

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION

Resource Sharing Project



Transformative Justice Resource Compilation

“Restorative justice’s beauty and effectiveness flow from people feeling free to tell the truth, and being welcomed to do so.”

-- sujatha baliga, [“A Different Path For Confronting Sexual Assault”](#)

At the heart of transformative justice are a few simple questions: How do we support healing for survivors of violence and those in their communities without causing further harm? How do we hold contradictory truths – that people are often survivors and perpetrators of violence at the same time – while seeking accountability and an end to the violence? And how do we create cultures of support and accountability that address the root causes of violence?

Years after the founding of the first modern organizations to end sexual violence, advocates and organizers continue to grapple with these questions. At the same time, survivors of color and other marginalized groups are offering answers to these questions and exposing oppressive histories of policing and incarceration that are shifting basic assumptions about how we approach this work. Many groups recognize the limitations of criminal legal system responses for survivors of sexual violence. Sex offender registries, sentence enhancements, and incarceration have not provided the healing hoped for, and contribute to hierarchies of power that allow sexual violence to continue.

At the intersection of these issues – creating accountability for sexual violence and undoing hierarchies of oppression – are two sometimes separate and sometimes overlapping approaches known as restorative justice and transformative justice. Restorative justice draws on indigenous peacekeeping traditions and others to focus responses to violence on repairing the harm caused to individuals and their communal relationships. Restorative processes often revolve around the questions, “who has been hurt, what are their needs, and whose obligations are these” (Zehr, 2002)? Transformative justice expands these questions further to ask how we change the causes and conditions that allow sexual violence and abuse to thrive in the first place (Kershner et al., 2007). Both approaches value the role of community in preventing and responding to violence and participating in any necessary reparations. Both also center the humanity of all people involved. Though restorative and transformative justice sometimes diverge in practice, for the purposes of this resource, we use the term transformative justice to describe the broad range of alternatives to incarceration and policing that anti-violence programs are increasingly exploring.

In this resource collection, we highlight some of the groups shaping local and national work on transformative justice. It is impossible to capture the full breadth and history of this work, as these frameworks represent centuries of wisdom developed around kitchen tables and other informal means by communities for whom calling law enforcement was not an option or could lead to additional violence. As we look for ways to expand how we support survivors of sexual assault who seek expansive forms of justice and healing, these projects offer examples and inspiration.

Many of these projects and philosophies are best understood as evolving conversations between survivor-activists, advocates, and community leaders. Some of the resources here offer examples and case studies of organizations and coalitions that are specifically applying restorative or transformative justice principles in their work to end sexual and domestic violence. A section at the end also includes resources that provide training on relevant transformative justice skills. Each of these projects embodies the spirit of grassroots, peer empowerment that drives our collective movement forward.

As transformative justice principles spread into broader sections of society, many practitioners caution that these approaches work best and honor the intention of the principles when they are used as an alternative to the criminal legal system. This can include being used as a police or court diversion program. Restorative and transformative processes should not only be offered after people have been arrested and incarcerated (Baliga, 2018). It is important to remember that, for many, transformative justice is rooted in a commitment to interrupting patterns of marginalization enacted through the use and maintenance of the criminal legal system.

Foundational Frameworks: Where did transformative justice come from?

Understanding the context in which these models developed can help programs adapt the intentions of transformative justice to their local needs. Though many of these ideas have existed for generations (see for example, [Sarah Deer, 2016](#)), the current iteration of transformative justice principles has a vague lineage based in communities of color, queer and trans communities, and groups envisioning new justice practices rooted in equity and liberation. Outlining the lineage of these ideas helps us avoid appropriation. Naming that these concepts were articulated and initially explored by people of color and indigenous people, many of whom are queer or trans women, reminds us that racial justice and decolonization are core tenets of transformative justice.

INCITE-Critical Resistance Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex

<https://incite-national.org/incite-critical-resistance-statement/>

In 2001, activists from INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and Critical Resistance authored a joint statement that exposes contradictions in mainstream

feminist approaches to ending gender-based violence and challenges people to explore more liberatory frameworks. Though anti-violence activists have explored different strategies for ending violence against women and girls of color for generations, this statement and series of discussion questions provided a clarion call for a new generation. Their statement outlines where our modern movements fall short in addressing the needs of women, girls, and queer and trans people of color experiencing violence and offers an invitation to collectively build new approaches.

GenerationFIVE Transformative Justice Documents

<http://www.generationfive.org/resources/transformative-justice-documents/>

GenerationFIVE's mission is to end child sexual abuse in five generations. Responding to a need "to develop a community intervention that aligned with our politics," survivors and activists developed a new approach for engaging not just those who do harm directly, but also those in positions to intervene (Kershner, et al., 2007). Their framework puts forward a vision of responding to child sexual abuse that takes into account the broader social and cultural norms and systems of power we live within. It emphasizes proactive, collective action to "shift the oppressive social and systemic conditions that create the context for violence" ([generationFIVE, 2017](#)). The website offers introductory texts in English, Spanish, and Catalan. It also contains the initial paper generationFIVE wrote for distribution and popularization of their ideas.

Creative Interventions' Community-Based Interventions Toolkit

<http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/>

Creative Interventions developed from a collective desire to explore possible models for community-based accountability processes. Over several years, domestic violence, sexual assault, and other anti-violence leaders, primarily from Asian and Pacific Islander organizations, worked to create a toolkit to aid

practitioners wanting to explore what this process could look like. The toolkit can be used as a self-reflection tool or as a guide for facilitating community accountability projects. The formal collaborative intentionally dissolved after completion of the toolkit, but maintains an online presence. The website also includes links to a collection of written and oral stories about community processes maintained by a spin-off group, the [Storytelling and Organizing Project](#).

“What is Accountability” discussion

<http://bcrw.barnard.edu/event/building-accountable-communities/>

Where does accountability come from? Is it something that can be imposed externally? Or does it have to be generated internally? If transformative justice is about creating accountability, how we understand the answers to these questions has large implications for how we approach this work. In this series of conversations, Kiyomi Fujikawa, Shannon Perez-Darby, and Mariame Kaba explore what it might take to create communities where accountability is more possible. The videos do not have Closed Captions, but links to transcripts are available on the landing page.

Examples: What does transformative justice look like?

There are so many examples. It was hard to narrow them down for this collection. Many people and organizations are creating accountability and survivor safety outside of the criminal legal system. Below are some of the groups birthing new ideas, practices, norms, and generative questions. Some of the resources in this section pre-date the INCITE-Critical Resistance statement referenced above. They exemplify the longevity and diversity of threads that are coming together to form our current understanding of transformative justice.

Black Women's Blueprint

<https://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/how-we-work>

“Black Women’s Blueprint tells the world: Black women are not a monolith, but we are a movement.” Since 2008, the women behind Black Women’s Blueprint have shown us what the principles of transformative justice look like in action. They’ve organized healing spaces, a national Truth and Reconciliation process, worked to preserve important arts and cultural practices, and mobilized thousands to be a visible presence in city streets for Black women and girls surviving sexual violence.

Recorded webinar on Restorative Justice and Sexual Harm

<http://zehr-institute.org/webinars/rj-and-sexual-harm/>

Learning directly from experienced practitioners helps us understand at what scale groups are using transformative justice practices to address sexual violence. In this webinar, three different restorative justice facilitators give specific examples of how they’ve used circle processes and other restorative approaches to address and prevent sexual violence. The presenters begin sharing their concrete experiences around 19 minutes into the webinar. The webinar shifts into a Q&A format around 52 minutes into the webinar. Topics covered include: working with boys and men, how this applies when survivors don’t want to interact with people who caused them harm, how facilitators make connections between individual behavior and larger systems of oppression, and how this connects with prevention work.

Please note, this webinar is not captioned. A transcript is available on the RSP website.

Hollow Water video (closed captioned in English)

https://www.nfb.ca/film/hollow_water/

This 48-minute documentary follows the Hollow Water community's journey as they grapple with multiple generations of sexual abuse on the reservation. They return to traditional justice practices to support inter-generational healing and accountability.

Hidden Waters NYC blog posts

<http://www.hiddenwaternyc.com/blogs/2017/3/25/the-healing-journey-for-abusers-those-who-didnt-intercede>

Hidden Waters NYC works specifically to help survivors and their families heal from child sexual abuse. In a series of blog posts from March 2017, Hidden Waters interviews practitioner Elizabeth Clemants on the four different ways they are using restorative circle processes to provide healing spaces for survivors, people who used violence, and other family members.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

<http://archive.jsonline.com/news/crime/community-plays-a-role-in-helping-ex-prisoners-b99718342z1-379536211.html/>

What could it look like for a group of volunteer community members to support a stranger convicted of sexual assault find stability and community after incarceration? CoSAs offer one promising model. This article examines how people in Vermont are working together with law enforcement to reduce rates of re-offense and live up to the intention of offering both support and accountability for people who've used violence in the past.

Audre Lorde Project Safe Outside the System (SOS) Safe Party Toolkit

Typed version of the Safe Party toolkit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxlqoamGVS6IMV9oSyoZNGIYNEE/view>

Zine version of the Safe Party toolkit:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxlqoamGVS6la2EzRi1OdkQ2bEU/view>

While a lot of transformative justice projects focus on supporting survivors after they've experienced violence, one group documented how they were using transformative justice principles to create safety at parties. The Audre Lorde Project's Safe Outside the System Collective created this document to think through questions about how to create safety for folks who do not wish to engage the systems.

#MuteRKelly Campaign

<https://www.muterkelly.org/>

Many transformative justice campaigns ask individuals to take accountability for their actions. The #MuteRKelly campaign is asking for the systems and people that uplift and profit from musician R. Kelly, a person who has sexually abused young Black women and girls, to stop promoting his music. This campaign is an example of how building economic and political pressure can be important to creating accountability for marginalized survivors of violence.

Love with Accountability

<http://www.lovewithaccountability.com/>

The internet can be a place of healing and accountability. This multi-dimensional project combines writings and audio recordings featuring a cross-section of Black diasporic survivors of child sexual abuse and advocates. The site is an intervention itself and is part of a larger series of Aisha Simmons' work. Simmons produced the documentary NO! The Rape Documentary in 2006 and is working to compile stories shared in the Love With Accountability forum into a larger anthology.

Impact Justice Restorative Justice Project

<http://impactjustice.org/restorative-justice-project/> and
<https://impactjustice.org/impact/restorative-justice-ipv-sexual-harm/>

Impact Justice's Restorative Justice Project increases restorative justice diversion programs. Their understanding of the significance of restorative justice comes from an understanding that decreasing incarceration is supportive of survivors and supportive of ending racial and ethnic disparities in society.

Their websites offer information about how restorative justice is being used in sites across the country to divert youth from the criminal legal system. The resources provide concrete examples, particularly around how restorative justice is being used to address sexual harm. The examples are drawn from cases supported by Impact Justice facilitators. The Restorative Justice Project is currently supporting local initiatives in California to expand restorative approaches to sexual and domestic violence.

Opinion Editorial on Survivor Support for Restorative Justice

<https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/restorative-justice-works-for-perpetrators-and-victims/>

This 2018 opinion editorial in the Seattle Times succinctly explains why expanding restorative justice works for both those who cause harm and those who are harmed. The piece includes links to research that shows support for non-criminal legal interventions amongst survivors of violence and why it may actually be harmful to expand survivor participation into traditional legal processes. The arguments in this op-ed are not specific to addressing sexual violence but can provide sample media talking points and background research.

One of the authors of the op-ed is affiliated with [API Chaya](#). API Chaya works to end sexual and domestic violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. They

are also actively engaged in experimenting with restorative and transformative justice processes.

Skill-Building: What's Next?

There is no singular model of transformative justice. Transformative justice processes can include sexual violence prevention work, political education around where we learn sexist, racist, ableist, and other oppressive behaviors and thoughts, victim-offender dialogues, and healing circles, among others. Many folks read about transformative justice and then wonder what to do next. Because there is no one comprehensive approach, figuring out how to develop skills needed is like putting together a puzzle. Practitioners often draw on skills across trauma-informed care, circle process facilitation, feminist political education, community organizing, sexual violence prevention, sexual assault advocacy, and more. The following resources offer some ideas of places to begin.

Transform Harm website

<https://transformharm.org/>

This website, developed by Mariama Kaba and designed by Joseph Lublink, provides a comprehensive collection of articles, audio/visual materials, training curricula, and more. It is a fantastic resource for people looking to internally build skills and understanding about transformative justice, community accountability, restorative justice, and carceral feminisms.

Ahimsa Collective's National and California-based Training List

<https://www.ahimsacollective.net/rj-movement-building>

The Ahimsa Collective is a project of Sonya Shah, one of the [Just Beginnings Collaborative](#) organizational grantees. They provide support for people who use violence, survivors, and survivor support networks in California. As part of their

work, they have identified places where people can receive training in restorative and transformative justice practices.

For programs that may be looking for practitioners to facilitate restorative processes, no comprehensive resource directory currently exists. However, two groups working to develop resource directories include:

- National Association of Community and Restorative Justice:
<https://nacri.org/directories/rj-program-directory>
- Restorative Justice on the Rise Resource Directory:
<https://restorativejusticeontherise.org/resource-hub/resources-by-state/>

BATJC Pod Mapping, Case Studies, and Resource Lists

<https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>

Many experiments with transformative justice begin in our own lives. These tools, developed by Mia Mingus and the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collaborative (BATJC), can help people identify more concretely who they could turn to when needing support to address harm and what facilitating transformative justice processes might look like using past examples of harm. Of particular interest is the concept of pod mapping. Pods are groups of specific people we may call on if we need support to become accountable.

Exploring the Differences between Restorative and Retributive Justice

<https://charterforcompassion.org/images/menus/RestorativeJustice/Restorative-Justice-Book-Zehr.pdf>

Howard Zehr's [The Little Book of Restorative Justice](#) is written from a slightly different perspective than the other pieces in this section. However, it provides an effective “compare and contrast” section that outlines where criminal legal and restorative justice processes often diverge.

Zehr Institute Recorded Webinars

<http://zehr-institute.org/webinars/past-webinars/>

The Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice is a program of Eastern Mennonite University. They've amassed a sizeable collection of free recorded webinars about different aspects and applications of restorative justice. While these resources contain a lot of valuable information, the majority of them rely upon the auto closed caption feature on YouTube, which are only partially accurate.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2014-TA-AX-K024 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.