



# Transformative Justice

A Curriculum Guide

A Project NIA collaboration  
Fall 2013

Project NIA presents...

# Chicago Transformative Justice Fall

(October-December 2013)

This Fall, Project NIA kicks off a series of transformative justice-focused discussions, film screenings, an art exhibition, and other activities. We got an early start with an event on August 15th about how we might consider the Trayvon Martin case through a transformative justice lens. Our goal is to raise public awareness about transformative justice and to think critically about our practice of mass incarceration. We will explore the values and social forces that underpin our punishment mindset and practices. We will examine how we respond to harm and injustice— both in our own choices as individuals and in what we ask our institutions to do in our names.

There are many ways that you can participate in *Transformative Justice Fall*.

- Use this curriculum guide to discuss transformative justice with youth, neighbors, colleagues, and friends. If you are an educator, consider using it with your students.
- Submit art. We have two calls for submissions (descriptions of each project can be found at the end of this guide, or you can check out the sites for each project below...)

***Miniature Cities of Refuge:*** <http://www.micahbazant.com/call-for-tiny-cities/> (**Due October 21**)

***Picturing a World Without Prisons:*** <http://tinyurl.com/q84gsvn> (**Due October 15**)

- Attend events (events TBA, stay tuned to NIA dispatches at <http://niastories.wordpress.com/>)
- Organize your own events (submit details about your event by September 30)
- Co-sponsor the Cities of Refuge art exhibition: <http://tinyurl.com/mmkvml> (We need financial contributions as well as groups and organizations who are interested in spreading the word)
- Co-sponsor events

**For more information about Transformative Justice Fall, contact Mariame Kaba at [projectnia@hotmail.com](mailto:projectnia@hotmail.com)**

## Credits:

Concept and contributions of materials by Mariame Kaba, original artworks (pictured on cover, & 'background' page) and content by Micah Bazant, content & compilation of materials by Billy Dee, "NoteCard Revolution" activity by Ann Russo (DePaul University).

As part of the Transformative Justice Fall Initiative, Project NIA has partnered with artist Micah Bazant to create this curriculum guide which draws on Micah's ongoing collaborative work on the topics of scapegoating and transformative justice. This guide uses the publication *Miklat Miklat*, a zine\* co-produced by Micah Bazant and Lewis Wallace, as a jumping off point for discussion and exploration of transformative justice

\*the zine can be found online at:

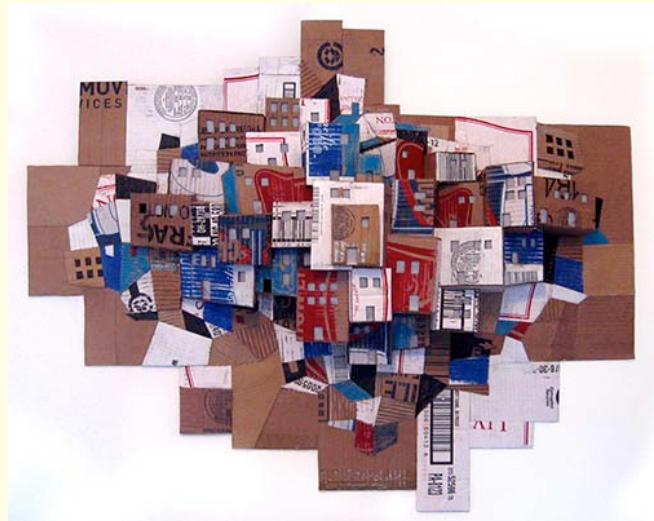
<http://www.micahbazant.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/miklat-zine.pdf>

## Some Background on *Miklat Miklat* and The Cities of Refuge Project...

*Miklat Miklat* is an ongoing collaborative project about scapegoating and transformative justice. Versions of this piece have been shown at several art shows, including *Dirtstar:Take Root* in 2011, and the *Streetopia* and *Best Revenge* exhibitions in 2012. Lewis Wallace and I created a companion zine that offers stories and questions about transformative justice.

The root of the modern scapegoat concept is an ancient ritual in which the community was cleansed by placing their transgressions onto a goat, which was then sacrificed or led out to die in the wilderness.

Another strategy of dealing with social transgression, also described in the Torah, are the Cities of Refuge, or *Arei Miklat*. In theory, a person accused of a serious crime could flee to a city of refuge and live a full life, safe from violent retribution. This imperfect model of the cities of refuge was a starting point to imagine how we can create sanctuaries, transformative justice, and healing, even in a world where we are both scapegoats and participate in scapegoating.



This piece was a way to create a concrete and metaphysical City of Refuge, and then to invite the goat inside the city.

-Micah Bazant

see images of Cities of Refuge art installation here:

<http://www.micahbazant.com/miklat-miklat/>

# What Is Transformative Justice?

Source: Philly Stands Up! (<http://www.phillystandsup.com/tj.html>)

Transformative Justice has no one definition. It is:

**... a way of practicing alternative justice which acknowledges individual experiences and identities and works to actively resist the state's criminal injustice system.**

Transformative Justice recognizes that oppression is at the root of all forms of harm, abuse and assault. As a practice it therefore aims to address and confront those oppressions on all levels and treats this concept as an integral part to accountability and healing. **Generation FIVE** does a great job of laying out the main goals, principles and questions of Transformative Justice. These are their words: The goals of Transformative Justice are:

- *Safety, healing, and agency for survivors*
- *Accountability and transformation for people who harm*
- *Community action, healing, and accountability*
- *Transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence - systems of oppression and exploitation, domination, and state violence*

**The principles of a Transformative Justice approach to addressing all forms of violence include:**

- Liberation
- Shifting power
- Accountability
- Safety
- Collective Action
- Respect Cultural Difference/ Guard against Cultural Relativism
- Sustainability

**Transformative Justice invites us to ask:**

- How do we build our personal and collective capacity to respond to trauma and support accountability in a transformational way?
- How do we shift power towards collective liberation?
- How do we build effective and sustainable movements that are grounded in resilience and life-affirming power?

Sources:

<http://www.generationfive.org/the-issue/transformative-justice/>

<http://www.phillystandsup.com/tj.html>

# Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice:

## Definitions and Debates

by Candace Smith, Mar 5, 2013, at 08:00 am

Reproduced from source: The Society Pages (online publication)

<http://thesocietypages.org/sociologylens/2013/03/05/restorative-justice-and-transformative-justice-definitions-and-debates/>

As explained by Walker (2013), modern restorative justice (RJ) began in the 1970s with the revitalization of the idea that victims and offenders need to come together and talk about what happened in an effort to achieve peace and (hopefully) restoration. While such a thought seems somewhat revolutionary in our day of overly punitive justice, RJ was the primary method used to handle offenses in pre-modern times. In fact, it was not until the Norman Conquest in 1066 that RJ was overcome by new techniques to deal with criminal events (Braithwaite 1999; Walker 2013). In the centuries that have passed since restorative justice was dismissed in much of the Western world, crimes have increasingly been regarded as an issue between the state and the offender. Somehow, the victim has been almost completely removed from the equation. In the late 1970s, however, Howard Zehr—who, at that time, worked as a director of a halfway house for recently released inmates in Indiana—stumbled upon the benefits of what he referred to as “victim-offender reconciliation.” Since that time, restorative justice (a term coined by psychologist Albert Eglash) has grown in popularity as it has become progressively more apparent that true restoration requires input from the offender as well as from the victim. While it may have taken nearly a thousand years for us to come back around to this idea, RJ is once again picking up steam as we attempt to overcome the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of our oft overly retribution-focused criminal justice system.

When it comes to defining RJ, it seems as if the only consensus is that there is no consistent definition (Walker 2013). In an attempt to broadly define the concept, Braithwaite (2004:28) writes that “restorative justice is a process where all the stakeholders affected by an injustice have an opportunity to discuss how they have been affected by the injustice and to decide what should be done to repair the harm.” That is, since crime hurts, it should also have a chance to heal. Beyond attempting to restore the victim and community to their pre-crime conditions, RJ is further concerned with assigning to the offender active responsibility as opposed to assigning passive responsibility. This means that rather than being told they committed a crime and then being punished for their indiscretions, offenders are asked to acknowledge their crime and attempt to atone for it. From this viewpoint, RJ may be understood to be a third option beyond conservative retribution and liberal rehabilitation. It is essentially an attempt to provide restoration to victims, communities, and offenders.

While coming from the same background as restorative justice, transformative justice (TJ) takes a bit of a bolder approach. Instead of simply seeking to restore the actors, TJ sets out to transform them for the better. As expressed by Wozniak (2008), TJ seeks to change the larger social structure as well as the personal structure of those involved. Realizing the unjustness of our current criminal justice system, transformative justice wants to be productive by providing victims with answers for why they were victimized, recognizing the wrong that has occurred, providing restitution, and restoring/establishing peace and security. Highly influenced by Richard Quinney and his writings regarding critical criminology and peacemaking criminology, TJ is aware of the injustices of the world as well as the need to spread peace. As Braithwaite (1999:2) explains, "Crime is an opportunity to prevent greater evils, to confront crime with a grace that transforms human lives to paths of love and giving."

As for deciding which term is more appropriate (restorative justice vs. transformative justice), it is likely that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. This is because both concepts are essentially reaching for the same goal. Still, there is reason for debate. While TJ more plainly states its objective of achieving social-level and individual-level transformation, the less ambitious term restorative justice necessarily leads to questions regarding what we want to restore. If one poor neighbor steals from another poor neighbor, are we just seeking to restore the victim to his previous level of poverty? With the term transformative justice, it is more blatantly clear that we wish to not only provide restitution to the victim, but that we want to improve the overall situation for the victim, the offender, and the community. Still, despite these battles with semantics, I am apt to side with Zehr (2011). In a blog on the subject, he explains that he prefers to think of RJ and TJ as being essentially the same concept. Realizing that although they may lead to some differences in practice, Zehr sees each as aiming to lead to positive social transformation no matter the terminology employed. For the most part, I agree with this perspective. I like to view RJ and TJ as two ways to describe the same concept. If forced to choose, however, I would prefer the field to adopt the term of transformative justice. To me, this moniker more appropriately and clearly describes the goal of transformation. But, what do you think? Is one term "better" than the other. Does one more clearly state the goal? Does this terminology even matter? Also, how do you feel about RJ/TJ and its implications?

## **For further Reading:**

Braithwaite, John. 1999. "Restorative Justice: Assessing Optimistic and Pessimistic Accounts." *Crime and Justice* 25:1-127.

—. 2004. "Restorative Justice and De-Professionalization." *The Good Society* 13(1):28-31.

Walker, Lorenn. 2013. "Restorative Justice: Definition and Purpose." Pp. 3-13 in *Restorative Justice Today: Practical Applications*, edited by Katherine S. van Wormer and Lorenn Walker. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Wozniak, John F., Michael C. Braswell, Ronald E. Vogel, and Kristie R. Blevins. 2008. "Introduction to Transformative Justice: Critical and Peacemaking Themes Influenced by Richard Quinney." Pp. 1-30 in *Transformative Justice: Critical and Peacemaking Themes Influenced by Richard Quinney*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Zehr, Howard. 2011. "Restorative or Transformative Justice?" *Restorative Justice Blog*, March 10, 2011. Retrieved March 3, 2013 (<http://emu.edu/now/restorative-justice/2011/03/10/restorative-or-transformative-justice/>).

## **Note about the Curriculum Guide:**

This guide was created with the goal of sharing activities and prompts for discussion that could be used in many different contexts. You don't need to be a teacher, an experienced facilitator or self-identified community organizer in order to bring this material to a group. All you need is a small group of people who are interested in learning and sharing knowledge about Transformative Justice, and who are willing to engage in discussion and activities.

It must be said, however, that the activities in this guide were created with the role of facilitator in mind. For the activities to be successful and generative, it is important to have one or two people engaged in the role of facilitator.

As a facilitator, although it is not necessary to be a specialist on the material at hand, it is important to prepare yourself for the role.

Below you will find guidelines on facilitation, reproduced from:

### **"Something is Wrong: Exploring the Roots of Youth Violence"**

*(Edited by Mariame Kaba, J. Cyriac Mathew, and Nathan Haines).*

You can find additional resources regarding facilitation in this text online at:

[http://www.project-nia.org/docs/Something\\_Is\\_Wrong-Curriculum.pdf](http://www.project-nia.org/docs/Something_Is_Wrong-Curriculum.pdf)

*\*material on facilitation can be found on pages 9-15*

## **FACILITATION**

*The goals of facilitation are:*

- To create a forum for group discussion
- To educate
- To articulate and respond to the questions and concerns of group members
- To clarify and address issues



## **Facilitating Behaviors:**

**Clarifying** Interpreting , clarifying misunderstandings, defining terms

"Tell us what you meant when you said that it was oppressive. We may not all have the same definition of oppressive."

**Encouraging** Being warm, friendly, responsive, respectful

"We're all learners in this process."

**Evaluating** Asking questions that encourage group members to examine an issue from a different perspective.

"How does that comment relate to the way others in the room might feel in a similar situation?"

**Gatekeeping** Managing time and group participation

"Let's hear from some of the people who haven't said much today..."

**Giving** Offering facts or personal experiences to clarify a point

"That is a relevant observation. In fact, that very thing happened at..."

**Initiating** Suggesting new ideas, definitions, approaches

"Perhaps if we looked at the issue this way..."

**Orienting** Bringing the group back to task

"That's an interesting point. Perhaps we can discuss it further later or during a break because now we really need to get back to what we started."

Considerations for Facilitating Discussions

### **Resolving Conflicts**

Conciliating differences, cooperative problem solving

"Even though you feel that way, Jason, can you understand what Tina is saying?"

**Seeking** Asking for clarification, suggestions, more information

"What has your experience been?"

**Summarizing** Pulling it all together, restating points

"What I think I hear you saying is..."

"Let's review what we just discussed..."

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## **Final Note on Using the Guide:**

*Read carefully through the guidelines for each activity before you begin so that you can make note of elements that may be challenging for your group. If you need to modify an activity in some way so that it is more accessible or engaging, go ahead!*

*Additionally, when working within time constraints (such as a classroom period), it is important to plan ahead for how much time you will allow for each element of an activity, and to be realistic about the level of sustained focus you can ask of a group. What can you fit within an hour? Do you need to make space for warm-ups, ice-breakers, and snacks? Make space for breaks, and allow time for "wrap-up" or a closing time to "check-out" with the group.*

*Good luck!*



# "The Lessons Of Nathaniel Jones"

## Activity #1

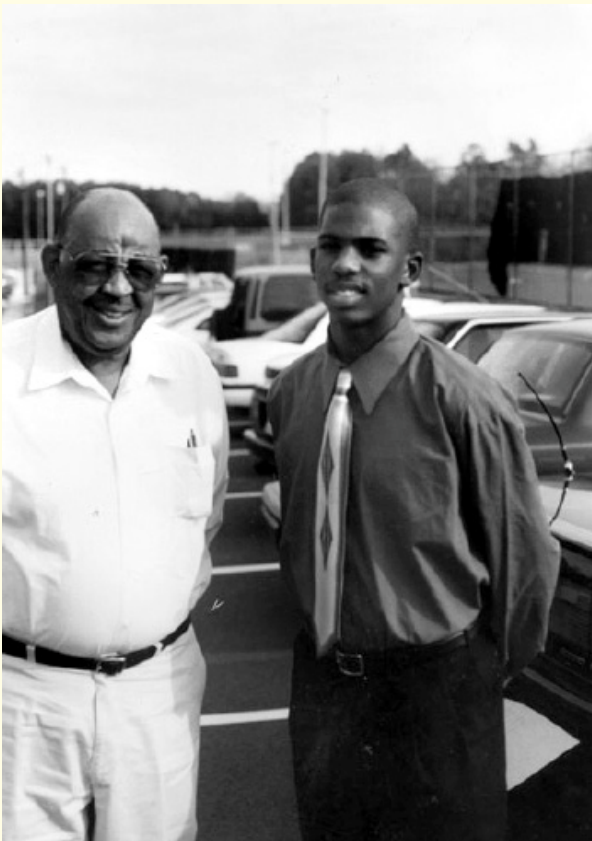
For this discussion, start out by reading "The Lessons of Nathaniel Jones" by Rick Reilly, which was reproduced in *Miklat Miklat*\*.

(You will find the story on the following page of this guide).

\*The zine *Miklat Miklat* can be found online at :

<http://www.micahbazant.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/miklat-zine.pdf>

Discuss the following questions:



Chris Paul and his grandfather Nathaniel Jones

1. What is the article about? What are the main points?
2. How did Chris Paul deal with his grief?
3. What made the compassion that Chris Paul demonstrated towards his grandfather's killers possible?
4. Would you be able to forgive your loved one's killer? Why or why not?
5. How would you define "forgiveness?"
6. Do you believe that people who commit a bad act can change?

# The Lessons of Nathaniel Jones

*by Rick Reilly for ESPN.com, April 28, 2011*

On the moonless night of Nov. 15, 2002, five young boys ran across a park, jumped a 61-year-old man, bound his wrists, duct-taped his mouth, and beat him with pipes until his heart stopped.

All for his wallet.

That man was Nathaniel Jones, the grandfather of future NBA star Chris Paul.

Today, those boys are men, sitting in prisons across the state of North Carolina, some serving 14-year terms, some life. On the TV sets in their prison rec rooms this week, the Hornets point guard has been wrecking the Los Angeles Lakers, averaging nearly a triple-double, the shiniest star of these playoffs. The five are all about the same age as Paul, same race, same height, and from the same hometown. They have one other thing in common with Chris Paul: All six wish they were free.

It's something Paul told me during a "Homecoming" episode once on ESPN, and every time I watch him play I can't get it out of my mind. Paul, now 25, said: "These guys were 14 and 15 years old [at the time], with a lot of life ahead of them. I wish I could talk to them and tell them, 'I forgive you. Honestly.' I hate to know that they're going to be in jail for such a long time. I hate it."

Whose heart has that much room?

"Chris Paul hates it?" says Geneva Bryant, the mother of one of the five, Christopher Bryant. "Well, so do I. My boy is 23 now. He's been in since he was 15." Her son has six years to go. Dorrell Brayboy, 23, has six years to go. Jermal Tolliver, 23, has seven. Two brothers — Nathaniel Cauthen, 24, and Rayshawn Banner, 23 — are in until they die.

Paul's attitude stuns one of the defense attorneys who appealed the verdict and lost.

"I've probably tried 30 homicide cases," says Paul Herzog, of Fayetteville. "It's very rare for a family survivor in a murder case to feel that way. You just don't see that ever. That's incredibly generous of Mr. Paul."

To understand how generous, you have to know how close Paul was to his granddad.

The man everybody called "PaPa Chili" was the first black man to open a service station in North Carolina and both Chris and his brother worked at it. PaPa Chili was known to let people run tabs when times got tough. Plenty of times, he'd hand people money out of the cash register to get by. Paul called him "my best friend."

The day Paul signed with nearby Wake Forest, the first person to put a Demon Deacons hat on him was his grandfather.

The next day, he was dead.

None of the five boys were particularly hardened criminals. Only Cauthen had been previously arrested — twice for running away and once for stealing his mom’s car. They decided they wanted to rob somebody.

Around the corner, in his white van, came that somebody — Jones. He’d closed the filling station and was now getting grocery bags out of his van. “Let’s go get him,” one of them said. They sprinted across Belview Park and jumped him.

Using tape they’d bought that day at a drugstore, they bound his head, neck and hands and began a “relentless, remorseless, conscienceless” attack, according to the judge who sentenced them. Jones died in his carport.

Paul, a high school senior, was so woebegone he was literally sick. Two days later, he scored 61 points for West Forsyth High School, one for every year of Papa Chili’s life. He purposely missed a free throw at the end, then collapsed into the arms of his father in tears. His grief was bottomless. Every national anthem in college, he’d hold his grandfather’s laminated obituary in his hand and pray. And now he wants the murderers set free?

“Even though I miss my granddad,” Paul told me, “I understand that he’s not coming back. At the time, it made me feel good when I heard they went away for life. But now that I’m older, when I think of all the things I’ve seen in my life? No, I don’t want it. I don’t want it.”

This is the kind of man Chris Paul is: He was president of his high school class all three years. When LeBron James’ girlfriend had a baby, James made sure Paul was there. He’s so humble that if you didn’t know who he was, you’d swear he was the pool man.

So what can Paul do?

He can appeal to the governor of North Carolina, Bev Perdue, and ask for their sentences to be commuted. North Carolina is not big on commuting murderers’ sentences, but I’d put nothing past the powers of Paul. This kid floors me. Not just with the way he can dominate an NBA playoff game at 6 feet tall in elevator sneakers. Not just for the way he can twist Kobe Bryant into a Crazy Straw. Not just for the way he’d rather pass through a doughnut hole than take the shot himself.

No, what floors me about Chris Paul is his humanity. If strangers had bound my weak-hearted grandfather, beat him for no reason and killed him for the cash in his wallet — strangers who to this day have not shown a thimbleful of contrition — I’d want them in prison 100 years after they were in the dirt.

Chris Paul once wrote that his grandfather “taught me more things than I could ever learn with a Ph.D.”

One of them must’ve been love.

## Activity #2

# NoteCard Revolution

**Everyday Responses to Everyday Harassment**

**Building Communities, Ending Violence –**

*(contributed by Anne Russo, DePaul University)*

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Everyday we face commentary that perpetuates sexism, racism, homophobia, heterosexism, classism, transphobia, and more. Sometimes we respond, sometimes we don't. Sometimes our responses escalate the negativity, and sometimes our silence perpetuates the negativity. We don't respond often because we are shocked, we're afraid, we are not sure what to say, we are conflict avoidant, we don't want to make the situation worse, we don't want to lose friendships, we are tired, we feel isolated and alone etc.

What would it be like to practice ready-made responses? An affirmation for the person harmed, a consciousness-builder for the one doing the harm? That's what the "Note Card Revolution" workshop seeks to explore.

**Materials: Paper, Pens and Markers, Note Cards**

**(small (e.g., size of a business card or a bit bigger 1/4 page)).**

### **Steps:**

- (1) Introduce exercise with a general framework on oppression and privilege, with a discussion difficulties of knowing how to respond to everyday harassment – and our own tendencies toward fight, flight, or freeze as responses. The goal of this exercise is to begin to imagine, develop, and practice small-scale interventions.

- (2) Gather participants in a circle, and using a modified peace circle process of having each person have an opportunity to speak, going clockwise around the circle. Using this process, create shared values/practices that you'd like to guide your responses to everyday mistreatment, harassment.
- (3) First Freewrite: Ask participants to take five minutes to write about an experience where they witnesses mistreatment or harassment and wished that they had had a quick and effective intervention.
  - a. Ask them to first write about an experience when they witnessed mistreatment, harassment or abuse in public. Encourage them to choose an experience that would be low trauma -- a 3-4 on a trauma scale of 1-10; *this is very important so that they and the group are not re-traumatized in the process; and so that the intervention that they are able to create feels more realistic and possible.*
- (4) Briefly share stories in Circle Format – going around clockwise in a circle, each person has an opportunity to share their story, including yourself. Ending with yourself, acknowledge stories, impact, and power of storytelling.
- (5) Second freewrite, drawing on values/practices developed earlier in the workshop, ask participants to write about what they might have liked to say to the person who was harmed and/or to the person(s) doing the harm
- (6) Gather in smaller groups (3 members per group). Group chooses one of their stories to work with. Drawing from the values as well as participant's freewrites, small group brainstorms and documents ideas for how they might (1) support and affirm the person harmed; and/or (2) engage the person doing the harm (e.g. seeking to distract, or shift the dynamics).
- (7) From the brainstorm, group chooses a response from each category and works together to create short, to-the-point messages to be put on the cards, and could be handed out in a similar moment.

**The note cards for the person creating the harm can include any of the following (with an emphasis on brief, to the point)**

- name the problem (for example, use of the word "gay"),
- why it is a problem (for example, its impact),
- analysis of the problem (for example, how it is connected to a broader system of oppression),
- suggested next steps (for example, offer alternative words, or ways of thinking),
- resources (for example, an organization, a book, a song etc.)

**The note cards for the person experiencing the harm can include one or more of the following:**

- an affirmation
- an inspirational quote about resilience, strength, resistance
- resources for support
- info about organizations or projects that are working to address everyday harassment and violence

**8) Share the cards; if possible, copies of cards could be copied and then distributed within the group.**





# "getting justice"/transforming harm...

an exploration of what it means to achieve justice/transformative justice in response to an act of harm

**Gather a group of students, neighbors, friends, community members, co-workers, etc. to ask the following discussion questions ...**

1. What comes to mind when you think of the word "Justice"?
2. In the event of a harmful act (anything from sexual harrassment in the workplace, to racially motivated hate-crimes & murders), what does it mean to "get justice"?
3. Who or what makes it possible to "get justice"? Can achieving justice involve causing some form of harm? How so?
4. How do you know when "justice" has been achieved? What if various people affected by the harmful act do not agree on what constitutes justice?
5. After reading the passage entitled "What is Transformative Justice?" at the beginning of this guide, what comes to mind when you think about "transformative justice"? Is this different from what came to mind when you thought about "justice"? If so, how?

*Have the group now read the article*

Making Restorative/Transformative Justice Real:

A Rape Survivor Leads the Way

*You will find the passage on the following page.*

*(You can also find the passage in the zine Miklat Miklat)*



# Making Restorative/Transformative Justice Real: A Rape Survivor Leads the Way

By Mariame Kaba for Prison Culture Blog, November 29, 2010

<http://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2010/11/29/>

[making--restorativetransformative--justice--real--a--rape--survivor--leads--the--way/](http://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2010/11/29/making--restorativetransformative--justice--real--a--rape--survivor--leads--the--way/)

**"Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."  
Martin Luther King Jr.**

A good friend of mine shared a remarkable article with me today.

[see the original article at <http://www.startribune.com/local/minneapolis/110948624.html>]

I am having a difficult time writing this because the subject hits so close to home. As a survivor myself, I find this woman's response and her story even more poignant and impactful. My ideas about restoration and transformation were also forged in the fires of experience. I too had to learn that forgiveness is not earned but given.

The article opens with this:

*The mother who was sexually assaulted at gunpoint in front of her children while cross-country skiing last week in a south Minneapolis park has a message for her neighbors:*

*Come out this week, she wrote Sunday on an online neighborhood site, to celebrate the Powderhorn Park area where the attack took place and help residents take back the neighborhood, which has seen several acts of violence this month.*

*"Celebrate our riches," the unidentified 45-year-old woman, who signed her statement "The Mother' in the News," wrote in support of organizers putting together two gatherings this week.*

Take a moment to let this sink in for you. Think about the courage that it takes for this woman to share her experience with her community in this way just a couple of days after her rape.

*"We survived," she wrote of her ordeal. "We're blessed with an abundance of support and love. ... Wow, what a great neighborhood we live in."*

*Last week, four teenage boys were arrested on suspicion of having sexually attacked her in the park and, in a separate assault, two teenage girls in a nearby garage.*

*Earlier this month, a 12-year-old girl standing on her porch in the Powderhorn neighborhood was shot in the neck and possibly paralyzed for life.*

*Those crimes prompted residents and members of the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association to plan a rally this Wednesday and a brainstorming session Thursday, to make the area safer.*

Whenever people complain to me about the injustice of the current criminal legal system, I always respond that the only way that we are going to change this is by acting locally. Here is a perfect example of a community coming together in the face of real violence and tragedy to reconnect with each other and to think about collective ways to ensure safety for themselves and their neighbors. I am certain that there are hundreds of similar examples that take place every day in communities across the U.S. Unfortunately, these are never featured in the press. This is what makes this particular case so remarkable.

*Instead of grief and outrage, participants have been asked to “bring music, art, puppets, laughter, hope and food,” Priesmeyer wrote in an email announcing the gathering.*

*That sentiment was echoed by the mother, who was cross-country skiing with her 10-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter when they were accosted.*

*“I would love it if people came out to sing, dance, ski, sled, play Frisbee,” the mother wrote in her posting. “Let’s make it a celebration of our community and our park.”*

*The four arrested boys — from 14 to 16 years old — are also being held in the sexual attacks on the girls who were attacked after the assault on the woman. The suspects are likely to face charges that include rape, aggravated robbery and false imprisonment, police said.*

Four boys ages 14 to 16 years old... Their lives are now forever altered. How would you react to this situation? How would you channel your understandable anger and grief at the perpetrators of this violence? Here’s how the woman who was assaulted responded:

*“I want to tell you that my children and I are doing quite well,” she wrote, “considering that we had a gun held to our chests only three days ago.”*

*She said she and her family are forgiving of the suspects, not much older than her children. “I guess I might fall into despair, hopelessness and hatred sometime along my healing journey, but I can honestly say I don’t experience them right now,” she wrote. “My spiritual practices ground me in love and possibility.”*

*She noted that on Thanksgiving Day, the day after the attack, her son told her how he felt sorry for their assailants because they were in jail and would not be able to have the kind of fun life he has now.*

*“I’m pretty amazed at his compassion and understanding,” she wrote. “I have a lot to learn from my kids about staying in touch with what really matters in life. We sure got a profound lesson in having gratitude for just being alive.”*

It is hard to continue to write as my eyes fill with tears. I was told years ago that to forgive is not for others but for oneself. This seems to be a sentiment embodied in the response of this woman and her family. I remember being consumed with anger and hatred after my own assault. And yet I was the one who ultimately suffered with those emotions. I know that there are many examples of cruelty in the world. I am not naive or pollyannish. But in this story, we also see human beings' incredible capacity for forgiveness and compassion. These acts of compassion often go unnoticed. They should not. They need to be underscored and promoted.

I wrote about Desmond Tutu last week. He has written that "at times of despair, we must learn to see with new eyes." I think that this is what this woman must be doing. "Seeing with new eyes." He has also written that:

***"Forgiveness gives us the capacity to make a new start...And forgiveness is the grace by which you enable the other person to get up, and get up with dignity, to begin anew...In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to change."***

Contrary to popular belief, this is not about martyrdom but about survival. I know that my own ability to forgive freed me to move forward. This is the promise of restorative and transformative justice. It isn't something one gets from the traditional criminal legal approach to addressing violence and crime.

I opened by quoting Martin Luther King Jr. and will close with some more words from him:

***"If I hit you and you hit me, and I hit you back and you hit me back, and go on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that's the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate, the chain of evil."***

This woman is the strong person.

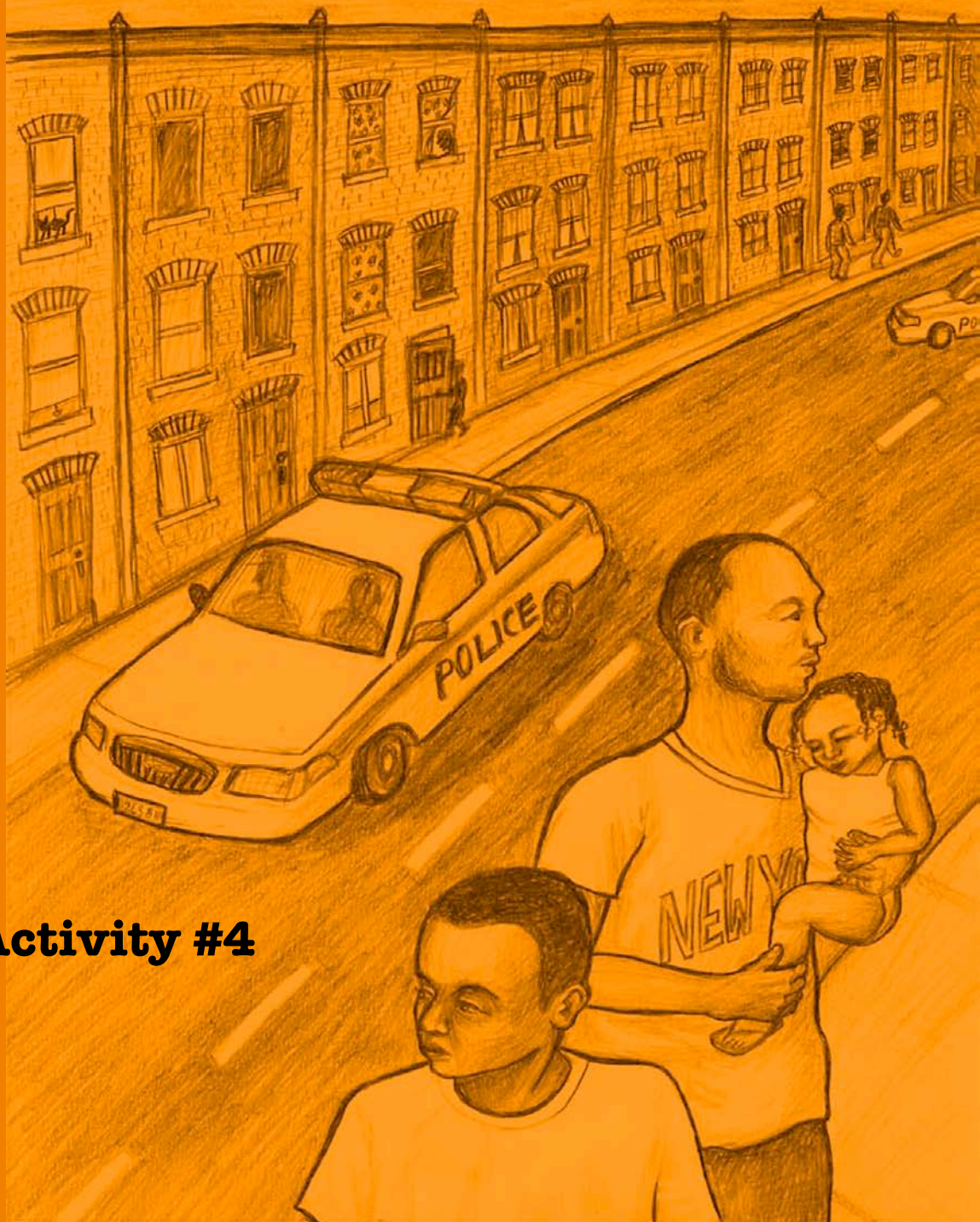
***After reading this passage, ask the following questions...***

1. Do you think the woman in this story achieved "justice" in relation to the assault she experienced? Why or why not?
  
2. Do you think the woman achieved "transformative justice"? Why or why not?  
*\*\*\*Review the goals of TJ created by Generation 5 to help answer this question...*
  - Safety, healing, and agency for survivors
  - Accountability and transformation for people who harm
  - Community action, healing, and accountability
  - Transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence - systems of oppression and exploitation, domination, and state violence
  
3. Why do you think this woman was amazed and impressed by her son, when he shared that he felt "sorry for their assailants because they were in jail..."?
  
4. Did reading this article provide you with any reflections or inspirations you feel you will carry with you? If so, what are they?



# "Who You Gonna Call" -- Part 1

exploring alternatives to policing



## Activity #4

*For this activity, gather a group of students, friends, members of a church community, neighbors, or other members of your community. It is important to have a facilitator to lead the activity. During discussion, it is also useful to note the ideas of participants on a large piece of paper or chalkboard so that everyone can keep note of the concepts discussed and build on group knowledge. This activity may prove to be emotionally challenging for some participants, and may bring up strong differences of opinion. Consider coming up with group agreements before diving into the exercise.*

**Some examples of group agreements:**

- Agreement to show respect to others through active listening, and to communicate through "I" statements, instead of generalizing the experiences of a group.
- Agreement that personal stories shared in the group will not be shared outside of the group unless permission is given
- Agreement to "step back" when you have talked more than others in the group, or "step up" when you have not participated.

**Background:**

In daily life, we often interact with oppressive institutions. Oppressive institutions are those which reinforce forms of oppression such as racism, ageism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. Although institutions such as schools, churches, and hospitals can offer important and useful services, they may also have oppressive policies and practices which reinforce or support systemic oppression (ex: a school system may be managed in such a way that students of color receive far inferior education than white students in the same city, a church may have homophobic policies and practices which actively oppress LGBTQ people). Prisons are an example of institutions that reinforce and support oppression in far-reaching ways. From the racial profiling and tremendous over-incarceration of black and brown youth to the transphobic policies employed on the inside of jails and prisons, to the criminalization of homeless people and undocumented immigrants, the Prison Industrial Complex operates as an oppressive institution in countless ways.

*In daily life, however, many of us turn to the Police (and therefore, to the Prison Industrial Complex) when ...*

- there is a conflict we don't know how to solve
- we are afraid for our safety, or the safety of others
- when we experience or witness a violent event
- when we experience or witness property damage, theft, etc.

*and much, much more...*

Often, we involve the Prison Industrial Complex in our own or other people's lives because we believe that involving police or another element of the P.I.C. may reduce the harm in a particular situation. If our lives are at immediate risk, or we are at risk of grievous injury, the intervention of police may indeed reduce harm. However, in many situations, the intervention of police (or other elements of the P.I.C.) may actually increase the overall harm for all people involved.

- Can you think of any reasons why this may be the case?
- Brainstorm instances in which calling the police (or involving the P.I.C. in another manner) could increase the harm in a situation that is already harmful or violent in some way. Write these on a large sheet of paper or chalkboard for all to see.

Once you have brainstormed possible answers to the questions, read the following passage:

### **"Upstairs Neighbor/Downstairs Neighbor"**

*You live in an apartment building. One night, while sitting at the kitchen table to have dinner with a friend, you hear shouting in the apartment upstairs. You have heard shouting once before, and wondered if the couple upstairs might be having a domestic dispute, or if there may be domestic violence involved. This time the shouting goes on for a long time. You hear something which you believe may be the sound of a physical altercation, and immediately call 911. You tell the operator that there is a domestic violence situation upstairs involving physical violence, and they should send an officer right away. A couple of officers arrive and are let into the apartment by the couple whom you believed to be having a physical fight. Because you have never spoken with them personally, you do not realize that the couple upstairs do not speak english fluently, and do not have legal documentation to live in the U.S.A. The police have difficulty with the situation due the fact that they do not speak the same language as the neighbors, yet decide to arrest one of your neighbors because they believe there has been a physical altercation of some kind. Once taken to the station, your neighbor's legal documentation is reviewed. They are suddenly at risk of deportation. They do not know their rights as they have not interacted with police in the U.S.A., and are unsure of what to do or how to contact their partner. They did indeed have a shouting match with their partner due to ongoing frustrations in their marriage, but did not have a physical altercation, and do not have a history of domestic violence in the relationship. They have no idea how to communicate this to the police, and now are likely to find themselves in deportation proceedings. They are very concerned about what will happen to the kids at home if they are deported. You do not know about any of the events that follow the arrival of the officers, as you do not go up to talk to the upstairs neighbors after this event. A few weeks later, you notice that the neighbors have moved away, but do not think much of it.*



## "Upstairs Neighbor/Downstairs Neighbor"

### **Discussion questions:**

1. After reading "Upstairs Neighbor/Downstairs Neighbor", in what ways did you believe contacting police increased or reduced overall harm in the situation?
2. Did the downstairs neighbor have any other options than contacting the police when they became concerned about possible domestic violence? What might the downstairs neighbor have done differently? What would you do, if you found yourself in a similar situation? What are some questions you have about the best approach in this situation?
3. What types of oppressions do you think the upstairs neighbors may have faced in their interactions with the police?
4. Why do you think the downstairs neighbor felt confident that calling police was the right approach in this situation?

\*\*\*\*\*

"Upstairs Neighbor/Downstairs Neighbor" is a fictional account, based on reality.

Take the time to now to read two real first-hand accounts: [Community Responds to Domestic Violence](#) and [Relying on Community Organizations instead of the Police \(Isaac\)](#) in which people speak about real-life experiences of engaging alternatives to calling the police.

**You will find them on the following pages of this guide.**

You can also find these articles in the zine *Miklat Miklat*:  
<http://www.micahbazant.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/miklat-zine.pdf>

## Relying on Community Organizations instead of the Police (Isaac)

Transcript from the StoryTelling and Organizing Project (STOP), a project of Creative Interventions  
[http:// www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/)

### Creative Interventions: Why did you not want to call the cops?

**Isaac:** It just wasn't an option. You know, on multiple levels. The police are like, you know, the enemy. So it's like you just don't call the cops. Now, like what's inside of that, I don't think it's just like a theoretical political thing there's the fact that the police had just shot this person in front of hundreds of people, you know, video tape rolling. They had just been incredibly violent out on the street, there was like a police state in downtown. Like on every level calling the cops was not an option, right? So there's the political level in which it's like you don't call the oppressor to help you out. You just don't. Then there's the level of our politics being like we need to like figure out ways to deal with this shit that aren't about calling in the source of violence, right? So then there's all kind of layers that happen with that, so then there's like well why don't we, right? And in this situation why don't we? Here is this person who is distraught. Who has a gun. Who's a person of color. There's no fucking way we could trust the cops to do anything but—I mean what, what were the cops going to do at best? The most safe thing that they would possibly do would be to physically disarm this person which would involve, you know, violence, right? And lock him up. That is like the best case scenario, so it addresses none of problem, right, like at all.

It was about this person's safety, but in a way that was not just responding to a crisis around their safety but also like what can we do? You know, so it's not just what can we do by any means necessary to stop this self harm or harm to another person, but like how is what we're going to do right now going to reverberate to, um, helping this person move through the period in their lives that is happening, unfolding, right, in this very acute way right in this moment? I mean I guess that that's actually kind of hopeful [laughs], that even in those moments of crisis, that you are actually thinking about—that incorporated into why the moment is serious is also like the, um, future.

You're never told in a moment—you know you might be told in all these other ways in life, right, about deescalating violent situations, so it's like oh, you have a beef with your neighbor that's getting kind of heated, "Well, just try to talk it out," or "You could hire a mediator," or "Call a lawyer." You know, like, you know and then other ways, right? Like in these interpersonal things, but very rarely is it—it, it ends. The discourse ends, I think, when there's, um, a gun involved. Or an act of violence. Oh, well then you call the police. And it's almost like it's like a natural thing, right. It's not even like you call the police because, it's like and then it starts raining, you know, it's like and then you call the police. It's like an act of nature.

And so we don't call the police we call this community organization. And I think that was like pretty [pause] it's cool—I mean it's cool that it exists, it's cool that we knew about it, it's cool that we did----but I think also what's cool is that that's where our mind went very quickly in this crisis moment. And so, I don't know, once again it engenders a little bit of hope, you know, around um like our abilities to respond when the resources are so scarce, right? And we started talking about what we had done, you know, and we started talking about like what could we do and where was the harm, right? What were the different levels of harm, right?

Where are our efforts, you know, where are our loyalties, where are we invested, where are, you know, where are we in relationship to all this stuff, you know, what are our priorities?

And we talked about that and that was really good, and I think that that's — what became the center was, OK, so there's this thing that's going to happen next week and it is potentially traumatic to this person and he has acted out in this and this way previously. His mode of acting out has intensified. So the harm or the potential harm has intensified, the harm to himself and therefore, the potential harm to others has intensified. So, what can we do to reduce the harm? And so we started talking about everything that we can do. And so like one of the major things we talked about is like: who else can we involve?

And that's when it came up to where it was like, "Let's try to map out who else can help here." And the help being specific to what's the most like urgent things, right? And what we're trying to learn from these things, right? It's like where are people's people in these situations, right? And the analogy that was like we were all trying to lift something that was really heavy. It's a lot easier to lift something that's really heavy if you have more than two people doing it, you know? And especially if it's something heavy that you all care about. And you all carrying it is in relationship to you caring about it and it affects how you care about it down the — " and it's true, it's like, where are these people's people, you know?

## Community Responds to Domestic Violence

*transcript from the StoryTelling and Organizing Project (STOP),  
a project of Creative Interventions  
<http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org>*

Two years ago, I was married to a man who I'd been with for ten years prior, and our relationship had troubles, had issues that people go through. Over the last year of our marriage, my former partner was going through training as a police officer, and at the same time, we had just relocated to a new state. And we were struggling with some large issues in the marriage, and things had gotten more difficult. And I just became increasingly afraid of someone that I used to feel really safe with.

I have three kids and, they were at that time, I guess, 10, 6, and 4, and they were witnessing a lot of arguments, a lot of loud screaming, a lot of doors being slammed, a lot of things that I felt were really unsafe for them to see. My home just felt more and more dangerous, more and more like I didn't know what was going to happen. I saw him acting in very controlling ways that I hadn't seen before. I felt scared to leave the house, I felt scared to come home, I felt scared to sleep in my bed.

I think the last straw came one night when I had gone to a friend's house and my partner followed me in his car. And when I arrived at my friend's house, he pulled up and got out of the car at the same time I did, and was yelling and screaming horrible things at me, and I felt very afraid but I didn't know what to do. I knew wherever I went he would follow me, so I decided I would go to my office, which was nearby, and it was night time so there wouldn't be anybody there. I had a key to the building and he didn't but I ran into my office and into the building, which he didn't have a key to get into. But the whole time he was just screaming at me, trying to get me to come with him, to get me to have a conversation with him. And then when I finally got inside, I waited for a few minutes and he left. So that was the immediate situation I was dealing with.

So I called a friend, who came and met me at my office, and she suggested that I call another friend who had a house I could go to while we figured out what to do, so that's what I did. So when we got there, everybody sort of sat around in the living room and just reassured me that it was, it was, safe for me to be there, that they were welcoming of it, that they understood, you know, that I was at this point on the run from someone who was furious and had a gun and I still felt bad. I felt like I was exposing people to something that I couldn't control, something I was, you know terrified of, but I didn't know what else to do at that point, and they were saying it was where they wanted me to be.

My friends asked me, are there some people that I could gather up, that I could call, that you might like to have support from in this time. I guess I should say that being part of this, this community organization UBUNTU, which is committed to ending sexual violence, meant that we had a way of, of responding that I knew people would come together. I knew if I needed help people would come and talk to me and we could work it out together. So it didn't feel like, it didn't feel strange to meet, to call people and say, "Hey, I need help, and that this is what's going on."

And at the same time, experiencing these things in my home, felt like people would see me differently, people would judge me, people would think I was a hypocrite, people would think I was weak. And I remember being really troubled by that the first few days. But I got reassurances from folks that that was exactly what the point of the organization was, and that experiencing harm is not about being strong or weak, that experiencing harm just is, and that it's what we choose to do about it.

So, we made phone calls, and asked people to come over. We had 7 or 8 people come over and just started talking through what to do. Which at that point felt totally overwhelming, I was still on, "Is this really happening to me?" and, "What can I do to, I don't know, make it okay?" Rather than thinking of anything beyond tomorrow, or, next week.

But I think my wants were something like: I want to be in my home; I want my kids to feel safe. I think I said, "I want \_\_\_ to leave." I think those were basically it at that moment, and then we just brainstormed what needs to happen right now in the next hour, the next day, the next week, for those wants to happen, and we just, we walked through it so if I want to be in my home, how do we make that happen? How do we make sure that's a safe space? And I think one of the answers to that question was, at least in the in the near future, having folks be there with me.

So we eventually set up a schedule. We put out an email with a schedule for the week, and blanks for people to fill in, and I was amazed that people did fill it in. And they did come by. They came by every day and they came and sat in my living room, and they brought food, and we just sat together. I, I was amazed at that. That was the one, that was how we got home to be a safe space for me again.

When we were thinking about whether to call the police or not, I did feel like I needed some help in calming the situation down, but I didn't know what to do, because if I can't call his, his, friends on the job, and I can't call them in----it doesn't seem right to call them in an unofficial way, because who knows what's going to happen with that. And calling them in an official way doesn't necessarily seem like it's going to produce any certain results either. So we tried to think about who could talk to \_\_\_, then. And, I think we had figured out some people in the community that he could talk to, if he was open to doing that.

My mom talked to \_\_\_. And she was willing to deal with him. He was totally raging, and for whatever reason she was not intimidated at all, and just was able to really to talk to him really calmly.

I had people checking on me, people staying, during the daytime hours, sometimes overnight for the next week, and it just felt good. It felt so good to have this full house, you know, this busy house of people coming by, and, you know, people were playing with the kids, and we were making art in the kitchen, and someone was always making tea, and it felt not alone.

In terms of talking about successes, I guess the biggest one is that I did get all three things that I wanted, that I identified as wants to hap-- pen. That, my kids went through that time feeling safe; that, \_\_\_ did leave the house; that I was able to return home; and that all that happened in, in a fairly short amount of time. So in terms of success, I'd say, ultimately for me as a survivor, that, those were the most meaningful successes.

Another success in terms of communication was that, I think we made a phone list immediately, that was one of the first things we did, so I always knew I had someone to call, and that people would call and check on me. Because at that time I think it was hard, I was worried about people burning out, I was worried about people feeling overwhelmed by me and my stuff. So, the fact that I didn't have to constantly, hour by hour, be reaching out for needs to be met because we'd identified them beforehand and there were enough people involved that it felt like no one was carrying all of it, or more than they could It certainly wasn't that things didn't feel hard, it felt really hard.

I think what was helpful was this wasn't an intervention where it was like, "how are we going to get \_\_\_ away from \_\_\_?" It was like, "how are we going to make sure that, that there's not harm happening in our community? How are we going to make sure that we've done our best to address that? And that the problem was consistently the harm. The problem was consistently the events or the behaviors, or the things that were harmful that were happening, but not him that was a problem. Not my choice to stay as long as I had that was a problem. But, but that was... not the relationship that was the problem.

That made it possible for me to feel like I could come into the space and say what I needed, which at that time really included not being someone who was perpetrating harm against him by engaging the power of the state, or by, you know, which whether or not it would have benefited me in that moment, could only have had negative effects on him. And then I got to make a decision about like what do I really need right now to do my work, to take care of my kids, to get through this day, to heal. You know?

We need to trust people to be the experts on their own lives and to take them seriously and have faith in people to set the course for working from harm to transformation. I think that comes best from people who are experiencing harm and have a vision about what they want. And to give people time to identify what that is and be willing to sit with the discomfort of not being able to rescue somebody in a simple or quick way. I think that those values were ultimately the most healing for me.

## Discussion Questions:

*Community Responds to Domestic Violence*,

*Relying on Community Organizations instead of the Police (Isaac):*

1. What did you learn from reading these passages? Could you relate to the experiences of the narrators? Were you surprised by any of the ideas presented?
2. Did you gain any new ideas about some specific interventions *your* group of friends or community might make in response to an act of harm? Do you have any new questions?

\* \* \*

Keep the conversation and the learning going by checking out the incredible...

### ***Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence***

which can be found at ...

[http:// www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/)

- Use the guide to look at specific approaches and interventions. You may find interventions which are helpful in dealing with issues faced in your community, family, school, workplace, etc.
- If it feels right to your community, family, friend network, etc., take the time to identify how you might actually employ some of these practical strategies to reduce harm, and make some concrete plans together!



# "Who You Gonna Call?" - Part 2

**Using Theatre of the Oppressed to find viable alternatives to policing.**

## What is "Theatre of The Oppressed"?

Reproduced from online source: Brecht Forum- <http://brechtforum.org/abouttop>

*"The Theater of the Oppressed, established in the early 1970s by Brazilian director and Workers' Party (PT) activist Augusto Boal, is a participatory theater that fosters democratic and cooperative forms of interaction among participants. Theater is emphasized not as a spectacle but rather as a language accessible to all. More specifically, it is a rehearsal theater designed for people who want to learn ways of fighting back against oppression in their daily lives. In what Boal calls "Forum Theater," for example, the actors begin with a dramatic situation from everyday life and try to find solutions—parents trying to help a child on drugs, a neighbor who is being evicted from his home, and individual confronting racial or gender discrimination, or simply a student in a new community who is shy and has difficulty making friends. Audience members are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas. Bridging the separation between actor (the one who acts) and spectator (the one who observes but is not permitted to intervene in the theatrical situation), the Theater of the Oppressed is practiced by "spect-actors" who have the opportunity to both act and observe, and who engage in self-empowering processes of dialogue that help foster critical thinking. The theatrical act is thus experienced as conscious intervention, as a rehearsal for social action rooted in a collective analysis of shared problems. This particular type of interactive theater is rooted in the pedagogical and political principles specific to the popular education method developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire: 1) to see the situation lived by the participants; 2) to analyze the root causes of the situation, including both internal and external sources of oppression; 3) explore group solutions to these problems, and 4) to act to change the situation following the precepts of social justice".*



**Activity #5**

*Although Theatre of the Oppressed is a form of theatre in which there are many techniques and approaches, a simple way to think of T.O. is that this form of theatre makes space for a "rehearsal for reality".*

## **Activity:**

This activity builds on the knowledge and questions from the previous activity. If you are not able to complete the previous activity before starting this one, please take a moment to look at the guidelines regarding facilitation and "group agreements" in the previous activity for reference.

The purpose of this activity is to use the unique approach of Theatre of the Oppressed, to give participants an opportunity to "think on their feet". In the last activity, discussion questions offered space to look for ways that calling the police and engaging other elements of the P.I.C. could increase overall harm in a situation, while the original intention of making the call may have been to reduce overall harm. In this activity, participants will have a chance to "test-out" alternative strategies in this "rehearsal for reality".

If you have access to the internet

while facilitating this workshop, take time as a group to access the website of a project entitled:

### **"Chain Reaction: Alternatives to calling the Police"**

(<http://alternativestopolicing.com/>)

If you do not have access to the internet

while facilitating this workshop, take this time to read the articles included after Activity #4 entitled *Community Responds to Domestic Violence & Relying on Community Organizations instead of the Police (Isaac)*. Once you have read those articles, skip the section below entitled "Chain Reaction". Go directly to the Discussion Questions section which appears on the next page, and continue from there.

## **Chain Reaction:**

On the website <http://alternativestopolicing.com/>, you will find personal accounts of youth for whom interaction with police was a source of danger and harm. You will find the stories under the "Audio" heading, and can easily download them from soundcloud. Play these aloud for the group. Take time to listen to at least 3 personal accounts. Use the discussion questions on the next page as a jumping off point for group discussion.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

### **\* Note to facilitators:**

**In facilitating discussion of the questions below (after reading the articles or listening to the personal accounts on the Chain Reaction website)...** *It may be useful to give participants time to reflect on the questions before inviting responses. Particularly when asking participants to identify situations in their own lives, it is important to be mindful of the fact that they may find themselves recalling moments which were emotionally challenging or even traumatic. Give the group space to reflect privately on their experiences if that seems useful-- passing out scrap-paper for participants to free-write or jot down ideas may be useful as well. Be mindful of the group, and try as a group to foster an environment of support and respect to hold the challenging emotions and experiences that may come up.*

### The Questions:

1. Did you relate to the experiences of the people who shared their stories? How? If not, were you surprised by their stories? Why? Share your thoughts with the group.
2. Have you had any experiences with police yourself? For example, have you ever found it necessary to call the police? Have you been on the other side of that equation (were police ever called on you)?
3. If possible, identify a situation in your own life where you called the police because it seemed like the best/only option at the time, yet where you would have preferred an alternate option. Alternately, identify a situation where the police were called upon you, however, where you did not feel this was an appropriate response. If neither of these situations apply, think of a situation you have witnessed in your neighborhood, at school, or another important location in your life where you believe the engagement of police may have increased the overall harm.

*Now that everyone has had some time to reflect, it is time to move on to the next element of the activity. Remind the group that this activity is an opportunity to work together to think of viable alternative responses to calling the police (or otherwise engaging the P.I.C.) in response to harm or the threat of harm.*

*Using discussion question #3 as a jumping off point, go around the circle and make space for people to share some of their own stories. Invite people to share moments from their own lives when they called the police, although it did not feel like an ideal option. Make space for people to share moments where the police were called on them as well. Once all members of the group who wish to share stories have had a chance to do so, explain that the next element of this exercise involves taking a personal story, and having a chance to "re-write" it through performance. For example, if a participant brings up an experience where they called police, although they would have preferred another option, the group could use this opportunity to imagine a scenario in which a community of friends could be called upon in place of the police. In order to prepare for the performance, have the group select a personal story from those shared which the group would like to "re-write" using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques.*

Ask the person who offered the chosen story to tell the story once more in detail, and decide upon people in the room who will play the various roles (ex: if the story involves 5 friends at a house having a loud party, an angry neighbor, and a police officer, try to find a person to play each of the roles, if possible). It is important that your group have actors who can perform roles in the story, and also "spect-actors" who can jump in during the performance to offer new insights through performance (it is best to have as many "spectactors" as actors).

## Warming Up

It is important to "warm-up" and "break the ice" when performing with a group (it can be scary and intimidating to perform for others!) A great way to warm-up is by playing a game. Here are a couple examples of games you can play to warm up. These games come from a fantastic list of games which can be found on the website of Philadelphia Theatre of the Oppressed.

(check out their website for more options):

<http://tophiladelphia.blogspot.com/search/label/rules%20for%20games>

### *Walking Games:*

- *Number Speeds: Speed up and slow down at the shout of a number, then do it without breaking eye contact with one other person.*
- *Lines and Triangles: Secretly pick two people and form a shape with them—either a straight line or an equilateral triangle—without letting them know who they are. Oh, and everyone else is trying to do the same thing as well...*

## ACT IT OUT:

Take the real-life scenario you have chosen, and act it out one time. Now act it out a second time, with the expectation that "spectactors" will swap places with the actors in order to change the way the story goes. How do you make this happen? When the group gets to a point in the story where a "spectator" wants to make an intervention, that "spectator" can simply clap their hands, or yell "stop!" The actors will freeze in their places, and the "spectator" will come up and swap places with an actor.

At this point, the "spectator" can make a change in the story by changing the behavior of that character. For example, if the actor plays a neighbor who calls the police when youth are sitting on her stoop, the "spectator" might change the story by playing a neighbor who goes and talks directly to the youth instead. When the central character in the scenario faces a challenge and does not know what to do, a "spectator" may be able to provide an interesting solution.

Give the group time to try various approaches. It can take a minute to get the hang of the role of "spectator", so make sure everyone who wants to has an opportunity to make an intervention. If you have time, it can be useful to act out the story two or three times so many interventions may be attempted.

## **BREAK IT DOWN:**

Once participants have acted out the story, and have tried to act out new approaches, check in with the group. How did they feel about the exercise? Did it help them think of solutions or approaches they could use in their own lives? What were these, and how did it feel to try them out? Did they have any other thoughts about the exercise?

Circle together to make a list of the alternate strategies to calling the police/engaging the P.I.C. which people tried through performance. It is useful to write ideas on a large sheet of paper where everyone can see and add to the list.

- Did people learn any strategies that they feel confident trying out in "real life"?
- What would they need to do/who would they need to be in touch with to put these strategies into action?
- What next steps does the group see themselves taking?

## **Learn more about Theatre of the Oppressed:**

*If you want to learn more about T.O. check out the writings of Augusto Boal at your public library, or check out these handy websites!*

- <http://tophiladelphia.blogspot.com/search/label/rules%20for%20games>
- <http://brechtforum.org/abouttop>
- <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?useFlash=0>

## **Want to keep the conversation going?**

Check out the amazing tumblr site "Imagine Alternatives" for more resources and a personal essay about actively taking steps to plan for alternative responses to policing. We thank Caroline from "Imagine Alternatives" for her thoughts, and have reproduced an activity from her site on the following page of this guide...

### **Source:**

[http://imaginealternatives.tumblr.com/post/487334687/feeling-for-the-edge-of-your-imagination-finding-ways](http://imaginealternatives.tumblr.com/post/487334687/feeling-for-the-edge-of-your-<u>imagination-finding-ways</u>)

## **Imagine Alternatives Activity:**

<http://imaginealternatives.tumblr.com/post/487334687/feeling-for-the-edge-of-your-imagination-finding-ways>

**Find someone you can talk with about heavy stuff, or grab a pen and paper. Ask yourself:**

> Have you ever called the police?

Why?

What did you gain from calling the police?

Do you know what the result of your call was for the other people in the situation?

> Have you ever chosen not to call the police when it seemed like an option?

Why didn't you call them?

Did you find an alternative response?

What did you gain from that response?

Do you know what the effect of that response was for the other people in the situation?

> Feel for the edge of your own police-calling "threshold":

- In what situations can you not even imagine calling the police? What is it that seems obvious to you to do instead?
- Are there any situations in which you feel like it's necessary to call the police?
- Name the situation (or type of situation) in which you think you would call the police, where that response is the only thing you can imagine doing, or would be automatic.
- Sit with that threshold for a minute. Imagine the creative response that would allow you to move that threshold back a bit and generate a more creative, community-based response. What would you need? Who would be involved? How can you start to build that possibility?

> Are there situations where you and your friend disagree on whether or not you would call the police?

What can you learn from your friend? What can you push them on?

> Would you call the cops on an institution (like a loud business, a safety violation at a school, etc)?

Do you think this is different? How? What might alternative responses look like for you?

> What about times when you're a bystander to police activity?

What do you do when you see a cop stop someone on your block? Think through an action plan for spontaneous cop-watching and for ways you can support people who are being detained by the police. For more information about cop-watching, check out:

<http://mxgm.org/web/people-s-self-defense-campaign-psdc/mxgm-copwatch-video.html>

and <http://www.berkeleycopwatch.org/>

**3. Collaborate and Share:** Pass this letter along. Bring it up over dinner. Ask these questions to your family, friends and roommates. If you have a story of a community-based, non-state response to harm, consider sharing it with the Story Telling Organizing Project:

<http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org/have-a-story/>

**4. Keep learning** about privileges you may have and the ways they manifest, keep listening and working to be a better ally to the people around you.





# Picturing A World Without Prisons

We had the idea to invite photographers (amateur and professional) to share their ideas for how we might visualize a world without prisons. Prison abolition is a central tenet of transformative justice. We believe that using art (in this case photography) can help unlock our imaginations to think about how we might envision and build a world without prisons.

All of the photographs submitted will be included in an online exhibit this December. We will also create a zine that includes some of the photographs so that we can share this with currently incarcerated people. Finally, we might also sponsor a physical exhibition of the photographs in Spring 2014 (this is still to be determined).

## Key Details

1. Submissions are accepted from both amateur and professional photographers of all ages and from across the world.
2. Submissions are due by October 15th.
3. Please submit your photograph as a JPEG file.
4. Please attach a short (under 200 words) statement explaining how your photograph depicts a world without prisons.
5. Please send the JPEG and your statement to [transformchi2013@gmail.com](mailto:transformchi2013@gmail.com) by October 15th.

Each photographer retains all rights to their work. By submitting your art, you give Project NIA permission include the photograph in an online exhibit, to include it in a zine that will be created to share with currently incarcerated people and potentially in a physical exhibition in Spring 2014 in Chicago.

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