

ReShape January 2019 – Sparking Our Imaginations



“If you want to view paradise
Simply look around and view it
Anything you want to, do it
Want to change the world?
There's nothing to it.”

Many of us do the work we do because we imagine a better world is possible for survivors of sexual violence. But what does this ‘better world’ look like? How broad is our vision? Where do we feel a sense of collective unity?

One source of on-going tension within the movement to end sexual violence revolves around the role of the criminal legal system. The criminal legal system creates accountability and healing for some survivors of sexual assault. For others, it can create more harm or exacerbate their existing trauma. To truly support all survivors of sexual violence, we can work to hold criminal legal systems accountable and invest in building and practicing other options.

In this edition of ReShape, we share stories from groups practicing community-based ways to address sexual violence and violence against women and girls to light the fires of our imagination and invite us to be creative about the options we

discuss for intervention. These are intended as inspiration and not instructions. What groups engaging in community accountability processes have found is that there is no one-size-fits-all method. It is always important to follow the lead of what each survivor wants to support their own healing.ⁱ



Beautiful Questions

Imagining different interventions starts with asking the right questions. In 2018, the Virginia Action Alliance created space for new inquiry by asking “what if” and “why not?”

- Action Alliance blog: <https://allianceinaction.org/2017/12/13/writing-our-future-story-the-power-of-asking-what-if-and-why-not/>



What are we fighting for? (video with Closed Captions)

In 2017, the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault invited Mia Mingus to speak at their statewide conference. Mingus is a member of the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collaborative (BATJC), a group actively working to address individual instances of child sexual abuse and the conditions that allow the abuse to occur. You can find out more about the BATJC by visiting their website at: <https://batjc.wordpress.com/>

- Mia Mingus on Transformative Justice and what we stand for: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_t4QZpRn59Y



Retracing Our Steps

One of the ways we can develop our imaginations for different interventions is through thinking back on past instances of violence and finding points where different choices could have created better outcomes. That is exactly what the Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault does in this blog post, “Opportunity Costs.” They look at the story of one college student accused of domestic battery and strangulation and identify when community intervention may have made a difference.

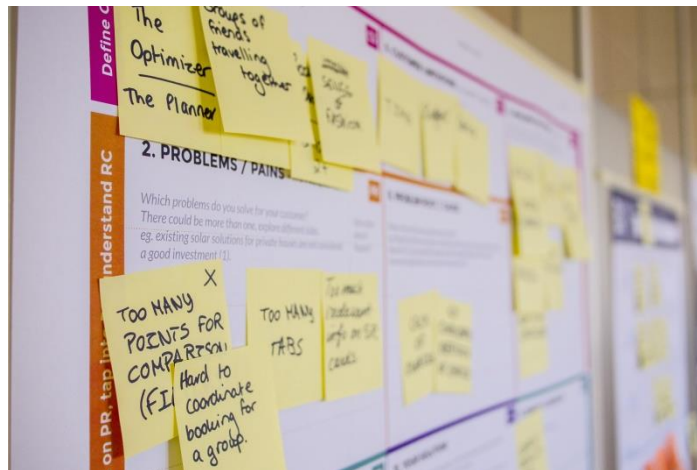
- Georgia’s blog: <https://www.gnesa.org/content/opportunity-costs>

Recent Experiments

As community groups develop different accountability practices, they are increasingly working to document their processes and outcomes. Three such groups are listed below. Though all of these projects are happening outside of formal sexual assault programs, the individuals leading the different community accountability processes have specific expertise and training in how to facilitate these processes.

- 1) Aisha Shahidah Simmons' Love with Accountability project "examines how accountability is a powerful and necessary form of love needed to address child sexual abuse. (CSA). Its focus is on tackling the global epidemic of child sexual abuse through the experiences, insights, and perspectives of diasporic Black child sexual abuse survivors and advocates. The project is culturally specific but accessible to many CSA survivors and advocates, all treated equally regardless of race, ethnicity, and culture." It is full of testimonials, resources, and writings.
 - a. <http://www.lovewithaccountability.com/about-lovewithaccountability/>
- 2) In early 2018, an online news site ran an article outlining how a professional sex and consent educator used his position to sexually assault a colleague. His apology within the article minimized the harm he caused. In response, the survivor began organizing a community process to support their own healing and ask for accountability from the person who caused harm. In the interest of transparency and support of transformative justice models, members of the survivor support team and accountability pods share their process and progress through two Medium.com pages.
 - a. <https://medium.com/reid-mihalkos-accountability-process>
 - b. <https://medium.com/@rm.survivorpod>
- 3) Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) is a Black, queer, feminist national organizing group with a firm commitment to addressing sexual violence within its ranks. In these episodes of the Healing Justice podcast, members of BYP100 share how they are developing cultural norms to both prevent harm and intervene when it happens.
 - a. Healing Justice podcast episode #26:
<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/e/26-preventative-healing-accountability-byp100-healing-safety-council-p-ife-williams-chris-roberts/>

- b. Accompanying practice #26:
<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/e/26-practice-deepening-community-agreements-with-byp100-healing-safety-council-pascale-ife-williams-chris-roberts/>
<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/e/27-practice-compartmentalizing-in-a-healthy-way-with-je-nae-taylor-of-byp100-healing-safety-council/>
- c. Healing Justice podcast episode #27:
<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/e/27-interventional-healing-accountability-byp100-healing-safety-council-je-nae-taylor-kai-green/>
- d. Accompanying practice #27:
<https://healingjustice.podbean.com/e/27-practice-compartmentalizing-in-a-healthy-way-with-je-nae-taylor-of-byp100-healing-safety-council/>



Organizational Commitments

If you are interested in starting a conversation with your team about investing and divesting in different resources, check out the Resource Sharing Project (RSP) facilitator's guide. This guide offers a sample agenda and discussion questions specifically geared towards statewide sexual assault and dual coalitions.

- RSP Invest/Divest Facilitation guide:
<http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/facilitator-guide-conversations-investment-divestment>
- RSP Open and Ethical Communication Facilitation guide:
<http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/facilitator-guide-open-ethical-communication>

ⁱ See Mariame Kaba's note at the end of the Black Youth Project 100's summary statement re: community accountability process (March 2017) at <http://transformharm.tumblr.com/post/158171267676/summary-statement-re-community-accountability>

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