 lbs of books and donated goods to Uganda.
- Transformed Books of Hope into E-luminate. In 2011, transitioned from sending printed books from U.S. schools to sending electronic materials made by American students, in the form of PowerPoint presentations, videos, and PDFs, and building multimedia centers in Sierra Leone and Uganda for the materials to be used.
- Assisted with other Memory Project programs, traveling to 45+ countries to work with vulnerable and orphaned children.