ADVANCE Journal

Photo-essay

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2026

Holding the Work: Collective Care, Creativity, and Feminist Scholarship at the ADVANCE Journal Retreat

Kayla Martensen, Nithya Rajan, Susan Shaw, Kelly Mack, Kasi Jackson, Annmarie Caño, Stephani Page, Tiffany Baffour, & Sarina Saturn

Abstract: This photo-essay documents a retreat held in September 2024 on the Oregon coast by members of the editorial collective of the ADVANCE Journal: Individual and Institutional Transformation for Social Justice. Originally supported by a National Science Foundation grant intended to strengthen the journal's long-term sustainability, the retreat created space for reflection on values, storytelling, and collective leadership within justice-oriented scholarship. Through collaborative art-making, value-mapping exercises, and discussions of narrative forms such as testimonio and autoethnography, participants explored how academic communities can cultivate inclusive knowledge practices and sustain institutional transformation. The retreat gained additional significance when the NSF grant supporting this work was later terminated, leaving the journal to continue as a volunteer-run endeavor. The images presented here capture moments of creativity, community, and shared purpose that illuminate the relational labor behind feminist and equity-centered scholarly publishing.

Keywords: feminist scholarship, collaborative art, storytelling and narrative inquiry, equity in STEM, academic community

Contact Sarina Saturn sarina.saturn@oregonstate.edu

Editorial Context

This photo essay accompanies the tribute to founding editor Dr. Susan Shaw in this special issue of the ADVANCE Journal. The retreat documented here took place in September 2024 on the Oregon coast, where members of the editorial collective gathered to reflect on the journal's future, values, and commitments to justice-centered scholarship. Months later, the National Science Foundation grant that supported this work was terminated, transforming the journal into a fully volunteer-run effort. In retrospect, the retreat captures a moment of collective grounding—an affirmation of the relationships, creativity, and shared purpose that continue to sustain the *ADVANCE Journal* community.



Figure 1 *Detail of the collaborative artwork created during the Advance Journal retreat, September 2024*

In September 2024, members of the editorial team of the *ADVANCE Journal: Individual and Institutional Transformation for Social Justice* gathered for a retreat on the Oregon coast. The retreat was supported by a National Science Foundation grant intended to help the journal's leadership reflect on its scope, sustainability, and future

direction. At the time, the gathering was simply an opportunity to pause, think together, and imagine what the next phase of the journal might become. Months later, in March 2025, that same grant was terminated as part of a broader review of federal awards. The termination eliminated the journal's primary funding and ended support for its postdoctoral scholar position. Looking back, the retreat now feels like something more than a planning meeting. It became a moment of grounding and a collective affirmation of values and community that would prove essential when the journal transitioned to an entirely volunteer-run model.



Figure 2 *Participants gather around a shared canvas during a collaborative art making session*

Making Meaning Together

One of the retreat activities invited participants to create a collaborative painting. Gathered around a large canvas, participants layered acrylic paints in vibrant greens, blues, golds, and reds. Each person added marks in response to what others had already created. There was no predetermined design and no single author. Instead, the painting unfolded through collective improvisation. The activity was facilitated by an artist scholar whose identity is intentionally withheld here. As an international scholar-activist working in the current sociopolitical climate, public visibility carries professional risks. Their facilitation emphasized attentiveness, creativity, and trust in collective process. The resulting painting is dense with movement. Organic shapes intertwine with luminous lines and bursts of color. The composition evokes roots, rivers, networks, and ecosystems. Like the journal itself, it emerged from many hands working together.

Naming Our Values

Another retreat activity invited participants to articulate the values guiding the journal's work. On a large sheet of paper overlooking the ocean, participants wrote words reflecting their commitments as scholars, editors, and community members. Among the values named were:

nurturance
resilience
ethics
justice
wisdom
courage
care
community
healing
equity
transformation

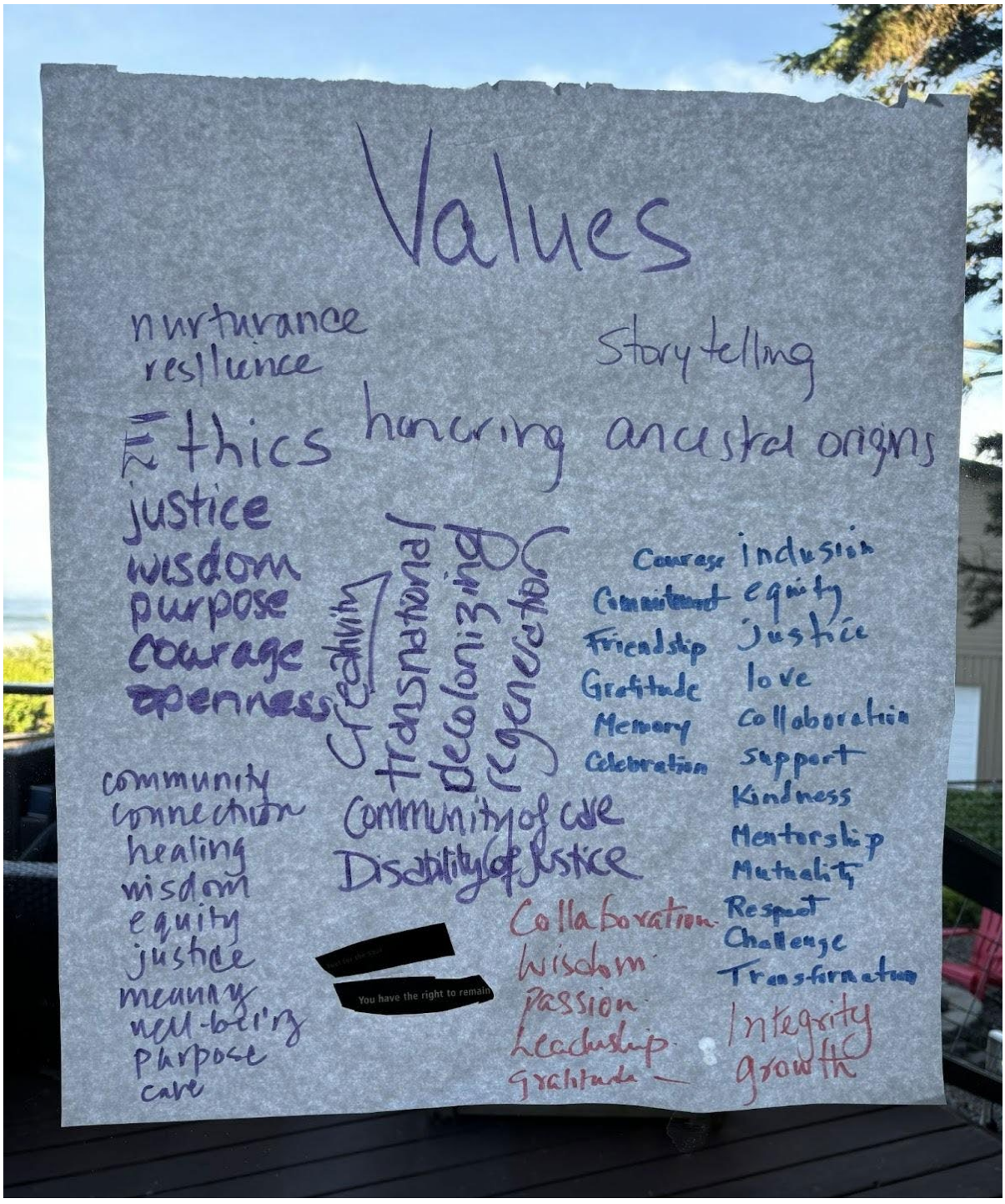


Figure 3 *Participants collectively identified values guiding the work of the ADVANCE Journal community*

Other words surfaced across the page, including collaboration, gratitude, mentorship, storytelling, respect, integrity, and honoring ancestral origins. Together they formed a collective map of the principles that shape the *ADVANCE Journal's* mission to cultivate scholarship that supports transformation within institutions while remaining accountable to communities working for justice.

Storytelling as Scholarship

Participants also reflected on the forms of storytelling that the journal seeks to support. In addition to traditional academic articles, contributors discussed methods of knowledge-making that foreground lived experience and community memory. These included:

testimonio
autoethnography
scholarly personal narratives
cultural genealogies
photojournalism
public scholarship and op ed writing

Such approaches challenge narrow definitions of scholarship and create space for voices historically excluded from academic publishing. Participants also acknowledged the infrastructure that sustains scholarly work including peer review, copyediting, production, and publication. These often invisible forms of labor make it possible for stories, research, and community knowledge to circulate.