

My name is Misha Stallworth and I am a village baby. One of the things that is really important and core to me and that has become even more essential as I've gotten older, is that my parents and my mother, in particular were really, really serious and intentional about making sure that I loved myself and that I did not grow up with these feelings about the color of my skin or about my hair, that are hateful.

The values that I carry around community are what brought me back to Detroit in 2011. I lived in Chicago, I've lived in Los Angeles... and in both those places, I really felt more like I was learning about things that worked there and kind of figuring out what I wanted to bring back home. It didn't feel right to take my energy towards organizing and community development to other cities - when my city was in such great need. I think even that value of giving back in Afrocentric value systems is something called Sankofa, that has to do with looking back to look forward. And in some ways we apply it to, you know, having a historical perspective. But the other way to apply it is to your service, that you give back first to your community, to your village before you can look forward to other things. And so that's really what brought me back and it's a lot of what drives me and my work, here in Detroit.

For my community to really evolve in the way that I think it should, I'm really concerned about bringing people into the fold, about wrapping our arms around people who are on the fringe. So to me, it's all about figuring out how we can come together and speak a common language towards a greater good.