We Need New Words by *Conniel Malek, Executive Director*

Words are like cozy sweaters.

You've had them so long that you don't remember who gifted them to you, but you keep them anyway.

But what happens when they no longer fit?

When they feel itchy on the skin and suffocating at the neck?

When they are tight around the shoulders and the seams start to tear?

When you recognize that these words, were never really yours to begin with?

When you figure out that these words, imprison you?

In that case,

We Need New Words.

And we must let the other ones go.

We do it in our work.

We keep wearing these alphabet soup sweaters because it is "just easier".

We stay blind to how threadbare and soiled they are.

Words like "these communities are so resilient".

What sad world have we created where resilience is a necessary currency to ensure that you *can even exist* tomorrow?

Words like "critical minerals".

Critical to the survival of the many? Or Critical enough to a Tesla, to *justify* any cost to land, life, or livelihood?

Question. These. Words.

Words like "empower communities".

As if we can "give" anyone power that is already theirs.

Words like "resource rich".

As if the earth's bountiful gifts are only valuable once we commoditize them.

Question. These. Words.

Words like "Free Prior Informed Consent".

When Consent is rarely *prior and* consent *does not equal approval*

Words like "Global South".

South of what? Determined by whom?

Question. These. Words.

We do it in casual and personal spaces

We say:

"Kill two birds with one stone"

"A canary in the coal mine"

"Ideas in the pipeline".

Words soaked with violence, pain, and an insatiable obsession with extraction.

Question. These. Words.

We must let them go.

Even if we don't know,

Just what to replace them with -

Yet.

Because, not knowing is ok.

Must we always know the answer before we are brave enough to ask the question?

No.

We Need New Words.

And we must let the other ones go.