

2016 YES! Alumni Survey

A total of 162 surveys were filled out in March 2016 on Googlesurveys, an increase from 96 in 2014 (each time growing since we started doing this bi-annually in 2006). Each statement below is preceded by the total percentage of those feel each statement is true to very true, per the survey responses. The narrative statements to open questions are highlighted as well. For complete responses, separate reports are available.

Perceptions of the Jam

100% feel Jams are unique spaces for young changemakers to engage with each other.
98% feel Jams foster deep inquiry, healing and well-being.
97% feel Jams are effective in creating intentional spaces for love and spirit.
96% feel Jams seek and create transformation on the inner level.
100% feel Jams seek and create transformation on the interpersonal level.
98% believe Jams seek and create transformation on the community/global level.
98% feel their whole self is welcomed at the Jam.

Perceptions of the Jam's Impact

99% feel they made important and valuable contacts at the Jam.
98% feel they have sustained friendships and alliances created at the Jam.
99% feel they learned new skills or perspectives that enhance my life.
95% felt they learned new skills or perspectives that enhance my work.
95% feel since the Jam, they are more aware of interconnections among issues and movements, and my vision of the future reflects this understanding.
92% feel since the Jam, they see more benefit in collaborations between organizations and movements.
91% feel since the Jam, they more likely to seek collective intelligence and diversity of perspectives in their decision-making.
93% feel since the Jam, they have taken better care of their physical, spiritual and/or emotional health.
91% feel since the Jam, they have created more life balance to help them thrive in work/activism.
95% feel since the Jam, their relationships with others are more honest and/or meaningful.
92% feel they have greater capacity to resolve conflicts constructively after the Jam.
92% say their work/activism feels more intentional and effective after the Jam.
92% feel their work/activism is more congruent with their values after the Jam.
70% feel since the Jam, they have been a more effective fundraiser, administrator and/or spokesperson for their work.

Your Perceptions of the Jam Community

97% feel the Jam Community is a strong network of people and support.
100% feel the Jam Community is a wealth of information and resources.
94% feel the Jam Community influences their awareness of interconnections among issues and movements, and their visions of the future reflects this understanding.
84% feel since the Jam, YES! has been there to support them or their work in ways that have mattered.
91% feel since the Jam, other members of the Jam alumni community have been there to support them or their work in ways that mattered.

What was the most practical and/or meaningful thing (insight, skill, awareness) that came out of the Jam for you?

Top ranked responses:

Self-awareness (23)

Authentic relationships and communities (15)

Self-love (14)

Self-care (13)
Emotional honesty (13)
Being present (12)
General facilitation and creating space (11)
Empathy, love for others (11)
Accepting differences, open to others (10)
Systems analysis, understanding ecology (7)

Specific tools:

Speaking from I (17)
Active Listening (16)
Zones (12)
Compass of Reaction (6)
Appreciative Inquiry (4)
Blowing out (3)
Secret angels (2)

Are you practicing more self-love and self-care after the Jam? If so, please tell us how; specifics are welcome.

Many reflections conveyed the continued intentions yet inevitable challenges that come with self-care and self-love. Three sample stories from alumni responses which were almost all affirmations of practices in progress:

"Ha! I am trying. The Jam was Step One for me of trying to put the arts more in the center of my life again, which is the act of self-love/self-care that I most desperately need, because not doing so is a form of spiritual death. Life keeps throwing curve balls, so I have not made as dramatic of changes as I would have liked so far, BUT there is some forward movement happening, and a commitment to not give up. For example, I am currently enrolled in the first rigorous dance class I've taken in 17 years (at Laney college) which is defying the notion that it is too late to start seriously dancing again at age 40, and the encouragement received at the Jam was definitely part of enabling that move. I also dared to apply to be a fellow at YBCA, and daring to go after that was also influenced by having dared to go after applying to participate in the Jam, and having had such a good experience there. And I was accepted! So I am now part of the "freedom cohort," the first cohort of YBCA fellows, spending a year focused on developing creative interventions on the topic of freedom."

"I am better at stretching my boundaries and becoming vulnerable, asking for help. This aids me in seeking support and compassion when I can no longer provide myself. Also understanding my inner dialogue (both criticism and compassion) helps me to slow down and take a step back before beating myself. And there is a voice inside my head that says "blow sweetie" everytime I am crying :) That is an amazing feeling, I blow, I breathe, I come back to the moment and can stay out of my self-pity loop."

*"A favorite moment from the Jam was Ashoka exclaiming "Self care is a myth!" - questioning the self-orientation of self care. This was a huge wake up for me. I have shifted my focus not *away* from self care but towards creating community and relationships which support care, for myself and others."*

Personal and planetary sustainability is a key value to YES!, and we seek to provide nourishing, balanced and delicious meals that are culturally respectful. What was your experience with food specifically at Jams, and can you provide a testimonial that we can share with others?

Amazing, healthy, delicious, and love to the kitchen crew were frequent descriptions in the survey responses. Three stories from predominantly positive feedback with our alumni and their experiences of the Jam food culture:

“Vegan/vegetarian meals were a great joy and relief for me as a vegetarian. The meals were simple, delicious and nourishing. Food is a big part of my happiness and often something I worry about when traveling (lack of access to quality vegetarian food), and that is one worry that was squashed by the wholesome meals provided at River's Bend.”

“The venue where we held the Jam made their own compost, and they also had chickens and ate fresh eggs every day. We had groups rotating to do the dishes etc. Somehow I, and only I, was given the task to care for the chickens. The task was to feed them two times a day, and then make sure that their cage is locked in the evening. This was my first time doing such a task. I had the privilege to take, cook and eat a fresh egg myself. This experience led to a revolutionary perspective transformation for me: I am an actress. I had already given permission to myself to not to be an actress, and that I would love myself, even if I find myself selling lemons one day. When I began taking care of the chickens, I had the revelation that I could redefine my identity every single day, AND that my actions and my role in the community could change every single day. So for that day, I announced that I was no longer the theater artist, I was "the chicken girl"! That freed me from my compulsive need to look clever and intellectual and creative. I have found peace, connection to nature, a different form of free creativity, value and a different understanding of living in community, thanks to the chickens.”

“Beautiful memories of Aas Bai and Choti di and rest of the kitchen team (Sachin, Ravi, Keta and volunteer team) comes flooding back. A lot of love, care and work went in to keeping our group nourished through the week and meal times were such a joy in the light of this. I felt really cared for, especially because my food allergies were taken into consideration and that felt like real family.”

What is your current work and/or what are you planning to do in the future? How does your work impact your community and the rest of the world?

Three feature stories, from people working on different types of issues ranging from education to economy to medical to food to environment, to others with integrated themes!

“I teach classes (as a lecturer/adjunct professor) at UC Berkeley, primarily in the Global Poverty and Practice program, but also including classes on Education and Social Change, and Art and Activism, and Community Reparations and Decolonization. The impact of teaching at an elite educational institution is a complicated question. I do believe that we can make interventions wherever we are located and that it is important to intervene in places of privilege. (Thinking of activism as an ecology again!) However, I also find it important to be engaged in various forms of work. Currently, I also play drums with BoomShake (a women/trans group that also turns out for rallies and protests and direct actions); am part of the teaching team for a class at East Bay Meditation Center on white racial conditioning; am active with the Interfaith Committee in Solidarity with the Movement for Black Life; and active with the Richmond Progressive Alliance. So there's some balance of direct action, and political education, and political organizing, and spiritual formation work there. What I would really like to do in the future, however, is find a more robust way to bring the performing arts, deep study, visionary organizing, and spirituality together. I want the arts to be the home space for that. I would like an ongoing ensemble (not just event- or project-based model) in which no prior experience is required, where we hone our artistic skills while also engaging in political study and conversation together, and create provocative and possibility-enhancing community-engaged work together that grows our souls.”

“I am a social entrepreneur, an interaction designer, an artist, a facilitator (and probably many more). I am co-founding a venture (ortakyaratim.com) that creates collaborative projects around alternative economies, community building and ecology. We have an online borrowing lending platform, a second hand sales website that supports creators of all kinds, and upcoming projects in these areas. We are hoping to create awareness on resource consumption and moving to self sustaining humans to self sustaining communities. Our users tell us that (even though it is slow) they can feel their purchase behaviors change and they tend to use different networks to reach what they need instead of going to a mall and buying it. Also with a group of Jammers, we recently started to build a "facilitator collective" (hayraalamet) to spread jam out into the world with workshops, events, games; little Jams in work places, schools, urban areas.”

"I'm just changing my work, so I'll include past, present and future. Past: Creative Director at MEET: Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow where we brought together 800+ Israelis and Palestinians to create social and political impact. Present: 1) Co-founder of San Francisco Playback Theater, where we aim to reach 500+ Bay Area citizens per year in social change organizations, global tech companies, schools and more to develop resilient relationships through sharing true stories. 2) Chairperson at Afghan Friends Network, where we work with Afghans to build self-sufficiency through education in a rural province of Afghanistan reaching ~1,400 youth and women per year. Future: Engineering Communications Manager at Credit Karma, where I'll be telling the stories of 200+ engineers helping 1 million people to take charge of their finances in the US. (And I hope to bring YES! in to facilitate growth as I build relationships there.)"

How many people do you reach directly through your work? How many people do you reach less directly or indirectly through your work?

Direct impact ranges from 25 to 274,000 people and average is 7,126 people. Indirect impact ranges from 100 to 4,000,000 people and average is 92,791 people. Based on 1,500 estimated Jam alumni (up from 1,000 in 2014) at this point, we can project YES! Jammers' direct impact is 72.6 million people and indirect impact is 139.2 million people.