

Challenging Men, Changing Communities: Reflections on Male Supremacy and Transformative Justice

*The Challenging Male Supremacy Project (CMS)
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Since 2008, the three coauthors of this essay have been working together as the Challenging Male Supremacy Project (CMS). Thus far CMS has aimed to be an intervention into the organizing and activist communities of New York City, an effort to concretely shift the personal and political practices of cisgender (i.e., non-trans) men as well as form better allies to feminist, queer, and trans justice struggles and movements. Each of us has previously participated in organizing to end child sexual abuse, either with generationFIVE or other organizations that believe (1) there are systems of oppression that must be thoroughly transformed as part of this work, and (2) state systems are themselves purveyors of harm and will not provide useful long-term solutions to the violence within our communities.

In the account that follows, we share our collective experience of forming CMS, organizing and facilitating a nine-month “Study-into-Action” group, and holding a public event (as well as some of the political analysis that brought us to this project). We bookend the essay with a detailed, first-person account of one of our experiences supporting an accountability process—in this case, RJ’s experience co-facilitating an accountability circle around a situation of abuse and doing follow-up work for the two years since. Because one of our explicit goals is to have more cisgender men doing the work of holding other men accountable, we spend some time exploring RJ’s involvement in this accountability process, including some of the fears and uncertainties raised for him. Our intention is to explore some of the complexities of cisgender men trying to actively and explicitly challenge male privilege while at the same time systemically benefiting from it.

Through formal collaborations and individual relationships, we support the work done primarily by cisgender women, transgender, and gender non-conforming organizers to challenge male supremacist violence in transformative ways. At the same time, we believe that cisgender men must take on more of this work, rather than continuing to let it fall disproportionately upon the very people who bear the brunt of this violence. Further, we also believe that more cisgender men in activist communities need to do advanced work specifically around male privilege and violence in order to enter future organizing efforts with more shared analysis, capacity, and commitment. (We made a conscious decision to use the still somewhat unfamiliar term “cisgender” in doing this work, a term coined by transgender activists used to describe those of us who identify with the sex and gender identity we were assigned at birth and are therefore accorded certain privileges by society.^{<<1>>1}) We hope this piece illuminates some of the ways we can make our communities healthier and safer by creating liberatory responses to violence, as well as the ways that these responses can push the cisgender men involved to more deeply challenge their relationship to male privilege; we offer it as part of a broader effort to find responsible and useful roles for cis men as allies in this work.

A (not so) typical story

In 2006, two young women came together who had been lied to, and one of them sexually assaulted, while involved with the same young man. All three of them worked together as student organizers. The two young women decided to break their silence and do something about it together. Dissatisfied with

the “typical” options (e.g., shaming, retaliation, calling the police) available for addressing sexual violence and male supremacy within activist scenes, they contacted Danielle, a member of the Rock Dove Collective, a radical community health exchange in New York City, with experience setting up “accountability circle” processes.

To build an effective accountability process, Danielle believed it was essential to involve people whom the person who caused harm cared for and respected. For this reason, one of the young women contacted me (RJ), as someone who this young man (we’ll call him “Mr. X”) respected, in the spring of 2007. Although I had some years of experience working with organizations building community-based responses to harm, first in Critical Resistance NYC and later with generationFIVE, I had never before facilitated anything like an accountability circle. This would also be the first time Danielle facilitated an accountability circle for sexual assault, a task she viewed as uniquely challenging.

Needless to say, it was disappointing and infuriating to learn from this young woman that Mr. X, who I knew as a friendly acquaintance in activist circles, had been abusive toward multiple women. He was a very visible and vocal leader within a citywide network of student activists, and thus held a great deal of social capital (e.g., likeability, influence, credibility) and power among his peers. He was also irresponsibly engaging many women within this network and, in several cases, sexually assaulting them; for some of the women, this harm was compounded by the fact that he was someone they—and many people they knew—had been inspired by and respected a great deal. He was even a part of the accountability council within their student network for addressing just such behavior, and had participated in confronting other men.

Listening to this young woman describe the harm caused by Mr. X brought up a mix of feelings in me, including sadness and shame as I thought of my own sometimes reckless sexual behavior, spanning from my late teens through my mid-twenties. I mourned friendships I had damaged or lost and opportunities for organizing I had ruined.

Unfortunately, this story is not exceptional in left and radical communities; situations involving a charismatic male figure in the movement behaving in sexually irresponsible or other harmful ways are quite common, just as they are in many communities. Throughout the process, the women he had abused made it clear that what they wanted was to feel safe and to see Mr. X change, so that he wouldn’t cause them or anyone else in their communities more harm. This was about intervening in “business-as-usual”—taking action not only to address this specific person and the harm he was causing, but also to challenge male supremacy within the communities tolerating and even colluding (through silence, excuses, and so on) with his inappropriate, misogynist, and violent behavior.

As I began to prepare for the process, I experienced a number of emotions: I felt very committed to supporting the women who were harmed and to building an accountability circle around Mr. X; I also felt some apprehension knowing that since I was stepping up around challenging his behavior specifically and male supremacy more broadly, I was going to have to hold myself to a higher standard and that it would bring up ways I wished I had behaved differently in the past. As common and structural as the behaviors that Mr. X was exhibiting were, I also believed that he could really transform them if he committed to it. After all, the past few years of facing my own experiences of being sexually abused as a child and teenager had seemed to provide me with a key to moving forward in bridging the gap between my own sexual politics and my practice. Why couldn’t that shift in practice also be the case for him?

After some preparation, Danielle and I approached Mr. X to inform him that we knew about his abusive behavior toward the two young women, and to see if he would be willing to participate in an accountability circle to address the harm he'd caused. We proposed that he work with us to compile a list of people close to him (other activists, friends, family) to invite into the accountability process. The circle itself would be a facilitated gathering, where we moved through a series of questions as a group; Mr. X would make specific commitments to address the harm he had caused and the factors that contributed to it; and some of the other participants would commit to supporting Mr. X in taking his next steps.

Danielle provided a list of what these circles are, and what they are not:

Accountability Circles...

ARE opportunities to air emotions, issues, tensions, fears, ideas, facts, stories and ARE NOT places to attack, degrade, punish, harm, or demean;

ARE collaborative and ARE NOT led by the facilitator;

ARE NOT a way to determine guilt/innocence (not a trial) and ARE a way to determine a response to a harm;

ARE focused on an incident or set of incidents and the best response to them and ARE NOT limited only to that incident;

ARE a way to hold people accountable in a compassionate way and ARE NOT a way to isolate or alienate someone;

ARE NOT only about the “perpetrator” and ARE an opportunity for a community to take a role in a person’s healing process;

ARE (probably) uncomfortable and ARE NOT perfect or easy;

CAN BE transformative, powerful, beautiful tools and ARE NOT ends in themselves.

Mr. X acknowledged that he had caused the harm we were seeking to address, and agreed to work with us in organizing the circle. Although it was a very slow process at first, we felt like we were making progress by compiling a list of people to invite to the circle. Something that became clear, however, was that Mr. X had few truly deep friendships and that approaching family was not going to be an option. This was a challenge that Danielle and I partially expected, not just from what we knew of him but also from the lack of community we saw among many people around us. We recognized that organizing this circle was also about supporting him in building some of the community he would need, both to be held accountable for the harm he caused and to grow and change in the future.

It would take over a year before the circle itself came to fruition: Mr. X dragged his feet in many ways, and the rest of us were juggling multiple commitments while trying to push this process forward. Over a year to pull Danielle and me, one of the two women who had initially come forward, Mr. X, and five other people who had some relationship to Mr. X (either current or former friends, or concerned community members) into the same room at the same time. As facilitators, Danielle and I also brought to the circle the expectations of the second woman who had stood up to address the harm but did not want to attend the circle meeting.

With everyone seated in a circle, Danielle and I went over again what a circle is and is not, and described the basic mechanics of the process. We would work through a sequence of questions, moving clockwise around the room, giving each person a chance to respond to the question. The person whose turn it was to speak would hold a talking stick in their hand and pass it when they were finished. Before posing the opening question, we facilitated a discussion to establish some ground rules, which we made

sure would include some form of confidentiality, respecting time-outs and showing respect in general, listening to each other, honoring the silence or speaking of the person holding the talking stick, and a commitment to not making threats.

Then we set out working through the questions:

- How are you feeling now?
- What are you hoping to get out of today/why are you here?
- What is your relationship to what happened? What happened? What did you do/have you done?
- How did you feel about it at the time? When it happened/When you found out?
- How do you feel about it now?
- What concerns you most going forward?
- What are some things that could address those concerns? (Brainstorm concrete ideas and go multiple rounds if necessary.)
 - Which of those things are feasible (e.g., willingness, time, resources, appropriateness, value, consensus)?
- Who should be responsible for what?
- Are they willing to do those things?
- What specific agreements do we want to leave with today?
 - Are those attainable?
 - If so, who is responsible for each aspect of the agreements (including primary responsibility, support roles, and follow up/check in)?
- How are you feeling now/closing comments?

After six arduous hours, Danielle and I thanked everyone for their commitment to the process and we closed. Mr. X had verbally committed to honoring requests concerning his presence and behavior around the specific women he'd harmed, as well as broader requests addressing issues (mental health, substance abuse, and misogyny) that had contributed to his actions. Others within the circle committed to providing support for the different pieces of work that lay ahead of him.

Working together to challenge the culture of male supremacy

Together with many others, we (Alan, Gaurav, and RJ) recognize male supremacy as a system causing a great deal of violence and harm not only in the world at large, but also within our own radical and Left movements. Whether physical or sexual abuse, talking over others, being needy without asking first or reciprocating later, or shrugging off emotional and logistical work, practices of male supremacy often work to undermine solidarity and community. Male supremacy harms, traumatizes, and pushes people away, placing even more obstacles in our collective path to social transformation.

Male supremacist behavior within our organizing spaces often goes unchecked because many of us have internalized the male supremacist notion that the “real struggle” is elsewhere, whether in the streets or the halls of government. In addition, some of the most obvious forms of this behavior, such as male sexual violence, can feel especially difficult to address for those of us who recognize that the police and prisons not only fail to prevent this violence but actually produce and reproduce systems of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. Left unaddressed, however, male violence within our

communities reinforces the status quo and undermines the belief that a better world is within our collective capacity to create. The joint statement “Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex” issued in 2001 by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and Critical Resistance is particularly instructive on this point, urging “all men in social justice movements to take particular responsibility to address and organize around gender violence in their communities as a primary strategy for addressing violence and colonialism. We challenge men to address how their own histories of victimization have hindered their ability to establish gender justice in their communities.”

Through co-facilitating or supporting various accountability processes, we’ve also learned that men who have caused harm are often easier to reach if they are engaged by people they already trust, and are frequently more likely to be accountable if they can maintain pre-existing relationships or even build new ones. When we address the problem through this lens, it becomes clear that the responses often employed to address male violence—public shaming, physical punishment, exile from spaces or a community, calling the police, or just doing nothing—are insufficient for transforming either the specific harmful behavior or the surrounding conditions. Demonization, isolation, retaliatory violence or state intervention offer, at best, only partial solutions, and can be especially destructive for communities that are already scapegoated and targeted by the prison industrial complex (PIC).

The question, then, is how do we respond to these widespread harms in ways that build solidarity, create community, and support the healing of those who have been harmed, while also challenging the male supremacist context within which the harm occurred? How do we do this without relying on unnecessary violence, exclusion, or state systems? We might call responses that meet these criteria “transformative justice” (TJ), to the degree that they seek both to address the specific instance(s) of harm and transform the convictions and structural conditions that facilitated the harm happening in the first place.^{<<2>>2}

Helping to bring together the accountability circle strengthened RJ’s commitment to actively challenge male supremacist violence around him, and led to the three of us sitting down to explore how we could do this work together (eventually founding the CMS Project). Over several months we spoke regularly about what we wanted to see and help to create in terms of community responses to violence. (One framework we found particularly inspiring was the “Transformative Justice Collaborative” model initiated by generationFIVE, a Bay Area-based organization focused on ending child sexual abuse by organizing “toward equity and liberation rather than maintaining the inequality that the current State and systems maintain.”) In an attempt to bring more cis men into this work, as well as to meet an expressed need to challenge male supremacy within various New York City social justice organizing communities, we facilitated our first “Study-into-Action” group process from May 2009 to January 2010. For nine months, this group discussed, read, and reflected on male supremacy in our personal and political lives.

Facilitating this process for a diverse group of cis men from all over the city, we tried to construct spaces and practices for confronting male supremacy in its concrete manifestations, as it intersects with other systems of oppression. For example, in one session we broke into groups to analyze how different racialized masculinities are represented in mainstream media. This was instructive for exploring both how we had related to our own particularly racialized masculinities growing up and how we have been targeted, privileged, or otherwise stereotyped in the popular imagination. One of the questions that remained at the end of this session was whether we were seeking to construct new and better masculinities or move beyond masculinity altogether.

Foundational to our monthly Study-into-Action sessions was our practice of Somatics, an integrative approach to healing and transformation that understands and treats human beings as a complex of mind, body, and spirit. With support from generationFIVE co-founder and long-time Somatics instructor Staci Haines, who co-facilitated our first session, we tried to employ Somatics as a tool to address shared privilege and power. We communicated to the group that we incorporated Somatics not simply as a practice of self-help or self-improvement—which is often socially decontextualized and strongly individualistic—but because we believe that we cannot just think and talk our way out of male privilege and male violence. This felt particularly important to us as so much of this violence manifests in relationship to bodies and what we do with and to them. As we shared in the group, we need to work with our whole organisms and transform ourselves at the level of everyday behaviors in order to shift our practices of male privilege.

Over this first cycle of work it became clear that there were recurring dynamics we needed to address and particular skill sets we needed to build. One key area is the development and valuing of emotional intelligence and the capacity to provide and seek appropriate support. Here we aim to root out specific tired and destructive behavior norms—cis men who act needy and/or emotionless, cannot or do not notice their own or others' emotions and emotional triggers, and so on—and encourage men instead to reciprocate the support they receive and provide care for others (including other cis men) in a way that challenges patriarchal social relations. A second area of focus is on developing a profound grasp and consistent practices of consent, moving from a legalistic framework of soliciting permission to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of power. In our work, we try to reframe consent—and particularly the word *No*—as something that can make healthier relations possible for all parties, and allow us to maintain connection in the future. At the same time, we've strived to question our basic assumptions about sexuality and desire, denaturalizing our sexual desires and examining how historical and cultural forces help to shape and produce them. The third area of development involves learning to identify and share work that has historically been—and continues to be—relegated mainly to women, especially in the home or in formal political settings. This area builds on the work of feminist writers such as Silvia Federici and Selma James; in the Study-into-Action, we used an excerpt of Federici's book *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004) to frame the ways in which the work of social reproduction is devalued and overwhelmingly forced upon women as part of a system of capitalist exploitation. So far, we've worked in these areas through education, skills-building, and mobilization with other cis men, and also in collaboration with feminist, queer, and trans organizers to build radical analysis and practice together. <<3>>3

Before beginning our Study-into-Action, we decided to approach some of the groups in New York City that do related work and formally partner with them in planning this project. In the role of Accountability and Support Partners, these organizations gave us feedback on a curriculum outline several months before our first session, helped to shape its structure and content, and met with us halfway through the nine-month program to again provide insightful feedback. The groups included the Safe OUTside the System (SOS) Collective of the Audre Lorde Project, Sisterfire NYC (a collective affiliated with INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence), Third Root Community Health Center, the Welfare Warriors Project of Queers for Economic Justice, and individual members of the Rock Dove Collective and an emerging queer people-of-color anti-violence group. Incorporating our partners' suggestions, we fashioned our nine monthly Study-into-Action sessions to open with group-building activities and an introduction to Somatics, followed by activities mapping the history of our understandings of masculinity—how different forces of privilege and oppression have shaped us as cis men. From there, we centered the sessions on political education, historicizing male violence, and forming a shared, intersectional analysis of male supremacy and male representations in media. The

second half of the curriculum moved toward a more experiential focus, honing in on what male supremacy, violence, accountability, desire, and transformation (could) look like in our personal and political relationships and what commitments we can make to challenging male dominance. Over sessions six through eight, we explored how male violence manifests in our communities; how, when we observe male privilege and/or violence, to intervene as bystanders without reproducing male supremacist dynamics; what accountability for male violence looks like in a TJ framework; and how to relate differently as cis men to desire, connection, and intimacy. In our final session, we evaluated our process together and discussed our concrete commitments to challenging male supremacy in our personal lives and political work.^{<<4>>4}

As the name suggests, we were hoping to culminate the Study-into-Action with some sort of collective action in support of and useful to one or more of our partners. Lacking a clear opportunity to do so, we instead organized a reportback event in March 2010 (two months after the end of the 9-month program), to which we each invited friends, family, and members of our communities. The goals of the event were to organize something collectively among the three of us who facilitated the Study-into-Action and the nine participants who completed it, to broaden the dialogue and share our commitments with a larger group of people to whom we are accountable in different ways, and to create a platform for this dialogue within the context of our accountability and support partner organizations—who also participated in the event—as a way to continue building connection and collaboration. The need for this kind of work was reflected in the packed room of over 100 people who showed up for the reportback, representing a rich cross-section of the city.

We find ourselves at present in a moment of reflection, where we are attempting to synthesize all the learning and feedback gained from our experiences with accountability processes, the Study-into-Action, and the collective event we hosted. Our relationship with generationFIVE, with whom we are deepening our understanding of TJ and training in Somatics, will continue to be crucial in our next steps following this assessment process. We recently completed production with generationFIVE on a DVD of “men’s digital stories to end child sexual abuse.” The digital stories and accompanying discussion guide are a teaching tool to explore the relationship between child sexual abuse and male supremacy, as well as the multiple positions that young men often hold in relation to violence.

Currently we are revising the curriculum developed for the Study-into-Action, based on all of the learning and feedback we’ve gained from both partner organizations and participants, in order to share it with people who are interested in building similar projects and to improve the next round of the Study-Into Action. We are also continuing our participation in the Story Telling and Organizing Project, a website and international network of organizations that provide a forum and a model for “collecting and sharing stories about everyday people taking action to end interpersonal violence,” and whose audio stories we have used in some of our work. Perhaps most importantly, we are looking for ways to deepen collaboration with our Accountability and Support Partners locally while continuing to engage and support the Study-into-Action participants and their communities. Whether we remain in our current formation or shift toward something else will depend greatly on these two groups’ needs and desires.

As allies to feminist, queer, and trans struggles against interlocking forms of oppression, we must acknowledge that we cisgender men cannot simply will our privilege away or make a quick and painless transition to different ways of being in the world. This work cannot happen unless we learn to acknowledge that there are all sorts of privileges and benefits we stand to lose by challenging male supremacy—but also, that we have honest emotions, healthier relationships, greater dignity, and a fuller

humanity to gain.

And the story continues...

And Mr. X? We had decided not to include him in the Study-into-Action process, as it did not seem clear that he was authentically committed to transformation. It had been a difficult year. He'd left the city and country several times and didn't put much effort into working with me (RJ), despite the fact that I was the person responsible for checking in on how he was keeping his commitments overall. When I surprised him by showing up at one of his parties, he commented—perhaps half-joking—that I was not “his parole officer.” What?! I'd just gotten off of a 9-hour shift taking care of restless children, and I was stopping by because he wasn't getting back to me by phone or e-mail. It wasn't my ideal way to start a Friday evening. Especially in times like this, the friendship, solidarity, and commitment of Danielle, Gaurav, and Alan, with whom I could vent and debrief on how to honor the commitments laid out in the accountability circle, have been crucial.

The fact is that it's been difficult to figure out how to orient myself to the responsibilities I had agreed during the circle to take on: I'm tracking his behavior through checking in on him and with people around him, though I'm not a social worker (much less a parole officer). On the other hand, although I care about him, I'm not a simple “friend.” And he may confide in me, but I'm not a counselor or therapist. I'm something else. I worry about how much to empathize or connect. Will I be enabling in some way, or will I come down too hard on where he's at right now? (One thing that we've learned through the multiple accountability efforts we've been a part of, and from talking with more experienced folks like Support New York, is that this question—*When do I express care and support, and when do I push for more?*—is one of the hardest parts of engaging with someone who has caused harm.)

In June of 2009, a month after kicking off the Study-into-Action group and a year into the accountability process, Danielle and I checked in with each of the participants in Mr. X's accountability circle. Speaking with them, and considering the reports from others who had been around him and our own infrequent communication with him, it became clear that Mr. X wasn't living up to the commitments he'd made in the circle. It was also clear that we had not established sufficient means for checking-in around his various commitments, nor had we articulated a clear outcome were he to fail to keep those commitments or remain in contact. We checked back in with Mr. X, sharing this feedback and what we thought it might mean. Although a bit snide and defensive at first, he seemed to come around and engage in a way that he hadn't previously. With support from Danielle, he found a therapist and various groups to address his alcoholism while building a group that he's comfortable with, and committed to starting sessions with me around misogyny and male supremacy.^{<<5>>5}

It's been over two-and-a-half years since two young women stepped forward and initiated this accountability process. It is very heartening to see them continue to be engaged and making important contributions in their radical political work, and to hear from them that they feel very supported and affirmed by our efforts. Their courageous actions were a major inspiration for CMS, and our broader, everyday efforts to take on the work of challenging male supremacy in more active, thoughtful, and radical ways. There is much work ahead, and some of the outcomes can be difficult to measure. Through building processes like the Study-into-Action and the accountability circle, it is our hope that we are creating responses to harm that make our vision for a better world—one that offers safety without depending on prisons—not only more likely, but also more credible.

Resources

For more information on the following organizations and their work, please visit their websites:

Audre Lorde Project: www.alp.org

Critical Resistance: www.criticalresistance.org

generationFIVE: www.generationfive.org

Generative Somatics: www.somaticsandtrauma.org

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence: www.incite-national.org

Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ): www.q4ej.org

Rock Dove Collective: www.rockdovecollective.org

StoryTelling and Organizing Project (STOP): www.stopviolenceeveryday.org

Support New York: www.supportny.org

Third Root Community Health Center: www.thirdroot.org

Appendices

Goals for the Challenging Male Supremacy Study-into-Action:

1. Build an understanding of the workings of male supremacy in relation to other systems of oppression, in our own lives and histories, and those of our communities.
2. Build a practice of confronting male supremacy as it intersects with other systems of oppression toward eliminating intimate and interpersonal violence in our personal and political relationships and institutional violence in our communities.
3. Create a space of and practices for accountability and support for cisgender men so that we can further the work of owning and changing our own oppressive behavior, while challenging gender binaries and heteronormativity.
4. Recognize the ways in which masculinities are racialized within our society and hold ourselves to a complex understanding of how this impacts our experiences of male supremacy.
5. Make room for the histories of trauma and violence that people bring into the room, and connect people with resources that can support them in engaging with these histories transformatively.
6. Strengthen the relationships between us, in order to help us hold the work we will do together.
7. Build a practice of solidarity with feminist, queer, and trans struggles and movements.
8. Work with and toward a vision of dignity and self-determination for all people.

Pilot Study-into-Action Timeline

May: FORM. Lay foundation of CMS group, including expectations and support mechanisms; introduction to Somatics; begin exploration of male privilege.

June: SHAPE. Explore the forces of privilege and oppression that have shaped us, and the changes that will move us toward our commitments.

July: FRAME. Deepen our understandings of male supremacy as one component of interconnected systems of oppression; locate sites in which to resist male supremacy in our lives.

August: REPRESENTATION. Identify (and question) distinctly marked masculinities—as they differ along lines of race, class and sexuality—and how they support the most-privileged men.

September: RELATIONSHIPS. Examine the ways in which we reproduce systems of oppression/privilege in our personal and political relationships; explore how to hold space with others in a way that honors the full humanity of everyone.

October: VIOLENCE. Reflect on (our) experiences of violence, from the perspectives of survivors, bystanders, and those who have caused harm.

November: ACCOUNTABILITY. Discuss Transformative Justice, and what it would look like to be genuinely accountable for male privilege in our lives/relationships.

December: DESIRE AND CONNECTION. Explore intimacy, isolation, consent, abuse, and histories of violence, as they apply to us and our (potential) partners.

January: MOVING FORWARD. Discuss action component; consider paths for bringing our work to other circles, as well as for future TJ work; honor and appreciate one another.

Notes

¹ <<1>>For a more thorough explanation of “cisgender” and related terms, see juliaserano.livejournal.com/14700.html

² <<2>>For more information on transformative justice, you can check out a short essay or the longer *Towards Transformative Justice* online resource, both from generationFIVE:
resistinc.org/newsletters/issues/2008/genfive.html
generationfive.org/downloads/G5_Toward_Transformative_Justice.pdf

³ <<3>>In founding the CMS Project, we’ve joined a patchwork landscape of organizations and collectives in New York City working to eliminate violence against female/queer/trans individuals and communities and/or build alternative forms of safety and accountability beyond the PIC. We’ve learned from and collaborated with Support New York, a collective who have been doing work around survivor support and community accountability for several years; we’ve also been in touch with members of Reflect, Connect, Move around our shared work on gender violence, while CONNECT—an organization focused on family and gender violence—has shared space and resources with us. We continue to be inspired by Critical Resistance NYC and the People’s Justice Coalition, who are building community-based responses to state violence: the former (as part of a coalition) recently won a campaign to stop construction of a new jail in the Bronx, while the latter is working to foster and support a citywide culture of observing the police as a tactic for deterring abuse and brutality on their part.

⁴ <<4>>As facilitators, we consistently tried to co-create a space in which all of us acknowledged how much we each have to teach each other, balanced against the fact that three of us had written a curriculum with set topics informed by external input from allied organizations. Similarly, as facilitators, we took on a number of roles within the group, and walked a difficult line at times between leading and participating.

⁵ <<5>>A feminist therapist who lives in my neighborhood has worked with one of our partners (Queers for Economic Justice’s Welfare Warriors) and has experience in harm reduction. She provided support for me in preparing this one-on-one work. One of her first pieces of advice was that Mr. X and I negotiate and establish clarity around our respective roles before beginning this work together.