Queer Transformative Justice Working Group
Principles/Concerns/Strategies/Models
Working Document
September 21, 2008

Goals of this document:
The goal of this Queer Transformative Justice (QTJ) Working Group is to develop transformative justice frameworks, politics, principles, processes, and practices around oppression and violence. It is our hope to use this living document as a way to build coalitions, create a common language, and explicitly name our frameworks and values.

Frameworks:
Conversation from 9/19/08 Meeting:

We believe the following frameworks have informed our analysis:
Anti-Oppression & Anti-White Supremacy
Harm Reduction
Queer
Social Justice & Coalition Building
Transnational
Human Rights
Feminist
Labor and Immigration Struggles
Anti-Nationalist
Anti-Capitalist
Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Centered
Survivor-Centered
Popular Education

Principles/Values:

We believe that violence involves an intersecting spectrum of intimate, interpersonal, community, state, and military violence. To end violence, we will work to shift power and generate new ways to resist violence that do not collude with state and systemic violence.

(We also had questions about whether or not to use words like imperialism, colonialism, globalization in our definition of violence.)

Examples/Conversation from 9/19/08 Meeting:
- Be explicit about the types of racialized, sexualized, and identity-based violence across the spectrum of violence.
- Examples to illustrate the statement above should make connections between gender-based violence and violence against incarcerated individuals and street harassment, etc. Also should explicitly make connections across struggles (i.e. how is sexual violence connected to labor and immigration struggles?).
- Susan Stryker has language that we could potentially use for connection between gender identity and immigration….
- We also discussed the importance of making connections without conflating. We understand that these things are complicated and nuanced—and that we seek a

process that does not conflate intersection. This should be explicitly stated in the construction of the examples.

We believe the State is the primary organizer of violence. We work to envision and create community accountability and transformative justice frameworks in our anti-violence work as active resistance against State collusion.

We believe that transforming the spectrum of violence involves community accountability measures that actively resist the roots of violence (i.e. the State, the prison industrial complex, militarism, capitalism, and neoliberalism).

We believe in a transformative justice response to violence that "seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or State or systemic violence, including incarceration and policing" (Generation Five). Transformative justice is premised on the idea that "individual justice and collective liberation are equally important, mutually supportive, and fundamentally intertwined—the achievement of one is impossible without the achievement of the other."

We believe that ending violence involves intentional community building, collaboration, coalition-building, and solidarity work.

We understand our experiences of oppression and violence in an intersectional way. Our responses to the spectrum of violence will work to connect intersecting oppressions and systems.

We are committed to harm reduction, self-care, and the unsilencing of individual and community resilience. We believe there are multiple ways for individuals, families, and communities to engage in healing, transformation, and liberation.

We celebrate resilience and survival and simultaneously work to create spaces for reflection, critical analysis, healing, and accountability. We value the processes of acting, doing, processing, and learning.

We resist the dichotomizing of victims and perpetrators. We believe that we are both simultaneous survivors of violence and oppression—as well as individuals complicit in the perpetuation of intimate, interpersonal, community, and State systems of violence. Recognizing this complexity is integral to our framework.

We believe that a queer framework is useful for understanding and responding to various, fluid, and interconnected forms of violence. We believe that liberation from violence emerges when we center people and communities who experience oppression and violence. However, we recognize that this language does not necessarily encompass or resonate with people who experience sexual and gender-identity based oppression and violence.

We believe that safety does not exist—and that, almost always, ideas of safety are created at the expense of communities and individuals who experience violence. We hope to create spaces and strategies that respond to violence without perpetuating safety as the ultimate goal or trajectory for survivors of violence. We believe that access to options, self-care, popular education, and community accountability through community-building provides greater opportunities for healing, transformation, and liberation.

QTJ Structure and Process

Our projects…

- …analyze and work within a multi-tier approach that engages violence in multiple ways, including individual, institutional, community, systemic and interpersonal. Centering these multiplicities upholds our commitment to an integrative healing and liberatory approach.
- …center queer people, work and leadership because of the disproportionate ways in which queer people experience violence.
- …are building a clearing house of information, resources and referrals for healing and intervention.

Process and community informing our projects includes…

- …responses to violence incorporating self-care, education, action, processing and solidarity building.
- …Transformative Justice principles and resources into meetings, actions, and community building.
- …commitment to accessibility--meaning mindfulness around language, provision of childcare, use of popular education, intentionally bringing people into the group.
- …awareness of group dynamics and communication, employing multiple forms of communication and ways to express concerns.
- …intentionality around community building.
- …accountability structures around collectivity, consensus building and decision making processes.
- …goals, process and facilitation for our work.

Guiding Common Language:

Throughout our learning process, we explored the following documents and work:
1. "Community Accountability Principles/Concerns/Strategies/Models Working Document," Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, March 5, 2003
2. "Incite! Principles of Unity" Incite! Women of Color Against Violence
3. Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex, Incite! (2001)
4. Generation Five
5. Harm Free Zones

Community:
By "communities" of the oppressed we mean communities of shared daily living, or of shared history, or of shared identity, or of shared struggle or of shared resistance, or of shared visions. We often begin with communities that are at present not united or in solidarity, but fragmented, dispersed, and often not self-aware as communities. Solidarity is born of community investment. Community members experience degrees and forms of investment in a community: they experience a sense of place, of belonging, of support, of companionship, of shared strategies for survival, and, not infrequently, of shared identity. (Harm Free Zones)

Community Accountability:
From Harm Free Zones, we explored processes of community accountability:

"It is important to underscore the visionary step in these processes. We make that clear when we remind ourselves that the larger oppressive society inflicts constant, pervasive, and systematic harm on our people and communities without ever acknowledging its responsibility.

A community is accountable to its members through four processes:
- Processes of intervention
- Processes of reparation
- Processes of prevention
- Processes of transformation

These processes are to be understood as linked with each other in such a way that separating one from the others changes its meaning and force. It is crucial to emphasize that the spirit animating intervention and reparation is not a punishing but a transformative spirit, a spirit that both requires and creates vision and hope.

Because acts of harm can be ones that are repeated over and over by different people in the community – for example rape, beatings, theft – the processes of intervention can take the form of public communal denouncing of the harmful acts. In these cases, clearly, intervention and prevention are linked. Public communal denouncing done in connection with rethinking and changing how we treat each other is not the same as public shaming.

Let's take an inter-personal situation in which one person has harmed another, that is has acted in a harmful or violent manner towards another person. The actor needs to be thought by the community
- as inseparable from the community,
- as affected by a history and present of oppression that affect the person's beliefs, character, desires, sense of self and of relation,
- as not passive with respect to oppression, as capable of acting, desiring, believing differently and thus as capable of resisting oppression,
- as a mirror for the community,
- as holding promise for the community.

Because the actor is not just a passive receptor of oppression, we can hold the actor accountable for the harmful act. We can also hold ourselves, in community, accountable for the community's part in creating an alternative set of social practices, relations and institutions to the oppressive ones.

Both the actor, the community member harmed, and the community are taken seriously in these processes of community accountability. As the community intervenes to stop, repair the harm, transform each person, and prevent further harm, the particular people involved and the community itself go through a transformation.

The community's intervention stops the harm. It also enables the actor to acknowledge the act as harmful or violent, to take responsibility for the act in the face of oppressive conditions, and to understand the relation between this act and the oppressive social context. Going through this intervention process is itself one of the most vivid forms of community education available to us. The education involved in calling and stopping the harm is key in preventing more harm.

The interconnection between intervention and reparation also must be understood. Intervention without reparation leaves the actor without a deep understanding of the act of harm. To repair the harm means that the person affected by the harm must be placed in a position with a set of possibilities that go beyond than what s/he had before the harm. It is not just a question of going back to their previous condition. In reparation, the person harmed must be viewed by the

community also as a mirror for itself, as a member of the community inseparable from it, as holding promise for the community, as someone who can be made whole, who can be placed in a healthier inter-personal, communal, condition. The work of recovery is a communal process of change, of coming to be a different place that takes up the wellbeing of each member. We can see then, the deep link between intervention and reparation on the one hand, and transformation on the other. But we can also see how the work of prevention is done too. Community members come to understand the long consequences of harming others; the significant work involved in intervention, reparation, and transformation; and they come to have a different perception of the harm itself. Semi-public communication and dialogue can reaffirm the work of prevention.

Community accountability cannot stop at intervention and reparation without transformation. Or, may be, better put, intervention does not make full sense without transformation since the capacity to harm and the harm done cannot be left untouched. Further, because In the process of reparation the actor needs to come to see him- or her-self as an active participant in this rebuilding of community for the person harmed, a deep transformation of the actor accompanies the transformation of the community. This does not entail that the person harmed needs to engage the actor, particularly in the early stages of this process, as the harm may have made that extremely difficult and psychologically dangerous. Finally, as reparation is done, transformation of the situation of the person harmed needs to go deeper than compensation since the life conditions and possibilities of the person harmed need to be altered in community.

We can see how these processes reaffirm ongoing dialogue, community investment, vision and hope. Thus we see how the conditions of community accountability enable us in community to initiate processes that strengthen these conditions which are, in themselves, indicators of community strength.