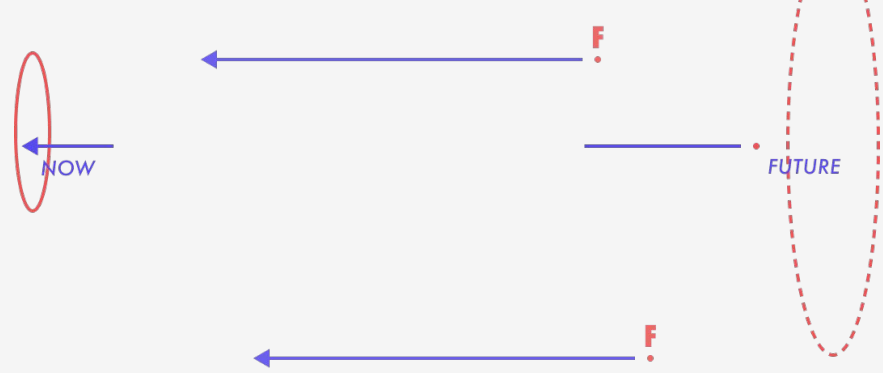
A blue-toned illustration featuring three people in profile, looking upwards and to the right. The person in the foreground is a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a suit and tie. Behind him is a woman with curly hair, and further back is a man with a beard. The background is filled with a large, stylized American flag, with its stripes and stars rendered in a textured, line-art style. The overall composition is set against a solid blue background.

# **Social Design Dreaming: Imagining the futures we want**

**June 2025**

**Hillary Carey, [JustVisions.co](http://JustVisions.co)**

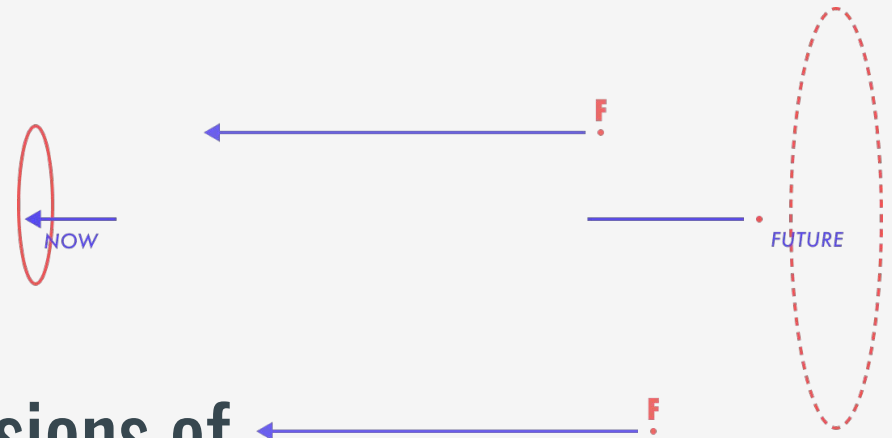


**Vivid stories about the outcome of change  
are a powerful way to engage people.**

**“Visions create tension between what is,  
and what could be.”**

Futurist, Ruud van der Helm





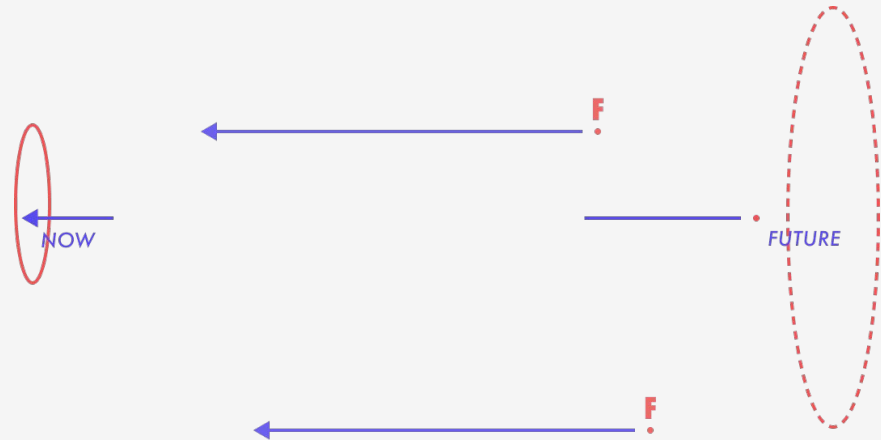
**We need more grassroots visions of dignified, just, sustainable futures.**

**“Future thinking disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present.”**

Ruth Levitas, 2013

**dreaming of...**  
**A Center for  
Practical Dreaming**



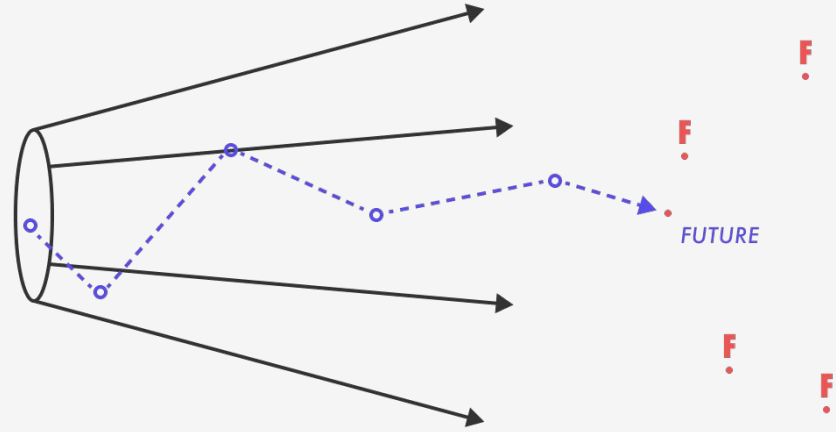


## *Practical* Dreaming

- Grounded in realism
- Plausible but aspirational

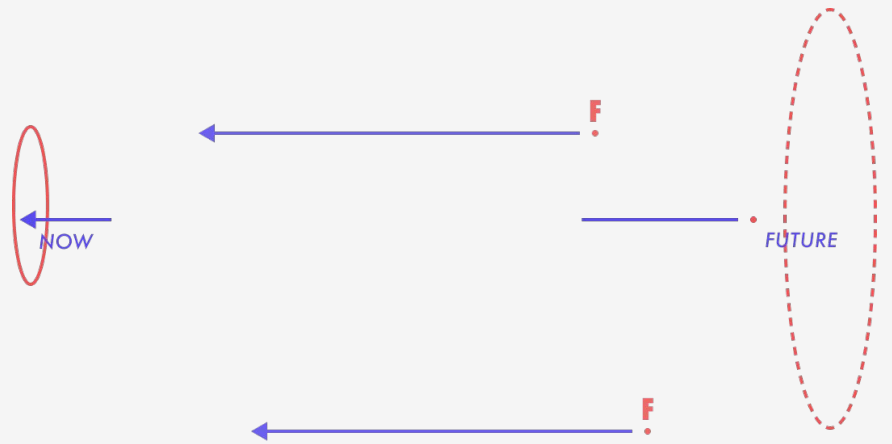
## Practical *Dreaming*

- Radical Imagination
- Collective imagination
- Social dreaming
- Clarifying what we truly want



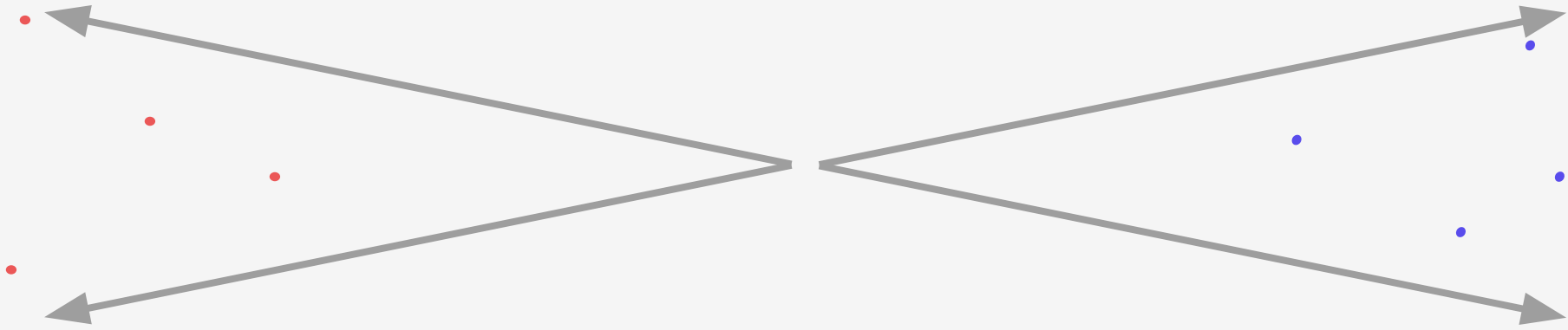
100-year futures





## Research questions:

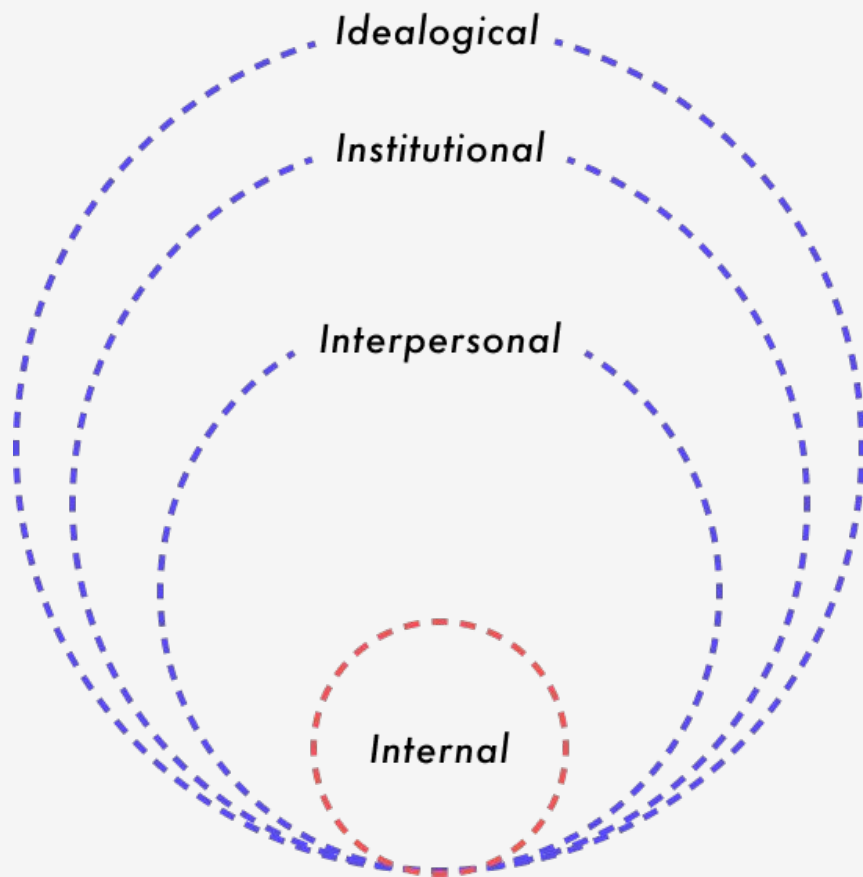
- What does visioning currently look like?
- What keeps people from visioning?



## Racial Justice advocates

- Deeply connect past, present, and future

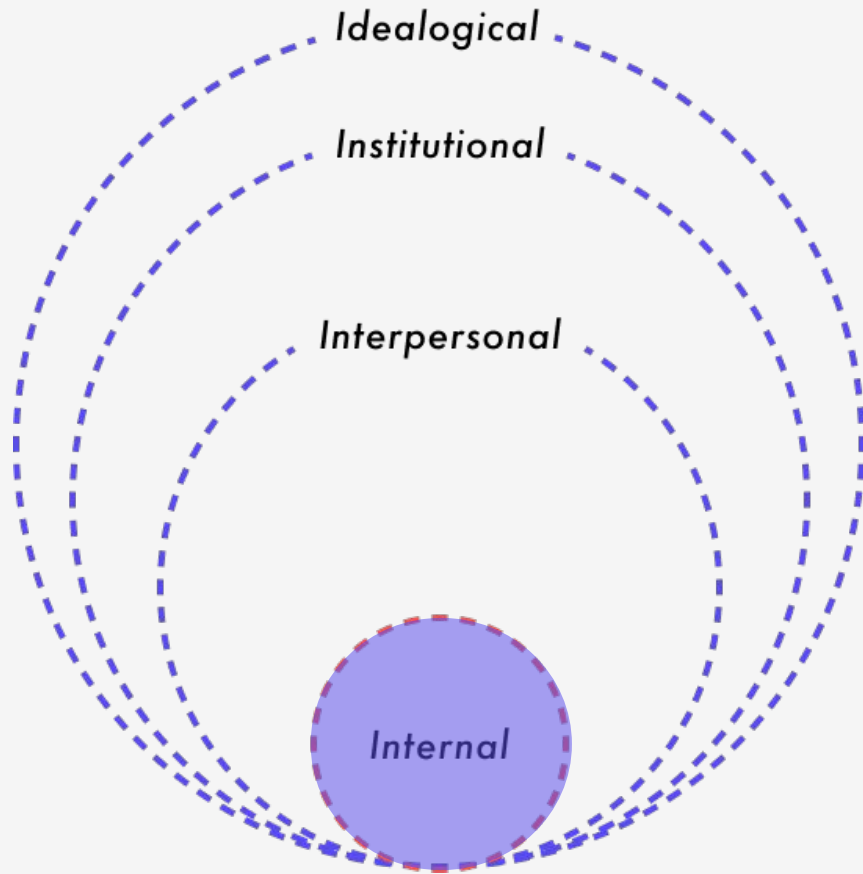




# 4 I's of Oppression

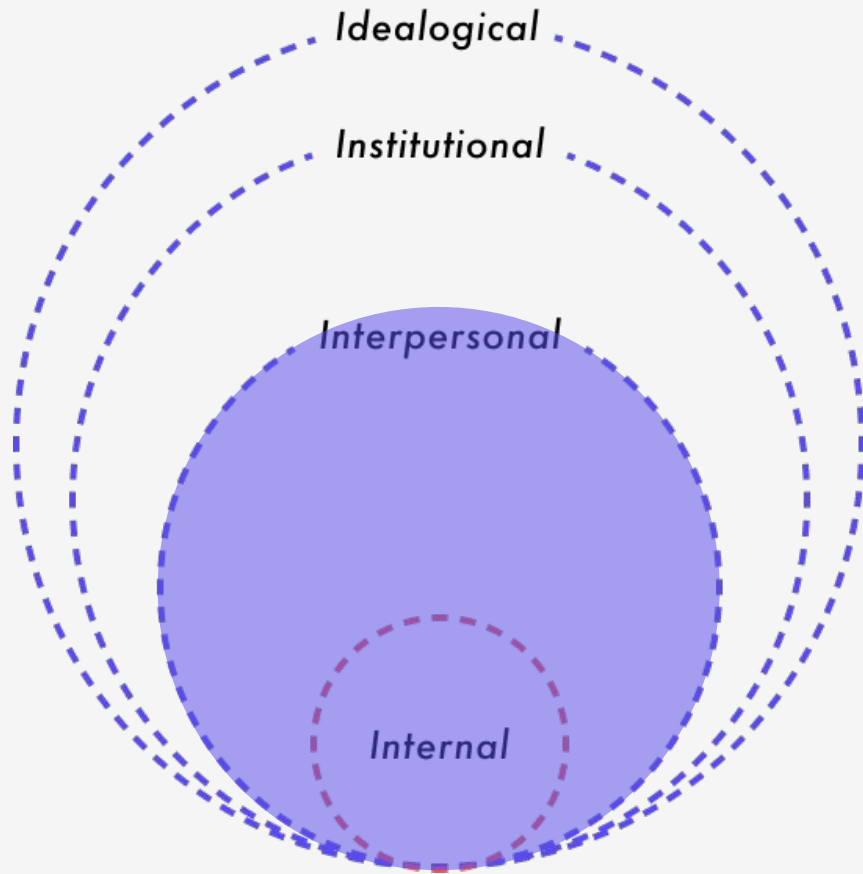
Bell (2013)

This model is used often in Anti-racism training.

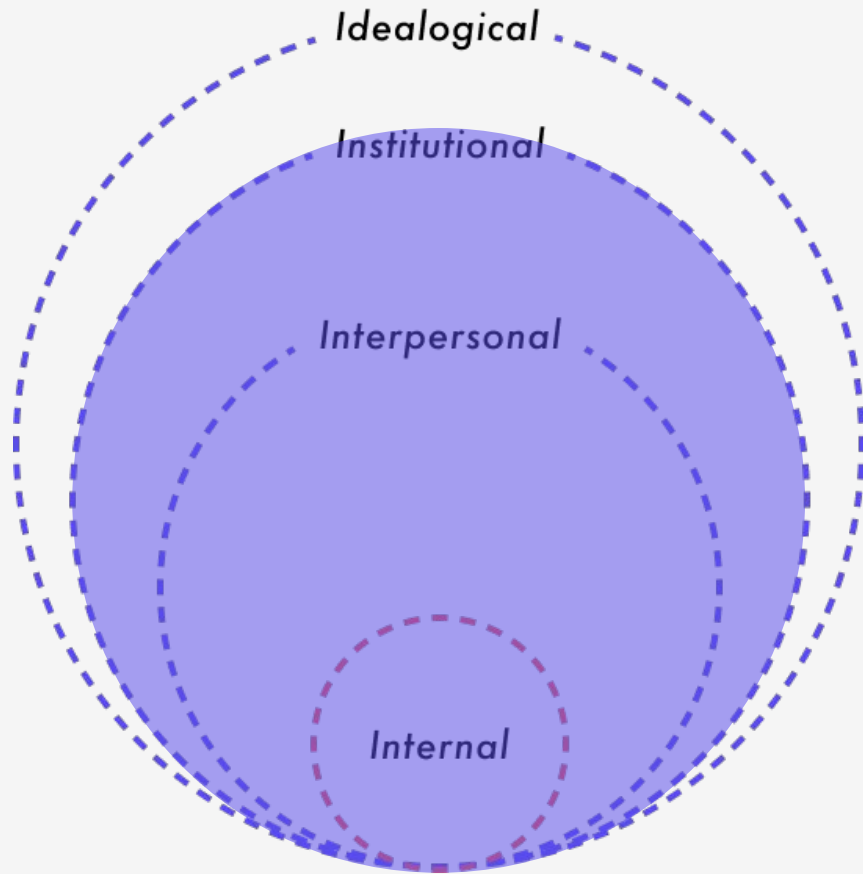


## Internally

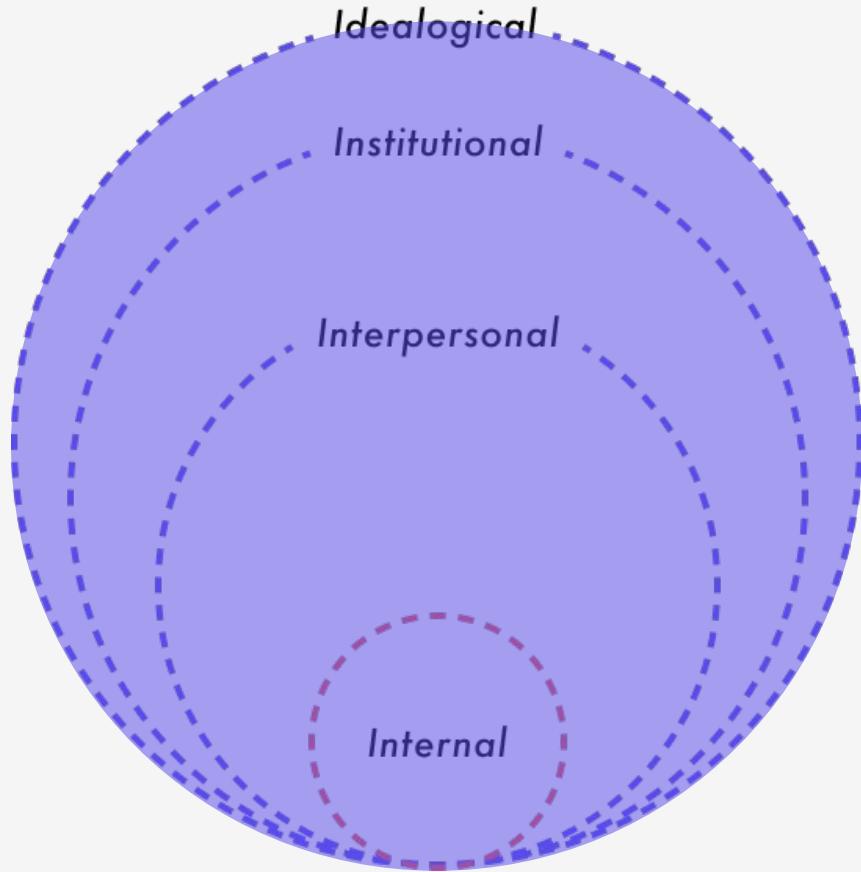
Fighting against violence is exhausting and limits our capacities



**Interpersonally**  
Practices for imagination  
are rarely taught or  
shared



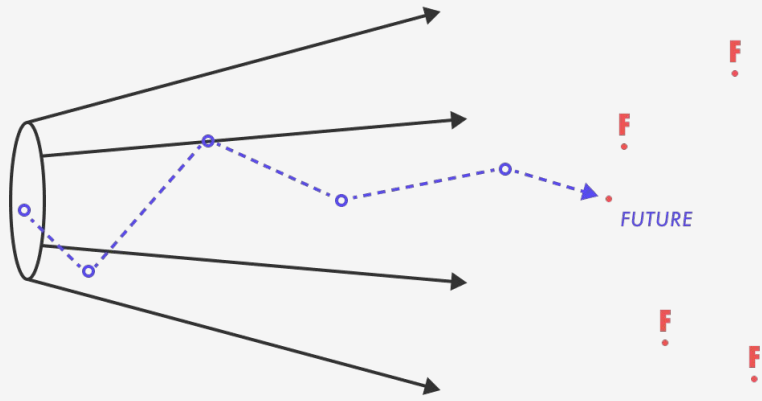
**Institutionally**  
Both funders and  
communities want to  
see immediate impact



## Ideologically

'Utopian' is negative.  
Practical thinking over  
ambitious dreaming.

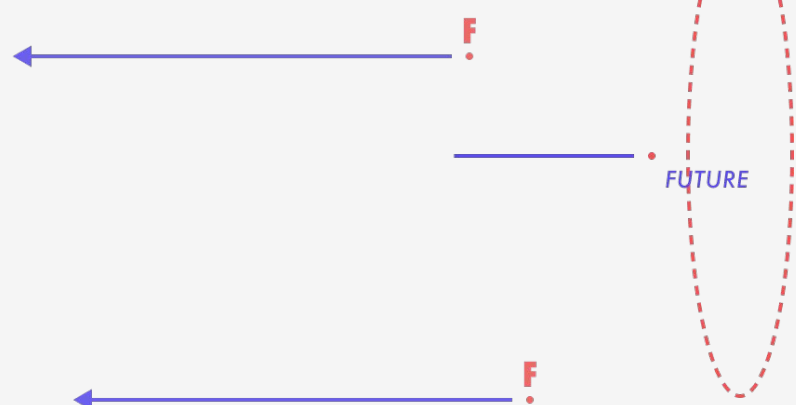




“If we have the ability to create stories around these preferable visions of futures, do we then have some sense of agency and ownership over what the future becomes?”

Radha Mistry, Foresight Practitioner, 2024

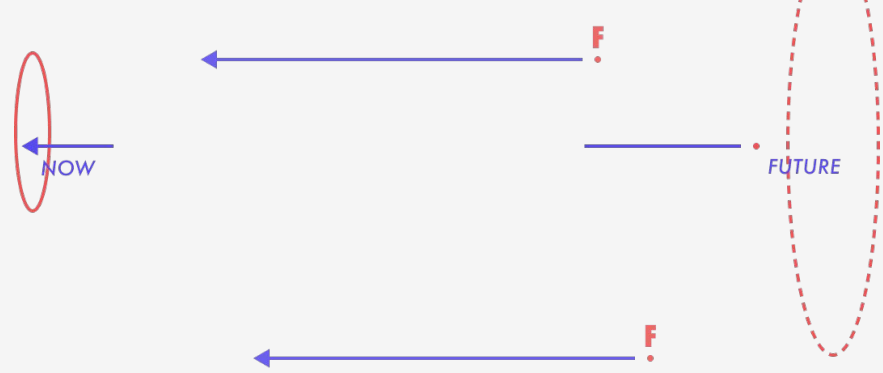
# How can we dream of long-term visions that describe the futures we want?



- Daily habits
- Community rituals
- Structural shifts



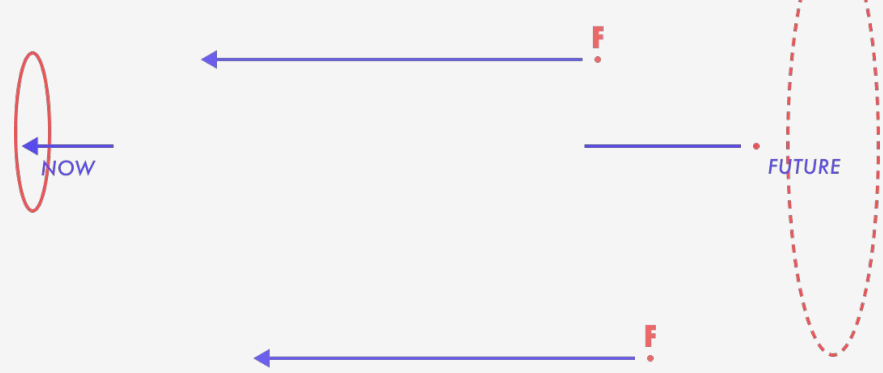
*Social Dreaming:  
Essential skills  
for change*



A few practices.

“In this spirit of adventurous learning, we can practice stretching our minds across time.”

- Vincent Ialenti, *Deep Time Reckoning*

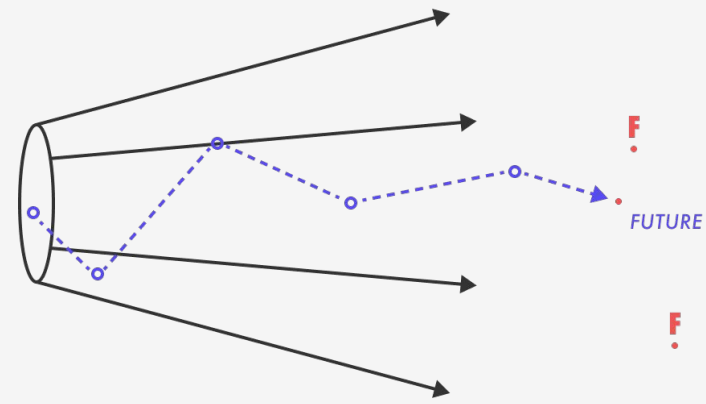


# 1. What if the *opposite* were true?

Example

**FROM** 'Futures' means stock trading

**TO** 'Futures' is used to describe many hopeful outcomes

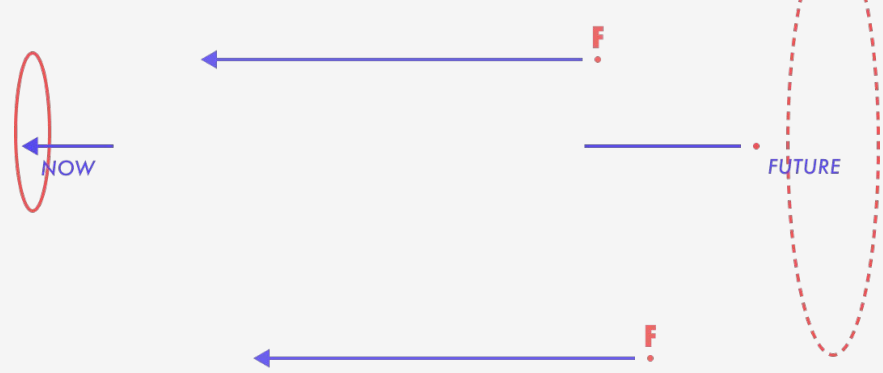


## 2. What would *good* look like?

Example

**FROM** Think more creatively

**TO** Gather and share inspiration regularly

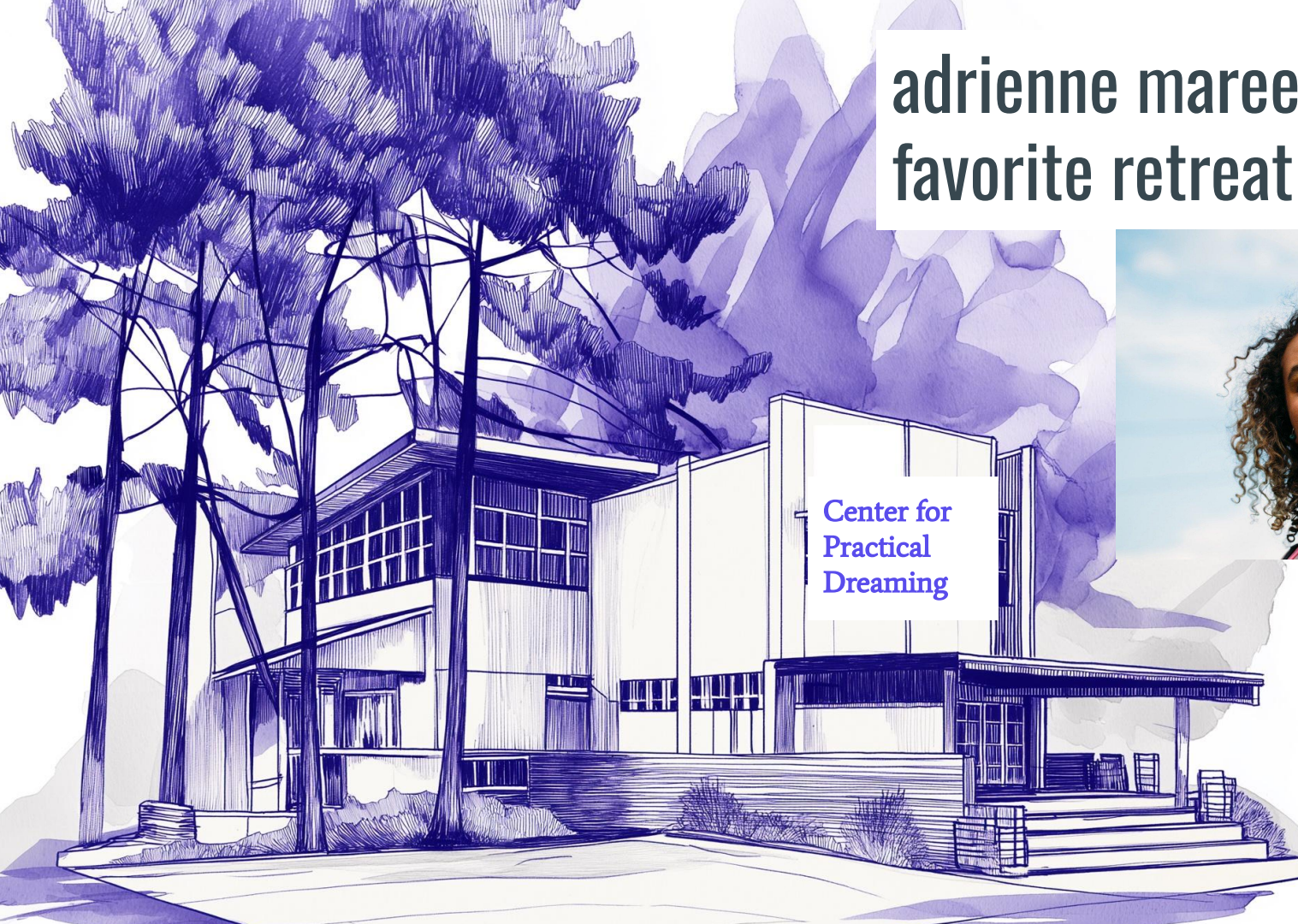


### 3. What if this work were *ridiculously* successful?

#### Example

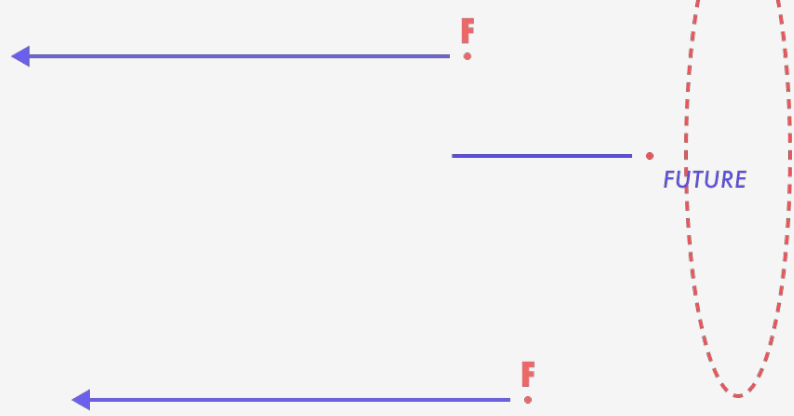
adrienne maree brown regularly attends retreats at the Center for Practical Dreaming

# adrienne maree brown's favorite retreat center



Center for  
Practical  
Dreaming





**More complex,  
more commitment**

# 4. Collective visioning

Public Data and information can be safely queried by any/all public servants to inform decisions (LLM/GPT assists)

People will be able to imagine a future that holds possibility for them and respond generously to that

  
Government is where you work to solve the world's biggest Challenges!

People will affirm their story is not everyone's story - respect for difference will flourish

100  
Project approval lifecycle and procurement processes will have to streamline or disappear  


AI tools will allow access to easily find govt services

Government will be seen as an ally and resource.  


My success will not be to your detriment  




100  
Where we have overcorrected on clunky process because we thought we needed rules, we will right size

Education will again be a tool to social equity - a vehicle for thriving

Trust will be a dominant civic value and emotion

21st century skills like collaboration, critical thinking, digital literacy will be normative

UBI everywhere so that government services are more focused on what people really need

Public service will be among the most desired professional tracks for every possible reason  
  


Data governance and safety will be a gold standard in CA

Government helps me grow, not only when I 'fail'  
100

Re-emergence of trust in public health and safety  
100

Authentic communication between policymakers and people.  



Shaping a future generation of critical thinkers  
  
100

A trustworthy government with the resources to support citizens in need  


"public comment" after the fact is replaced with co-design up front

An entire society that appreciates cultures and beliefs that are not their own.

Focus on acceptance as an appreciation rather than an agreement

No stigma for people who need help  


new kinds of services for "climate refugees" for example, to help people relocate and thrive in new places

## 5. Prefigure & Prototype



Susan Leigh Foster (2003)

## 6. Experiential Futures

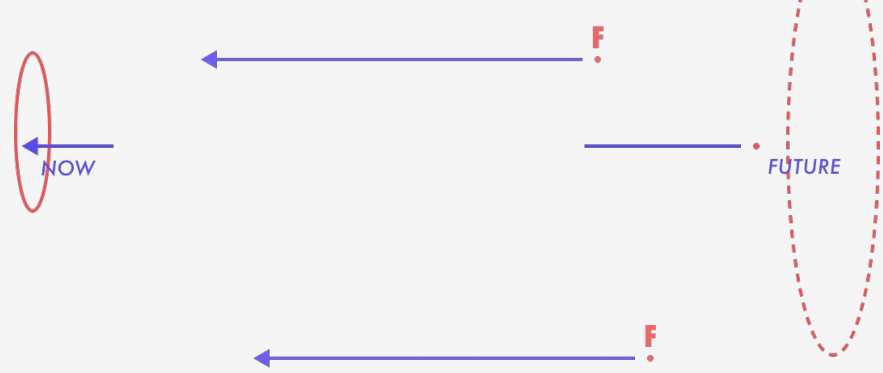


## 6. Experiential Futures





# 6. Experiential Futures



Creating **visions of inspiring future outcomes**  
can be a leverage point for change.  
And a resilience practice.

Embed **hope** into our everyday practices.

# Join me!

Hillary@JustVisions.CO

[www.JustVisions.CO](http://www.JustVisions.CO) → Learning = links to  
these slides and other resources

