



# 2nd ANNUAL U.S. ACTIVIST RETREAT

March 29 - 31st, 2019 | Brooklyn, New York



## CONNECTING ACTIVISTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In March 2019, Sahiyo U.S. hosted our second annual activist retreat for women connected to the Bohra community who are concerned about the issue of FGC within the community. Sahiyo understands it takes many to bring about social change, and as a result, we work with individuals, organizations, and coalitions in a collaborative fashion. As advocates and activists, we are better together and can find the best solutions if we collaborate and work as one. The Sahiyo Activist retreat helped to build a network of U.S. based Bohra activists by 1) Strengthening relationships with one another, 2) Sharing best practices and providing tools for activists to utilize in their anti-FGC advocacy work moving forward.



The retreat was also an opportunity for advocates/activists to discuss both the challenges and opportunities they face in advocating against FGC. Activists have the option to attend the retreat completely anonymously, and Sahiyo takes extensive measures to protect the privacy of the activists and volunteers who wish to remain anonymous in their activism. This year, Sahiyo also initiated our peer support program, Saathi, a program attended to build a support system for activists. As per Sahiyo's 2017 Activists Needs Assessment, findings suggest that having a support system in place is crucial towards building a critical mass of voices seeking to create change. Both the Activist Retreat and Saathi program seek to do so.



"I liked how so many women from different states and backgrounds could come together under one roof and talk about a common course without any fear and inhibitions."

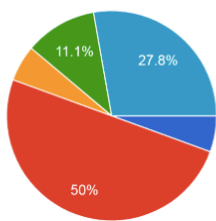


## WORKSHOPS

The activist retreat consisted of informative workshops, reflection sessions, group discussions, and lunch socializing. Workshop topics included:

- Why Are Community Led and Survivor Led Movements Important
- Purity Culture Talk
- Other Social Norms/Dynamics (connected to FGC)
- Federal Law Enforcement Effort to Prevent and End FGC
- Tips for the Social Media Advocacy on FGC
- Systems Change (Mapping)
- Journaling & Reflection

Which session did you like the most?  
18 responses



- Why are community led and survivor-led movements important?
- Purity Culture Talk
- Other Social Norms/Dynamics (connected to FGC)
- Update on Michigan's FGC case
- Tips for Social Media Advocacy on FGC
- Systems Change (Mapping)

## PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

A total of 21 participants attended the retreat, which is double the amount of the participants who attended the first retreat in 2018. Through word of mouth and advanced marketing campaigns, Sahiyo's activist retreats are predicted to continue growing. At the end of the retreat, participants were asked to fill out an anonymous evaluation and provide feedback on the workshops, activities and topics of discussion. Not all participants answered all the qualitative questions, causing a varied total number of responses.

The majority of participants (53%) are based in New York, where the retreat was held. There were also three representatives from Texas, and single participants from California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Toronto.

Activists were asked if the retreat left them with new material and resources to aid in their work as an activist, and 94.1% of respondents stated that it did. Participants were also asked if they achieved their personal goals by attending the retreat. 77.8% respondents selected 5/5, while the other 22.4% selected 4/5. Participants left the retreat feeling energized, mobilized and inspired by the sisterhood and solidarity. Several participants wrote reflections on their experience at the retreat which can be found on Sahiyo's [blog page](#).



"I liked that it gave me an avenue to connect with others who had similar positions about Sahiyo. It gave ideas about more I could do for my community and for my personal growth"

