

ORGANIZING FOR COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY

⇒ 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?

Work with family members of a survivor to enhance support for that person.

Community accountability 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:**

Make agreements with your friends about what to do if one of you is in an abusive relationship

Organize a “liberated ground,” mobilizing a neighborhood block by block to agree to resist rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment.



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⇒ WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY LOOK LIKE?



Art by Cristy C. Road, croadcore.org

Community-based responses to violence have a long history in many of our communities and networks, and have often been developed in contexts where we could not rely on the state or larger community to protect us from violence (such as Black communities in the slavery and post-slavery eras, immigrant communities, queer communities, and Indigenous communities). But these practices may not necessarily be called “community accountability” and can look very different depending on the circumstances.

Community accountability can be about directly addressing violence as well creating on-going practices within our relationships and broader networks that are opposed to oppression and violence. Networks of people can develop a community accountability *politic* by engaging in anti-violence/anti-oppression education, building relationships based on values of safety, respect, and self-determination, and nurturing a culture of collective responsibility, connection, and liberation. Community accountability is not just a reaction — something that we do when someone behaves violently — it is also *proactive* — something that is ongoing and negotiated among everyone in the community. This better prepares us to address violence if and when it happens. **Concrete strategies and examples of community accountability can be found in the blocks on the right and in the documents referenced below.**

⇒ IS COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY REALISTIC?

Understandably, many of us want a quick fix to end domestic and sexual violence in our communities. However, community accountability work can be difficult and complicated because of oppressive attitudes and beliefs internalized by people within our communities. Community accountability can also be hard because we are often isolated from other people, sometimes because of the abuse itself, making it difficult to work collectively to support one another as well as hold each other accountable. Doing this work can be emotionally risky or even relationship breaking. Sometimes a process can take a very long time. **For these reasons, it can be vital to create a support network when doing this work and to *work collectively*.** It is also true that engaging in intentional community accountability work can sometimes help to *build* connections with people, strengthening a collective political commitment to respectful, loving, and liberatory relationships.

Use street theater to demonstrate to community members how they could react if they see acts of violence or harassment

⇒ WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

There are many groups in the U.S. and abroad who are doing critical community accountability organizing. INCITE! members and affiliates have mobilized and written about community accountability strategies led by women of color, LGBT/queer people of color, and our communities. Please see the following documents on the resource CD attached to this toolkit:

- ⇒ INCITE! Working Document: Community Accountability Principles/Concerns/Strategies/Models
- ⇒ Community Accountability Within People Of Color Progressive Movements
- ⇒ Taking Risks: Implementing Grassroots Community Accountability Strategies
- ⇒ The Community Engagement Continuum: Outreach, Mobilization, Organizing, and Accountability to Address Violence Against Women in the Asian and Pacific Islander Communities

Do participatory action research to learn what strategies women of color and LGBT/queer folks of color think might work for them to increase their safety



Please visit www.incite-national.org for more info!