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## **ASIAN AMERICAN DRUG WAR HEALING CIRCLES**

In 2018, in response to the absence of spaces for people of color who use drugs to have open and honest conversations, gain harm reduction skills, and reflect on their relationships with drugs, the Center for Political Drug Education (<https://www.politicaldrugeducation.org/>) developed the Asian American Drug War Healing Circles. The Drug War Healing Circle is a culturally-informed, harm reduction based, and community driven response to address the disconnection, silence, and intergenerational trauma caused by the Drug War in the Asian American Diaspora. To guide the development of the intervention to the community's needs, pre-survey data was collected from eleven respondents to understand their existing knowledge, awareness practices, and skills. 4 weeks after the completion of the 2020 Healing Circle intervention, 30-minute in-depth interviews were conducted with 3 participants over Zoom to understand what aspects of the intervention were most meaningful and impactful for their healing journey. Findings suggested that political drug education, reflection, and storytelling raised participants' awareness of how their identities and pain were connected to larger histories and the social contexts created by the War on Drugs. What appeared to be most healing about the intervention for participants was the conversion of self-inquiry towards drug use and drug war trauma as a welcome opportunity rather than a threat. Recommendations for future interventions would be to place greater emphasis on embodiment of insight and instructions for daily practices that will sustain the healing work towards wholeness.

Interventions aimed at reducing negative consequences with drugs are successful when they focus on the whole-person healing. Mindfulness and contemplative reflection have shown to be beneficial for preventing addiction and relapse, but require stigma reduction in order to be culturally appropriate for communities who have been most impacted by stigmatization and criminalized by the War on Drugs.

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