



MOVE TO **END** VIOLENCE

a program of the NoVo Foundation

What is Forward Stance?

The practice of **Forward Stance** brings physical and experiential elements to movement building work and provides a way for individuals to break the habit of staying only “in our heads.” It is built on the premise that the mind and body are interconnected in ways that allow for physical experience to enhance and shift the ways the mind can understand, absorb, learn, and imagine.

By developing a physical and conceptual understanding of basic *Forward Stance* principles we can literally shift the way in which we move in the world.

Why does Move to End Violence Utilize Forward Stance?

We recognize that social justice work is highly conceptual, and in order to make the changes we seek, we must move beyond *thinking* about change and move into *embodying* change. This practice teaches our Movement Makers that change is a state of being; one that consists of moving in time and space. Through physical practice, we experience moving both individually and collectively.



FORWARD STANCE PRINCIPLES

Four key elements of Forward Stance can work individually and together.

1. Stance: forward facing, directionally balanced stance



Stance is our physical orientation to the world and, more specifically, to what it is we want to do/what is standing in our way. Many progressive movements have a defensive stance that emphasizes protection, pushing back, preventing things from happening, holding ground, and a culture of “no.” *Forward Stance* promotes shifting to a stance that is on the offensive and is moving from a position of core strength.

Practice: Understanding Stance

- This is experienced best physically through the body by doing the following:
- Stand with your feet hip-width apart, with 60 percent of your weight on the balls of your feet and 40 percent on the heels of your feet.
- Breathe “slow and low,” from just under your belly button.
- Close (not clench) your sphincter muscle so that your center of gravity is lower.
- Relax your shoulders and arms, and straighten your back.
- Look straight ahead with “soft” eyes so that you can have a 180-degree perspective.

2. Energy: strong, rising, restorative



Proactive work requires energy that will both propel and attract. Energy can be cultivated and restorative, and “big energy” can be a sort of physical sensation that spurs people to rally in support and rise beyond challenges. It is what transforms bystanders into active participants.

3. Rhythm: sustainable, momentum

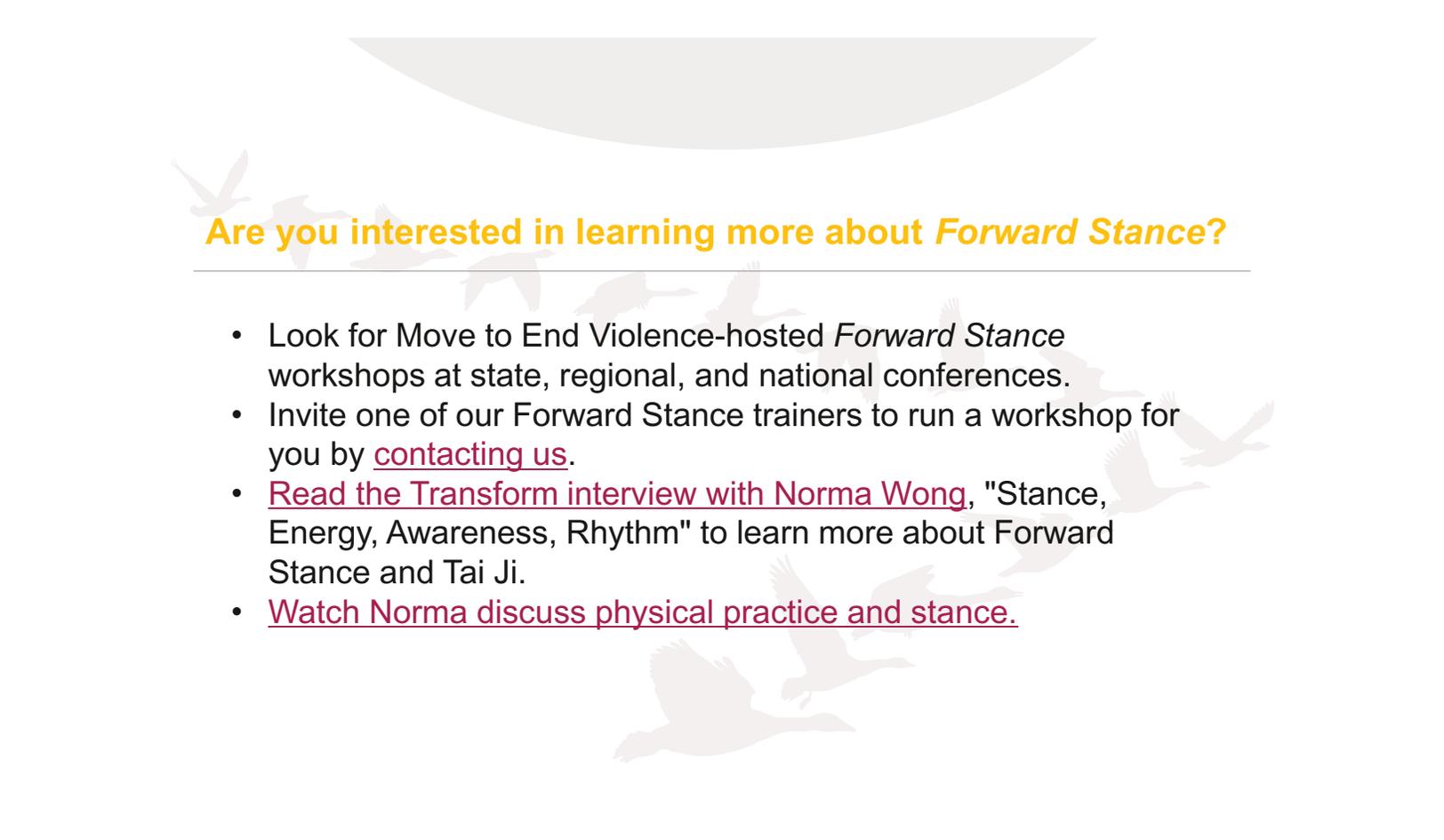


A sustainable rhythm recognizes different paces, builds in phases, and intentionally manages restorative pauses. All things, including individuals and organizations, have a rhythm. When the rhythm is too fast, too slow, erratic, or doesn't pause, our stance will shift out of 60/40 balance. Part of *Forward Stance* is recognizing the rhythms within and around us to maintain a sustainable pace.

4. Awareness: broad, objective



When locked into a narrow, concentrated focus, opportunities and challenges can pass us by, unseen. Awareness is our perception of what is happening around us, and it is ideally as broad and objective as possible. Otherwise, our awareness can be filtered through our point of view, which may not allow us to see and think about things outside our own box of perception. We can gain more awareness by being connected to our bodies and understanding others' perceptions.



Are you interested in learning more about *Forward Stance*?

- Look for Move to End Violence-hosted *Forward Stance* workshops at state, regional, and national conferences.
- Invite one of our Forward Stance trainers to run a workshop for you by [contacting us](#).
- [Read the Transform interview with Norma Wong](#), "Stance, Energy, Awareness, Rhythm" to learn more about Forward Stance and Tai Ji.
- [Watch Norma discuss physical practice and stance](#).



MOVE TO *END* VIOLENCE

a program of the NoVo Foundation