



Transformative Justice

Red Rose Collective

TW: Mentions of SA



Introduction: Context

Gender Based violence is normalized within our current capitalistic context. Throughout the past couple of decades, various movements have formed to deal with sexual violence. **Can you think of one?**

Introduction: Context

In our current framework, sexual violence and violence generally is supposed to be dealt with in court. It involves a strenuous process to ultimately “prove” to a court of unaffected people that the law was broken. How do we prove harm that took place in an interpersonal setting? It’s not completely reasonable or even possible to expect all victims to have definitive proof that their individual rights were broken. That, and we know who courts tends to side with.

63% of sexual assaults are NOT reported, yet 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men in College alone experience it.

Introduction: Context in DFW

RRC became especially interested in this topic when a comrade of ours, Ziyang, released a statement naming her abuser and rapist who was the president of YDSA in 2023-2024 (Now RRC).

You can read her statement here: <https://ziyan.mataroa.blog/blog/on-abuse-part-4/> →



How did other organizations in the area react?

- Individuals who are leadership of organizations Ayeed is a part of claimed they'd launch an investigation to "clarify dynamics" between the two
- These same individuals engaged in character assassination of the survivor, claiming she was exaggerating, crazy, and that she was trying to destroy Dallas organizing
- Those same investigators cut RRC out of their investigation (despite us telling them Ziyang wanted us to be advocates for her), and they threatened RRC to take down our statement which named the abuser, and named the orgs he's part of alongside of another abuser who was outed in Ziyang's post

Given the various reactions and our commitment to seeing through accountability we began studying transformative Justice, but what is it?

What is Transformative Justice?

TJ is an intersectional and materialist approach to dismantling systems of oppression and the acts of violence they spawn. Focus is on cause, prevention, & community-building rather than punishment and alienation.

Aims to answer the question: How do we respond to violence & harm without creating more violence & harm?

It's a vast framework that can be applied to various kinds of interpersonal conflicts and harm. It is meant to be moldable to apply case by case. It is a community centered process that DOES NOT rely on the state.

Why would someone choose TJ over traditional means of seeking justice (via the state)?



What is Transformative Justice?

In short, not everyone can call the police. Within marginalized communities across the country, their first thought when harm happens isn't even to call the police, but rather to deal with it as a community. We may have just began understanding TJ, but it is something that has been practiced for generations in various disenfranchised communities who never could rely on the state.

Rather than pointing to a singular strategy, TJ aims to *transform* the very foundation of our approach to justice- to be more conversational & democratic, prioritizing the survivor's autonomy, and addressing the material conditions that contributed to the wrongdoing.

Due to it being a foundational change, it requires daily practice at every level of our organization- down to each individual! Can we practice owning our mistakes and asking for support? Talking openly and frequently about mistakes made & corrections? Can we recognize that the emotional labor required in TJ is intuitive for many of us but has been systematically devalued as feminized labor?

Why Transformative Justice?

Ultimately, even if one does go through the legal system, it does nothing to get to the root of the issue. People aren't born knowing how to harm others, instead they are learned behaviors that are taught to us by a society built upon violence. Capitalism and class society breeds, enables, and rewards violence so how do we expect locking up a couple bad people to solve anything?



Why Transformative Justice?: DFW

Ziyan herself, released her statements after her visa was revoked by the state. She fled and entered political exile shortly after her revocation. She was targeted as an immigrant who was prominent in the Pro-palestine movement in Austin.

Given her conditions, and the response from other organizations in the area, how does she seek accountability?

There have been other statements and concerns brought up by survivors in the DFW organizing scene. Why is this problem everywhere?

How do we deal with harm doers?

TJ is difficult, and perhaps the most difficult aspect of it is how to deal with harm doers. Our approach will vary case by case, but we should work towards tempering the communication of a harmful behavior or action with offers of support if they do want to change.

It is important to recognize the humanity in the harm doer, as all of us make mistakes and are capable of change.

Equally as important though, is to let them feel real consequences, understand their impact, and keep harm central.

What are the consequences? How do we determine them?

Of course, the survivor's safety and autonomy should always be centered!

How do we deal with harm doers?

Offer the reflection that they've caused harm, and give them time to reflect & update their **sense of self**. It takes time to make change. How long does it take to do the internal work? Especially for non-well-resourced people. **Individual change takes considerable time & resources (i.e. therapy, a support system, physical/mental/emotional stability).**

- **What support can we offer?**

Ultimately, understand that we cannot truly “hold people accountable”, accountability is a process that people *choose* to work through themselves.

Only offer to support those who you can actually see their transformational capacity. It is not constructive or healthy to engage in supporting someone who you don't believe wants to change.

Initial Steps

Build community and trust. Building relationships with people, constantly learning, and refraining from judging victims are the foundational goals of anyone who wants to practice transformative justice.

“What kinds of community infrastructure can we create to support more safety, transparency, sustainability, care and connection (e.g. a network of community safe houses that those in danger can use, an abundance of community members who are skilled at leading interventions to violence)?

What are the skills we need to be able to prevent, respond to, heal from, and take accountability for harmful, violent and abusive behaviors?

What do survivors and people who have caused harm need?

Why do survivors and people who have caused harm have so few options in our community?

What are some of the harmful ways that we treat each other that help set the stage for violence and abuse, and how can we change this?” (Transformharm.org)

Lessons from an Anarchist Commune

Survivor autonomy: The theoretical foundation upon which most radical support work is based. Survivor Autonomy is the concept that a survivor should be given the power and autonomy to decide for themselves how to deal with their own trauma, and that the role of supporters is to empower and encourage this autonomy.

Survivors should be centered rather than having to bear an outsized burden of communicating in the most inoffensive way to “keep the peace.” This model centers the perpetrator’s feelings and further subjugates the survivor. It is ultimately up to the perpetrator to take accountability and change no matter how the survivor chooses to communicate the crimes against them.

Lessons from an Anarchist Commune

We must evaluate our own roles in harm instead of placing all blame on the one perpetrator. Ostracizing people who do harm cannot be the only thing we do, and it only serves to clear our own conscious while refusing to analyze how we are all complicit in systems of power which lead to violence. Furthermore, only expelling the perpetrator mimics carceral forms of punishment which still do nothing to get to the SYSTEMIC issue.

We all have caused harm. We all have the capacity for abuse and for transformation. There is no true, immovable binary between survivor and perpetrator. “People’s roles are not static and systems of oppression are not congealed.”

How: Case Study (Korean Drumming Workshop)

A cultural community center in Oakland, California hosts week-long drumming workshops which are multi-gender and intergenerational. During one of these workshops, the instructor sexually assaulted a student. Instead of holding private investigations and keeping this violation to themselves, the center leaders organized a direct confrontation and members of the workshop condemned the violation and showed up to support the victim. Afterwards, they held sexual assault awareness workshops for all members and they sent a list of demands to the overarching organization. The demands were that they'd send at least 1 female drum teacher and they requested that the instructor step down initially for 6 months to attend feminist therapy sessions to get at the root of the assault he committed. It resulted in greater awareness about sexual violence amongst membership.



Inspired by this story of collective action and its concrete results, the Oakland organization implemented measures that reversed the usual silence and victim-blaming that accompany sexual assault. The annual October festival was dedicated to the theme of healing from sexual violence. Facts regarding the incident were published in the program and shared as a part of the evening's festival. This was not intended as a shaming act, although the teacher may have been shamed by it. Rather, it was a challenge to the community to take collective responsibility for ending the conditions that perpetuate violence, including collusion through silence.



How: RRC Community Forum

Following the requests of Ziyen, we held a community forum in June to allow the community to discuss these violations and support the victims. During this forum, many community members shared their own experiences with sexual violence and misogyny within various organizations across DFW.

Before this forum, RRC officership also took a step back and investigated ourselves as Ayed was previously our president when he was abusing Ziyen and when he dismissed the experiences of another victim of abuse. We were able to point to internalized misogyny within our previous officership and recounted experiences of Ayed's misogyny. Now, this accountability process has been long and not easy. Many organizations that we once had relationships with were resistant to this process. Some labeled us extreme, others threatened us to take down our post and apologize, and many of these organizations still have relationships with Ayed. **Despite these setbacks, we've inspired change within DFW. We've recently gotten into contact with some comrades who left another DFW organization because of their leadership failing to stand against sexual harassment, and as much as these other organizations try to cover it up, we know the truth.**

Conclusion

The culture is changing. Very slowly, but it is. And we must use these principles of transformative justice to bring about a new culture that doesn't shame or silence victims or resist accountability. **As we continue to educate and learn, how do we take these lessons and apply them here in Dallas?**

Sources and Further resources

[TransformHarm.org](https://transformharm.org)

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<https://libcom.org/article/betrayal-critical-analysis-rape-culture-anarchist-subcultures>

Videos:

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