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Practicing Possibilities for Justice

by SouthAsianSOAR

A workbook imagining the possibilities of transformative justice for South Asian anti-violence organizations, survivors and communities.

“Justice has to be brought about by going deep to the root”

- SOAR Transformative Justice Learning Circle Participant

Dedication

This workbook is dedicated to those who have borne the weight of navigating oppressive systems, endured harm and its compounding effects, and held onto curiosity and hope for something better. **We honor your visions for transformation**.

Acknowledgements

We start this workbook by **acknowledging that transformative justice and abolition are Black-led organizing strategies and Indigenous practices that we are learning from.** This work originated from multiple communities, including prison abolitionists, Black feminist theorists and organizers, Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) communities, disability justice organizers, sex workers and collective organizing outside of non-profit organizations.

We want to **offer gratitude and acknowledge** that this workbook is a compilation of tools, practices, and reflections from many writers and practitioners, including Mariame Kaba, Andrea J Ritchie,Mia Mingus, Ejeris Dixon, Mimi Kim, Shannon Perez-Darby and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, as well as groups such as The Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, Critical Resistance, Survived & Punished, Interrupting Criminalization, Generation 5, INCITE!, and The City School.

"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. Transformative Justice was created by and for many of these communities (e.g. indigenous communities, Black communities, immigrant communities of color, poor and low-income communities, communities of color, people with disabilities, sex workers, queer and trans communities).

It is important to remember that many of these people and communities have been practicing TJ in big and small ways for generations–trying to create safety and reduce harm within the dangerous conditions they were and are forced to live in . . . whether or not these practices have been explicitly named as "transformative justice."

- Mia Mingus

Please consider using the following links below to donate and support BIPOC grassroots organizations that are implementing, writing, and sharing tools about transformative justice:

Critical Resistance
Interrupting Criminalization
The City School
Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective
Project NIA
Survived & Punished

"A movement created by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color feminist revolutionaries to free our people."

- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha [on Transformative Justice]

Contributors

This workbook was written by Uma Venkatraman and Nishma Jethwa, with editing support from Amrita (SOAR), Yasmine (SOAR), Himadri (SOAR), Sagar (SOAR), Avantika (DVRP), Azaadi (Sakhi), Veda (SOAR), and Dee (Alternative Justice).

We deeply appreciate the contributions of SOAR member organizations and Transformative Justice (TJ) Learning Circle participants in shaping the contents of this workbook.

This workbook was designed and illustrated by Anurima Kumar.

A note from the contributors

By creating and compiling this workbook, we by no means hold any "expertise" in transformative justice, but rather are committed to a process of learning together. Given the vast amount of content available now on transformative justice and abolition, **we believe it is our responsibility as South Asian anti-violence organizations to study, reflect, and experiment based on these key learnings.** We do this in the hope of building towards a world where we can respond to violence **without** enacting more violence **and practices that center care, joy, and healing.**

We also recognize the South Asian organizers who have been spearheading this work for decades, including Soniya Munshi, Amita Swadhin, Sonya Shah, sujatha baliga, and Mon M (among many others) whose work is referenced in this workbook. We know this work is often unseen and unrecognized and we seek to learn even more about its history.

Content Note: *In this workbook, we reference gender-based violence and survivorship, including sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of abuse and oppression. We have included additional content notes throughout the workbook to note specific sections or tools where these topics are mentioned in more detail. We encourage you to engage with this workbook in the way that feels most comfortable for you. If you are looking for resources for care and healing, please visit SOAR's Healing Resources.*

Table of Contents

Chapter Two: Responding to Violence

Introduction

Responding to Violence: Community Accountability

Responding to Violence: Envisioning a Process with Survivors

Responding to Violence: Engaging People who have Caused Harm

Closing: Visioning

Chapter Three: Assessing our Organizations

Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

Activity 3.1: Personal Writing Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

How Did We Get Here: Acknowledging our Movement History

The U.S. Anti-Violence Movement

South Asian Anti-Violence Movement History

Anti-Violence Orgs and the Criminal Legal System

Where Are We Now: Assessing our Organization's Work

Activity 3.2: How do the Criminal Legal System and Non-Profit Structure Impact our Work?

Activity 3.3: Applying Reformist Reforms vs. Non-Reformist Reforms to our Orgs

Where Could We Go: Exploring Transformative Justice Values in our Organizations

Activity 3.4: Mapping the Opportunities

Activity 3.5: Visioning New Possibilities

Spotlight: Learning from our Legacy: Anti-Violence Orgs and Transformative Justice

How Do We Get There: Starting our Organizational Journey Towards Transformative Justice and Abolition

Poll: Where Should I Start?

Introducing the Conversation:

Tool 3.1: Organizational Discussion Guide

Internal Policies:

Tool 3.2: Internal Policies on Law Enforcement

Political Education:

Tool 3.3: Power and Control Wheel

Closing: **Activity 3.6:** Closing Reflections on Organizational Possibilities

Chapter Four: Embodying our Values

Self-Accountability

What is Self-Accountability?

Activity 4.1: Journal Reflection on Self-Accountability Practices

Activity 4.2: Taking Accountability: Self Reflection Questions

How does Self Accountability Connect to the Anti-Violence Movement?

Tools for Accountability

Tool 4.1: Four Parts to Accountability

Tool 4.2: Accountable Apologies

Activity 4.3: Personal Reflection on Accountable Apologies

Activity 4.4: Apology Practice Scenarios

Embodying our Values: Organizational Culture

Activity 4.5: Community Agreements

Activity 4.6: Values Reflection

Common Sources of Conflict

Activity 4.7: Deeper Reflections on Organizational Dynamics

Activity 4.8: Power and Control Wheel [Re-Visited]

Visioning for your Organization

Activity 4.9: Visioning for our Organizations

Spotlight 4.1: Internal Accountability and Conflict Resolution

Spotlight 4.2: Collective Structures and Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits

Closing: **Activity 4.10:** Reflections on Internal Organizational Accountability

Conclusion: Building the Future

Resource List

Introduction

"How can we respond to violence in ways that not only address the current incident of violence, but also **help to transform the conditions that allowed for it to happen**?" - Mia Mingus

Welcome to SOAR's workbook on transformative justice for South Asian anti-violence organizations, survivors and communities! Whether you are new to transformative justice, or whether you have been reflecting, learning, and practicing these principles for years, we hope that you will find this workbook useful in your ongoing practice.

Workbook Overview

This workbook is **an interactive resource on transformative justice for South Asian anti-violence organizations and survivors based in the United States.** Our intention is to build upon lived experiences in the South Asian anti-violence field as a foundation for shifting our work deeper in alignment with transformative justice and abolition.

Why create this specific workbook?

→To make transformative justice and abolition feel concrete and accessible for SOAR members, which includes reaching a wider swath of our membership

→ To provide members with specific ideas for how they can implement these principles in the anti-violence field and in their personal lives

→ To support members in feeling more inspired and less alone in their transformative justice efforts!

Transformative justice and abolition can often feel like abstract, intellectual concepts but are, in reality, rooted in deep histories of practice and experimentation.

The goal of this workbook is to provide South Asian anti-violence advocates with concrete and relevant activities that encourage you to engage in transformative experimentation.

In this process, we seek to recognize how our organizations have both aligned with state structures *and* the potential we have to build alternative responses to violence outside of the criminal legal system.

Audience for this Workbook

This workbook was designed for those who are seeking further education and skill-building related to transformative justice and how it applies to South Asian, anti-violence organizations. You will find that many of the activities and prompts in this workbook speak to the tension of navigating these specific intersections. However, we welcome anyone who finds this workbook useful to engage and share this material as it feels relevant to you and your communities.

Pause Point: As you begin this workbook, you may feel tension in how you relate to the criminal legal system. For example, many advocates feel that the criminal legal system is the only option, while also recognizing the harm, racism, and violence of the system. Many advocates can share stories about working with survivors who experienced harm from the criminal legal system. We know this vi**olence to be painfully common, yet we can often feel stuck about what else exists. If you feel stuck about this question, you are not alone. By creating this workbook, we look forward to exploring future possibilities for the South Asian anti-violence movement *together.***

How Did We Get Here?

"The criminal legal system is largely failing our clients"

- SOAR Anti-Violence Advocate

The relationship between law enforcement and the anti-violence movement has always been contentious. While the anti-violence movement has an origin in grassroots, people-of-color led responses, the rise of criminalization and legislation such as the 1994 Violence Against Women Act shifted the field towards increased investment in police and criminal responses. These responses have in turn increased violence instead of eliminating it, including increased police violence, arrest, traumatizing court appearances, involvement in the family regulation system without consent, court-mandated mediation, and deportation. *We explore this relationship with the criminal legal system further in Chapter Three: Assessing our Organizations!*

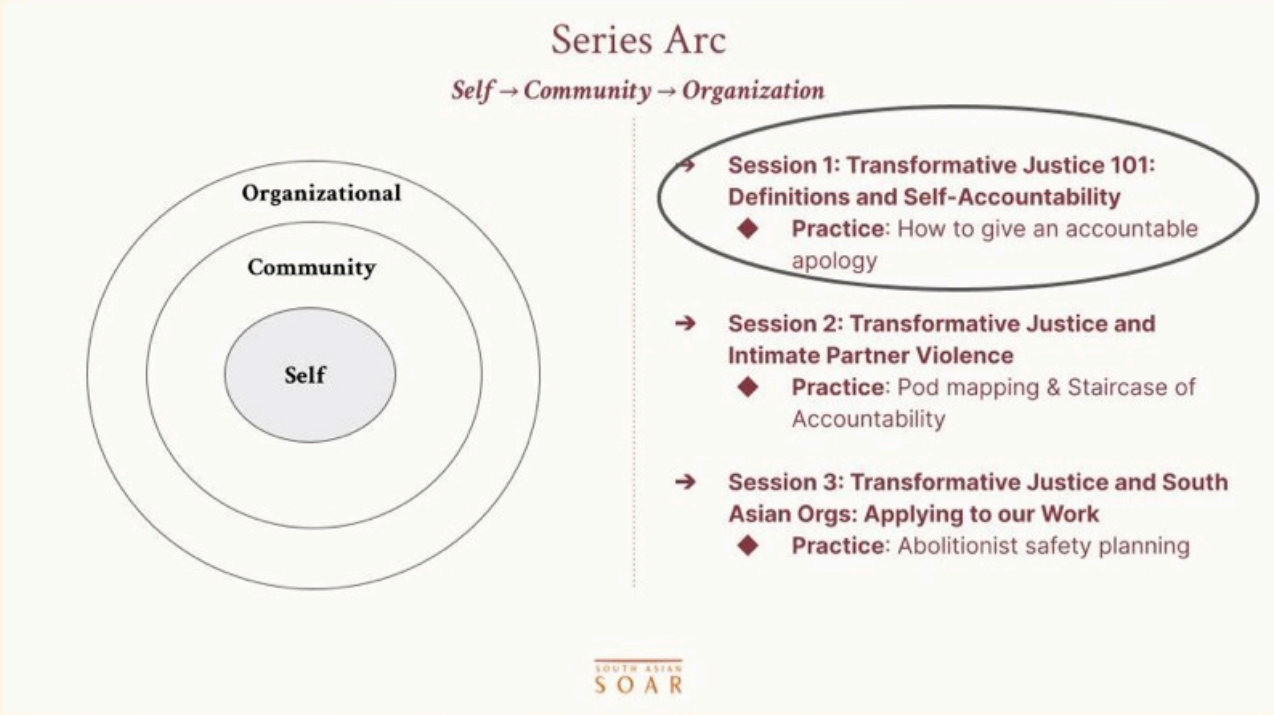
"Transformative justice [is] a liberatory approach to violence...which seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or state or systemic violence, including incarceration or policing."
- Generation 5

Within South Asian communities, members of the South Asian anti-violence movement and South Asian grassroots organizers have long been raising this tension and **challenging the movement to reconsider their stance on law enforcement and invest in community-led responses.** Individuals have named the dangers of law enforcement on survivors in our communities, especially along the lines of religion, caste, race and immigration status, and **the need for solidarity with Black and Dalit-led efforts to build community responses outside of the police.** Their advocacy has challenged groups like SOAR to create opportunities for member organizations to deepen their understanding of transformative justice.

So, why create this workbook now?

→ To respond to the direct asks and top areas of interests of SOAR members
→ To maintain the focus on core challenges and priorities in the anti-violence field
→ To create and prioritize space to collectively vision (which feels more important than ever)
→ To deepen our skills and aligning with survivor-led organizing and Black and POC-led organizing for racial justice

This specific content of this workbook originated from SOAR's Transformative Justice Learning Circles, which was a 3-part learning and skill building series that ran in August 2022. **These circles aimed to create deeper learning and practice spaces for SOAR members to engage in how transformative justice applies to both survivor support work and their personal lives and communities.** The learning circles focused on personal, community, and organizational accountability; each of these core themes became a basis for our workbook chapters. If you are interested in learning more or accessing the curriculum, please reach out to hello@southasiansoar.org.



2022 Transformative Justice Learning Circles: Session Arc

Note: we recognize that abolition is an expansive concept. **For the purposes of this workbook, we focus primarily on the relationship between anti-violence organizations and law enforcement/policing.** Given this scope, we have not covered crucial topics such as the abolition of the family regulation system. **For more on this topic - and for additional tools - we encourage you to check out our resources page at the end of this workbook.**

How to Use this Workbook

Let's get started! You will find the following sections in this workbook:

- **Chapter One - Reclaiming Safety:** Focuses on defining transformative justice and understanding two key concepts: punishment vs accountability and community safety.
- **Chapter Two - Responding to Violence:** Explores community responses to violence and models of how to respond to violence outside of the criminal legal system.

- **Chapter Three** - **Assessing our Organizations:** Dives into organizational practices and tools for aligning our organizations further with abolitionist and transformative justice values.
- **Chapter Four** - **Embodying our Values:** Discusses how we can embody values of accountability in our personal relationships and in our organizational cultures.
- **Closing** - **Building the Future:** Closes with reflection, commitments, and visions for the future.

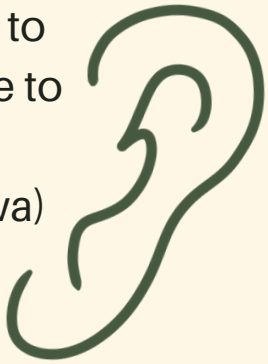
Here are some things you'll see throughout the workbook:

- **Activities**: Interactive activities to engage with in the workbook including journaling prompts, polls, drawing space, etc.
- **Tools**: Specific tools you can take with you outside of the workbook to apply to your work, personal lives, and communities,
- **Pause Points:** Key moments to consider taking a break and engaging in grounding practices or reflection,
- **Case Studies:** Example scenarios to further illustrate the tools or concepts in the workbook,
- **Spotlights**: Highlighted resources to explore a specific topic or concept further,
- **Guidance for Advocates:** Specific considerations for anti-violence advocates that focus on incorporating the concepts, activities, or tools into 1-1 or group work with survivors,
- **Sources & Additional Resources:** Digital links to additional reading, activities, and sources. We encourage you to check these out!

Tips on moving through this workbook:

- **This workbook is not linear** - you can start anywhere you want or move around as needed. We have offered the flow above so you start with a **definition** and **vision** of transformative justice to refer back as you explore community and organizational possibilities. **However, please feel free to go in any order, or focus on one chapter, based on what feels most helpful to you!**
- Before you dive into chapter one, **we encourage you to connect with a buddy** and work through the following sections together!

Pause Point: We invite you to find somewhere comfortable to listen to this **grounding** (recorded by Nishma Jethwa) before moving into the workbook.



"Our long-term vision is of a just world. A society made up of communities, relationships, and individuals that are liberated from the cycles of violence that we see today. **To transform our society, we must be able to imagine the future that we want,** for ourselves and the generations that will come after us, **and to make an honest assessment about how our current choices and conditions do and don't line up** with that vision. Meaningful change is only possible when we are willing to face and take action to address the gaps between the future we long for and the realities we are living."

- Generation 5

Initial Reflection:
Where are You Now?

What questions are you coming in with as you start this workbook?

What do you feel (physically and emotionally) when you consider diving into the topic of transformative justice?

This workbook may feel challenging at times - who and what will be supportive to you as you go through it?

How would you like to move through this workbook (i.e. the pace or order that you want to go at)? What would you like to get out of it?

Please feel free to check out & listen to our TJ Workbook Playlist as you go through the workbook!

Glossary

Abolition: "A political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment" (definition from Critical Resistance);
A push to imagine a world without police, prisons, and an underlying culture of policing. Abolition also means not just the closing of prisons but the presence of vital systems of support (definition from Ruth Wilson Gilmore).

Accountability: The ability to recognize, end, and take responsibility for violence [including] thinking about the ways someone may have contributed to violence, making amends for actions and making changes to ensure that violence does not continue and that alternatives can take its place. A process rather than a one–time event" (definition from Creative Interventions).

Anti-Violence Movement: Network of organizations working to end gender-based violence and sexualized violence; can range from grassroots collections to mid-large non-profit organizations.

Anti-Violence Organization: An organization seeking to end gender-based violence and sexualized violence.

Capitalism: "Capitalism - or racial capitalism - promotes competition and exploitation of natural resources, leading to the destruction or depletion of resources and widening inequities for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. This persistent cycle of structural violence contributes to generational and recurring trauma" (*definition from AMA, attributed to Cedric Robinson*).

Carceral: Refers not only to prisons and punishment but also to the overall societal culture of surveillance and regulation of human behavior and the ways our bodies, minds, and actions have been shaped by the idea of imprisonment (*definition from Carceral Society*).

Caste: Caste is a social, hierarchical structure of religiously codified oppression assigned at birth that affects over one billion South Asians around the world. Despite the illegality of the system, the oppressive effects are still felt today through numerous injustices at the interpersonal, social, and systemic levels (definition from Together We Rise Report).

Community: "A grouping of people based on some common experience including geography, values, identities, or interests. When we use this term we do not assume complete agreement within the group nor do we assume it to have only positive dynamics" (definition from Creative Interventions).

Community Accountability: "A process in which a community, such as family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or community members work together to transform situations of harm. This can also describe a process in which the community recognizes that they are impacted by violence, even if it is primarily between individuals; that they may have participated in allowing the violence to happen or even in causing the violence; and are responsible for resolving the violence" (definition from Creative Interventions).

Community-Based: Approaches that build on and promote community knowledge, skills, values and resources especially those of oppressed communities (definition from Creative Interventions).

Criminal Legal System: Another name for the criminal justice system but one which emphasizes that this system may not be connected to justice. It also takes into account the civil system of law such as that governing divorce, child custody, property ownership and lawsuits (definition from Creative Interventions).

Criminalization: The process through which actions (most often directly associated with people from oppressed communities) become illegal (definition from Creative Interventions).

Gender-Based Violence: Any type of violence that is rooted in the exploitation of unequal power relationships between genders, including structural power imbalances and inequities. GBV can encompass a range of harms that include physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse, intimate partner (IPV) or domestic violence (DV), genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), family violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse (CSA), stalking, human trafficking, and transnational abandonment (definition from Together We Rise Report).

Intersectionality: The term 'intersectionality' was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and legal scholar, who describes the concept as "a lens for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other" (definition from Together We Rise Report).

Patriarchy: Refers to a social system in which men hold the primary positions of power and exercise power and privilege over women and non-binary communities, including in political leadership, economic control, and social norms.

Prison Industrial Complex [PIC]: A term recognizing prisons and jails as a part of a broad system that ties together the state and the government; [includes] industries such as those building jails and prisons, those that benefit from prison labor, and those that determine who is "criminal" and who is not. [The Prison Industrial Complex includes an analysis of how] people who are named criminals are actually a product of a larger capitalist system that feeds upon the poverty, oppression, and exploitation of certain people at the expense of others - often based upon race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, national origin and other forms of discrimination (definition from Creative Interventions).

Restorative Justice: A model that aims to repair harm by engaging community members and restoring community balance by calling on shared values, principles, and practices of accountability (definition from Creative Interventions).

Safety: The following are definitions of individual, community, and societal safety:

- Individual safety includes: Freedom from immediate violence and exploitation, and freedom from threat of further violence and exploitation.
- Community safety includes: Community practices which challenge violence and move towards collective liberation, while allowing for each individual's wholeness.
- Societal safety includes: Systems built on equitable power relationships, mutual accountability, and strong alliances (all definitions from Generation 5, Transformative Justice Handbook).

South Asian Diaspora: "Individuals with ancestry from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives and individuals of South Asian origin who have roots in various areas of the world, including the Caribbean (Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago), Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda), Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore). In addition, we recognize that there is no homogenous or singular South Asian identity or experience. While we use the term "South Asian" to capture the commonalities based on ancestral geographic origin, this report does not attempt to generalize the experiences of South Asians in the US. This is particularly important to us, given the existing hegemony within the diaspora along the lines of caste, class, immigration status, religion, language, and more" (definition from SOAR's Together We Rise Report).

State: Set of people and interests that determine the laws, policies, and practices of a predetermined area. Also known as the government - federal, state, and local (definition from Creative Interventions).

State Violence: Violence perpetrated at the hands of or on the behalf of the state. This can include police violence, military violence, the types of punishments and uses of control by schools (definition from Creative Interventions).

Survivor: We define a survivor as a person who has experienced GBV. Though the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ are often used interchangeably, we use the term 'survivor' to refer to someone who has experienced harm and 'victim' in cases where the person who has experienced GBV has not survived. In addition, we recognize that people of all genders and identities can be survivors of GBV. We believe there is no perfect term to describe the experience of survivorship, and it is up to each individual who has experienced GBV to choose how they describe themselves (definition from Together We Rise Report).

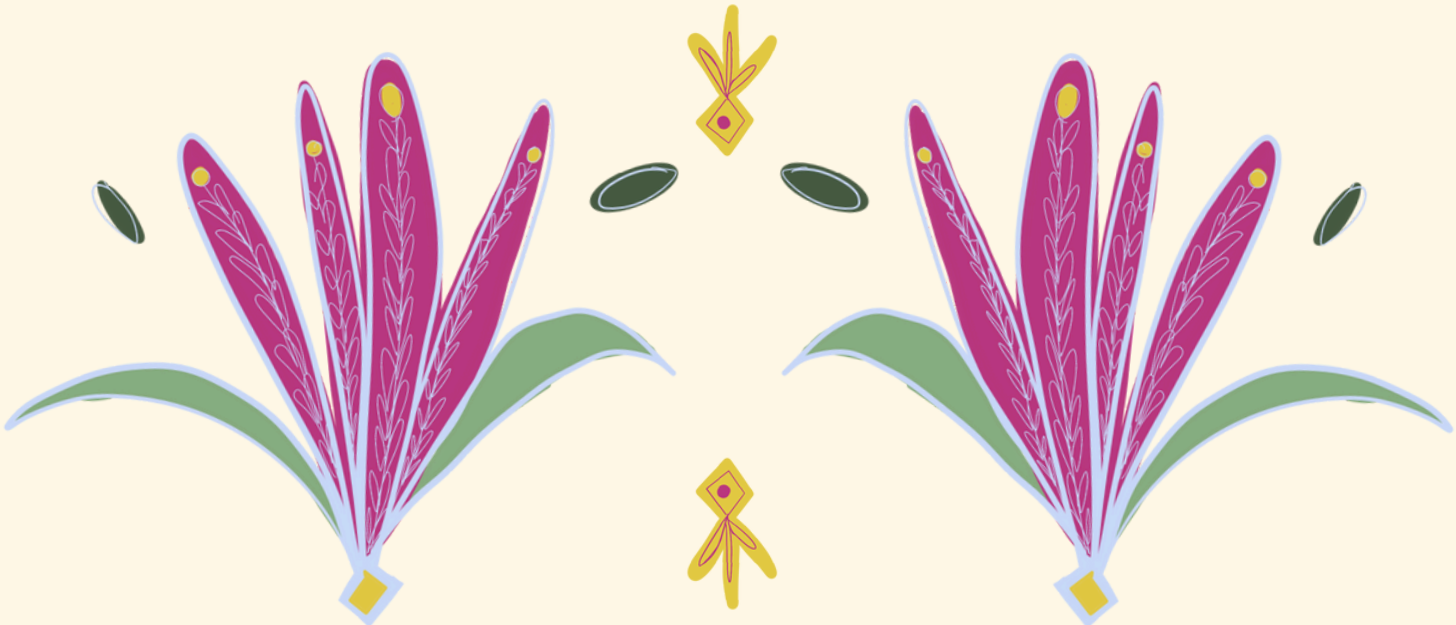
Transformative Justice: An approach to - and processes for - addressing harm that seek to not only address the specific situation of harm in question, but to transform the conditions and social forces that made such harm possible (definition from Creative Interventions).

White Supremacy: A system of power that privileges white people, including their actions, ideas, beliefs, that is maintained through the exploitation and repression of people of color. This makes specific that this system upholds the privilege and power of white people (definition adapted from Creative Interventions).

Chapter 1: Reclaiming Safety

In this chapter you will:

- **Gain** an understanding of transformative justice and how it differs from restorative justice and the criminal legal system
- **Explore** the difference between punishment and accountability and how transformative justice centers accountability
- **Build** your personal ideas around what safety and community mean to you
- **Imagine** community safety outside of the criminal legal system



Chapter Outline

We want to begin **by acknowledging the immense amount of work that you as advocates are doing in your day-to-day roles.** It is not easy to maintain the daily responsibilities of survivor support - whether that is managing a helpline, finding resources for a survivor, or offering court support - all while providing emotional support for experiences of trauma. It can be additionally difficult to maintain these responsibilities while also envisioning **another response to violence** that does not include the court system or the police. By starting this workbook you are already trying to do both: working to make systems less harmful for survivors while also holding curiosity, hope, and vision for a transformative society.

Activity 1.1:
Opening Reflections

"A commitment to creating genuine and lasting safety for all is what drives our desire to remake the world."[2]
- Mariame Kaba & Andrea J. Ritchie

Jot down your thoughts on the following prompts:

As advocates, we are often guided by our desires to create safety for all; this desire may also stem from our personal connections to survivorship. Take a moment to consider: what brings you to your work?

Now, please take a moment to jot down the support that you offer in your role (i.e. hotline shifts, emotional support, social media, interpretation, mutual aid, etc):

When you reflect on the list above, which parts of your role involve working with the police or the court system?

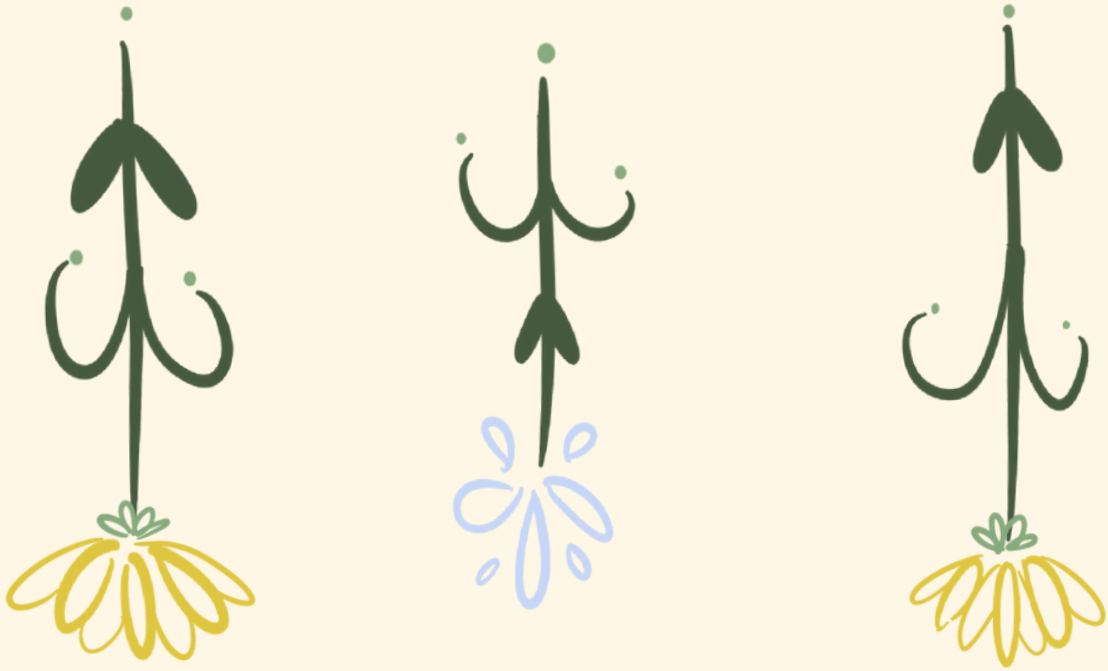
While transformative justice can feel daunting, you may already have started practicing it! As you look back over your journaling reflections above, we imagine that **you listed several forms of support that you already offer that do not involve the criminal legal system**. We start this chapter from that recognition: that you, like most advocates, already have building blocks and skills to support you in practicing transformative justice and abolitionist practices.

This first chapter provides **a foundation for understanding transformative justice as anti-violence advocates working with South Asian survivors.** We will first look at what is currently happening in the criminal legal system* to root ourselves in why we care about transformative justice and abolition. We will then explore what transformative justice means through three key principles: punishment vs. accountability, community safety, and visioning.

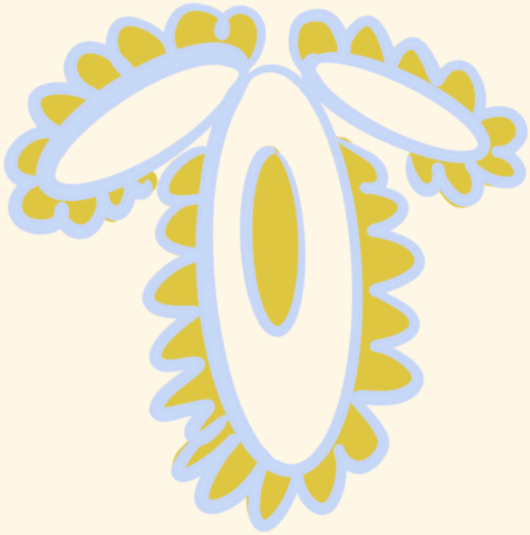
The goal of this chapter is to **deepen your understanding of and investment in transformative justice** and give you a foundation of knowledge to use as you explore the rest of this workbook.

Criminal Legal System: Another name for the criminal justice system but one which emphasizes that this system may actually not be connected to **real justice. It also takes into account the civil system of law such as that governing divorce, child custody, property ownership and lawsuits (source: Creative Interventions)*

Let's begin! **We invite you to do the following section with a buddy or group of people in your organization.** The upcoming activities can be completed for yourself or you can adapt them to do with a survivor you may be supporting (we will offer our thoughts on when to do this). **However, we encourage you to first engage with the activities for yourself** before considering how you would incorporate them into your work with survivors. As we discuss more in the last chapter, we caution against jumping to implement practices with survivors that we have not yet grappled with ourselves.



Why Transformative Justice?: Analyzing Our Current Criminal Legal System



How often have you heard from survivors that they don't want to involve the police or the criminal legal system, they just want the violence to stop? What did that make you feel?

As advocates working with South Asian survivors, you have likely struggled with how to relate to the criminal legal system as you see firsthand the harm and pain that it can cause survivors. In this section, we'll begin to explore your interactions with the current criminal legal system.

Activity 1.2:

Reflections on the Criminal Legal System

Jot down your thoughts on the following prompts:

Let's start with a personal reflection: what was a time when you felt conflicted or confused about the response you used when supporting a survivor?

(e.g., you were told by a supervisor to call the police but the survivor you were working with didn't want to).

What do you think led to that internal conflict or confusion?

(e.g. feeling like the police were the only available option, feeling the pressure to report due to mandatory reporting policies)

How do the police tend to treat you as a South Asian person? How do they tend to treat the South Asian survivors that you work with? Do you notice varied treatment based on privilege and oppression (i.e. if someone is wealthy, if someone is cisgender, etc)?

Do you feel like the police keep you safe when harm occurs in your communities? Why or why not?

"Growing up, my father was always afraid of the police regardless of where we were. My mother, on the other hand, had a lot of distrust for police 'back home' and conversely an immense amount of trust for police in the U.S."

- Azaadi Khan, LMSW, South Asian Anti-Violence Advocate

Please take a moment to review your response to the last reflection question. Did you indicate that you feel the police keep you safe?

We invite you to consider the following reflection questions:

- What identities do you hold (i.e. ethnicity, religion, caste, class, gender, sexuality)? How do these identities intersect with each other?
- Why might society deem you “worthy” or “unworthy” of being protected by the police?
- Why would the police show up for you in ways they may not for others? Who does this benefit? Who does this hurt?

We invite you to consider the following reflection questions:

- What identities do you hold (i.e. ethnicity, religion, caste, class, gender, sexuality)? How do these identities intersect with each other?
- Why might society deem you “worthy” or “unworthy” of being protected by the police?
- What were you told about the police growing up?

The meaning of safety in our current criminal legal system often depends on what and who society finds "worthy" of protection. In the U.S. some of us are deemed "deserving" and the police are understood to keep those groups safe, while those deemed "unworthy" are, at best, ignored and abandoned, or, at worst imprisoned and abused. People deemed "unworthy" may be seen as criminals, a burden, dangerous, irrational, or deviant. In the United States, the idea of being "unworthy" has one of its roots in Anti-Black racism, as well as colonialism and anti-Indigeneity. *For more about the history of the criminal legal system in connection to the anti-violence movement, please see Chapter 3: Assessing our Organizations.*

Pause Point: This can be an emotional exercise, especially recognizing how society casts marginalized communities as "unworthy" of protection. As anti-violence advocates, what does it mean to rely on an institution like the criminal legal system that is designed to impose violence on the "unworthy"? What feelings does this bring up?

South Asian Communities and the Police

Now, let's look even more specifically at our own communities. As South Asians, if we conform to certain norms and expectations or experience privilege (for example, if we are upper-class, Hindu, Brahmin, citizens, etc.), we can sometimes be seen as "worthy" of being protected by the police.

At other times, we may find ourselves labeled as "unworthy" - for example, if we are unhoused, poor or working class, queer, trans or caste-oppressed. Our criminal legal system uses these narratives to justify limiting our communities' access to certain freedoms, silencing, surveilling, separating families, or even causing death.

South Asian Communities and the Police: Part One: Recognizing Anti-Blackness as the Root of the Criminal Legal System

"When Black lives actually matter, when Black people are not seen as disposable commodities, then all lives will truly matter. In other words, when Black people who are at the bottom of America's divisive racial ladder, are free, it will be impossible for systems and policies to engage in discrimination and racism against other communities of color."[3]

- Deepa Iyer

As we reflect on our relationships with the criminal legal system, we recognize that:

1. The criminal legal system is built on anti-Black racism and we have a responsibility as South Asians to challenge it in solidarity with Black communities.
2. South Asian communities, especially marginalized South Asian communities, are also impacted by criminalization including state surveillance, police brutality, and deportation.

Spotlight: Examples of South Asian, Arab, and Muslim Activists Solidarity

(Excerpts pulled from "Ferguson is Everywhere" by Deepa Iyer[4]):

Supporting Black Lives Matter Protests

"As wounds were bandaged and hands were held in the front room, [Ruhel Islam] was in the kitchen, preparing daal, basmati rice and naan" for the protesters. Overnight, the fire from the 3rd precinct reached the Gandhi Mahal and it was severely damaged. Still, Mr. Islam said: 'Let my building burn. Justice needs to be served . . .' **Mr. Islam, who said he grew up in a 'traumatic police state' in Bangladesh, understood the anger and frustrations of Black people."**[5]

Student Organizing

Youth members of DRUM–South Asian Organizing Center made a powerful statement in the wake of Michael Brown's death when they marched through the streets of Jackson Heights, Queens, holding their hands up and shouting, "Hands Up, Don't Shoot."

Fighting the Model Minority Myth

In Oakland, South Asians joined other Asian Americans with signs that read "Model Minority Mutiny!" to encourage the subversion of the framework that creates divisions between Black and Asian American communities.

"With these actions and messages, South Asian, Arab, and Muslim activists have amplified the experiences of Black people without conflating them with the struggles of non-Black communities. South Asian, Arab, and Muslim communities must be visible and supportive partners and engaged actors in the Black Lives Matter movement. How we build together now will influence movements for racial justice and solidarity for decades to come."[6]

- Deepa Iyer

As mentioned above, **we can approach transformative justice and abolition through both a lens of solidarity and an understanding that the legal system also criminalizes many South Asian communities**, especially Muslim communities, Dalit communities, disabled and working-class South Asians, etc.

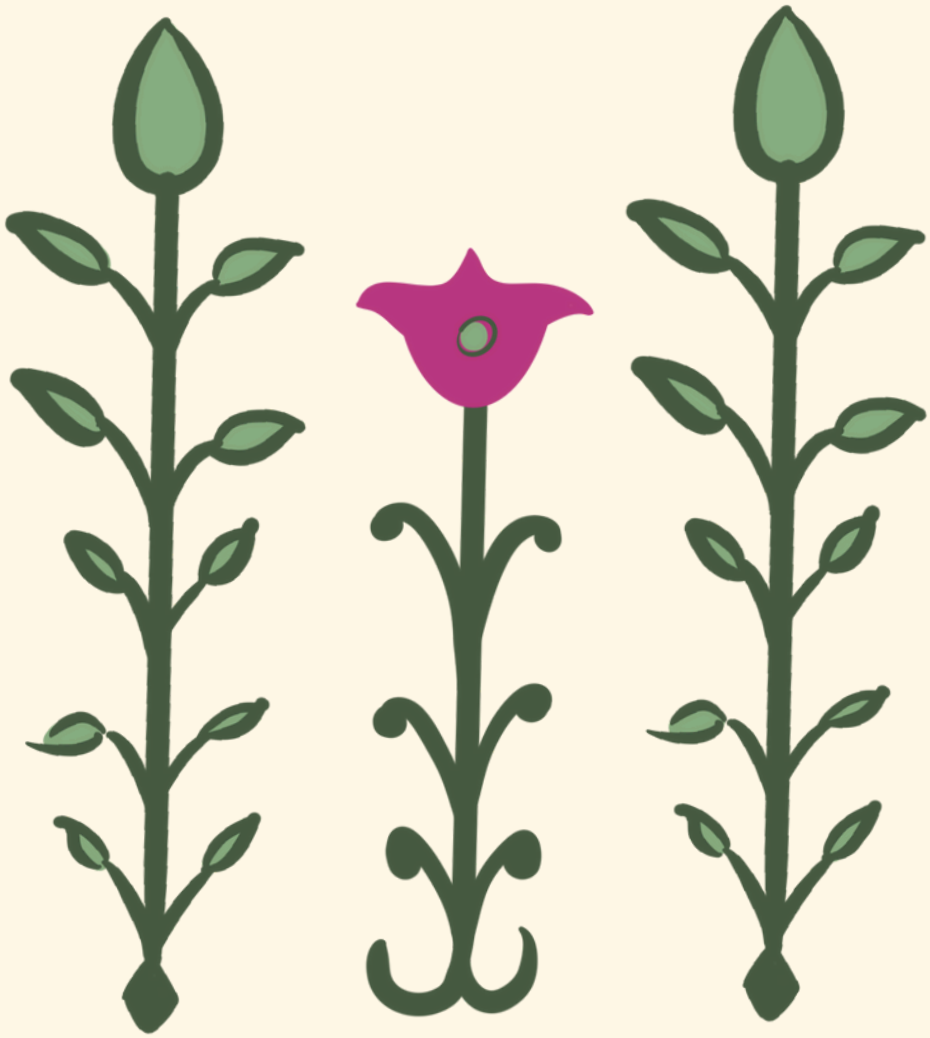
South Asian Communities and the Police: Part Two
Who in our Communities is Targeted?

"Since 2001, South Asians, Muslims, Sikhs, and South West Asians have increasingly faced government scrutiny, surveillance, and harassment based on their perceived race, national origin, and religion. Many community members remember this form of state harm most clearly in the forms of being singled out for extensive searches when boarding a plane, experiencing FBI background check delays with immigration applications, facing increased harassment for religious attire, and being the targets of multi-level surveillance of Muslim communities. . . . **Though this form of state harm relies on homogenizing our diverse community, it also continues to reveal intersections of privilege, ability, and access within our diaspora."**[7] - South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) on Racial Justice

"I work [for] construction companies as a day laborer. I was questioned by ICE and NYPD several times, while waiting to be hired at the corner of the street, because of my appearance."[8]
– *South Asian restaurant worker focus group participant*

“I heard one of the 'bad brown aunties' from the podcast of the same name talk about her work as a public defender - she saw many more Bangladeshi folks being picked up than any other South Asians. She chalked this up to rates of poverty, colorism, and neighborhood proximity (proximity to Blackness).” -Azaadi Khan, LMSW, South Asian Anti-Violence Advocate

Interested in more testimonials?
Check out: In Our Own Words: Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling.



Remembering Sayed Arif Faisal by Afiya Rahman

Content note: Police violence, murder

"On January 4, Sayed Arif Faisal was killed by Cambridge police. A student at the University of Massachusetts Boston, a Bangladeshi American, a 20-year-old only child, Faisal's death sparked protests from the Cambridge community calling for police accountability. Faisal was very probably undergoing a mental health crisis, and instead of helping him, police fatally shot him.

As a Bangladeshi immigrant myself, I cannot describe the feelings of anger and grief that I felt when hearing this news. My parents, however, clearly articulated theirs: anger at his death, grief for his parents, and lack of trust in the ability of the police to conduct a thorough investigation. In that moment, the myth of immigrant excellence — of coming to America to achieve a better life — vanished, and all that was left behind was the realization that the police will not protect us."

"For South Asians, the stain of British colonialism has never left; the violence perpetuated and the struggle for independence has left behind a legacy of struggle and division. We understand very well the imprint British colonialism has left in our motherlands, and we are aware of our racialized brown bodies in the airport post 9/11, but too often, we fall short at denouncing the American policing system — another tool of colonial and racist/white supremacist/Islamophobic violence, one that does not guarantee safety and protection like it advertises.

"The United States spends more than 100 billion dollars a year on policing, yet some experts argue that there is no relationship between the number of police present in an area and crime rates. It is clear from the disproportionate impacts that police have on Black people that their presence is not always good for the communities they claim to serve.

"Many South Asians extend our solidarity with Black Lives Matter by protesting against police brutality and donating to antiracist organizations. However, we often dismiss having discussions of anti-Blackness in our own communities and may believe our efforts are wasted on our parents, who belong to an older generation that can be less socially conscious."

"South Asians have a responsibility to fight against this country's police system — not just for Faisal and his family, but for every Black and brown American killed by police brutality."[9]

- Afiya Rahman

Pause point: This is heavy, emotional content. If you'd like to pause, take a minute now before you carry on. Feel free to take three deep breaths, move your body in any way that feels good for you, and/or grab water or a warm drink of your choice. If helpful, here is a link to a series of short grounding exercises.

We include these stories to show that if we continue to rely on the police, we allow the criminal legal system to define who is "worthy" of being safe. As we see through our own experiences, through the stories above, and through many survivors we work with, the criminal legal system is **failing to keep members of our communities (and extended communities) safe.** This statement especially applies to Black survivors, immigrant survivors, disabled survivors, poor and working-class survivors, queer and trans survivors, caste-oppressed survivors, and survivors at the intersections of these identities.[10]

Police often dismiss or criminalize people who report sexual violence. **Less than 31 percent** of sexual assaults are reported to police.[11]

South Asian Anti-Violence Advocates and the Police

So, what does this mean for our role as advocates?

Rethinking our relationship with the police can be especially challenging to consider when you work in anti-violence organizations or with survivors in any way. **Many of us as advocates are grappling with how to distance ourselves from the police while navigating the current system that we live in.** We know that much of our work is trying to get someone to safety who might be facing immediate danger, even death. In the system we currently live in, accessing the police and the power they hold can sometimes feel like the quickest way to do this.

However, take a moment to consider the survivors that you work with.

Activity 1.3:

What are We Hearing from Survivors?

As South Asian anti-violence advocates, what do you hear survivors saying about the police and the court system?

What are some of the reasons why South Asian survivors are scared of calling the police or being involved with the courts?[12]

Arrest and/or deportation of the person who caused harm

Fears of arrest or deportation of the survivor

Loss of child support

Language barriers

Person who caused harm lying and/or manipulating situations with police and the court system (especially in situations where the survivor cannot speak English or fear other repercussions like deportation)

Re-traumatization from the court system

Any others?

For more, please see SOAR's Together We Rise Report.

"I felt there's no compassion or understanding in the court system for people who are going through domestic violence. [The] legal system is hard anyway. The person who is being abused is in a very sensitive situation. It's hard for them to deal with these things, so it's twice harder."[13]

-Jayanti, age 35, India

The lineage of groups like INCITE! remind us that transformative justice **stems from working with survivors.**[14] Survivor advocates have a unique advantage in understanding transformative justice because you and the survivors you work with **see first-hand the daily injustices of the criminal legal system**. You carry deep knowledge about the criminal legal system, which can inform your commitment to building something outside of this system.

So, what do we do if we are not calling the police?

Transformative justice and abolition offer an approach for building safety outside of the criminal legal system.

In this next section, we're going to dive deeper into what transformative justice is and isn't. However, we want to highlight that one of the reasons we are committed to transformative justice is that it can **expand** the options that we offer survivors and push us as advocates to get creative and think outside the box.

So, what happens if a survivor does want to call the police?

We do not recommend discouraging survivors from taking action in ways that make them feel safe and secure at any given moment - this may mean calling the police or other state services.

However, here are a couple key advocacy notes when supporting South Asian survivors who want to work with the criminal legal system:

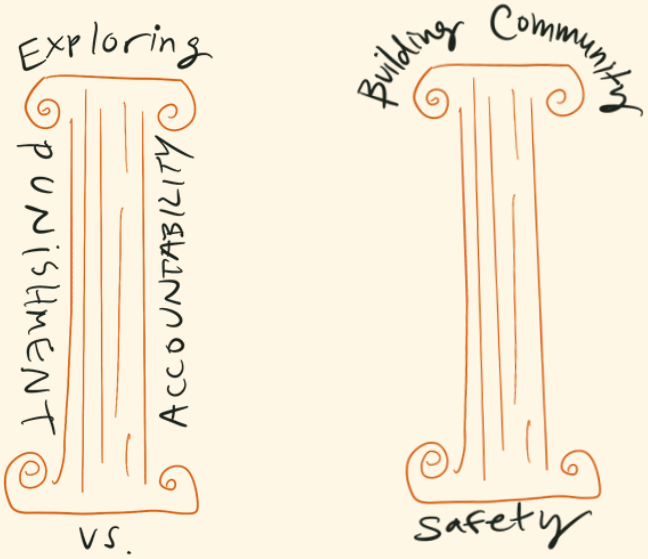
- **We can take time to ask questions** about what survivors are looking for at that moment and discuss whether the police or court system can truly provide that.
- **We can support informed decision-making.** We can share information about the realities of the court system including the ways the process can be re-traumatizing and discuss strategies for harm reduction if survivors decide to continue.
- **We can safety plan** with survivors for their interactions with law enforcement. **For example: Who will accompany them? Do they know their rights when interacting with law enforcement?**

For more abolitionist safety planning resources, please see **Chapter Two, Responding to Violence.**

Defining Transformative Justice

"I want to make certain that we let Transformative Justice (TJ) be free, that we don't judge TJ, put TJ into boxes, or constrain TJ just because she became a popular kid. And I want people to know that for so many of us, TJ is already in us, in our families and lived experiences, and is something that we just call life"
-Ejeris Dixon, Beyond Survival, pg. 8

To break down the idea of transformative justice, we will explore two key pillars:



But first ... what **is** transformative justice?

Transformative justice is:

- Focused on creating strategies for responding to and **preventing harm** so that institutions like the police and the criminal legal system eventually become obsolete
- Focused on building the skills, tools, and courage to create a more equitable experience of safety, instead of outsourcing it to the police

Transformative justice is not:

- One concrete "formula" that applies to all; it is not meant to be the only solution to all situations
- An approach that excuses violence or ignores consequences
- About survivors tolerating abuse and harm (whether systemic or interpersonal)

Still unclear? Let's break it down by exploring a concrete scenario:

Activity 1.4:

What do we do if we don't call the police?

Consider this scenario: You work in a community garden with a group of four other staff members. Four of you have worked together for the last year and have strong relationships with each other. The fifth person recently joined the team - you don't know them as well but they are very close to a friend who works in the garden outreach team. You usually each lunch together as a team but you realize that your newest team member has not been joining you. One day, you notice that the money you set aside for lunch is missing. Over the next few weeks, you see your newest team member take this money about once a week and use it to buy food. You decide that you want to confront them about it.

How would you approach this scenario without calling the police? Jot your ideas down on the post-its. If you're stuck you will find some examples of things we came up with in our listening circles.

Form a friendship to understand why the person is taking the money

Active and generous listening

Build shared solutions based on the underlying need

Discuss accountability as a group since the money belonged to the group

Focus on root causes

What approaches did you notice in the above examples?

Curiosity vs. presumptive

Modeling the kind of world we want to live in

Accountability can only take place when relationship exists

Long-term process; no easy short-cut; discomfort is part of it

Importance of knowing root causes

Importance of knowing root causes

Potential to have more than one person involved in defining accountability

⁎**Restorative** = returning the lunch
Transformative = a system where everyone has food (i.e. creating community potluck)

⁎*We will discuss restorative justice further in the next few pages.*

Note: This scenario may feel "low risk" if you work with survivors, but **some key elements of transformative justice in this scenario can also apply to survivor support work.** In addition, practicing applying this approach to low stakes scenarios will help you build your skills so you can intervene when more high risk harm happens in your community.

Please take a moment to reflect on which elements of the above activity may apply in your work or context.

"Crisis expands our imaginations around what is possible."

– Mariame Kaba / Olly Costello,
Against Punishment Curriculum

Using what you wrote above, please consider the following scenario. ***Content note:*** *this scenario is more DV/SA specific but does not include explicit details.*

Consider this scenario: You are working in a community garden with a group of four other staff members. Four of you have worked together for the last year and have strong relationships with each other. The fifth person recently joined the team - you don't know them as well but they are very close to a friend who works in the garden outreach team. You usually each lunch together as a team but you realize that your newest team member has not been joining you. Over time, you notice that the person is becoming more and more isolated and withdrawn from the team. You also notice that they have bruises on their arms. When you talk with them about it, they share that they are a survivor.

How would you approach this scenario without calling the police? Jot your ideas down on the post-its.

Now, go back to the above post-its notes and highlight any key words or ideas that jump out at you.

Through the activity above, **you have started identifying the key elements of transformative justice,** including:

- Responding to violence **without** creating more violence
- Prioritizing **relationship building**
- Exploring **root cause**s for why violence and harm occur

Pause point: how does this understanding of transformative justice feel to you so far?

To summarize, here is a chart that outlines the differences between retributive, restorative and transformative justice.[15]

Retributive

The conventional retributive justice framework that we see in the criminal legal system focuses on these three questions:

1. What laws have been broken?
2. Who did it?
3. What do they deserve (i.e. punishment)?

In this framework:

- Crime is a violation of the law and the state
- Violations create guilt (which does not always lead to change or transformation)
- Justice requires the state to determine blame (guilt) and impose pain (punishment)
- Most people want punishment. The harsher the punishment the more we feel that the harm we experienced is being taken seriously

The central focus here is "offenders" getting what they deserve.

Restorative

The restorative justice framework focuses on these three questions:

1. **Who has been hurt?**
2. **What are their needs?**
3. **Whose obligation is it to address these needs?**

In this framework:

- Harm (used instead of crime) is a violation of people and relationships; violations create obligations.
- Justice involves people who cause harm, people who experience the harm, and community members in an effort to put things right.
- Justice requires joint responsibility and accountability. Harmful actions are both a sign of individual and collective failure; thus, they provide opportunities for individual and collective actions to restore and repair.
- It involves participatory, collaborative discussions/dialogues about responsibility, accountability, forgiveness and reintegration, and reparations/repairing harms and damages.

The central focus here includes safety and care for the person harmed, as well as the person who caused harm taking responsibility for the harm they caused. It is a community-focused, collaborative, and holistic approach to solving problems related to harms and violations of community norms and standards.

Transformative

The transformative justice framework asks these three questions:

1. **What systems of violence contributed to the harm? (e.g. capitalism, Islamophobia, racism)**

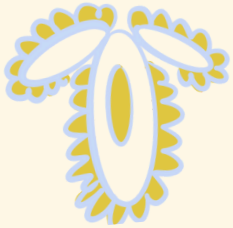
2. How can these conditions be transformed for individual and collective healing and liberation?

3. How can we meet the immediate needs of the person harmed?

In this framework:
The focus is to **not create more harm/violence** (e.g. prisons, the police, the criminal legal system) and not perpetuate systemic violence (e.g. oppression, harmful societal norms, vigilantism, criminalization).[16]

Instead, the aim is to:

- Work to meet immediate needs for justice (e.g. safety, healing, connection, accountability); while also working towards a long-term vision of liberation (e.g. a world without prisons and oppression where sexual violence doesn't exist).
- Work to address current incidents of violence in ways that will shift the conditions that allowed that violence to happen, in ways that prevent future incidences of violence and ultimately end violence.
- Understand that individual acts of harm do not only have individual impact but also have collective impact and therefore need to be solved collectively.



"How can we respond to violence in ways that not only address the current incident of violence, but also help to transform the conditions that allowed for it to happen?"

- Mia Mingus

The central focus here is transformation - of the systems that cause harm, of how we meet immediate needs and how we organize collectively.

Transformative justice is grounded in the idea that we cannot prevent harm by causing further harm. As we named above, we must find different ways to address harm - there is no single solution. In fact, transformative justice may not be for every situation or context and we can grapple with that too.

Activity 1.5:

Reflections on Transformative Justice

Take a few minutes to reflect on the concept of transformative justice and use the space to note down anything you want to remember or take forward with you as you complete the rest of this workbook.

Have you seen or experienced examples of transformative justice (even if you didn't call it that) in your communities? What did it look like?

(If the above feels hard) Are there any examples of responding to harm that you have seen that did not involve the police? Who was involved?

Are there any examples of responding to harm that you have seen that focused on healing, support, equity, and meeting people's needs? What are these?

Survivor Story: Restorative and Transformative Justice

Content Note: Sexual Assault & State Violence

“When I was 18, I experienced my second sexual assault. The first time I experienced violence, I told no one what happened and held my pain alone. This time around, I knew I needed support. But as soon as I told one person about my experience, I was met with an onslaught of friends and college administrators urging me to talk to the police. It was overwhelming, and it felt like the only alternative to taking no action.

My main frustration with going to the police wasn’t actually from a fear of being retraumatized—it was about the punitive nature of the carceral system. I had no desire to participate in an unjust system that I believe perpetuates harm. Especially one that does not support my healing or my harm-doer's learning.

A friend who worked at my school’s student-run violence prevention office suggested an alternative: restorative justice circles. The relief I felt to have an option that didn't involve police or prisons replaced my typical anxious response to newness with curiosity and a willingness to learn. I immediately took that route.

Restorative justice circles provided a space to share my story and receive support from my community. I didn’t know what to expect but in my head, I pictured a literal circle of chairs and that’s exactly what I walked into. Seated across from me was our circle-keeper - a trained facilitator who walked the group through activities and discussions about healing and addressing harm. Next to me were my roommates, friends, and mentors from my college community. And in the middle of the circle was my circle-keeper’s dog, napping and ready for emergency cuddles. For 3 months, we met biweekly to discuss the impact of my experience on myself and my community. We left with tangible steps I committed to take to support my healing and actions my community would take to support me. For example, I started regularly going to therapy. My roommates planned monthly mental health days for us to check in on each other and do a fun activity. Ideally, the person who caused the harm would also participate, but even though he refused, I was still able to address the immediate harm of the assault.

However, as I progressed through the circle, I found myself reflecting more on the harm of being pressured to tell the police—a harm that, at the time, felt more traumatic than the assault itself. Though my community members apologized for the pressure they put on me, the norm of carceral responses goes far beyond them as individuals. It was a systemic harm that restorative justice couldn't fully address.

This realization wasn't just mine; it was something my circle-keeper noticed from my reflections and from other student survivors who chose not to go to the police or who did go but experienced retraumatization in the process.

That's when we, as survivors and graduated restorative justice circle participants, were offered the chance to pilot a transformative justice cohort. It was a space where we could delve into the deeper systemic issues that perpetuate harm and explore alternative pathways to healing and accountability. We set it up similar to a book club where we met biweekly to discuss a reading on abolition or transformative justice and rotated facilitators. We also discussed community guidelines, what systemic issues were at play in our experiences, and brainstormed actions we could take to dismantle oppressive systems. It was a space for experimentation and learning that led me to work with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Getting to that point was a journey. Though I already named prisons and police as the oppressive systems at play in the harm I experienced, the prospect of working with people affected by those systems was still scary. We're brought up with extremely negative narratives about people with violent offense charges that ultimately dehumanize them and leave us on the outside in fear of them. But having a cohort to lean on and learn from helped me ground myself in my values and challenge myself to act on them.

After college, I decided to get an incarcerated pen pal. Through an LGBTQ pen pal program, I read letters from folks on the inside requesting friends. One in particular resonated with me - his nickname was Sunny and we had so much in common. To name a few, we're both the oldest of 6 siblings, we love the same Ben & Jerry's flavors of ice cream, and we hold the same political beliefs and curiosities. In his request letter, he encouraged interested pen pals to look up his sentencing charge because he didn't want anyone to feel uncomfortable speaking to him. At the age of 17, he was charged as an adult for a sexual assault and at this point had been serving time for over a decade. In full transparency, that alone almost stopped me from reaching out. But I thought back to what brought me here and what narratives I still needed to unlearn, so I wrote to him and I'm so grateful that I did.

The connection I formed with Sunny is to this day my most transformative experience. We learned so much from each other and formed a genuine friendship that I still hold. I learned that he was being held 3 years after his sentence was over simply because of housing restrictions imposed by the state. So I started a campaign with youth in my hometown to work on his reentry. After a year of fundraising and sharing Sunny's story, we raised over $20,000 to get him a trailer house and out of prison.

Building that relationship allowed us to learn from each other's perspectives and lean on each other which isn't possible in a world with prisons.

From this experience, I immersed myself in reentry organizing and advocacy work to eliminate housing banishment and public registration laws. First, I started with writing petitions and representing incarcerated people with violent offense charges in front of parole boards. Then, I began working with a group of formerly incarcerated homeless people in my city. Many of them, like myself, were youth survivors. However, as primarily cisgender Black men like Sunny, they were never given that language, nor deemed worthy of the same recognition and support. And if they weren't already survivors, the harm they experienced in prison made them survivors of state violence. Through advocacy and personal connections, I witnessed the transformative power of reimaging safety. Ultimately, my healing came from working with people who were labeled as my opposition, as abusers, but who, in reality, are a part of the survivor community. To this day, that is the majority of my organizing outside of the South Asian anti-violence movement.

Transformative justice became more than just a concept to me; it became a guiding principle and practice of my politics—a vision of a world where we have the tools and opportunity to disrupt cycles of violence. I don't want to give the impression that this is easy to practice or that my version of transformative justice is what everyone should follow. What I shared is just an abbreviated version of my story, but there were many points where I hesitated or temporarily stepped away from the work. However, I always had the intention and motivation to come back to transformative justice. It's hard, it's messy, and it's imperfect because it isn't prescriptive. But that's what makes it a priority for our movement to explore.

So I invite you to be imaginative and approach this workbook with the openness to actively practice transformative justice in both your professional and personal lives."

- SOAR Community Member

Transformative Justice Pillar One: Understanding Punishment & Accountability

"Accountability feels focused on the future, punishment feels focused on the past."

- SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Our first pillar is understanding the difference between punishment and accountability. To start - what is punishment?

Activity 1.6:

Reflections on Punishment

Note: This can be a challenging activity so please ensure you are in a safe place, have access to something that may be comforting, and have time to ground yourself after completing it. If helpful, here is a resource for grounding activities.

Think about your first memory of being punished (this could be being disciplined at school, getting a "time-out", getting a toy taken away, etc). Please note it down. How did it feel at the time? How does it feel to remember it?

What did you learn about punishment from your family? How does your South Asian context or community inform your understanding of punishment?

How do you think the messages from power structures (e.g. capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy etc.) impact our understanding of punishment?

Below are some examples of punishment from our SOAR TJ learning circles. Can you think of any others? Add them below.

Blame	Withholding Resources	
Time-outs Detentions Suspensions		Isolation

Note: was it easy to think of examples? Why or why not?

Pause Point: If that activity felt intense, please take a minute before you continue and grab water, move your body in any way that feels good for you, or anything else that feels restful/grounding.

“But wait...how are we defining punishment?”

“Punishment is defined as inflicting violence on others in response to an experience of harm or violence.”

“But what else is possible? If people cause harm, they need to be responsible for it. We can’t excuse this behavior – that already happens too often in the anti-violence field.”

To look at what else is possible, let's refer back to question #1 above and the memory you reflected on. You may be sitting in feelings of shame or you may have felt isolated and disconnected from others. Too often, we end up staying in these emotions without taking other actions such as reflecting on our actions, making amends, and committing to changing our behaviors.

What could be possible if we shifted from a punishment mindset to one that embraces the possibility of change?

One of the principles of transformative justice is that punishment actually undermines safety. Transformative justice differentiates punishment from accountability. It offers that, while punishment looks like inflicting cruelty and suffering on people and dehumanizing them, **accountability is about actions that minimize future harm, take away power from the person harming and increase the agency of the person harmed.**

Example

You are a kid in school and you knock over someone's markers, causing a big mess:

Punishment could mean a time-out
Accountability could mean cleaning up the mess, returning the markers and making a genuine apology

How would this apply to something like domestic violence?

Punishment would be going to jail (a deeply traumatic environment)
Accountability could mean participating in an accountability process and following through on the demands asked of you⁎

⁎Note: as defined by the person harmed (may include public apologies, agreeing to certain commitments about future behavior, financially supporting someone to move through the impact of the harm, etc.).

“Transforming our punishment mindsets is a daily discipline. Punishment is so deeply ingrained that we fail to even notice how we enact it in our lives. It takes practice to uproot it and to focus on being more restorative in our interactions.”

- Mariame Kaba

Activity 1.7:

Reflections on Accountability

What are examples of accountability that you have experienced or witnessed? Add them to the examples below.

What did you learn about accountability from your family? How does your South Asian context or community inform your understanding of accountability?

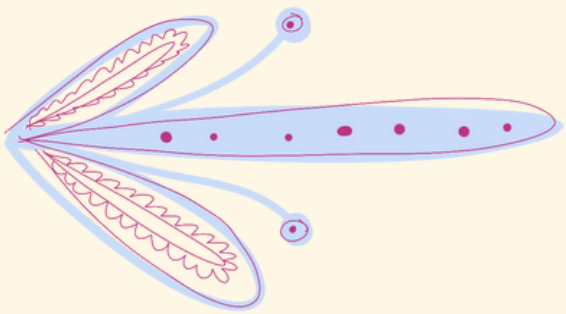
How do you think the messages from power structures (e.g. capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy etc.) impact our understanding of accountability?

What are the difficulties or challenges of accountability?

Below are some examples of accountability from our learning circles. Can you think of any others? Add them below. Note: consider whether it was easy or difficult to think of examples and why that might be.

Changing behavior or seeking help to achieve that change (i.e. therapy)	
Accountability circles and clear apology with restitution	
Space for people harmed to discuss their feelings, account of events, and name their needs	
Understanding the impact and consequences of the act	
Conversation with clear apology and accountability steps	
Taking responsibility for one's own actions	

We want to acknowledge that the concept of accountability can bring up a range of feelings. **Take a moment to consider: how does accountability make you feel?**



"Sometimes punishment feels pessimistic and accountability feels optimistic/hopeful."

-SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Some of the differences between accountability and punishment are summarized in the table below:[17]

Accountability ***The focus is on repair, changed behaviors, and healing***	**Punishment** ***The focus is on retribution, rather than repair or healing***
Minimizes Harm: Accountability aims **to stop harm** from happening. Accountability focuses on the idea of **responsibility and repair.** It is not about enforcing rules but rather about people taking responsibility for their actions to create healthier communities.	**Continuation of Harm:** Punishment can often be a continuation of harm. The process of punishment can be violent or shaming. Punishment is **a way of enforcing rules**, often rules we have not created or consented to.
Proactive: Accountability is often active and can be proactive; the one who committed harm can initiate the accountability process rather than waiting for a consequence to be imposed upon them.	**Passive/Reactive:** To complete punishment, one must only not escape. It requires neither agency nor dignity, nor does it require work. It is usually coerced; most people don't volunteer to be punished.

Accountability *Focus is on repair, changed behaviors, and healing*	Punishment *The focus is on retribution, rather than repair or healing*
Ongoing: The most effective accountability processes are voluntary and ongoing–they are more of a process than a single event.	**Limited:** Punishment is often seen as "over" once the act of punishment is done.
Embraces Complexity: Accountability takes into account the wider context that we live in, including systems of power and trauma histories.	**Uses Binary Thinking:** Punishment is steeped in either/or thinking: one is either guilty or innocent, a perpetrator or a victim.
Prioritizes Agency: The person or persons who were harmed are active participants in the accountability process along with the person who committed harm.	**Limits Agency:** The type of punishment may or may not be decided in consultation with the "victim".
Community-oriented: Accountability builds connection by acknowledging the harm and its impact. Accountability is founded on the premise that when a harm is done, the harm creates an obligation–to the person harmed, and often to others in a group or community.	**Individually-oriented/Isolating:** Whether it's a time out, suspension, expulsion, or incarceration, punishment is often isolating; it involves being removed from one's community.

"Accountability comes with a sense of ownership of the problem . . . punishment doesn't provide folks a chance for rehabilitation or investment in transformation."

- SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Let's apply this concept to a scenario:

Activity 1.8:

Punishment versus Accountability [Application]

Content note: the following story briefly mentions intimate partner violence.

You are working in a small, South Asian community mental health organization. You are approached by a community member (initials D) who tells you that they are a survivor of intimate partner violence by one of the staff members of your organization (initials A). D shares that they do not want to involve the authorities but instead have specific demands for A including: an apology letter, stepping down from his staff position, and paying back the money that he owes them.

Consider:

1) What would punishment look like in this scenario?

2) What would accountability look like in this scenario?

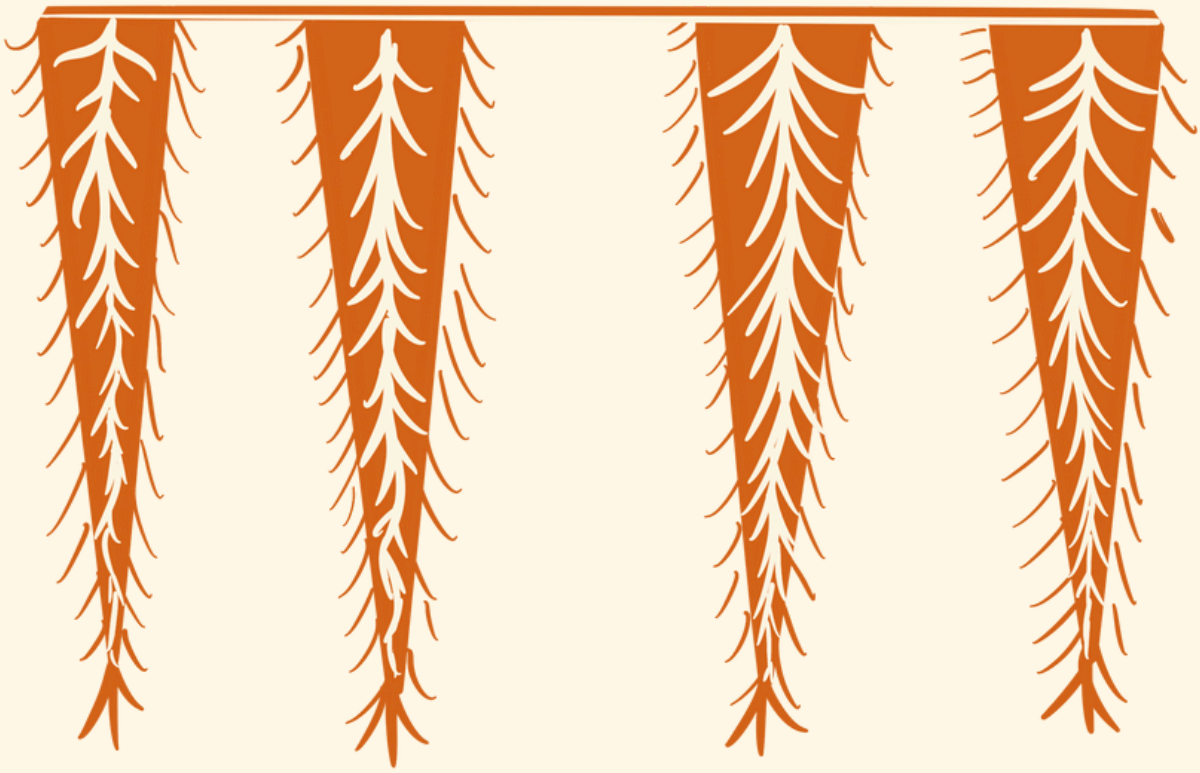
3) Which offers greater potential for a survivor to ***have their needs and demands met?***

"**What about consequences?** I think it's important that people face consequences for their actions."

"**Yes!** One of the myths of accountability is that it means there are no consequences for people's actions. **Actually, consequences can be a real and necessary part of accountability.** For example, ensuring that powerful people that have caused harm step down from their positions of power (where they can continue to enact further harm) would be seen as consequences rather than punishment. That can definitely be a part of accountability."

Going deeper: It is important to remember that not all consequences are punishments. If you are interested in further resources on consequences, consider Kai Cheng Thom's Unwinding Binaries & Loving Justice model.[18]

As we close this section, consider: why is engaging with accountability important in your context as South Asian anti-violence advocates?



Transformative Justice Pillar Two: Imagining Community Safety

So, if we are not punishing - then how are we keeping each other safe?

As we discussed above, in order to apply principles of transformative justice to ourselves, our communities, and the survivors that we work with, we need to begin dismantling the idea that the police and the criminal legal system create safety for us. **Instead, we can heed the call to reclaim and re-imagine safety.**

In anti-violence work, safety is at the core of what we do. We are trained in safety planning and safety protocols to ensure safety for survivors. **Yet, who is defining safety? Is it the survivors that we are working with? Is it our funders? Is it the criminal legal system?**

"Abolition also requires us to unpack the notion of safety itself. While safety is a basic and universal human need, it doesn't have a universal and singular definition. No individual or society can be "perfectly safe" at all times and under all conditions."[19]

- Mariame Kaba & Andrea J. Ritchie

Activity 1.9:

What does safety mean to you?

First, let's take some time to reflect on what safety means to you:

What do you need to feel safe and secure? If you're stuck, think of the last time you felt safe. Where were you? Who was there?

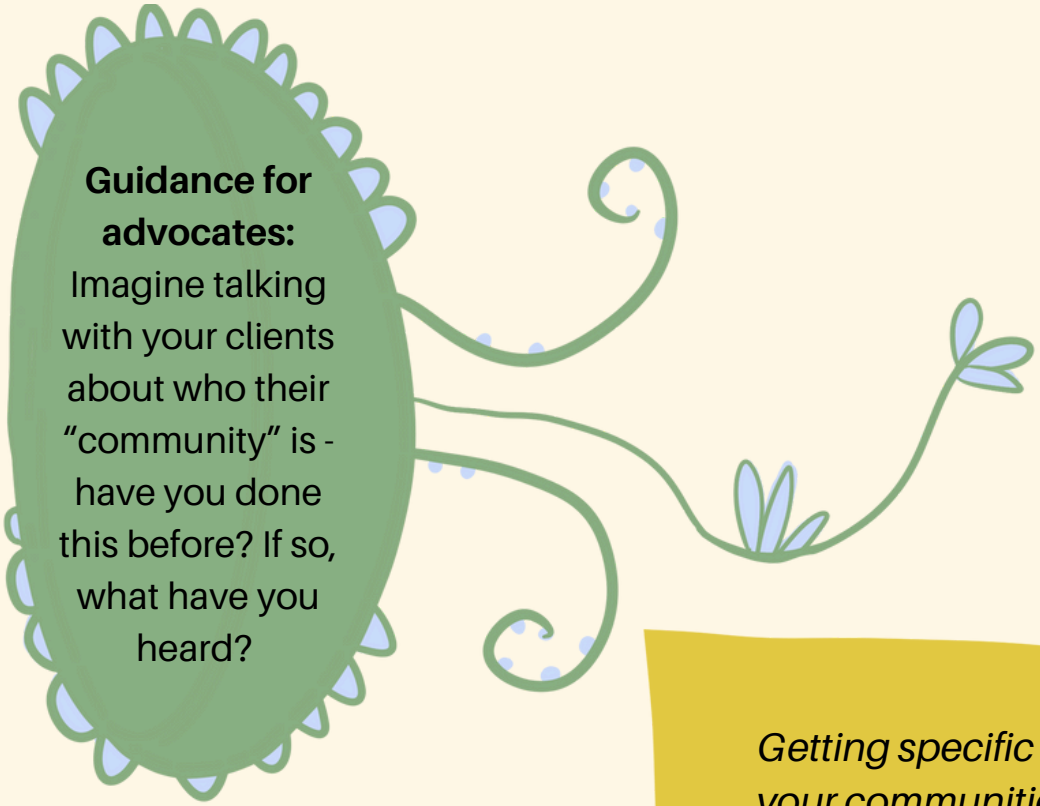
How did it feel in your body?
What were you thinking or feeling?

What could emotional safety look or feel like?

**__Guidance for advocates__: If you feel comfortable, you can do this activity with survivors you work with and discuss how they define safety. One idea is to connect this activity to pod mapping (see Chapter Two) to map out who to turn to if they are not feeling safe.*

Our aim here is to **expand our understanding of safety** and acknowledge that the criminal legal system is not keeping us - or the survivors that we work with - safe. One of the key principles of transformative justice is the idea that it is actually **our networks of relationships that are critical to keeping us safe.** As the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective states, people who experience violence, harm and abuse often look for support in their personal networks before they consider going to external state or social services.[20]

As South Asian anti-violence advocates, we may feel deeply tied in community with the survivors that we are working with. **We also recognize that for many South Asian survivors, community can be a challenging term, especially for individuals who are new to the country, have little social or structural support, don't speak English, and are isolated from community due to domestic violence**. You may have survivors who feel that you or your organization **are** a part of their community, especially given isolation due to domestic/intimate partner violence.



Getting specific about who is in your communities can be a helpful tool instead of assuming that community is inherently supportive. See: Chapter Two, Pod Mapping Resource.

Activity 1.10:

What does community mean to you?

Take some time to reflect on the following prompts.
There is space below for you to draw, write, doodle etc.

Who are the groups you see yourself a part of? For example, you may consider yourself part of the South Asian community, the Tamil community, the queer community, a school friendship group, a workplace, an apartment block, a mutual aid group etc.

*Who are the **specific people** you would consider part of your intimate networks or communities?*

What supports you to feel "in community" and connected to others?

What can be challenging about community?

We know that defining community can be a challenging task. We also want to acknowledge that the idea of one "South Asian" community itself is a myth. **We are not a monolith.** Moreover, many of us don't connect with the term "South Asian," especially given the complicated history of it being used to obscure our distinct regional, caste and religious experiences and instead express proximity to whiteness.

Community may also have been a source of harm for us or for South Asian survivors that we work with.[21] Some of these harms may include:

- Patriarchal violence
- Coerced or forced marriage
- Reluctance to disclose intimate partner violence to protect family reputation
- Immigration threats
- Financial dependence on partners due to immigration status
- Abuse from in-laws or extended families
- Caste or religious violence

"The responsibility of abuse is placed on the [survivor], which is why her leaving the abuser is not considered an option. The abuse is considered a family affair, and if the community members come to know about it, it negatively impacts not only the survivor but also the future of her children."[22]

– Sabri Bushra, Michelle Simonet, and Jacquelyn Campbell, excerpt from their article "Risk and Protective Factors of Intimate Partner Violence Among South Asian Immigrant Women and Perceived Need for Services"

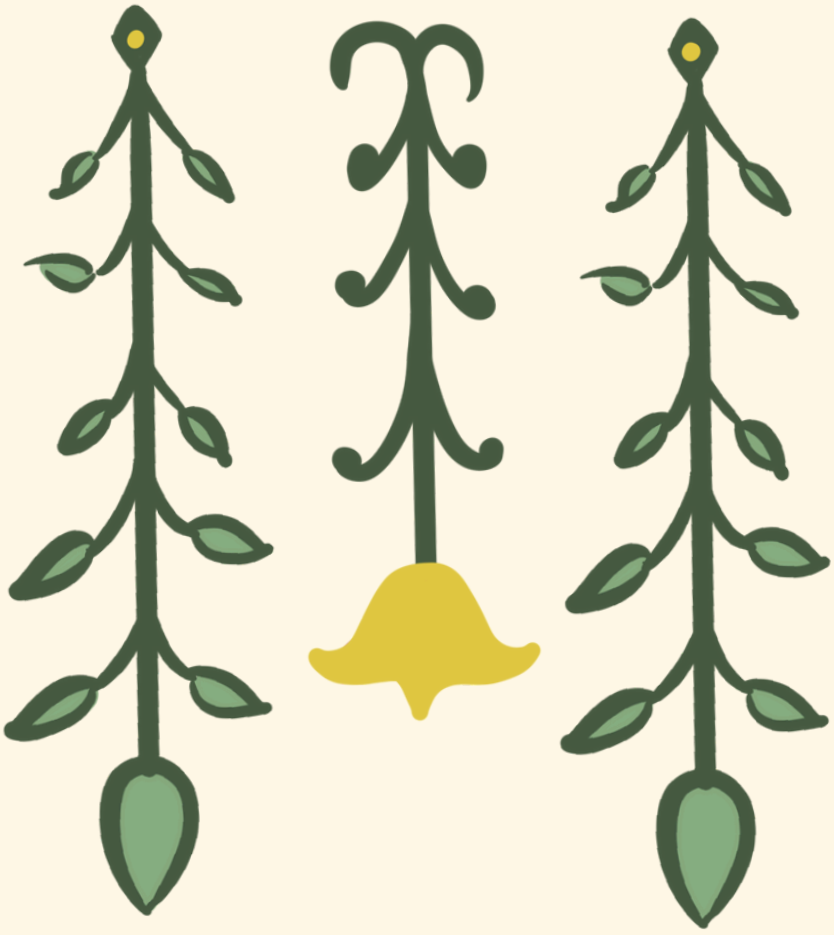
Pause Point: What feelings and emotions are coming up for you after this section?

It is understandable to feel angry with community or family members given what you may have experienced yourself or from working with survivors. Yet, we believe that when relational or community harm happens, healing and long-term change can come from supportive and connective relationships. **In South Asian communities where there is often so much community involvement, how can community be used as a supportive, protective factor for ending abuse?**

We propose that many of the dynamics that can be challenging in navigating abuse and intimate partner violence in South Asian communities (i.e. close-knit families, community influence, and the focus on family), can **potentially be (or be transformed into) protective factors that create the foundations for transformative justice.** However, doing this work also involves expanding ideas of family outside of the "biological" model and recognizing the concept of **chosen** family and community.

"Building and strengthening the relationships we need to create collective safety requires us to overcome the fear of and alienation from each other that the state has perpetuated."[23]

- Mariame Kaba



Now that you've reflected on safety and community, let's dive deeper into **how our relationships and communities could keep us safe.**

Activity 1.11:

Who keeps us safe when harm occurs?

What kinds of harm do you witness in your community?
Keep in mind specific harms you want to address in your community such as domestic abuse, interpersonal violence, intergenerational abuse, caste violence, etc. Prompts are inspired by the 'Practicing Abolition, Creating Community' zine by Project NIA.[24]

Please describe what you notice and the underlying conditions that contribute to the harm (examples below).

Harms	***Characteristics***	***Underlying Conditions***
Example: Emotional abuse of a survivor by husband and extended family	*Example: Controlling behavior, using derogatory language, constant rejection of thoughts and ideas, causing doubts about own feelings*	*Patriarchal notions of what roles a wife should play in South Asian households, gendered ideas of honor, lack of understanding about non-physical abuse*

Now, pick one (or more) of the harms above and consider the following reflection questions:

How do the police help or hinder when these harms occur? Note what you put for "help" - could these functions have been instead provided by someone devoted to supporting and strengthening communities?

How do members of the community help or hinder when these harms occur?

What resourcing, skills, or support would you need to be able to better prevent these harms? For example:

- Your community had abundant access to food, money, shelter etc.
- As a neighborhood, you discussed and challenged patriarchal notions (i.e. that women should do all the housework and not have strong opinions on other aspects of family life)

The goal of this activity is to show how our communities have the potential to keep us safe and in fact - in many cases, have been doing so for centuries through food and ride-sharing, healing circles, peer support groups, mutual aid, and many others. It also shows the importance of **prevention** - how much harm could be reduced or prevented if people had access to meeting their basic needs including safe housing and food?

Pause Point: Can you think of any examples of community care or safety in your own life? Try the activity below!

Activity 1.12:

Your Community

Adapted from 'Reclaiming Safety: In our imaginations, we need to break the equation of policing and public safety' by Mariame Kaba & Andrea J. Ritchie.[25]

Reflect on your community care example above. Who helps you/people you love stay safe in the day-to-day? Who cares for you and others? Where are these helpers in relation to you? Feel free to draw or jot down a few words about how they contribute to safety.

*Note - if this is hard - consider what **could** safety look like in your community? We will have a chance to explore these ideas further in the next section on visioning!*

SPOTLIGHT

Examples of Community Safety in South Asian Communities

For more powerful stories about community safety, check out STOP (Storytelling and Organizing Project).

“It's true that people in our community aren't always kind. We aren't always peaceful or forgiving, even when we should be (and we shouldn't always be). It's true that without police, we would sometimes get into violent conflict — just like we do with police. But it isn't true that policing is the best institution to address these conflicts, or that we can't address intra-communal violence without punishment and prisons.”[26]

- Hari Ziyad

As we close this section, we may be feeling complicated emotions about our communities. We are part of power structures and identities that constantly interact - including caste, class, sexuality, regional ancestry, language, and more - and, sometimes, it is our community itself that allows harm to occur or perpetuates it. **Yet, even when community is complicated, we advocate for community-based responses outside of the police. Why?**

Here are some of our reasons - please write in your own!

- *Because we cannot reform the police - there is not a time in U.S. history where the police were not a force of violence against people of color and, particularly, Black people.*
- *Because we cannot create safety in a world where the police keep people in check through arrest, incarceration, violence and death.*
- *Because most victims of sexual violence do not report their assaults to the police. The current system produces and reinforces sexual violence while using survivors to justify it's existence.*
- *Because, when people are harmed, while our responses may not be perfect, we do have the tools and skills within our communities to address those harms and the ability to* ***build community care systems that cultivate joy, safety and healing.***

What/who helps keep you committed to community safety outside of the police?

Closing: Visioning Beyond

How are you feeling as we approach the end of the chapter? You may have lingering questions. When we talk about transformative justice and abolition, we are often left to grapple with questions like:

- What if someone robs your home?
- What do we do about people perpetrating sexual violence?
- What about violent acts of white supremacy?

Have these questions come up for you? These are natural questions to consider and may arise for many reasons. However, instead of focusing solely on those questions, we encourage you to also **imagine a different world for our communities**. In this world, harm is:

- Responded to without violence when it does occur *and*
- Prevented by generative and supportive structures

We invite you to zoom out and think about the kind of world that we want to build together. Tapping into our creativity and imagination is a critical part of transformative justice and pushing against systemic oppression. We can often get caught in all the structures we want to tear down - but **what do we want to build?**

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

- Ruth Wilson Gilmore

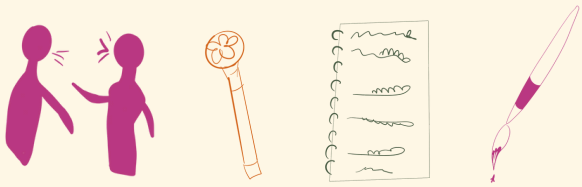
Imagining possible better futures is often even more difficult if you are a survivor, a frontline service provider, or both. This is a space to step outside of the challenges and constraints you face on a daily basis.

Let's try to imagine what we want for our communities.

Activity 1.13:

Imagining Beyond

Imagine an ideal future for you and your community. We invite you to use a form of reflection that you don't usually use. For example, if you write in journals regularly, you could try drawing. Or if you often use diagrams to organize your thoughts, you could try to paint your ideas or record a voice note.



Reflection questions (note: you do not need to address all of these!):

Under the ideal conditions - what does your community look like?

- What does family look like? How is the community shaped?
- What do relationships feel like?
- What does joy or pleasure look like in this world?
- What values and beliefs do people live by?
- What challenges might people face?
- How are problems and issues addressed?
- What would safety look and feel like for you and your community in this context? What would it smell or taste like? What noises do you hear?

Go Deeper: How does a South Asian context shape your vision for an ideal community?

As we close out this chapter, we invite you to **take this vision with you into the next chapter as we start to deepen our understanding of community accountability and transformative justice practices for responding to violence.**

Activity 1.14:

Closing Reflections

Take a few minutes to reflect on the contents of this chapter and how it makes you feel. Use the space at the end to note down anything you want to remember or take forward with you as you complete the rest of this workbook.

Consider your vision above. The following prompts are adapted from "Practicing Abolition, Creating Community" by Project NIA.[27]

1. *What are some concrete steps you can take today to make this vision a reality?*

2. *What type of relationships or connections could make this vision a reality?*

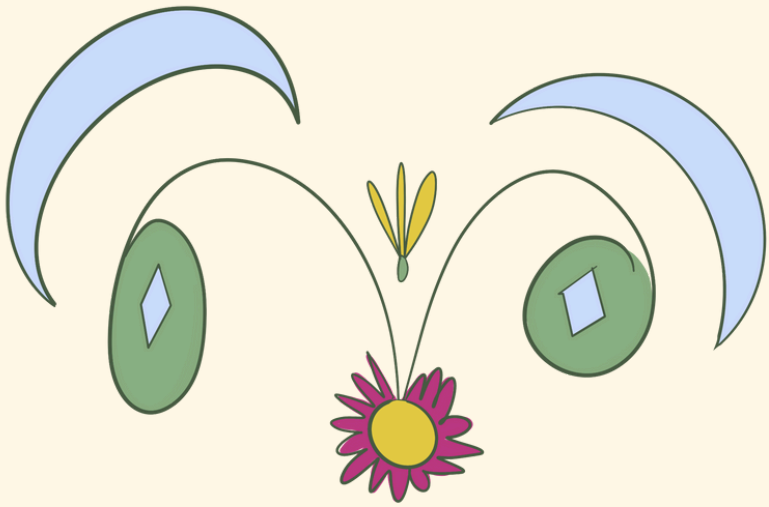
Did your feelings about transformative justice change at all after going through this chapter? If so, how?

What questions do you have?

Chapter 2: Responding to Violence

In this chapter you will:

- **Define** and deepen your understanding of community accountability
- **Learn** initial tools for building a community accountability process in response to gender-based violence
- **Build** your toolkit to assess **when and how** to work with survivors and with people who have caused harm using transformative justice approaches
- **Practice** tools to respond to violence without involving the criminal legal system



Chapter Outline

Introduction

Responding to Violence: Community Accountability

Responding to Violence: Envisioning a Process with Survivors

Responding to Violence: Engaging People who have Caused Harm

Closing: Visioning

Survivor Story:
Community Responds to Domestic Violence [excerpted]

Content Note: This story contains descriptions of intimate partner violence.
Story from Creative Interventions: Storytelling and Organizing Project

"Two years ago, I was married to a man who I'd been with for ten years prior, and our relationship had troubles. 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] I became increasingly afraid of someone that I used to feel really safe with. I have three kids and they were witnessing a lot of things that I felt were really unsafe for them to see. My home just felt more and more dangerous . . .

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 . . . 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. I still felt bad. I felt like I was exposing people to something that I couldn't control [but] I didn't know what else to do at that point. My friends asked me [if I'd like] support from this community organization UBUNTU, which is committed to ending sexual violence.

So, we made phone calls and 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?" 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." So if I want to be in my home, how do we make that happen? How do we make sure that 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 friends on the job [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 him, if he was open to doing that.

I also 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 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 happen.

That, my kids went through that time feeling safe; that [he] 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.** I always knew I had someone to call, and that people would call and check on me.

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.** 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.

I got to make a decision about what do I really need right now to do my work, to take care of my kids, to get through this day, to heal. 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 from people who are experiencing harm and have a vision for themselves 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, in a simple or quick way. I think that those values were ultimately the most healing for me."[1]

Click for full story.

Introduction: What is Needed when Responding to Violence?

Now that we've broken down the key principles of transformative justice, let's reflect again on how common it is in our communities to want violence to end without involving the police. **Have you wondered: what could this actually look like? What role could I play? How would it feel?**

The goal of this chapter is to **build investment in community processes** and **share examples of these processes,** especially in the context of gender-based violence. We hope this chapter will offer you both hope and possibilities in considering how we, as South Asian anti-violence advocates, can respond to violence outside of the criminal legal system. **We have selected some specific tools as a starting point to draw upon** when you are seeking to (i) support a survivor, (ii) move towards accountability with a person who has caused harm, and (iii) facilitate community accountability and social change.

When thinking about transformative justice, every intervention to violence is unique to the situation and context.

If you are an anti-violence organization, you may already be intervening in line with your own mission, programs and services. **For these reasons, we have not tried to provide a step-by-step guide for you here. Instead, we offer a range of tools and practices** that will give you a **starting point** for collectively creating community-based processes. Not all tools will be useful in all cases but we encourage you to try some of these out with others and share feedback and learnings.

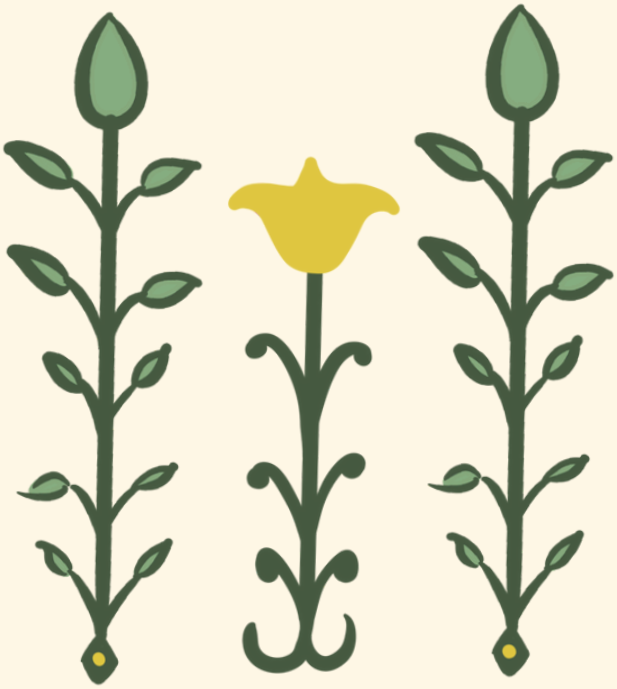
Note: This chapter is not a comprehensive guide to community accountability processes. If you are interested in being involved in a process, **we highly recommend you check out the full Creative Interventions Toolkit.**

This chapter involves three key sections:

1. Responding to Violence: Community Accountability
2. Responding to Violence: Envisioning A Process With Survivors
3. Responding to Violence: Engaging People Who've Caused Harm

Let's get started!

First, keep in mind South Asian survivors of harm and abuse - they may be people you know, people you support in your work or wider community, or it may be you. **What do you hear survivors asking for in response to harm or abuse?**



The below activity builds on this question (inspired by the Against Punishment curriculum).[1]

Activity 2.1:

What do we need after harm or violence happens?

The table below starts to list what we often hear survivors say they need in response to violence (versus what the current system offers). This may feel familiar to questions in Chapter One, however the goal of this activity is to consider how we can build responses to violence that center what survivors are asking for.

Please take a minute to add to the chart below based on your experiences:

What do survivors of harm often say they need in response to harm or violence?	What does engaging with the criminal legal system often involve? *
• Safety • Acknowledgment/ recognition of the abuse (by the individual(s) causing harm and by the community) • Restitution/repair • Changed behavior/violence to end	• Arrest • Incarceration (which can lead to loss of child support) • Deportation • Ongoing violence or retaliation

**Note: we recognize that survivors may rely on or engage with the criminal legal system for specific benefits (i.e. in order to get a protective visa such as the U-Visa)*

"If the goal is to end rape through a criminal legal process, then I would say based on the numbers, the strategy has already failed"[2]

- Mariame Kaba

When looking at the above chart, we can see again how the criminal legal system causes more harm.

So, what does it look like to build a response that centers the ideas of safety and repair?

It can mean engaging in processes that feel difficult, messy, and nonlinear. We may feel excited - and also challenged - by the idea of working outside the criminal legal system. This idea may bring up a range of emotions (fear, guilt, frustration, hope, etc). This is why we start with the activity above - to remind ourselves that working outside the criminal legal system is rooted in **care for survivors.**

For the purposes of this workbook, we are going to use a concrete scenario to illustrate our tools. Throughout the chapter, you will see tools applied to the scenario below.[3]

Please note: Throughout the chapter, we have applied tools to this scenario to make them more concrete. However, **none of our examples are the "right" or "only" answer** in either this, or any, scenario. Applying these tools in context looks different in every situation and must center **checking in with the survivor** and **moving in line with identified values.**

Content Note: This scenario contains descriptions of intimate partner violence.

Your friend Sonia (pronouns: she/hers, 29 years old) is reaching out to you and your friends/pod for support in an intimate partner violence situation. Sonia and Maria (pronouns: she/her, 32 years old) have been dating for two years, and have broken up several times for brief periods and quickly gotten back together. They are both South Asian.

You and Sonia are part of a tight-knit group, and you've known her for nearly 10 years. Two of your friends - Risa and Leo - also have friendly independent relationships with Maria. Sonia is like family to you and you have supported each other through tough times in the past.

Once before, Sonia confided in you and a few other friends that Maria scares her when she drinks and has made her feel physically and emotionally unsafe by doing things like holding her down and pushing her against a wall. Sonia also called you and another friend in the middle of the night after they got into an argument, saying that she feared Maria might hurt her. None of your friends have talked to Maria about this behavior before.

Maria and Sonia recently moved to Sacramento, where they live with Maria's mother and grandmother, who are both friendly with Sonia, but they also have a language barrier. Maria has shared with Sonia that her mother and grandmother have expressed a desire for the two of them to stay together, and that Sonia is "good for" Maria. Sonia does have a sister who lives in a small town about 45 minutes away, and they have a loving but somewhat distant relationship. Most of Sonia's closest friends and chosen family live in New York City.

Maria also doesn't know very many people in Sacramento. She has shared with Sonia that she had a traumatic childhood (due to her father who does not live in the house), that she is struggling right now and Sonia is the only one she can talk to. Maria does talk with her sister but her sister just moved abroad. Maria has a loving but fairly surface-level relationship with her younger brother who lives on the East Coast. Maria has mentioned a few good friends she has from growing up, and you realize that you know one of them vaguely through a mutual friend.

Now, Sonia has come to you and your friends; she shares that the abuse has continued and she wants to leave Maria, and asks for help brainstorming how to do that safely. She is concerned because her housing is tied to Maria. She says that she cares about Maria and wants this behavior to stop. Sonia also wants physical space from Maria. She said she doesn't want to mend the relationship but she would like to go through some kind of process where Maria acknowledges her behavior and makes amends to Sonia. Sonia doesn't want to be very involved in that part of the process but would like to be checked in with regularly and receive updates.

***Note**: This scenario was adapted from the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective Case Study for March 2017 Transformative Justice*

Now, please take a moment and **think of your own example** where you supported a response to violence - this can be a case at your organization or something personal. Try not to choose something present as it may be particularly activating to apply these tools to a situation that you are currently navigating.

1. *What are the key details from the situation? Jot them down so you can refer back to them easily.*
2. *Who are the key people involved? Draw an initial diagram mapping them out.*
3. *If helpful, you can draw lines between them to detail the relationship dynamics involved.*
4. *Make a note about any relevant social context, culture, or systems that have influence in the situation (i.e. racial dynamics, language barriers, etc.).*

***Note:** Please hold onto this example as we are going to refer back to it throughout the chapter. We encourage you to try this if you can as the tools in this section will feel more applicable and relevant.*

Pause Point: How do you feel after reading the case study and/or reflecting on a personal example? We recognize that can be heavy content to hold. If helpful, please take a moment to grab something grounding (tea or water, grounding object, etc.) to hold onto while you continue moving through this chapter.

Responding to Violence: Community Accountability

"We can act with care and compassion to those we are closest to, including people who are causing harm. We can more immediately come to the assistance of our loved ones or those we understand and share community with. We can address harm directly and firmly without pretending like nothing is happening, blaming the victim or hoping someone else will deal with it. We can make our homes, families and communities the kinds of healthy places that we want to live in."

-Creative Interventions Toolkit

In the first chapter, we reflected on community safety and key elements of accountability including listening and learning, taking responsibility, and changing behavior.[4] We are going to build on these two concepts and focus on the idea of **community accountability.**

First - what is community accountability?

Defining our Terms: Community Accountability

The Creative Interventions Toolkit defines **community accountability** as "a more specific form of a community-based response or approach to interpersonal violence. The word, "community" acknowledges that **it is not only individuals but also communities that are affected by violence.** Interpersonal violence is not only an individual problem, but a community problem.

The word, accountability, points to the idea of responsibility. We usually think of the person doing harm as the one to be accountable for violence. ***Community accountability also means that communities are accountable for sometimes ignoring, minimizing or even encouraging violence.***

Communities must also recognize, end and take responsibility for violence – by becoming more knowledgeable, skillful and willing to take action to intervene in violence and to support social norms and conditions that prevent violence from happening in the first place."[5]

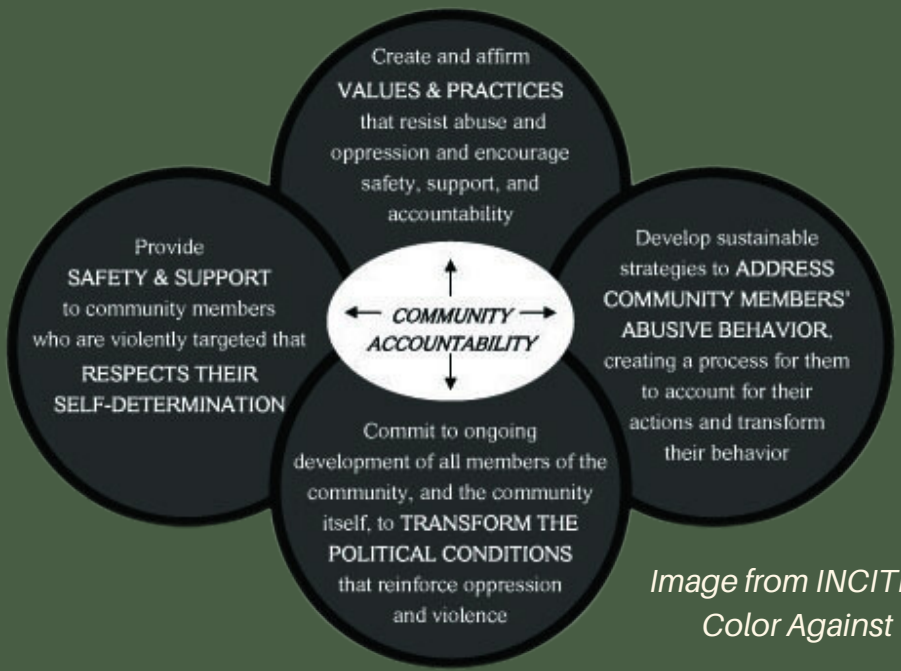


Image from INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence

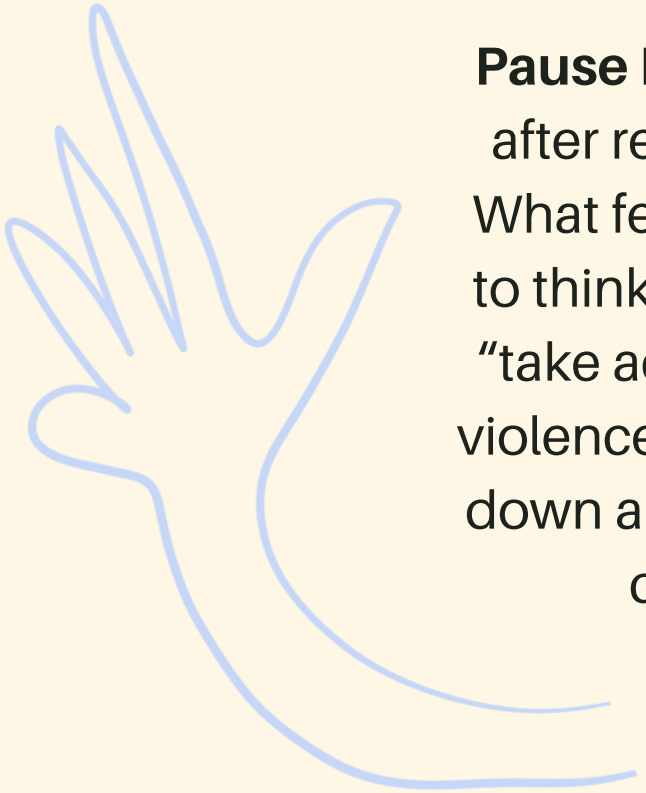
Community accountability can involve:

1. Community members supporting individual(s) who caused harm to be accountable for their actions (in line with what the person who has experienced harm wants)
2. Community members themselves taking responsibility for the role they may have played in minimizing or enabling violence

We know that people who experience harm often turn to families and friends first and many communities are not safe turning to police or state institutions. Given this reality, the idea of community accountability asks each of us: **what would it look like for us in the South Asian community to increase our knowledge and skills in addressing, reducing, ending, or preventing violence?** What could that offer or transform for South Asian survivors?

"Shortly after I moved to Los Angeles, my father was scheduled to be a keynote speaker . . . [my friend] told the event organizers that she would pull their sound permit if they didn't pull my father from the line-up. Several of my friends attended the event to distribute flyers with my father's name on them, along with statistical information about the prevalence of child sexual abuse. I watched these events unfold from Los Angeles in awe . . . I'd never had any loved ones hold my father accountable."

-Amita Swadhin, Transformative Family
(Beyond Survival, pg. 87)



Pause Point: How do you feel after reading that definition? What feelings does it bring up to think about being willing to "take action and intervene" in violence? Take a moment to jot down any thoughts or feelings coming to mind.

Note: We can each play different roles in responding to violence or engaging with an accountability process. As survivor support advocates, you may feel strongly about the idea of working specifically with survivors. Or you may feel curious about the idea of working on accountability with a person who has caused harm. A crucial part of community accountability is **choice and consent** and this includes community members choosing the role that works best for them.

For specific examples of roles, please see ***Tool 2.2:*** *Mapping Allies and Barriers.*

Now, let's start to explore: what might a **community-based intervention** to gender-based violence look like?

The Creative Interventions toolkit outlines community-based interventions as:

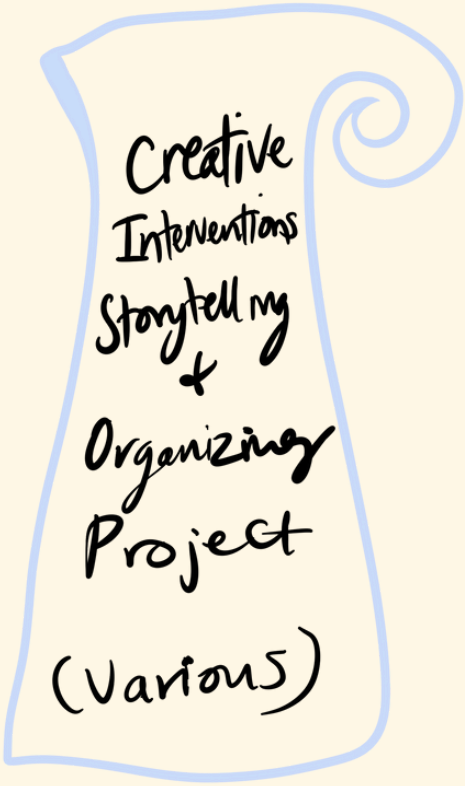
- An attempt to address, end, reduce, or prevent interpersonal violence, which involves:
  - Using community resources rather than relying on the police or social services
  - Directly involving friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, or community members
  - Exploring the possibility of directly dealing with (or engaging) the person or people doing harm[6]

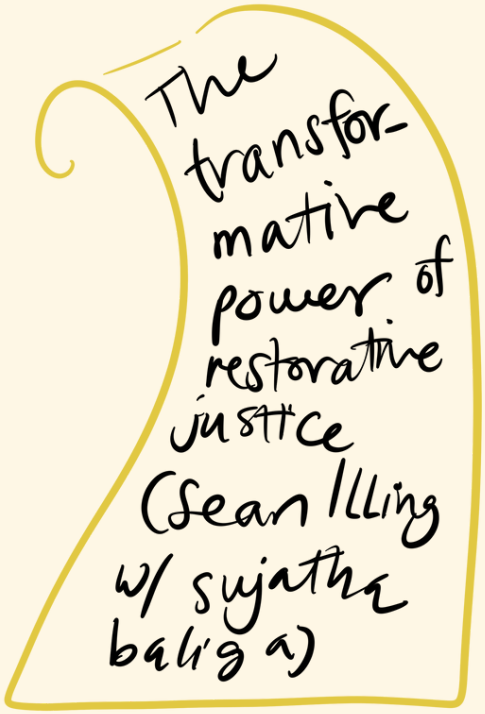
Community-based interventions require **opportunities in our communities for direct communication, understanding, and repairing of harm.** However, this might not be possible right away. For our communities to facilitate repair, it might mean power dynamics need to shift or relationships need to be rebuilt.
What can this look like in a South Asian context? What would it mean to challenge elders or in-laws? Or call attention to power dynamics of class, caste, or religion?

What can community accountability look like?

- Community members coming together to send a message to a person who caused harm saying they cannot attend a shared space with a survivor (at the survivor's request)
- Two parallel "circles": a support circle (for the person who experienced harm) and an accountability circle (for the person who caused harm) to follow through on accountability asks from the survivor (with designated point people to communicate between the circles)

2.1 Case Studies on Implementing Transformative Justice





Pause Point: Can you think of any examples of community-based interventions in your work with South Asian survivors or in your own South Asian communities?

"When he showed up at the prison justice film screening I was attending, held in a small classroom where we would have been sitting very close to each other, friends told him he was not welcome and asked him to leave. When he called in to a local South Asian radio show doing a special program on violence against women, one of the DJs told him that she knew he had been abusive and she was not going to let him on air if he was not willing to own his own violence.

My safety plan included never going to a club without a group of my girls to have my back. They would go in first and scan the club for him and stay near me. If he showed up, we checked in about what to do."[7]

-Leah Lakshmi Piepnza-Samarasinha

Now, let's start to get into the process of building a community accountability process:

If we start to envision a community-based intervention, **who exactly is the "community" in this case?** Who is going to be part of the process? Our first set of tools addresses this question and helps us get specific about community:

Tool 2.1: Pod Mapping[8]

Defining our Terms: What are our "Pods"?

WHAT ARE PODS?
In this context, the term "pod" was coined by the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (BATJC) to **describe the relationship between people who would turn to each other for support** when violent, harmful and/or abusive experiences occurred, whether as survivors, bystanders or people who caused harm. It is a way to clarify **who the specific people in your community are,** especially given how broad and complicated the term community can be.

> "Allowing people to organize their pod was much more concrete than asking people to organizing their 'community' . . . [pods] made transformative justice much more accessible and places relationship-building at the very center of transformative justice and community accountability work"[9]
>
> -Pod Mapping Instructions
> Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective

Your pod is made up of the people that you would call on for support: You may do this when you need to process something that has happened to you or something you have done to another person.

You can have multiple pods! This can include pods for:

- Reaching out for support
- Seeking accountability for something you did
- Processing a traumatizing global event
- Understanding something that happened on your street

Generally, pods can include people you trust, people you can access easily (in-person or digitally), and people you share some values with. They do not always have to be your closest friends. You can consider what skill sets you are looking for in your pods including: a track record of generative conflict; boundaries; being able to give and receive feedback; and reliability.

Take a moment to reflect: What are you looking for in people that you turn to for support?

Your pod can support your transformative justice practice: Even if you are not sure who might be in your pod, you can spend time building it through relationships and trust. Once you have done that, your pod can be a space to explore everyday practices grounded in common values.

- You may do values check-ins where you ask each other how you are living in line with your values
- You may learn about transformative justice together
- You may practice mutual aid
- You may decide to educate others on some of the practices you are trying

Pods can be proactive: You can start building your pods now so that they are in place in the case that harm does occur. Pods can involve an ongoing and proactive process of relationship building.

"[Pods] are a nice reminder that I don't have to do everything by myself."

- SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Note: Many of us do not have "pod people": BATJC writes, "This is a very real reality for many oppressed and isolated communities/individuals because of how capitalism, oppression, and violence shape our lives . . . for example, immigrant women of color who are isolated because of language and documentation."[10]

We may only have 2-3 people who have the trust, reliability, and groundedness to respond when violence occurs and even less when we are seeking to take accountability for harm we have done. Additionally, survivors in smaller or more insular South Asian communities may understandably feel fear about information spreading and experiencing stigma, shame, ostracization, etc. However, even in these cases, pod mapping can help identify which relationships to strengthen.

Take a moment to consider: How do you see this dynamic playing out in your work or in the South Asian communities you are connected to? How does immigration, race, ethnicity, culture, language, and survivorship influence our ability to create pods?

Tool 2.1: Pod Mapping [Continued]

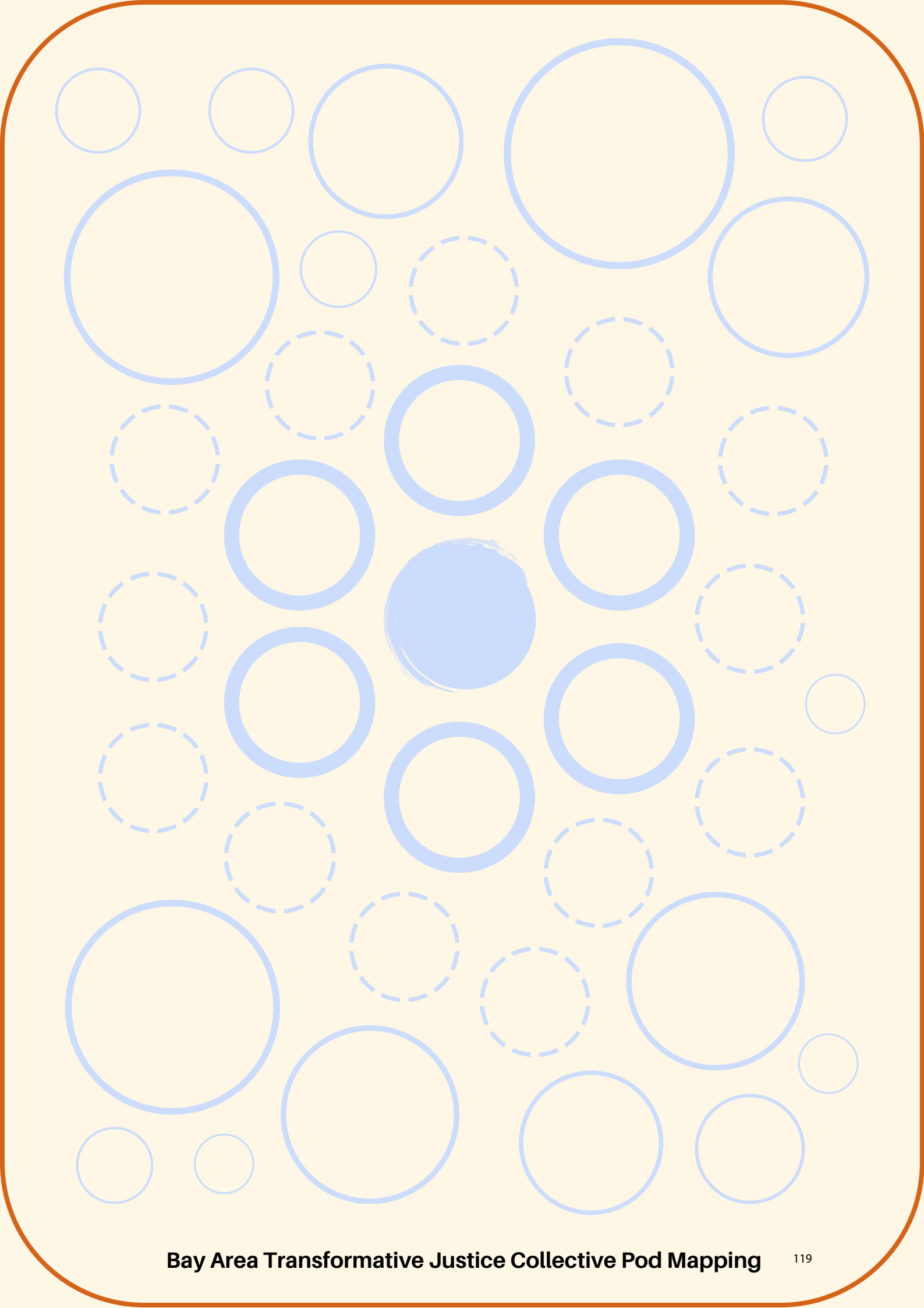
Building your Pods

Now that we've defined what pods are, let's practice pod mapping! Let's start with creating one for yourself:

Use the instructions below, from Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, to build your own pod.

1. Write your name in the middle blue circle.
2. The surrounding bold-outlined circles are your pod. Write the names of the people who are in your pod. We encourage people to write the names of actual individuals, instead of things such as "my friend group" or "my neighbors."
3. The dotted lines surrounding your pod are people who are "movable." They are people that could be moved into your pod, but need a little more work. For example, you might need to build more relationships or trust with them.
4. The larger circles at the edge of the page are for networks, communities or groups that could be resources for you. It could be your local direct service organization, or your youth group, community center, etc.

Reminder: there is no pressure to fill out every circle or to even use this worksheet - this activity is for you so engage with it however you want!



“[Pod mapping] is a good visual representation of who is in your support system. It is also a good reminder to grow certain relationships”

- South Asian Anti-Violence Advocate / SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Activity 2.2:

Pod Mapping: Personal Reflection Questions

What came up for you as you thought about those you turn to for support and those you turn to to be held accountable? What felt easeful? What felt challenging?

What are 3 ways you might be able to use pod mapping proactively in your life?

"[Pod mapping] makes me think about safety and who I feel safe with."

-SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

Putting Pods in Practice: Coming Back to Sonia & Maria's Story

Consider the scenario that we presented at the beginning of the chapter: Who could be part of Sonia and Maria's pods? Consider who might be able to support with navigating accountability and/or safety and what skills and relationships might be needed. For example:

Sonia's pod could include: you, Risa, Leo, her sister (in Sacramento), other close friends or family in New York City, a queer survivor support collective in Sacramento that she's been to two events with

Maria's pod could include: her mother, grandmother, sister, younger brother, and childhood friends (including the person you know through a mutual friend)

Now consider your personal example: What communities or groups do the people involved belong to? Use the pod mapping tool (**Tool 2.1**) above and try to map a pod for each person involved.

Guidance for Advocates:

Let's zoom out of the specific scenario. How might you use this tool with survivors or in the work that you do?

For example....

- Implementing pod mapping as part of your safety planning protocols could strengthen survivors' support systems and concretely name people they feel safe reaching out to
- Growing and deepening pods in your communities can help you to connect with survivors who may not otherwise reach out for support or who may be feeling isolated or alone

Are there other ways you could incorporate pods or pod mapping in your anti-violence work?

Now that you've familiarized yourself with pods, let's explore another tool that helps us **assess** how community relationships and dynamics influence how we approach a situation of harm or abuse.

Tool 2.2: Mapping Allies and Barriers[11]

Mapping our allies and barriers emphasizes that working together collectively gives us more power, support, resources and ideas than working alone. You can use this tool when first working with someone. It can be a resource in both 1-1 support work and community-based interventions.

Mapping allies and barriers involves understanding:

- Resources: who the survivor / person who caused harm may have around them as community allies
- Barriers: who could get in the way of an intervention (barriers)
- "Swing" People: People who **could become** better allies with effort

> ***Note:*** *This tool builds upon pod mapping. If you have already done a pod map with the survivor or person who caused harm that you are supporting (or they already have a pod they work with), use this tool to think about additional people who can support, as well as people that may act as barriers in this specific situation.*

You can create a list or table with the survivor you are working with using the following key questions:

- What kind of help is the survivor looking for? Who can give this kind of support?
- Who can become an ally or become a better ally with a little bit of help?
- Who might get in the way? How could allies support in minimizing these barriers?
- Who is in a good position to help support the person doing harm to stop using violence, take accountability, repair harm, and/or learn new behaviors?
- Note: for more on this, see **Tool 2.7: Finding Accountability Allies.**
- What roles can people play in the process? (**see below**)

If you are working with a person who caused harm, these questions can be adapted accordingly.

Some of the potential roles people could play are (from Tool C3 from Creative Interventions Toolkit, Section 4C, pg. 19):[12]

- ☐ Act as a facilitator for the intervention
- ☐ Coordinate logistics like where are we meeting, when, what do we need
- ☐ Take notes
- ☐ Keep track of goals
- ☐ Keep track of decisions
- ☐ Keep track of timelines (including start and end times for meetings)
- ☐ Make sure next steps were followed by checking in with people
- ☐ Make sure to think about risks and safety planning (See Section Staying Safe)
- ☐ Be a good reality check
- ☐ Defuse or reduce physical conflict
- ☐ Defuse or reduce emotional conflict
- ☐ Offer useful information about the dynamics of violence – may include their own experience if they are comfortable to share
- ☐ Be emotionally supportive to the victim or survivor or other people directly affected by violence (for example, children)
- ☐ Be emotionally supportive to people taking action in the intervention
- ☐ Be emotionally supportive to the person doing harm
- ☐ Offer resources (money, food, rides, shelter, storage, etc.) to the victim or survivor or other people directly affected by violence (for example, children)
- ☐ Offer resources (money, food, rides, shelter, storage, etc.) to support people taking action in the intervention
- ☐ Offer resources (money, food, rides, shelter, storage, etc.) to the person doing harm
- ☐ Be a person who can communicate well with the survivor or people affected by violence (for example, children)
- ☐ Be a person who can communicate well with the person doing harm
- ☐ Be a person who can communicate well with others involved in the intervention
- ☐ Drive if/when necessary
- ☐ Pick up supplies if/when necessary
- ☐ Hold meetings in their home or office or other space if/when necessary
- ☐ Cook or provide food for meetings
- ☐ Provide for spiritual needs (for example, hold a prayer, bless the space, provide spiritual counseling for anyone involved in the intervention, etc.)
- ☐ Other: _____

Putting this in Practice: Coming Back to Sonia & Maria's Story

Here is the beginning of how to map allies and barriers in our case study.

Resources for Sonia: You, Risa, Leo, Sonia's sister, other close friends in New York

Resources for Maria: Maria's mother and grandmother could offer emotional and material support; potentially Risa and Leo depending on their capacity and the role they want to play

Barriers: Maria's mother could be a potential barrier since she might encourage them to "just make up" and stay together, as she thinks Sonia is "good for" Maria; note: you may also brainstorm systemic barriers such as housing or language barriers)

"Swing" People: Maria's sister, younger brother, and childhood friends

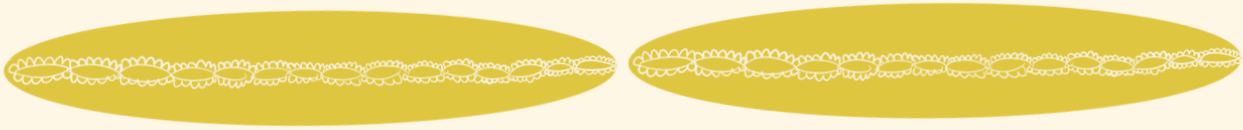
Potential Roles:

- You and Leo could work together to facilitate the survivor support circle using these tools (from Creative Interventions)
- Risa and Maria's brother might be able to facilitate the accountability circle if they have capacity to show up for Maria's accountability
- Leo could decide to be the designated point person to communicate between the two circles
- Another friend (not listed in the scenario), Meera, has facilitated circles like this before, and could be called on for advice on how to set up the circle
- Friends in the East Coast could offer virtual resources (send money if possible, set up a regular check-in call with Sonia, help Sonia find alternative housing)

Each of these tools focuses on **how we can assess who is part of a community** and who can be involved in forming an accountability process or meeting a survivor's safety plan.

Now, try using **Tool 2.2** to map the allies and barriers of your personal example situation using the prompts above.

Take a moment to consider: *This section focuses on the idea of community. How do our South Asian anti-violence organizations fit into our assessment of "community"? What role can we play in community accountability processes?*



Curious to discuss more? Here is an activity to do with your co-workers to further explore this question:

Activity 2.3:

Your Organzation's Role in Community Interventions

Download and read the following parts of the Creative Interventions Toolkit with members of your team (if you can't read them all, please feel free to select the ones that seem most relevant to your team!)

- Section 1, pp.4-5: The Community-Based Intervention to Interpersonal Violence: An Introduction
- Section 1, pp.16-17: What Is Our Bigger Vision?
- Section 2, pp.9-13: Community-based Intervention Approach
- Section 2, pp.31-34: Your Biases
- Section 2, pp.37-45: Violence Intervention: Some Important Lessons
- Section 3, pp2-11: Reviewing the Community-Based Intervention to Interpersonal Violence
- Section 3, pp.15-18: What are we trying to achieve? 3 Key Intervention Areas

Here are a few questions to discuss together:

- What role can your organization play in supporting community-based interventions like the one described in the toolkit?
- What does it mean to support a community accountability process as a non-profit advocate?
- Are you resourcing it?
- Are you participating but not leading it?
- How are you also building these skills in your own community or personal relationships (not just as an organization)?
- How can supporting a community accountability process be part of your own relationship to survivor support work?

Jot down your ideas on the questions and discuss them as a team. Don't worry about being too specific at this stage - just pick out whatever sounds interesting and possible for you.

Note (for discussion): Given that community accountability is a grassroots concept, we also want to be wary of co-opting the term and creating "TJ" programs in our non-profit organizations (see the next chapter for a further discussion on the non-profit industrial complex). However, we believe there is space to learn from, credit, and incorporate transformative justice and community accountability principles in our organizations - especially if we have deep ties to the communities we are working in.

Community Accountability: Envisioning A Process with Survivors

"The alchemy of our accountability work is a serendipitous mixture: part art, part science. We affirm that regular folks in communities can develop and exercise their own process for making justice in sexual assault situations possible for their communities. In doing so, our communities can be more successful, by any measure, than the state ever has in addressing sexualized violence"

-Esteban Lance Kelly and Jenna peters-Golden
(with Qui Alexander, Bench Ansfield, Beth Blum, and Dexter Rose)

Let's dive into working with survivors in the context of community accountability. In this section, we are going to explore both:

- Transformative justice tools for short-term/immediate survivor support (i.e. safety planning)
- Transformative justice tools for envisioning a community accountability process with survivors (both one-on-one and group tools)

Let's come back to the personal scenario you envisioned on page four. When a survivor first comes to you, the first consideration we often think about is safety or **safety planning,** or plans and actions meant to minimize the current, potential and future levels of harm or to increase overall levels of safety. We know many of you are deeply knowledgeable about safety planning given the day-to-day work that you do.

Consider: When you safety plan with clients, do you include the police or criminal legal system as part of the safety plan? Why or why not?

Given the focus of this chapter, we are going to consider how to safety plan in ways that do not involve the criminal legal system, also known as ***abolitionist safety planning.***

Defining our Terms: What is Abolitionist Safety Planning?

"My communities - Arab and Muslim communities - don't really call the police or go to shelter. They would rather problem solve with someone they trust. So maybe a family member, or someone in their immediate circle that speaks their language and understands their culture. Many of my clients do not call the first [violent] incident. They wait until years later, when things get leaked to a doctor or teacher. Often, they actually didn't call the police... someone else did.

So safety planning is really different for my clients, because, well, racism. A lot of survivors won't call the police because they don't think they will help, because they're Muslim, or they don't speak English, or they're afraid of retaliation from the authorities. They don't even call organizations because they think they are government agencies, and they will not be helpful."

- Mouna Benmoussa

Abolitionist safety planning is something that many advocates working with communities of color - including South Asian anti-violence advocates - have already been doing.

Abolitionist safety planning acknowledges that safety from harm **includes safety from** the criminal legal system.[13] It can involve:

- Strengthening relationships
- Gathering resources
- Strategizing options to increase a survivor's ability to gain power back over their own life and decision-making

It is a **shift** from the mainstream model (which can assume police arrival on the scene leads to safety for survivors) and **instead hinges upon the understanding of the police and criminal legal system as twin entities** that regularly heighten abuse and gender-based violence against survivors.[14]

When engaging in abolitionist safety planning, it is important to acknowledge that safety is not the same as avoiding all feelings of discomfort - feelings like anxiety, vulnerability, nervousness, embarrassment or shame may be difficult but necessary experiences on the way to creating safety in the long term.

For example:

- Someone who is asked to take accountability may experience this as making them feel vulnerable and, therefore, unsafe.
- A survivor who is nervous about talking about and sharing their experience of abuse with allies may feel a sense of embarrassment or shame that makes them feel unsafe.
- Community allies who recognize the need to involve themselves in addressing harm that they had previously ignored may feel feelings of nervousness and uncertainty that feel unsafe.

Often these experiences are not actually creating a lack of safety but inviting people into discomfort. This tool focuses on creating safety rather than comfort.

Tool 2.3: Abolitionist Safety Planning[15]

"Safety planning helps to shift the conditions for what is possible."

- Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters

As a first step, you may want to use a chart (like the one below) to ensure the risks are being appropriately recognized and managed, especially considering that risks to safety can increase as a survivor takes action or tries to leave.

These safety planning worksheets are adapted from Just Practice and are meant to provide an example of how a safety plan could be mapped out and organized.

Risk Assessment Chart for Safety Actions:
Potential future risk/harm?
Who or what is the cause of the harm?
Who is the target of the harm/risk?
What is a possible safety action?
Who will support this action?

Options for Intervening or Escaping:
Where are the safe places you can go?
How will you get there?
Who can help you get there/how will you let them know?

Options for Healing and Support:
(Immediate, Secondary, Long-Term)
What are you already doing to feel supported?
Who can help remind you to do these things?
What kinds of resources do you need to feel supported?

Follow-up and Next Steps:
When will I revisit this plan?
Who will I share this plan with?

Looking for more resources on safety planning?

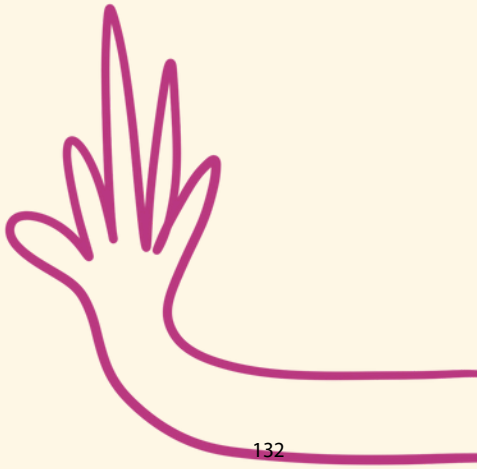
Escape to Safety Checklist (Section 4B, page 32) [Creative Interventions Toolkit]

Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters [Spring Up - Safety & Care Plan]

Safety Plan & Action Worksheet (Section 4B, page 23) [Creative Interventions Toolkit]

Safety, Support & Care Planning [Alternative Justice]

Pause Point: Take a moment to reflect or journal: What resonates with you given the work that you do with South Asian survivors? How do you feel about abolitionist safety planning? What parts feel familiar/comfortable? What parts feel uncomfortable?



"As a transgender woman, a lot of us have extended family members that are not necessarily blood related to us, out of the necessity of having someone to relate to. And because of that, I can't just plan around my own safety. I have to plan around the safety of everyone that's in my circle.

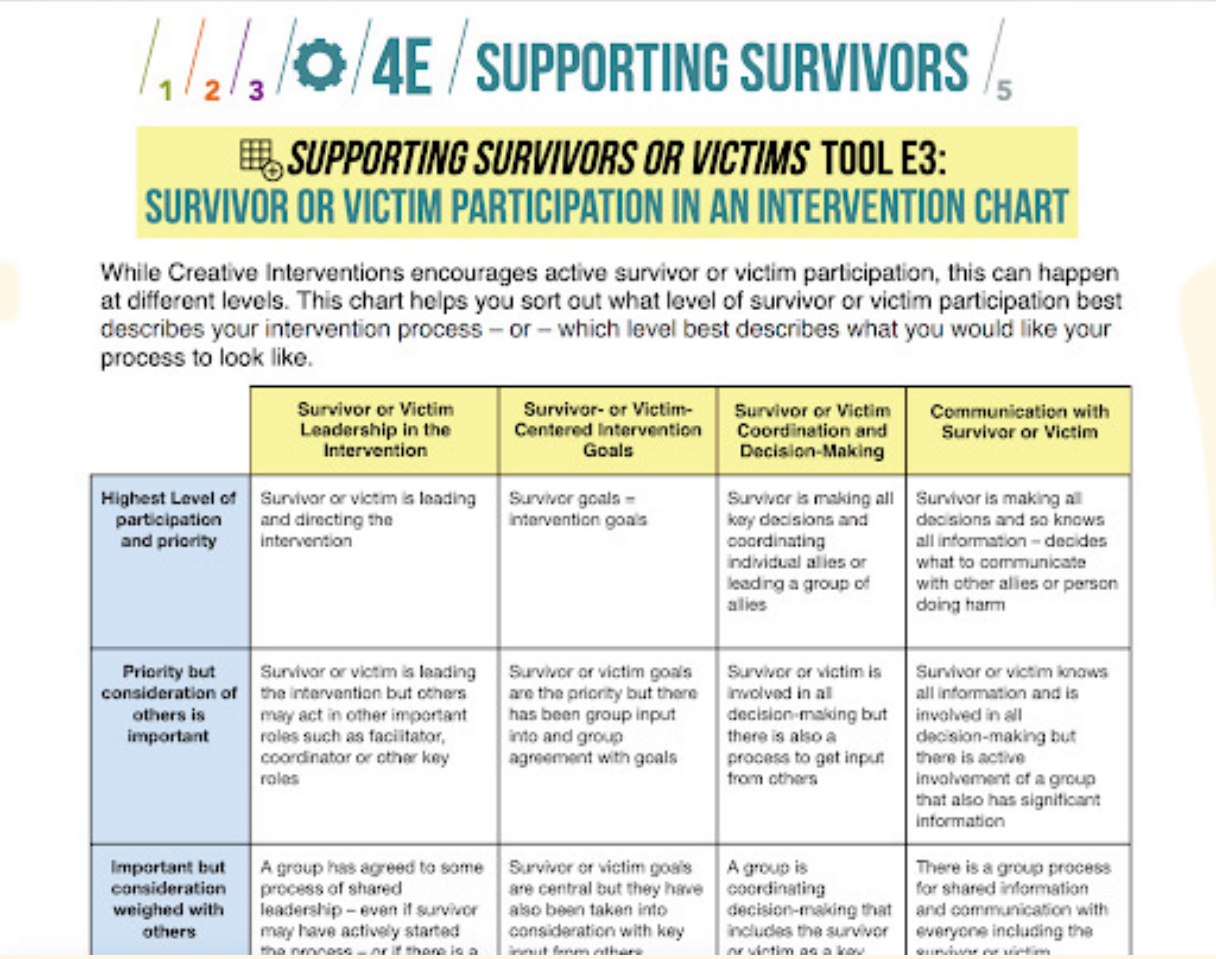
When I look at how domestic violence shelters work, they don't allow for that. They don't allow for nuances, for different kinds of circumstances and situations that are people's lives."

– Tamika Spellman, Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters

Now, after discussing safety and providing emotional support to the survivor you are working with, the survivor you are working with may indicate interest in starting a community accountability process. **The following resources focus on envisioning this process with survivors.**

In this case, it is important to engage the survivor on what role or level of involvement they would like in the process. As survivor support advocates, you already bring many skills and tools to approach this process with a survivor-centered lens.

Tool 2.4: Supporting Survivors Short-Term Assessing Survivor Participation in an Intervention[16]



1 2 3 4E SUPPORTING SURVIVORS 5

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS TOOL E3:
SURVIVOR OR VICTIM PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVENTION CHART

While Creative Interventions encourages active survivor or victim participation, this can happen at different levels. This chart helps you sort out what level of survivor or victim participation best describes your intervention process – or – which level best describes what you would like your process to look like.

	Survivor or Victim Leadership in the Intervention	Survivor- or Victim-Centered Intervention Goals	Survivor or Victim Coordination and Decision-Making	Communication with Survivor or Victim
Highest Level of participation and priority	Survivor or victim is leading and directing the intervention	Survivor goals = intervention goals	Survivor is making all key decisions and coordinating individual allies or leading a group of allies	Survivor is making all decisions and so knows all information – decides what to communicate with other allies or person doing harm
Priority but consideration of others is important	Survivor or victim is leading the intervention but others may act in other important roles such as facilitator, coordinator or other key roles	Survivor or victim goals are the priority but there has been group input into and group agreement with goals	Survivor or victim is involved in all decision-making but there is also a process to get input from others	Survivor or victim knows all information and is involved in all decision-making but there is active involvement of a group that also has significant information
Important but consideration weighed with others	A group has agreed to some process of shared leadership – even if survivor may have actively started	Survivor or victim goals are central but they have also been taken into consideration with key	A group is coordinating decision-making that includes the survivor	There is a group process for shared information and communication with everyone including the

Above is a chart from Creative Interventions Tool E3 (Section 4E, pg. 24) to support you in exploring with a survivor how they would like the process to go. For example:

- How would you like to be involved?
- What level of decision-making feels best for you?
- What level of communication would you like from the accountability circle?
- Would you like to have completely separate circles? Would you like them to come together at any point?

Putting this in Practice: Coming back to Sonia & Maria's Story

Sonia shares that she wants an accountability process but she does not want to be involved in the process directly. In this case, Sonia could designate a specific point person (for example, Leo) who shares updates from the accountability team.

After discussing the survivor's preferred levels of participation and communication in the process, you can work to **align values** and **create goals** using the two tools below.

[Note these tools can be used in either one-on-one or group settings, depending on the context]

Tool 2.5: Aligning our Values

Discussing and aligning values is a crucial aspect of creating a survivor support circle but can sometimes feel like an afterthought. Here is a tool to support your group to connect deeper and ground your support work in shared values.

Note: In our experience, creating this space helps to ground the process in common beliefs and approaches. Each person in the process brings their own values and approach so it can be useful to mutually define and document what shared values will look like in the process. This will allow you to return to these values to see if your day-to-day way of doing things is in alignment with them.

As a group, you can start by each writing or reflecting on the following prompt:

- What are the values that guide me and why? How might these show up in the context of this process?

Then, take a moment to share what you wrote with each other and create a collective list of values to use in your process moving forward.

Below is a list of some values (non-exhaustive) you may want to consider:

Putting Into Practice – Sonia & Maria's Story: Based on the information shared, values Sonia might hold could be accountability, care, holding contradictions and complexity, consent and community.

Please take a moment now to circle any of the values above (or write in new ones!) that are important to you in building a survivor support circle.

Tool 2.6: Naming Goals and Limitations

Goal setting includes the steps the individuals and group can take to move towards a single outcome or set of outcomes that could result from actions taken. At this stage, **it is important to ensure you are moving in line with your values as well as being survivor-centered.** Often we can end up assuming what someone's goals are based on our perceptions of what justice, punishment, accountability or consequences should be. This tool is one way to actively center the survivor. You can also involve their pods/community in the discussion.

Key questions you can explore **with the survivor** are:

- What do you want?
- What do you not want?
- What can you do to move towards these goals?

Key questions you can explore **as a survivor support team** are:

- Does the group share the same goals?
- What can you as a group do to move towards these goals?
- How can you state these goals as concrete actions?

Here is one template that may come in useful, especially if there are multiple people involved in the process. Once everyone has filled this out, you can come together to identify agreed-upon goals, agreed-upon bottom lines and disagreements. This should help you map next steps, delegate responsibilities, and create a shared timeline.

Note: These tools are just the beginning! For more about survivor support and accountability circles, please check out: Creative Interventions Toolkit.

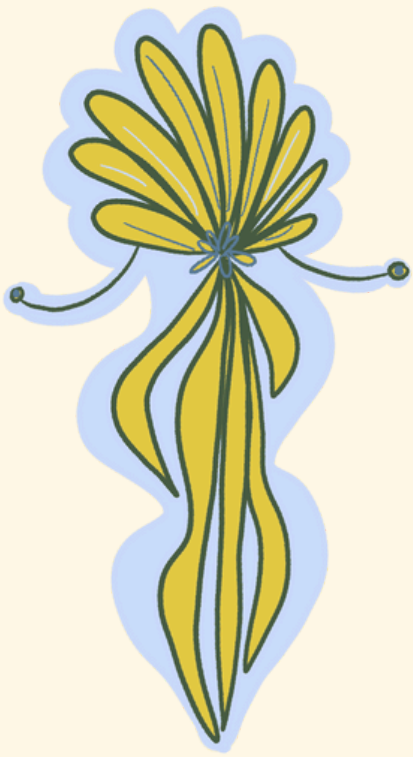
Coming Back to your Personal Scenario

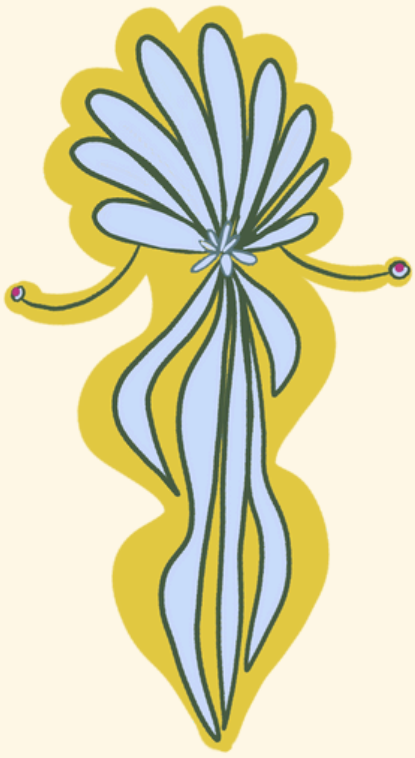
1. Imagine the survivor in this case has just come to you, what safety plans and actions might you put in place?
    a. Use **Tool 2.3: Abolitionist Safety Planning** to map this out.
2. What kind of role or involvement does the survivor want in this case? Use **Tool 2.4: Assessing Survivor Participation to assess**
3. What were the key goals and limits for the survivor (and for anyone else involved) in this process? Make a copy of the template in **Tool 2.5: Goals and Limitations: What do We Want?** and work through that as best you can.
4. Do you remember aligning values when supporting this case (formally or informally)?
    a. If so, what are some of the values you were aligned to? Check **Tool 2.6: Aligning our Values** if you're not sure.
        i. How did these values guide what you did and did not do?
5. If not, would it have been helpful to do this? Why?

Community Accountability: Engaging People Who've Caused Harm

"Accountability involves listening, learning, taking responsibility, and changing. It involves conscientiously creating opportunities in our families and communities for direct communication, understanding and repairing of harm, readjustment of power toward empowerment and equal sharing of power, and rebuilding of relationships and communities toward safety, respect, and happiness."

– Creative Intervention Toolkit





“Everybody always starts with the question: What if you were attacked? Well, let’s flip it. What if you lost your shit and attacked someone? Let’s start there. How do you want to be dealt with?

I think that it’s more useful to turn the conversation around. We aren’t infallible. We have to have humility when dealing with people who have been accused of things to know that we have the capability to do similar things.

I feel committed to building a world where both of those people are heard, harm is addressed, and the dignity of all involved is restored. This isn’t possible if we throw away people who cause harm and rely on punitive models of justice.”[17]

– Excerpt from an interview with Ryan Conrad

We have explored how the criminal legal system impacts survivors, yet we also can recognize how the system also inflicts harm on those identified as harm-doers, including increased surveillance, family separation, increased homelessness, and other continuations of systemic harm - **that often stops people from being able to take accountability.**

Now, take some time to reflect on the following questions:

How would you want to be treated if you caused someone harm? What support would you need in order to take genuine accountability for that harm?

How is this complicated when it comes to gendered violence or abuse? How might those complications be navigated?

How do you feel about the idea of ***working with someone who caused harm?*** *In what context would you engage with this work? In what context would you not?*

What does it look like to separate compassion from collusion (making excuses) when working with a person doing harm?

The Creative Interventions Toolkit outlines **three important questions** to consider when working with a person who has caused harm:

1. What could make the violence stop?
2. What could prevent further violence?
3. Who/what does the person doing harm care about?

Working on accountability in this context is complex; as we named earlier, accountability is not one formula and may shift over time. In the context of transformative justice, we try to shift from state-directed punishment **towards responsibility and change.** This does not mean we turn away from consequences.

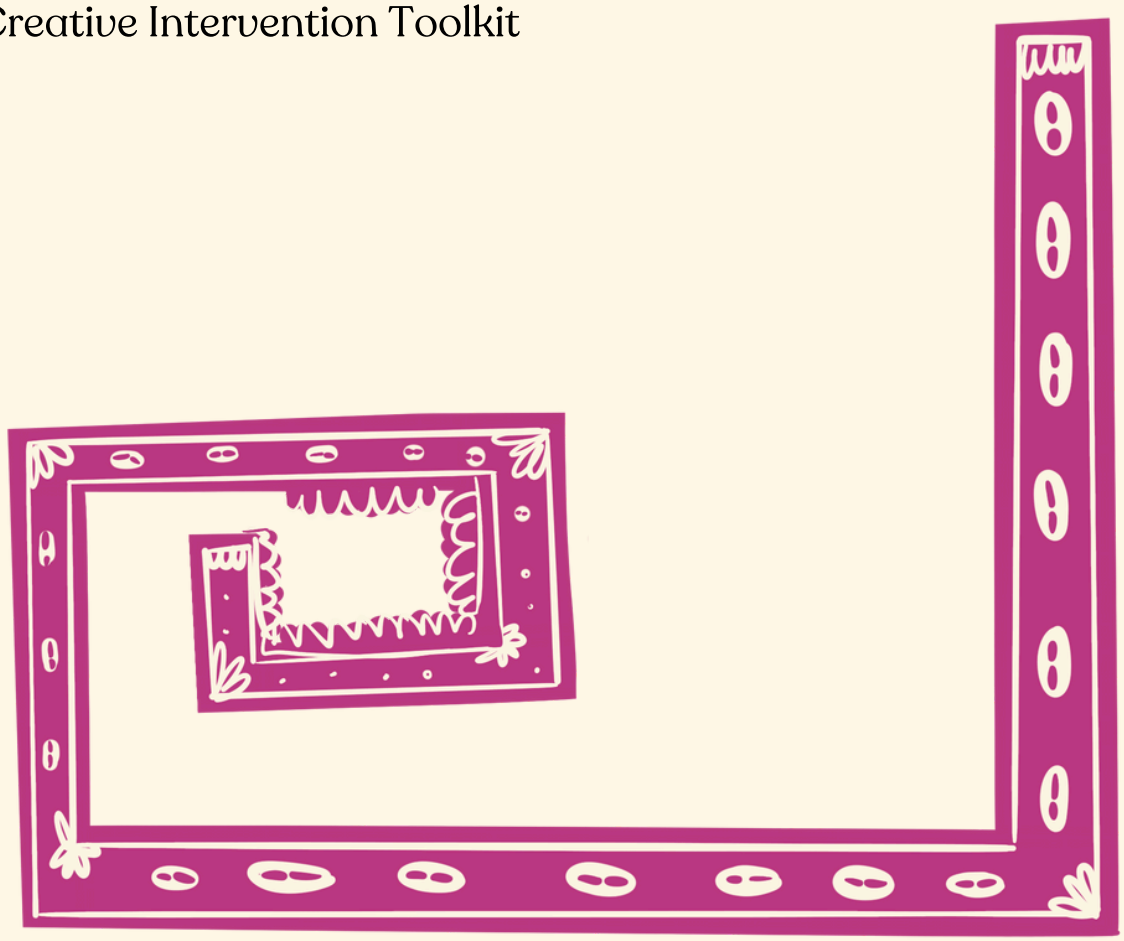
Remember: As we explored in Chapter One, accountability is not the same as forgiveness. Survivors should never be pressured or told they need to forgive the harm done to them. Nor should it be assumed that an apology will suffice to make everything right. **Sometimes accountability may mean that strict boundaries are set and that relationships are no longer maintained.**

The intention of an accountability process is not to pressure a survivor to forgive or maintain a relationship with a person who caused them harm. As we explored above, the support and accountability circles can be **entirely separate** with no contact between the survivor and the person who caused them harm. We want to underscore this point as we explore what it can look like to work with someone who caused harm.

If you do want to engage with a person doing harm, use the tools here and keep these limits in mind but do not be afraid to try - **only we can create the world we want to see**.

"Accountability does not have to be punitive, painful, terrifying, or retaliatory. We can make it clear, encouraging, firm, and practical. We can make aspects of it feel like relief. Accountability can help us be seen and understood by those around us. It can help us not be and feel so alone, and can help us develop the kinds of relationships we want in our lives."

- Creative Intervention Toolkit



Tool 2.7: Finding Accountability Allies[18]

As we started exploring above, **part of community accountability is considering who may be able to support the person doing harm to stop using violence, take accountability, repair from harm, and/or learn new behaviors**.

In considering this, think about people who:

- Matter to the person doing harm
- Can see the person doing harm as a human being deserving of basic respect and compassion
- Understand the harmful impact(s) of the violence, even when met with anger, tears, or defensiveness from the person doing harm
- Can be clear and specific in their communication, including holding conflict or disagreement in a group
- Have a sense of when to give someone some space or time to take in new information
- Can get support to sustain the hard experience of potentially being rejected by the person doing harm or becoming the target of that person's anger or criticism
- Can develop understanding and compassion for the person doing harm's emotions and experience and can keep that separate from condoning their use of violence
- Can help motivate the person doing harm to stay committed to the process of accountability

Putting this in Practice: Coming back to Sonia & Maria's Story: Let's return to the moment when Sonia asks us to start an accountability process for Maria. You can identify Maria's brother, sister, childhood friend, potentially Risa and Leo as potential allies in this scenario.

Coming back to your personal scenario: Take a moment to brainstorm any specific people that could be involved in working with the person who caused harm:

Guidance for Advocates: If your organization does not work with those who have caused harm (see the next section to explore this further), this is a tool you can pass to those who do. You may still find this tool important to hold in other relationships (as a community member, friend, relative, etc.).

One of the next initial steps is assessing how possible it is to engage the person causing harm in accountability:

Tool 2.8: Engage-ability of the Person Doing Harm[19]

Low Engage-ability

- ☐ The person doing harm has no friends or social connections – engage-ability may be low.
- ☐ Issues related to substance abuse and/or mental illness impair the person doing harm's ability to have meaningful social connections – and/or make them unable to figure out and follow through with positive change – engage-ability may be low or may change depending upon their state of mental illness or substance use.
- ☐ The person doing harm has some friends but they all collude with the violence by directly supporting it or encouraging it, or by excusing it or doing nothing about it – engage-ability may be low.
- ☐ The person doing harm has some friends but disengages with anyone who challenges them – they turn against or cut off from any person who challenges them – engageability may be low.

- [ ] The person doing harm's only connection is with the survivor or victim of harm and not with anybody else. This may be positive if their care and connection for the survivor or victim becomes a motivation for change. But it also can simply mean that their connection is also based upon the dynamic of violence. This may put survivors or victims in an impossible situation of being responsible for changing the violence that they never caused in the first place – engage-ability may be low.

Moderate / High Engage-ability

- [ ] There are people who support accountability who are not necessarily the close friends of the person doing harm, but whom the person respects and whose opinions matter – engage-ability may be moderate or high.
- [ ] The person doing harm has close relationships with community members who are willing and able to engage the person doing harm to stop using violence and use new behaviors; the person doing harm has the ability to talk about difficult things and to be vulnerable with people – engage-ability may be moderate or high.

The more interpersonal connections the person doing harm has and cares about, the more likely you are to find a point of access or leverage for using community to support a person to change.

Putting It Into Practice: Sonia & Maria's Story: We would likely assess Maria's level of engageability as **moderate-high** given that there are people with strong relationships who can support the accountability process.

Coming back to your personal scenario: Would the person who caused harm have been open to engaging in a process? Use this tool to assess their willingness.

If you indicated moderate or high engageability, you may be in a position to start forming an accountability group for the person who caused harm. Note: if you are forming an accountability group, you can use **Tools 2.4** and **Tools 2.6** to align your values and set goals. A best practice is to create your goals and values based on communication with the survivor support team.

Now that you have identified the willingness of the person who caused harm - and key community members to facilitate an accountability process - you may be wondering: **What are the stages of an accountability process? How does one even start?**

Creative Intervention's Staircase of Accountability offers a helpful framework for answering these questions *(image below from Creative Interventions Toolkit Tool F1, Section 4F, Pg. 52).*

Tool 2.9: Staircase of Accountability[20]

"Our vision of accountability as a process or as a staircase of change means that **we value any step leading towards the end of or reduction of violence** and that we also see each small step as one that can lead to our bigger vision of community well-being and, ultimately, liberation."
- Creative Interventions Toolkit

The staircase of accountability can be a very useful tool to envision an overall process of accountability and name **what specific things you can ask the person (or community) causing harm** to do in order to take accountability for their actions.

Here are questions to consider for each stage of the staircase. Note: we have identified select questions, for a full list, please see Creative Interventions, 4F: Taking Accountability.

Step #1: Stop immediate violence

1. What specific harmful, abusive or violent actions need to stop?
2. Are there some that are absolutes or bottom lines?
3. Are there some forms of harm, abuse or violence that are priorities to stop in this current moment? Are there some that you could come back to at a later time when things progress?

Note: *Sometimes we only reach Step #1 and that is okay. It does not mean that you have failed if the conditions or relationship were not set up to facilitate the rest of the steps.*

Step #2: Recognize the violence

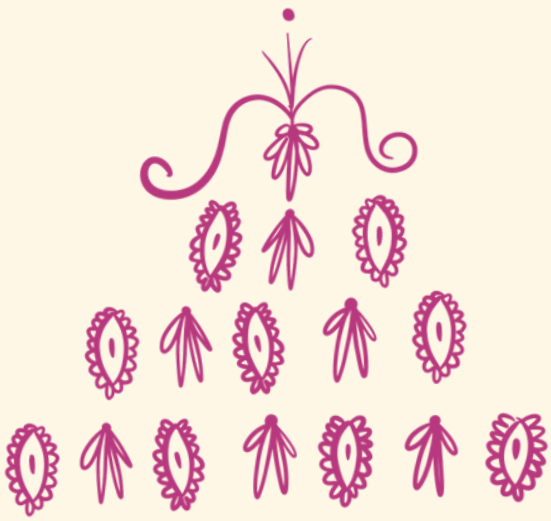
1. What specific harmful, abusive or violent actions do you want the person doing harm to name and recognize?
2. What words do you expect the person doing harm to use to describe this? Do they need to be the same as the words you use?
3. Are there some **absolutes** or bottom lines? Are there some actions that are priorities to name in this current moment?
4. How will you feel if you are unable to accomplish Step 2?

Step #3: Recognize the consequences - without excuses - even if unintended

1. What were the immediate consequences of the violence (e.g., injuries, fear, lost days from work)?
2. What are the more long-term consequences of the violence (e.g., inability to trust, nervousness, nightmares, flashbacks, loss of self-confidence, lost relationships with children, incarceration)?
3. What is the bottom line in terms of what you would want the person doing harm to name as the consequences of their violence?
4. What individuals, families, groups or organizations have been harmed by the violence?
5. How will you feel if you are unable to accomplish Step 3? Could you consider reaching Steps 1, 2, and 3 a success if you got no further?

Step #4: Make repairs for the harm

1. What can be done to repair the harm? (Understanding that there may be nothing that can repair it): Financial repair? Services? Apologies? Public apologies or other responses?
2. To whom? For how long? Are any parts of the repairs to be made public (e.g., a public accountability statement or apology)?
3. How important is it to you that the person doing harm (and their allies or support) be the ones to come up with the repairs?
4. What is the bottom line in terms of what you would want the person doing harm to offer in terms of repairs?
5. How will you feel if you are unable to accomplish Step 4?

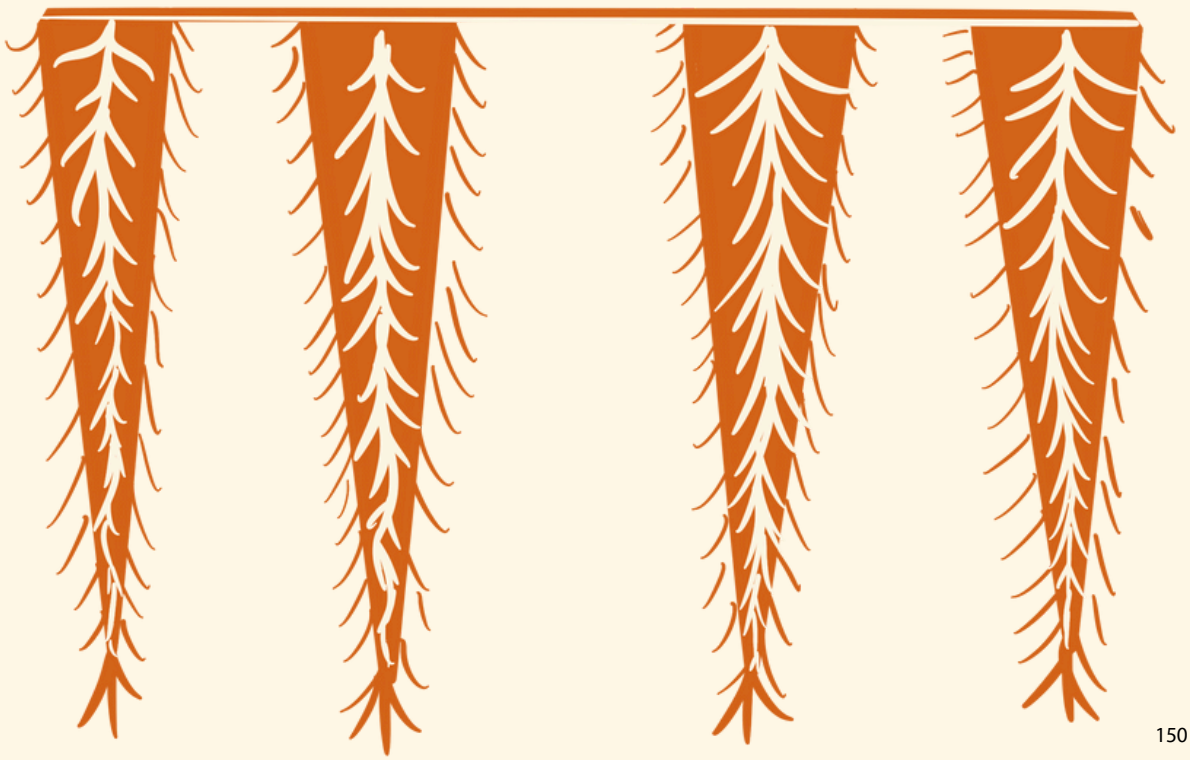


Step #5: Change harmful attitudes and behaviors so that violence is not repeated

1. What underlying or deep attitudes and behaviors have contributed to the violence?
2. What underlying or deep changes in attitude or behavior need to be made?
3. How can you say this in specifics? Note that it is hard to know what it means if the request is, "You will be a kind person." Rather, kindness may look like specific things such as, "You will never insult me – call me names like (you can come up with your own)."
4. How would you know if someone reached Step 5?

Step #6: Create a healthier community

1. How can we contribute to a healthier, less violent community overall?
2. What are situations of violence in my community that we have witnessed or have been aware of but where I was unable to intervene?
3. What are some of the social or community dynamics that helped me to intervene? Or that was a barrier to intervening?
4. Who are other people in my community who could benefit from having a staircase of their own, and how can I support them?



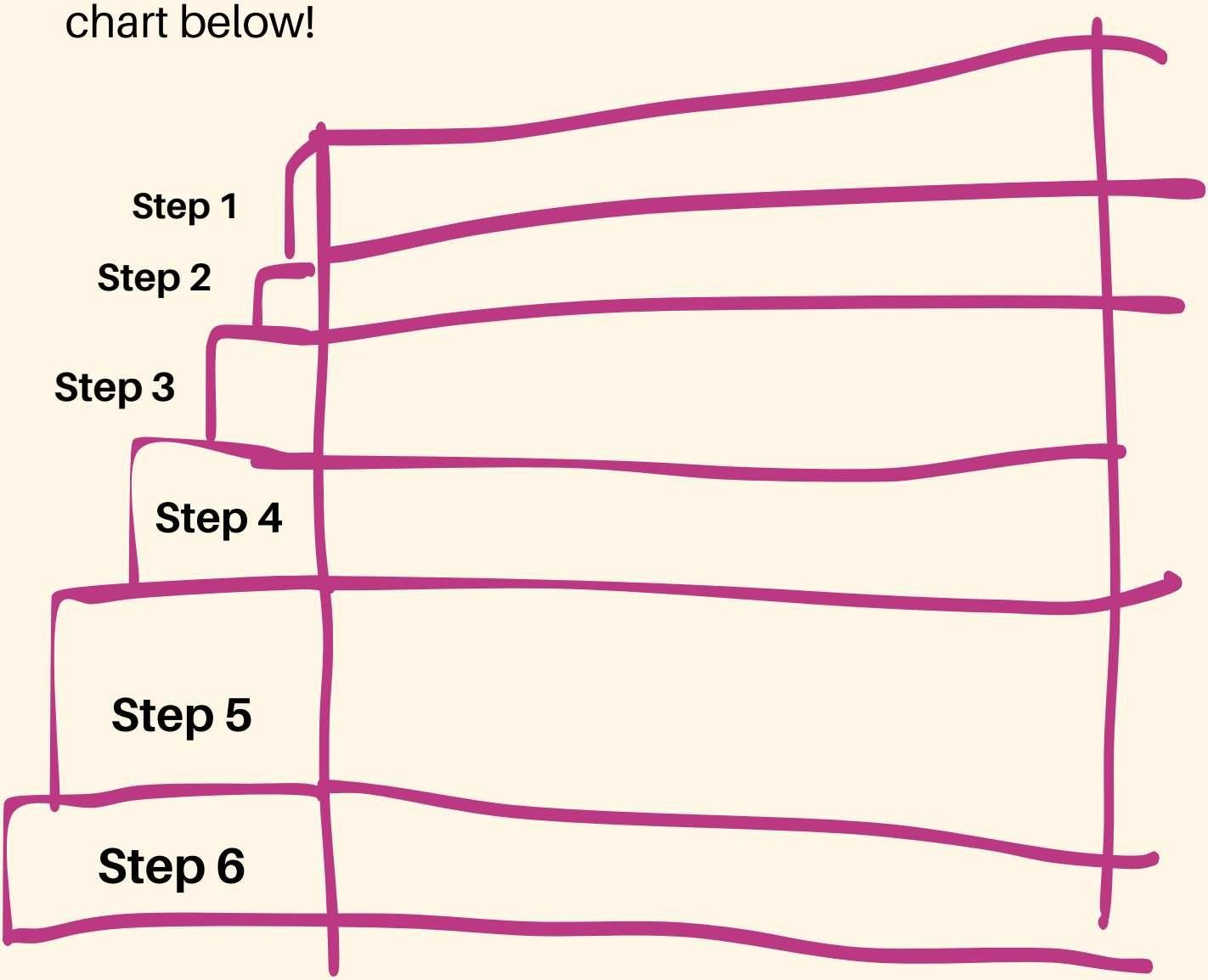
Putting It Into Practice: Sonia & Maria's Story

Now, let's return to our scenario. Here is an example of what the staircase of accountability could look like:

Step 1 - Stop the immediate violence	Work to create physical space between Sonia and Maria; Sonia may be able to temporarily live with her sister; support Sonia's move so that it is safe and immediate
Step 2 - Recognize the violence	Reach out to Maria to share Sonia's request and your role in supporting her; provide information about what this process might look like and ask Maria to share if she is willing to participate in an accountability circle held by Risa and Leo (she may need time to think about this or she may have questions); use the circle with Risa and Leo to support Maria to name and recognize her actions; form a support circle for Sonia to understand her needs and desire; decide on who could be a good point person/people to communicate between the circles
Step 3 - Recognize the consequences	Hold accountability circle meetings to support Maria in recognizing the impact of her actions and naming the consequences of the harm without excuses; ensure that Maria is not contacting mutual friends (as requested by Sonia)
Step 4 - Make repairs for the harm	Support Maria to reach the point of making repairs based on Sonia's requests (e.g. offering financial support for Sonia to move into semi-permanent housing, writing an apology letter with no excuses and a commitment to find support to stop this behavior)
Step 5 - Change harmful attitudes	Support Maria to continue working with the accountability circle and, as per Sonia's request, go to therapy to continue individual work
Step 6 - Become a healthy member	Maria and Sonia do not have contact but Maria writes a letter to mutual friends; respects Sonia's boundaries; Maria can engage in intimate relationships without causing harm

Now, consider your own scenario and fill out the chart blow from Creative Interventions.[21] Please try and get as specific as you can.

What would the Staircase of Change look like in your own personal scenario? Practice filling out the chart below!



Notes on the Staircase of Accountability

- Some interventions may only see reaching Step 1 (stopping immediate violence) as a measure of success
- You may be dealing with more than one step at a time or may move to another and back again
- The Creative Interventions toolkit reminds us to take it "one step at a time [and] remember to measure progress each step of the way" - there is no fixed blueprint for accountability!
- You can only go through the full process if **someone is willing and ready to engage**

We are approaching the end of the chapter! The tools above can support us to envision and create community models for accountability and yet it is important to remember that **sometimes a person is not in the place where they are ready to take accountability or the community supports are not set up yet to support an accountability process. Accountability may not make sense as a primary goal for every violent situation or intervention**. For example:

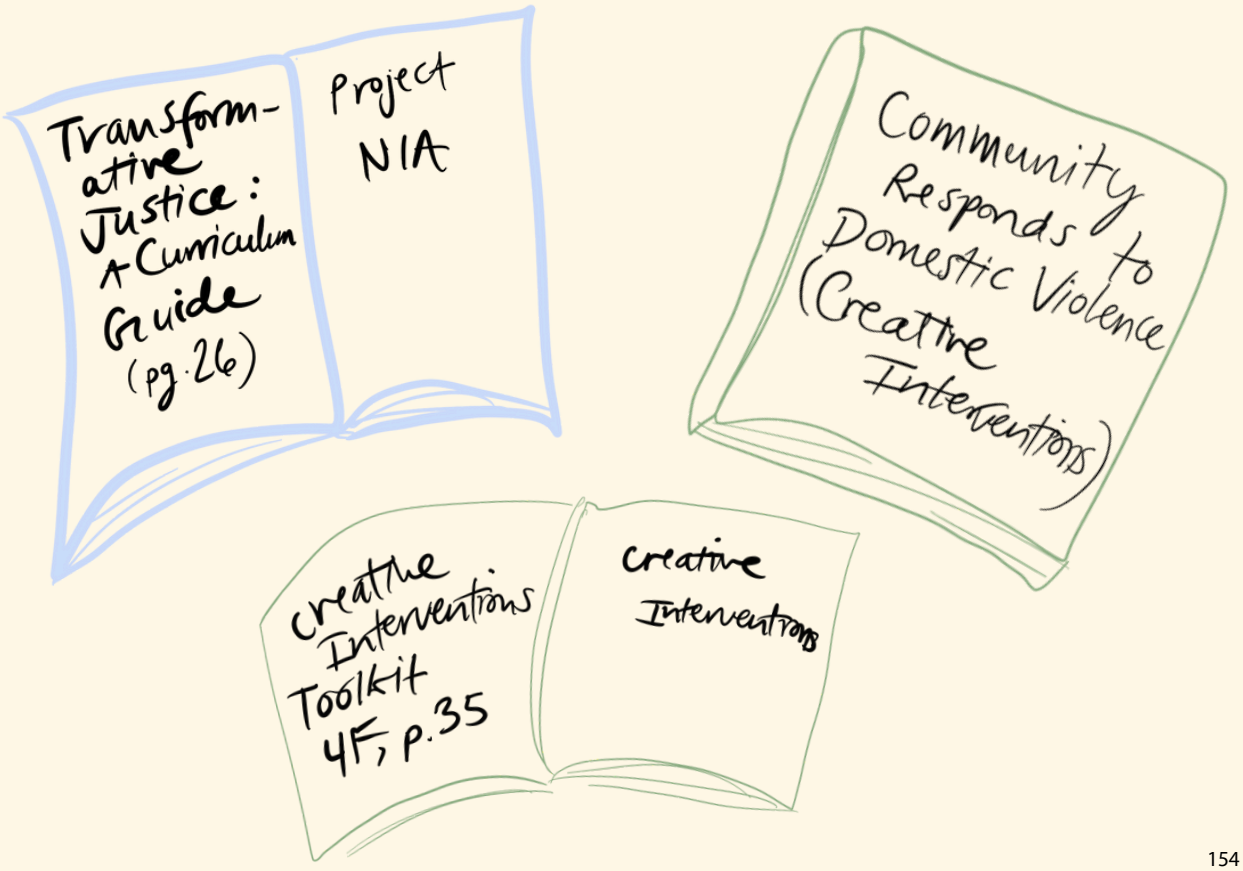
- Sometimes we don't have the resources, time, or opportunity to engage a person to take accountability for their violence.
- Sometimes people doing harm are not ready or willing to make any acknowledgement of or effort to change their viewpoints and violence.
- Sometimes the violence committed is so morally heinous to us or so progressed and long-standing that we feel hatred, anger, and disgust, and cannot find anyone who might engage the person doing harm with intent free of aggression or vengeance.
- Sometimes people doing harm show that any confrontation or request for accountability results only in escalating their harmful behaviors.
- Sometimes the situation is shaped by systems of oppression that we cannot control

Transformative justice is about making a survivor-centered assessment around what type of process works best, whether that is the **staircase of accountability, boundary setting, mapping allies, safety planning, or a combination of the above.** Transformative justice can be messy, non-linear, frustrating, and imperfect. It is important not to romanticize it because this can create a dynamic where we are not honest about the real challenges we may experience.

However, as we shared in the beginning, we believe deeply in the commitment to this work and the vision of **a society that prioritizes safety and accountability.** Check out these examples for additional inspiration!

Spotlight

2.2 Case Studies on Community Accountability Processes



Conclusion

"I am not proposing that sexual violence and domestic violence will no longer exist. I am proposing that we create a world where so many people are walking around with the skills and knowledge to support each other that there is no longer the need for anonymous hotlines. I am proposing that we break through the shame of survivors (a result of rape culture) and the victim-blaming ideology shared by all of us (also a result of rape culture) so that survivors can gain support from the people they already know in their lives. I am proposing that we create a society where community members can hold an abuser accountable so that a survivor does not have to flee their home. I am proposing that all of the folks that have been disappointed by systems work together to create alternative systems. **I am proposing that we organize.**"

-Rebecca Farr, Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA)

You have reached the end of the chapter! As we named above, the tools in this chapter are not a step-by-step guide to leading an accountability process. They intentionally do not include everything you should consider if you are taking on such a role. If you do decide that you or your organization want to build skills in order to facilitate community accountability processes, we recommend:

1. **Exploring and engaging with the referenced resources and examples throughout this section, especially the Creative Interventions Toolkit and Spotlights**
2. **Practicing the skills outlined here and in those resources with each other**
3. **Reaching out to us (hello@southasiansoar.org) if you'd like support thinking through what this might entail and whether or not you should follow this path**

If building out an entire process feels daunting, consider starting with **one** tool or envisioning the first **1-2** stages of the staircase. You can also imagine trying these tools in a situation that does not involve intimate partner or sexualized violence. Mia Mingus reminds us that we should not only be trying to use transformative practices once high-stakes violence occurs.[22] We can practice thinking about it all the time, even as smaller acts of hurt unfold in our communities. As we slowly build skills around community accountability, **we are then more likely to be able to address violence when it first happens and not just when it escalates.**

Activity 2.4:

Closing Reflections: Your Personal Role in Community Interventions

Take the time and reflect on your experiences and beliefs about community and how they might influence your relationship to community interventions. Jot down your reflections below (questions from the Creative Interventions Toolkit).[23]

How can your experiences or beliefs make you especially useful or knowledgeable in community accountability processes? What roles do you feel drawn to?

How can your experiences or beliefs make certain roles difficult for you to take?

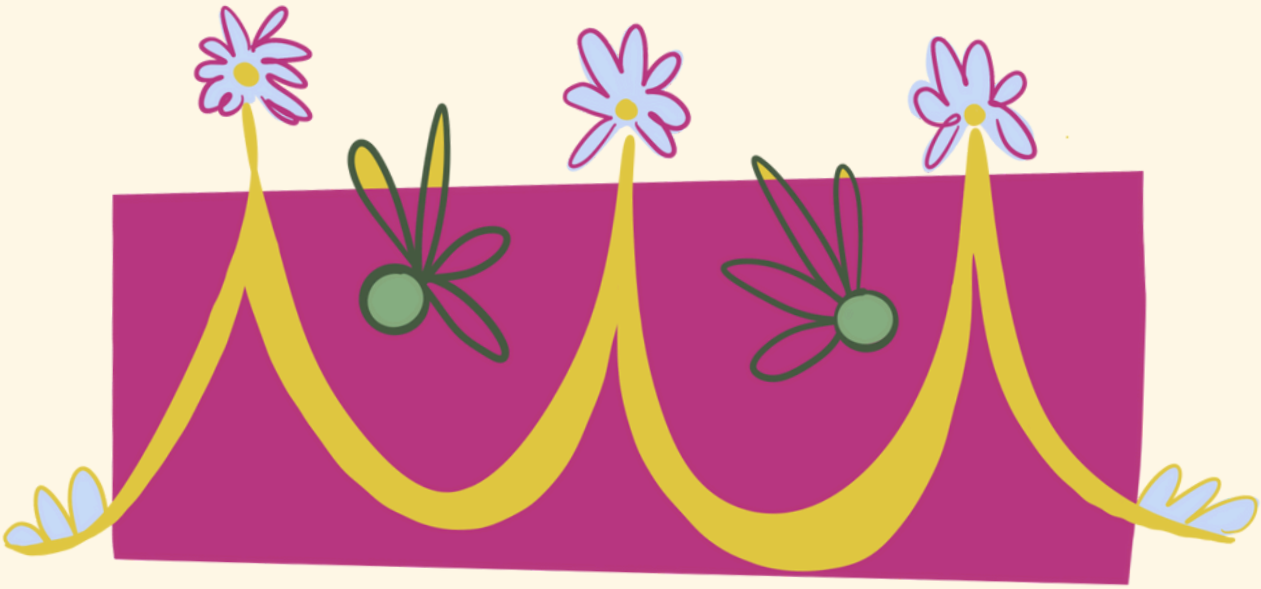
How can you deal with possible discomfort that can arise with an accountability process that does not involve the state or police?

What feelings come up for you when you think about these ideas? What questions do you still have?

Chapter 3: Assessing our Organizations

In this chapter you will:

- **Review** a brief history of the anti-violence movement and its relationship to the criminal legal system
- **Reflect** on your organization and how the criminal legal system and non-profit structures impact your work
- **Assess** your organization's work and what openings exist to shift your work in support of abolition
- **Apply** concrete tools to move your organization deeper in alignment with abolition and transformative justice values



Chapter Outline

Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

Activity 3.1: Personal Writing Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

How Did We Get Here: Acknowledging our Movement History

The U.S. Anti-Violence Movement

South Asian Anti-Violence Movement History

Anti-Violence Orgs and the Criminal Legal System

Where Are We Now: Assessing our Organization's Work

Activity 3.2: How do the Criminal Legal System and Non-Profit Structure Impact our Work?

Activity 3.3: Applying Reformist Reforms vs. Non-Reformist Reforms to our Orgs

Where Could We Go: Exploring Transformative Justice Values in our Organizations

Activity 3.4: Mapping the Opportunities

Activity 3.5: Visioning New Possibilities

Spotlight: Learning from our Legacy: Anti-Violence Orgs and Transformative Justice

How Do We Get There: Starting our Organizational Journey Towards Transformative Justice and Abolition

Poll: Where Should I Start?

Introducing the Conversation:

Tool 3.1: Organizational Discussion Guide

Internal Policies:

Tool 3.2: Internal Policies on Law Enforcement

Political Education:

Tool 3.3: Power and Control Wheel

Closing: **Activity 3.6:** Closing Reflections on Organizational Possibilities

To begin this section, we will look at how transformative justice principles of **accountability** and **transformation** apply to our organizations. Abolition and transformative justice are not just tools we use with people who caused harm and/or people who have experienced harm. They are practices that we can utilize in our day-to-day work and can profoundly shape our organizations.

Within anti-violence organizations, it can often feel impossible to have space to zoom out and assess our work, especially given the daily demands on frontline staff. However, we believe that taking time to reflect on our work is a critical need in the South Asian, anti-violence movement. We have **a choice moment** to consider whether the work we are doing and the systems we are working with are truly **building safety and transformation for all survivors.** We also have an opportunity to align with Black, Indigenous, Dalit, Adivasi, and Bahujan-led movements to envision a world free of violence.

The following section delves into the history of South Asian anti-violence organizations and offers tools for how we can shift our work to align further with abolition. The goal of this chapter is to provide concrete ideas about how to incorporate abolition and transformative justice values into our work as anti-violence organizations.

Let's get started! We invite you to do the following section with a buddy or group of people in your organization.

Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

Before we dive in, let's take a moment to write **our personal reflections on the movement:**

"The work of building a community-centered model and a holistic approach to DV within South Asian communities requires us to build strong relationships with each other. But if you ask any South Asian—our community is so fractured from the traumas of genocide, Partition, caste and gender violence that those relationships will take years of iteration and conflict to grow and transform." [1]

- Sharmin Hossain, South Asians for Abolition: Diasporic Strategies and Conversations

Activity 3.1:

Reflections on the Anti-Violence Movement

Jot down your thoughts on the following prompts:

Let's start with a personal reflection: what was a time when you felt conflicted or confused about the response you used when supporting a survivor? (i.e., you were told by a supervisor to call the police but the survivor you were working with didn't want to).

What do you think led to that internal conflict or confusion? (i.e. feeling like the police were the only available option, feeling the pressure to report due to mandatory reporting policies)?

What organizational support do you wish you had to navigate that situation? What solutions and support do you wish you could offer to the survivor you were working with?

Now, let's zoom out and consider how this example fits into the wider anti-violence field. In your ideal world, what are your hopes for the South Asian and/or your community's response to (and prevention of) violence?

What are your fears for the South Asian/or your community's response to (and prevention of) violence?
Where would you like to see the anti-violence movement in 10 years? How do South Asian anti-violence organizations fit into or support that vision?

Now, as you go through the rest of this chapter, **please hold onto your vision of where you would like to see the movement in ten years.** In this chapter, we are going to take an honest look at our organizations and assess how our relationships with funding sources, law enforcement, and the non-profit system impact our work with survivors and each other. To do that, we will dive briefly into the origin of the anti-violence movement so we can situate our work in a broader historical context. We will then explore tools for how to move closer to building a creative, relational, and abolitionist movement that **truly centers care and safety.**

How Did We Get Here? Acknowledging our Movement History

"If our movement is, at its core, an "anti-violence" movement, why are we choosing incarceration—a system of punishment which produces violence and suffering—as a primary response to violence?"[2]

- Punishment is Not Accountability, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Acknowledging our History: The U.S. Anti-Violence Movement[3]

First - what do we already know about the U.S. anti-violence movement? Take a moment to jot down any key figures, organizations, or dates that first come to mind:

Now - let's ground in some key historical points from the anti-violence movement, looking specifically at its relationship to (and resistance against) the criminal legal system. This brief timeline by no means covers everything but we hope it will be a helpful start.[4] Note: we will be diving deeper into the history and contributions of South Asian anti-violence orgs and services in the next section.

1970s
Beginning of the contemporary anti-violence movement, a movement that **originated as a grassroots, Black and POC survivor-led movement** in response to a systemic absence of support and services for survivors

The simultaneous rise in policing and incarceration in the United States (i.e. increase of arrests and incarceration of Black communities, heightened collaboration between police and immigration enforcement)

1980s
Growth of anti-violence organizations and services; rise of mandatory arrest laws (mandatory arrest of at least one party when police respond to calls of domestic violence)

1980s & 1990s
Growing critique of the anti-violence movement, especially by Black women and women of color who called out historical violence by the legal system to Black communities and communities of color

1994
Passage of VAWA (Violence Against Women Act), a United States federal law that solidifies domestic violence as a "crime"

2000
Establishment of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, a network of radical feminists of color organizing to end interpersonal violence **and** state violence

2020s
National conversations about policing increase due to Black-led organizing (Black Lives Matter; the Movement for Black Lives); growing splits and tension in the anti-violence field about how to relate to law enforcement and the criminal legal system; VAWA reauthorized three times since 1994

Post 9/11
Growing deportation and detention of undocumented immigrant survivors

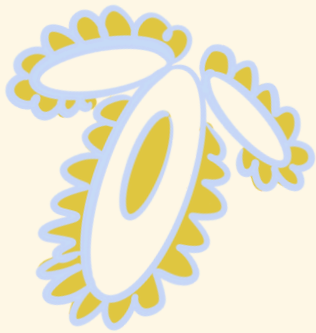
Pause Point: What was familiar to you from this history? What surprised you?

"What now appears as a complex, professionalized network of social service, clinical therapeutic, mental health, medical, civil legal, child welfare and criminal justice system responses to domestic violence has its early contemporary roots in a more grassroots feminist social movement with a systemic analysis of gender-based power and the identification of patriarchy as an overarching political problem."[5]

- Mimi Kim

Looking for more on the history of the anti-violence movement? *Check out: The Current Landscape: A Reflection on Mainstream Victories within the Anti-Sexual Violence Movement.*

Going Deeper: South Asian Anti-Violence Movement History



Now that we've grounded in a brief overview of the U.S. anti-violence movement, let's dive specifically into South Asian movement history. South Asian anti-violence organizations have a variety of origins, including community members who experienced a widespread lack of support for South Asian survivors and organized themselves to address violence in their own communities. This work not only filled a notable gap in anti-violence services but called attention to **white feminism in the anti-violence field which harmed and excluded Black, Brown, and POC survivors, including South Asian survivors.**

South Asian anti-violence organizations aimed to:

- Provide culturally-specific immigration, legal, economic, and emotional support for South Asian survivors
- Shift beliefs about intimate partner violence in South Asian communities
- Challenge racist beliefs that violence was "inherent" in South Asian communities.

> "In its work, Sakhi walks the line between meeting a need for culturally competent services for South Asian survivors, while also furthering the idea that domestic violence is not unique to South Asian communities. In other words, Sakhi simultaneously identifies the culturally-specific needs of survivors of domestic violence in South Asian communities, while also resisting cultural racism that attributes the roots of this violence to culture."[6]
>
> - Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe on Sakhi, 2015

Check out our mini-timeline on the history of South Asian anti-violence organizations:[7]

1970s

Rise of South Asian feminist organizing that focused on urgent needs in the South Asian community including immigration, labor rights, caste violence, and solidarity with Black and Latinx feminist organizing; this work highlighted domestic and intimate partner violence as a critical issue in South Asian communities

1980s

Growth of a coordinated movement to end South Asian, gender-based violence, including the establishment of South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs) such as Manavi, Sakhi for South Asian Women, Raksha, Apna Ghar, and Sneha. These groups named how structural and cultural factors, such as in-law relationships, forced marriage, immigration, and transnational abandonment, shaped dynamics of abuse for South Asian survivors

1990s

SALGA NYC (South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association of New York City) is founded (1991) to focus on the needs of queer and trans South Asians; increased collaboration between South Asian anti-violence organizations; a rise in national convenings including the Millennium conference (1999), the Aarohan conference (2002 and 2003), and the Jahajee Sisters Indo-Caribbean Women's Empowerment Summit (2007)

2000s

Mid 2000s

Growing convenings between South Asian anti-violence organizations including Sakhi's SAWO Convening (2015); a rise in coordinated advocacy including collective statements on violence in South Asian communities; DeQH (Desi LGBTQ+ Helpline for South Asians) is founded (2012); SOAR is founded (2020)

We recognize this is a very broad overview! Interested in more information on South Asian anti-violence movement history?
Check out SOAR's full Movement History Timeline here.

Pause Point: What is the history of your own organization? If it's not included above, put a star on the timeline when your organization was founded.

As we highlight this history, we want to acknowledge the reality that many of the organizations listed were founded and led by individuals within the South Asian community who held privileged identities (for example identifying as Hindu, caste privileged, class privileged, straight, and/or cis-gender, etc). Therefore **many people were further marginalized even by South Asian anti-violence organizations**, including queer and trans South Asian survivors, Dalit survivors, Muslim survivors, and Indo-Caribbean survivors.[8] Many South Asian survivors who did not feel safe in the court or police system **also** did not see themselves represented in these organizations, did not approach them for support, or described experiencing marginalization and dismissal when attempting to seek services.[9]

"South Asians, particularly Bangladeshi, Indo-Caribbean, Nepali, and Dalit women have spent decades protesting and addressing intimate partner violence. They have also created robust intergenerational struggles to fight for domestic worker rights and anti-war movements against the War on Terror and Muslim surveillance in our communities. But we're held back by a malignant combination of Savarna and carceral feminisms that fail to make inter-caste and intra-racial analyses around survivorship and abuse."

- Mon M, South Asians for Abolition

Pause Point: Take a moment to consider how the statement above applies to your work. **Who benefits from the work you do? Who is left out? Who would you like to support in the work that you do?**

Exploring the Impact: Anti-Violence Orgs and the Criminal Legal System

As you can see from the history above, the anti-violence movement had a grassroots, survivors-of-color-led origin, but became increasingly tied with the criminal legal system in the 1980s and 1990s. After the passage of VAWA in 1994, the anti-violence movement started to rely even more heavily on tactics that aligned with the criminal legal system. In fact, **85% of VAWA funding goes to the criminal legal system.**[10]

You may have mixed feelings when you read this. Some of you may be wondering - isn't it a good thing for domestic violence to be nationally recognized as a crime?

While widespread recognition of intimate partner violence is important, **in reality, the pressure to participate in the criminal legal system overwhelmingly led to:** Increased and disproportionate harm to Black people and people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ communities, including arrests of survivors who called the police for help or who were fighting back against abusive partners.

- For example, in 2020, up to **24% of women** who called the police to report intimate partner violence said that they were consequently arrested or threatened with arrest[11]
- For South Asian communities, this meant harm to many marginalized South Asian survivors, such as Dalit survivors, queer and trans survivors, and undocumented survivors
- Increased funding to the criminal legal system and law enforcement over community-based organizations. For example, the 2022 reauthorization of **VAWA funded the police 30 times more** than community-based organizations[12]
- Increased pressure for organizations to engage with the criminal legal system including partnerships with police, "cultural competency trainings" or policies that direct survivors to call 9-1-1 in case of emergencies; however, notably there is **no data linking VAWA-funded trainings to a decrease in violence and evidence shows that such trainings have little impact on police practice**[13]
- Increased **requirements** for anti-violence service providers to collaborate with law enforcement to **receive funding**; restrictions (such as removal of funding) on organizations who attempt to minimize police contact or call out how the police and criminal legal system perpetuate violence[14]

"Requiring that community-based agencies maintain partnerships with law enforcement to be eligible for VAWA funding (funding that they rely on to survive) may prevent those agencies from taking stands that they believe will upset law enforcement, even when those positions are important to or directly impact the people they serve."[15]

- Leigh Goodmark

Looking for more on the implications of VAWA?

This connection to the criminal legal system also led to pressure for organizations to professionalize and become non-profit organizations. While this shift did create opportunities for some advocates to now be paid for the work, it also included:

An increase of:

- Expectations of college-educated leadership in the staff of anti-violence organizations; leadership that was often highly privileged in terms of class, caste, religion, gender, and other power systems
- Domestic violence "experts" who became the face of the anti-violence movement over survivors with lived experiences; a rise in survivors who were pushed out of the field and told they were too "in crisis" to be in leadership
- Corporate, private, or government funding that directed organizational priorities
- Violence defined as interpersonal with little to no emphasis on systemic violence
- An individual, direct service approach over a collective, community-organizing approach such as survivor peer groups, survivor-led campaigns, etc.[16]

What does the leadership in your organization look like?

Do you have funding sources that require you to partner with law enforcement or family regulation systems? What other forms of funding could you shift to?

Limitations on:

- Alternative work outside of direct, 1-1 work with survivors, such as engaging in restorative justice circles, working with people who caused harm, or building responses to harm outside of the police
- Outreach to marginalized survivors (sex workers, people who were incarcerated, poor and working-class survivors, queer and trans survivors, and Dalit survivors)
- Pay equity within organizations

Notably, there was **no connection between these changes and a decrease in violence**. Instead, there was high concern about the negative impacts on survivors (especially marginalized survivors).[17]

Note: while many anti-violence organizations faced pressure to professionalize and collaborate with law enforcement, **there were many grassroots or community-led groups who advocated for a more expansive understanding of "anti-violence"** that recognizes harm and violence coming from the criminal legal system. This could also include your organization!

"[We] cannot properly serve all survivors if we do not acknowledge and address the oppression and violence the most marginalized survivors are experiencing."

– Embrace [a domestic violence shelter in Rural Wisconsin who were pressured by law enforcement to remove their Black Lives Matter sign and consequently lost $25,000 in funding when they did not comply]

Pause Point: Let's circle back to our question above and consider again: who benefits from the work you do? Who is left out? Who would you like to support in the work that you do?

Where Are We Now?

Assessing our Organizations: The Limitations and Possibilities of our Work

Now - let's apply these points to our own organizations! The section above outlined broad trends in the anti-violence movement but we now invite you to reflect on how the above impacts of the criminal legal system and non-profit structure **show up in your organizations.**

Activity 3.2:

How do the Criminal Legal System and Non-Profit Structure Impact our Work?

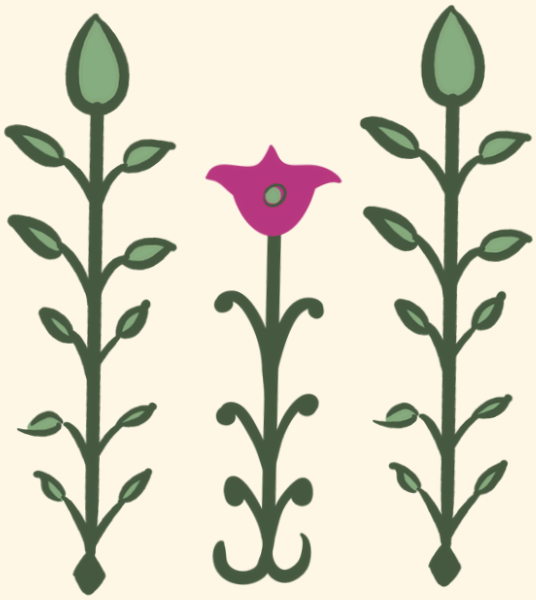
This activity is designed to help you identify the limits you may feel when working in the non-profit structure. Below is a chart with key categories based on the points above. Please fill in the table below with **specific examples** of how this impact of the criminal legal system or non-profit structure **currently** shows up in your organization.

Categories	Examples
Connections to the Criminal Legal System: Ways your organization connects to, crosses paths with, or works within the criminal legal system	
Funding: Ways corporate, private, or governmental funding direct organizational priorities and programming	
Root Causes: How your organization addresses (or struggles to address) root causes of violence and injustice on a systemic scale	

If you don't know, that's okay! It could be a moment to ask a buddy or trusted co-worker in your organization

Categories	Examples
Creativity: Ways your organization incorporates creativity into the work	
Collective Approach: How your organization approaches its work with survivors (i.e. using an individual, direct service approach or a collective, organizing model, or elements of both)	
Defining Violence: How your organization currently defines violence (i.e. violence can happen from individuals and from the state)	
Leadership: How leadership looks in your org (i.e. the current make-up in terms of class, gender, caste, religion, and other systems of power, as well as whether survivors are in leadership and staff positions)	
Pay Equity/Inequity: The way your organization approaches pay, salaries, and benefits within the organization	

Pause Point: How do you feel after doing this activity? We want to emphasize the purpose of doing this activity is **not about personal blame, but rather about creating space for you to reflect on your experiences**. Many of the topics above can be difficult to assess or made invisible on purpose.



"In prioritizing the realities of survivors needing alternatives to criminal legal solutions to domestic violence, Sakhi finds itself caught at the intersection of two conflicting approaches: 1) a culturally-specific service model that generally aligns with mainstream anti-violence models, which rely heavily on the criminal legal system and other systemic interventions to respond to domestic violence, but with a focus on making them more accessible (e.g., through language access, or know your-rights education); 2) a transformative justice approach which envisions and builds responses to domestic violence outside of state engagement and punitive strategies, based in communities instead of professional experts, and concerned with increasing safety and wellbeing for survivors, people who cause harm, and communities overall."[18]

– Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe, excerpt from their article, "Building Towards Transformative Justice as Sakhi for South Asian Women" (2015)

Building on the quote above, let's start to envision the possibilities for shifting our work. You may be wondering how we **start doing this**, especially given all the constraints that we face in terms of funding restrictions, lack of resources, limited time, legal requirements, etc. **There are many ways to start!** While transformative justice and abolition can sometimes feel like a long way away, we **can make concrete shifts** in our work to align deeper with abolitionist principles. **As a useful starting point, the following activity helps us look at our choices as an organization and think about whether they support the idea of policing or reduce its overall impact.**

Assessing Reformist Reforms vs. Non-Reformist Reforms

A tool from Critical Resistance[19]

Helpful if you have ever wondered: as we hold the vision of abolition, what do we do in the meantime?

One tool that we have found useful in responding to this question is **reformist reforms vs. non-reformist reforms**. This tool helps us understand if the choices we are making are furthering the vision of abolition or blocking it.

What is the difference between a reformist reform and a non-reformist reform?

A Reformist Reform: is a decision or action that continues or expands the reach of policing.

Whereas:

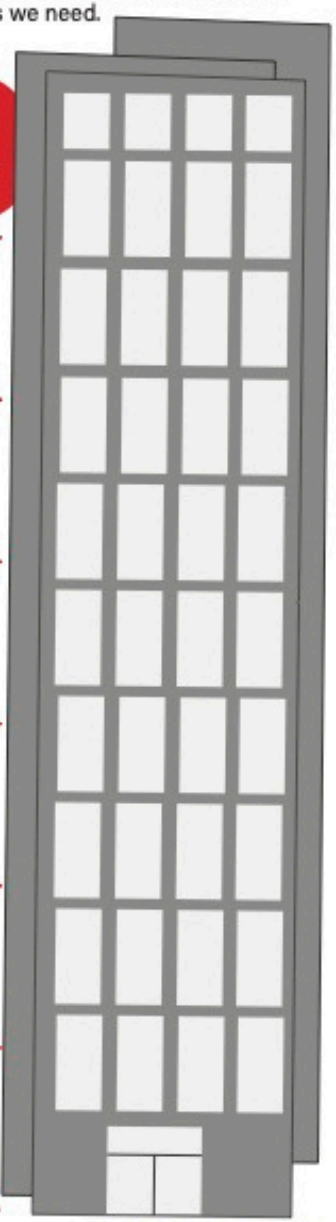
A Non-Reformist Reform: is a decision or action that chips away at policing and reduces its overall impact.

Want specific examples? Check out the amazing chart below by Critical Resistance on non-reformist reforms to end policing. **For example**, let's discuss body cameras for police officers. While some people argue that this helps the community, body cameras can actually increase funding to the police, enforce the idea that police can cause safety, and increase policing overall.

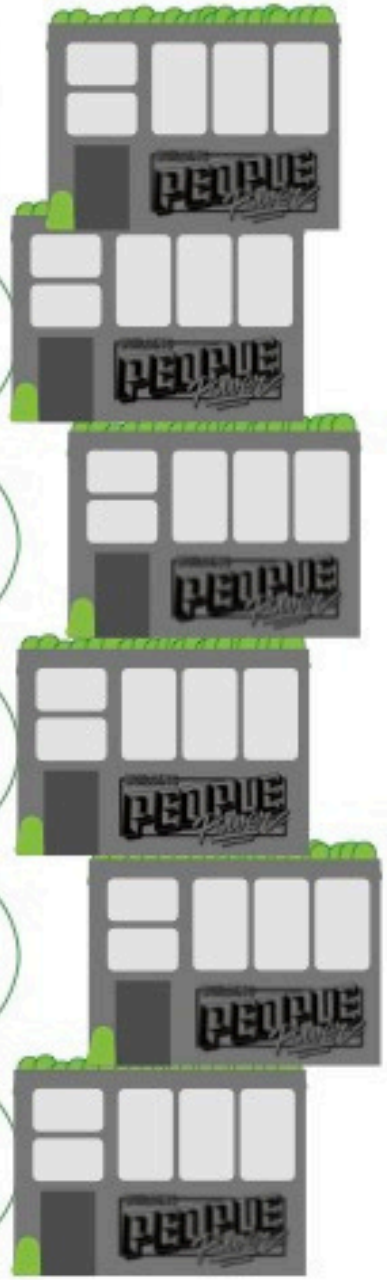
Reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps to end IMPRISONMENT

This poster is a tool to assess and understand differences between reforms that strengthen imprisonment and abolitionist steps that reduce its overall impact and grow other possibilities for wellbeing. As we work to dismantle incarceration in all its forms, we must resist common reforms that create or expand cages anywhere, including under the guise of "addressing needs" or as "updated" replacements. Jails and prisons deprive communities of resources like medical and mental health care, transportation, food, and housing. In our fights, it is critical to uplift and strategically contribute to movements led by imprisoned people, both to address pressing conditions and for abolition. In all decarceration strategies, we must utilize tactics that will improve life for those most affected and make space to build the worlds we need.

DOES THIS...	reduce the number of people imprisoned, under surveillance, or under other forms of state control?	reduce the reach of jails, prisons, and surveillance in our everyday lives?	create resources and infrastructures that are steady, preventative, and accessible without police and prison guard contact?	strengthen capacities to prevent or address harm and create processes for community accountability?
Building jails or prisons to address overcrowding or rising numbers of "new" prisoners (for example, migrants)	**NO.** If they build it, they will fill it! Building more jails and prisons creates more cages, period!	**NO.** Building more jails and prisons increases the reach of the PIC and prison and jail infrastructures. Creating more cages means building something we have to tear down later.	**NO.** Adding cages takes away state and local funding and resources that could be directed to community-led infrastructures.	**NO.** Building more prisons and jails entrenches the carceral logic of accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm.
Building "closer to home," or as "nicer", "modern," "rehabilitative" alternatives to existing jails or prisons	**NO.** The history of the prison is a history of reform. New jails and prisons that are proposed as improvements on existing sites or buildings expand the arguments for and lengthen the life of imprisonment.	**NO.** There is no such thing as a "humane" cage. Construction under the pretense of addressing the harms that imprisonment reinforces the logics of using cages as a solution for social, economic, and political issues.	**NO.** Arguments for jails "closer to home" reinforce the idea that jails and police create "safety" and take away the capacity to build resources that can create well-being.	**NO.** Prisons and jails do not enable accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm.
Building jails / prisons that focus on "providing services" to address the needs of specific "populations"	**NO.** Life-affirming resources cannot be provided in spaces of imprisonment. These "services" do not decrease numbers of imprisoned people - they keep specific populations of people imprisoned.	**NO.** Building jails and prisons that lock up specific populations expands the reach of imprisonment by normalizing the idea that care can and should be coupled with policing and imprisonment.	**NO.** The argument for these jails and prisons is that they provide specialized services through policing, imprisonment, and control. Environments of control and violence cannot provide care.	**NO.** Prisons and jails do not enable accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm, and solidify oppressive social expectations around gender, sexuality, and mental health.
Legislative and other efforts to single out some conviction categories as "exceptions"	**NO.** This strategy entrenches the idea that anybody "deserves" or "needs" to be locked up. Prioritizing only some people for release justifies expansion.	**NO.** By doubling-down on the "need" for some people to be locked up, these efforts strengthen and expand the reach of prisons, jails, and the PIC.	**NO.** Manufacturing divisions between imprisoned people, as more or less "dangerous," limits our ability to create real supports and resources that sustain all people.	**NO.** These efforts reinscribe the idea that some people are "risks" to society and others "deserve another chance," strengthening logics of punishment without engaging the context of how harms happen.
Use of electronic monitoring (home-arrest) and other law enforcement-led "alternatives" to jails and prisons.	**NO.** Electronic monitoring is a form of state control. It escalates the frequency of contact with the PIC for all members of a household, increasing the vulnerability of people already subject to policing and surveillance.	**NO.** Monitoring brings the prison, jail, or detention center into a person's home, turning it into a space of incarceration, which takes both a psychological and a financial toll.	**NO.** E-carceration means that regular daily movements are constantly linked to threats of arrest. This does not allow people to build and maintain community.	**NO.** E-carceration extends the violence and harm of imprisonment into people's homes and everyday lives. Nothing about electronic monitoring creates systems of accountability or healing.
Public / private "partnerships" to contract services that replicate conditions of imprisonment	**NO.** These services move people from one locked facility into another facility often with similar rules and with the threat of jail or prison looming.	**NO.** This expands the reach of imprisonment, by adding to the larger system. This is particularly the case where the partnerships replicate and expand logics and rules of jails and prisons, as opposed to intentionally challenging them.	**NO.** These programs require moving through the policing and court systems to access any services that might be available there.	**NO.** Court mandated / police-run "justice" processes hold similar threats for participants as the broader PIC. They do not necessarily include meaningful processes for creating accountability or tools for preventing future harm.



DOES THIS...	reduce the number of people imprisoned, under surveillance, or under other forms of state control?	reduce the reach of jails, prisons, and surveillance in our everyday lives?	create resources and infrastructures that are steady, preventative, and accessible without police and prison guard contact?	strengthen capacities to prevent or address harm and create processes for community accountability?
Decarceration - or reducing the number of people in prisons and jails	***YES.*** Decarceration takes people out of prisons and jails, and out of direct state control, with the aim of supporting people to stay outside.	***YES.*** By de-prioritizing and de-legitimizing jails, prisons, and related systems we reduce the common-sense idea that they are necessary and/or "effective".	***YES.*** As part of abolitionist organizing we must focus on getting people out while building strong infrastructures of support.	***YES.*** When we work to diminish carceral logic, we can pair our work toward decarceration with other ways of responding to and preventing harm. Investing in one will grow our capacities for the other.
Shutting down existing jails and prisons and not replacing them	***YES.*** By reducing the number of cages, we can reduce the number of people inside.	***YES.*** When we close a jail or prison and do not replace it with other carceral systems, we chip away at the idea that cages address social, political, and economic problems.	***YES,*** when we organize for it. When we fight to close jails and prisons we can open the way to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people. Abolition is also a BUILDING strategy.	***YES.*** Our work to close prisons and jails and keep them closed is one step toward shifting the focus to addressing and preventing harm without violence and putting resources into that work.
Rejecting government spending for jail and prison construction, renovation, expansion	***YES.*** Nearly all spending projects include enhancements that support arguments for the "benefits" of incarceration.	***YES.*** By rejecting spending on jails and prisons, we counter the common-sense argument that they are necessary and reduce the system's reach.	***YES.*** When we reject funding for jails and prisons this can create opportunities to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people.	***YES.*** When we reject funding for jails and prisons this can create opportunities to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people.
Reducing policing and police contact in general, and "quality of life" policing, specifically	***YES.*** Policing feeds imprisonment, and is an important part of systems of control. Reducing police contact reduces the number of people caught in the criminal legal system.	***YES.*** Policing is a justification for imprisonment. By reducing police contact, the legitimacy and power of jails and prisons can be reduced.	***YES.*** When we fight to reduce police contact and funding, we can free up state resources. We can organize allocation to community-led infrastructures that are decoupled from policing. We must eliminate all forms of policing from social and community services.	***YES.*** Policing does not prevent harm, but actually causes it. Fighting to reduce policing provides opportunities for communities to invest in systems that prevent harm and create accountability.
Creating voluntary, accessible, community-run services and infrastructures	***YES.*** Access to services that address needs people articulate for themselves can reduce vulnerability to police contact and prevent harm, while building sites for self-determination.	***YES.*** Voluntary services that are community-led and -informed take power away from jails and prisons by removing the focus on imprisonment as a solution to social, economic, and political issues.	***YES.*** When we create services and infrastructures that are de-coupled from policing and imprisonment we develop systems with the potential to engage with people's complex needs in consistent and trust-building ways.	***YES.*** People getting their needs met in community- determined and -led ways prevents harm. By bolstering resources that address harm, without replicating harm, we create opportunities for community accountability, not punishment and isolation.



Check out the ***Abolitionist Steps*** poster series: criticalresistance.org * CRITICAL RESISTANCE * 510.444.0484 **v.1, 2021**

Pause Point: How do you feel about non-reformist reforms? *If you are feeling comfortable with the idea, try the activity below with your coworkers! If it still feels confusing, feel free to spend more time with the Critical Resistance chart above or this chart on steps to end prisons.*

Activity 3.3:

Reformist Reforms vs. Non-Reformist Reforms

Review the following examples and determine if they are reforms or non-reformist reforms. Here are the guiding questions to consider as you go through the examples (taken from the Critical Resistance Charts above).

Does this example:

- *Challenge the notion that the police and prisons = safety?*
- *Reduce the number of people imprisoned, under surveillance, or under other forms of state control?*
- *Reduce funding to the police?*
- *Create resources and infrastructure that prioritize healing, accountability, and transformation?*
- *Strengthen capacities to prevent or address harm and create processes for community accountability?*

Example #1: "Cultural Competency" trainings for law enforcement

Example #2: Advocating for legislation that increases "Dangerousness Hearings"

Example #3:
Creating a Know Your Rights policy for staff, community members, and survivors if police/ICE are trying to enter the building or request information

Example #4: Training your staff to only call 9-1-1 in case of emergencies

Example #5: Pod mapping with survivors

Note: In anti-violence organizations, many of us grapple with how to relate to reforms vs non-reformist reforms and the pressure to enact reforms. For example, "cultural competency" training can be a common offering in the South Asian anti-violence movement. This activity is meant to begin opening up space for the long-term work of shifting towards non-reformist reforms. Therefore, we encourage you to consider the following reflection questions, discuss your reflections with your team or trusted friends, or get in touch with us!

After you have finished, consider the following reflection questions:

- Does your organization lean more towards reformist or non-reformist reforms? Why or why not?
- If you do lean towards reformist reforms:
  - What have you noticed in terms of outcomes? Have you seen any changes in terms of impact on survivors or an increase in survivor agency and autonomy?
  - What messages does [this idea] send? Why might that idea be dangerous / unhelpful / limiting? Does the idea come from funding sources or from survivors themselves? Who benefits?
- If you identified a reform, can you shift it towards a non-reformist reform instead?
- Given our energy is limited, what else could be done with our energy or resources? (i.e. instead of resources going to training the police, could we redirect that time or money towards survivors instead)?
- What are the challenges in making these shifts and moving away from the criminal legal system?
- Where are the possibilities or openings that would occur if we make these shifts and we move away from reliance on the criminal legal system?

"Sometimes, our ability to create safe spaces and trusting relationships is restricted by safeguarding policies and mandatory reporting duties that embed surveillance and policing in our work. To avoid this, we often find **ourselves working against institutions from within**, a difficult struggle that can lead us to burn out. [However], we have to support each other in our collective resistance and carefully consider whether or not to work with people, organizations and spaces that will be hostile with our commitments. **Our choices may be constrained, but can't let this push us towards making nice with the state or compromising our ambition. In fact, it becomes even more urgent to hone a sharper edge to our vision."**

-Pearls from their Mouth, Pear Naullak

Where Could We Go?

Exploring Transformative Justice Values in our Organizations

Now that we've started assessing our organizations, let's pick up on that last set of reflection questions and explore the possibilities that exist if we move away from ties to the criminal legal system and professionalization. We are in a **choice** moment: we can either continue with the way we have been doing our work and or we can build new models that do not rely on the criminal legal system!

Activity 3.4:
Mapping the Opportunities

How can incorporating transformative justice approaches strengthen our work? We're going to begin this brainstorm using a tool known as Polarity Mapping.[20]

First, jot down **an essential issue or challenge** you are grappling with right now in your organization's relationship to the criminal legal system. You can use an example from the activities above if helpful! Examples: partnerships with police, cultural competency trainings, limited options for survivors outside of the police, staff conflict on calling police.

Then, map out three of the most difficult, chronic problems relating to that issue. These are specific examples that are leading to this issue. Why exactly is this issue persisting? Examples: VAWA funding, lack of alternative models, restrictive organizational policies, mandatory reporting

1.
2.
3.

Next, write down three of the most exciting possibilities you can think of relating to transformative justice or community accountability. How could your organization start to explore these? Examples: survivor healing circles, working with families, accountability circles.

Once you've mapped out some of the possibilities, fill in as many of the below sentences as you need to summarize what you came up with:

**To address [.] my organization is or should be moving FROM*

_____
TOWARDS _____.

**To address _____*
[explain the issue], my organization is or should be moving FROM

_____
[name the chronic problem] TOWARDS _____
[name the related exciting possibility].

**To address _____*
[explain the issue], my organization is or should be moving FROM

_____
[name the chronic problem] TOWARDS _____
[name the related exciting possibility].

If you want, think about how that felt for you. Jot it down or draw it below.

Now, let's build on this momentum and, ***together with your buddy or team****, engage in a comprehensive brainstorm about what new ideas you can try!*

Activity 3.5: Visioning New Possibilities

Let's go back to our earlier chart (from Activity 3.2) on how the criminal legal system impacts our work and create a chart with new examples of ***how we can shift our work****. You can use the possibilities you wrote down above if they fit:*

Note: We want to be careful with these ideas because our goal is not necessarily to start formal "Transformative Justice" programs in our organizations. Given the history above, we want to be careful about not co-opting a grassroots approach or starting a formal program without doing the deeper work to assess how our organization relates to the criminal legal system on every level. However, **there is a lot we can start with**, including changing our relationship with law enforcement or expanding the options we offer survivors and emphasizing **community** as a resource. We've included some examples below!

Challenging the criminal legal system	*Examples: promoting alternatives to incarceration; ending partnerships or trainings with police*
Exploring funding sources outside of restrictive corporate, private, or government funding	*Example: community donor circles*
Approaching the work with a systemic lens that looks at *root causes*	*Example: political education with survivors and advocates on systems of oppression and the impact on survivors; include political education in support groups*⁎[21]

⁎*Credit to (Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe) Building Towards Transformative Justice at Sakhi for South Asian Women for many of these examples!*

Building creativity into the work	*Examples: healing circles with survivors, books clubs or discussion groups on transformative justice with staff and survivors, decolonial healing practices (i.e. time in nature)*
Using a collective, organizing approach over a direct service model	*Examples: survivor-led decision-making committees for our orgs, creating spaces for survivors to connect and build relationships with each other groups in support groups*
Incorporating an analysis of state violence into your work	*Examples: Use safety planning tools when survivors have to engage with law enforcement and/or the court system; create policies to protect staff and survivors from police or immigration/ICE interactions*
Building leadership that centers the most marginalized within your communities	*Examples: Review hiring policies; create protections against caste, class, racial, gender discrimination*
Creating pay equity	*Examples: raising the salary floor, narrowing the pay gap between advocates and directors, horizontal pay models*

Hopefully, this activity helped to highlight that it is possible to start shifting our patterns. **Please take a quick moment and a) circle your favorite idea that you brainstormed above and b) jot down 1-2 actions that you can take to begin implementing your new idea.**

Actions:

Reminder: you are not alone in this process! Take a moment to consider:

- Who can you partner with inside your organization to build towards this vision?
- Who can you partner with outside of our organization to build towards this vision? Jot those names down too!
- What support would you or your organization need to build towards this vision (i.e. policy, funding, etc.)?

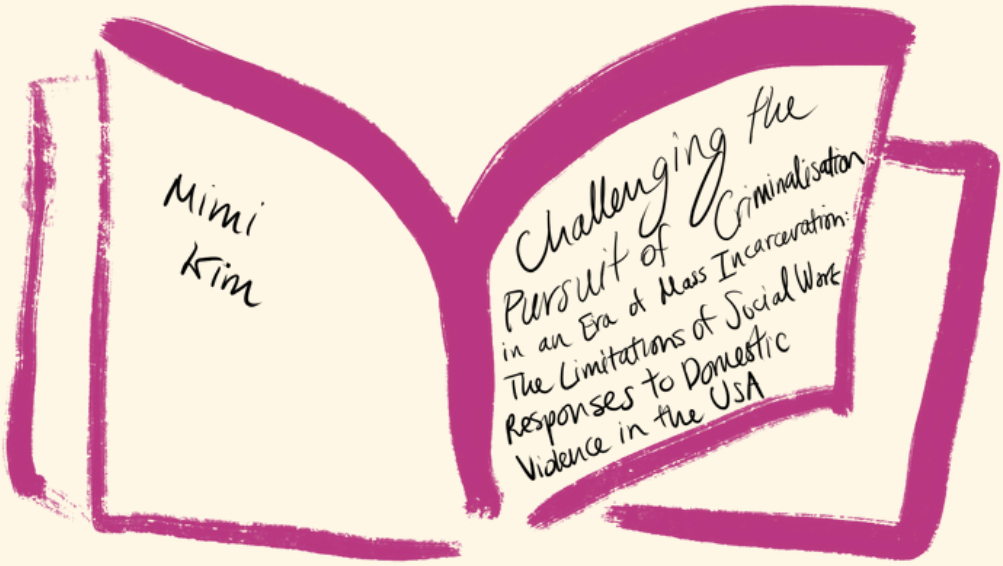
We also want to highlight that this work is for the long haul and needs to be sustainable. This means it should be **structurally supported and not just fall on the shoulders of 1-2 people in the organization.**

Looking for inspiration?

As you saw above, there is a long history of anti-violence advocates who have been engaging with these questions for decades. Check out the spotlight below for key learnings from anti-violence advocates and organizations exploring the questions above.

Spotlight

Anti-Violence Orgs and Transformative Justice



"One set of short-term strategies, for example, was to focus on obtaining more information from survivors and community members about how and where communities are already providing support to survivors. The longer-term strategy that this serves is to build community capacity to respond to violence by both de-individualizing violence and de-centering Sakhi's role as a primary responder to a facilitator of community-based interventions. This is the shift from community education that informs the community of Sakhi as a resource to one that informs (and in fact, expects) the community to be active in supporting survivors of violence directly."[22]

-Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe

How Do We Get There?

Starting our Organizational Journey Towards Transformative Justice and Abolition

Now that we have brainstormed new possibilities, **let's explore concrete tools for making these changes happen.** To start, let's first assess how open our organizations are to making this change:

Poll: Where Should I Start?

Circle the option that best reflects how you feel! It can also be helpful to check in on where your organization is at the current moment. Sometimes we think we know our organization's stance based on past behavior or stories - however, it's possible they have changed!

Statement #1: My personal values (in support of transformative justice and abolition) are aligned with my organization's values around working with law enforcement

Unsure
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Statement #2: My organization is open to *discussing* abolition and transformative justice

Unsure
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Statement #3: My organization is open to *shifting* our practices (including funding) to align with abolition and transformative justice

Unsure
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Now, take a moment to reflect on what you circled:

Majority Agree or Strongly Agree -> Ready to Go: *You may be well positioned to start making changes in your organization! You may find any of these tools useful but we recommend checking out* ***Internal Policies*** *or* ***Political Education*** *tools below (****Tools 3.2*** *and* ***3.3****).*

Majority Neutral -> Curious and/or Cautious: *You may be ready to start introducing the conversation in your workplace. Check out the* ***Introducing the Conversation tools*** *below on how to start that process! (****Tool 3.1****).*

Majority Disagree or Strongly Disagree -> Finding your Allies: *Your organization may not be open to this conversation. But don't worry! We encourage you to still review the tools below. Can you think of* ***one*** *person in your org or a partner org who might be interested in talking with you? You can also reach out to SOAR at* ***hello@southasiansoarg.org*** *to strategize or discuss ideas!*

Majority Unsure -> Checking the Facts: *It's totally fine to be unsure about the answers above! You may want to start by asking a buddy/buddies in your organization about the questions above to learn more about your organization's position.*

Introducing the Conversation: Tools for Staff Discussion

Helpful for starting the conversation on abolition and transformative justice in your organization.

Tool 3.1: Organizational Discussion Guide

This example is for an introductory conversation with your staff team on defining and understanding transformative justice. The first step is to set aside a staff meeting or training to specifically focus on this topic. This is an example so please adjust based on what works best!

Total time: ~45 minutes

Facilitator Framing (5 minutes):

- We are going to start with an activity that helps us further understand transformative justice, and how it differs from the current punishment system
- Note: these are not concepts with clear set definitions but instead can be more deeply understood through examples and practice, which is what we are going to do!

Activity (20 minutes):

1. Present scenario (note: this scenario was also included in Chapter One. We are intentionally using an example that does not involve gender-based violence):
    - *Scenario: You work in a community garden with a group of four other staff members. Four of you have worked together for the last year and have strong relationships with each other. The fifth person recently joined the team - you don't know them as well but they are very close to a friend who works in the garden outreach team. You usually eat lunch together as a team but you realize that your newest team member has not been joining you. One day, you notice that the money you set aside for lunch is missing. Over the next few weeks, you see your newest team member take this money about once a week and use it to buy lunch. You decide that you want to confront them about it.*
2. Break into small groups (~4-5 people per group/7 minutes total)
    - In your small group, respond to this prompt: how would you approach this scenario without calling the police? (please be as detailed as you can!)
    - Assign someone to take notes and report back
3. Come back together & debrief:
    - Have each group share their approach
    - *Note: helpful place for note-taking on themes + practices from this report back*
4. Debrief questions:
    - What approaches did you notice?
    - Why did these approaches work?

F**acilitator Summary** (5 minutes)

- Discuss the approaches mentioned in the debrief - these are foundational principles to transformative justice!
- Review a definition of transformative justice (see Chapter One)
- Review visual that breaks down TJ / RJ / Punishment System (see Chapter One)
- Pull out key points and themes:
    - Punishment in the scenario = suspension or firing
    - Restorative in the scenario = getting the lunch back
    - Transformative in the scenario = creating a system where everyone has food at lunchtime!
- Facilitator Note: Credit to Black communities, disabled communities, queer/trans folks, and working-class communities for our understanding of transformative justice (see Chapter One)

Pair-share Discussion (5 minutes):

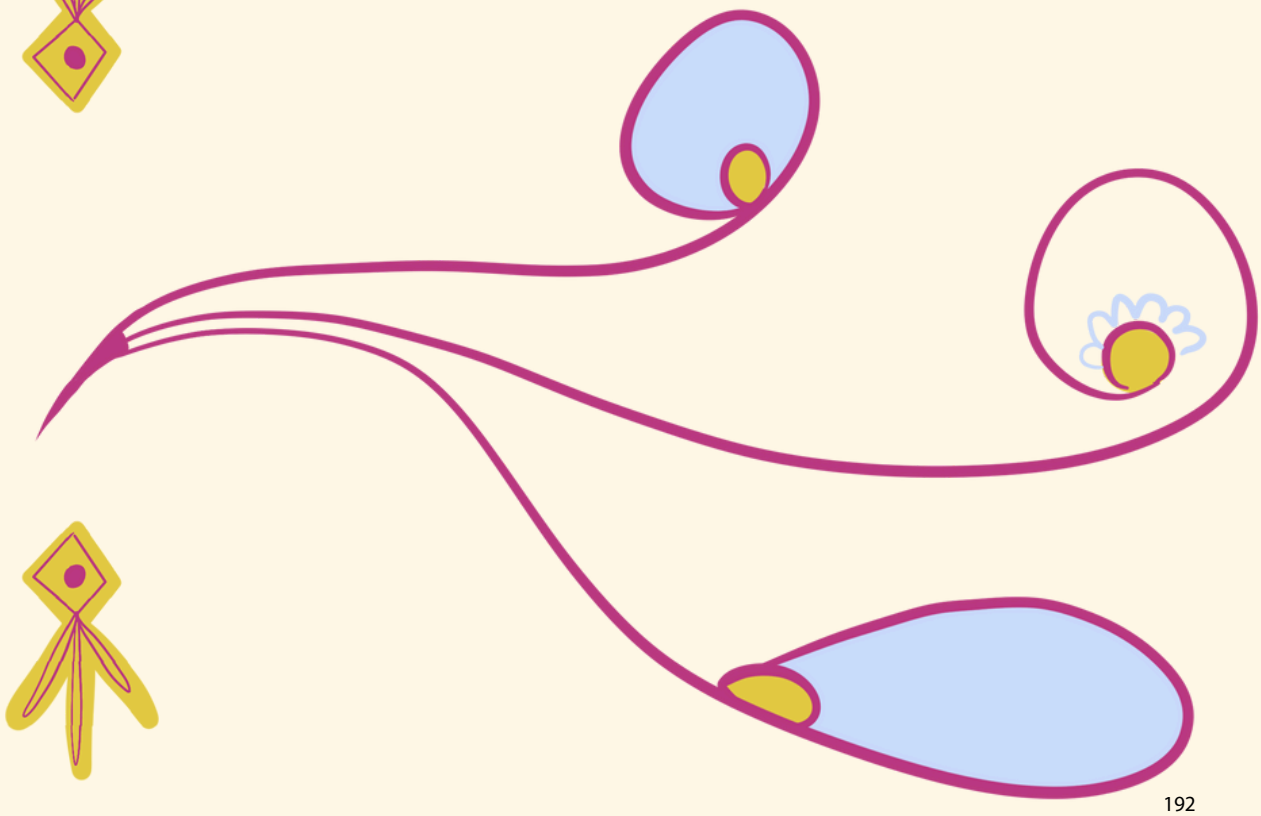
- Are these ideas new/familiar? Why or why not?
- Have you seen or experienced examples of transformative justice (even if you didn't call it that) in your communities (i.e. home/biological family/chosen family/workplace/cultural context)?
  - *If that's hard to think about:* what are examples of responding to hurt or harm that did not involve the police?
  - What are examples of responding to hurt or harm that focused on healing, support, equity, and meeting people's needs?
- What feelings come up for you when you think about these ideas?

For more curriculum ideas, check out:

Against Punishment: A Curriculum Guide or Critical Resistance Abolitionist Toolkit.

Full Group Debrief (10 minutes):

- How could this apply in the context of gender-based violence?
- What is our next step to ensure that this conversation does not get lost? (i.e. setting up another team meeting)



Internal Policies

Helpful for shifting your policies to align with abolition or transformative justice values.

Tool 3.2: Internal Policies on Law Enforcement

This tool focuses on reviewing your **organization's internal policies,** especially regarding law enforcement. These policies are essential in showing your organization's stance to police and prioritizing safety for **all** survivors.

For example, are police able to easily enter your buildings or access your information? Do all staff and community members know their rights when interacting with law enforcement?

Check out the template below and build your own protocol to set boundaries with ICE and law enforcement:
Protocol for Anti-Violence Orgs to set boundaries with ICE & Law Enforcement

Reflection Questions:

- What message does that send to survivors and/or staff if you involve or partner with the police?
- How does your organization present the option of going to the police to survivors?
- How does your organization offer other options besides going to the police (if you do)? Could you offer additional options?
- How could you incorporate safety planning when/if survivors are in situations where they are required to (or choose to) interact with law enforcement? *(For more resources on this, check out Survived and Punished Safety Planning and Pod Mapping from Chapter Two!)*

Take a moment to consider: *What other internal policies could you shift? Safety planning? Training materials? Funder requirements? Others?*

If you are feeling stuck, consider the following quote about intake forms:

"[We tried to] make adjustments to the intake form to ask survivors who contact Sakhi about ways that they have accessed (or could access) community for support. When communicating with survivors, [we] encourage them to identify individuals within their communities who can support them—and create space for these supporters to be part of resourcing process that Sakhi holds."[23]

– Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe

Political Education

Helpful for shifting the narrative of domestic violence from an individual issue to a systemic issue.

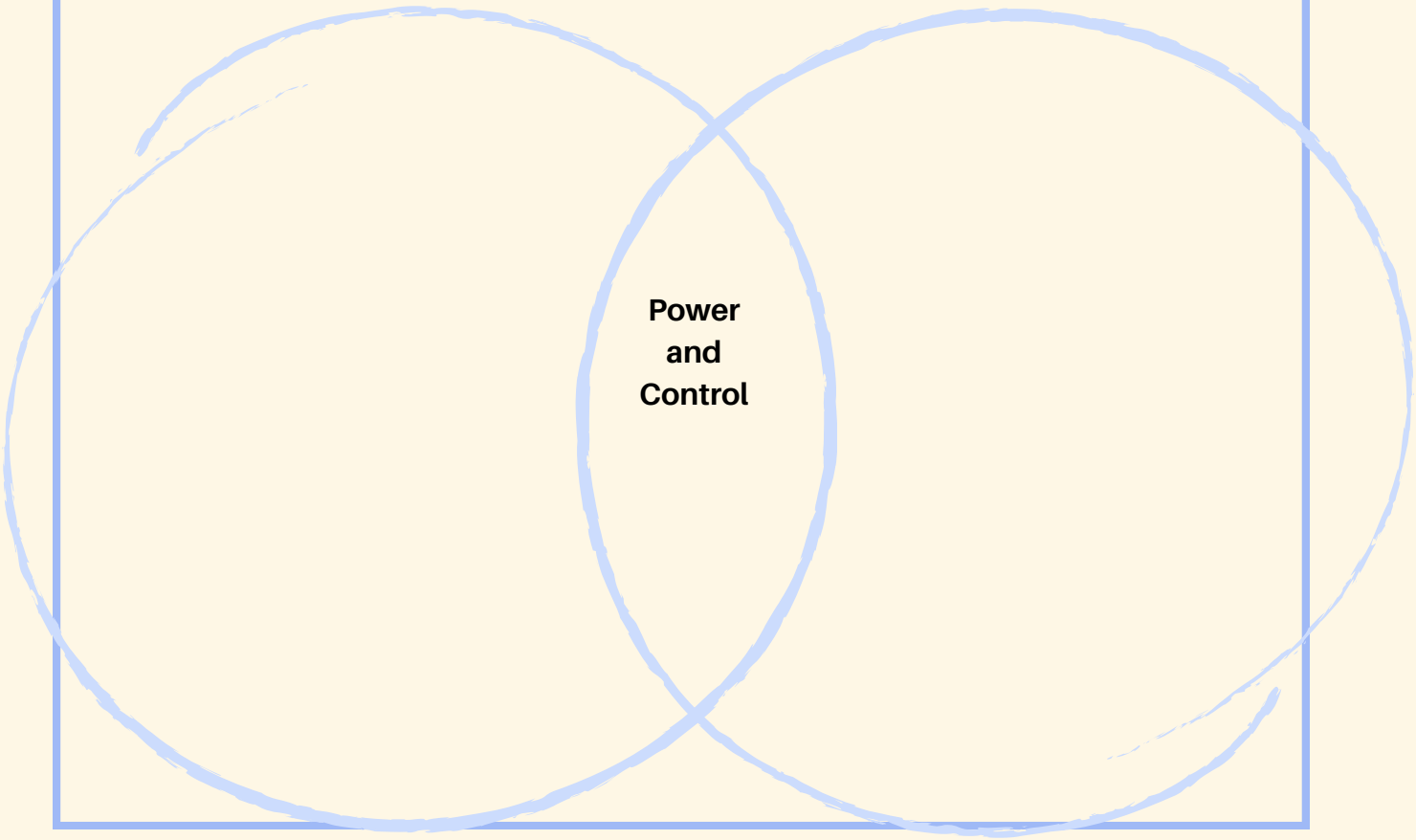
Tool 3.3: Power and Control Wheel: State Violence and Interpersonal Violence
Created by: Moms United Against Violence & Incarceration[24]

We love this tool, which was created by Moms United Against Violence & Incarceration! You can use this tool as a political education tool in a survivor support group, community training, and/or staff meeting.

Suggestion: First take time to fill out a blank chart (below) with examples of tactics of abuse of intimate partner violence and state violence.

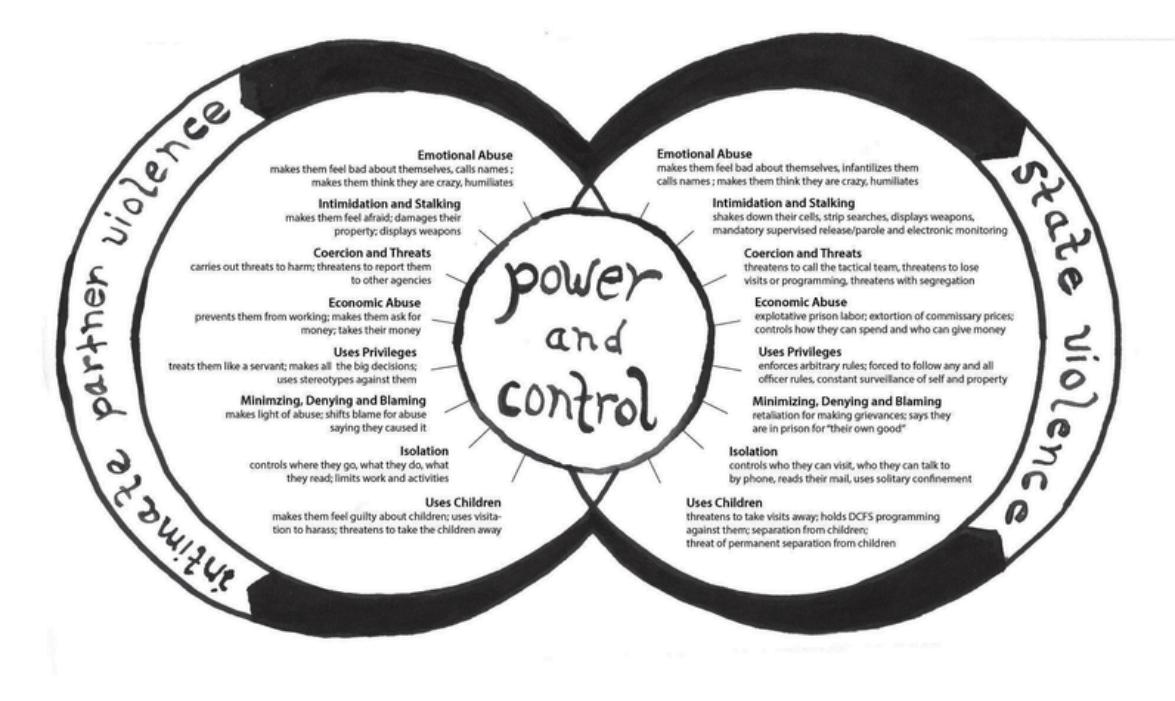
Intimate Partner Violence

State Violence



"Prisons and policing abuse and violate people by design. Their dynamics mirror interpersonal domestic and sexual violence."[25]
- Mariame Kaba

Now, compare it to the filled-out chart below:



Discussion questions [for organizations]:

- How does your organization frame violence, power, and control when you discuss your work? The left side, the right side, or both?
- How can you bring this tool into your organization's work moving forward?
- In addition to state violence and intimate partner violence, how do power and control show up in your org? (This will be covered more in chapter four!)

“Our first [political education] session focused on the historical trajectory of the criminalization of domestic violence and the impacts of the dominance of these responses. We looked specifically at [our] work to ask: Where does [our work] challenge the values and use of the criminal legal system already? Where does [our work] rely on the criminal legal system? Where are the possibilities/openings that would occur if we move away from these strategies? What are the challenges in moving away from these strategies?

Moving forward from the challenges, we asked, how could [we] start not to use these strategies in the short-term? How else could [we] fulfill these needs? We used this series of questions in all three sessions to help identify short-term steps that [we] could take to build from its existing work towards growing greater community capacity to respond to violence.”

- Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe, excerpt from their article, “Building Towards Transformative Justice as Sakhi for South Asian Women” (2015)

Closing Reflections

Activity 3.6:

Closing Reflections on Organizational Possibilities

Take a few minutes to reflect on the contents of this chapter and how it makes you feel. Use the space at the end to note down anything you want to remember or take forward with you as you complete the rest of this workbook.

Did your feelings about your organization and the anti-violence movement change at all after going through this chapter? Any new learnings/insights that you are taking with you?

There were a lot of activities and tools described here. Which tool are you excited to start with? How will you begin?

In the spirit of collaboration, what orgs can you/are you working in coalition with who are fighting for abolition and transformative justice?

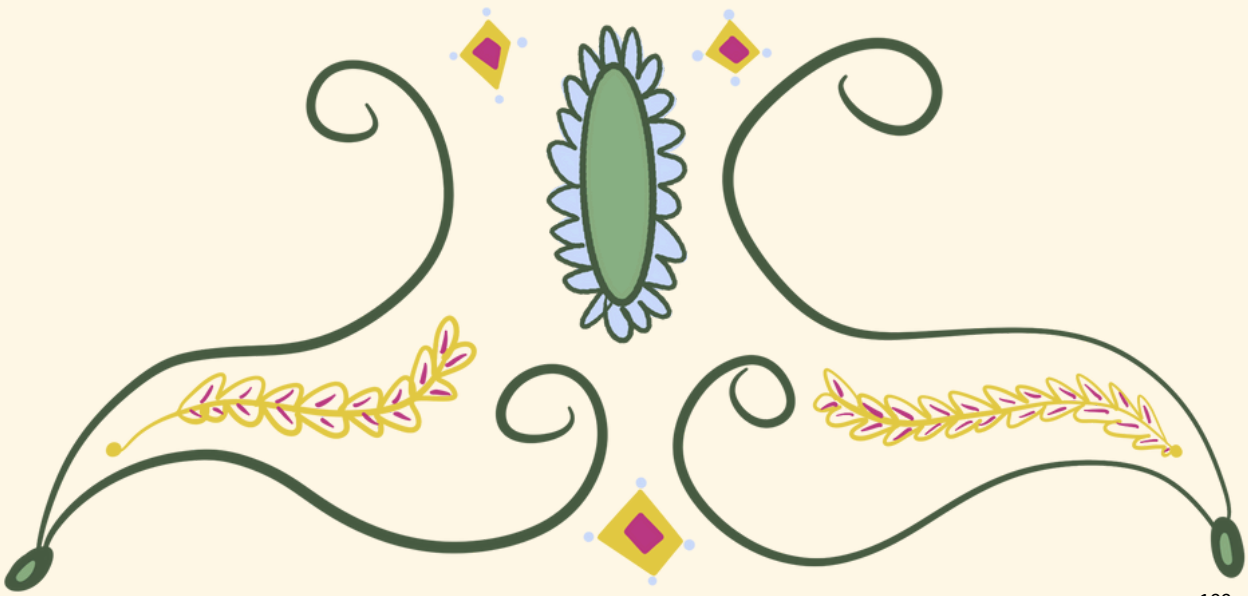
What feelings come up for you when you think about implementing these ideas?

What questions do you still have?

Chapter 4: Embodying our Values

In this chapter you will:

- **Define** self-accountability and build practices for incorporating self-accountability into your relationships
- **Practice** tools for taking accountability, including key parts of an accountable apology (credit to: Mia Mingus, Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective)
- **Identify** connections between self-accountability and the anti-violence movement
- **Reflect on** common sources of conflict in your organization and how to build healthy, sustainable, and accountable organizations



Chapter Outline

Self-Accountability

What is Self-Accountability?

Activity 4.1: Journal Reflection on Self-Accountability Practices

Activity 4.2: Taking Accountability: Self Reflection Questions

How does Self Accountability Connect to the Anti-Violence Movement?

Tools for Accountability

Tool 4.1: Four Parts to Accountability

Tool 4.2: Accountable Apologies

Activity 4.3: Personal Reflection on Accountable Apologies

Activity 4.4: Apology Practice Scenarios

Embodying our Values: Organizational Culture

Activity 4.5: Community Agreements

Activity 4.6: Values Reflection

Common Sources of Conflict

Activity 4.7: Deeper Reflections on Organizational Dynamics

Activity 4.8: Power and Control Wheel [Re-Visited]

Visioning for your Organization

Activity 4.9: Visioning for our Organizations

Spotlight 4.1: Internal Accountability and Conflict Resolution

Spotlight 4.2: Collective Structures and Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits

Closing: **Activity 4.10:** Reflections on Internal Organizational Accountability

You've reached the last chapter! Up to this point, we've explored definitions of transformative justice, models for community accountability, and applications to our organizations and work. We're now going to close with more **personal reflection on our own behaviors** and how these behaviors impact our organizations.

Given our connection to the South Asian anti-violence movement, we can instinctively focus on how transformative justice and abolition apply to our 1-1 and programmatic work with survivors. However, a critical part of transformative justice is also looking internally at how these principles apply to our personal lives and organizational cultures.

For example:

In this section, we will explore these questions by looking at both personal accountability and organizational practices to consider how we embody values of care and accountability in our day-to-day behaviors and relationships.

The goal of this chapter is to create space for reflection on how our personal choices align with our values and to provide tools for taking accountability in relationships and within organizations when/if we fall short (which can happen to everyone).

Self-Accountability

"We don't need perfection, we need humility, practice and skills"

- Shannon Perez-Darby

Transformative justice and abolition can feel broad but it starts with the personal. **Self-accountability** is about **personal reflection** on our own behaviors and how to be in healthy and accountable relationships with ourselves and others.

Self-accountability recognizes that we can all cause harm and be in conflict. Cultivating our own practice of accountability is one way for us to live out transformative justice values ourselves and not only focus on what *other* people are doing.

Note: self-accountability is not about blaming survivors or apologizing for abuse. In this chapter, we focus on the idea of self-accountability as a tool for building healthier relationships. If you are curious about this distinction, check out the video in the next section!

First: check out this link for a great conversation between Kiyomi Fujikawa and Shannon Perez-Darby that explains self-accountability.

What is self-accountability?

As Shannon Perez-Darby says in this video, self-accountability is about looking at yourself, looking at your values and your choices, and seeing **if the daily choices you are making are aligned with your values.**[1] It is a **proactive, ongoing process** of reflection through regular practices such as journaling, checking in with friends, etc.[2]

Shannon Perez-Darby also names that **self-accountability is a tool that pushes us to look at our choices and ask the following questions:**[3]

- Did the choices I make today align with who I want to be?
- If not - what happened?
- What was going on for me at the time?
- What am I going to do about it?

Self-accountability encourages us to find the middle ground between being **completely defensive** about our own behaviors or jumping to saying **"everything was my fault"** or "I am the worst person in the world." Sometimes we can spiral into shame and inadvertently create a dynamic where the person we hurt is now comforting us. Or we can take on disproportionate responsibility and apologize for something that we didn't even do.

Self-accountability encourages us to find the middle ground between being **completely defensive** about our own behaviors **or** jumping to saying "**everything was my fault**" or "I am the worst person in the world." Sometimes we can spiral into shame and inadvertently create a dynamic where the person we hurt is now comforting us. Or we can take on disproportionate responsibility and apologize for something that we didn't even do.

Take a moment to consider: Do either of those dynamics feel familiar to you? Why or why not?

For more on this dynamic, **check out Shannon Perez Darby's article on Centered Self-Accountability**, which emphasizes taking **proportional responsibility** for our actions, meaning we are clear, specific, and realistic about what we did and how we can make amends.[4]

Activity 4.1:

Journal Reflection: Self-Accountability Practices

Based on what you heard above – why do you think self-accountability is important?

What is one daily practice of self-accountability that you want to try? This can be anything (movement practice, being with friends, listening to practice, journaling, etc.)

How will you incorporate the practice above?

"I think it's essential to get support from others and to have some kind of daily practice."
- Shannon Perez-Darby

Reminders:

- **We don't need to practice self-accountability alone.** A lot of personal reflection work is done with other people!
- Perfection is not the goal; **we can honor our imperfections and the ongoing process** of accountability
- Consider **self-accountability in the context of systems of power.** For example, many survivors who are Black or POC women, non-binary folks, and/or femmes are often forced to take on disproportionate responsibility or told to apologize for actions that were not their fault, whereas many white, straight, cis men are not pushed into apologizing or taking responsibility for their behaviors.

Take a moment to consider: How, if at all, have South Asian cultural or familial dynamics shaped your thoughts on self-accountability?

"The work of [self-accountability] is turning to it over and over again."

- Shannon Perez-Darby

We also want to recognize that it can be natural to feel defensive if someone is giving you feedback.

Part of self-accountability is reflecting regularly on our actions so that we begin to react from a place of openness and accountability instead.

Check out the activity below for a tool to support this shift!

Activity 4.2:

Taking Accountability - Self Reflection Questions

This activity is pulled from Section 5F of the Creative Interventions Toolkit[5]

This tool is helpful in moving from defensiveness to openness. Imagine someone comes to you with feedback or is naming hurt/harm you have caused. You may start to feel defensive and want to respond immediately. Instead, try asking yourself these questions from the Creative Interventions Toolkit:

1. When I'm feeling angry or defensive, what do I need to remind myself?
2. Is there a more positive story I can tell myself (about why they are talking to me about this)? What is it?
3. Can I imagine myself as someone who can listen to what is being said without being defensive? What is that person like? When have I been like this?
4. When I imagine or remember what it's like for _____ (the person who was impacted) to be receiving my actions, I see...
5. What can I share with the people confronting me so that they know me better, and can help me feel connected to them instead of rejected? What can I share that isn't making an excuse for myself or putting blame on other people?

How does Self-Accountability Connect to the Anti-Violence Movement?

"We stress relationship building in transformative justice work because without strong relationships, we will not be able to respond effectively to harm, violence, and abuse within our own communities . . . If we cannot handle the small things between us, how will we be able to handle the big things?"

-Mia Mingus

How does Self Accountability connect to Community Accountability?

"Each of us building that skill is how we can collectively get to a place where we can create communities where **accountability is possible**. Self accountability is **the building block** for accountability on a community level."
- Shannon Perez-Darby

But...don't we hold others accountable?

"It is so common for people to want to rush to hold other people accountable...in my experience, **no one wants to be held accountable by someone who is not doing their own work."**
- Shannon Perez-Darby

"[Self accountability] makes me think about being the best approximation of who we want to be -- a reminder that it's so okay to make mistakes. Just because we have this understanding of TJ doesn't necessarily mean we will never cause harm. So I'm sitting with and accepting that."

- SOAR TJ Learning Circle Participant

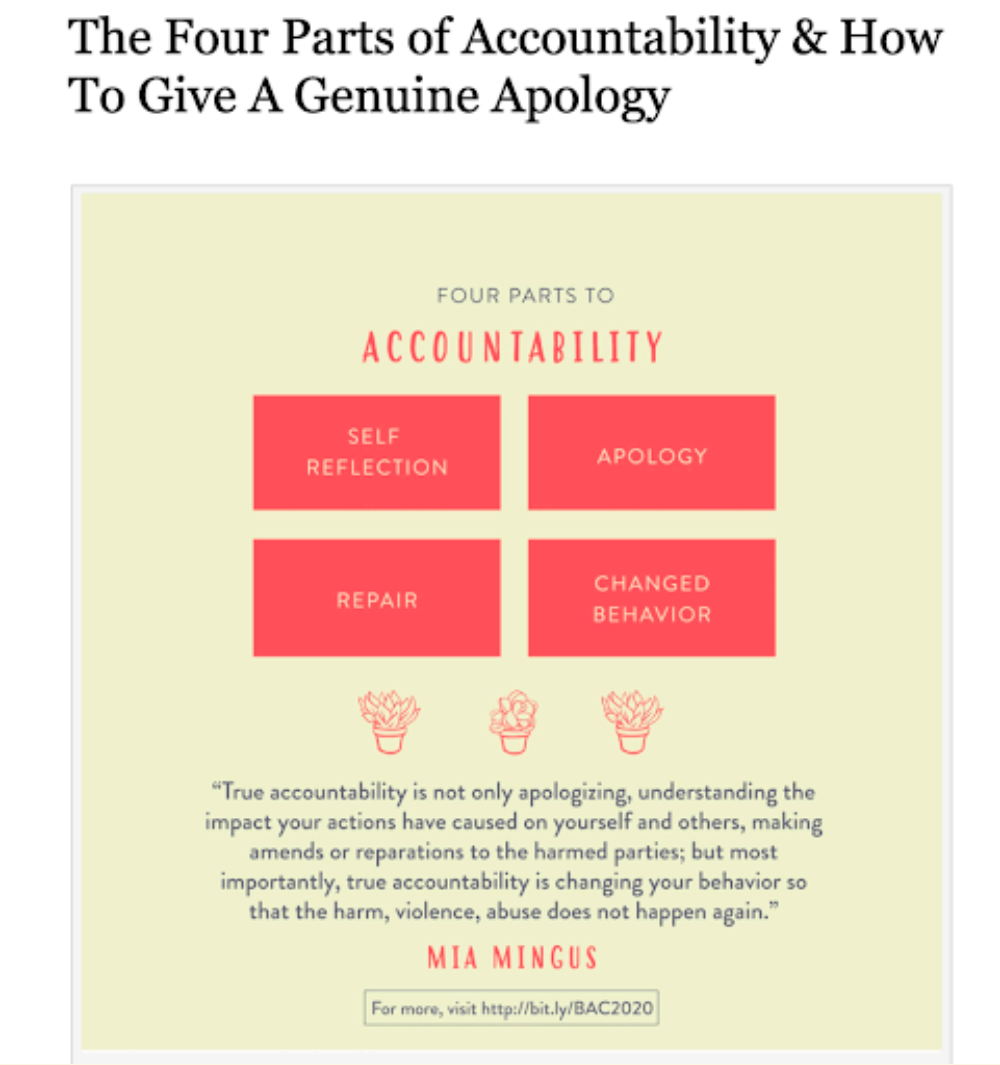
Tools for Accountability

So, now that we've discussed why self-accountability is important, how do we concretely practice it? Below are specific tools to support you in that process!

First - we are going to break down the four parts of accountability, which is a framework developed by Mia Mingus and the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (you can check out the full article here).

Tool 4.3: Four Parts to Accountability

Source: Mia Mingus, "How to Give a Good Apology Part 1: The Four Parts of Accountability"[6]



Below is a summary of each part:[7]

Part One: Self Reflection*

Part Two: Apologizing

Part Three: Repair

Part Four: Behavior Change

- Take time to reflect on how to **change** your behaviors.
- **Note**:
  - This process involves committed, hard work to look at your behavior patterns and think about how to change them in a consistent way.
  - Behavior change involves support - who in your life can you talk to about your goals? Who can hold you accountable to your behavior changes?
- Practice **consistent behavior changes** using the tools and support system you reflected on above!

Reminders:

- It is important to practice all four parts of accountability!
- Mingus writes that "true accountability must be consensual"[8] – you cannot force someone to be accountable (**note**: we have found this to be an important reminder to come back to when considering transformative justice - whether that's with community accountability processes or our own personal relationships!)

Now that we've reviewed the four **broad** stages of accountability, let's get specific with **Tool 4.2: Accountable Apologies!** This next tool breaks down why apologies are important and how to make an accountable apology.

Tool 4.2: Accountable Apologies[9]

Source: Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective

This tool is useful in incorporating accountable apologies into your relationships. **Apologies can seem deceptively simple but making a genuine apology can be a critical part of moving through defensiveness and towards accountability.**

"Apologizing well is a fundamental part of accountability. It is a skill that we should all understand and practice consistently. You cannot take accountability if you do not know how to apologize well."

- Mia Mingus, The Four Parts of Accountability

Five Parts to an Accountable Apology

Note: All this material on accountable apologies is credited to Mia Mingus and the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective. Check out the essay here if you want to read more!

Let's break down these parts with an example:

Example: You've been working on a panel event highlighting the voices of South Asian survivors. After the event, a community member approaches you to share that they were uncomfortable because the event was homogenous in terms of religion/ethnicity/caste and did not highlight the voices of marginalized South Asian survivors. What do you say in response?

1) Saying I'm Sorry / I Apologize

- An important (and often overlooked) piece: remembering to apologize in your apology!
- Example: "I'm sorry and this was not okay."

2) Name the Hurt or Harm

- Name what you did
- Show you understand what happened
- Be specific and intentional in your language
- *Example:* "I recognize that we chose panelists with similar, privileged identities which does not reflect the values we aspire to and creates an isolating and uncomfortable environment for people who do not share those identities."

3) Name the Impact

- A place to focus on the impact of your actions or inactions (not a place to focus on intent)
- *Example*: "By creating this panel that featured speakers with privileged identities in the South Asian community, we fell short on our values, created an inaccessible space for many, and also perpetuated the damaging idea that 'South Asian' equals Hindu/Brahmin/class-privileged."

4) Take Responsibility:

- Name your actions and what you did
- *Example:* "I want to take responsibility for the choices we made and the reality that this event understandably made you feel unwelcome and uncomfortable."

5) Commitment:

- Commit to not doing the hurt/harm again
- Be clear and specific in what you are committing to
- Reflect on how you are going to maintain this commitment
- *Example:* "I'm going to think more on this but for now, I can say that we'll bring this feedback to the team, incorporate it into our next event, and make a plan to not only invite in but also stipend panelists in the future."

Let's now get into some **more personal reflections** on how we relate to apologies...

Activity 4.3:
Personal Reflection on Apologies

What did you learn about apologizing when you were younger (from friends, family, community)? Have you heard your parents and/or family members apologize?

What is the last apology that you gave? Which of the parts above did your apology have?

As we've emphasized, **practice** is essential! Here is an opportunity to practice further:

Activity 4.4:
Apology Practice Scenarios

Pick one of the following scenarios (or create your own!). We recognize these are short descriptions and real life is often more complex but we encourage you to tweak or add details as relevant to your context and lean into examples in service of getting hands-on practice.

Write out how you would apologize using the five parts above:

Scenario #1: You didn't do any work on a project & your co-worker was overworked.	**Scenario #2:** You forgot to credit a team member for their contribution to a project.	**Scenario #3**: Your co-worker (or friend) mentions that you never ask how they are doing or check in with them.

Scenario #4: You did not make space for your team to process a significant event, such as the overturn of Roe v. Wade, and your team expressed this made them feel invisible.

Scenario #5: You were approached by someone in your team who expressed frustration that Diwali was a pre-existing day off for your whole organization but no other religious holidays were organization-wide days off.

Scenario #6: One of the families you work with stopped by your office to comment on the binary gender language that you have on your website.

Scenario #7: You are a supervisor and you are called out by your supervisee on being overly critical and creating an unwelcoming environment that makes it hard for them to be honest or bring their full set of emotions to work

Not drawn to any of the scenarios? **Create your own!**

☐ **Commitment:** Practice an apology over the next week and share with a friend or loved one when you did it or mark it off here!

Embodying our Values: Organizational Culture

"The best analysis in the world is useless if we don't treat each other well. If we don't invest our time and energy in learning how to love each other better, if we can't build relationships that can last more than 2-5 years. If we can't commit to practicing working out hard dynamics in our relationships or if we are recreating the very conditions we are fighting against inside of our collectives, organizations, and movements."[10]

– Mia Mingus

As we discussed above, self-accountability is **critical** in the anti-violence field because it provides an opportunity for us to practice anti-violence and healthy, accountable communication in our own relationships and organizations. **We can ask ourselves:** are we modeling healthy communication and conflict with each other? How does this in turn impact the longevity of our work?

Take a moment to consider if everyone in your organization or collective was using the tools above. **How would your work or this movement look different?**

We want to frame this section with a note on trauma in the workplace:

- We recognize that our organizations are **not trauma-free spaces** and this reality impacts how we show up in relationship with each other.
- Many of us are deeply impacted by trauma ourselves, including experiencing family or intimate partner abuse, intergenerational trauma, classism, caste violence, forced separation from families, or violence from the criminal legal, immigration, or family policing system.
- In addition, we may also be navigating vicarious trauma* given the advocacy and support work that we engage with each day.

Take a moment to consider: How is trauma (primary and/or vicarious) showing up inside our organizations and in how we treat each other?

**Defining our terms:* *Vicarious Trauma (VT) describes the long-term effects of working with traumatized clients, specifically changes in worldview, existential meaning, and/or spirituality that can occur amongst those exposed to trauma.*[11] *It can affect [advocates] in such a way as if they are exposed to direct trauma, and lead to symptoms that are similar or same as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).*[12]

Further resources: Given the limited scope of this workbook, we have included additional resources on vicarious trauma when caring for others, as well as tools for navigating its impacts, in our resource list at the end of the workbook. One resource that is specifically geared towards advocates is Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others.

"At the same time, organizations themselves have the potential to either mitigate or exacerbate the effects of trauma exposure for all of their workers. The way those [organizations] manage trauma will in turn have an impact on the experiences of already traumatized clients."[13]

-Connie Burk and Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky, Trauma Stewardship**

Let's dive into this section by looking at the internal dynamics of our organizations:

Invitation: we invite you to do this section with a buddy or group of co-workers from your organization after having gone through the sections above.

First: Please start by setting community agreements together. We describe community agreements as the infrastructure that enables us to challenge each other intellectually while holding each other emotionally. They are the foundation of our ongoing practices, conversations, and relationships as a community. If you are feeling stuck, we have examples below!

You can reflect on the following questions to generate your community agreements:

- What shared agreements would make you feel supported in this activity or discussion?
- What will make you feel safe(r) and more comfortable to share?
- What do you need acknowledged? (i.e. I need a class or caste-explicit space; I need us to acknowledge the power hierarchy in the organization)

**Lipsky, L. van D., & Burk, C. (2009). Trauma stewardship: an everyday guide to caring for self while caring for others. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Activity 4.5:
Community Agreements

What community agreements are important to you to set the tone for the rest of this section?

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....
6. .....
7. .....

Feeling stuck? Check out SOAR's Community Guidelines or this resource from Color Brave Space!

Next, take a few moments to set values together as these values will ground the work moving forward. Learning where we are each coming from as we enter into the conversation is a useful foundation for digging into deep conversations about conflict, harm, and punishment, as well as accountability and transformation.

Note: *In our own experience, we have found that one of the first hurdles we face as people trying to implement transformative justice is that we haven't had time to take a step back and discuss shared values. Value-setting can be a very useful practice when starting both organizational and community accountability processes!*

Activity 4.6: Values Reflection

(Adapted from In It Together Toolkit)[14]

Take a few moments and write individually on the prompts below:

What are my three of my own personal values?

1.
2.
3.

Feeling stuck? Here is a list of values (from In It Together Toolkit) to start from![15]

Authenticity Balance Bravery
Compassion Challenge
Communication Community Creativity
Curiosity Determination Fairness
Freedom Friendships Generosity
Growth Honesty Integrity Justice
Kindness Knowledge Flexibility
Learning Love Loyalty Openness
Hope Transparency Respect
Responsibility Spirituality
Sharing Power Wisdom

Am I practicing my personal values on a regular basis? Why or why not?

How can I practice these values in my organization? What/who helps me to practice these values?

What are the values of my organization? Are there core values that we need to agree on as a group?

Is my organization acting in line with these values on a regular basis? Why or why not?

Please take a few moments to share your reflections with the other members of your organization. *Note: as you saw from these prompts, you can use these reflections for personal accountability or as a group tool for building healthier organizations.*

Common Sources of Conflict

As a buddy-pair or small group, please read the following "Common Sources of Conflict" which were ***adapted from In it Together Toolkit****:*[16]

1) We Replicate Harmful Structures and Norms: This can show up through top-down decision making or a lack of transparency on organizational priorities, funding, and salaries. In South Asian anti-violence orgs, this dynamic can show up in burdensome workloads and lack of support for advocates on the frontlines. We can also replicate the idea that elders are "always correct" which can make it hard to challenge leadership.

2) We Claim There Are No Structure and Norms: Sometimes we can shy away from structure entirely because we don't want to cause harm. However, if there is not an explicit discussion of power, responsibility, and role, we can often promote the same structures and leave people feeling resentful, confused, or even harmed.

3) We Avoid Conflict and Ignore Harm: When we try to avoid conflict to "keep the peace" but are instead glossing over hurt and harm in our organizations. The In It Together Toolkit reminds us that if we don't discuss conflict, then we are not able to reflect and learn from it in order to change our behaviors.

Reflection point:
Does this happen in your organization?

4) We Protect Ourselves by Punishing Other People: When we target others through punishment and rush to "cancel" people in our staff or coalition, without engaging in a process that could lead to resolution or transformation. **To be explicit:** this is in cases of hurt or conflict. If the organizational dynamic is abusive, please consider the community accountability tools outlined in Section Two.

5) We Advocate for Our Position - and get stuck in it. While it is important to advocate for ourselves and the survivors and families that we work with, sometimes we can get stuck in our positions and start pitting ideas against each other that could co-exist or become entirely closed to creative problem-solving.

6) We are Driven by a Scarcity Mindset: When we internalize the capitalist idea that we need to hoard what we have and not share it. While this can be understandable given both capitalism and non-profit funding sources, this can cause deep conflict in our work and create further division instead of coalition building.

Who is someone you could partner with instead of seeing as competition?

"We transform conflict when healthy steps are taken towards accountability."[17]

- In It Together Toolkit, p. 20, Interrupting Criminalization and Dragonfly Partners

Activity 4.7:
Deeper Reflections on Organizational Dynamics

After reviewing the Common Sources of Conflict above, please take a moment to reflect on how the above dynamics may show up in your organization. We recognize this set of questions might bring up a lot, especially if toxic or abusive dynamics are happening in your workplace. Given that, we recommend doing the next two activities (4.7 and 4.8) individually first and then getting together in small groups to discuss your responses. If you'd like, ***feel free to take a moment afterward to discuss any follow-up actions or ideas that came up for you.***

How are we treating each other within the organization?

Which of the six sources of conflict above resonated for you (if any)? How do we respond to conflict in the organization?

What culture of feedback and accountability exists within our organization (if any)?

"When power and responsibility are unnamed, it is difficult to hold people accountable for their actions"

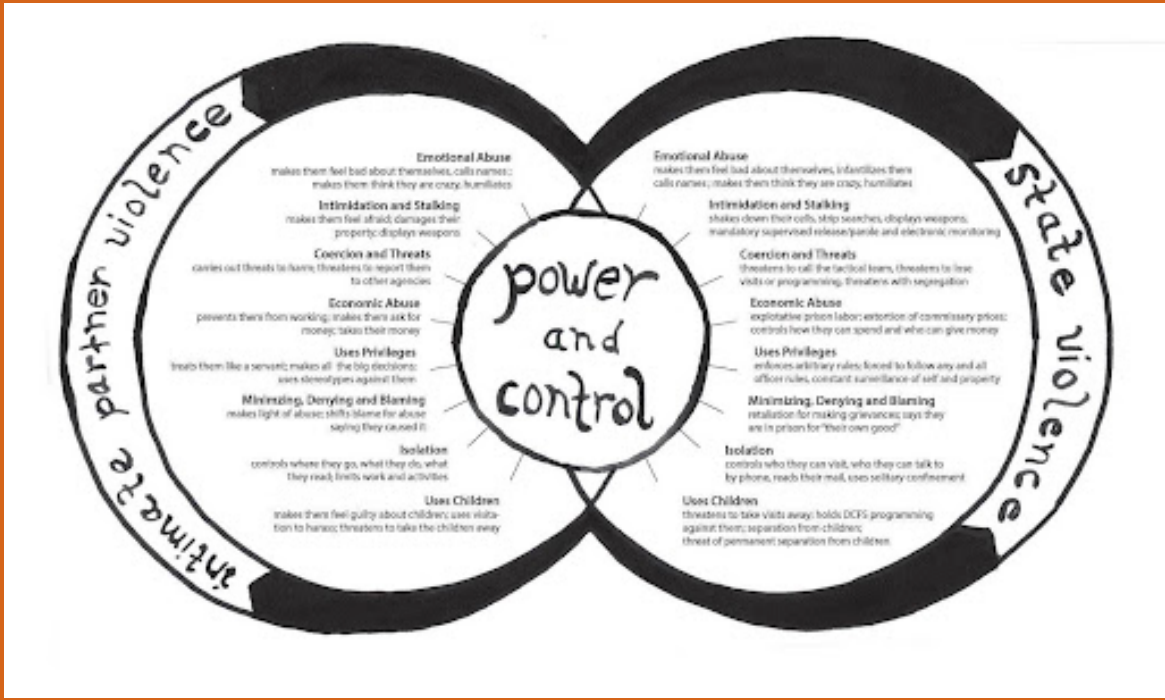
- In It Together Toolkit, Interrupting Criminalization and Dragonfly Partners

Activity 4.8:

Power and Control Wheel [Re-visited]

Source: Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration[19]

Our final activity in this section is the Expanded Power and Control Wheel from Chapter Three. Previously, we looked at this wheel as a political education tool. Now, let's take a moment to look again at this tool but this time **on a personal level**.



Reflection questions:

Note: these can be intense and vulnerable questions. If it is supportive, please feel free to take breaks and return to this activity if needed, or discuss them with someone you trust outside the organization. If you are processing a moment of accountability, we encourage you to be as honest as possible in your reflections.

- How do power and control show up inside the organization?
- Have I experienced any of these harms in the workplace?
- Have I caused any of these harms in the workplace? If yes, how could I hold myself accountable?
- What is my current position in the organization (Executive Director, advocate, communications, etc.)? What does that mean for how I relate to power or control in the organization?

Let's revisit the question above - if people in your organization were accountable for these harms, what would that mean for your work or movement overall?

Activity 4.9:
Visioning for your Organizations

However you are feeling after completing the earlier sections - hopeful or discouraged - it can be helpful to envision ***what we would like our organizations to feel like.*** *Below are a few writing prompts but feel free to draw/sketch, voice memo, paint, etc., - anything that feels right for you!*

How would you like to feel inside your organization?

What can healthy, accountable relationships look like inside your organization?

"If we are lucky, it breaks down our walls - the armor we have built to survive in this harsh world. But then, we are courageous in conflict, we are direct, we connect, we transform ourselves and one another. There is joy."[20]

- In It Together Toolkit, p. 17, Interrupting Criminalization and Dragonfly Partners

SPOTLIGHT

4.1 Internal Accountability and Conflict Resolution Policies

As you move towards your vision, you don't have to start from scratch! Check out these examples of internal processes, norms, or agreements that organizations have used:

Membership Policy: Conflict, Harm, and Accountability and Community Guidelines (South Asian SOAR)

Community Agreements on Interpersonal Harm [ASATA: Alliance for South Asians Taking Action]
8 Practices for a More Emotionally Just Organization (Fireweed Collective)

Group Cultural Norms (adapted from White Supremacy Characteristics) (DragonFly)

In It Together Toolkit: A Framework for Conflict Transformation in Movement-Building Groups (Interrupting Criminalization and DragonFly Partners)

Chat with each other: could you apply anything from above into your own organization?

Sharing Power: It can sometimes feel hard to consider tools around communication and conflict given existing organizational power dynamics (i.e. pay inequity). *If you feel that way, you are not alone!* For example, it can be hard to think about giving feedback to your boss/supervisor given understandable concerns about retaliation (i.e. firing/suspension/pay cuts/etc.).

"Findings indicate that an environment in which there is shared power—that is, respect for diversity, mutuality, and consensual decision making—provides better protection for advocates than more traditional, hierarchical organizational models."[21]

- Suzanne Slattery and Lisa Goodman

In response, we want to highlight examples of organizational structures that are more collective, worker self-directed, and/or horizontal. Part of visioning for healthy organizations is not only considering how we treat each other inside them but also looking at sustainable organizational structures. What would it look like to have equitable or equal pay across the organization? For staff to make key strategic decisions instead of the board? These might feel uncomfortable or completely new to you, especially given that most non-profits follow a more traditional, hierarchical structure.

We encourage you to check back in with the vision you held for your organization, check out the following spotlight, and consider what resonates for you!

Spotlight

4.2 Collective Structures and Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits

Cooperative Structures (Cosmic Possibilities: An Intergalactic Youth Guide to Abolition, 116)

Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits (Sustainable Economies Law Center)

Bylaws Toolkit for Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits (Sustainable Economies Law Center)

"Ethical work cannot be sustained in an eroding environment that fails to support its workers"[22]

-Trauma Stewardship (23)

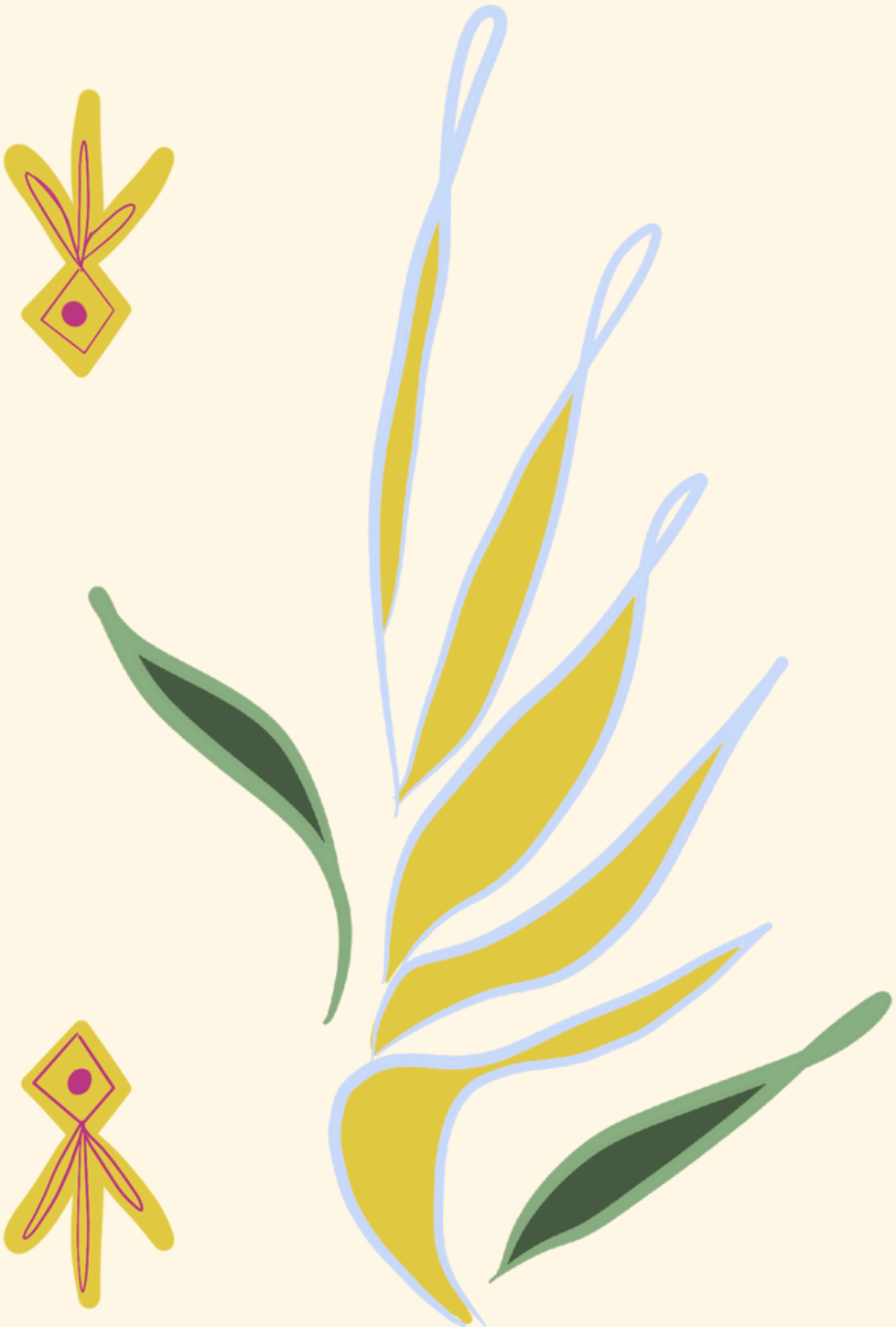
Closing Activity 4.10:
Reflections on Organizational Accountability

What feelings come up for you as you close this chapter?

What questions do you still have?

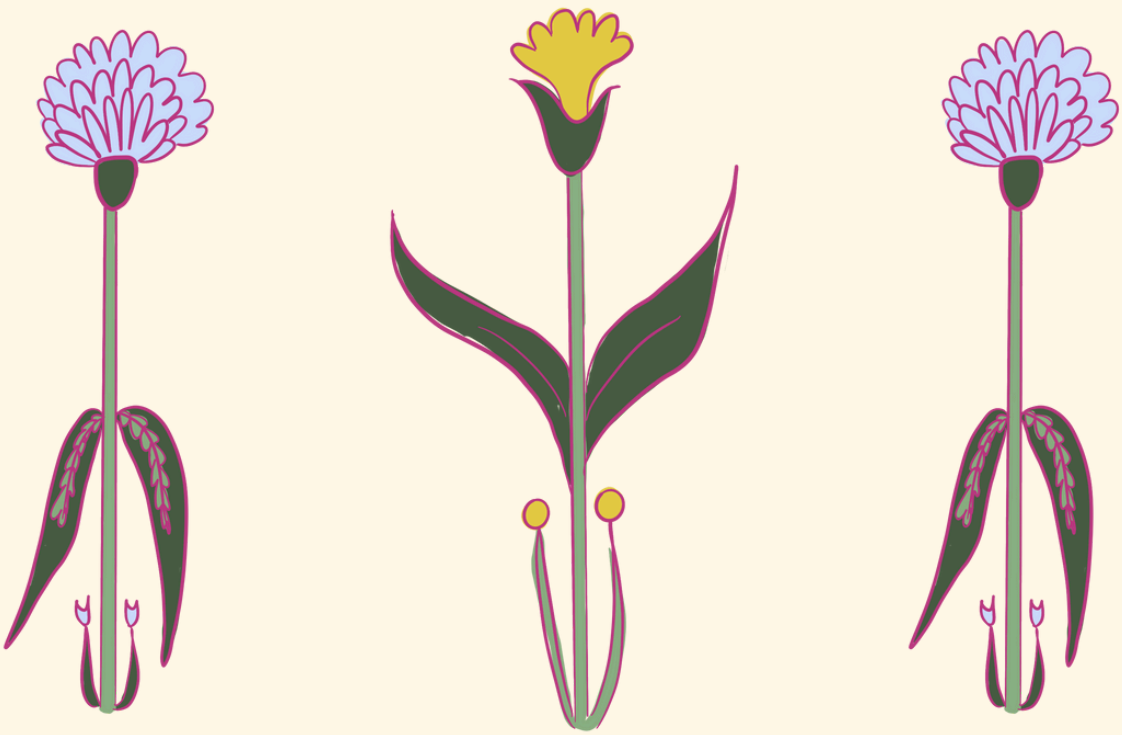
How can power (i.e. decision-making, salaries) be shared more equitably in your organization?

Closing: Building the Future



“The primary offering here is a space to be.
Be alive.
Be all over the place.
Be messy.
Be wrong.
Be bold in your hopefulness.
Be confused in community.
Be reaching past isolation.
Be part of the problem.
Be hungry for after.
Be helpful in the midst.
Be so early in the process.
Be broken by belief.
Be bolstered by brave comrades.
Be unbelievably unready.
Be alive.”

-Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Beyond Survival (Forward)



Closing Commitments

*Please take a few minutes to summarize the **personal, community, and organizational** practices you want to try and **how you will get there.***

What transformative justice ideas or strategies do you want to try moving forward? *(Try brainstorming ideas for the following categories)*	**Who is <u>one person (or people)</u> you can connect with around this idea?**	**What is <u>one specific</u> action or commitment you can make towards this idea?**
In my personal life:		
In my community:		
In my organization's services and programs:		
In my organization's culture and internal relationships:		

"Everything worthwhile
is done with others"
- Mariame Kaba

For inspiration - **and to remind you that you are not alone** - check out the SOAR spotlights below!

Spotlight #1: What Are We Trying in our Collective?

Below are experiments that SOAR members are envisioning and/or creating in their own organizations and communities!

"Recipes for Healing" by API/DVRP!

Abolitionist approaches to self-defense programming!

Abolition Book Club

Creating children's book series based on TJs

API Chaya Natural Helpers Program

***Note**: What are you trying? Add them above!*

Spotlight #2: SOAR Commitment Cloud

Below are some of the commitments that SOAR members have shared:

"Keep making transformative justice a priority in my professional and personal life"

"Work with fellow organizers on transformative justice education"

"Engage with self-accountability and continue learning about these practices"

"Build a shared framework of values and analysis - and an agenda across the south Asian gender-based violence movement!"

"Build structures to evaluate harms in our organizations and address them"

"Initiate more conversations about transformative justice in my circles"

“I will not be perfect, I will keep learning. I will also not be silent, I will keep learning.”

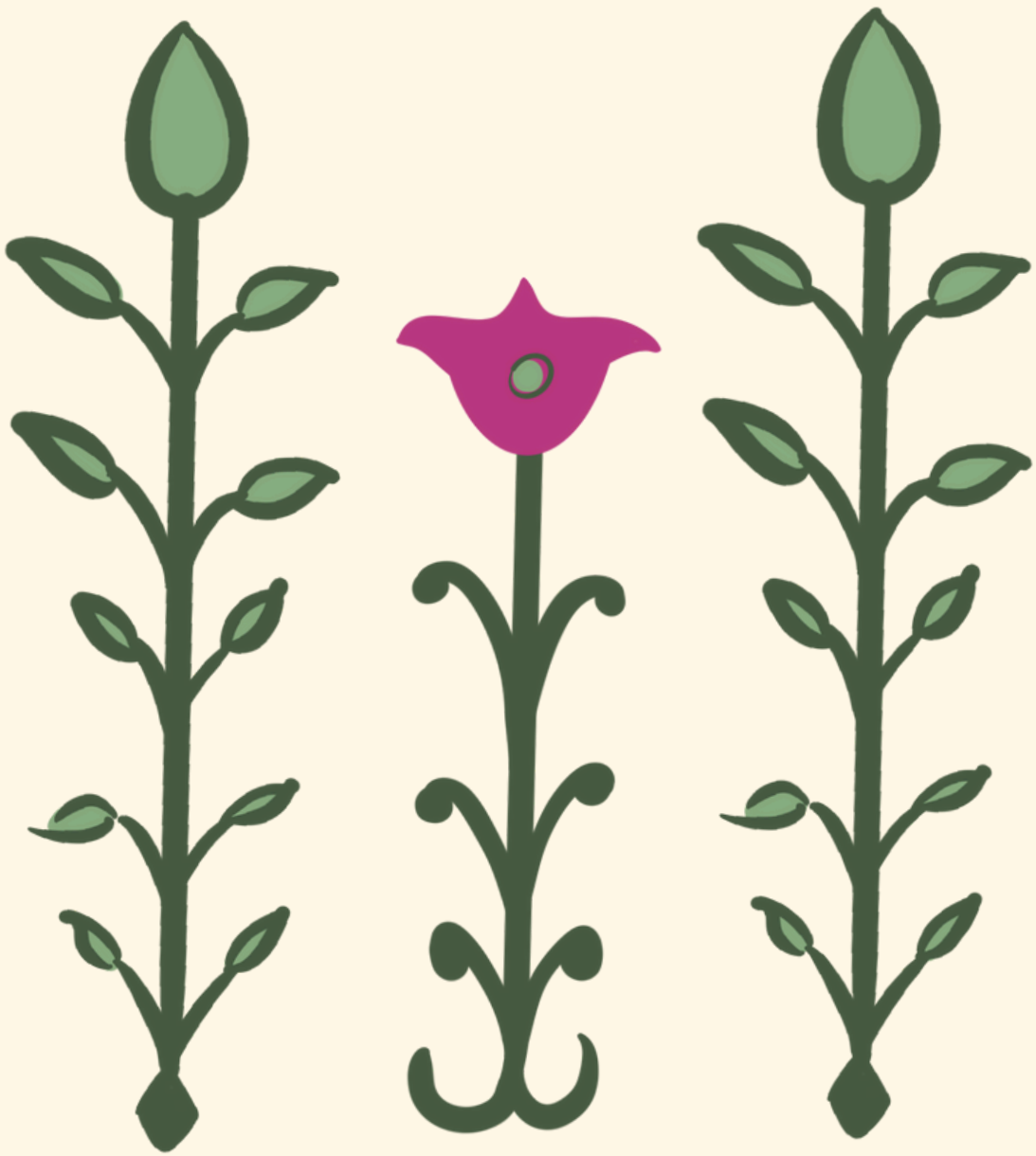
— Adrienne Maree Brown, We Will Not Cancel Us: And Other Dreams of Transformative Justice

Closing Reflections:

As you close out this workbook, how are you feeling in your body? If you’d like, return to the somatic grounding from the introduction. What feels similar? What feels different?

What emotions are coming up for you?

What questions do you still have?



Closing Vision

As we close, **let's circle back to the beginning of this workbook** where you reflected on what you want to see for your communities. We again **invite you to zoom out from the day-to-day demands and take a few moments to vision.**

"We can't build what we can't imagine"
- Walidah Imarisha

Prompt: What would a world look like where people's needs are met and they are thriving?

Similarly to above, we invite you to use any form of reflection that feels right for this prompt (drawing, journaling, diagrams, voice notes, painting, etc!).

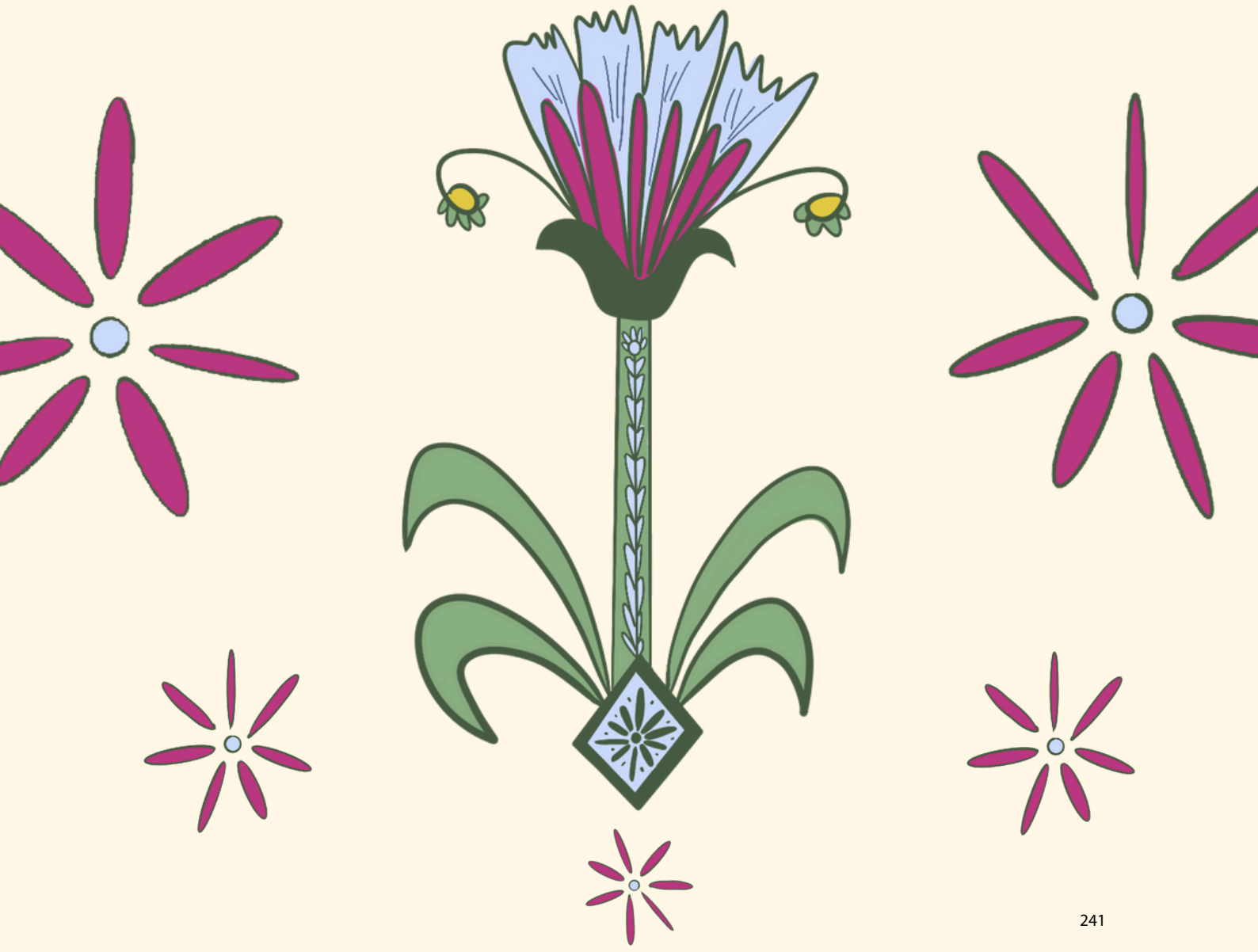
Want to share your reflections above? Please share it with us at: hello@southasiansoar.org.

We've reached the end! We would love to hear any feedback that you have for us. Please reach out to [hello@southasiansoar.org] to let us know how you engaged with the workbook, what was useful, or what we could have added or changed. We also welcome any questions you have about this workbook's content. We are constantly learning and this workbook is an evolving document **so your feedback is strongly encouraged.**

Please fill out this feedback form to offer your feedback and any stories, quotes or testimonials that you feel comfortable sharing!

We close by once again expressing our sincere gratitude for all of the practitioners, artists, and visionaries who paved the way for this project, as well as all of the SOAR members and staff who contributed to making this workbook a reality!

Thank you so much for engaging with this workbook.



Resource List

This section includes the main resources referenced in this workbook (by chapter), as well as additional resources on topics we weren't able to cover in depth in the workbook:

Chapter One

Introduction & Key Terms

Reclaiming Safety (Mariame Kaba & Andrea J. Ritchie)
INCITE! Analysis (INCITE!)
Transformative Justice and Community Accountability One Pager (Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective)
What is Transformative Justice? (Various, video)
Toward Transformative Justice (Generation Five)
Who will keep us safe in a world without police? We will (Hari Ziyad)
Punishment is Not Accountability (Kate McCord, Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance)
Practicing Abolition, Creating Community (Benji Hart)
Against Punishment (Project NIA and Interrupting Criminalization)
Cosmic Possibilities: An Intergalactic Youth Guide to Abolition (Project Nia)

South Asians and Abolition

South Asians and Black Lives (Deepa Iyer)
We Too Sing America [Chapter 7 "Ferguson is Everywere"] (Deepa Iyer)
"In Our Own Words" Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling (SAALT, DRUM, The Sikh Coalition, SAYA, etc.)
South Asians, Police Abolition is Your Responsibility Too (Afiya Rahman)
Risk and Protective Factors of Intimate Partner Violence among South Asian Immigrant Women and Perceived Need for Services (Bushra Sabri, Michelle Simonet, Jacquelyn C. Campbell)
Building Community Safety (Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)
Muslims for Just Futures
Discussions of Transformative Justice and Accountability (Amita Swadhin)

Chapter Two

Community Accountability

Open Letter to the Anti-Rape Movement (Robin McDuff, Deanne Pernell, Karen Saunders)
A Stand Up Start Up: Confronting Sexual Assault with Transformative Justice (Philly Stands Up)
Against Carceral Feminism (Victoria Law)
Community Accountability in the POC Progressive Movement (INCITE)
Interrupting Intimate Partner Violence: A Guide for Community Responses Without Police (Justice Teams Network)
Creative Interventions Toolkit (Creative Interventions)
Pods and Pod Mapping Worksheets (Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective)
The Transformative Power of Restorative Justice (sujatha baliga, Podcast)
Discussions of Transformative Justice and Accountability (Amita Swadhin, Podcast)
Creative Interventions Storytelling & Organizing Project (Creative Interventions)

Safety Planning

Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence: A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters (Survived & Punished)
Spring Up - Safety & Care Plan (Spring Up)
Creative Interventions Toolkit - Safety Plan & Action Worksheet (Section 4B, page 23) (Creative Interventions)
Creative Interventions Toolkit - Escape to Safety Checklist (Section 4B, page 32) (Creative Interventions)
Safety, Support & Care Planning (Creative Interventions Toolkit, adapted by Alternative Justice)

Chapter Three

South Asians and Abolition

South Asians for Abolition: Beyond Gilded Cages (Part 1) (Mon M.)
South Asians for Abolition: Diasporic Strategics and Conversations (Part 2) (Mon M. and Sharmin Hossain)
South Asian Anti-Violence Movement History Timeline (SOAR)

Impacts of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

Assessing the Impact of the Violence Against Women Act (Leigh Goodmark)
VAWA'S Solution To Fund the Police Harms Us All (Especially Women) (Common Justice Staff)
Unintended Consequences: Communities of Color and the Violence Against Women Act (New America)
What Does Justice Look Like for Survivors? (Various, Barnard Center for Research)
Centering the Needs of Survivors (Part 1) (Various, Barnard Center for Research)
Centering the Needs of Survivors (Part 2) (Various, Barnard Center for Research)

Toolkits

Critical Resistance Abolitionist Toolkit (Critical Resistance)
Rape Culture Intervention Toolkit (Hope Praxis Collective)

Anti-Violence Case Studies

Challenging the Pursuit of Criminalisation in an Era of Mass Incarceration: The Limitations of Social Work Responses to Domestic Violence in the USA (Mimi Kim)
Pursuing a Radical Anti-Violence Agenda Inside/Outside a Non-Profit Structure (Alisa Bierria)
Taking Risks: Implementing Grassroots Accountability Strategies (CARA)
Building Towards Transformative Justice at Sakhi for South Asian Women (Soniya Munshi, Bhavana Nancherla, Tiloma Jayasinghe)

Tools

Power and Control Wheel (Expanded) (Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration)
Criminalizing Survival Curricula (Survived and Punished)
[Template] Law Enforcement + ICE Protocol (HarborCOV)

Chapter Four

Self Accountability

Centered Self Accountability (Shannon Perez-Darby)
What is Self Accountability? (Kiyomi Fujikawa and Shannon Perez-Darby)
The Four Parts of Accountability & How to Give a Genuine Apology (Mia Mingus)

Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution Process (South Asian SOAR)
Community Agreements on Interpersonal Harm [ASATA: Alliance for South Asians Taking Action]
8 Practices for a More Emotionally Just Organization (Fireweed Collective)
Group Cultural Norms (adapted from White Supremacy Characteristics) (DragonFly)
In It Together Toolkit: A Framework for Conflict Transformation in Movement-Building Groups (Interrupting Criminalization and DragonFly Partners)

Community Guidelines

Community Guidelines (SOAR)
How to Run a Better, Equity-Focused Meeting (Color Brave Space)

Organizational Structures

Cosmic Possibilities: An Intergalactic Youth Guide to Abolition (Cooperative Structures) (Project Nia, pg. 16)
Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits (Sustainable Economies Law Center)
Bylaws Toolkit for Worker Self-Directed Non-Profits (Sustainable Economies Law Center)

... Even more resources we like!

Abolition and Transformative Justice Movement

Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement (Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)
The Color of Violence (INCITE)

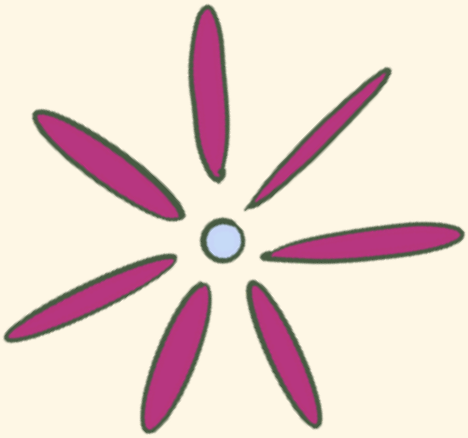
The Revolution Starts at Home (Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)
We Do This 'Til We Free Us (Mariame Kaba)
Steps to End Prisons & Policing: A Mixtape on Transformative Justice (Just Practice)
(AirGo and Interrupting Criminalization)
One Million Experiments (Podcast)
Beyond Punishment: The Movement for Transformative Justice (Rustbelt Abolition Radio)

Transformative Justice and Disability Justice
Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice (Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)
Intersections of Disability Justice and Transformative Justice (Elliott Fukui and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)

Abolition of Family Regulation/Policing System
Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families — and How Abolition Can Build a Safer World (Dorothy Roberts)

Secondary Trauma
Trauma Stewardship (Laura van Dernoot Lipsky)

Speculative Fiction and Essays
Pearls from Their Mouth (Pear Naullack)
Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals (Alexis Pauline Gumbs)



Endnotes

Chapter One: Reclaiming Safety

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Chapter One: Reclaiming Safety

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Chapter Two: Responding to Violence

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