CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP

8 lessons from 8 years of growing and closing a social justice organisation

By Anneessa Mahmood and Iona Lawrence

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1. Introduction

In this section we lay out Campaign Bootcamp's vision, mission and decision to close in 2021, and why and how this report came to be.

About Campaign Bootcamp

'It's far too hard for ordinary people, especially those in marginalised communities, to challenge the powerful. Because of this, injustices persist and millions of people do not live happy, safe and fulfilled lives.'

(Campaign Bootcamp's Business Plan, 2019)

People from marginalised groups – for example those on low incomes or recent immigrants – are significantly less likely to vote, be interested in politics, be satisfied with the present government, sign a petition, vote in a referendum, start a campaign, or meet their MP. The impact of this is that marginalised people are continually and systematically excluded from influencing the decisions made on the issues that affect their lives. This matters because they are disproportionately impacted by inequality and injustice. Campaign Bootcamp coined the term 'the Democracy Gap' to describe this phenomenon.

Campaign Bootcamp was founded in 2013 by a group of civil society campaigners and activists determined to make the campaigning sector in civil society more representative of the people, communities and experiences it campaigned on. Since then the world has been shaken awake by Black Lives Matter, Me Too and other movements. Inequality and injustice have intensified and the climate emergency has also accelerated. All the while, democracies have buckled and the impact of the Democracy Gap has intensified as a privileged few are consistently heard over everyone else.

In the 2019 Business Plan, Campaign Bootcamp set out its vision for a world where people impacted by injustice would have the tools and skills they need to end it. Over eight years the organisation's vision had grown from transforming just the campaigning sector to transforming campaigning for everyone by unlocking a new generation of campaigners agitating for change from within the communities most impacted by inequality and injustice. Campaign Bootcamp sought a fundamental shift in who campaigns, how they do it and the impact they have in the short and the long term.

This work has never been more essential. So why has Campaign Bootcamp chosen to close?

Anticipating and deciding to close

In a world dominated by a 'growth at all costs' mindset, endings are all too often equated with complete and utter failure. As a result civil society, reflective of society more broadly, more often than not tries to skip over an ending. For those involved with an ending we rush through it, trying desperately to move past it. For those around it, we look away to avoid witnessing the discomfort, grief, and trauma that an ending can bring up.

The trustees of Campaign Bootcamp's decision to close was "no one's vision of success". Despite this, they recognised that the closure presented the opportunity for both critical reflection and the sharing of lessons and insights gathered over the organisation's eight years. With the support of Anneessa Mahmood and Iona Lawrence, Campaign Bootcamp's trustees have looked seriously at the organisation's closure and, with this report, invite you to share in some of what they've learned.

About this report

This report shares the trustees' key insights from Campaign Bootcamp's journey as of April 2022. They have chosen to do this in the hope that other social justice organisations engaged in anti-oppression work can learn from them and those who fund this work can better grasp the realities of this work.

As the trustees acknowledge in their letter (Section 2), there will be people who disagree with what is in here. Those people's views are valid too. This report has not been written in an attempt to represent everyone's story of what happened and why. The learnings and recommendations laid out here are representative of overarching themes and organisation-wide reflections. They are also not intended as explicit or inadvertent attribution of responsibility to any individual involved in the organisation.

Campaign Bootcamp's trustees also recognise that their ongoing processing of, and reflections around, the organisation's closure will benefit from the time and space that follows the intense work and energy required to close a charity. The reflections in this report are therefore reflective of their shared view of the organisation's journey at the time it closed.

In order to generate the insights and recommendations the following research was undertaken between January and March 2022:

- a range of workshops and interviews with people connected to Campaign Bootcamp at all levels

- a review of documentation, reports, organisational reviews, and inquiries from over the eight years

At the heart of this enquiry, we held the following questions:

1. What can the leadership, trustees and staff of other social justice organisations learn from our experience?

2. With the benefit of hindsight, what do we wish we had known at the outset?

3. What are the questions we don't have answers to and continue to hold as we bring Campaign Bootcamp to a close?

Considerable thanks and appreciation are owed to all who were involved in Campaign Bootcamp's final chapter and shared their views in workshops and interviews during that period which provided the foundations for this report.

About the authors

This report was compiled by two external consultants, Anneessa Mahmood and Iona Lawrence.

Anneessa Mahmood is a freelance organisational development consultant. She was commissioned to work with Campaign Bootcamp in Spring/Summer of 2021 as a Senior Strategic Projects Consultant. As part of this work, Anneessa supported the leadership team to work through some operational and delivery planning, conducted a review to inform a transformation review and then helped the organisation understand the sequencing of wide ranging and deep rooted change required for a successful recovery. Before this, she worked in national membership organisations, National Union of Students and the Community Transport Association in member development and services leadership roles.

Iona Lawrence is a freelance strategist, researcher and coalition builder. Her diverse portfolio includes her coordination of Stewarding Loss: an initiative established in 2019 to support and influence civil society at all levels to dedicate the time, energy, care and resource to endings that it does to beginnings, uninhibited by fear, stigma or prejudice, and rooted in best practice. Before freelance life, Iona was the founding Director of the Jo Cox Foundation, a coalition campaigner for Save the Children UK and a community organiser in the Calais 'jungle' camp for Safe Passage. She is also a trustee of the Rural Coffee Caravan.

Anneessa and Iona are grateful to Adam Sherif for his careful work proofreading and copyediting this report.

2. **Letter From The Trustees**

To all who are engaged in social justice and anti-oppression work,

The anticipation of our closure and the decision to do it stands among the toughest professional journeys we have been on as individuals and collectively.

2021 was the year that we as trustees came to fully comprehend the state of Campaign Bootcamp's culture and its oppressive costs. As COVID-19 tore through lives and communities, we spent hundreds of hours across many months listening closely to the problems the organisation was facing, making sense of how we'd reached this point, and working out what was needed from us as trustees to address them.

As we worked with staff to address the organisation's problems we came to understand how multi-dimensional, complex, and interconnected they were. Every time we took action, a cascade of often unforeseen consequences also needed to be addressed. With the best of intentions and under pressure, we made some good decisions, some average ones, and a few bad ones. In the end we didn't get the outcome we wanted. Campaign Bootcamp's closure and the loss of twenty-two jobs was no one's vision of success. Throughout though, we believe we made the best decisions we could with the information available at the time.

Campaign Bootcamp's vision, work, culture, and closure were all the product of hundreds of people's dreams, frustrations, experiences of injustice, and a colossal amount of hard work over the eight years.

As trustees, we bear ultimate responsibility for what happened and we take that very seriously. We missed signs over the years that things weren't quite right, we underestimated signs when we did see them, and it took us too long to recognise the full scale of the problems the organisation faced.

Much of what you read in this report will probably recall characteristics and traits you see in your own organisation, or organisations you fund. You might see them as individual problems or challenges to be tackled. Like

we did in the earlier stages of reckoning with the state of our organisation, you might not fully comprehend the challenges you face as adding up to a bigger picture or pattern. Our experience was that all the relatively small, identifiable challenges cumulatively created what many staff described as a 'pressure cooker' culture. In the end we underestimated it until it was too late: by which stage our organisation had lost the confidence it needed to pursue its charitable purpose and deliver the much-needed work it was set up to do.

That's why we want to honestly and transparently share some of the lessons we've learnt through our journey. We hope that this might aid you in identifying, navigating, and preventing the problems we encountered in your own work, organisations, communities, and movements.

There will be people who disagree with what is in here – their views are valid too. This is not everyone's story of what happened and there are many lessons each of us is taking away at the individual level that aren't necessarily reflected in this report.

Finally a note of thanks and gratitude: through the highs and lows we are deeply grateful to those who trained, participated, challenged, funded, and supported Campaign Bootcamp and shared our vision.

Esmat, Ian, Foyez, Kaytee, Manish, Tom

The final six members of the Board of Campaign Bootcamp

3. **8 Years, 8 Lessons**

In this section we detail the key, overarching learnings from Campaign Bootcamp's journey, accompanied by practical recommendations for social justice organisations engaged in anti-oppression work and those who fund them. These learnings aren't discrete or isolated from one another, but overlapping and complementary.

Each learning is presented in three sections:

- **What Campaign Bootcamp learned**
- **Recommendations for other social justice organisations**
- **Questions for curious funders to ask themselves**

Campaign Bootcamp's 8 Lessons For Social Justice Organisations

1 Interrogate why and how you want to grow or scale

2 Embed a culture of learning at the heart of your organisation

3 If everyone says "you're amazing", ask "why?"

4 Prioritise nurturing and maintaining good relationships at all levels of your organisation

5 Diverse teams that include marginalised staff may need more structure than you might assume

6 Prioritise the backend of your organisation from the beginning

7 Make governance an organisation-wide endeavour by being leaderful and well-led

8 Don't be afraid of the end

1 Interrogate why and how you want to grow or scale

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- Part of the allure of setting up a new organisation is having the chance to do things differently, better and more impactfully. In the early stages of Campaign Bootcamp's journey the team needed to prove they could achieve change and that their model was viable and impactful. This required a rapid test-learn-improve cycle. In the early stages the organisation focused on delivering "big results on small budgets" to attract the attention and approval of funders.

- As the organisation developed a track record for success, the temptation to scale and grow was relentless. Growth felt intuitive for many of the staff and trustees of Campaign Bootcamp. So intuitive that it clouded the organisation's ability to identify what strategic options could have the most impact, what a sustainable pace of growth would look like, and what success should feel like for the organisation.

- All the while, funders rewarded good work with even more money. All the team had to do was deliver even more work at pace.

- Campaign Bootcamp learned that success and growth are regularly conflated and that a premium is put on innovation, scale and fast-paced growth.

- Campaign Bootcamp learned that despite the prevailing mindset and the interests of many funders, civil society and society at large, success doesn't just involve finding routes to scale as fast as possible, and in fact can be hampered by a singular focus on growth for growth's sake.

- All too rarely is success considered in terms of building a solid foundation, careful and incremental growth, or even just doing more of the same.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Don't be afraid of growth, but be wary of un-interrogated or unquestioned growth. A 'growth at all costs' mentality can be a source of huge impact for your organisation. It is also a deeply embedded mindset in our culture, and one rooted in white supremacy. Because a focus on growth may feel instinctive, it can lead to unconscious scaling and processes without design or intention. You might notice the impulse to unquestioned growth in strategic conversations in your organisation which promote rapid growth or scale without hesitation.

- If you overpromise on targets and delivery to funders and then 'bust a gut' to deliver in the early stages, as you scale and grow you run the risk of amplifying the gap between what is manageable and realistic, and what looks impressive and unlocks more cash. This approach is symptomatic of a culture of haste, at the foundations of which lie white supremacy and entrenched ableism.

- From the earliest possible stages, make the case to funders that it's essential for you to be able to create slack in your team. If you are always delivering at 100% in order to meet targets, periods of peak delivery will require those who can to deliver at 150%. Have regular discussions across your organisation about capacity and delivery to identify and remedy the 'pinch points'.

- Be aware of getting drawn unwittingly into cycles of delivering bigger and bigger numbers without clearly defining why you're doing it, why it matters, and for whom.

- Your strategy is not a strategy if it doesn't help you to say 'no' to opportunities that might be a detour from your strategic aims.

- There are many consultants ready to support organisations to develop a growth-orientated business plan. These people's work is of value – but balance their advice with others who ask more probing questions about why and how you want to pursue your strategic ambitions.

- As programmes and project delivery grow, internal systems and support structures must grow and mature too. The latter can't be an afterthought.

- Mitigate the risks of the 'growth at all costs' mindset that we are all susceptible to by considering loss just as readily as growth in your organisation. Create space for annual conversations at all levels of the organisation (from board meetings to one-to-one conversations) to ask questions like:
  - Where have we not delivered or under-achieved? What does this mean we should stop doing?
  - What are we uniquely placed to do? Where are we getting in the way of, or duplicating others – and are we confident that that is worth doing? Are we the best people to do this work?
  - Where should we be stepping back in order to create space for others who are better placed to lead this work? How can we support others to step into the space we create?

- Encourage your funders to collaborate in evaluating how your organisation is scaling, particularly if it's going from a turnover of tens of thousands of pounds annually to millions. Inviting your funders to join the dots like this might help your organisation avoid growth being pursued for the sake of financial security or to shore up larger cost bases. It may also encourage funders to give multi-year funding for start-up charities more readily as it would spread the 'risk' of investments and allow them to take bigger leaps of faith in organisations.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- Do we define success by scale? If we have an organisation we think is delivering well, is the natural next step to offer more money? Or do we ask "where would you like to go next?"

- How do we reward our grantees?

- What does failure mean to us?

- Do our trustees and staff recognise the 'growth at all costs' mindset?

- Do we fund organisations in ways that allow for there to be slack in the delivery team in order to ensure teams aren't expected to operate at 110% as standard?

- Are we collaborating with other funders who fund the same organisation / sector to evaluate together how an organisation is scaling, particularly if it's going from a turnover of tens of thousands annually to millions?

- Could we do more to embrace endings as part of the lifecycle of organisations? Both our own, and those of our grantees?

2

Embed a culture of learning at the heart of your organisation

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- Overall, Campaign Bootcamp didn't take learning and evaluation seriously enough. Some individual staff and teams did, but in the grand scheme of things, a focus on learning was too far down the list of organisational priorities.

- Campaign Bootcamp approached evaluation and learning largely as a tactic in the game of securing funding. It didn't develop a meaningful culture of learning at the core of the organisation, instead using evaluation largely as a means to prove impact to funders and to secure follow-on funding (often for augmented versions of existing projects and programmes).

- The organisation did not generally use evaluation to interrogate and measure the impact of the work on different groups across the short, medium and longer term.

- The organisation didn't give itself enough time to review, reflect and genuinely learn between project and funding cycles. Instead it bounced from funding round to funding round, 'bootstrapping', and merely guessing what had been successful about the previous programmes.

- The organisation didn't ensure that learning was embedded in employees' goals, such that staff could develop important skills and understanding around things like equity and organisational management alongside doing their jobs.

- Benchmarks and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are part of what is needed to track progress, impact and to hold the organisation to account. Dedicating time and resources to gathering rigorous quantitative data is key for organisations. Like many charities, Campaign Bootcamp ended up setting the bar too low for impact by adopting simplistic measures like the Net Promoter Score from the commercial sector and transposing it onto the work of social change. This meant that the organisation based its success on whether participants felt they got value from the residential trainings – which they were always likely to do to some extent unless something went badly wrong. Relatedly, the organisation could have done more to develop and hold a more meaningful theory of change.

- Campaign Bootcamp could have done more to leverage the value of qualitative evaluation. Interviewing staff and participants to better understand their experiences could have provided additional depth to what the numbers showed. Evaluating how you're doing something is just as important as what you're doing – particularly when it comes to actually living your values out in practice and ensuring a positive work environment for your staff, partners, and trustees.

Not all funders are looking for rigorous analysis of existing projects in order to inform future funding. They are under their own pressures (cultural pressures, governance pressures and external pressures) to invest in organisations which deliver outstanding, groundbreaking, innovative results. An admission from grantees that a project didn't have the intended impact isn't always met with an investigative response from funders.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Take learning and evaluation seriously. Allocate time and money in your project and planning cycles to genuinely listen, reflect, analyse and learn about what you're doing and how you're doing it. Use this time to plan what is needed next.

- Don't just evaluate what it is that your funders ask for, evaluate what matters to the organisation, its purpose and its beneficiaries. Do not set targets for funders and then transpose those to the organisation's management and staff targets. Instead have targets for funders which sit alongside, and are part of, your wider organisational targets. Share these with your funders so they can see what they are a part of.

- Draw on qualitative as well as quantitative data, and ensure qualitative data is interpreted by multiple people in a range of positions in your organisation in order to glean all possible lessons and reflections.

- Co-develop all targets with your staff, and ensure they are informed by the experiences of those who are part of your work. This doesn't need to be onerous, but the parameters for what you collect as well as how you collect and analyse it needs to be done in a way that involves the whole organisation and will allow for candour about what's working and what isn't. Your measures should have qualitative and quantitative values, and be concerned with a full range of indicators including staff wellbeing, leadership satisfaction, programme effectiveness, overall organisational impact.

- Relevant individuals at all levels should also be consulted on the development of the measures that matter to the organisation, irrespective of programme / delivery choice or funding requirements.

- To really understand the health of an organisation trustees should seek to create trusting and honest relationships: between themselves, with executive leadership, and most critically with the staff. Questions to the leadership like "what keeps you up at night?" and "where do you think our awareness gaps are right now?" go some way to embracing vulnerability and avoiding the perpetuation of a complacent, performative culture where leadership and staff show up to trustee meetings to project how good the organisation is rather than offering a more balanced view.

- Avoid the temptation to over-manufacture or curate your findings for the sake of funders. Tell them the truth, not what you think they want to hear in order for them to feel like they made a good funding decision and in order for you to get more cash.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- How do we articulate the value of our investments in board meetings or decision-making panels?

- Do the ways we measure success and value our investments account for both the delivery output of an organisation and the organisation's relative health alike?

- Do we give grantees enough time and money to resource meaningful and continuous learning? How do we feel when a grantee organisation downs tools and focuses on reflection and learning?

- When a project or investment hasn't had the outcomes we expected, how do we feel? How do we respond? How do we communicate this internally in our organisation?

3

If everyone says "you're amazing", ask "why?"

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- From the earliest stages, Campaign Bootcamp quickly developed a high profile, gaining a degree of recognition many organisations dream of. This was partly because of the connections and privilege of the founding team and partly because they were doing innovative and important work.

- Campaign Bootcamp represented lots of what the wider social justice and voluntary sectors were wanting to do themselves: diversifying, challenging oppression and injustice, reaching beyond the traditional campaigning audiences to new groups – especially those with direct lived experience of the issues so many civil society organisations work and campaign on. This made the organisation the object of a huge amount of interest, praise and flattery.

- Campaign Bootcamp heard a lot of the positive feedback and too little of the more challenging, critical feedback. Over time this made the organisation complacent about the areas they needed to be working on and improving.

- Larger organisations, funders and civil society leaders sought the organisation's advice, affirmed their approach and praised their accomplishments. This enabled Campaign Bootcamp to have considerable influence on the wider nonprofit training landscape. However it also opened the organisation up further to a kind of complacency trap.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- If you're only hearing good things from external audiences, be careful not to let it go to your head. Interrogate why people want you to hear good things. Ask funders and other stakeholders explicitly why they think you're so great, and whether they really can't see any areas that they think could be improved. Perhaps they don't know enough to be sure whether or not you have everything covered.

- If you're a trustee and everything you are hearing about your organisation is that it is going well, all the feedback is good, and the funders are content – don't rest on your laurels. Find ways to regularly ask different questions to different people within your organisation and its network to ensure you aren't overlooking something or only grasping a curated, constructed picture of the organisation's health.

- Create internal rituals for communication that hold space for the diversity and nuance of everyone's perspectives and opinions. Ask questions in one-to-ones, team meetings, away days and board meetings like "what are we not talking about and why?" or "what doubts do we have about our work, ambitions, practices and culture?"

- Notice where you're getting your good ideas from. How might you broaden your field of reference and can you learn from organisations that are also learning from you?

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- Do we have favourite or cherished organisations who we see as being able to do no wrong? Why are they our favourites?

- Do we support our grant management staff to have the capacity and confidence to have courageous conversations with their grantees? Is this encouraged? Are staff trained appropriately?

- If we choose not to fund an organisation in our next round, are we honest with them about why? Are we giving grantees the chance to learn by sharing our perspectives as fully as possible?

Prioritise nurturing and maintaining good relationships at all levels of your organisation

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

■ Not enough time was spent on building connections between people working towards Campaign Bootcamp's mission. There weren't enough retreats, away days, lightly-scheduled board meetings, casual gatherings, and other times when people could connect. There was no emphasis on relationships as a priority, so when good relationships emerged it was voluntary.

■ Many of the staff team, leadership team and trustees worked remotely. This created a decentralised organisation which seldom met in person. In addition, many staff were part-time meaning the organisation worked asynchronously and remotely long before COVID-19 induced this shift in wider society.

■ Over time, isolation and disconnection crept in and posed a significant challenge for Campaign Bootcamp. Disconnection existed across the board, including:

– Between staff

– Within the senior leadership team

– Between leadership and the wider staff team

– Between the staff and trustee group

– Between the leadership team and the trustees

– Within the trustee group

■ Across all these relationships there were patterns of weak communication, a lack of transparent decision making and low levels of honesty and feedback – all of which resulted in people not feeling connected to each other or on the same page.

■ The board didn't get to know each other outside of the business of the board and similarly there were never any real opportunities created for staff engagement and relationship building.

■ It's only by working in relational / relationship-centred ways that trust can truly be built. It's through good, strong, warm, honest relationships that organisations can build the foundations needed to weather the highs and lows of trying to do social justice work, especially across identity and power differences.

■ When things go wrong, programmes don't go according to plan, funding doesn't come through or people have bad days, it's trust and connection built into relationships that pave the way for understanding and support. Without it, tension builds and conflict is handled poorly.

■ Weak relationships contributed to a lack of shared understanding regarding organisation's values and how those should be embodied in day-to-day activities, strategic plans, and policies.

■ The weak relationships in the organisation both created and perpetuated a kind of values gap whereby senior leaders and trustees appeared to have divergent

(if not conflicting) values to those held by staff.

- In 2021, when trust and faith between staff, leadership and trustees were at their lowest, Campaign Bootcamp sought to revolutionise relationships and leadership within the organisation, and to rebuild trust by adopting principles of <u>transformative accountability</u> and <u>non-hierarchical organising</u>. However, these steps were taken too late in order to stand any chance of success and weren't given the structure, care, attention and prioritisation needed in order to be meaningful.

- These efforts didn't have the intended impact intended both because trust was so low and also because there were different, competing perceptions of these new approaches amongst staff and trustees. Training wasn't provided on how to implement them. In practice too, Campaign Bootcamp also found these approaches sat in tension with existing UK regulations. For example, by rights any employee can choose to initiate conversations about a planned exit rather than engage in the transformative accountability process. And while the organisation could operate without a hierarchy, under UK charity law powers are delegated but not devolved from trustee boards to staff teams, which means trustees still need to ensure the organisation is operating well.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Don't leave relationships to chance. Good relationships are the foundations on which your organisation can be built, its purpose can be pursued, and your people can thrive.

- Good relationships are essential for your whole organisation and must be modelled at the highest levels.

- Create space for relationships to be formed and nurtured within teams, across teams and across different levels of your organisation. In all teams (but especially for diverse teams working in remote or hybrid ways) this means more than just going to the pub on Fridays. Consider cross-organisational buddying schemes, staff socials that include everyone, one-to-ones for people to talk about their wider life, half a day a month for staff to work together to pursue their commitments beyond work, and so on. These sorts of things can create the social fabric your organisation needs to deliver its core purpose to the highest possible standards.

- Recognise that while the trustee role is a voluntary, unpaid one, it is nonetheless important that the time commitment from trustee members is sufficient to build the relationships within the board and wider organisation needed to maintain the strategic and legal oversight that is their duty.

- Board members' experience of an organisation must not be solely through the medium of the board meeting. Instead, the board should consider cross-organisation buddying, attending events and socials, as well as other opportunities for them to engage with the wider organisation.

- Watch out for the ebbing away of trust – symptoms of this can include staff disengagement in organisational processes, and confusion or frustration with decision making.

■ If you are concerned about the state of trust in your organisation, you will need to think extra carefully about whether and how people are sharing authentic feedback. Provide support and structure for feedback, put in place clear and practical tools for mediating conflicts, and build trust by prioritising relationship building.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

■ Do we value relationships enough in our grant-making? (relationships within our organisation, and relationships between ourselves and our grantees)

■ How do we articulate, measure and acknowledge the value of relationships?

■ Do we hold relationships with more than just one or two members of staff in grantee organisations? Do we have touch points or ways of understanding experiences and perceptions across our grantee organisations?

■ When thinking about grantee governance (for example in funder plus models) do we encourage relationships across a whole organisation? Do we model this in our own organisation?

5

Diverse teams that include marginalised staff may need more structure than you might assume

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- Over its eight year journey Campaign Bootcamp hired increasingly diverse teams and talent to lead its fast-paced, innovative work. The organisation was proud to become more and more representative of the marginalised communities central to the organisation's vision. Campaign Bootcamp did not, however, take steps to support the requisite learning and unlearning necessary to ensure that marginalised staff would feel empowered at work and not be subjected to the same oppressive dynamics they experience in wider society.

- As explored in learning #4, not enough time was spent on relationships and trust building. This meant that when conflicts arose (especially conflicts that involved multiple people), people often moved to polarised positions quickly rather than listening and considering the perspectives of all parties.

- The organisation didn't have the structures and training to support people to engage in generative conflict, especially when that conflict involved identity difference and experiences of oppression. This was in part due to the backend of the organisation not being tended to or nurtured adequately enough (more to come on that in learning #6). Over time, organisational conflict was handled so poorly that the organisation's culture was increasingly experienced as being a pressure cooker of unmanaged tension.

- In Campaign Bootcamp's final years, trustees saw first-hand how people were experiencing marginalisation within the organisation. They worked to address this by listening deeply and carefully to the voices and experiences of the most marginalised staff. However, there was noticeable hesitancy to engage in honest, generative conflict with marginalised staff, for fear of inadvertently causing further harm. This meant workable solutions were harder to arrive at, critical feedback was withheld, and resulted in experiences of alienation for almost everyone.

- On reflection Campaign Bootcamp needed everyone in the organisation to be able to express their views as well as to hear and consider competing opinions. Senior leadership needed to take decisions in ways that reflected a range of perspectives and to take accountability for them to the wider staff and stakeholders. Equally, staff outside of the senior leadership also needed to listen to others, respect divergent opinions, and recognise senior leadership's responsibility for stewarding the organisation as something with its own identity beyond just being a set of individuals.

- Trustees learnt that the current legal frameworks and standard practice in the UK, particularly around disability and race, are not keeping pace with what is needed to tackle ableism and racism in the workplace. In hindsight they wish they had taken more time to reflect on

the developments of anti-oppression research and practice whilst also working proactively on how to work in anti-oppressive ways given UK legal and cultural contexts.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Hire a mix of people with different identities, political perspectives, life experiences, emotional and character types. This applies to the staff team, leadership team and on the trustee board alike. Think about how you build the bigger whole as well as hiring the best possible individuals. Hire people who are excited to work in a way that's aligned with the values of the organisation. Skills around listening, empathy, conflict management and compromise should be abundant and supported by training.

- A diverse organisation, particularly one whose purpose is to support a wide range of people who themselves have strong views on what is right and needed, needs people who are curious about difference and have the capacity and appetite to harness the power of diversity. Test for these attributes in recruitment processes for staff and trustees. Defensiveness and shame are natural human responses to conflict but if not managed appropriately, they prevent the possibilities of generative conflict.

- Install tools to manage conflict regularly and meaningfully. Do not save feedback for annual 360 reviews as this will likely result in people having so much to say that they don't know where to begin, or they will likely deliver it in an unconstructive, harmful or traumatic way. Have weekly or monthly standing agenda items in one-to-ones, train and support your staff to have courageous conversations, and model from the highest level that careful and compassionate honesty is valued in the organisation. Build managers' skills to solicit, receive, and act on feedback. Crucially, don't just acknowledge feedback. Explain whether and how it will be acted upon.

- Be aware of stereotyping. Create the conditions for people to be whole, and support others to unlearn preconceived notions they hold about particular marginalised identities and experiences.

- Be aware of homogenising. Make sure organisational groups (senior leadership, 'junior staff, trustees etc.) are understood to be groupings of individuals who will hold a range of perspectives. Assumptions about like-mindedness at different levels of the organisation caused problems within Campaign Bootcamp.

- Being for social justice and anti-oppression means you have to talk about both personal politics and the organisation's position on political issues in the workplace. Fundamentally everything is political, and people who join the staff and board should expect to engage in these discussions.

- When you commit to values of equity, justice, and inclusion – the socio-economic reality and how we operate within the systems we inhabit will likely be working against you. For example, a culture of white supremacy has a pervasive impact on how all people behave, which includes those whom it serves as well as those who are oppressed by it. An un-interrogated, traditional operating system is always likely to be an oppressive operating system. Simply hiring marginalised staff will not solve this.

- Learn from <u>Healing Justice London</u> and place trauma-informed anti-oppression practices at the heart of your organisation. If you don't have experience and expertise of this within your organisation, pay someone to provide it. Make specialised, trauma-informed mental health and other confidential supervisory support available to all staff. People experiencing marginalisation and oppression have less access to specialist care, let alone mainstream support. Consider enhanced coverage for staff who are neurodiverse, staff with disabilities and trans staff.

- Learn from the work of <u>Larger Us</u> by designing ways to distribute the emotional health and wellbeing of an organisation by recognising that:

  – We all have work to do on ourselves: everyone needs to practice managing their mental and emotional states. This helps us correct our biases and prejudices. Accepting ourselves so that we don't repress the parts we dislike and end up projecting them on to someone else – the root of scapegoating and othering.

  – We all have work to do with each other: design your organisation in ways that encourage people to listen deeply and have the courageous conversations that we need to have. Create the space to recognise that we inadvertently alienate people and design in ways to respond to people being othered.

  – We all have work to do together: organisations must carve out ways to stand resolutely for our highest values while also respecting those of others. We must organise in ways that seek to heal rather than to defeat, and bridge divides instead of deepening them. Without this we cannot truly repair our communities, rebalance power, or regenerate our planet.

- Be open and upfront with funders that to truly have an accessible and inclusive offer costs more. If you predominantly work with and hire people with a range of access requirements you will need more money than if you have only one or two people with access needs amongst a larger group.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- Do we have an anti-oppression and trauma-informed approach to grant-making?

- If we are committed to funding inclusive and accessible organisations, do our grant sizes and processes account for the larger budgets and greater resources needed for organisations to be truly equitable?

- How do we support grantees to prioritise work and approaches that have anti-oppression at their heart?

- How can our grant making processes account for intersectional oppression and how it shows up in organisations – both our own and those of our grantees?

- Do we embed Larger Us principles in our organisation and our grant-making?

- How do we manage rising tension or conflict in a grantee relationship? How do we manage it internally in our funding organisation? Do we have tools to manage the conflict well?

- Do we have the right systems and processes in place for generative conflict in our organisation – both between staff and with our grantees?

6 Prioritise the backend of your organisation from the beginning

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- As explored in learning #1, Campaign Bootcamp quickly came under pressure internally and externally to scale. Learning #2 explored how this was measured largely in simplistic and reductive ways around output and delivery. All of this meant that tending to the organisational foundations – the backend – was not a high enough priority. By backend we mean: the policies, processes, and structures that underpin the delivery of your work and the resources and people who drive it.

- Scaling amplifies and increases complexity. Small teams can have a tacit and close set of relationships which might not seem to need as much HR or wider operational support, but this will change as you grow and your work develops. Maintaining bonds of trust and care, and operational excellence can be difficult as the organisation shifts, grows and changes.

- It's crucial to prioritise and adequately resource the backend of an organisation from the very beginning. If you leave investing in core functions like HR, finance, culture and operations until further down the line, the weaknesses and faults in your organisation will become amplified as you scale.

- Funders, allies and stakeholders are more likely to ask "how many activities or interventions have you delivered?" than

"how's your HR system developing?" or "how are you training and supporting your managers?" This is in large part due to the way that civil society has come to value and operate around funding, resources and power most of all. Don't wait for others to prioritise these things – whether they're asked about or not, these are important functions.

- Campaign Bootcamp largely took organisational policies from wider sector best practice. Efforts were made to adapt these to the organisation but were not sufficient. Standard practice in civil society on everything from sick pay to whistleblowing is typically based on imagined norms and doesn't account for how marginalisation, inequality, and poverty have an impact on people's needs. Mainstream policy and practice are largely not appropriate for trauma-informed work.

- Policies are words on pages. Anti-oppressive, safe organisations need more than words on paper. Campaign Bootcamp had the policies in place but staff didn't use them because they didn't trust them – a wider reflection of the trust gap. Once you have the right policies in place, it's essential to apply them in a consistent way.

- When adopting methods from other contexts, context is key. Campaign Bootcamp sometimes drew inspiration from the US where there is a rich history of civic movements and different approaches to employment regulations

and best practice. As an example, Campaign Bootcamp implemented performance-related pay without sufficiently examining the problems and pitfalls other UK organisations had already encountered when attempting to translate this US approach to the British context.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Design and develop the backend of your organisation with expertise, care and clarity. While it may not be currently valued in the same way by certain groups and people, the backend of your organisation requires just as much attention, thought, and cash as the front. Everything from how you recruit and induct your staff, through to the provision of training for managers, and how budgets are developed matters.

- Ensure operations is taken seriously. As you grow try to avoid forcing yourself to decide between hiring an HR or finance manager, or a delivery-focused staff member. You need BOTH to do the work you want to do.

- Hire staff and trustees who have both operations development experience and wider skills including trauma-informed working. These hires should work with your wider team to help model what anti-oppressive practices look like in organisations.

- Recruiting staff to build the operational side of your organisation with robustness and an appropriate approach to risk can be tough. When seeking operational staff, look for people who blend a keen eye for detail with a healthy sense of how to build robust organisations with enough flex for the moment and to meet scaling

in future years. Look for them to also be rooted in an understanding of equity, inclusion and anti-oppression, and trauma-informed practice.

- Take policies, processes and structures off the shelf with care. This is important for both traditional and more innovative or cutting edge approaches.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- Do we fund for long grant periods to support organisations to have the space to develop and deliver operational excellence?

- Do we ask our grantees about what they need for operational excellence?

7 Make governance an organisation-wide endeavour by being leaderful and well-led

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

- All too often governance in charities and nonprofit organisations has been conflated with the ways in which only trustees and senior executive leadership take decisions and how those decisions are consulted on by, or communicated to staff and other stakeholders. Campaign Bootcamp learned this is a hazardous conflation and that anti-oppression work is rooted in participation, power sharing and transparency across a whole organisation.

- On reflection, the organisation came to see that governance in fact encompasses the whole organisation. Governance is all the structures and social processes that people use to create and shape their collective endeavours. Good governance needs everyone to participate, be heard, be clear on their role, understand (but not necessarily agree with) how and what decisions are taken, and see how responsibility and accountability are distributed.

- In the early stages of the organisation's journey, the decisiveness, energy, and commitment of the founders and early staff members laid the foundations for creative, ambitious work. Campaign Bootcamp learned that the leadership required to get an organisation off the ground isn't necessarily the same leadership that is needed to maintain and build a sustainable organisation.

- In the early stages of a new organisation the board / trustees are likely to be drawn from the networks around the founder(s). This is because being a trustee is a voluntary role and it's easiest for the founder(s) to call in a favour with people in their existing networks, rather than ask a stranger to donate time and energy to a new idea.

- Start-up boards often rely on close relationships in the early stages, based on high levels of trust, relatively low levels of challenge or scrutiny, and an acknowledgement that the work is forming and what the founder(s) need is support, access to networks, and a low burden from the trustee group.

- A critical moment in the development of any organisation is the need to shift up a gear and increase the structure and formality of an organisation's ways of working. Getting the flow of information right so that trustees have enough to maintain oversight, but not so much that they're inundated takes careful management and is not appropriately done in a more casual setting.

- Campaign Bootcamp's trustees, like so many trustees, were giving their time voluntarily in the midst of busy work schedules and wider commitments. In the early days, the organisation had few trustees who were retired or engaged in non-executive posts and therefore able to dedicate more time to the organisation.

- Being both leaderful and well-led is also about resolving issues at an appropriate pace and maintaining confidence in the process. When organisations move too fast through decisions and cut corners, trust and accountability suffer. But when they move too slowly they risk losing confidence and in turn, trust and accountability suffer. Over its eight years Campaign Bootcamp moved too slowly at some points and too quickly at others. Setting the right pace around decision making, avoiding deadlines slipping, and being clear about process steps is crucial to striking the right balance of leadership and leaderfulness.

- It is a constant and universal challenge that volunteer boards face, balancing being sufficiently engaged and having enough information in order to perform their legal duties, but not so much that they are overwhelmed and disengage.

- Campaign Bootcamp's trustees did not always make the time to hear directly the views and opinions of the wider staff group and beneficiaries, and relied on their relationships with the CEO in particular, and senior leadership more broadly, as a source of information. This meant the board did not hear the wider perspectives of the organisation and didn't take these potentially divergent opinions into consideration when making decisions. As learning #4 suggests, trustees holding relationships across the whole organisation is key to mitigating the risk of this.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

- Start by acknowledging that governance sits in all people, processes, and policies of the organisation and that everyone has a part to play in achieving good governance.

- Design the composition of your board with care and a keen eye for people's past experiences of being on boards, their lived experiences relevant to the purpose of the organisation, and how much time members have to dedicate to their trustee role.

- Be aware of the role of the Board in ensuring the right level of structure and formality in decision making as an organisation grow. Placing scrutiny, accountability and rigour at the heart of your governance from the earliest stages is an act of care for the staff and a sign of commitment and dedication to the organisation's mission.

- Make space for trustees to build relationships with each other without the staff or senior team. Make space for trustees to build relationships with the wider staff and the senior team exclusively.

- Place transparency and accountability at the heart of your commitment to good governance by creating clear delegation pathways for all decisions (between trustees and leadership, and leadership and staff) – and sticking to them.

- Leaders need to have a helicopter view and be bold in deciding when a short-term measure needs to cease and a longer-term solution be put in place. This will help reduce pressure and anxiety in times of difficulty, and allow trust to be

maintained over time. This will be key as far as addressing systemic problems in a sustainable way.

■ As you design place decision-making processes, be crystal clear about what different people in the organisation can expect from their role in the process. If you do hit a crisis point, be really careful that you do not hastily devise a new way of working without being clear on what that will mean and what everyone can expect from it.

■ The nature and frequency of communication between the trustees and the organisation is critical. Take time to understand how to get the balance right between reliable and digestible communication on the one hand, and not wasting people's time with communication on the other.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

■ Do we support grantees to build and strengthen their trustee boards?

■ Do we have ways of listening to staff and trustees at all levels of a grantee organisation?

■ Can we help an organisation identify when they are reaching a time when their Board needs to adapt to increased growth?

■ What does leadership mean to you and your organisation?

■ What are the hallmarks of good leadership you look for in grantee organisations? How do you measure these?

8 Don't be afraid of the end

What Campaign Bootcamp learned

■ Endings are a taboo for British society in general. The end of life, relationships, jobs, and organisations all too often come with associations of shame, disappointment, and failure. Societally we don't have the language to describe them in their fullness or the rituals to fully anticipate and process them collectively.

■ Like the majority of civil society organisations, the deep-rooted societal mindset of avoiding endings created a 'survival at all costs' mentality at Campaign Bootcamp. During the organisation's toughest and most traumatic moments, people said "oh don't worry, we won't close", as though that would be the ultimate failure. Certainly the ending that has transpired wasn't what anyone wanted, but when it came to it, it was the best option for an organisation which had reached the end of its road, and needed to close as well as it could to make space for others and for new work to emerge.

■ In hindsight, the trustees of Campaign Bootcamp could have turned to thinking about the possibility of the organisation's ending sooner than they did – particularly if they had been in the habit of having regular conversations about its ongoing existence. They could also have left it a lot later too, which would have had a damaging effect on the staff, the work, and the wider sector.

■ Endings involve complex logistical, legal, and financial considerations. They are also marked by different experiences and emotions for all those involved within and outside of the staff, trustees, beneficiary groups, and wider communities. Anger, despair, relief, shame, guilt, and grief are just a few of the countless experiences that came up time and again for people at Campaign Bootcamp.

■ The act of considering a closure or merger doesn't make it inevitable. As a natural part of the life cycle for organisations and wider civil society, the possibility of an ending is always on the horizon. But when it comes down to it, endings are handled best when considered and planned for with as much intent, thought, planning, and design as circumstances allow.

Recommendations for other social justice organisations

■ Remember that organisational closures and endings are part of the natural cycle of growth, change, renewal, and innovation within the nonprofit sector. Organisations that are deeply committed to their mission should be constantly asking themselves the questions: are we still the right people to do this work? Is this still the work that is needed? Are we being effective in creating the change we seek with the communities we work with? Are there others we should be collaborating with, or getting out the way for, in order to better achieve our mission?

- Endings should be considered from the beginning of an organisation. Don't wait until things feel strained and the prospect of an ending starts to loom to put the conversation on the table. This will likely be beyond the point at which you can deliver an ending which has the care and thought it needs. If you consistently consider the possibility of endings by asking yourself the questions above, you are laying the foundations for honest, frank conversations about it if, or when the moment comes.

- Intentionally and proactively care for people's emotional needs and responses when endings are considered.

- Whatever the circumstances and timing of your organisation's closing, there are always stories to be celebrated, legacies to be proud of, work that will continue even if the four walls of an organisation no longer stand, as well as learnings that peer organisations and communities can carry forward in their pursuit of change.

Questions for curious funders to ask themselves

- Do we encourage organisations to tend to loss in their organisation by encouraging and championing efforts to end grant cycles, leadership tenures, and other transitions with care?

- Do we support grantees to think about possible endings early enough?

- If the organisation does end, how do we support it to do so effectively and compassionately? Do we resource it adequately? Do we recognise that endings aren't just about turning the lights off, but are also deeply emotional journeys that require meaningful care?

4. **Appendix**

These are three key public statements issued by the trustees of Campaign Bootcamp between August 2021 and December 2022 charting the organisation's closure.

An update from Campaign Bootcamp's Board of Trustees

August 6, 2021

We want to share with you some information around the challenges our organisation has been facing, and the steps we have been taking to address the concerns.

To the Bootcamp community,

We want to share with you some information around the challenges our organisation has been facing, and the steps we have been taking to address the concerns. This is an important moment of reckoning for the charity sector as a whole around oppressive cultures, and we are not immune.

The Board has heard concerns coming from some current and former staff, beginning 2-3 years ago but becoming much louder in the last year, and shared more publicly in recent weeks, about their experience of the culture and working practices at Campaign Bootcamp. They have told us that our rapid growth has left in its wake an environment that feels hurried and stressful, with ever-shifting priorities and high staff turnover. Some staff said they feel that decision-making lacks transparency or consistency, that the organisation is not guided by a shared sense of purpose. As a result, some

have shared they feel undervalued and overworked.

They said this working culture has a disproportionate impact on staff of colour, disabled staff, trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming staff, LGBTQ staff, staff from working-class backgrounds and staff who experience mental health problems. Some shared stories of situations they experienced as racist, sexist, or ableist.

The culture they described is not what we believe Campaign Bootcamp should be.

Those of us who have been on the board for years acknowledge that we have overseen the growth of an organisation that staff have struggled in. We acknowledge that we did not develop enough relationships with staff to know things were as off-course as we have now heard. We know we should have asked more questions about the well-being of staff, and proactively looked for echoes of systemic oppression in the organisation. Newer board members, who joined just before we began to hear serious concerns, have joined our commitment to ensuring we are successful in our work to

transform this organisation. We know there is more to learn here, and the entire board is committed to doing that work through the processes we have initiated (detailed below).

To any current or former staff or freelancers who have shared that they were harmed by the working culture at Campaign Bootcamp, we apologise, both for the harm that you experienced, and for the time it took us as a Board to begin to respond comprehensively. We recognise and appreciate the significant contribution you have made to the success and reputation of Bootcamp, and we are sorry that the culture caused you pain.

To our community of graduates, we realise this news may be hard to hear. We acknowledge we have let you down by not entirely being what you may have imagined us to be, or experienced us as in our trainings. For that we are sorry.

We want to share a few things the Board and Leadership Team have done in response to the concerns over the past few months.

- To look into specific instances where we have been told that our policies may have been followed in discriminatory ways, last year we launched an independent investigation, and that investigation should conclude in the coming weeks. We deeply appreciate every person who shared their experiences with the investigator.

- The Board has been receiving notes from all exit interviews, to understand better why people are leaving.

- We have begun a comprehensive review of our policies to align them with our values, and began to address any specific contract issues and investigate if there are any pay discrepancies.

- We have appointed two board members to act as liaisons with staff, to ensure we are actively building relationships with staff members.

- Board members are now regularly attending staff meetings, to encourage relationship building and information sharing.

- At a very practical level, we have established a wellbeing fund for staff.

- We also engaged in a two-week Pause & Reset in June to support staff to get a break from the day to day and spend time thinking about how to make space for wider culture work, as we know engaging in this significant piece of work will require time and emotional space, especially for staff from marginalised backgrounds.

We know that experiencing oppressive workplace cultures can happen even when policies and laws are followed to the letter. While the Investigation is an important step for us to take, we believe that it is necessary also to understand more fully the ways we have heard our culture hurt people, to look deeply at the roots of those challenges, and take steps to heal and rebuild in a way that is fully aligned with our values of justice and equity.

To that end, we have appointed Social Justice Collective to conduct a Culture Review and Visioning Process. We know they will hold us to account and help us use this moment to change our culture in meaningful, systemic ways. We have also devised an accountability process that pulls in the principles of transformative justice to ensure we are understanding and addressing at all levels the harm that people have shared they experienced.

Some people who have told us they were harmed by the culture at Campaign Bootcamp have since left the organisation. To those former staff, we want to acknowledge that your voices and experiences are important to hear and hold ourselves accountable to as we engage in the Culture Review.. We will compensate former staff for their time supporting our learning and growth.

Finally, the Culture Review will ultimately envision and establish a set of shared values or cultural principles that we will co-create and commit to together, and embed into our organisation at every level, all the way up to the Leadership Team and Board.

We do not expect to emerge from this process free of all of the "isms" that plague our society, but we do expect to emerge with an ability to proactively address challenges going forward, to ensure we work in ways that are fully aligned with our values. As a board, we also hope to be able to right the wrongs of the past through an accountability process rooted in the principles of transformative justice. All current board members, especially those of us who have been around longer, are committed to engaging fully in this accountability process.

As a Board, we are clear: We want Campaign Bootcamp not only to be a place that produces great work, but a great place for everyone to work. In particular, we want staff from marginalised communities to feel fully respected and valued, and for the whole organisation to function and be formed in a way that doesn't reproduce patterns of harm our work together is committed to dismantling. Crucially, we want to have transparent and fit for purpose processes in place that allow us to respond to concerns as they arise in a way that is fair and restorative.

We recognise that many other organisations are grappling with similar challenges. We are making our struggles public in part out of a commitment to transparency, honesty, and accountability to this community. We also plan to offer reflections, learnings and unlearnings to the wider sector as we do this deep and necessary work. We will share an update by mid-September on the Culture Review and Investigation. We would ask that this community hold us accountable to our vision of a world rooted in justice.

In solidarity,

**The Board of Trustees,
Campaign Bootcamp**

An update from Campaign Bootcamp's Board of Trustees on the culture at Campaign Bootcamp

September 23, 2021

Last month, we shared an update about the challenges our organisation has been facing and the steps we have been taking to address them. Since our last post, there have been some significant updates.

For the last nine months, we, as the Board of Campaign Bootcamp, have commissioned <u>an investigation into concerns raised by staff and former staff about the working culture within the organisation</u>. That investigation is now complete, and in the interest of transparency and learning, we want to share the outcomes publicly.

This investigation looked at a number of concerns raised by staff in late 2020. All staff were given the opportunity to raise concerns to feed into the investigation. Twelve individuals were interviewed by an external investigator. The investigator looked into claims of a challenging and unhealthy organisational culture. We heard from staff that the culture disadvantaged those with marginalised identities specifically.

The investigation was not looking into any concerns raised around the programmes that Campaign Bootcamp delivers or into the experience of our wider Bootcamp Community. It was conducted by Byrne Dean, a collective of employment law and HR experts who had no prior connection to Campaign Bootcamp. The final report was shared with the Board at the end of August 2021.

The report outlines, in stark terms, that our internal culture did not live up to our values or our mission. To the current and former staff affected, we offer a sincere apology for the deep hurt caused.

As a Board, we want to thank current and former staff and freelancers, many of whom have worked under challenging circumstances, for creating powerful training and programmes and consistently calling for the organisation to be better. We appreciate the ways in which our staff trainers, freelancer trainers and programme staff have worked hard to put our values of justice, equity, and supporting people from marginalised backgrounds into practice.

Outcomes of the report

The report identified three main areas of concern, summarised in quotes from the report, below:

A lack of strategy

"There is evidence that there were weaknesses around strategic planning and implementation[…] whilst there are business plans, these are not regularly referred to and do not seem to guide strategic decisions[…] This had a negative impact on the working environment of staff and their ability to do their jobs well."

"The evidence showed that there was a lack of consultation with those that would need to deliver on the funding, resulting in them being required to deliver work which was outside of their capacity and goalposts frequently changing."

Inconsistent and unfair HR practices

"It was clear that in general the Organisation's policies are inadequate and there has been a failure to train and support Managers to implement clear and fair processes."

"Senior leadership[…] have at times caused confusion over pay reviews or performance management. The lack of consistency also extends to annual reviews and pay reviews."

"There was no consistent understanding of when a recruitment process was run internally and when advertised externally[…] The lack of strong policies, training and consistency in the application of HR processes has led to a breakdown in trust among staff."

A culture of racism that particularly impacted the fundraising team

"Although in specific individual cases the evidence was not sufficient to make findings of racism, that does not mean it does not exist. When looking at the overall pattern and picture of the complaints that have been made there are a concerning number of allegations of racism made by women of colour."

"There are aspects of [the Organisation] that would fall within the description of a white supremacist culture." (For a description of "white supremacy culture", which is a set of ways of working which result in a benefit to white people, often at the expense of people of colour, see this website: whitesupremacyculture.info)

An apology from the Board

First, we want to unreservedly apologise to staff members and freelancers who experienced these challenges. There are clearly a number of systemic organisational challenges that resulted in harm, and we must recognise the role we as the Board played within this.

The Board, made up of volunteer Trustees, has not been engaged enough and has allowed the organisation to grow in a way that let funding priorities drive the training programmes' work to such an extent that it caused harm to staff.

We didn't make sure our policies were robust and fairly applied. We didn't do enough to build relationships with staff so we could provide support when things were hard. This caused people to be put on performance plans without sufficient support and to have pay rises delayed. It caused people to tell us they experienced significant mental health challenges. Even if the report does not show that race specifically was the cause of those experiences, the pain people experienced is valid. We know we have work to do to embody an anti-racist organisation that resists the patterns of white supremacy culture.

We have been reflecting a lot on what has happened within Campaign Bootcamp and how things went so wrong. Our key learning as a Board is that the forces of white supremacy, economic inequality, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and other forms of discrimination are incredibly powerful in our society. So powerful that,

if we are not actively resisting them in our work, they will embed themselves in organisations like Campaign Bootcamp regardless of our intentions or our ideals.

As a Board we did not do enough to resist those forces, and staff members were harmed as a result. For this, we are deeply sorry, and we are committed to change.

The Board commissioned this investigation because we understand that societal forces of oppression — white supremacy, economic inequality, ableism, sexism, transphobia, and others — are extremely hard to resist, and can persist in organisations regardless of intentions. We also understand that the legal definition of discrimination only reflects the most overt experiences. We took a view at the start of the investigation that even if the investigation could not prove that people experienced less favourable treatment because of their marginalised identities, the simple fact that people told us they were hurt required us to act to change the organisation.

Ultimately, these are systemic mistakes made real by individual actions. We won't fix them by focusing on individual actions alone but rather by looking deeply at the systems that caused harm and reflecting on what we could have done differently. We are committed to continuing this work into the future.

Next Steps

We want to share some steps we are taking to address the concerns highlighted in the report:

1 We are not done learning about why and how people were hurt. This report affirms our belief in the need for a culture review, looking more broadly at the ways we work together and how these are experienced by people of colour, disabled people, neurodivergent people, and trans and queer people as oppressive. We have begun this work with the Social Justice Collective and will be sharing updates on that later this year.

2 The issues contained in the report are primarily systemic challenges — ones that happen regardless of who is working for the organisation. But there is learning for individuals as well, and we are providing feedback to those people. We are also setting up training for those who need it to ensure that, as individuals, they are getting support to do better in the future. The report did not highlight any need for individual disciplinary processes for current staff of Campaign Bootcamp.

3 We are committed to only hiring staff, especially leadership, and only appointing Board members who are deeply committed to building an organisation that resists and tackles the culture of white supremacy.

4 We have adopted an approach to accountability and learning rooted in the principles of transformative justice and guides all the ways we learn from our mistakes at work. This includes building out several new processes that will support systemic reflection and learning and support individual learning and accountability. We know, and we've seen in this report, that most harm is caused by a combination of individuals and systems, and we can't focus alone on individual accountability.

5 We are beginning a process of organisational transformation. We will look at all aspects of our policies and governance and be open to changing whatever is needed to live

our values fully. As a part of that, we will soon be advertising for an interim Transformation Director, who will support us to begin the process of tackling the culture of white supremacy and to build one that values everyone. One of the first pieces of work for this person will be to work with the Head of Operations to redesign our annual review, performance management, recruitment, and pay policies to ensure they are equitable and applied fairly in all cases.

6 This Transformation Director will also be responsible for guiding a bottom-up strategy development process so that our programmes can meet the needs of the most marginalised people to develop the skills to challenge oppression.

7 Our new Head of Income Generation has been given the space to adopt an approach to fundraising which lets programmatic work guide funding proposals rather than the other way around. She is also committed to providing feedback to funders where appropriate.

8 Our new Head of Finance has built systems to track our financial position better, so we have deep insight into our reserves and our financial health. This allows us to invest charitable resources wisely and fundraise accordingly to manage and mitigate financial risks.

9 We have started to build on the relationships between staff and the Board, with clear systems so challenges can be raised up for support if needed as we undergo the work to transform the organisation.

There is a long road ahead. All of us, but especially the Board and leadership team, will need to work much harder to tackle the issues of our organisational culture and create real change. As Board members, we are committed to seeing this through but also recognise there is a need for new leadership at Board level too. We are continuing our work to restore trust, redesign policies, reflect on our culture, and build an organisation that is just. We believe in our ability as a Board, leadership team, and staff to do that. It isn't going to be easy, but it is what we need to do.

During this difficult period, the entire staff team has done an amazing job making sure our work in the world embodies our vision of justice and wholeness. That gives us confidence that we have the skills we need to do this internally. We ask our community to continue to hold us to account to ensure we are doing everything we can so our internal reality is fully aligned with our values.

In solidarity,

**Kaytee and Manish,
Co Chairs of Campaign Bootcamp**

On behalf of the Board

Closing Campaign Bootcamp

December 22, 2021

We're announcing the heartbreaking news that Campaign Bootcamp will be closing in early 2022.

Campaign Bootcamp was set up with an ambition to equip individuals and communities across the UK and beyond with the tools, confidence and community needed to run powerful campaigns. Over 8 years, we've trained over 1,300 graduates of our programmes to do just that.

Over the last month, the Bootcamp trustees have been in a collective consultation with staff about the future of the charity. At the end of the consultation period, we have reached the heartbreaking realisation that we need to bring Campaign Bootcamp as a charity to a close in the coming months.

We want to share a bit about why this was necessary, but first we want to celebrate the amazing things our staff, trainers, graduates, and community have done.

Bootcamp graduates have waged important, successful campaigns across a range of issues, winning change through record breaking petitions, testifying before Parliament, appearing in the national and international press, organising demonstrations and direct action stunts, raising thousands through crowdfunders and fundraising campaigns, challenging and changing laws and getting elected to local government.

At the centre of this has been an amazing community of individuals who have come together to help to shape the work that we've done. It's through the time, dedication, and a willingness of those to take part in training, share strategies and stories of success (and failure), or commit time and effort to shape and improve our work that our community has been able to achieve so much.

Through our programmes, the Bootcamp community has helped to radically transform, diversify and change the training landscape in the UK. These programmes have included the 17 Campaign Bootcamp residentials that have taken place; the pioneering Everyday Activism programme which has provided training to groups across the UK; and our Train the Trainer work, including the recent UNPACKED programme, which has equipped many with tools to support others in their campaigning journeys together.

How we got to this point

It has been an 18 month long journey to this point, as we have shared earlier this year. Regrettably, we have not been able to ensure that the values that we've put at the centre of our training have been experienced by our staff – too many of the decisions that we have made did not fully embody our values of equity and justice. This has caused many people, especially staff of colour, disabled staff, and others who experience marginalisation in society, to be hurt. For that we are deeply sorry.

As an organisation we have worked hard to understand those concerns through formal investigations and informal culture reviews, and found that culture to be pervasive, and the pain staff have felt to be serious. However, there was not a path to addressing those challenges that didn't continue to exacerbate experiences of hurt and

marginalisation, especially within the confines of a charity limited by requirements of how we address issues and use our funding.

We now find ourselves in a situation with significant trust gaps, dwindling leadership capacity, and an uncertain long-term financial future. With those three challenges, the Board does not see a viable path to transforming from an organisation that does good work externally but is causing hurt and pain internally, to one that fully embodies our core values of justice and equity.

With no sustainable path forward, we felt it was only right to close the organisation in the kindest way possible, redistribute our remaining funds to organisations better equipped to do this work with equity and justice at the centre, and clear space for new entities to grow that don't repeat our mistakes. We are committed to telling our story and sharing our learnings. We want to create a lasting impact with our remaining time and resources, so other organisations can benefit from the learning that came from our challenges and closure.

As a Board of volunteer Trustees, especially those of us who have been involved for the longest, we accept our role in not asking the right questions, creating spaces to hear from all staff, and not having enough relationship with each other to see a pattern of staff unhappiness, so that we might have identified and addressed the challenges we face before they became so pervasive they threatened the organisation's ability to continue. We tried in all the ways we knew how to right this ship, but in the end it wasn't enough. We are so sorry that it's come to this.

We also believe that choosing to close this legal entity, and with it all its challenges,

makes space for a new chapter of this work to emerge. One that is rooted from the start in a deep understanding of justice, and that begins with a strong foundation and grows from there. Making this decision now means that we can look to what's next, and support that in any way we can.

What next?

We'll be fulfilling our commitments to finish the training programmes that we're currently running including our UNPACKED Beginners course, Age Activism training, and will be planning a final Community Conference for early February 2022 where we can invite community members to look back and celebrate what has been achieved over the last ten years, and discuss how, collectively, we might move forward. The team will be sharing more on this soon.

With climate change urgency, democracy in crisis, division in society and inequality rising, there is still such evidence for the need to equip campaigners, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, with the tools, confidence and community they need to campaign.

As we move to close, we want to work with others in 2022 to ensure the legacy and work of Bootcamp and the contribution of so many will be maintained in some new way. We are exploring options for us to do this in line with our charitable objectives, and will share more on that in the new year.

Our thanks

We are proud that we have built a passionate and skilled team of trainers, community builders, programme leaders, communicators, operations and finance experts and fundraisers. We are working hard to ensure that they are given the opportunity to search for new roles while carrying out their closing work, and would

encourage anyone who has vacancies to consider hiring any one of our brilliant team members. We are grateful for each of them, and for the way that they have led our work with dedication and passion.

As we close, we are deeply thankful to our funders who have stood by us, acting as catalysts for such transformational, powerful and impactful work, and especially to those who are supporting us at this critical moment.

But most importantly we are continually thankful for all those within the community who have made Campaign Bootcamp a unique, challenging, caring, radiant and inclusive space for activists and campaigners to work together, exchange learning and celebrate success. We are encouraged, motivated and fiercely proud to see those most affected by injustice equipped and active in leading campaigners towards a more sustainable world and fairer society for all. We know that the impact that our training had will continue to live through those community members, and we're grateful for all of their work – past, present, and future.

The Campaign Bootcamp Board

CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP