

# Witnessing Resistance in Community Work

## Consider these ‘Understandings of Resistance’:

- Whenever people are oppressed they resist
- Resistance ought not to be judged by its ability to stop oppression, rather;
- Resistance is important for its ability to maintain a person’s connection to humanity, especially in situations outside of human understanding.

(Wade, 1997; Reynolds, 2010a)

Think of a position of resistance you have taken in your life in response to oppression or being the victim of someone's abuse of power-over. Pick a particular event, not a generalized feeling. Choose something that you can experience and re-member with enough-containment, not necessarily without pain.

**Share the story of your resistance with a witness** — someone you know or trust as safe-enough. The witness' role is to ask questions to bring forward an account of your acts of resistance.

- How did you respond? What did you do?
- How did you choose this course of action? What were you paying attention to?
- What resources and knowledges were you able to access in this moment (Bird, 2006)? How was this possible? Did other events/teachings prepare you for this resistance?
- What was going on in your body in this experience? How were you experiencing your body that was useful in terms of your resistance?
- Did you have any allies in this act of resistance? Who could you count on? What differences did it/would it make to have an ally?
- How did you attend to power in this experience? If you had had less access to power, how may you have responded? More power?
- Can you connect this act of resistance to other experiences through your life — what Allan Wade refers to as your ‘repertoire of resistance’?
- How does this act of resistance serve as a resource to you in community work?

## Reflexive questions to consider following the experience:

- How is it different for you to be positioned as a witness to your own resistance?
- How does witnessing resistance change your relationship to the oppressive event?
- What does this experience bring to your work as a community worker? How will it inform your theory/practice about community work that is accountable to power?
- How can you use your body's knowledges in your work now?
- What differences might your history of resistance make for:
- The people you work alongside?
- Your experience of yourself as a community worker?
- Other aspects of your life?

(From: Reynolds, V., “Bahman”, Hammoud-Beckett, S., Sanders, C.J., & Haworth, G. (2014). Poetic Resistance: Bahman’s resistance to torture and political violence. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*. No.2, 1-15.)

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