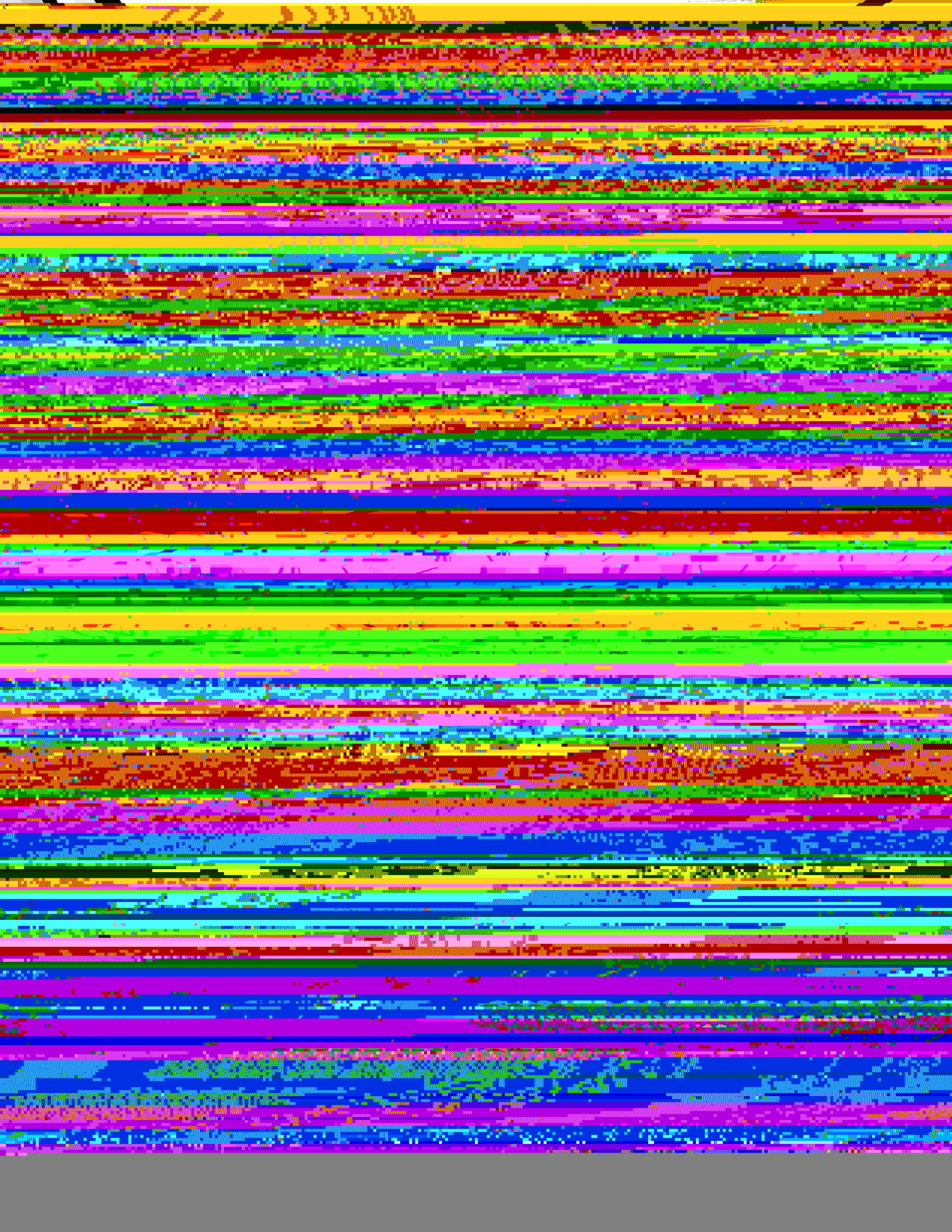


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bch` \ Uj`Y`h`Y` `hd` ` ` `A` [`g`gq`

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borhood with one breakfast spot and one bar.)

But I still ran into him. Still looked up and saw him staring me down at the club. Still saw him headlining a show, speaking at a rally.

I'd gotten away alive. I'd gotten more than many folks get. But I still wasn't done. You don't get done without justice.

~

I felt caught. I was safe. I wasn't dead, as he'd threatened ("You ever send me back to jail, I'll take you to the cop shop, kill you and then kill myself.") But I didn't know how to move forward. Should I write the dub poet and tell her that her friend had kicked and choked and terrorized me, a sister poet? Should I contact the heads of the political groups he was a part of and ask them to not have him as a speaker? I was afraid that any attempt of mine to contact him, or contact people in his life and let them know what was up, would be met with a violent, unpredictable backlash against me. A worker in rape crisis and DV, I was familiar with the feminist DV understanding that the way to go is to cut off all contact with a stalker or harasser after setting a clear "NO," that any attempt to negotiate or discuss would be twisted into manipulations that screwed with your safety.

And I was tired. I was tired of always having to put myself out there to be physically and emotionally vulnerable explaining partner abuse to others when it wasn't an abstract issue- it was my credibility, and my life stories before those skeptical eyes as I said that yes, he'd hit me and no, there was no excuse for it, and yes it was really that bad. I couldn't get him fired from his job at the shelter. I'd never called the cops on him because I didn't want to send a man of color to prison, so there was nothing that would show up on his

criminal screening. I couldn't get him fired from every job working with youth in the city. Sometimes I thought I should just leave the city, but I didn't want to be pushed out of my first city, my first true love, my home.

Most times, I did nothing. Except that doing nothing is also doing something. It's continuing to get up in the morning, pray, show mMm

holding perpetrators accountable.

posts and am amazed at what I've emerged from. I am amazed at the concrete tools we have created out of our own genius. Take these tools into your own lives and see where they fit. Make and share your own. We are the ones we've been waiting for, and out of our own genius knowledge we will figure out how to make a revolution that leaves out none of us.

-Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

When I was 17 years old, my family didn't approve of my boyfriend at the time. They thought that he was a bad influence on me -- he was an immigrant from a different ethnicity/race without a "good job" (we had worked together at the same movie theater) or "good educational background." I battled my mother and emerged from that experience resolved not to let anyone else control

the revolution starts at home: pushing through the fear

>Uj'8i `Ub]

5Wdl]b[`næi fgYZ]g'UV][`dUfh
cZk f]h]b["
r `7\fn]g'

I am scared to write this introduction. I am scared that people won't believe a word I have to say. I am scared that I don't believe what I have to say. I am scared and feel ashamed because I am not 14 anymore. I am not 17 anymore. I am not 19 anymore.

1. Maps to Secrets and Lies (14)

K \Uh' \Ug' Vfc] [\h næi `hc' h]g' a ca Ybhi
f][\hbck 3
r `G\Ufcb `6f]X] Zfh`

A queer, closeted, intense love affair in Chandigarh, India. That was my first relationship. She was the beautiful, new braniac at school. And me? At 14, I was going on year three of being the "girl from America" - which to my classmates meant some unfortunately false assumptions about:

- a.) me being rich and
- b.) me being a slut.

My family was split in two different countries. Her family moved around a lot because of her Dad's job. We knew what it felt to be uprooted. We wanted to find home in each other. Home. Safety. Stability. Space. To be ourselves and share our pain, hopes and fears. Ninth and tenth grade was a whirlwind of love letters, holding hands underneath our desks, stealing kisses during study time, secret dates to the lake, codes to say "I love you" in front of a parents' (1-4-3 - very original and hard to crack), mixed tapes (think 80's love songs: Lionel Richie, Richard Marx, Jefferson Starship - "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now") and last

but not least, lots and lots of hallmark cards (the silhouettes of a man and woman in front of a beach sunset was accommodated in our gay-but-not-named-gay relationship). We were best friends to the world. To each other, we said we were in love. After all, outcasts always find each other. It was us against the world. Us against the world.

I want to end the story there. A secret underground love story, queer without labels, my first gay relationship - in India - proving America didn't make me a homo.

I don't remember our first fight. Her jealousy and possessiveness affected my relationship with my sister, as my sister could smell something was wrong... and missed me as well. "K \Uh_]bX'cZ\ c`X'XcYg'g\ Y\ Uj Ycj Yf' næi 3"

My classic defensive retort: "Mti `Xcb]i b! XfghUbX"

No one did. No one knew I was her refuge from her parent's emotional and physical abuse. No one knew that I became her only escape. She needed to know where I was and what I was doing all the time. She couldn't handle me having other friendships. She was so angry once when I said I was going out with some other friends that she kept calling my house. I remember being embarrassed and not knowing what to tell people what was going on. But I soon learned to lie because disagreeing with her or challenging her was not an option. She had to win. I couldn't leave until she did. I was frequently late and made up a lot of lies, to teachers, tutors, family. Cutting herself was a coping mechanism she used to deal with her family. When she realized how much it upset me, she knew she could

use that against me. She wasn't afraid to punish me. Amongst nail-digging, pinching, pushing, hair-pulling, face grabbing, was the occasional backhand. But mostly, her palms cut up. Lines of destiny mixed with lines of self-hate, manipulation, dried blood: Maps to secrets and lies. She would do it in fr~

posed to be.

Meanwhile, I had quickly become *h Ypoc* anti-violence activist. I had co-organized Take Back the Night and more women of color students and professors were in attendance than ever before (or at least in a long-ass time!). I had developed a reputation as the only visible person of color anti-violence activist.

Two nights before I overdosed, she took me home from a party. Sex in my room ... I was so drunk, couldn't walk straight. ... My body remembers. Sobering up naked in bed. ... *8c' nci h\|b_ =Ñ UfUd|gfb...*

The next night, hours before I took a shit-load of pain-killers, she and her ex had a huge fight in my room. This was what tipped everything over. She yelled at him in front of me. I saw him physically react, get smaller and smaller. She got in his face, backed him against the wall with loud hurtful words. I did nothing. I stood there, paralyzed, complacent.

I hated myself. Was disgusted. Felt hypocritical and ashamed for having an anti-violence activist reputation. I felt like I chose her over him. Fucking over friendship, since I was sleeping with the enemy.

I felt responsible for everything shitty that I was feeling. I was feeling shitty about my body and the sex from the night before. Sex I had told myself I wasn't going to engage in ever again. I was feeling shitty about not standing up for a friend. I felt trapped in shame.

IV. Of Martyrs and Prayers

*Øti QbYX'rc`cc_`Uhk \UHg` \UddYbYX'jb`
nci f`|Zžgc`|hXcYgb|ñWblfc`nci`
r`7`fng'rg`*

As someone with a history of being socialized female, I understand how that can translate to believing I need to be a caretaker, erasing myself, and giving in to other people's sexual desires in order to please them. In many ways, I was simply playing out what I learned and internalized. Over and over again.

I have thought critically about what that means. What was my role in these relation-

how silence works, the intricacies of what is at stake, and what is possible.

I reflect on my experiences and think about how vulnerable queer teenagers are to abusive relationships. Not being out leads to a secret relationship, which can easily lead to secret abuse. I think about the power of language. Naming a relationship – acknowledging an existence – helps to identify real violence in a real relationship.

I think about how in queer communities, especially queer people of color communities, you know how much shit your lovers/partners have been through. How they are often survivors, if not of physical or sexual violence, then definitely of the violence of oppression. How can we hold them accountable and still get them the support they need for the fucked up shit they have been through and still keep ourselves safe? How do we share community? How do survivors get past the shock that “one of us” is recreating the violence? The guilt of not wanting to add to our lover’s oppression or make their situation worse? The fear that the community we found or created will hate us, shun us, expel us for shaking up the foundation of trust we thought we shared?

As if we come to these activist communities with a history of being believed, not blamed for the violence we experienced. Naturally we lie again to cover it up. Naturally “the community” is uncomfortable or unaware or perhaps unintentional in boldly perpetuating silence.

The very shit that led us to be activists and organizers is the shit that has been recreated. It feels shocking. Unnerving. But not unbelievable. How easy is it to be isolated when everyone is working hard all the time and burnt out anyway? And did we forget that abusers are often charming, talented, intelligent beings? Of course they are popu-

lar speakers, artists, writers, trainers. We look for monsters, not martyrs. We look for someone who looks like “the enemy.” Did we forget that it is the ones we know, not strangers who hurt us the most?

This zine is a prayer for us all, as witnesses and survivors, to step up and push through the fear that keeps us silent. This zine is a prayer for hope, healing and responsibility. An offering of stories that will hopefully validate, inform and inspire dialogue and action. A calling for us to notice, whose life is getting smaller and smaller? Whose needs are at the center of/defining the relationship? Who is manipulating activist language to cover-up their behavior?

While we have more questions than answers, we at least have questions that can serve as a roadmap towards healthier and more accountable communities. A roadmap to what is possible. After all, the revolution starts at home.

there is another way

5bU@UFU

Part I: Survivor's Rights & Responsibilities

As a survivor of abuse, in any of its forms, I have the right to:

1. Name rape, incest, sexual molestation, assault, battery, domestic violence, and all forms of abuse in all its forms.
2. Feel angry, hurt, sad, loving, or forgiving of my perpetrator(s), and any friend(s) or family who has collaborated with the violence.
3. Speak about my abuse.
4. Have a space to reflect on my personal history without judgment.
5. The physical and psychological care that is necessary for surviving trauma.
6. A safe and secure home.
7. Safe relationships with family, friends, partners, lovers and service providers.
8. Confront perpetrators and those who have participated in violations and abuses.
9. Leave.
10. Take action to stop the abuse.
11. Feel beautiful and loveable.
12. Love and be loved.

As a survivor of abuse, in any of its forms, I have the responsibility to:

1. Take care of myself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—whatever that means for me.
2. Reflect on the ways abuse has affected me and to seek appropriate forms of support.
3. Understand the sources of my pain.
4. Interrupt patterns of abuse and self-abuse in my own behavior that hurt me and/or others.
5. Take full responsibility for my choices

and behaviors.

6. Reach out to other survivors as a source of support or to provide support.
7. Live my life to the best of my abilities and with the goal of reaching my full potential.
8. Stay present to myself and to my needs.
9. Form healthy relationships that nourish me.
10. Claim my own desire.
11. Accept my beauty, power, strengths, weaknesses and humanity in the world.
12. Survive my history, circumstances and violations.

Part II: What I Was Thinking

This essay is written for myself and other organizers who are survivors of abuse, in all its forms. I'm writing it in the hopes of making connections between our experiences as survivors and our roles as organizers.

For many years, and with many friends and peers, I have had an on-going discussion about the effects of abuse on ourselves and our community work. At the core of that discussion is a tension around how to identify ourselves and each other with regards to where we are in relationship to our personal histories. Are we victims? survivors? What are the politics of these identities? Without ignoring or discounting the important history of the domestic violence movement in the United States, or where you the reader may be in your own process, I want to clarify where I sit today with regards to this particular item.

People of color, queers, genderqueers, we are the living proof that we do not accept

institutionalized forms of violence as inherently true or valid—that we believe in our own worth and right to live life on our own terms. It is important for me to start there because my understanding is that when we extend the definition of oppression to include violence in all its forms, we are extending it into an understanding that all forms of abuse are unacceptable: from institutional racism to partner abuse, from police brutality to date rape, from financial control to compulsive heterosexuality. In other words, WE ALREADY HAVE A BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND THOSE OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

If that is my starting point, then please know that this essay is an attempt to create language for defining my own experiences and my own lessons. This is a divine opportunity because to date I have not seen language that reflects 1) how I have survived abuse and the ramifications of my process on my community organizing work and 2) the direct connection with our own resolutions around personal abuse and the ways we affect others as community organizers. Given that resolving our personal histories of abuse is a life-long process that is more like walking around a well than down a straight road, I am in no way implying that I have it all figured out. But rather, the opposite: when we're aware of our own pain, and work to uncover its sources, we become our best allies to our own healing—and can become stronger in our community work.

My limited experience of the existing institutionalized domestic violence frameworks has been frustrating and painful. Some of the worst abuse I have experienced has come from social service or community based organizations offering services to survivors, and to the most disenfranchised members of our society. In the process of reflecting on these experiences, I ended up sitting down

and writing out all of my thoughts about my own history of abuse and survival and the lessons I have learned in the process. The very first realization that came to me out of that process resulted in the “rights & responsibilities” statement. As I saw myself writing down what I have learned about what I have a right to, and in turn, a

-
thes
!

stances to avoid the places where she hung out. This sucked for me, but I didn't want to risk seeing her. It didn't matter—she found ways to find me.

The moment of personal fury and epiphany came when she approached an acquaintance (let's call her "Sarah") almost two years later, and informed "Sarah" of my betrayal of her love. "Sarah", someone with whom I was doing intense community work, was not familiar with the violence I had lived through with this woman. "Sarah" came over to my home one day telling me I had a responsibility to ensure that all of our community was taken care of. I was so upset, I turned pale. After taking an hour to calm down, I explained to "Sarah" why I had broken off all communication with my ex. "Sarah", also a survivor of abuse, immediately understood. She started crying, having herself felt the effects of abusive manipulation. However, a couple of months later, "Sarah" invited both me and my ex to a party—without informing either of us that we would both be there. When I asked her why, she said it was not her responsibility to value one community member over the other. I left the party. It was apparent to me that "Sarah" was not sensitive to the subtleties of abuse in our communities. As a result, she had created a context for perpetuating violence. I understood her desire to create healing, but I thought that her method was deplorable.

If I had not done the work to take care of myself, to ensure my own safety and menm a t nwas
 cg, community† wasémealyrestR seae



sonal experiences of abuse could be become a roadmap for continuing or stopping the perpetuation of violent, oppressive behavior. That being a survivor and a perpetrator are simultaneously possible, just as it is possible to be a racist queer, or a homophobic person of color. And that much in the same way we work to not perpetuate racism, we must also work not to perpetuate violent interactions. There are other ways.

Truth telling does not have to be a traumatic, abusive process. Believe me when I tell you I have experienced social change in non-abusive, healing forms. And usually, it comes out of models generated by the most traumatized of our communities—communities of color, genderqueer communities, genderqueer colored communities... we know that there is a way to do the work without hurting ourselves and others. Because creating hurt is what our society does to us every day, and what white supremacy and nationalism and fascism operate on.

Part IV: What I Dream Of

I know, in my flesh, that my ancestors had no choice about their enslavement. But they did have a choice about how to survive that enslavement. They chose profound spiritual power, subtle and direct forms of resistance, and sometimes, participation in the system as overseers or slave owners themselves. I think, I believe, the kn ic olem

m

M|

M

we do the hard work to leave the destructive patterns behind—trade them in for new ones; that we survive our history and circumstances, allow ourselves to feel beautiful and be loved so that we can create that for each other.

Peace and light, always.

i. anger is sexy

She wanted to poison me against the rest of the world, that girl. It was me and her, radical revolutionary partners-in-crime against the fucked-up human race. She was a poor white Southern kid from a classically broken home, stuck forever in that queer-kid, poor-kid, dysfunctional-family, the-world-owes-me-because-I'm-a-victim frame of mind. The kind of girl who'd experienced enough

i M

eye wandered away from her jeans and fitted tees look to women who wore their clothes very differently. I didn't love her enough. The kind of sex I wanted was too perverse, too queer. The women I wanted were too tough, the men I wanted wore more make-up than I did. I wasn't really queer because I was bisexual. I was too queer because I was bisexual. Why did I have to talk about it? A hot flush of my desire was enough to enrage her for days. I wanted to suck cock and I didn't care if it was flesh or silicone, I just wanted to be on knees and have my mouth filled by someone who wanted it as much as I did. I wanted someone to hurt me because it made them wet, made them hard, made them shiver.

boys. The mantra she repeated to anyone who would listen, ; /bU`Yh'a Ylc`Z W`Vcngž ; /bU`Yh'ici f`k cbXYfZ`fYUhcgb\jd`lc`Z W`h YbYa n'I wrecked our home to let willowy fags and muscular butches slap me around because I actually wanted it. Not because it was how someone punished me for wanting freedom. I wrecked her home because her home was our relationship and being a homewrecker was my last and only survival strategy. Being a homewrecker was the only way I could get out.

But how do you even wreck a home that's already way past broken, the foundation rotten to its awful fucking core? When I met her, I could have been any scared sixteen-year-old girl, easily ensnared by someone tall and smart and manipulative, someone just as scared as I was, but with a different and dangerous coping mechanism. I got myself into that mess, but you know what, I got myself out. I made my home in myself. I am not \Y home. I have never been her home.

our brothers

our sisters

were

is

am

are

predators.

arm in arm

we link

mass mobilization

in the way of soul chants cradled

to beat schemes as smooth as

the blood that runs through the capillaries of our people.

but-

Not around my sisters

I don't care who the fuck you are!

You don't have *Ubmright* to be
an asshole,
a sexual predator,
fuckhead,
rapist,
pillager,
thief -
a poser fronting as a partner in the cause -

you sack of limp balls and groping claws swaggering around
young flesh.

we will
exterminate the infestation

of your rodent hands
crawling over paralyzed skin

twitching
sniffing
seeking to consume the souls we will not give you

exterminate the infestation

of your hands
your words
your thoughts
your cocks

multiplying in our homes
in our communities
in our classrooms
in our beds
in our dreams
in my home

you fucking bitch
I want to
crush your windpipe
force open your ravenous jaws
spit the poison
you infused in me
back into your salivating maw

I want to grab your balls and rip them off.
use them the way David used his marbles –
twirling them in a dangerous sling –
spinning and spinning until momentum is built and
shoot them back at you!
bring down your
Goliath sized ego

how would you like that, Brother?
lover
sister
comrade
friend?

you sorry excuse for X chromosome

fuckheads!

I will hold a mirror up to you
Of multiple truths written in blood.
survivors' words on the mirror walls of an entire room

and lock you inside.
keep you naked
force you to read the words
witness the truths.

I will watch as you try to wash,
smear the testimonies with your body,
with your blood,
your sweat,
your saliva,
your tears.

nothing washes the words away.

how will you escape this time?

I will watch as you try to break down the mirrors –
scratch at the glass.
will you shatter instead?

I wanna try out this experiment:

rats in a box...

you know who you are.

I wanna name names.
you will not get away with this bullshit!

k YUFYUk UFY

if you knew
behind every woman you terrorize
is a whole army of sisters ready to pluck out your balls
and break your knuckles –
it would be a different world.

the ultimate cock block!

exterminate the infestation
my lover
my sister
my comrade
my friend

say with me:

*Bc`Ufh]g]a a i bY Say: bc`a cj Yá Yblžbc`gcb[]g]a a i bY`
h YgUa Y\UbXg`*

*Bc`Ufh]g]a a i bY Say: bc`a cj Yá Yblžbc`gcb[]g]a a i bY`
h YgUa Y\UbXg`*

exterminate the infestation

we are aware.

and justice will walk through us.

ably real to me in this moment.

How could I say, that even after everything, I still longed for her?

It is a difficult thing to explain to anyone who hasn't been there. From the outside, this possibility seems unimaginable. From the outside, things are clear and straight-forward.

From the inside, life is held in powerful contradictions. I lived our profound intimacy that when good, was nothing short of magical. That the person with whom at times I felt the most safe, the most at home, was the same person at times I both dreaded and feared. The person who could be big and angry could just as easily be intensely vulnerable and incredibly loving. For all her suffering, I thought I could love her pain away- that I just had to love her bigger, better.

Shame was a steadfast companion. The good feminist that I am, I have read the books on the cycle of abuse and violence. I know them. How did I get here? I should have known better than to let this happen. What kind of feminist was I?

As a therapist in training, I encouraged clients to name abuse, and when they couldn't, I would call things for what they were. How could I say out loud that I had gotten caught in such a crazy dynamic? What kind of therapist was I?

Once out of the relationship, I worked hard to see the hooks. How deep our socialization runs that somewhere inside of me, part Catholic upbringing to honour commitment, part fairy-tale that true love only comes once, I clung to my values, and my fear. To my homophobic family, how much I wanted to show you that queer relationships could be healthy and long-lasting-that I could have what you have, that I could be just like you. And how, because of this, I have kept my si-

lence, that you don't know me as well as you might.

It would be easier to tell you that the story ends there—that I picked up the pieces and moved on, but it doesn't. I got back together with her. Some said I was like the reality of this betting on the wrong horse.

In a strange way the specialness that marked our love, what set 'us' apart from 'them', transformed itself into a fierce protection. A new bond of 'us' against 'them'.

More than anything, it fueled our desire to disprove the doubt and speculation.

Looking back, there thankfully was some (although I wouldn't have thought so at the time).

My house held a meeting with us in which my partner listened to and addressed their concerns and the ways in which her behavior had eroded their sense of safety too. She would have to earn their trust back.

My partner and I created a new narrative to overwrite our history. Things were different, the 'old self' was gone. This was a very effective tool in combating the external doubt and at first, we hardly drew on it. Things were different...for a while. This narrative, though useful, left no room inside the relationship to name old behaviors, old ways, if they didn't exist anymore.

The narrative began unravelling, but in the face of people's judgments and my own hope of change, to whom could I admit this?

Rarely did I get time alone to even think such thoughts. I would be accused by her of using my femme and 'passing' privilege against her through the court process; using my class privilege when I didn't pay for this or that; of not knowing what it was to be a 'real'

I remain caught on the horns of the same old dilemma. The one I've been stuck in since I was with her. What to do with the fact that this fairly high profile career activist, who does do good work often, is really abusive at home. That she mangled me and my self-concept so badly cannot be irrelevant, but I still feel as though it reflects poorly on me and as though I ought not rock the lefty labour boat by talking about it.

Abuse. The word transforms her from a slightly difficult, neurotic "political powerhouse" into a nasty, disturbed bully who would chase me around the house in her rages. It makes her a perpetrator, when being a victim is her stock-and-trade. It makes me a victim—a mess to be cleaned up, an inconvenience. It makes me a rat to say it, a squealer. And, in my imagination, all those folks have way more reason to be loyal to her than to care about me.

I wrote that four months after leaving. Our assets were still entwined, I was still having nightmares, and I had just begun to eat like a regular person again. My dearest dream was to make sense of what had happened—and expose her private shame—by writing the story of our relationship, a version that finally, I could control. Now, I've been out of there for three years, have had no contact with her—even through lawyers—for almost two years. And I still feel tentative. I still avoid any meetings, protests or events she is likely to be part of. I am still afraid of calling it abuse publicly, of what she could do in response. So, I've written and rewritten this piece about 30 times, and it is still one of the hardest things I've ever done.

And I don't exactly know why.

I know that I am desperate not to become the hysterical hard-done-by ex-lover crying abuse in order to slander. I am determined not to exaggerate or be dishonest. I don't want to write a revisionist history to try to justify my own mistakes, don't want to seem reactionary because this experience has made me question the culture of labour _

or bringing a paring knife to bed? And how could I acknowledge how screwed up things were? When she said my unconditional love was so important to her. When each incident sounded so surreal, strange and improbable when I tried to describe it. When she didn't mean to, was just stressed out by all her responsibilities/ flashing-back on childhood abuse/ reacting to my insensitivity. When it felt necessary to keep a semblance of normalcy together, make sure we made it to the demo on time, to smile and hold her hand while she worked the crowd. When I was so convinced of my own culpability, that she was right and if I just weren't so difficult to love (so in my own head/ such a slut/ so unwilling to compromise), she wouldn't be so scary. Surely, as she said, the turbulence of our relationship pointed to a deeper passion than I had known in my previous WASPy existence, and it would all even out over time.

I really thought abuse was when someone put a brick in a sock and hit you with it. I thought it always left visible bruises, was perpetrated by unambiguous assholes and would be obvious to everyone around. I didn't know it made you doubt your own perceptions, that it could be so subtle and manipulative, that you could buy right into it and pity her (rather than yourself) as she ripped your favourite sundress off you or kicked your houseplants down the stairs. I didn't know how insidious intimidation is, that you could be controlled by learning how to tiptoe around someone's frightening moods, that you could be cornered into denying your own beliefs in order to avoid conflict, that you could spend mornings hiding in a closet in your own home, waiting for her to leave for work. I didn't know your body could shut down, that desire could be suffocated like that or that marital rape could happen between women—that eventually you'd put out to try to halt the hounding, the constant criticism and guilt, the accusations: "You don't want me anymore!" Which, of course,

I didn't—those hands hurt me so often that their caress became unbearable. But I didn't understand, had always had a healthy libido, thought that there must be something terribly wrong with me. How was I to know that those repulsive memories could stay with you and haunt your later lying with better lovers? I didn't know that projection is a huge part of perpetrators' M.O., that they could convince you that you were like them or worse, call you "abusive" for yelling back, pushing back, or leaving.

I really didn't know, or really want to know, these things. And I certainly was not aware that you could keep complex secrets from yourself, that in the midst of daily horrors, you could even abandon yourself to cope. That you could know and not-know, at the same time, that being regularly maligned and discounted like that was completely Not OK. I didn't realize that you could smother your own instincts, paste a bland look on your face and go play convincing happy couple in public. It was only when I started to write nearly every day like I had before I met her, (resisting her—often very dramatic—interruptions, refusing her distractions, sticking to my own thoughts and feelings, keeping it all in one book), that this denial began to wear thin. When I could look back over pages chronicling weeks of intense anxiety, horrible "fights," earnest expressions of concern from my close friends and my own enormous unhappiness, then, I began to let myself see. I began to understand how little energy I had left, how much "taking care" of her was diminishing me, that her much-touted politics didn't include an equitable division of domestic or emotional labour, that her rants about the need for on-line access for activists in the global South rather overlooked the fact that I still didn't have private email access from our home.

I wish I had listened to the dyke-grapevine, right at the beginning when she was court-

ing me so aggressively, when the word on it was that she was messed-up, a liar and none of her exes would have anything to do with her. I wish someone at the collective meetings had noticed that I was never given the agenda, that she held it for both of us and consistently shot down my ideas. I wish one of the older labour and development lefties had checked in with me about why she was always borrowing money on our behalf. I wish my being with her hadn't suddenly guaranteed me return calls from labour folks who previously hadn't had the time of day for me or the projects I was working on. I wish I knew how to explain to the all the straight-lefties who were bending-over-backwards to be gay-positive that abusers aren't always men, that girl-on-girl relationships are not utopic, that sexism, homophobia and racism can thrive in the same skin that gets paid to be organizing against them. I wish I'd been able to tell the activists I respected that it

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When I was fourteen and fifteen years old, I was in an abusive relationship with my best friend. It ended because I stopped talking to him or spending time with him. The last time he tried to assault me, mutual friends of ours were visiting from out-of-state and staying at his house. I stayed there, too, the last night they were in town, after he pressured me. The next morning, after they had left, he and I were folding up sleeping bags and he started touching me. I managed to stop him and left his house. I kept going to high school with him for three more years. We had all the same friends.

I'm a transguy; in high school I was some kind of a girl, but harte

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the strangling grip of abuse memories was telling the fragments, working to remember the order and context in which things happened. It scared me to see the people closest to me freeze up or sharply inhale air when I spoke the details aloud—again, I was terrified I'd drive them away—but their witness helped

wholly and be believed and respected.

When I moved to Philadelphia, I started meeting people who did radical organizing around sexual assault, mostly as part of a group called Philly's Pissed, and people whose visions of possibility were informed by this work. There were so many small things which were actually hugely important, like having friends and lovers who said, after I told them about my weekend back home, when my friend invited me to a bar without telling me the high school abuser would be there,

talk to him. I was having a good time. She and I were headed to the Siren Music Festival at Coney Island. But then he showed up, the high school abuser, with another friend of mine from high school, one of the ones I'd been keeping my distance from but really loved and missed and fuck it, I just wanted to be normal and so off we went on the subway to Coney Island, me and my brilliant new friend who knew the abuser from another context and the other high school friend and him. I was fine. I was fine. Except then we got there and started drinking and I freaked out and ran into a dirty punk sweetheart friend of mine and wandered off with him and we got Coronas in brown bags and drank them on the beach and I just kept saying, "I'm not a slut, I'm not a slut, I'm not a slut." And he nodded understandingly with his soft eyes and I never explained and he never asked. And then I met back up with the others, and we took the subway to a tiny boring party and then left quickly again, because someone was driving—back out of the city and on the way, they could give us a ride home. Except I was stuck in the backseat of the car, four of us across in there, and next to me was the boy. The one who, I suddenly remembered as the side of my body was pushed up against his, used to force me to suck his dick until I gagged and sometimes threw up, his hands holding my head down, all over the back of my neck such that it still makes my skin crawl sometimes when people touch me there. Getting Over It didn't really work for me.

When I sent him the letter, he took three months to write back. I figured that was that; he was going to cont]

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LISTEN. “Yes” means, “yes.” Everything else means “no!” If someone says “no,” that means “no.”

BE RESPONSIBLE. If your date is drunk or passed out, it is not an invitation for sex. You are responsible for everything you do; these are choices you make.

RESPECT. Don’t make people feel bad for saying “no” to one or a few or all sexual acts. Being in a relationship or on a date does not mean you have any rights to someone else’s body. You are not entitled to anything except mutual respect.

What is Consent?

Consent is freely and voluntarily agreeing to do something. Not giving in to someone who is harassing you to do anything. Not when they or you are heavily intoxicated, not when someone is sleeping, not when they have said NO.

If the other person says no to a sexual request that should be taken seriously. It is not an invitation to beg, plead or cry for sex.

If you feel sad, sometimes you can’t help but cry. This may mean after being told NO, you might need to take some time to yourself to cry, calm down or maybe talk to a friend - not guilt someone into sex.

Touching someone while they are sleeping or trying to wake someone up because you find yourself being horny in the middle of the night is selfish. How many important decisions are you asked to make after being woken up in the middle of

the night?

If you think there is a possibility you might want to have sex with your partner in the middle of the night, talk to them beforehand and make agreements. For some people, it could be hot to be woken up in that way, but unless your partner has given you permission that is fully consensual, you are raping them.

No one is obligated to get you off sexually if you are horny and the other person is not.

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may automatically side with you especially if they don't like your partner; try someone who can better separate the people from the actions.

Some Examples From My Own Life:

One time, I had a flashback to a sexual assault from my childhood during sex. I had to stop and started to cry. My then-partner held me for about 20 minutes and I started to feel better. I was then asked to continue with the sexual act I had stopped doing. I felt sick to my stomach and confused so I said I wasn't in the mood, but they constantly said "please" and whined for about 5 more minutes until I gave in.

In this moment I went through major guilt. I

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Can you be more specific here? As in organizing, I believe in the escalation model. Before you destroy someone's reputation, there should be people who can commit to trying to work with both parties so that both parties can heal and create realistic boundaries. Accountability could cre is

that are clearly posted at the door at many sex clubs or play parties should be universal. We have to be ok with setting a standard for ok behavior and be willing to be disciplined about maintaining it.

We have to be dedicated to not only institutional change but also to transforming our interpersonal dynamics—fuck politeness and niceness. It tends to lead to passive aggressive behavior and unhealthy repression. Change isn't usually pretty. Healing is not pretty—it's pus and scabs falling off and reforming surrounded by scars that tell stories.

From all of this, the biggest task I have ahead of me before the recommended forgiveness of the community member who repeatedly violated my body and took away so much of me is to forgive myself and heal the other part of my past that has been left uncared for.

Outside the cyclone of abuse, there is a social structure steeling the actions of abus-

hitting her torso where bruises will not show. With a blind partner, this could mean putting obstacles in her path so she will trip and fall. With a frail partner who is too neurologically impaired to express consent, this could mean using body weight to hold her down during sex even while she tries to resist by stiffening her body and pushing weakly with her forearms, then forcing the sex in a way that physically harms her.

Advocates working with disabled victims of IPV must redefine the list of what constitutes IPV, tailoring it to an individual's disabilities just as the abuser has probably done. Abusers will sometimes use the minimum amount of force to maintain power and control, and this minimum amount of force used on a disabled victim—though it may cause substantial injury—might not fit neatly into legal definitions of abuse. Coersion and threats to a disabled partner could involve threatening to withdraw basic support, an act that can be more dangerous to a person with a disability than a violent beating. Intimidation tactics might include harming or mistreating a service animal. Economic abuse might include embezzling funds from a disabled partner who can't fill out a deposit slip, or giving her lavish gifts of adaptive equipment the state won't pay for to encourage her dependence. Physical abuse might consist of rough handling when transferring someone out of a wheelchair, or over-medicating. Sexual abuse might include forced abortion, inappropriate touching during bathing or dressing, or put downs about a disabled person's sexuality. Neglect can include withholding care, medication, or life-sustaining attention. Denying the person's feelings might include attributing injuries to the disability itself ("You're just touch-sensitive! That didn't hurt."). Many forms of abuse against people with disabilities—particularly those against some of the most vulnerable groups, such as the developmentally disabled—involve discrediting a person's own voice when she tries

to convey her experience.

Activists have to think about the creative ways that abusers are maniacal and get away with it. Abusers sail through life, therapy, and the court systems with a "not as bad as that guy" philosophy. Their rationalizations are endless, and they can often pass off controlling behaviors toward a disabled partner as "concern." If they can convince themselves or others that looking through a partner's garbage, monitoring his phone calls and mileage, and insisting to know what he does every waking hour is not abuse, they will. For a disabled person confined mostly to a home or bed, such acts of control can be a replication of the inherent suffering the disability might already create. Most people will believe the abuser's pleas that she was simply trying to protect the (ungrateful) disabled victim.

At every juncture, society is complicit in the abuse of disabled victims. For example, an abuser will isolate a victim of IPV. If that victim is wheelchair-bound, and very few venues in town are wheelchair-accessible, the abuser is not the only one isolating her: society has shut her out by relinquishing responsibility for accommodation. When she comes forward with her abuse, her peers might side with the abuser because they are, through inaction, supporting a similar agenda. When the abuser talks about all he has done for his victim—as abusers are prone to do—and the list includes bathing her, driving her to medical appointments, and hand-dispensing medication, people might view him as a hero. This reflects the deep threads of ableism in our culture, which believes that basic, hands-on care for most disabled people is exceptional, and should not be socially mandated.

People often believe that disability empowerment means taking a "just like me" attitude that presumes a disabled person wouldn't want exceptional treatment—even if that

treatment is fragrance free accommodation or a sign language interpreter or, more subtly, acknowledgement of someone's physical vulnerability. The differences in human vulnerability can be huge, especially when talking about IPV dynamics that involve power and control. To sidestep this fact pretty much denies the entire reality of people with disabilities and reinforces a mentality that only

disability calls, because time is of the essence when stopping abuse and people should not have to beg for access. Meanwhile, as time passes, more victims of IPV will become disabled. It is not uncommon for initially able-bodied victims of IPV to become temporarily or permanently disabled by physical injuries inflicted by abusers, or to develop ongoing psychiatric disabilities caused by the abuse. These survivors are at high risk for re-traumatization that might incorporate the disability. The underpinnings of abuse have to do with distorted notions of strength and weakness, with the essence of bullying. IPV activists must ferret out inequities in their own organizations, to take a concrete stance against the exploitation of privilege. Disability is a central issue in IPV. The ability to convey the gestalt of a traumatic experience to a receptive witness, and validation that truly comprehends the difference in vulnerability, helps disabled victims of IPV to step out of the fury and into a safe future.

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I begged her to stop.

I was paralyzed by the memories of one of the times that I'd been raped. The angle of her hand as she pumped my cunt sent me spinning backwards to another time. Since I wasn't with that man, and I was lying in my own bed, in my own house, and I wasn't 10 anymore, I was able to whisper "Please! Stop!"

Jo continued to fuck me. She was leaning over me, and her face was so close that I could smell her honey calendula lotion. Surely she must have heard me. "Please baby- please stop"

"Why?" She said, not stopping. "I'm comfortable"

My eyes bugged out and I combated all of the different feelings that came up for me, including wanting to please her, being scared that she would be mad at me, feeling guilty for being damaged and ultimately, anger.

"Get the fuck off me!" I yelled.

Finally, she did.

It certainly wasn't the worst thing that had ever happened to me, but it wasn't what I expected my girlfriend to do.

One night, she asked me to tell her my abuse history. I told her everything. I especially tried to explain the things that set me off, the triggers that led to my disassociating from my body. When I finished, she started talking about how she can understand triggers. She began to cry. She told me that she got triggered when her girlfriends didn't have sex with her every night. I continued

friend of ours approach her. Jo vehemently denied everything. It wasn't long after that this that the mutual friend wouldn't discuss it with me anymore. Despite her previously acknowledging and agreeing that the behavior was suspect, she stopped communicating with me about it and then seemed to become better friends with her.

Even when I realized I was being stalked I was never willing to involve the police. Jo easily passed as a male, and she's a person of color. The small town, however "progressive", was still run by a bunch of white people. I had no faith that she would be treated fairly. She also would be facing the possibility of the police beating her up or some other horrendous acts. In addition, the queer scene that we were a part of was primarily white. There were a lot of us working to be accountable, but we were far from the majority. I was concerned about her safety with them as well. I knew that that she would have been exposed to a level of danger and potential abuse far higher than what I was experiencing.

I made myself get used to seeing her all over the place, and I begin to numb out and move on. A year and a half later, I was asked by a local activist named Sean if I wanted to participate in an intervention to hold my ex-girlfriend accountable for her actions in the community. He explained that there was a string of people that have claimed that she had stalked them, scared them, or had bad boundaries with them over the years, the most recent being his girlfriend. AND, he also told me that Jo was now officially moving to the small town where I lived.

I spoke with his girlfriend, and we compared stories; they were practically identical. She said that she was going to be a part of the intervention. I began to get excited at the idea of some recognition, some honesty from Jo, and some safety

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very common, detrimental- and sometimes deadly stereotype. Jo's new love interest is also a person of color, and, as a white person, I struggled with finding language to discuss the incidences, the behavior, acknowledge the racial stereotypes, honor Jo's feeling that I was being racist, take responsibility for where I had privilege and name her behavior- all at the same time.

Sean and the other people involved decided it was best to handle it one on one. They each set up a time to meet with her alone and discuss their concerns, and they all ended things amicably and discretely. That wasn't a comfortable choice for me; I couldn't do it. I hadn't had any one on one contact with her in over a year, and I didn't want to start now. Then, the activists literally disappeared, leaving me to defend vicious rumors about how I was a racist, and was out to get her and had been plotting to hurt and ruin her for no reason. I no longer had the support and proof of "people coast to coast" who had experienced similar things". Not only that, I was dealing with the emotional ramifications of an old wound torn open and constantly being triggered by her presence.

I felt abandoned. I felt defensive, and I was angry as hell with the so-called "concerned activists" that had initiated the process. I never felt safe in my community again. I never knew what was being said behind my back. People would seek me out to talk to me when my ex would do something that they felt uncomfortable about, and then I would see them hanging out the next day, so I didn't really know who to trust, outside of a few very, very good friends. I retreated, and moved soon after. As the old story goes, the illusion of a close-knit and caring community committed to social justice was just that: an illusion. To this day, I hear that my ex continues to thrive in the same tiny town. As far as I know, she has never openly taken responsibility for any of her actions.

As I have been writing this story, it is clear to me that the feeling of being abandoned by my community is the wound that still lingers. Being left alone was awful. It was irresponsible. It was wrong. Leaving the victim with no support system is unacceptable, and as a community, we should work very hard on making sure that this doesn't happen. If you can't continue doing it, then find someone who can, or make sure that they have a counselor. Survivors already, I
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How do we take these questions and actions into a more therapeutic realm? For instance, I have worked with sex offenders, facilitating therapy groups and doing case management. If there's one thing that is clear to me, it's that talking things through, and really getting to the bottom of a compulsive romantic/sexual behavior takes an incredible amount of hard work, support, and help from a skilled practitioner of some kind. Who and where are these facilitators in our communities?

Where and how do race and abuse overlap? How do we talk about them? My ex is one of a few People of Color in the community. She is brave. I don't know the myriad struggles that she and other POC face, apart from what they have chosen to tell me, and what I have been privileged to] o om She s it that she f_lt because of he her- race. I ion't" o ! that" o I/ elto/ thatOa O f a O/ I/ M

“I’m an activist against the prison system because as the prison system works now, I’ve seen so many great ideas, lives, and spirits just completely squashed by the bureaucracy, and by the total abuse and dehumanization that goes on within these walls. It’s time we learn to stand up,” said Misty Rojo on Justice Now’s 2005 CD, *How to Survive in Prison*.
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Like so many people in prison, Rojo is a survivor of both interpersonal violence—in her case, over 10 years of partner abuse—and the state violence of policing and imprisonment. Her call invites us to create ways of living without throwing people behind prison walls: What would it mean for us to hold each other accountable for the harms we do without calling the cops? How do we transform our lives so this harm no longer happens? Can we even imagine it?

As a queer first-generation Chinese-American anti-prison organizer, I grew up not always being able to communicate with my parents or relatives about my work: how do I explain prison abolition, community-based accountability, or transformative justice in Chinese? Who should and can I be out with, as queer and as a survivor?

I wrote an earlier version of this article in 2004 for *Colorlines* Magazine (www.colorlines.com). Sharing the article with my mother was simultaneously a building moment and a reminder that even when communicating in the same language, in this case English, we know different words and have varying comfort levels in using them, and I was communicating in language and stated intentions commonly shared by activist-identified communities.

Over time, I’ve realized that even if in 2004 I found barriers sharing this work with my mother, this conversation about the need to vision beyond bars takes place everywhere we are building and practicing *Abolition*. Now, when my mother and I are out to dinner with family friends who as]

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my understanding of my childhood also has shown me that in many ways, the hardest work begins at home, and that accountability to people in our daily lives is integral to being accountable to the work of transformation.

Building the Movement

Those of us targeted by policing and imprisonment—communities of color, immigrant, poor and working-class, queer and trans, and disability communities—have long had reason to not turn to these systems for support around the violence and harm we face, and to instead create our own interventions.

This need has become all the more urgent with the increased surveillance and policing after 9/11. In Atlanta, Georgia, the South Asian anti family violence organization Raksha launched Breaking the Silence after the PATRIOT Act and increased deportations targeting the immigrant and refugee communities. “We have to think about the impact law enforcement has had in our communities,” said Priyanka Sinha, community education director at Raksha. “People don’t feel safe; our families have been broken up.”

In recent memory, our movements have amplified our collective analysis and articulation of this need, answering Angela Davis’ call on *H\YK YH UhGYg'I g': fYY* to “begin to think about the state as a perpetrator of violence against women, and understand the connections between intimate violence, private violence, state violence, prison violence, and military violence.” Since organizers working with the prison abolition organization Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence collaborated five years or so ago to write the joint statement, “Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex,” the prison abolition and prisoner rights’ movements have amplified

our analysis of how gender oppression and state violence intersect, and seen a proliferation of organizing with and advocacy for people in women’s prisons and a marked growth in this work with trans and gender variant people in men’s and women’s prisons. We’ve taken seriously the task of engaging in dialogue and work with the anti-violence movements to end interpersonal violence.

And radical and progressive networks within the anti-domestic and sexual violence movements today commonly acknowledge

Sara Kershner, G5's director, said of the last several years that "what we've been able to do put child sexual abuse, intimate and community violence more on the map as a political project" and to articulate their vision for transformative justice. Most recently, G5 distributed its document, "Towards Transformative Justice: A Liberatory Approach to Child Sexual Abuse" at the United States Social Forum. A call for people to engage in

also have much learning and growth to do in terms of responding to harms directed at us from outside of our immediate networks: How do we hold people accountable for the harm they do when we don't have interpersonal relationships?

In this moment, we have few, if any options for responses to racist, sexist, queerphobic

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Sexual violence is often treated as a hyper-delicate issue that can only be addressed by trained professionals such as law enforcement or medical staff. Survivors are considered “damaged,” pathologized beyond repair. Aggressors are perceived of as “animals,” un-

Dehumanization of aggressors contributes to a larger context of oppression for everyone. For example, alienation and dehumanization of the offending person increases a community's vulnerability to being targeted for disproportional criminal justice oppression through heightening the "monster-ness" of another community member. This is especially true for marginalized communities (such as people of color, people with disabili-

may react.

Organizers must also plan for supporting the survivor and themselves. It is easy to become

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organizers, or the desire for the organizers to be anonymous for fear of backlash, we sometimes do not make a plan to relay the specific steps for accountability to the aggressor. Publicly asserting that the person raped another, insisting that he must be accountable for the act, and convincing others in the community to be allies to your process may all be important aspects of the accountability plan – but they are only the beginning of any plan. Public shaming may be a tool that makes sense for your group, but it is not an end for an accountability process. An aggressor can be shamed, but remain unaccountable for his behavior. Organizers must be grounded in the potential of their own collective power, confident about their specific] s mu

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tions in the organizing space about the size of women's genitals as it relates to their ethnicity. The young women also asserted that institutional sexism within the space was a serious problem at Youth Empowered. Young women had fewer leadership opportunities and their ideas were dismissed.

Organizers at CARA met with Dan in an effort to share with him our concerns and begin an accountability process, but he was resistant. Women of color who were Dan's friends, who did not want to believe that Dan was capable of this behavior, chose to protect Dan from being confronted. Instead, several young women were surprised by an unscheduled meeting within Youth Empowered, facilitated by an older woman of color, where they were bullied into "squashing" their concerns about Dan. They were accused of spreading lies and told that they should be grateful for the organizing opportunities afforded to them by Dan. In one of these meetings, a young woman was shown a letter from the police department that criticized Dan about organizing a ra

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The first meetings with these women went very well. The CARA representative was clear that her organization's analysis was that Dan had a serious problem with sexual harassment, and we were specifically concerned about the fact that he was working with young people. We were specifically concerned about Dan's engagement with young people because of the power Dan had in choosing which young person would get internships, go to out of town conferences, or receive leadership opportunities. Dan's friend received the information with very little defensiveness and was eager to have more conversations about Dan's behavior. This one-on-one strategy seemed to relax the tension between the two progressive organizations; instead we became three sistas intentionally unpacking the problem of misogyny in our community.

The outcome of these meetings was the healing of the strategic relationship between our organizations, which was important for movement building, but we still had not moved to a place where we could hold Dan accountable. We struggled with the specific thing we wanted to see happen. The women whom he'd sexually harassed were not asking for anything in particular; they understandably just wanted to be left alone. We decided that we did not want him ejected from the activist community, but that it was not safe for him to mentor young people.

It was at this time that a young 17 year old Black woman, Keisha, connected with us through Rashad, a young 17 year old Black man who was organizing both with CARA and with Youth Empowered. (Rashad was referred to CARA through Dan's organization because the rift between the two groups had significantly healed. If we had not accomplished this, Keisha may not have found CARA.) Keisha was an intern at Youth Empowered and had written a four-page let-

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ternship. Keisha, being the youngest person at the meeting, was mostly intimidated and silenced by these hurtful tactics. The CARA organizer who was there, however, carefully challenged each attempt to discredit Keisha. We continued to support Keisha during and after this meeting.

Keisha's letter, however, had a strong ripple effect that continued to impact Youth Empowered. The Youth Empowered organizer who had been talking with CARA was moved by Keisha's letter, and committed to figuring out an accountability plan for Dan that made sense for her organization. She began to organize discussions to clarify the issues that included organizers from CARA, Dan, and organizers from Youth Empowered. These conversations were very different than when we had started. We no longer had to convince folks that institutional sexism existed in the organization, or that Dan's behavior was a form of sexualized violence. Dan eventually resigned from his mentorship position at the organization, but we don't know if this was because of the pressure created by Keisha's letter and CARA's stronger connections with women of color at Youth Empowered. With his absence, the new leadership at Youth Empowered began to more confidently address the institutional sexism issues within the organization.

Although we think that this work has created a safer environment at Youth Empowered, Dan still has not been accountable for his behavior. That is to say, he has not admitted that what he did was wrong or taken steps to reconcile with the people who he targeted at Youth Empowered. However, at the time of writing, we expect that he'll continue to go to these meetings where these conversations about sexual violence (including his own) will be discussed in the context of building a liberation movement for all Black people.

Working The Principles: In the above sce-

underestimated in this particular scenario. Because the behavior was not intensely violent, such as sexual assault, we we(

of accountability work. Perhaps the type of strategy is not a good match for the culture of the group. As this group moved into a different direction that focused more on raising consciousness and building stronger community connections, we noticed a significant revival in the energy of the organizers.

Finally, we think that the most important principle that made a difference in this community's work was when they presented a critical analysis of sexual violence and rape culture to the larger community of rock musicians and alternative artists. It seemed important to sap the arrogance of the newspaper's uncritical defense of Lou, given how much influence the newspaper has within the larger community. We also think that creating and sharing the statement was important in light of the group's flyer strategy. There's very little one can say on a flyer and sexual violence can be very complicated. Their statement did a great job of demonstrating the full dimension of sexual violence by weaving in the survivors' voices in their own words, using statistical information to show why people do not believe survivors, and presenting a liberatory vision of accountability and justice.

Some members of the community may regret that they were ultimately unable to compel Lou to follow their demands. However, CARA feels that it's not unreasonable to think that their work did have a significant impact on Lou. After experiencing the full force of collective organizing which asserted that his behavior was unacceptable, we venture to guess that Lou might be less likely to act in manipulative and abusive ways. In any case, we think their work may have also compelled other members of the community to think critically about the way in which consent operates in their sexual encounters, which is important work in preventing future sexual violence. Also, it's important to remember that this community did in fact

stay with their accountability process for the long-haul – they now simply have their sights set higher than Lou.

Scenario Three: Marisol is a young, radical Chicana activist who organizes with CARA as well as the local chapter of a national Chicano activist group, Unido. While attending an overnight, out-of-town conference with Unido, a young man, Juan, sexually assaulted her. When she returned home, she shared her experience with organizers at CARA. She told us how hurt and confused she felt as a result of the assault, especially since it happened in the context of organizing at Unido. The organizers validated her feelings and supported her to engage in a healing process. We then began to talk with her more about Unido to get a better grasp on the culture of the organization as a whole and if they had the tools to address sexual violence as a problem in their community.

Marisol realized that she needed to discuss the problem with other young women at Unido. Through conversations with them, she learned that Juan had an on-going pattern of sexually assaulting other young women organizing with Unido. She found three other women who had had similar experiences with the same activist. This information led Marisol to organize an emergency meeting with the women of Unido to discuss the problem. At this meeting, she learned that this behavior had been happening for years and women before her tried to address it and demand that Juan be ejected from the position of power he possessed within the organization. However, though Unido's leadership had talked to the Juan about his behavior, there was no real follow-up and no consequences.

The young Chicanas of Unido decided to devise a plan to confront Unido's largely male leadership about the problem of sexual violence in general and Juan's behavior specifi-

negotiate itself through a complex process that has multiple components. While organizers should be committed to some fundamental political principles (womanism/feminism, anti-racism, proqueer, etc.), and can build on the organizing principles we have listed above, the context of any situation will likely be complex, and therefore organizers must also be flexible enough to modify and improve tactics as the process unfolds.

To underscore the need for jazziness, we want to briefly explore a problem that comes up frequently in community accountability work: how do the community and the organizers think about the *WYX/VJ* of survivors and of aggressors? Because of oppression, people of color, women, young people, queer people, and people with disabilities are often not believed when] “ res

When I stumbled upon the work of UBUNTU and Alexis Pauline Gumbs (at iambecauseweare.blogspot.com and broken-beautifulpress.blogspot.com) I was simply blown away. UBUNTU is a coalition based in Durham, NC and lead by women of color, queers and survivors, that came together to respond to the aftermath of a sexual assault perpetrated by members of the Duke University lacrosse team on several Black, female sex workers (who are also honor students, mothers, lovers, and community members) the team had hired to dance at a party (who were also c...
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trusted from her spiritual community, who also came to the home, and made sure that she was able to receive medical care. She also arranged for members of our UBUNTU family to have a tea session with the young woman to talk about healing and options, to share our experiences, to embrace the young woman and to let her know that she wasn't alone in her healing process.

In each case these responses were invented on the spot... without a pre-existing model or a logistical agreement. But they were also made possible by a larger agreement that we as a collective of people living all over the city are committed to responding to gendered violence. This comes out of the political education and collective healing work that we have done, and the building of relationships that strongly send the message... you can call me if you need something, or if you don't. You can call me to be there for you... or someone that you need help being there for. I think it is very important that we have been able to see each other as resources so that when we are faced with violent situations we don't think our only option is to call the state.

In that way (and this leads into the next question) everything that we do to create community, from childcare to community gardening (our new project!), to community dinners, to film screenings, to political discussions helps to clarify how, why, and how deeply we are ready to be there for each other in times of violence and celebration.

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we have built informal mechanisms to offer
childcare, trade massages,]bà mdcetrqyr folc,4”

INCITE! Community Accountability Fact Sheet

HOW DO WE ADDRESS VIOLENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES?

We are told to call the police and rely on the criminal justice system to address violence within our communities. However, if police and prisons facilitate or perpetrate violence against us rather than increase our safety, how do we create strategies to address violence within our communities, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse, that don't rely on police or prisons?

Developing community-based responses to violence is one critical option. Community accountability is a community-based strategy, rather than a police/prison-based strategy, to address violence within our communities. Community accountability is a process in which a community – a group of friends, a family, a church, a workplace, an apartment complex, a neighborhood, etc – work together to do the following things:

Create and affirm **VALUES & PRACTICES** that resist abuse and oppression and encourage safety, support, and accountability

Develop sustainable strategies to **ADDRESS COMMUNITY MEMBERS' ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR**, creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior

Commit to ongoing development of all members of the community, and the community itself, to **TRANSFORM THE POLITICAL CONDITIONS** that reinforce oppression and violence

Provide **SAFETY & SUPPORT** to community members who are violently targeted that **RESPECTS THEIR SELF-DETERMINATION**

Selections from the 2005 Report from INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence

Ad-Hoc Community Accountability Working Group Meeting

February 7-8, 2004 Seattle, WA

Sponsored by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence

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How Is Gender Oppression within Progressive, Radical, Revolutionary Movement(s) Maintained, Supported, Encouraged?

Patriarchy: The Root of Gender Oppression

The system of patriarchy is the root of gender oppression. We all exist within a system of oppression which assumes rigid gender binaries of women and men, female and male; which values males and the male-identified and devalues female and the female-identified; which assumes heterosexual normativity; which delegates men/boys/male-identified to roles and positions which have higher status and levels of decision-making than women/girls/female-identified; which assume male values as universal and given. This system of patriarchy intersects with racism, classism, homophobia/heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, ageism, nativism (anti-immigrants) to oppress women of color/queer people of color. Ultimately, it oppresses us all. Despite our commitment to social justice and liberation, we as activists, organizations and movement are not immune.

Gender oppression is not just an act, it's a state of mind and a way of doing. The patterns of power and control, acts of abuse and

violence, and cultures and conditions tolerating, condoning, encouraging and perpetrating abuse and violence appear to follow certain patterns.

Tools for Maintaining Gender Oppression: Denial, Minimizing, Victim-Blaming, Counter-Organizing

Patriarchy upholds and supports gender oppression. Four primary tools for maintaining gender oppression and for avoiding accountability are: 1) Denial; 2) Minimizing; 3) Victim-Blaming; and 4) Counter-Organizing.

1) Denial

Our progressive, radical, revolutionary people of color as individuals, organizations and movement (just as the rest of the world) have been pretty good at denying that gender oppression exists.

What can denial look like?

Silence

ing into the hands of the race/class/nation enemy.

2) Minimizing

Our progressive, radical, revolutionary people of color as individuals, organizations and movements (just as the rest of the world) have been pretty good at minimizing gender oppression as an issue or minimizing situations/acts/patterns of gender oppression.

What can minimizing look like?

Putting issues, acts, or patterns of gender oppression on the back burner (forever)

Viewing issues, acts, or patterns of gender oppression as individual, personal, private rather than acts of gender oppression requiring public and collective responsibility and solutions

Writing issues, acts, or patterns of gender oppression off as a misunderstanding.

Writing sexual harassment or assault off as dating, asking someone out

Writing domestic or intimate partner violence off as fighting, an argument, they have problems, they both have problems, she should just leave him (or her)

Viewing any issue of gender oppression (which requires more than abstract talk) as taking away from the real and/or important work

Hoping that it goes away or the people raising or causing the issues go away

Addressing it very ineffectually (and knowing it)

3) Victim-Blaming

Our progressive, radical, revolutionary people of color as individuals, organizations and movements (just as the rest of the world) have been pretty good at blaming the victim or others who call for accountability when

gender oppression as an issue or a situation of gender oppression arises. This blaming the victim or allies is often combined with denial and minimizing.

What can victim-blaming look like?

Calling the people (usually women) raising the issue of gender abuse, oppression or violence bourgeois, middle class white feminist, dividing the movement, destroying unity, lynching, taking us away from the real or serious work, a race/class/nation enemy

good at counter-organizing. And counter-organizing can involve a higher level of the devaluation, deceit, and manipulation which are all also a part of the dynamics of gender oppression and avoidance of accountability.

What can counter-organizing look like?

Harassing, demeaning, denouncing, gossiping about, spreading rumors and lies about, or threatening to do these things to women who raise the issue of gender oppression either as survivors/victims or as allies

Demoting, firing or threatening to demote or fire women who raise the issue of gender oppression either as survivors/victims or as allies

Isolating or discrediting persons who raise concerns and/or call for accountability

Questioning the legitimacy of concerns to detract from the need to be accountable

Questioning the legitimacy of the accountability process to detract from the need to be accountable

Accusing others of abuse in order to call attention away from own accountability

Denying, minimizing, victim blaming, and plain-old lying about doing any of these things when called on it

More on Counter-Organizing or What Is the Opposite of Accountability?

People who commit acts of gender oppression, abuse, and violence can add on all sorts of additional manipulative behavior in order to: 1) Make sure their victims/survivors don't do anything back, 2) Make sure they don't

those who try to do something to raise the issue or confront them

Threaten to sue, call the police, call INS, report to funders

Claim that they are being a victim may refer to being a victim of white feminists, being victim to the race/class enemy

Claim that the accusations are personal gripes, individual issues, power-plays

Apologize and think that's all they have to do

Apologize and then get mad if they have to do anything else

Say that they didn't know and expect this to be all they have to do

Say that it's a misunderstanding and expect this to be all they have to do

Say they didn't mean it and expect this to be all they have to do

Cry (can look like remorse but can be a way to get people to feel sorry for them)

Start making excuses for their behavior (not to explain or understand, but to excuse their behavior and avoid accountability) (bad childhood, stress, too much work, too much responsibility, they're so dedicated to the movement)

Try to meet with the victim/survivor as a good-will gesture or as a way to be direct and honest (but really to interrogate/intimidate them)

Use leaders sometimes from outside of the community to back them up, e.g., white allies with power and a reason to back up a person of color to look good especially when the survivor/victim is someone less powerful

Use relationships with respected folks within the movement to back them up, prove that they cannot be abusers, shield them from accountability

Quit or leave immediately if they think they have to take some accountability (not for reasons of the victim/survivor's safety or because it's the right thing to do, but because they want to avoid accountability)

Use delaying tactics until everyone gets worn out.

And It Can Get Even Sneakier and Nastier

Some oppressive, abusive, and violent people (mostly men/boys/male-identified but also

organization, and the movement for safety and healing. Do you want additional support? Should your organization be providing leave time? Support for counseling? A space for you to be heard?

3) Think about the role of the organization in addressing accountability and reparations. Accountability for oppression/abuse is different for different people, for different situations. Do you want a statement of accountability and apology? Do you want it public? Do you want it written? Do you want a supportive space for your abuser to hear and understand what you have experienced? Do you want a public statement from your organization?

4) Think about how you want to be involved in the process of accountability. Do you want to be involved in every step? Do you want to be involved in specific aspects of the process?

4) How serious?

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ily, co-workers, comrades whom you trust, ask them to help you to take accountability, not to help you avoid accountability.

5) Take accountability for full reparations. Consider what you need to do to take accountability including full public apology, offering resources (including money) to the survivor/organization to help with healing/reparations for the abuse, counseling, leave

This article is a mixed bag of strategies and stories of how some folks have chosen to deal with abusers in their communities. Like any potluck, it is a mix of different folks have brought to the table. Graze through this list, seeing what feels tasty for you. But before you start, you have to grab a plate and some utensils, which are these three questions:

three questions to start out with, whatever your situation:

1. What does the survivor, need to feel safe? (Answers may change over a month, year or day.) They may include: needing the abuser to leave a position of community leadership; I won't share a stage with her; I need people to walk me to my house.
2. Who are your allies? Who are people the abuser will listen to?
3. What does the abuser value? Their reputation, home, job, staying out of jail?

And then: some of many dishes on the buffet:

Community restraining order: One queer Asian activist was being harassed by an ex (white, male and straight) partner who would not leave her]
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cooked for myself, went to the library, found a free therapist through a local DV support group,

not stop the abuser from returning. And without strong community based communication, nothing is stopping the abuser from continuing to abuse in a new, fresh community. Issues of trashing and believability can come up.

Outing: Some people have talked about creating lists of abusers and posting them publicly. This idea holds so much fire and resonance for me. When I was a baby riot grrl, one of the first young feminist actions I heard of was of a bathroom at a college where women started writing the names of their abusers on the inside of a bathroom stall. As a young survivor, this action set me on fire- that girls my age were actually coming together and fucking saying what everyone knew was going on and nobody talked about.

But a decade and a half later, I have questions. I still want survivors to be able to name our abusers and say out loud what everyone knows (or doesn't know) is going on. And I also want the process to feel sane and clear. One thing attempts to deal with abusers inside community are always dogged by is accusations g!

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Checklist for Intersex and Trans Survivors

Here is a checklist you can use to help determine if you are in an abusive relationship. This list was adopted from several similar lists developed by different organizations, plus some questions specific to intersex and trans survivors added by Survivor Project. Does your partner...

- isolate you from your family and friends?
- grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- call you "it" or other pronouns not preferred by you?
- touch where you do not want to be touched?
- negate your personal decisions?
- force you to engage in sexual acts you don't want?
- intimidate or threaten you to gain compliance?
- sabotage your medical treatment, or coerce you into treatment you don't want?
- threaten to take away children?
- demand detailed explanations of where you were and how you spent your money?
- ridicule how your body looks?
- tell you that nobody would love you?
- tell you that you are not a real man/woman?
- blame you for how they feel or act?
- threaten to "out" you to your employer, friends or family members?
- tell you that nobody would believe you?
- break or hide things that are important to you?
- force you to engage in sex work, or force you not to?
- eroticize/fetishize your body against your will?

Do you...

- feel like you are walking on eggshell, trying not to upset your partner?
- feel that you must change yourself in order to help your partner change?
- almost always do what your partner wants you to do rather than what you really want to do?
- stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you leave?
- feel like all these abuses are somehow your own fault?

their own actions. The following account by J.E. is an example of this tactic:

“Recently, the batterer who was my lover six years ago called me up on the phone. I was surprised to hear her voice. Though I have asked her not to call, a few times a year she phones me anyway. It had been several years since I talked to her in person.

“I thought: What does she want? I feel suspi M2 M n.

battered lesbians.

Our community can help stop lesbian battering. We can begin re-evaluating the terms we use which perpetuate violence against battered lesbians. We can support the healing of both survivors and batterers by insisting that batterers and community alike not be allowed to hide behind the misconception of “mutual abuse.” The lesbian batterer needs to be told that violence is not acceptable and will not be tolerated in our community.

About the author: Karen uses a pseudonym in order to protect herself from the possible reprisal by either the batterer or her community for “coming out” about lesbian battering. She wishes to thank all those who have given their support and encouragement during this often difficult process of being “heard.”

When your parents make you, it is Chile, 1974
They think they will raise you in a revolutionary sunlight
but you are born in a refugee camp to a mother alone
as your father sits in Pinochet's prison

When you show me the one photograph of your childhood
you are four. Your delicate face spreads like sunrise
as you eye stare away, wide open and fully disassociated
At the refugee kitchen table
your mother rocks thick black eyeliner and wings of hair
holding a cigarette over a smile insisting
She looks like her hummingbird heart is about to explode
Your father grips her heart
like a cigarette between his fingers
He is the one about the explode
Your heart flies off someplace else

He is the M fu] hey to ex

You have the Angry Brigade and *H\ YK fYH WYX cZH Y9Ufh* in your bookcase
We tag *DYd/HU* and *7\ UbW/hc : +* on the walls of the underpass
The security guards tell us to stop kissing in the lobby

You pull out your knife as we try to have sex in the playground
when a man jumps out with his dick in hand
You tell me you've always wanted to die
but feed me, give me books
I've never been this happy

I pull you back from the window,
jam my shoulder in the door
to the room where you're trying to cut your wrists with a pink daisy razor

everyone has thought you were crazy for so long
you're bi, talk about abuse, being crazy
Being lightskinned tortures you
like an itch that never once stops
You try to rip your eyeballs out of their sockets
because you think they're blue
You sneer, at least when they think you're white they think you're Italian.

I meet your mother and she and your dad take us out
before the food comes you and your dad are circling each other
in the street. go on, hit your old man
this is why you left
but almost 10 years later you want your parents
You start to say that, after all
your father was driving a cab all night

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cal dialogue, and community organizing to undermine rape, abuse, and oppression. They have done and continue to do crucial, groundbreaking work on transforming partner abuse and sexual assault within communities.

info@cara-seattle.org
Phone: 206.322.4856
ty/fax: 206.323.4113
801-23rd Ave S, Suite G-1
Seattle, WA 98144

UBUNTU: *JUa VWi gYk YfYk cfXdfYgg'Wa*

UBUNTU was born in the aftermath of the March 13, 2006 rape of a Durham, NC Black woman by members of the Duke University Lacrosse team. UBUNTU is a Women of Color and Survivor-led coalition of individuals and organizational representatives. We prioritize the voices, analyses, and needs of Women of Color and Survivors of sexual violence in both our internal structure and our external work. We are Women, Men, and people who do not fit into the gender binary. We are non-trans and trans. We are People of Color, Multi-racial, and White. We come from throughout the Triangle area and have roots both within and outside of the United States. We are sex workers, students and community members. We are workers. We are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirit, and Questioning. We are Queer and Straight. We are youyoM_ Snd S We We! M M S!

and confidential. They include support groups, individual counseling, legal advocacy, shelter referrals, safety planning, basic needs assistance, community education and community organizing. PO Box 18436 Seattle, WA 98118; (206) 568.7777; TTY message: (206) 517.9670; info@nwnetwork.org

Asian Women's Shelter: *k k k "gZuk g'cf/*

AWS is a survivor-centered organization that works toward an extended family model: our shelter offers and coordinates a network of services that meets the holistic needs of survivors of violence. Domestic violence occurs when women are living in social isolation. We tell them: "You are not alone." We reach out to them, acknowledging that the survivor situation is intimately tied to family, society, culture, and economic situation. AWS has a toll-free, crisis hotline, 1-877-751-0880. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Sistersong: *k k k "g]ghf gcb/ "bYh*

A North America wide organization, based in Atlanta, of women and girls and trans people of color working towards reproductive justice. Reproductive justice is defined as "is the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, economic, and social well-being of women and girls, and will be achieved when women and girls have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about our bodies, sexuality and reproduction for ourselves, our families and our communities in all areas of our lives."

Partner abuse in activist community publications:

INCITE Community Accountability Principles: www.incite-national.org/index.php?s=93

INCITE Special Report on community accountability within activist communities of color: www.incite-national.org/index.php?s=94

Sexual Assault in Activist Communities: Special Issue of The Peak. the University of Guelph's student newspaper. This came out in 2003, but back issues are still available. Contact : The Peak, UC Rm 236, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Survivor stories:

@YHf g'lc 'A Ufh U Hanalei Ramos. (Self-published: contact Hanaleihanalei@gmail.com)

"Kicking Down Jane's Door", in *K Uf ']b 'h YB Y] \ Vcf \ ccX*, Seth Tobocman

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"What did he hit you with? the doctor said," by Chrystos, in *8fYa 'Cb*, Press Gang, Vancouver

: *JfYDck Yf*, Chrystos. Press Gang: 1996.

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G\ci hCi h`K ca Yb`cZ7c`cf`F YgdcX`h`J]c`YbW, edited by Maria Ochos and Barbara Ice. Seal: 2008

7cbei Ygh Andrea Smith

Articles:

“Violence in intimate relationships: a feminist perspective” in *HU_]b[`6UW. h`]b_]b[ZÁ]! b]gžh]b_]b[`VUW*, by bell hooks. South End Press

“Keeping Safe: Native women mobilize their own coalition against domestic violence” by Andrea Smith, in *7c`cf`]bYg* Summer 2002

“Closeted Violence” (about queer DV), by Celina de Leon, *7c`cf`]bYg`A U[Un]bYž* September 2006

““The Silence Surrounding Queer Sexual Violence and Why We’re Not Talking” by Elizabeth Latty, in *K Y8cb]B YX`5bch` Y`K Uj Y*, edited by Melody Berger, Seal Press, 2007.

“How to support a survivor of a sexual assault,” by UBUNTU, *]Ua VWi gYk YUFYÚ Yg`k cfX! dfYgg`Wa #&SS+#S&#g] fj]j cf!g] ddcfhVcc_`Y%`dXZ*

Self-help books for survivors:

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About the Editors:

Ching-In Chen is the author of *H\ Y< YUHS*
HfUZUW (Arktoi Books/Red Hen Press, 2009).
Past occupations include karaoke singer,
flautist, 1st grade literacy teacher, com-
munity organizer, construction job counsel-
or, and a severely lost person in the Rocky
Mountains. Her poems have appeared or are
forthcoming in

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B Yk 'Ei Yf';]f`K f]h]b[(ed. Michelle Tea),