

AN ORDINARY RIOT

# AN ORDINARY RIOT

SKILLS TO SUPPORT PUNKS IN  
RADICAL INTERVENTIONS TO  
VIOLENCE AND ABUSE



*"We have all hurt someone tremendously. Whether by intent or accident. We have all loved someone tremendously. Whether by intent or accident. It is an intrinsic human trait. And a deep responsibility. I think. To be an organ and a blade. but. learning to forgive ourselves and others because we have not chosen wisely is what makes us most human. We make horrible mistakes. It's how we learn. We breathe love. it 's how we learn. And it is inevitable."*

*-nayyirah waheed*

# AN ORDINARY RIOT

This zine is for punks and other weirdos who want to disrupt the subtle and obvious ways we hurt each other. We wanted to make something that's useful to everyone, but this was hard to do because punk isn't a monolith, or one uniform thing. In reality, punk is a network of little communities and microcosms, and we all internalize and respond to injustice differently. Maybe you've rioted and participated in direct action. Maybe you've imagined the future you want and have fought in quick, violent spurts to get it.

Maybe you've glossed over the underlying issues by saying "fuck the police" a lot and getting really, really, drunk.

But we haven't done the long, tedious, and sometimes agonizing work of having an honest confrontation with each other, as a scene. Because if we had, we would have seen a long time ago that there is so much more we need to do.

Maybe you've tried to use violence to fix violence. Maybe you've acted like people are disposable. That's okay - we have too.

But if we're going to radically change the future, if we're committed to resolutions that don't rely on the state to solve social problems, then we need to revolutionize how we relate to each other. We need to do the boring stuff. Stuff that isn't big or glamorous. Stuff that we won't get credit for. We need to commit to the long game and do the work to disrupt violence through small, everyday actions.

We need an ordinary riot.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

a note on language

Pg. 4

---

resist-beyond ACAB

Pg. 8

---

What is sexual violence?

Pg. 20

---

transformative justice

Pg. 38

---

kicking cops out of punk:

practice and skill building

Pg. 61

---

for people who have experienced

harm and their support systems

Pg. 69

---

for people who have caused harm

or been abusive

Pg. 80

---

culture change and

preventing violence

Pg. 99

---

mini-glossary

Pg. 103

---

the list--resources

Pg. 109



## A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Before we get into it, we want to talk about language.

Because the words we use matter. They invoke serious emotions and help us understand the world. Words have the power to lift up, belittle, hold accountable, blame, affirm, and so much more. They can be acts of political resistance or tools of a state agenda. When we intentionally use certain words to describe acts of violence and people who use violence, we acknowledge that people are more than the worst thing that's ever happened to them or the worst thing they've ever done.

For those reasons, we chose our language carefully. In many instances of sexual violence, there isn't a universally agreed upon way to describe the situation or the people involved. Because of this, it's important to mirror the language of the person who has been assaulted. But we will also stay away from using the state's terms, like "perpetrator" or "assailant," to talk about sexual violence. We'll sometimes use words like "harm" and "abuse" to describe problematic behaviors, but these words don't always work. Our aim is to approach each unique situation with the understanding that we may need to use different words in different situations. Academic jargon also has a tendency to alienate people and make them resistant to learning more. Language, in any context, should be accessible and inclusive.

You'll also see us reference "cancel culture" throughout this zine. The meaning of this phrase

has changed since its origins. Cancel culture started in Black, trans, sex worker communities as a way for them to share information and keep themselves safe when they \*could not\* rely on criminal legal systems to do so. Bad date lists and other strategies for information sharing allowed sex workers, especially those who are most marginalized, to "cancel" violent clients and other unsafe people because they had no other choices or options available. When we are talking about cancel culture in this zine, what we just described is not the kind of cancel culture we're talking about.

The right wing, mainstream media - even some activists - co-opted the phrase to include the erasure of people who said or did problematic things. When we talk about cancel culture in this zine, we're talking about punks and other activists completely erasing or ostracizing someone from a friend group or community after that person does something abusive, without the consideration of repair. We're talking about what happens after that person is cut off from all of their support systems. We are not talking about famous people being de-platformed or the widespread criticism of people in power.

There are a couple dos and don'ts when it comes to talking about cancel culture. For example, you've probably heard people compare cancel culture to policing. These statements usually come from communities that are not over-policed. We don't endorse either, but state sanctioned police violence is not the same as getting called out or canceled.

But more on all of that later.

There are too many punks on the other side of canceling that ridicule being mindful of language, and automatically dismiss requests for social consciousness as too "PC". If this sounds like you, please see "SSCWD" in the glossary.

In fact, lots of punks really love to whine about "PC Culture."

The people who demand we stop using harmful words and phrases tend to be the ones who are harmed the most by them. If you're consistently scoffing at "PC culture", you're not fighting the system—you're shutting people out who are trying to create new ways forward. This is pretty common in the punk scene because it's supposedly antithetical to whatever brand of GG Allin/Motley Crüe worship that proliferates punk. If only one idea from this zine sticks with you, we hope it's the idea that being against the police and the system means that we're for building something new. And that requires changing the ways we think, the ways we talk *about* each other, and the ways we choose to interact *with* each other.

Note: there are more definitions of terms used throughout this zine in the mini glossary in back, if you're into that sorta thing.

**\*\*CONTENT WARNING\*\***

Any descriptions of sexual assault will include another content warning beforehand. We encourage you to take care of yourself while reading this. Put it away and take a break. Read it in sections. Talk to a friend about it afterwards – whatever works for you.

If you're a survivor, it may be challenging to read about restoration over revenge when reflecting on your own experiences and feelings towards the person/people who harmed you. We will explore sexual violence and challenge the way we think about sexual harm and the people who enact that harm. This isn't a safe subject, so we can't guarantee safety for anyone reading this. We're talking about a form of violence that impacts everyone whether they are aware of it or not, and we're presenting ideas that aim to transform the way we address that violence. Engage with the content how you can. Identify your support system that can help you process (more on that later). We organized this zine in a way that allows you to make informed decisions as to whether or not to read on.

# RESIST. BEYOND ACAB



Look, we all know people who post pictures of cops on fire on Instagram with the tagline ACAB. Hell, we've been those people. Maybe we've never been in a situation where we had to call the cops. But that doesn't make us award-winners for not being "cop-callers" and sometimes we act like it does.

Think of it this way...

*Imagine you have a monthly car payment. Your shitty old spray-painted black 1992 Toyota Pickup finally shit the bed and you had to finance a vehicle to get to work. Then, one day, your new car gets stolen from the gentrified neighborhood you live in. The only hope you have of getting your car back is to file a police report (it's the only way that*



*the insurance will cover it). You imagine that the person who stole your car is probably hard up and likely part of a community that is often victimized by police violence and if caught, they'll probably be thrown in jail or even killed. You feel conflicted because you know that all cops are bastards (plus all the instagram posts you made with protest selfies and that dead cop patch on your vest), but you really want your car back. What do you do?*

We live in a terrible system that relies on policing to solve social problems. Unfortunately, with the way things are right now, it can sometimes feel near impossible to avoid. In punk, these are things that are often overlooked as we get swept up in that collective ACAB energy. We know that the criminal legal system is fucked, but our efforts to become independent of it tend to be pretty pathetic. The point of this example is not to make you feel shitty, but to point out that just simply declaring that you're not a cop caller is kind of a fallacy. Because many of us end up in situations where we feel we have no choice but to call the cops. Contradictions are going to happen and no one can do this work alone. Choosing not to call the cops doesn't change the system we all live in. It's frustrating to consistently see anti-police efforts fall short, to be confined to back patches and social media posts without organizing and collaboration. There's a lot more we need to be doing and building.

Anti-police rhetoric has always been a huge part of punk culture. In fact, punk is widely credited with bringing "ACAB" back into the mainstream after it was first coined by strikers in the 1940s.

In the punk scene, ACAB quickly became a coded rallying cry to acknowledge punk's inherent resistance to an authoritarian police state and a subtle nod to our collective values in punk communities all over the world. But, as much as we might have thought we embodied these values, just flagging ourselves as anti-cop hasn't done much to lessen our reliance on them. Because of the way our system is set up - because it demands reliance on these structures by *design* - we have to actively resist using the police to solve our problems.

*And how do we best resist the police?*

*We do everything we can to make them irrelevant.*

But that takes a lot of *work*. Hard work. Work that is even harder to engage in collectively when we all know plenty of people who are often tempted to prioritize traveling, playing music, and getting fucked up. Intervening in conflict, knowing what to do in an emergency (medical, mental, or overdose), supporting a friend who's been assaulted - these are all important aspects of taking matters into our own hands and we have to learn how to do it.

If we are really committed to creating cop free communities, rather than just waiting around for the cops to disappear, we have to start building the skills to address our issues ourselves. Chanting "FTP" at a protest is all fine and good. Property destruction has its time and place. BUT, when shit hits the fan in our own community (and it often does), do we know how to handle it ourselves? Knowing how to handle conflict, crisis,

or disaster is a skill. And like all skills, they need to be practiced.

So, that's the deal. If it's not them, then it's us.

Ask yourself, what are you doing to be a resource to your community? Who *is* your community (punk, family, neighbors, etc.)? What skills and resources do you need so that people in your community will call you for help rather than the cops?

*"What we do in reality is that we build skills together. We try to center our politic in transformative justice and reject disposability and criminalization. We try to learn and build skills so that when we experience trauma or scarcity, instead of turning away from each other or turning on each other, we turn into each other. So it's not just "don't call the cops." It's "don't call the cops, call each other."*

so, who are we??



We are a lot of things.

When we first considered writing this zine, we hesitated for a number of reasons. We're two cis-women. We have college educations and jobs that pay the bills. We're related to lots of middle-class white folks. It felt important to lift up the work of those before us.

The principles behind the ideas in this zine do not belong to us and there is a long history of white people co-opting social movements. Many of the originators of these concepts risked everything and put thousands of hours of emotional and intellectual labor into reimagining how communities can process and respond to violence. People of color and others who could not rely on the state to

safety crafted these ideas. We followed the work of Mia Mingus, Mimi Kim, Ejeris Dixon, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Lea Roth, Stas Schmiedt, Mariame Kaba, Shira Hassan, Adrienne Maree Brown and so many others. In this zine, you'll hear from them through quotes and references to their work.

Not everything in this zine is worded perfectly and you may disagree with or have an experience that runs counter to some of the information. That's okay. We checked in with a lot of people along the way to try and incorporate as many different perspectives and experiences as possible. Our reviewers, collaborators, feedback givers, etc. come from all different backgrounds and skill sets. They graciously lent us their stories, opinions, and criticisms. While we can't guarantee perfection, we promise you that this was not a quick and thoughtless process.

Between us, we have nearly two decades of experience working in the anti-sexual violence field. We've worked at rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters and we've taught sexual violence prevention and sexual health. We have sat with hundreds of survivors receiving rape kits and watched as the state failed them over, and over and over again.

We've both experienced sexual violence. More than once.

We grew up in the punk scene. Even with its issues, this community matters to us.

We believe in abolishing prisons, not calling the cops, and accountability over cancellation.

We value a diversity of thought and experience, and acknowledge that there is not a "one size fits all" model to address interpersonal violence or abuse. The information and resources included in this zine, represent only some of those models.

## who is this for?

*"Maybe you're like me, the type of person a friend of a friend calls because they think you can help out, start a process, talk to an abuser, find community resources, or just know somehow what to do. Maybe you're like me, in that you've also been abused and an abuser, that you've worked on your shit and continue to work on your shit, and just want the people around you to work on theirs and stop hurting each other and being hurt. Maybe you're like me, in that you think there's another way than tearing people and families apart with over-policing and under-resourced mental health and community services."*

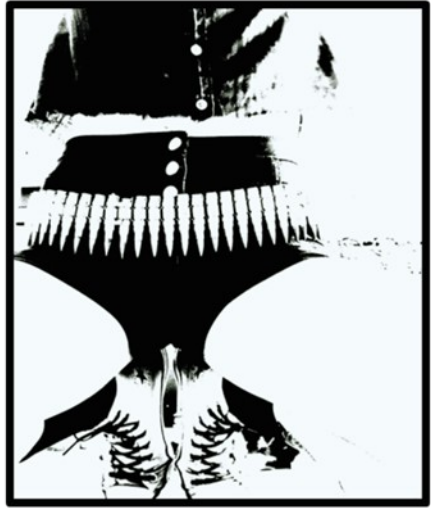
--Lakayo

This zine for our friends. And their friends. And their friends' friends. We wrote this for everyone who's called us, asking for guidance when someone had been called out or they were supporting a friend who'd experienced abuse. We all live in communities impacted by violence and punk culture is not immune.

When we talk about punk culture, we mean the specific groups that exist inside it (crust punks, hardcore kids, metalheads, oogles, etc)

but also other punk-adjacent weirdos that don't fit into typical mainstream normie culture.

It's also for anyone who's ready to do the hard work of addressing violence in ways that don't rely on the state or disposability. This zine is for anyone who's been harmed by someone, harmed someone themselves, or knows someone who fits into one or both of those categories.



This zine is for people who are interested in responses to violence that also seek to prevent the violence from happening again - especially in the punk scene, which is a tiny town.

We wrote this zine so that anyone can read it, regardless of their experience level. This zine is for us.



## NOT IF, BUT WHEN

**CW: Descriptions of sexual assault**

The first time someone touched me in a sexual way without my consent, I was nine. I was with a group of friends playing "truth or dare" in my friend's barn and his older brother (let's call him Dale), 15 or 16 I think, came in to torment us as older brothers often do. After bullying us into accepting dares to kiss each other, he dared his younger brother, my friend, to put his hands down the front of my pants and grab underneath my underwear. After his brother refused, Dale dared



himself. We all protested that someone daring themselves defied the rules of the game, but he rebutted our arguments and won. All of my friends watched, frozen, as he completed the dare. I hated it. I was disgusted.

After, I thought about what might happen if I told someone. I went through scenarios in my mind - our parents all screaming at each other, some blaming me, some blaming him. I thought about my friend, and how I loved my friend and my friend loved his brother. I also thought about how even though Dale was a dick a lot of the time, he also did nice stuff sometimes too. If I made a big deal out of this, I thought, what benefit would it be to me? I thought about this incident occasionally over the years, but didn't see any real reason to address it. As a teenager, I didn't even have language to describe what I felt was an accurate representation of the situation. What, like, I was molested? Raped? Sexually assaulted? While some of those descriptions may have had some technical truth to them, it didn't resonate. So I left it there.

It was only a few years after that that I found my way into the punk scene. As a weird, androgynous child who cried nearly every day about some perceived injustice, I had never fit anywhere. Then, at thirteen, I found a community that not only accepted my weird aesthetic and disdain for authority but exposed me to the social justice ideologies that still guide my life today. We disregarded gender norms, professionalism, ivory tower academia, conformity, fascism, capitalism, and sobriety. But, as much as we denounced all of that (and so much more), we fell into a lot of the same traps that we always pretended were reserved

for fraternities, jocks, and other "normies." We believed in equality. We were better than *them*. In light of all that, I probably should have been more surprised when falling asleep wasted on a couch at a party was a near guarantee that I'd wake up with some dude's hand down my pants who wasn't there when I had passed out. There were those people, "friends," who we all knew to stay alert around. One time, I woke up to my ex in bed with me and another friend of mine trying to initiate some sort of threesome while we were passed out drunk. Another time, I woke up in a basement with a friend pulling off my clothes and when I protested, he held my arms down. I kicked him as hard as I could and ran up the stairs and out of the house. And again, I once awoke in my own bed (where I had gone alone), head spinning, to a traveling couch guy's dick inside of me.

Although I felt so many things related to all of these situations (and others not named here), shock was not among those feelings. To be perceived as a woman in this country, is to never wonder *if* you'll experience violence, but when.

Not unlike my childhood experience, while I occasionally thought about these events, I didn't discuss them much. Again, I felt limited in the language available to me to describe each situation. I knew enough to know that people might tell me that these occurrences were "rape" or "sexual assault" but with the exception of the couch guy, I didn't feel like that's what it was. These people were my friends, and if what they did was rape, then logically, they would be rapists.

And once they were rapists, that's all they would ever be.

I wasn't prepared to strip away all of their humanity, and while some of them I chose not to be friends with anymore, they still meant more to me than the sub-human that the title of "rapist" would make them. I desperately desired vocabulary to help make sense of what those experiences were to me and I wanted accountability (not life-ending ostracization) from the people who had caused the harm but no such language or framework seemed available.

To be honest, I never felt particularly traumatized. What I felt was frustrated and pissed off that what I was supposed to want - labeling these people as rapists and having them forcibly removed from punk - just didn't speak to me. I didn't know what I wanted. There was no TJ process, no accountability, no cancelation - nothing happened. I was pissed that my options seemed to be going into battle to try to oust them via social media blasting or just biting it without any kind of closure, restoration or accountability. What did speak to me, however, were the terms "consent violation" and "harm doer." What spoke to me, was the notion that it's okay to feel white hot rage and still believe that members of your community are not disposable. To be femme (or part of any marginalized identity group) in this country is to know you'll experience violence but only we should get to decide what restitution looks like.

# WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**\*\*CONTENT WARNING\*\***

## Definitions

Before we go any further, we think it's important to make sure that we have a shared understanding of what we mean when we say "Sexual Violence."

Sexual violence describes any actions or behaviors that sexually violate another person or group of people. When we say sexual violence, we're talking about a wide range of sexual behaviors including sexual harassment, consent violations, and sexual assault.

Sexual violence is about gaining power over another person or group so it impacts marginalized people more than privileged people.

*\* see the glossary for a more detailed breakdown of different forms of sexual violence*

## Entitlement Vs. Intention

Not all sexual violence or abuse is intentional. Entitlement thinking means people are trained to prioritize their own needs over others and learn that manipulation is how you can meet your own

entitlement to other people's bodies and is one of the reasons why sexual violence mostly happens between people who know each other (i.e. a partner feels entitled to sex or someone feels like they deserve sex for being so nice to their friend that they are attracted to). Entitlement is why a lot of people who have caused sexual harm struggle with accountability, because they don't see anything wrong with what they did. They felt entitled to act on their own desires based on years of social conditioning and acceptance of sexually violent behaviors, attitudes their friends/family/community share, and probably didn't consider power dynamics or whether it was actually a mutual experience. Part of the work to unlearn this is about being self-aware and examining if your behavior crosses boundaries or is coercive. Even though sexually violent people don't always act intentionally, survivors still experience that violence similarly.

## **What does it look like and how do we talk about it?**

Instead of focusing on the many forms of sexual violence, we decided to frame it based on the complicated ways it seeps into relationships; friendships, partnerships, family--biological and chosen, and "membership" in the punk scene.

You'll notice we switch between talking specifically about "sexual violence" and abuse. We want to make this zine broadly applicable to a lot of different forms of harm and abuse while still

leaning on our experiences in the anti-sexual violence realm.

You might also notice that it seems like we're using the words "harm" and "violence" or



"abuse" interchangeably. We recognize that harm and violence are not always the same, and we don't want to minimize the impact of violence by referring to it as "harm." We use both of these terms because the concepts we're talking about in this zine can usually be applied whether we're talking about harm (for example, making a racist or sexist comment) or violence (physical abuse or sexual assault). However, harm and violence are not opposites. The everyday acceptance and normalization of harm, like (cis)sexist or racist comments, create an environment where violence towards groups targeted by those harms also becomes accepted and normalized.

Think about it this way: if your group of friends regularly jokes about "scene sluts" and then a touring band member sexually assaults a person labeled under this category, how would your friend group react? Would their first reaction be to support this person and ask them what they need?

All of this boils down to the fact that harm, violence, and abuse are all regularly used as umbrella terms to describe tons of different ways

that people experience hurt or violation. Repeated acts of harm can lead to what is commonly referred to as death by a thousand cuts. How we define a situation, or cut, depends on a variety of factors, such as someone's receptiveness to change their behavior, an established pattern, and whether or not someone doubles down on the behavior after being told it's harmful. In the end, it's up to the person who was harmed to define how that experience impacted them, even if you disagree.

## factors that influence consent



## WE HAVE EACH OTHER'S BACKS

## CW: Brief description of sexual assault

I'm 22 years old and drunk. I'm on tour with my friend's band and I'm selling merch at their show. A guy from the headlining band, 10 years older than me and sober, approaches me to pet my dog. Four hours later, I'm in his bedroom. We've been flirting all night. He asks me what I want to do. I aggressively pursue him and demand he "fuck the shit out of me." He kinda laughs and says "hey, let's slow down." I'm annoyed. And baffled. Why doesn't this cool band guy want to fuck the shit out of me? He says he does, but let's talk for a while first. And maybe make out a little bit. I'm manic. I don't want to talk to him, I just want to take control of this situation and do what I want. I think I want him to hate me. I'm fine being used. I tell him again - "I want you to fuck the shit out of me." He smiles at me and says:

"I don't believe you."



There's something this guy doesn't know. Three days ago, I was sexually assaulted. A different guy, 10 years older than me and sober, raped me while I slept in my bed alone. He CAN'T be the last person I had sex with. I want to have sex with someone when it is MY choice. Like right now. Or maybe I just want him to use me. I've been drunk since it happened.

But that's not what this guy does. He senses something is off and he doesn't move forward because my words don't feel sincere. And that's what I need more right now, and he somehow knows that. We talk until the sun comes up and it's time for me to leave. I start to feel normal. Years later when I reflect on this experience I think about how to meaningfully be in sexual relationships with each other means to check-in and that sometimes going without getting laid is an option if something feels off. Not because you're a rapist if you don't, not to avoid getting canceled, but because we have each other's backs.

Nine years later, he gets canceled for abusive behavior towards his ex. He loses mostly everything. Everyone calls him an "abuser." But I stick by him while he gets help and tries to be accountable. Because as much as I **hate** what he did, I know that's not all that he is. I know my own narrative doesn't lessen the impact of his abusive actions, but I do know that it's complicated. I know he's not only the worst thing he's ever done, and I know what good he is capable of, and I know he has a long way to go, but I think we can get there.





In order to really understand sexual violation, we think it's important to understand consent and sexual autonomy first. Staci Haines defines consent as "the ability to choose, based on your own internal experience, what you want physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually,

sexually, and then to communicate those wants." We like this definition of consent because it illuminates the complex factors behind the simple "yes" or "no" when making a sexual choice. For example, you may make sexual choices that don't always line up with your desires or your idea of a fairytale relationship. When we choose to be in a sexual relationship with someone else, even for just a night, we are all bringing our social identities and positions into the equation as well. How much power we have impacts the dynamics of our sexual interactions (and non-sexual friendships too) in ways that we often fail to consider, which is why we sometimes get confused and cause sexual harm to another person — or another person harms us — without being consciously aware of it at the time. Some of the following examples show how an unequal power dynamic doesn't rule out consent. But it does mean you need to pay attention to that dynamic and how it might affect your or your partner(s)' ability to consent. In our experience, harm is more frequently born out of negligence rather than intention.

If you're a survivor of child sexual abuse (or really any form of sexual violence), we highly recommend checking out *Healing Sex* by Staci Haines. It has a lot of great information and exercises to work through on your own and/or with a partner. One major drawback is it is pretty dated in its use of gender, because its really focused on cis women.

## Here's how this works in real life:

**CW: Descriptions of sexual assault**

**Example:** Using alcohol and/or drugs to have sex

**What about it?** There is no magic number of drinks that makes the difference between consent and sexual assault for everyone. It's naive to say that, across the board, the only way to truly consent is if everyone involved is 100% sober. And a lot of people use drugs in order to have or enhance sex. Sometimes, people use drugs as a social lubricant or just because they feel like it.

Whatever the case, this is where communication comes in. Is the person you're trying to get down with able to hold a conversation about what's happening in the moment? What is your relationship to them and how does that affect your understanding of their ability to consent? Did you talk about sex beforehand? Look at your own motivations for initiating sex with someone that's been drinking and/or doing drugs. Are you banking on their fucked up state as your sexual "in"? Are you using it as a way to try something they weren't okay with before? If your answer is yes to either of the above or you're not sure if that person is together enough to really say yes -don't do it. AND, this should be obvious, but never try to initiate hooking up with someone who is fucking ASLEEP (unless you've talked about it beforehand).

**Think about it like this:** Imagine you're at a show and you see a person you want to sleep with, but you decide you need liquid courage in order to approach them. So instead of trying to start a conversation, you avoid them for the time-being and decide to wait until later in the night when you're both fucked up. In the meantime, you ask your friends about this person. A couple friends say they know of them and that this person has "been around" and that they're always going home with someone.

Does this information shape the way you view whether or not you're going to try and hook up with this person? Why?

Does it change your reasons for approaching them if they're drunk?

Is consent possible here?

**Key Points:** It's messy - of course consent IS possible here, but it's not a guarantee. Whether or not someone can consent usually depends on a variety of factors, including the approach. Waiting until a stranger is wasted to see if they're interested in you and making assumptions based on their sexual history can have unintended consequences and lead to sexual assault. If you give a shit about not hurting other people, you will need to pass up sex when you're not sure about the answers to the questions above.

Think about the way you view other people sexually. Are you prioritizing yourself over seeing other people as equally sexually autonomous (entitlement)? Consent is all about mutual enjoyment, not getting something from another person without their knowledge or agreement (also entitlement).

**Example:** Gender Roles

**What about them?** First, there are more than two genders. Gender is also expansive and experienced differently depending on other aspects of identity. There are dominant ways the more visible genders, such as cis men and women, are conditioned to behave sexually, and the following are just a couple of examples from an infinite social code we are all taught from birth. Even the most nonsensical things are socially coded as masculine or feminine, like the way you cross your legs. Women are socialized to be sexual gatekeepers, trans and/or nonbinary folks are stereotyped as always being sexually available and often fetishized, and people who present as men are always supposed to want sex. There's crossover, of course. Race, sexual orientation, ability, culture, and more are always a big part of the way we experience gender roles. The point is to think about how socialized gender roles might change the way someone feels about saying yes or no. Examples: being "one of the guys" or not wanting to be viewed as uptight about sex or not down.

**Think about it like this:** Cis-women are pressured to be "one of the dudes" while trans women are pressured to be extra girly to be seen as real women. This means constantly trying to figure out the delicate balance between being taken seriously, sexually liberated, but not a groupie...belonging in the scene, but not sleeping with everyone...challenging feminine gender roles, but not so much that you become sexually unattractive to straight men...even if straight men aren't your thing. People who aren't cis men also aren't really allowed to change their minds, identities, interests or the way they present themselves without being questioned and ridiculed and this complicates how sex and consent happen.

**\*\*\*content warning: scenario asking you to imagine yourself as someone experiencing a potential violation\*\*\***

For a more specific example: You're at a party and you've been talking to someone - a cis guy - for the last couple of hours. You don't know him well, but you're enjoying his company and are fairly attracted to him. It's clear he's into you and asks you to come home with him at the end of night. You agree, but tell him up front that you're trying to take it slow. You get back to his place and start hooking up. He starts to take off your pants and you remind him to go slow. He kind of scoffs, but he stops. You can tell he's pretty drunk. A few minutes later, he goes for your pants again. You push his hand away and you can tell he's annoyed. He tries again and this time you wonder if you should push his hand away. He seems increasingly annoyed when you do and you don't know him - he might get aggressive. Or pissed off. Or talk shit about you tomorrow. You're attracted to him enough and you're here, so you just decide it's easier to have sex then to risk it.

Have you noticed ways that your own gender identity has impacted your sexual decision making? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?

**Key point:** Even though we're supposedly so "liberated" being a part of the punk scene, we still uphold rigid and puritanical beliefs about sex and gender. Even though it may not seem like it, there are often social consequences for acting outside of your assigned gender role. The social pressure to not make waves and to be sexually compliant is also real. These are examples of what people mean when they talk about rape culture.

**Example:** Power Dynamics

**What about it?** Social capital, like how many people you know or how cool your band is, changes the way you're perceived by other people in the scene, and this absolutely includes people who are newer, younger or just not in a popular band.

**Think about it like this:** There's a 20-year-old who's new to the scene. They're figuring it out and finding themselves in the music, community, etc. Older dudes quickly start hanging out with this person and inviting them backstage, to the van, after-parties, and so on. One more established, 40-year-old dude in a band starts pursuing the new young person sexually, and they start a relationship.

What power dynamics are at play here? Is consent possible? Why or why not? Does it change based on different circumstances?

**Key Point:** Power dynamics exist in all of our relationships and they are always changing based on our social and personal identities (race, class, ability, assigned sex/gender, sexuality/asexuality, etc.). When you are the one in a position of power, your intentions are less important than the reality of the power-imbalance. This isn't to say that consent isn't possible in the above scenario, but that the power dynamic is an important factor that can shape the relationship in a way that creates a potential for harm. Basically, the person who has more power needs to check their shit to make sure they're not selfishly taking advantage of someone more vulnerable.

**Example:** History of Sexual Trauma

**What about it?** Something related to "trauma-informed care" we discuss often is to approach our relationships with the assumption that trauma is a shared experience. Trauma affects most people. Oppression layers that trauma disproportionately on different groups and it's still really common no matter who you're interacting with.

If someone ignored you in the past when you said or signaled "no" to sex or sexual touching, or if they coerced you in another way, it's pretty likely that it will affect the way you say or signal "yes" or "no" in the future. If your partner has a history of sexual trauma, it's really important to open yourself up for a conversation about their needs and boundaries. You should be doing this anyway!

**Think about it like this: \*\*\*CW: description of child sexual abuse\*\*\*** If someone was sexually abused as a child by their step-dad and he used to say things like "no" really means "yes", it can change the way that person registers ownership over their body because it fucks up their ability to figure out what they do and do not want as an adult. It also impacts communication about consent with future partners and/or their relationships and sexual decision making. Often, when survivors of child sexual abuse are older and in a consenting sexual relationship, their partner may say something that reminds them of the abuse (i.e. "I know you want it") or do something else that creates a trigger response.



**Key Point:** You probably won't know whether or not your partner has experienced abuse unless they or someone else shares that with you. You're not always going to be able to avoid triggers when you're partnered with a survivor, but you can reduce the chances of sexual harm by talking to your partner about what they like, how you can tell if they like something, and how to know when they want you to stop. On the flip side, if you're a survivor and you know that you have a hard time communicating "yes" and "no" or understanding your own boundaries before a trigger happens, it might be helpful to think about alternative ways to communicate your needs. For example, triggers often show up as dissociation, like spacing out in the middle of sex. If that sounds like you, you can tell your partner that if you suddenly appear unengaged and zoned out in the middle of sex that they should stop and check-in before going any further. Basically, we never know what experiences someone is bringing into a relationship so it's necessary to center communication in all of our sexual interactions.

The above are just a few considerations that you need to make based on your own context and the person/people you're either having or want to have sex with. There is no calculator to plug in a formula to determine whether or not what happened was sexual violence. Not everyone interprets their experiences in the same way. Not everyone looks back on their sexual experiences with great feelings and that doesn't necessarily mean it's assault. We live in a complicated world and there isn't always an easy answer. What one person labels an assault may not be a violation to another. It can be stressful on you as a person to label everything as assault, and we want to make room for the grey areas. There is room for validation and support in the grey areas too, and there's room for accountability. We don't need to label everything as "bad" or "good" to transform the way we move forward. That being said, the person who was impacted by harm is the only person

who gets to decide what to label their experience. As supportive friends or bystanders - if we weren't there, we aren't in a position to say what did or didn't happen, or make judgments about how a person should react to, label, or feel about an incident.

## Some Terms to Help Work it Out:

If not everything is sexual assault - then what is it?

"Consent collision" originates from the kink community and it refers to an unintended event or action that crosses a line for one or more people in a scene/dynamic/encounter--sometimes referred to as a "consent accident". It's like stepping on someone's foot: you may have not been *trying* to hurt anyone, but you still did. An example of this might be saying something during sex that triggers your partner's past experiences of sexual abuse. There are plenty of reasons why a particular phrase might not have come up when, ideally, you had a conversation first about what everyone was in for. And obviously you wouldn't know this if you never had a conversation beforehand. There's no real reason why you wouldn't just take responsibility for accidentally stepping on someone's foot, and in the same way, you need to just take responsibility for consent collisions. If you step on someone's foot, take your foot off, and then stomp on it again - it would be reasonably perceived that you're making a choice to use harm and/or violence. A "consent violation" is a more intentional boundary crossing or reckless disregard of a boundary. An example of reckless disregard might be assuming that your partner is okay with you choking them and doing it

without asking. Some people might be totally fine with that, but there are a lot of people who have felt really violated by that.

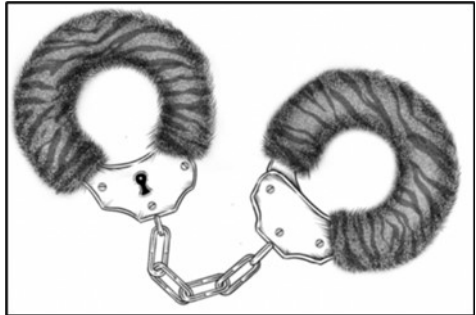
Participating in this behavior is potentially harmful and your partner may experience that as violence. It also demonstrates that you're not all that concerned with making it a mutual experience and prioritizing the pleasure of everyone involved.

This one is really easily avoided—

c o m m u n i c a t i o n .

Another example of a consent violation through reckless disregard is

violating a fluid bond. Say you have a partner and the two of you decide that you're not going to use condoms or barriers of any kind with each other, but if either of you were to have sex with someone else, the expectation is that they will use barriers to prevent STI's. If one person decides to forgo this agreement while having sex with



someone else and doesn't inform their partner about it before having sex with them again, they've violated a consent boundary. Same goes for monogamous partners. If the expectation is that no

## state-sanctioned violence

It was really challenging to find a simple definition to reference for this zine, so we're going to try and break this down with some examples of state-sanctioned sexual violence to give you an idea about the different ways this can show up. To define it briefly, state-sanctioned violence is when the government has the power to enact violence against its own people legally.



It can also include violence that is only considered illegal, or the law against it consistently enforced, when the victimized person holds positional power (i.e. white, middle and upper class, cisgender, men, able-bodied, US citizens). For example, when the police murder someone, they are unlikely to be held accountable by the state for it unless the victim fits into all or most of the above listed categories.

### Examples of state-sanctioned sexual violence:

#### **Police**

*Rampant sexual abuse of citizens-- blackmailing women and gender expansive folks for sexual favors in exchange for avoiding arrest*

#### **Jails/Prisons/ICE Detention Facilities**

*Ex: Strip searches, rampant sexual abuse of*

*inmates*-- prison guards abuse their power to sexually violate inmates with no consequence

### **Medical Institutions**

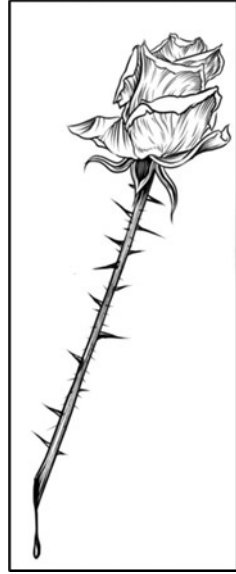
*OB/GYN abuse and coerced sterilization*-- the US has a history of coercing the sterilization of Black and Brown women and people with disabilities --and it's still happening-- see the most recent (at the time of this writing, anyway) example from Irwin County Immigration Detention Center in Georgia

### **Behavioral Health**

*Conversion "therapy"*-- therapists and churches try to forcefully indoctrinate their patients/members into being straight and cisgender--this is banned in some states and still perfectly legal in others, and none of the bans apply to religious institutions.

# TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

honoring the  
origin story of  
restorative and  
transformative  
justice



A quick history lesson:

Restorative Justice has firm roots in Indigenous cultures. Indigenous folks in so-called North America and other communities from all over the world have long been using RJ and circle practice independently of each other in ways that have varied over time. This restorative justice practice is not the same as RJ programs you might see connected to the criminal legal system. Transformative Justice was built from Restorative Justice and borrows significantly from a variety of Indigenous practices around conflict mediation. A lot of people say that a key difference is that RJ seeks to restore, while TJ seeks to transform and looks at the social structures of injustice that contribute to abuse. For the purposes of this zine, getting into the history of RJ/TJ is beyond our scope —it could be a whole other zine! But it's still incredibly important to acknowledge its roots.

Unfortunately, the origin story of RJ/TJ isn't well-documented. Most sources say it originated in the 1970s so-called United States as an alternative to courts and the legal process and while we don't know its exact origins, we do know that it's practices and principles go much further back.

## what is transformative justice?

*"Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of "making things right," getting in "right relation," or creating justice together.*

*Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system, though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved.*

*State responses to violence reproduce violence and often traumatize those who are exposed to them, especially oppressed communities who are already targeted by the state. It is important to remember that while many people choose not to call the police, many communities can't call the police because of reasons such as fear of deportation, harassment, state-sanctioned violence, sexual violence, previous convictions or inaccessibility."*

Mia Mingus

Transformative Justice operates under a couple specific principles: 1). Harm doesn't fix harm and 2). people are not disposable. If we believe this to be true, engaging the state to intervene in community violence – like calling the cops – contradicts our values. And if we don't engage the state, we need systems in place that support people who have been impacted by violence or abuse and hold the person who caused harm accountable. But the way we build these systems looks completely different from the crime, punishment, and ostracization model of the criminal legal system. If you're a little familiar with TJ, you might associate it with accountability processes and restorative justice mediation circles. While those can be helpful tools for repairing harm, they're not the end-all, be-all. From a TJ perspective, the community has a role to play in being responsible for the conditions that allowed the harm to occur and making changes to prevent/deter it from happening again. Unlike restorative justice, TJ is about creating something that exists outside of the current legal system. It's about restructuring our lives and relationships so we don't have to rely on the police to intervene in crisis or conflict. It's about building the skills we need to handle emergencies, crises, violence, conflict, or misunderstanding *before* there's an event where we need to use them. More on this later.

“Therefore the question is what can you help build? What conversations can you start to increase the safety of your community? What new structures or collaborations will you create to decrease your reliance on the criminal legal system? Perhaps you want to think about one form of violence to work on and build your knowledge from there. You could start simply by having dinner with your friends, family and chosen family to discuss how you all can better support each



other. Or you could raise the issue of police violence and harassment at your next tenants association meeting and see if there's a way that your neighbors want to engage with each other as opposed to the police. Next, you could research ways that people can get emergency medical assistance outside of 911. The possibilities are endless."

Punks are actually in a pretty good position to start incorporating TJ practices into our communities - it's why we wrote this zine. In fact, lots of punks already do TJ work (check out Philly Stands Up or Support New York). We likely don't have to convince you that calling the cops isn't a desirable option for most of us. We frequently get calls from friends who've been called out, experienced harm, or are close to someone who's been called out. They don't want to involve the state or cancel someone, but they want to do something. In a lot of ways, we're used to handling our problems in-house, but we make a lot of mistakes. But that's part of the deal. We don't exactly have a clear road map for this, but with a shared understanding of our values and where we want to be, our mistakes can start to become less frequent and less harmful. For example, a big mistake we've seen over and over again is vigilantism or "street justice" in response to sexual violence. If the goal is to create communities where sexual violence just doesn't happen anymore - and we hope that's your goal - then it doesn't make any sense that the solution to get us there is beating the shit out of each other. Combatting violence with violence isn't effective in holding someone accountable. A majority of people who use violence against their partners have a history of surviving abuse themselves, so beating them up and piling on more violence won't prevent them from doing it again.

Violence also gives people an out to avoid actually being accountable. Good luck engaging someone into a process after you beat the shit out of them. People familiar with violence often treat it as a straightforward transaction: they pay the price for their actions in blood -- and that's it. There's no incentive for them to change their behavior. The bottom line is that cops are encouraged by the state to use violence to stop violence, and we're assuming that one of the main reasons you're reading this is because you have an interest in disrupting that system. If that's the case, then why would we replicate a police force model that we know damn well mostly targets people who don't have positional power?

\*See "For People Who Have Used Violence and their Support People" section for more about common mistakes in TJ processes.

## restoration over retribution

*"Retribution becomes more complicated when we recognize that those we are punishing are almost invariably also people we have failed to protect. Nearly everyone who commits violence has survived it, and while that in no way excuses their actions, it reminds us that state-conducted retribution for violence is carried out almost entirely against survivors of violence."*

Danielle Sered

Restoration instead of retribution is one of TJ's key concepts. Retribution, meaning punishment or revenge, is the way we're taught that we heal from harm. The only way to feel better is to revel in the suffering of the person who caused harm. Sometimes, this is partly true. Many times it's

not. And even when it's true, retribution is not effective. It doesn't incentivize accountability; it doesn't promote behavior or culture change and it doesn't prevent someone from doing harm again. It just doesn't.

Restoration is a little more ambiguous.

So what's the goal of restoration? Is it to restore the relationship to the way it was before? Maybe, but not likely.

Is restoration about forgiveness?

Not necessarily.

Restoration can be interpreted in a lot of different ways. To us, it means any process that fosters accountability and healing for both the people who experienced harm or abuse and the people who caused it. It focuses on developing a collective future instead of punishing past behavior. Restoration doesn't mean that you have to be friends with the person who hurt you if you don't want to be - ever.

Related to all of that, something that we need to mention here is that TJ work was mostly developed and practiced within marginalized communities - communities where calling the cops on your ex could easily be a death sentence. Alternative justice practices were originally conceived in Indigenous communities, but these practices were quickly adopted by other communities of color, queer and trans folks, sex workers, etc. who are profoundly aware of the violence enacted by the criminal legal system.

Having said that...

Here's the thing: a lot of the people who cause harm in the punk scene are shitty straight cis white dudes (SSCWD). SSCWD who are not as likely to bear the brunt of police violence. Many of these SSCWD act like they're in a punk fraternity and sometimes it feels like the only way to get them to wake up to the reality of their behavior is to report or cancel them. But before someone says "not all men," we absolutely know that not all SCWD are shitty SCWD. Not all abusers are SSCWD either... the oppressive, racist, capitalist cis-hetero-patriarchy (aka this bullshit system) is the air we all breathe. We learn how to navigate this in different ways, and sometimes that means grasping at ways to get our power back by taking it from someone else, like behaving abusively. People with dominant identities are more likely to carry out these behaviors because they stand to benefit from them, but no one is immune. We make the point about SSCWD because when we talk about ending sexual and interpersonal violence we have to get real about who is most likely to enact that violence and why. The answer always comes back to socialization and systems of oppression, not an inherent desire to cause harm. We want to target the system, not each other.

But here's the other thing.

Even if we manage to get every person who's been abusive out of our scene, or even out of our city, they don't just go away. Maybe they get help. But maybe they move, maybe they become worse abusers, maybe they hurt more people - either way, if there's no repair, they likely become somebody

else's problem.

But here's the other, other thing.

What if people who behaved abusively remained the problem of the community? What if we as a community acknowledged how we've been complicit in problematic behaviors, like band dude worship in punk and made it our responsibility to help them change and be accountable? If we want to end violence and abuse, if we don't want to keep canceling people until there's no one left or shuffling people who cause harm from city to city, we eventually have to address the root of the issue. If we're against cops, if we want to stop treating people like they're disposable, then it's on us to try to restore what's been broken. We have to find a way to engage everyone in the world that we want to create. This goal is the opposite of overlooking or being a passive bystander to shitty, problematic behavior. In order for TJ to work, people who cause harm need a community that supports them, but more importantly, that holds them accountable and expects better.

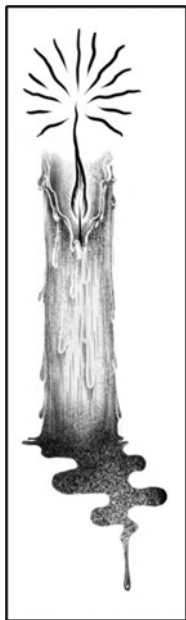
*"We are left with questions. If we are only willing to call out abusers to scapegoat and isolate them, what progress have we made toward healing for the survivor, and even the abuser? If we press charges and enter the criminal justice system to seek justice and an abuser is incarcerated, how does this address the harm done on a human-to-human level? And how are we complicit if we stand by without questioning any of the methods currently in favor when dealing with the avalanche of accusations occurring in a retributive, rather than a restorative, system?"*

Wendy C. Ortiz

## accountability

*"For our work, accountability is not just saying you're sorry for something, it's not just reparations, it's not just repairing the harm. True accountability is changing your behavior so that the harm does not happen again. You can apologize all you want. You can repair trust all you want. But if you continue to do the harm, and the violence or the abuse, then what does it matter? That's what I hear 9 times out of 10 from survivors, including myself as a survivor. What most people say is that they don't necessarily want an apology, they just don't want anyone to go through what they went through."*

Mia Mingus



A lot of us have probably been hearing this word a lot lately. I hear it more now than I ever used to. Friends who have no connection to transformative justice work say things like "I know I just need to be accountable" after having some kind of beef with another friend. Or other friends will say to me "I know we're both to blame, but the main problem is that they never want to be accountable" in reference to some kind of relationship drama. I've said it to partners with regularity too when asked what I want during an argument - "please just be accountable."

We've been saying this word a lot, because we know it means more than a simple apology (although those can be great too!). It means truly taking ownership and responsibility for that fucked up thing you said/did/perpetuated to hurt someone

else and doing everything in your power to make sure that it doesn't happen again. And in our experience, that's what most people want after they've been harmed.

Before we get into it, the unfortunate thing about accountability is that you can't hold another person accountable. Accountability is often misunderstood as something that you can do TO someone else. "Holding someone accountable" is kind of a myth, because it's something the person who caused harm needs to do for themselves. This distinction is important because sometimes people post on social media calling for accountability and that can't actually happen without the person who caused harm engaging in the process. While you can always *ask* for someone to be accountable, you can't *hold* them accountable.

But accountability is more than a buzzword. It's more than "sorryifuckedupitwonthappenagain." The part of accountability that seeks to prevent the harm from occurring again requires a level of self-reflection that so many of us just aren't willing to invest our time into. It requires really sitting down with ourselves and examining all of those dark places that make us uncomfortable to really try to understand why we did what we did in the first place. Sure, sometimes it's as simple as needing education - maybe you just didn't know that what you said/did/perpetuated was a problem or that it would hurt someone else and now you do so it won't happen again. Apologize. Do it well. Apply the new information you've learned, and move on.

But sometimes you fuck up bad. Like, real bad. Sometimes we do things we didn't think we were capable of, or we have some compulsion to do things that we don't even understand ourselves. Sometimes, we're reckless or act only in our own self-interest, and then we have to deal with the consequences.

Regardless, taking accountability for causing harm, being abusive, or using violence usually requires someone to confront some serious demons. Whether we like it or not, that process will be most effective if that person has a support system while doing so.

Canceling a person who has behaved abusively doesn't hold them accountable either, in fact, it often does the opposite by allowing them to escape accountability. Consider this: Most people who are canceled, or who are on the verge of getting canceled, don't think "Okay, well I guess I'm going to accept this, go confront my demons and learn how to be accountable now." Sure, some do, but many people, when they feel backed into a corner, will panic-deny, deflect, hide - anything to avoid owning up to what they did and facing punishment. This dynamic creates a lot of missed opportunities for accountability and repair. And it doesn't decrease the likelihood of harm happening again. Doing everything in your power to tear away another person's entire support system - their housing, income, and mental health - is what prisons were built to do. Cancelling someone that does not have a huge platform - like a social media following or lots of social capital - and a safety net to bounce back from is just spreading the trauma and the pain to another person. It doesn't repair, restore, transform or inspire



accountability.

So let's say someone IS willing to admit they screwed up and they want to be accountable. What does that look like?

Accountability processes are largely led by the person who experienced harm or abuse and usually require the following things:

- Admittance of wrongdoing from the person who caused harm or abuse
- Validation from the community
- Apology (more on this later)
- CHANGED BEHAVIOR

Accountability is not a passive process, it is something that requires active participation in an ongoing way. As part of the accountability process, it's common for people who have caused harm to do things like lay low from social scenes for awhile, check into therapy, learn about the type of harm they caused, quit drinking or doing drugs if being drunk or high often leads them to the harmful behavior, telling future partners (or others) about the harm, and avoiding other spaces/situations/people that trigger the behavior.

Accountability also isn't just saying "Okay, just tell me what to do and I'll do it."

The accountable person should be an active participant in determining what is the best course of action. They also get to maintain some agency over things like timeline and their own boundaries. The person who was harmed might dictate what is needed to repair the relationship, if they're interested in that, and set the parameters of the relationship, while the person who caused harm really should think about what steps they need to take to prevent the harm from

happening again and communicate what those steps are. This will be specific to each person and situation. It's a good idea for the person who caused harm to have some people in their corner who will both support them and support them to be accountable for doing what they said they were going to do. There's a difference between friends providing support to the person who caused harm and **the survivor** expending copious amounts of emotional labor to guide them through feelings of guilt or shame. Bottom line: the accountable person's friends should support them through this process, not the survivor.

Finally, accountability isn't a punishment. It's not meant to torture someone or to be a public flogging. It shouldn't be shameful. But being accountable for the harm we've caused is work and we all likely have something we need to account for even if we haven't been called out for it. If we truly want the violence to stop, and if we truly believe that we are not disposable, it's the only way forward.

*"When the response to mistakes, failures and misunderstandings is emotional, psychological, economic and physical punishment, we breed a culture of fear, secrecy and isolation."*

*Adrienne Maree Brown*

*If you or someone you know has been called out, see the section "For People Who Have Caused Harm or Been Abusive".*

## consequence vs. punishment

A common critique of accountability requests is they can sometimes feel like thinly veiled punishment. We've been clear that the consequences of someone's abusive behavior shouldn't replicate harm or oppressive systems. But advocating against punishment doesn't mean that there aren't consequences for abusive behavior either. Sometimes appropriate consequences kinda suck for a while.

So how do we tell a consequence from a punishment?

Simply put, consequences promote safety, healing, and good boundaries, while punishment causes pain and suffering. The specific course of action should also be proportionate to the harm or abuse. Most accountability actions don't fall neatly into one category or the other, so it's important to be honest with ourselves about what our goals and intentions are for the request. More on that later.

We have to consider what losses come with the consequences that we're suggesting. If someone loses their job/income, how will that affect them? Will they lose their housing? Their ability to provide for their family? How does this consequence promote safety for the person who was victimized? That *could* be an appropriate consequence if the survivor and the person who abused or assaulted them work together. Every situation is unique. The goal is to promote safety and healing by creating space for the survivor, not to make the other person suffer. We have to stay away from one-size-fits-all rules when making these decisions because circumstances aren't

always one thing or the other. But if significant suffering is a byproduct of a consequence, it can sometimes cross over into punishment. On the other hand, while the goal is not to cause more harm and suffering, sometimes consequences can feel like punishment to the person experiencing them. This can require the friends of the harm doer to support them in understanding how the consequences rebuild trust, safety and healing for the survivor.

Lastly, the person or people proposing the accountability action can be important in determining whether or not something is a consequence or a punishment. Pissed off mobs that aren't connected to the process generally shouldn't be handing down authoritative commands framed as accountability. Decisions for accountability action really only need to involve the survivor, the person who used violence, and their support people. Each situation should be uniquely addressed and only produce consequences that both help repair the harm and prevent it from happening again.

Note: see the "pyramid of escalation" under the section "Culture Change and Preventing Violence" for some ideas on how to strategize an accountability process.

## survivor-centered

*"A survivor-centered system is not a survivor-ruled one. Valuing people does not mean giving them sole and unmitigated control."*

Danielle Sered

### What Does it Mean to be Survivor-Centered?

- A process, behavior or action that is survivor-centered prioritizes the individual survivor: What violence or abuse did they experience? What was the harm? What will be helpful to them and who can best offer this support? How will they get ongoing support?

Source: Creative Interventions Toolkit

- Survivor-centered processes also focus on people who are most impacted by sexual and interpersonal violence as a tool of oppression.
- To be survivor-centered means understanding that the need is not the same for everyone - nothing is - there is no group of "survivors" who meet regularly and always agree.
- Being Survivor-centered is about trusting that survivors are the experts in their own experiences and have valid reasons for choosing or rejecting a particular course of action.

- Being survivor- centered means letting the survivor know that you support the choices they make even if they're not the same choices that you would make in their situation.
- Being Survivor-centered means keeping the survivor informed at every step of the/each process and asking for consent or consultation before moving forward.

#### What Survivor-Centered is NOT:

- For TJ processes to work well, it's important that the accountability process doesn't reinforce oppressive norms rooted in punishment and abuse. This can be hard because we're socialized to lash out and seek revenge when we're angry or hurt. That being said, it's okay for survivors to be messy, angry, and want for there to be punishments for the person who assaulted them. But, if there's going to be a reparative accountability process, support people need to be willing to gently challenge or redirect the survivor if their requests cause more harm. Vigilantism, for example, is not aligned with TJ, whether you're acting on the behalf of the survivor or not – **especially** if you're not. If the survivor isn't in a place where they can engage in a reparative process, they may need more time to process or more support to feel safe. During this time, the person who caused harm may need to build enough trust back by respecting the survivor's other non-violent requests, like giving them space.

- Side note: seeking out revenge for survivor's without their knowledge or request is a reason why a lot of people don't come forward about the abuse they experience. Don't make someone who was sexually violated worry about you and your reactions on top of everything else.
- As a support person, it's not your opportunity to demonstrate what a great ally you are by becoming overly involved or crossing boundaries to show support. It's super overwhelming to be at the center of an abusive situation. Sometimes the most supportive thing you can do is give space.
- It's not the time to make it about you, your friends, the person who caused harm, etc.

People who have experienced abuse or sexual violence will sometimes compare their experiences to the experiences of other survivors and make judgements about who had it worse. It can also be triggering for survivors to hear other people talk openly about abuse and sexual violence. Trauma desperately wants a witness, and if you - the support person - are also a survivor, it can feel tempting to discuss your own traumatic experiences in comparison to the situation at hand, but we have to check ourselves to make sure we're not letting our own experiences overshadow the person who is being centered.

- If you're supporting a survivor, it's good to avoid warning other people about the abuse or putting the situation on blast without their explicit request or permission. People have their own reasons for taking, or being resistant, to certain actions. It's almost never a good idea to act on a survivor's behalf without their knowledge, even if you think it's in the best interest of the survivor.





it's messy and I might  
change my mind

**CW: Descriptions of Sexual Assault**

I don't remember ever meeting him before I went to sleep that night. I didn't recognize him when I woke up with him on top of me and his tongue in my mouth, and I didn't recognize him when he leapt up and ran out of the house either. I used to drink until I couldn't hold my head up anymore, so I would just slouch over myself and spit into an empty beer bottle. I'm assuming it was one of those nights.

I was disgusted with myself because I woke up kissing him back. It also always felt kind of fucked up that my first thought when I woke up went straight to assuming it was a "consensual" encounter where I was just too drunk and forgot what I was doing. I think that's what haunted me the most about it. I can still remember exactly how it felt every time I think about it. This wasn't a unique experience for me. It stands out because it was the only time I was completely asleep before it started (instead of just falling over myself drunk and high like the other times), and because there was never any doubt in anyone's mind about what had happened, even from him.

A couple days later he sent me a message apologizing for what he did. I never replied.

- **July 19, 2011, 10:50 PM:** hi, i was told what happened that night on sunday and i

am disgusted for my actions and am really sorry for what i put you through. I dont remember leaving \*\*\*\*\*'s house or how i got home that night. i know being in an altered state is not an excuse, i never thought i was able to do such things. i wish things did not happened the way they did for that i am sorry for my actions and the pain i caused you. from everything within me, i am sorry.

This is not what I would call a good apology, but it's a hell of a lot better than anything else I or anyone I knew at the time got. As someone who has experienced sexual assault and as someone who works with survivors regularly, I know that one of the most common things people ask for is that the person responsible admit that they did it. I honestly think that's why I was able to move through this in the way that I have. I had validation that what happened had actually happened, that I wasn't being "dramatic" or making it up. I had friends who were there and saw what happened. And although I felt let down by the opportunity to intervene, I had support after the fact.

Two years ago a friend of mine reached out to me because he was hanging around some of her friends at an infoshop, and she wanted to call him out over what he did to me. She said she wanted to check in with me about it first, but when we talked on the phone, it sounded like she had already said something. She told me she wanted to do a restorative justice process and asked how involved I wanted to be.

I said I didn't want to be involved other than getting an update about how it went. I also sent her some resources on transformative justice because our conversation turned into a larger conversation about going through community accountability processes. She never gave me an update, and I never checked in about it.

I wasn't initially bothered by being left out of the decision to move forward with a process, and I go back and forth about it. It was something I definitely hadn't forgotten about, but had for the most part moved on from and I had zero interest in bringing it back up. There were a lot of reasons why I didn't feel justified stopping the process, even though it was about me and my experience. I think of this as a situation where multiple things can be true. It wasn't exactly survivor-centered...and it was clunky...but I also felt validated that someone cared enough about what happened (other than me) to take steps to create safety within another community of people. I wouldn't have asked for punishment, I just wanted it to go away-- but I don't know that's always the answer even if the survivor requests it either. I do think that sexual violence needs to be addressed. I got an apology and an acknowledgement of what happened, and I've never had to see him again out of coincidence. But accountability means changing the behavior and I have no idea if that happened or not. I always bristle whenever I've heard other people tell survivors that they're doing the right thing reporting because they're protecting other people from this person. The responsibility for stopping sexual violence does not and should not fall on the shoulders of survivors, especially (and obviously) when we're talking about involving the cops. But in my case, I don't know that I can say that I should have had total control over whether or not this person has

to answer for their actions.

What happened to me was not a secret, and right now I'm thinking that I wouldn't want to get in the way of making other femmes safer by having a process that doesn't involve me. I feel this way today, as I'm writing this, but it's messy and I might change my mind if I were asked about it again.



# KICKING COPS OUT OF PUNK: PRACTICE AND SKILL BUILDING

*"We must practice community safety much as one practices an instrument or a sport: By practicing in slow, measurable and deliberate ways, we can build the knowledge we need to diffuse and address conflict within our communities."*

*Ejeris Dixon*



## **what we do is secret: making cops irrelevant**

### **Learn how to give a genuine apology**

Most of us are shit at saying we're sorry. It may seem like a stretch to say that learning how to genuinely apologize is linked to police resistance, but the culture that we create around how we are accountable to each other has everything to do with building communities that don't involve the state. A genuine apology can make the difference between a misunderstanding turning into an irreconcilable conflict and it can be the basis for accountability for our actions. If we envision our future as one that values restoration rather than punishment, practicing accountability through apology (and many other actions too!) is something we need to start doing today. Check out Mia Mingus' blog, [Leaving Evidence](#), for the four parts to a good apology.

### **Learn how to handle basic conflict**

Sometimes conflict is just a misunderstanding or refusal to admit a mistake and sometimes it escalates to the point of causing harm. Practicing the skills to directly address conflict before it escalates creates a foundation for responding to more severe acts of harm and violence.

### **Make a plan for intervention if someone experiences sexual or interpersonal violence.**

It's a good idea to talk with your close group of

friends about how to respond to sexual or interpersonal violence before it happens. Hearing that someone close to you has used or experienced violence is incredibly stressful and in the middle of a crisis people often aren't thinking clearly which can lead to making rash decisions that cause more harm. Just like planning for earthquakes or other natural disasters, it's important to create a plan with those close to you about responses to personal crises. [The Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#) has a helpful resource about this and identifies this practice as "pod mapping." The basic idea is to identify those in your inner circle who you would call on in a crisis and involves having conversations with those people about what crisis intervention and/or accountability would look like. Pod mapping is also great to share with your friends and community members who have kids. To find more information about the pod mapping exercise and worksheet, you can look up "Pod Mapping Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective" online.

### **Learn to use Narcan and carry it with you**

Most of us know, or have been, a habitual heroin user. Most of us know of someone who has overdosed and likely been saved by Narcan. We also know people who have overdosed and died. Heroin use in the punk scene is unlikely to go away, and the more of us who know how to use, and carry, lifesaving medications like Narcan, the less likely it is that we'll need to call 911 if we're around when someone overdoses. Most major cities have Narcan distribution centers and training opportunities. Take some time to research where to get Narcan near you, learn how to use it, and teach everyone else you know how to use it too.

distribution centers and training opportunities. Take some time to research where to get Narcan near you, learn how to use it, and teach everyone else you know how to use it too. The National Harm Reduction Coalition has a [Narcan Finder](#) on their website.

**Ask your friends with mental health issues how you can support in a crisis**

A lot of us have mental health issues. Whether related to using drugs, past trauma, or biological wiring, most of us have witnessed someone in our scene experiencing a mental health emergency. This is another situation where cops can make an event a thousand times worse than it would have been if appropriate de-escalation and crisis intervention had been used. If you know someone who is prone to having mental health crises, ask them what is helpful for them in a crisis situation. Spend some time researching crisis intervention and de-escalation tactics so that you're prepared to offer support instead of calling the cops. Because people with mental health issues are more likely to be killed by police, using harm reduction strategies that seek to make the person or situation immediately safer usually does not involve calling the cops.

**Join/create tenants unions or create neighborhood assemblies**

Tenants unions are groups that fight for the rights and collective interests of renters. Sometimes, tenants unions are made up of people who live in the same building, have the same landlord, or just in the same neighborhood.



These unions are community-led and advocate for things like rent control, holding landlords accountable for basic housing needs, or fighting against evictions and displacement. You can join an existing union in your areas (they're all over the place!) or start your own by simply knocking on doors, posting flyers in your building or on your block, or creating a social media page. For more information on tenants unions, check out the organization Tenants Together. Neighborhood assemblies can resist something like a shitty homeowner's association and follow a similar structure but are meant to address a larger range of issues related to politics, the economy, mutual aid, or even direct action. Neighborhood assemblies can also exist for the sole purpose of supporting one another through child care, community gardens, transportation, and making plans to intervene in crisis situations and disaster response without calling the cops. Secure housing can also prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

**Talk with friends and neighbors about who to call in a medical emergency.**

Before we go any further, we want to say that you absolutely should call 911 in a life-threatening medical emergency. If someone's life or long-term health is on the line, sometimes the only appropriate intervention is to call the paramedics. However, lots of medical issues don't require EMS and calling 911 in certain emergencies can lead to consequences. People can rack up thousands of dollars in bills from ambulance transport and first responders can cause issues for people who are undocumented, have criminal records, are drug users, sex workers, etc.

Because of this, it can be helpful to identify trustworthy people in your wider circle who have medical training. Ask your EMT, wilderness first responder, and herbalist friends if you can use them as an emergency contact in a medical situation. Identify trustworthy free clinics in your area. Learn CPR. If you have friends or neighbors close by who live alone or don't have transportation, offer to be an emergency contact who can drive them to the hospital if you can. Most importantly, it's about having multiple options available and making sure that you know the wishes of medically vulnerable people around you rather than defaulting to that 911 call in all situations.

### **Join or start a political education study group**

If you're not ready for direct action or feel like you need to learn more about a cause or movement, you can start a political education study group with neighbors or friends. Many people need more education before they're ready to take action, and starting a book club, study group, or some other method of collective learning can help achieve that goal. People are usually more likely to study or get involved if there is a social aspect to it, so it's not a bad idea to incorporate something like a potluck or another way for people to also get fed and hang out. Setting agendas, community agreements, and models for consensus-based decision making can also be important to prevent certain types of conflict or hierarchy, especially for people without any organizing experience.

**Participate in mutual aid efforts (for example: distribute food, clothing, tents, sleeping bag, masks, etc.)**

Part of disrupting reliance on the state (police and also state systems) involves building safe and strong communities outside of our immediate circles. Part of mutual aid is taking a shared responsibility in caring for one another and changing conditions to help meet the needs of everyone in a community. Most major cities have grassroots organizations who lead supply distribution and coordinate mutual aid efforts in unhoused communities and other under-resourced communities. If you can't find something already established in your area, coordinate with your friends to take the lead in organizing mutual aid efforts.

**Make a resource list for your community (Rape crisis center, free clinic, Mental Health First)**

Most communities actually have a surprising number of under-utilized resources for support in police-free crisis intervention. Organizations that de-escalate crisis situations without police involvement are starting to pop up, like Mental Health First in Sacramento and Oakland. Nearly every major city in the U.S. has a community rape crisis center that can offer cop-free support, advocacy and counseling after a sexual assault. Most areas have free clinics to assist with emergency medical support - the list goes on. Most people call the police or 911 do so in a crisis situation where it doesn't feel like there are any other options, and oftentimes that actually isn't the case. Researching resources and thinking quickly in a crisis is ten times more difficult than compiling a list of resources ahead of time and distributing them to people who you are in community with. Some ways to do this are to create a gmail account to access google

docs and make a shareable word file with a link that anyone with a smartphone can easily access and distribute. Libraries will usually let you print copies on the cheap. Social media sites can act as a web page, for example just create a facebook or twitter account for your group and post your list to that page's feed so people can see it. Preparing in advance for an emergency and making sure those close to you know how to access support is a huge step toward reducing the number of panicked cop calls that happen when people feel like they're out of options.

### **Actively redistribute stolen wealth**

If you're not Native or part of a community whose ancestors were violently kidnapped and relocated against their will and you live in so-called North America, you're occupying stolen land that was developed using stolen labor and lives. Land that was obtained through the use of rape, violent force, chattel slavery, and genocide. While money doesn't right or erase this intensely violent history, regular donations to Black and Indigenous organizing causes in your area can serve as an acknowledgement that you intend to center the histories and experiences of Black and Indigenous people. You can also give directly to individuals as a way to redistribute stolen wealth and advocate for reparations on a government policy level. Active participation in the struggle against colonialism, even in a small way, is an important part of resisting the police state.

# FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED HARM AND THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

*"I have come to think of forgiveness rather simply as relinquishing our desire to see the person who harmed us suffer. I know that forgiveness does not require minimizing or even accepting the harm done; it does not require embracing the other person; though others would disagree, in my view it does not even require no longer being angry. At its most basic, perhaps it just requires separating one's well-being from the other person's suffering."*

Danielle Sered

It's important to note that there are situations in which a Transformative Justice Process might not work or be a good fit. If someone is violent to the point of causing serious injury or death, you might feel like you need to engage the criminal legal system. If there's ever a situation where someone needs to do this, it doesn't make them a "cop caller." A lot of whether or not a TJ process will be successful has a lot to do with resources and your personal network. As Mia Mingus

has pointed out, capitalism relies on breaking relationships and devaluing community to deny people support networks. The system is set up to encourage reliance on the state and it really fucking sucks when there are no other options to keep yourself safe other than seeking out state offered protections like restraining orders. Calling the cops can be incredibly shitty for the person who had to do it if they didn't want to and while this zine is about offering alternatives to calling the police, avoiding the criminal legal system is not always possible.

This is by design, and it isn't your fault.

Having said that, calling the cops or using the courts almost never produces the outcomes survivors hope it will when they do. Aside from the racist and sexist state of policing, sexual assault crimes are almost never prosecuted and convictions are even more rare. Managing expectations about what will happen when choosing to engage the criminal legal system is important.

If you or someone you know encounters a situation where you're not sure how to act, feel free to reach out to the email [zine@anordinaryriot.com](mailto:zine@anordinaryriot.com) to talk it through.

## the second rape: what to know if the cops get involved



Some people who experience abuse or sexual assault decide to report it to the police. There are lots of different reasons why someone might do this - sometimes, they want the person who hurt them to go to jail or sometimes they want to make a "matter of record" report meaning that they don't pursue prosecution but the cops still have the person's name in case it comes up in future allegations. Sometimes, people make police reports because they don't know what else to do or because a friend or family member pressures them to. Some people think filing a police report is the only way to feel validated. We've had plenty of experiences with punks who are self-proclaimed cop haters tell their friends that if they were actually assaulted by everyone's favorite drummer,

The survivor would have called the police to report it.

Usually, reporting a crime to the cops entails calling 911 or a non-emergency police line and meeting with an officer who will take a statement and decide whether or not to investigate.

We're going to be honest. Police interviews are fucking terrible more times than not. They're particularly terrible for people with identities that are often victimized by police violence, like people of color and queer and trans folks. But, while there's not much we can do in the moment to make them less terrible, sometimes knowing what to expect can help folks prepare emotionally for the process. If someone reports a sexual assault, here's a non-exhaustive list of questions investigators typically ask:

Provide a detailed description of the assault and the person accused, including the events immediately leading up to and immediately after the assault.

*Note: the person reporting will likely be asked to repeat themselves, questioned about inconsistencies and asked to provide a graphic walkthrough of the assault. Anyone mentioned in their story may be contacted by police for verification and the cops may ask to keep their phone for evidence (FYI, they don't need to give the cops their phone if they don't want to).*



- Alcohol or drugs taken within 24 hours of the assault
- Number of consensual sex partners (if any) within the past 5 days.

Allegedly, the intention of these questions is to gather evidence related to the crime and to rule out any consensual partners, however, cops are extremely susceptible to bias and we've seen firsthand how the answers to these questions (and numerous other factors) affect how police treat survivors. We're not trying to discourage anyone from pursuing the course of action that's right for them - we just want to give a realistic picture of what to expect.

## know Your rights:

Victim/Survivors of sexual violence have rights. The cops won't always know or respect these rights, so it's important for the person who's making the report to know them so they can advocate for themselves. It can also be helpful to have a savvy friend or support person nearby who can interject if needed. You should also know that the person who makes the report has a right to a sexual assault advocate from a local rape crisis center. The advocate should also be present to ensure that those rights are upheld and they should be called automatically if someone is getting a forensic exam (rape kit). Keep in mind, just because these rights exist it doesn't mean that they'll always be respected or that the cop taking the statement will even be aware of them. Below is an example of standard victim's rights - they may vary slightly from state to state but not all that much.

- Confidentiality: right to remove name from police record
- Right to an advocate and support person
- Right to collect evidence (like a physical exam, i.e. rape kit) before moving forward with pressing charges
- Right to ask for an emergency protective order, aka restraining order
- Right to seek financial assistance through victim's compensation programs
- Right to get the status and results of the evidence analysis

## supporting survivors or victims without cops: key questions

In contrast to filing a police report, the following are some questions that a transformative justice process seeks to address. There isn't a universally agreed upon set of questions for TJ processes, but these are common:

- *What violence or abuse did the survivor or victim experience?*
- *What harms have resulted?*
- *What do they think will be helpful to them?*
- *Who can best offer this support?*
- *How are they getting ongoing support?*

**Source:** [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#)

You can use these questions to guide a process that allows the person who was harmed to maintain or regain some control. In criminal legal proceedings, the survivor rarely has that. They

can't control what questions they're asked, whether an investigation takes place, whether there are consequences for the person who caused harm or what that person's sentence will be in the unlikely event they're convicted of a crime. In the criminal legal system, abuse is considered a crime against the state and the goal is punishment for the crime. In a TJ process, the central goal is to help the survivor heal and to hold the person who caused harm accountable in ways that feel appropriate to the survivor. Many people choose to pursue a TJ or a community accountability process for these reasons.

If you find yourself supporting a person who has experienced interpersonal violence, you can use these questions (and the rest of the Creative Interventions Toolkit) to help guide your process.

**wondering how this might actually look in practice? see the story below:**

**\*Content Warning: Depiction of sexual assault**

***What violence or abuse did the survivor or victim experience?***

- Joanna (she/her) and Marie (she/her) are both part of the punk scene in a mid-sized US city. The scene there is pretty small, and the same group of punks go to all the same shows and parties. Joanna is in a well-known local band that plays with a lot of touring bands and has a lot of social capital. Marie just moved back to town after a year of doing seasonal work and traveling and isn't as well-connected in the city. Joanna lives in a punk house with an old friend of Marie's, and Marie is staying on their couch. Joanna and Marie are both queer and have hooked up before, but not since Marie got back. Marie is sober now and Joanna still likes to party. One night, Joanna comes home from playing

a show and she's wasted. Marie wakes up on the couch to Joanna's hand down her pants. Marie sits up and shoves Joanna, but Joanna aggressively pushes Marie back down and continues touching her. Marie shoves Joanna's hand down her pants. Marie sits up and shoves Joanna, but Joanna aggressively pushes Marie back down and continues touching her. Marie shoves Joanna again and yells at her to stop. She does.

***What harms have resulted?***

- Marie feels violated and uncomfortable staying at Joanna's house. Marie is also triggered due to a sexual assault she experienced a couple of years before and really wants to use again in light of this event. Marie is isolated from her friends and community because she doesn't want to see Joanna and she recently had a falling out with a few close friends who couldn't handle supporting her mental health needs. The scene is small and avoiding Joanna in any social situation is nearly impossible. The number of queer people in the scene is even smaller, and Marie worries about cutting off Joanna's access to queer community spaces if this blows up.
  - The harms here are: current violation, reactivating past trauma, struggling with the urge to use, social isolation, and no place to stay.

***What do they think will be helpful to them?***

Marie discloses the incident to a close friend, who asks Marie how she would like to address the situation. Together, Marie and her friend brainstorm the following list of what Marie wants/needs:

- Access to social support without Joanna present - this might require some coordinating and Joanna

may need to sit out certain shows and parties for a while so Marie can get some space. Marie might not know how long she needs space, so one part of the accountability process can include checking in after a few months.

- A chill place to stay so Marie can process and avoid the urge to use
- Pursuing therapy and going back to meetings
- An apology from Joanna
- To ask Joanna to stop drinking
- Support from a small group that knows about the assault and can help her access other needs
- Joanna confiding in a close group of friends who will support her through the process and help keep her accountable to her promise to disclose the abuse to potential sexual partners.

***Who can best offer this support?***

- Marie's small group of friends brainstorm about how to help her access helpful resources and brainstorm action plans. One friend knows a local nonprofit worker who can refer Marie to a sliding-scale sexual assault counselor. She can take a sober friend's roommate's room while they're out of town and Marie figures her shit out. A couple mutual friends agree to ask Joanna to lay low and avoid certain shows and parties where she knows Marie will be for a while. Additionally, in an effort to create space between Joanna and Marie in the small scene, Marie's support people plan to ask Joanna if she'll consider having her bandmates communicate with Marie before they book a show. If Joanna doesn't agree to this, Marie's friends will continue to support

Marie in other courses of action.

***How are they getting ongoing support?***

- Marie will continue to see her counselor and she'll go to meetings with her other sober friend. Marie's support system will continue to check-in with her to see how she's doing and to reassess the situation if needed. One of Marie's support people has to leave town in a few weeks, but they agree to a standing phone call every Tuesday. There's a queer bar in town that Joanna agrees not to go to indefinitely, so Marie can go there any time she wants without worrying about seeing her.

**Questions to ask about this process:**

- What if Joanna denied everything?
- What if Marie just wanted to forget about it and move on?
- What if more people came forward about other non-consensual interactions with Joanna - would that change the approach?

This is the best-case scenario in a perfect world that we don't live in. Normally, there are lots of roadblocks along the way. Some of these roadblocks include unwillingness to ask for help, others unsure of how to offer support, lack of access to resources, people taking sides, accusations of lies, etc. We use this scenario not to provide unrealistic expectations but to illustrate how shifting our response - the questions we ask, how we show up, checking our biases - can change the outcomes. In order for a process to run this smoothly, everyone (including the person who caused harm) needs to be on board and committed to making it work. This can be a huge challenge because in moments of crisis, we're often bad at remembering how to effectively support someone. Because the

methods that the criminal legal system uses are so ingrained in us, a lot of times we jump into immediately asking accusatory questions, trying to determine if someone is lying or needing to know how and where to appropriately cast blame.

*"I do not believe that a punitive justice system is even remotely related to what I need for personal healing. Why is validation of what I have lived through dependent upon the punishment of another? It would not make me feel safer to know that the Black, homeless man who sniffed my hair on the Skytrain was beaten or shot by the police. It would not end my nightmares and my panic attacks to see my ex-boyfriend, himself a survivor of violent trauma, in prison, where he would be exposed to further violations of his rights and bodily autonomy.*

*What I want from these men is something else entirely, and neither #MeToo nor the criminal justice system will offer it to me. I don't want to be interrogated about the details, over and over, in the hope that my story will sound truer than theirs, resulting in some punishment that I didn't choose. I want to know they understand. I want them to know how I felt under their hands. I want them to choose not to hurt me ever again, which is a better and truer safety."*

*Kai Cheng Thom*

# FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE CAUSED HARM OR BEEN ABUSIVE

*"When we are able to admit that the capacity to harm lies within ourselves--within us all--we become capable of radically transforming the conversation around abuse and rape culture. We can go from simply reacting to abuse and punishing 'abusers' to preventing abuse and healing our communities. Because the revolution starts at home, as they say. The revolution starts in your house, in your own relationships, in your bedroom. The revolution starts in your heart."*

*Kai Cheng Thom*

Everyone is capable of both experiencing and causing harm. Sometimes, the specific harm that was done can be less important than the actions that are taken after the harm has happened. We've seen dozens of people get called out on social media, asked to leave bands or friend groups - sometimes entire cities. When this happens, the most common reaction from the person who's been called out is to deny, minimize, victim-blame, or otherwise try to skirt accountability. While this is shitty behavior, it's also pretty easy to understand. Punk culture doesn't exactly provide incentives for us to take responsibility for our behavior, especially



when wrongdoings lead to punishment, ostracization, and more violence. This is part of what we're trying to change. Even if everything is done perfectly, being accountable for your actions is still hard. But as we'll address below, we all have to do hard things if we're invested in a future without police or prisons.

*"If we are not going to rely on police, prisons or the courts, then we are the ones who will have to address things such as domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, murder, stalking, child abuse and child sexual abuse."*

Mia Mingus

# Barriers to Accountability

*"If people who do bad things are bad people and need to be kept away from the rest of us, then why would you own up to being one of those bad people who has done a bad thing?"*

Lea Roth

## **Shame :**

If you've ever been accused of causing harm, you might feel resistant to being accountable because you associate accountability with being a "bad" person. This belief comes from Judeo-Christian either/or thinking about "good" and "evil". This is a problem, as Nuri Nosrat explains, because shame is something that keeps us stuck on ourselves and renders us incapable of really listening to the person we hurt. For example, people who get called out are frequently overwhelmed by embarrassment and a desire to hide.

As community members, often, our first instinct is to distance ourselves as much as possible from the person who caused the harm rather than supporting them through being accountable and changing the behavior. This is a part of the way we're socialized to seek punishment and vengeance, to justify why someone needs to go away, and to cut them out of everything they care about. This doesn't incentivize anyone to take responsibility for their actions if the consequence is losing everything. It doesn't make people less afraid of doing something wrong, but more afraid of being caught.

In our experience, using shame or isolation to punish people who have caused harm can sometimes

lead that person to avoid relationships with anyone who calls them on their shit. Unsurprisingly, this can lead to groups of people who have caused harm to cluster together in consequence-free spaces where they can maintain the same harmful behaviors. Banishing people who've been abusive to their own shitty little island of enablers doesn't do anything to repair or prevent harm. Another byproduct of continued shitty behavior is often pushing people with marginalized identities out of the scene because it creates an environment that doesn't feel safe or inclusive.

### **Loss of Relationship:**

Another reason people resist accountability is the fear of losing relationships. In the punk scene, relationships and community are part of our identity. We use our social connections to schedule shows, find free places to stay when we travel, locate housing and jobs. We depend on each other and our relationships to survive. If we risk that, we risk losing the people we care about. And honestly, sometimes that's going to be the case. The goal here is to minimize the loss of relationships by addressing the circumstances that lead to harmful behavior. When we're accountable for our smaller actions, we're creating ways to relate to each other that reduce and even eliminate the future possibility of harm.

**Source:** the listed "Barriers to Accountability" were interpreted and adapted from interviews with transformative justice practitioners through the Barnard Center for Research on Women series on transformative justice. Specifically, Mia Mingus, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Sonya Shah, Nuri Nosrat, Shira Hassan, Esteban Kelly, and Lea Roth. See the resources and links section for more from this series.

# TAKING ACCOUNTABILITY

The following is paraphrased from Kai Cheng Thom's updated 9 Ways to be Accountable When You've Been Abusive:

## **Learn to listen when someone says you have hurt them**

This means listening without becoming defensive, trying to make excuses, minimizing or denying the extent of the harm, or trying to make yourself the center of the story.

Rape culture has created a script: a hero and a villain, a right and a wrong, an accuser and the accused. Listening to the impact of harm done does not relinquish one's own truth, but it does make room for more perspectives and truths. This creates room for understanding the harm done to another person without immediately attaching it to punishment.

## **Take responsibility for the abuse**

Accept the weight of your own actions, think critically about your role and do not martyr yourself.

## **Accept that your reasons are not excuses**

"Reasons help us understand abuse, but they do not excuse it."

Violence is very rarely actually motivated by sadism, it's usually based in desperation or suffering.

Example: "No one will love me unless I make them."

## **Don't play the "survivor olympics"**

Survivors are not immune to causing harm and their

previous experiences do not exempt them from perpetuating abusive behavior. Anyone can be abusive. Similarly, just because someone caused harm in the past, it doesn't mean that they can't be a victim of harm in the present or future.

### **Take the survivor's lead**

Give the survivor space to express their needs and set boundaries. Often, basic needs must be met before the healing can happen.

On the flip side, survivors may ask for retribution and punishment, but this is what the criminal legal system does and we're not trying to recreate that. If you're going for a TJ approach, then this is where the line is drawn.

BUT, if you're the person who's abused someone, it's not up to you to decide how the process should work. Being accountable means being flexible and reflective. We would add here that the person who acted abusively also needs to be an active participant in the process, and it's unreasonable to expect someone to address their childhood trauma, for example, in a couple of weeks. This process requires patience.

### **Face the fear of accountability**

We want to be honest about the fact that being accountable has high stakes and there are real risks. People lose jobs, friends, and resources. We are not currently set up for true accountability, especially for Black and Brown folks, because of the harsh and discriminatory sentencing in the criminal legal system. But there are also benefits.

Taking accountability after you've caused harm supports your own personal growth - if you care about that - and allows you to move through it without the fear of the abuse following you everywhere you go. Out of the people we know who have caused harm and been accountable to it, they've also been able to be a resource to other people involved in accountability processes.

### **Separate shame from guilt**

Shame is about feeling bad for who you are, guilt is feeling bad for something you have done. Feeling Bad for something you've done (guilt) can be healthy and inspire accountability because it speaks to our values and identifies what we actually care about. People who have been abusive should feel guilty for what they did, but if we take that on as a part of our identity (shame), then we lose capability of change.

### **Don't expect anyone to forgive you**

Nobody has to forgive you for being abusive, and entering an accountability process feeling entitled to forgiveness can feel like an extension of the abuse.

### **Forgive yourself**

You do need to forgive yourself in order to face the harm you have caused, and to heal. You are capable of loving and being loved.

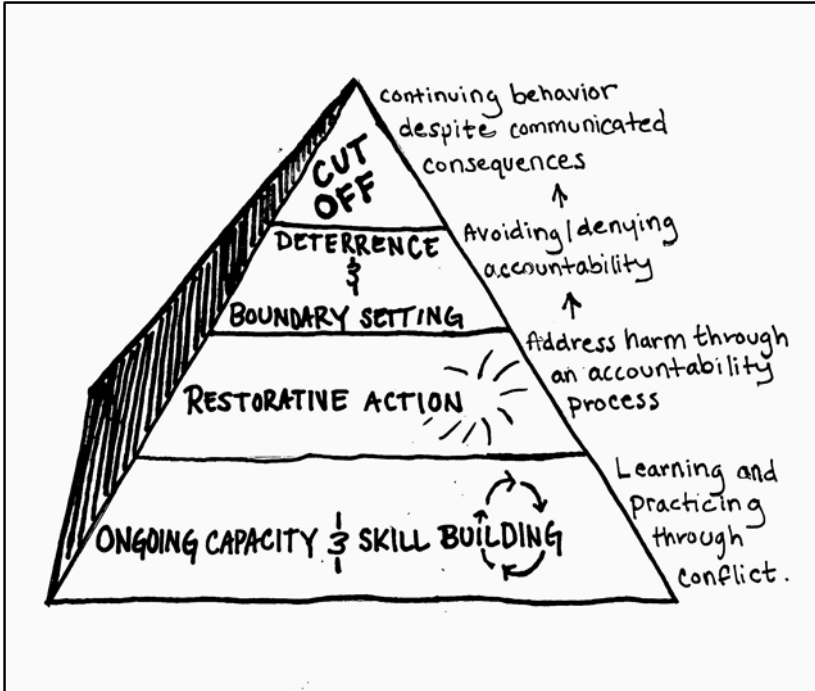
*"If we are ever to see the dream of transformative justice become a widespread reality, we must collectively resist the culture of disposability that says that people who have done harm are no*

*longer people, that they are 'trash,' that they must be 'cancelled.' While consequences for harmful behavior are a necessary outcome of accountability, those consequences should not involve actions that are themselves abusive."*

*-Kai Cheng Thom*



# BIG A LITTLE A ACTION



## Pyramid of Escalation:

We adapted this pyramid from an existing model<sup>2</sup> as a way to think about how consequences can escalate within a community over time if the person who caused harm either refuses to participate or repeats the harmful behavior. The original idea behind this pyramid is a restorative justice tool used to create additional steps between asking someone to be accountable and incarceration. In this pyramid, we changed "incarceration" to "cut off" because we are not advocating for

<sup>2</sup>Check out Braithwaite's Pyramid of Responsive Regulation if you're interested in the original concept



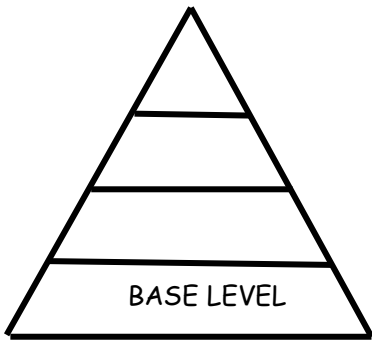
incarceration as a solution. The final stage, "cut off" means creating a boundary where the person who was abusive is no longer welcome in certain spaces where the survivor and their support people have the ability to control who attends. In some circumstances, other communities may be warned about the risk this person poses. This final strategy still does not involve violence or calling the police. This version of "cancelling" is rooted in what punk communities can realistically control and therefore does not rely on an outside institution like the criminal legal system. It should be based on survivor-centered community decision-making and it comes after trying other strategies for engaging in an accountability process — like, **really trying**, for **A WHILE**. This step is for severe situations to increase safety when there are NO other options for the people impacted by harm. Being "cut off" is not being accountable.

It is also important to understand that this is a strategy for choosing a course of action, not the answer for all people and all situations. And this is a work in progress! This is intended to grow and change over time as we learn more about what works and what doesn't. This is only supposed to be a starting point.

Ok...here we go.

### **Base level: Ongoing Capacity and Skill Building**

There is no process to follow at the base level of the pyramid, because this is the work that we should strive to do every day: build our conflict resolution skills. Instead of shutting down,



ongoing practice: reading  
this zine

navigating conflict

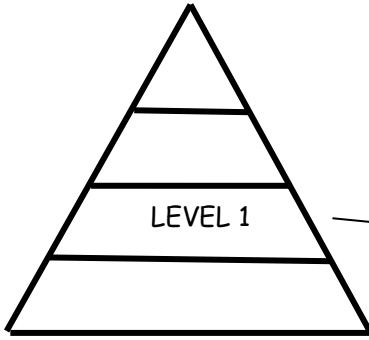
healthy communication

calling in your friend when  
they say something shitty

avoiding people when they're mad at us, or saying bigoted things, we should instead address issues as they're happening. Don't be afraid to lean into healthy conflict. This stage is ongoing. The goal is to create relationships so we feel more equipped to respond when something happens that does require organized accountability and repair. We call this the "base level" because the things we do here should be part of our daily lives - it doesn't escalate to "level 1" until there is an abusive incident. This level is what we mean when we say "an ordinary riot."

### **Level 1: Restorative/Transformative Action**

At this level, someone has been abusive, the person who experienced the harm is willing to participate in a process, and the person who caused harm is willing to actively participate and be accountable for their actions. This is when we escalate to level 1. Most of the information and suggested actions in this zine happen at this level. Ideally, the goal is to repair the harm, however it's identified by the survivor, and transform the responding community in a way that discourages the same - or escalated - harm from happening again.



**request accountability:** accountability process

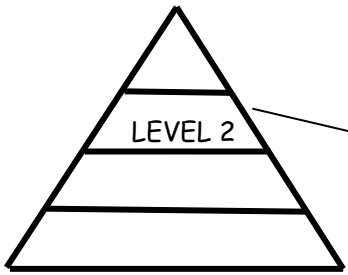
disclosing abuse to sexual partners

written apology

quitting alcohol/drugs

### **Level 2: Deterrence and Firm Boundary-Setting**

At this level, the person who caused harm is avoiding or denying accountability, has chosen not to change their behavior, and/or has repeated the behavior after an accountability process. Level 2 is an escalation in the accountability process that involves communicating consequences for refusing to respect boundaries or to meaningfully engage in the process. You might inform the person who caused harm that if they refuse to acknowledge and change their behavior, it will be addressed publicly. You may tell the person who caused harm that they are at risk of losing certain relationships, opportunities, or access to certain spaces and events. Remember not to frame this as a punishment. Instead, help the person understand exactly *why* you're asking them to perform a certain action. For example, a PWCH may be asked to disclose the abuse or harm they caused to future partners during the accountability process. If this request is made, the PWCH should understand it's because potential partners deserve to make informed sexual decisions. It is crucial to think about what consequences you offer at this level and what might be the blowback for following through. This step comes after genuine attempts to engage in restoration and, ideally, consensus between the people impacted. You do not carry out the named consequences at this level.



**communicate consequences:** if you don't quit drinking, we're going to tell more people about the abuse so they can make an informed choice about being around you when you're drunk.

if you go to X venue when survivor is working the door, you're never going to be allowed back.

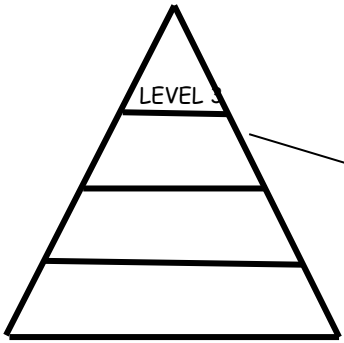
if you don't educate yourself about sexual assault dynamics, you'll be asked to leave community spaces.

Questions to ask yourself when determining consequences:

1. Does this promote emotional or physical safety for the survivor/person harmed?
2. Does this perpetuate more violence?
3. Does the consequence promote healing/learning/growing?
4. Is the consequence a proportionate response to the harm?
5. What are the root causes of the harm? How do the consequences address the root cause?

**Level 3: Cut Off**

At this level, the person who caused or is actively causing harm is considered to be intentionally being abusive and an active threat.



**Cut off contact:** banned indefinitely from community spaces

loss of relationships with certain friends/groups

others warned about abusive behavior

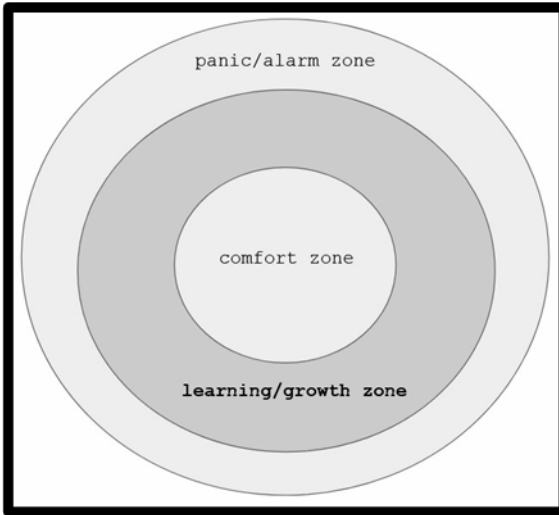
They understand the consequences, but have either ignored or refused requests to engage in repairing or stopping the abuse. This is when you carry out the potential consequences that you communicated. Make sure the PWCH has an appropriate time period to act between level 2 and level 3. If someone is low-income or uninsured, it can take a long time to find a therapist. Level two can take time and it's important to have patience and do what is possible to maintain safety in the meantime. For example, in the ideal case of Marie and Joanna, Marie prioritizes her safety by requesting that Joanna stay away from a mutual hang out spot and to be mindful of playing shows and going to parties where she knows Marie will likely be. By agreeing to these terms, Joanna chooses to engage in an accountability process. If she were to ignore these requests and refuse to acknowledge what happened, the process might follow this way:

- Depending on what Marie wants, she and/or her support people reach out to Joanna and/or her support people to discuss why these requests were made and why it's important that Joanna respects them. They can also ask if Joanna

needs additional support people or resources to go through with the requests.

- Marie and/or her support people can inform Joanna of the consequences for refusing to respect Marie's boundaries and take accountability.
- If Joanna ignores or refuses to engage in the process any further, Marie and her support people carry out the named consequences, like cutting off all ties to Joanna, talking to promoters about not booking her band at certain venues, and asking that she not be allowed in certain spaces that Marie frequents. Then, they can continue to support Marie to feel safe and able to move forward.

This process is not an exact science. It may be challenging to negotiate the line between setting firm boundaries for safety and a desire for revenge. We think the key here is being open to revisiting the process in the future, being patient and understanding this takes time, and not getting caught up in the desire for revenge or self-righteousness. It's also important to check in about how people's unmet needs, like having adequate support, and lack of access to resources, such as time and money, can impact someone's ability to be accountable. We advocate giving people the benefit of the doubt until it becomes clear that the person doesn't give a shit. Even at this level, we're not advocating violence, bullying, or harassment.



**Tips for support people involved in this process:**

- Support people for the PWCH need to lean into conflict, too. You can stay in a relationship with someone without

excusing or minimizing their behavior.

- You can't make the survivor and their support system "the bad guy". If you don't like the consequences, you can negotiate, communicate unmet needs, and ask questions.
- There might be work for more people than just the person who used violence. Maybe the culture of the friend group/larger punk scene needs to be addressed as a root cause of the harm.
- Accountability and repair require the person who caused harm to learn and grow. That's impossible if they're coddled in the process to the point of not understanding the impact of the harm they caused. It's also impossible if they feel under attack, bullied, and threatened. If the point is to change the behavior and prevent it from recurring, the community needs to support that person without excusing or minimizing the behavior.

*The learning zone is an educational tool we adapted from Tom Senninger*

## Common Mistakes for People New to Transformative Justice:

As we mentioned earlier, making mistakes is part of the deal. At first, we'll have more fuck-ups than wins. But mistakes are learning opportunities, cliché as it sounds. Exploring new ways of doing things isn't easy, which is probably why we fall back on the same punitive resolutions over and over again - because they're known to us. It's important to talk about our fuck-ups, because comparing notes is how we get better. Lukayo Estrella has a great article (5 Common Mistakes I've Made in TJ Work) where they share common mistakes they've made early on in TJ work. Here are some ways we've seen them show up for us.

**1. I didn't know my options** - Chances are, if you're doing TJ work with any group of people, they're new to this kind of thing and might not know their options. Sometimes a TJ process isn't a good fit, and those involved should discuss all options and resources available. You can still incorporate TJ-esque strategies in repairing harm or help connect people to supportive resources like therapy.

**2. There wasn't enough support for those involved** - We've repeatedly seen people get kicked out of their scene after everyone turned against them. Another option may be negotiation when they are not allowed to attend specific events because the survivor plans to be there. As we said before, angry mobs shouldn't be the arbiters of justice. How to give space for the survivor's safety and healing should be determined by the survivor and



their support people. If access to certain spaces is restricted, it shouldn't be with the goal of cutting someone off from their community but to offer the survivor access to social support that is free of engagement with the person who abused them. Ask yourself if you're setting a boundary for safety or to punish the person who acted abusively.

**3. We didn't have a plan** - A lot of us tend to be impulsive. We often rush into things without having a clear goal or action plan in mind. Not only is it important to think about what the goals are (the person who caused harm won't go to X space, will read X book, etc.), but what will happen if those goals aren't met. What if the harm-doer comes to the space after they're told not to? When will you know if the situation needs to escalate? In some ways, the early crisis intervention work is the easy part. People are frequently ready to take accountability when they're getting called out, but don't keep the momentum after the initial call for accountability. We've seen people who have experienced harm feel the impact of the violence long after the harm-doer is interested in reparation work. These things should be addressed on the front end by the people involved in the TJ process.

**4. We didn't have consent from everybody** - It may seem obvious, but in order for a process to work, everyone has to be on board, aware of their role, and included in any big decision making. This includes the survivor, the person who did the harm, and the support people. Doing any vigilantism or acting on the survivor's behalf without their permission is not okay and can cause more harm down the road. For an example of how it might shake down if you don't have consent from everyone, See the story *i might change my mind* in the "For People Who

Have Experienced Harm" section on page 58.

**5. We didn't know the difference between "consequence" and punishment"** - TJ is not about retribution. Ever. If the survivor is out for blood, if they insist their abuser's hands be broken, then a TJ process is not going to work.

Fundamentally, causing more harm, perpetuating cycles of abuse, recreating systems of oppression, is not compatible with TJ. If vigilantism is someone's jam and they truly believe that's the only way they're ever going to get justice, then we can't stop them. That's their choice. But it's not transformative, it's the same old shit, and it's not a good fit for TJ.

# CULTURE CHANGE AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE

community accountability



When people think and talk about transformative justice, they often focus heavily on accountability processes. But what happens *after* interpersonal violence occurs is only a fraction of what TJ seeks to accomplish. Part of what separates TJ from restorative justice and the criminal legal system is that it urges us to think about the conditions that allowed the harm or violence to occur in the first place.

What was it about *our community* that created a situation in which violence was able to happen?

A lot of what contributes to sexual and interpersonal violence is social norms. Social norms are the accepted behaviors and social dynamics in a scene. For example, you'd probably act differently in a group of old friends than you would at a job interview. That's because we have a road map that tells us how we're supposed to behave in certain situations.

Social norms are usually informed by values. Collective or cultural values are the principles and ideals that a community or society is built on. Christian values, for example, are extremely different from punk values, which is why punks behave differently from conservative Christian church-goers. Most people are in the scene because their personal values aligned with the values of some subset of punk.

But, as much as we like to believe our "punk" values are rooted in anti-authoritarianism, anti-oppression, anti-capitalism, etc., we were raised with the cultural values of whatever countries and communities we were raised in. And that matters. Because those cultural values still influence our community. We still enter punk with all of the privilege our identities may afford us, some residual Christian values from conservative upbringings, and all of the racism, sexism, transphobia and other bigotries drilled into us from childhood. Part of community accountability is about recognizing that this is true and actively working to dismantle all of the garbage that exists inside dismantle all of the garbage that exists

inside all of us. For example, community accountability might involve the harm-doer's support people reckoning with the ways they contribute to a culture that creates violence and harm.

*"All of us have our own role and responsibility to take in ending violence. Community-based solutions to violence require that we all step up and think about the ways we may have contributed to violence, the ways we may need acknowledge and make amends for our contribution to violence, and the ways we can take action to make sure that violence does not continue and that healthy alternatives can take its place."*

Creative Interventions Toolkit

## closing time.

You made it. We're glad you stuck it out with us. We don't know everything- that's not the goal. We hope we created something we can share and build from - with all of you. Please let us know your thoughts and ideas, your stories, what worked for you and what didn't. Reach out if you want thought partners for a process.

Know that we're learning too, and the best part of this whole thing was talking about it, and thinking about it, and then talking about it some more with so many of our friends and especially our REVIEWERS. Because damn, ya'll - the most big, heartfelt, epic THANK YOU to our reviewers for your incredibly solid feedback, your honesty and your community.

If anyone wants to talk to us, ask us questions or yell at us, you can reach us at

[zine@anordinaryriot.com](mailto:zine@anordinaryriot.com)

"Abolition is about presence, not absence.  
It's about building life-affirming  
institutions."

Ruth Wilson Gilmore

# MINI GLOSSARY



**Disclaimer:** *Language is always changing and evolving as we learn more and find better and more inclusive ways to describe the diversity of human experience. Because of this, language quickly becomes outdated. Depending on when you're reading this, some of these terms may have changed or may no longer be appropriate. The definitions below are neither gospel nor stagnant - do your research and use your best judgment to identify the best language to use!*

**Abuse:** Treating someone with violence or cruelty despite being made aware of the impact. Abuse can be psychological, emotional, sexual, or physical and is often a pattern.

**Abuser:** A person who repeatedly behaves in ways that harm others, especially romantic partners. Sometimes people choose not to label a person

who perpetuates abuse an “abuser” due to stigma and dehumanization.

**Cisgender (or cis):** Anyone who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Conflict\*:** Disagreement, difference, or argument between two or more people. Can be personal, political, structural. There may be power differences, and there will most likely be dynamics of privilege and oppression at play. Conflicts can be direct and named, or indirect and felt. Conflicts rooted in genuine differences are rarely resolved quickly and easily.

**Harm\*:** the suffering, loss, pain, and impact that can occur both in conflict and in instances of abuse, as well as in misunderstandings steeped in differences of life experience, opinion, or needs.

**Harmer/Harm-Doer/Person who caused harm/PWCH:** A person whose actions cause another person to be impacted by harm. These terms are often used in transformative justice in lieu of abuser or perpetrator because they recognize the humanity of the people involved, rather than reducing them to their action.

**Harm reduction:** Actions, behaviors or interventions that seek to minimize the harm that is caused by certain activities. For example, harm reduction principles advocate for access to clean needles and safe injection sites to reduce the harm associated with heroin use like contracting HIV or overdosing, rather than simply telling



people not to use drugs (which obviously doesn't work).

**Interpersonal Violence:** An umbrella term to describe violence or harm (physical or verbal) between two people. Can be one time or ongoing.

**Marginalized:** people, groups, and concepts treated as insignificant or peripheral (Oxford dictionary).

**Marginalized genders** are basically anyone other than cisgender men--e.g. trans and nonbinary folks, cisgender women.

**Mistakes\*:** when someone straight up messes up. Says something offensive or triggering, mishandles a situation, is dishonest, has a negative impact in spite of positive intentions, or doesn't think something through. Mistakes can be resolved with an authentic, informed apology.

**Misunderstanding\*:** incorrectly interpreting or not understanding what is being communicated. Something that can be resolved through a clarifying conversation, and if not addressed, can fester into conflict.

**Perpetrator:** A term used by the state to describe a person commits a crime. Some people choose not to use the term perpetrator because it's a term developed, and most often used, by law enforcement.

**Person who experienced/person impacted by harm/violence:** A way to refer to someone who has experienced or been impacted by sexual violence when they do not identify as a victim or a survivor or you don't know how they identify.

**Positionality:** the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status.

*Positionality* also describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world. (source-dictionary.com)

**Rape:** A term used by the criminal legal system to describe a sexual assault that specifically includes nonconsensual penetration.

**Rape Culture:** The various attitudes and behaviors in our culture (rigid gender norms, victim blaming, sexism, sex negativity, slut shaming, cat calling) that contribute to an environment that normalizes sexual violence.

**Sexual Abuse:** a pattern of sexual violation to varying degrees

**Sexual Assault:** a legal term used to describe forceful violation of consent, either physically, due to age, mental capacity, or force by position of authority. This term is common outside of a legal context, too.

**Sexual Harassment:** A pattern of unwelcome sexual behaviors that may include street harassment and sexual commentary. Typically does not involve a physical assault.

**Shitty Straight Cis White Dude (SSCWD):** A cis man who is straight, white, and consistently behaves in entitled and harmful ways. The SSCWD is totally

unaware of his privilege and exhibits no desire to do better.

**Survivor:** A term typically used by anti-sexual violence advocates and activists to describe a person who has experienced an act(s) of sexual violence. Some people feel empowered by identifying as a survivor because it uplifts their resiliency through surviving a violent event. Some people don't like being called a survivor because "victim" or another term feels more appropriate, or because it feels like forced heroism.

- Some people identify as both a victim and survivor, or neither. You will see both terms used throughout this zine.

**Trauma:** Trauma is often used to refer to the psychological distress that occurs following a traumatic event(s) where a person's ability to cope is overwhelmed. While someone who has experienced past trauma may feel totally normal some or most of the time, they may also have depressive or anxious periods, panic attacks and/or mood swings. People who suffer from depression or anxiety might not realize that it's connected to a traumatic event. The brain is weird like that.

**Triggers:** An unintentional, neurophysiological response to being reminded of a past traumatic event. The trigger could have everything or seemingly nothing to do with the person's trauma or a traumatic event. Being triggered is usually a pretty uncomfortable, and sometimes confusing, experience.

- Don't be a dick and make fun of/overuse to mock people. You sound like you read Breitbart News when you do that.

**Victim:** A term typically used by the state to describe a person who is harmed or impacted by a crime. Some people who have experienced sexual violence identify as a victim.

**Victim Blaming:** Blaming someone for the violence they experienced by implying that their actions were somehow "asking for it" by getting too drunk, being flirtatious, dressing a certain way, etc.

*\*This definition is from We Will Not Cancel Us by Adrienne Marie Brown*

# THE LIST:

## RESOURCES

### questions to vet your potential therapist

Getting a therapist is often a non-negotiable part of someone's accountability process and an integral part of someone's healing process after experiencing violence. Honestly, therapy is a pretty good fucking idea for MOST people, if nothing more than a maintenance or prevention strategy. Having said that, therapy certainly isn't for everyone. It isn't the end-all, be-all of any kind of recovery. And sadly, there are probably more shitty therapists out there than good ones. Also, mental/behavioral health, as a field, has a long history of harming marginalized communities — particularly queer, disabled and BIPOC people — through "corrective" therapy, forced assimilation, invalidation, etc. This might impact someone's willingness or ability to meaningfully engage with therapy. For these reasons, and others, a lot of people choose to seek out a therapist that they share identities with.

Anyway, even after you get past all the stigma and weird mental shit that happens when you decide to seek out a therapist, finding one isn't a process that feels accessible for most people. First, there are the letters. SO MANY LETTERS. The letters after a therapist's name lets you know what type of training they've received and what kind of counseling or therapy they studied in school. The letters can also let you know how much experience a therapist has. There are also different letters to let you know what the therapist's modalities are.

Modalities basically mean what therapeutic techniques the therapist is trained to use. Some of these modalities can be regular talk therapy (Like CBT) or can use more advanced techniques (like EMDR) to try to rewire the brain to process trauma.

There are too many letters and letter variations to list here (you can find that [HERE](#) if you're reading this electronically) but we suggest you do an internet search for the different letters to see what they mean because they do really impact what your experience will be like. For the record, we like social workers (MSW, LMSW, LCSW) - they tend to incorporate more of a social justice lens into their practice. But we can't vouch for all social workers. This also doesn't mean that other types of therapists can't be just as good. You'll have to judge based on a variety of things, like experience, special focuses like trauma-based, queer, child sexual-abuse, abuser, etc., accessibility/affordability/insurance, and modalities.

The other thing we want you to know about therapist shopping, is that while all of the above can be intimidating, your therapist works for you. Most people don't realize that they are actually in charge of their therapeutic experience. You are hiring them to do a job, and just like anyone else you would hire to do a job, you should ask them some questions before committing to ensure that they are a good fit for you.

As a side note, someone can be a decent therapist and still not be a good match for you. Like any relationship, there needs to be chemistry for it to work and sometimes the chemistry just won't be there even if everything else seems to line up. If you find yourself in that position, just try again, as frustrating as that is. Good therapists will probably even help you find someone else. But if you think there's potential, you should feel comfortable giving them feedback and let them know what's not working for you. Sometimes people have

to start work with several different therapists before they find the right one. Check out [Open Path Collective](#) online to find a national network of sliding scale therapists.

Okay. Back to the questions.

The questions here are meant to offer some guidance for people in very specific circumstances, but you can personalize your questions based on your own identity and experiences. For example, if you're queer, you can ask the therapist about their experience working with queer folks. If you're non-monogamous, kinky, or both, you probably want to check-in about their knowledge on non-traditional relationship styles. Check out Kink Aware Professionals for a database of therapists who identified themselves as kink/poly/queer-friendly. And generally, you'll probably want to ask some generic questions about their experience and philosophical approach to therapy. Also, as mundane as it sounds, asking questions about how payment and billing work on the front end can be helpful to relieve any anxiety about logistics. This is totally normal.

Questions people who have caused harm can ask their therapist:

(some therapists, particularly those at Rape Crisis Centers, will not work with people who have caused harm)

- Do you work with people who have been abusive
- What is your experience with that?
- What is your philosophy about abuse recovery and changed behavior?
- What are your thoughts on prisons and policing? Do you have any knowledge about alternative justice?

- What do you believe is the most effective strategy to help people change abusive patterns?

Questions people who have experienced harm can ask their therapist:

- Have you worked with abuse/sexual violence survivors before?
- What is your approach to therapy?
- What do you think should happen to people who have been abusive?
- What does trauma-informed mean to you?
- What happens if we disagree?

## Local Rape Crisis Centers

Local rape crisis centers are a free resource for accessing 24/7 peer counseling, individual and group therapy, information about other local resources like clinics, shelter, housing, and food, and support finding free medical care after a sexual assault. Depending on the area you live in and the advocate you talk to, its hard to say what a local rape crisis center's stance will be on transformative justice, the criminal legal system, and how much they'll suggest making a police report. **Most likely, they'll affirm your right to choose how to move forward, but won't have much to offer around non-carceral responses other than therapy.** Find your local RCC: [www.raliance.org/rape-crisis-centers/](http://www.raliance.org/rape-crisis-centers/)



## Organizations, People, and

Survivors should be at the forefront of transformative justice AND *experiencing* sexual violence does not come with all of the knowledge and skills to *handle* sexual violence on a community or societal level. The work is and should be rooted in the experiences of survivors and marginalized groups, but there is often a need for survivors, harm-doers, and their support people to get on the same page by cultivating a shared understanding of TJ concepts. Reading articles, watching videos, and having conversations about it can help with that.

BUT, there is a lot of inaccurate information out there, particularly on social media where people who are still figuring things out (as we ALL are) sometimes have a major platform. It can be really hard to vet resources, so if you're interested in TJ practice, we recommend getting a variety of information from a variety of sources. It's also important not to take anything as gospel - every person, every situation, is different and what works best for one person or community might not be what works best for you and your community. To further expand your knowledge and practice, see some of our favorite resources below.

Remember: this work is always evolving, we will never fully arrive.

**Organizations & Individuals:**

- MH First
- Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (PODS)
- API Chaya Natural Helpers
- Project Nia
- Shira Hassan, Mimi Kim, Mia Mingus, Ejeris Dixon, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Lea Roth, Mariame Kaba, Adrienne Maree Brown
- Open Path Collective (sliding scale therapy for uninsured)
- Stop it Now- a helpline with a public health prevention approach for adults who either have been or fear they will be sexually abusive towards children

**Further Reading/Viewing:**

- Barnard Center for Research on Women Transformative Justice Series
- Creative Interventions Toolkit
- Beyond Survival
- The Revolution Starts at Home
- Transformharm.org
- Just Practice Collaborative- TJ Mixtape
- Leaving Evidence (blog)
  - How to Give a Good Apology/Four Parts to Accountability
- Land Reparations and Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit: <https://resourcegeneration.org/land-reparations-indigenous-solidarity-action-guide>
- Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook



[zine@anordinaryriot.com](mailto:zine@anordinaryriot.com)