

“Friends Are Reaching Out” (F.A.R. Out) is a particularly inspiring program model from Northwest Network. Initially designed for communities of queer people of color, this “radical organizing project to strengthen friendships and build accountability in our relationships with each other” facilitates intentional dialogues about relationship abuse among close friends. This approach is based on participants’ shared commitment to staying connected to each other, while building the capacity of friendship networks to resist isolation, and hold each other accountable.²⁸

The basic assumption of the F.A.R. Out program is that even though we may love and care for our friends, we are unreliable to each other in the face of abuse unless we work in advance on building the capacity to respond. In addition to clarifying our expectations for what roles friends should play when one is in a troubling relationship so as to “take the guesswork out of how to support your friend when they’re in need,” the strategy of staying connected may prevent relationship abuse because “isolation from friends and family is the most common tactic used by abusers in establishing control patterns.”²⁹

The particular challenge to those of us who work within the feminist antiviolence movement is to confront and dispel the myths we have created about ourselves as women and as feminists. We need to challenge the notion of women’s shared experiences and accept specificities of women’s experiences in relation to the complex matrix of social institutions, not just the patriarchy. We need to challenge the notion that women do not have real power in this society, and address how all of us are capable of using our various powers and privileges lovingly or abusively. We need to acknowledge the limitation of our feminist consciousness and ethics, and pursue structural remedies to hold ourselves accountable to each other as women and as fellow human beings.

Once we cease to fear being tagged as disloyal to these feminist myths, once we cease to allow the use of feminism to preserve the status quo, we can begin the true transformation of our feminist movements against all forms of violence and oppression, a revolution. When the rebels take down the walls of feminist pretenses and the castle of self-serving feminist make-believe, feminism will survive, more powerful than ever.

Gender Violence and the Prison-Industrial Complex

Statement by Critical Resistance and Incite!
Women of Color Against Violence

We call social justice movements to develop strategies and analyses that address both state *and* interpersonal violence, particularly violence against women. Currently, activists/movements that address state violence (such as anti-prison, anti-police brutality groups) often work in isolation from activists/movements that address domestic and sexual violence. The result is that women of color, who suffer disproportionately from both state and interpersonal violence, have become marginalized within these movements. It is critical that we develop responses to gender violence that do not depend on a sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic criminal justice system. It is also important that we develop strategies that challenge the criminal justice system and that also provide safety for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. To live violence-free lives, we must develop holistic strategies for addressing violence that speak to the intersection of all forms of oppression.

antiviolence not nonviolence
The antiviolence movement has been critically important in breaking the silence around violence against women and providing much-needed services to survivors. However, the mainstream antiviolence movement has increasingly relied on the criminal justice system as the frontline approach toward ending violence against women of color. It is important to assess the impact of this strategy.

- 1) Law enforcement approaches to violence against women may deter some acts of violence in the short term. However, as an overall strategy for ending violence, criminalization has not worked. In fact, the overall impact of mandatory arrest laws for domestic violence have led to decreases in the number of battered women who kill their partners in self-defense, but they have not led to a decrease in the number of batterers who kill their partners.¹ Thus, the law protects batterers more than it protects survivors.
- 2) The criminalization approach has also brought many women into conflict with the law, particularly women of color, poor women, lesbians, sex workers, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized women. For instance, under mandatory arrest laws, there have been numerous incidents where police officers called to domestic incidents have arrested the woman who is being battered.² Many undocumented women have reported cases of sexual and domestic violence, only to find themselves deported.³ A tough law-and-order agenda also leads to long punitive sentences for women convicted of

killing their batterers.⁴ Finally, when public funding is channeled into policing and prisons, budget cuts for social programs, including women's shelters, welfare, and public housing, are the inevitable side effect.⁵ These cutbacks leave women less able to escape violent relationships.

- 3) Prisons don't work. Despite an exponential increase in the number of men in prisons, women are not any safer, and the rates of sexual assault and domestic violence have not decreased.⁶ In calling for greater police responses to and harsher sentences for perpetrators of gender violence, the antiviolence movement has fueled the proliferation of prisons which now lock up more people per capita in the United States than any other country.⁷ During the past fifteen years, the number of women, especially women of color, in prison has skyrocketed.⁸ Prisons also inflict violence on the growing numbers of women behind bars. Slashing, suicide, the proliferation of HIV, strip searches, medical neglect, and rape of prisoners have largely been ignored by antiviolence activists.⁹ The criminal justice system, an institution of violence, domination, and control, has increased the level of violence in society.

CCP would have 90 many problems if we were more vital to the community

The reliance on state funding to support antiviolence programs has increased the professionalization of the antiviolence movement and alienated it from its community organizing, social justice roots.¹⁰ Such reliance has isolated the antiviolence movement from other social justice movements that seek to eradicate state violence, such that it acts in conflict rather than in collaboration with these movements.

- 5) The reliance on the criminal justice system has taken power away from women's ability to organize collectively to stop violence and has invested this power within the state. The result is that women who seek redress in the criminal justice system feel disempowered and alienated.¹¹ It has also promoted an individualistic approach toward ending violence such that the only way people think they can intervene in stopping violence is to call the police. This reliance has shifted our focus from developing ways communities can collectively respond to violence.

In recent years, the mainstream anti-prison movement has called important attention to the negative impact of criminalization and the buildup of the prison-industrial complex. Because activists who seek to reverse the tide of mass incarceration and criminalization of poor communities and communities of color have not always centered gender and sexuality in their analysis or organizing, we have not always responded adequately to the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

- 1) Prison and police accountability activists have generally organized around and conceptualized men of color as the primary victims of state violence.¹² Women prisoners and victims of police brutality have been made invisible by a focus on the war on our brothers and sons. It has failed to consider how women are affected as severely by state violence as men.¹³ The plight of women who are raped by INS officers or prison guards, for instance, has not received sufficient attention. In

addition, women carry the burden of caring for extended family when family and community members are criminalized and warehoused.¹⁴ Several organizations have been established to advocate for women prisoners; however, these groups have been frequently marginalized within the mainstream anti-prison movement.¹⁵

- 2) The anti-prison movement has not addressed strategies for addressing the rampant forms of violence women face in their everyday lives, including street harassment, sexual harassment at work, rape, and intimate partner abuse. Until these strategies are developed, many women will feel shortchanged by the movement. In addition, by not seeking alliances with the antiviolence movement, the anti-prison movement has sent the message that it is possible to liberate communities without seeking the well-being and safety of women.
- 3) The anti-prison movement has failed to sufficiently organize around the forms of state violence faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two-spirited, and Intersex (LGBTTI) communities. LGBTTI street youth and trans people in general are particularly vulnerable to police brutality and criminalization.¹⁶ LGBTTI prisoners are denied basic human rights such as family visits from same-sex partners, and same-sex consensual relationships in prison are policed and punished.¹⁷
- 4) While prison abolitionists have correctly pointed out that rapists and serial murderers comprise a small number of the prison population, we have not answered the question of how these cases should be addressed.¹⁸ The inability to answer the question is interpreted by many antiviolence activists as a lack of concern for the safety of women.
- 5) The various alternatives to incarceration that have been developed by anti-prison activists have generally failed to provide sufficient mechanisms for safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. These alternatives often rely on a romanticized notion of communities, which have yet to demonstrate their commitment and ability to keep women and children safe or seriously address the sexism and homophobia that is deeply embedded within them.¹⁹

We call on social justice movements concerned with ending violence in all its forms to:

- 1) Develop community-based responses to violence that do not rely on the criminal justice system and which have mechanisms that ensure safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Transformative practices emerging from local communities should be documented and disseminated to promote collective responses to violence.
- 2) Critically assess the impact of state funding on social justice organizations and develop alternative fundraising strategies to support these organizations. Develop collective fundraising and organizing strategies for anti-prison and antiviolence organizations. Develop strategies

- and analyses that specifically target state forms of sexual violence.
- 3) Make connections between interpersonal violence, the violence inflicted by domestic state institutions (such as prisons, detention centers, mental hospitals, and child protective services), and international violence (such as war, military base prostitution, and nuclear testing).
 - 4) Develop an analysis and strategies to end violence that do not isolate individual acts of violence (either committed by the state or individuals) from their larger contexts. These strategies must address how entire communities of all genders are affected in multiple ways by both state violence and interpersonal gender violence. Battered women prisoners represent an intersection of state and interpersonal violence and as such provide an opportunity for both movements to build coalitions and joint struggles.
 - 5) Put poor and working-class women of color in the center of their analysis, organizing practices, and leadership development. Recognize the role of economic oppression, welfare "reform," and attacks on women workers' rights in increasing women's vulnerability to all forms of violence, and locate antiviolence and anti-prison activism alongside efforts to transform the capitalist economic system.
 - 6) Center stories of state violence committed against women of color in our organizing efforts.
 - 7) Oppose legislative change that promotes prison expansion and criminalization of poor communities and communities of color—even if these changes also incorporate measures to support victims of interpersonal gender violence.
 - 8) Promote holistic political education at the everyday level within our communities—specifically, how sexual violence helps reproduce the colonial, racist, capitalist, heterosexist, and patriarchal society we live in, as well as how state violence produces interpersonal violence within communities.
 - 9) Develop strategies for mobilizing against sexism and homophobia within our communities in order to keep women safe.
 - 10) Challenge men of color and 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.
 - 11) Link struggles for personal transformation and healing with struggles for social justice.

We seek to build movements that not only end violence, but that create a society based on radical freedom, mutual accountability, and passionate reciprocity. In this society, safety and security will not be premised on violence or the threat of violence; it will be based on a collective commitment to guaranteeing the survival and care of all peoples.

Time for some accountability!
AMR EWG!!!
All these demands are

26

Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice

Statement by TransJustice, a project of the Audre Lorde Project, a community organizing center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirit, and Transgender People of Color in the New York City area

We invite our trans and gender nonconforming people of color communities (TGNC), and our allies, to march with us in the First Annual Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice in New York City on June 24, 2005.

Visibility of Trans and Gender Nonconforming People

Communities of color have histories that are rich with multiple gender identities, experiences, and expressions, but today the two-gender system is enforced against us everywhere: in health care, immigration, bathrooms, clothing, shelters, prisons, schools, government forms, job applications, and identity documents.

- Gender policing has always been part of the United States' bloody history. State-sanctioned gender policing targets Trans and Gender Non-Conforming people first by dehumanizing our identities. It denies our basic right to gender self-determination, and considers our bodies to be property of the state.
- Gender policing isolates TGNC people from our communities, many of which have been socialized with these oppressive definitions of gender. As a result, we all too often fall victim to verbal and physical violence. This transphobic violence is justified using medical theories and religious beliefs, and is

The following statements were issued in 2005 by TransJustice, a project of the Audre Lorde Project. TransJustice is a political group created by and for trans and gender nonconforming people of color. TransJustice works to mobilize its communities and allies into action on the pressing political issues they face, including gaining access to jobs, housing, and education; the need for trans-sensitive healthcare, HIV-related services, and job-training programs; and resisting police, government, and anti-immigrant violence. On April 24, 2002, the New York City Council passed a bill, Int. 24, amending the city's Human Rights Law to prohibit discrimination against transgender people, making it the third jurisdiction in New York State to enact such legislation. Two states, Minnesota and Rhode Island, and thirty-nine other municipalities, have enacted similar laws. On December 22, 2004, two and a half years after the NYC Human Rights Law was amended to preclude discrimination based on gender identity and expression, the New York City Human Rights Commission finally released its "Compliance Guidelines Regarding Gender Identity Discrimination." The June 2005 Day of Action was endorsed by over one hundred organizations and individuals, including Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, and the trans and gender nonconforming community and its allies marched—more than two thousand strong—to link struggles and rally for the rights of all New Yorkers. Drawing from the success and momentum of Day of Action, TransJustice organized a job fair in December 2005 to highlight the unemployment and barriers to education for trans and gender nonconforming people of color, and the struggles of all people trying to find a living wage job and access to education.