

AN ETHICAL STANCE FOR JUSTICE-DOING IN COMMUNITY WORK AND THERAPY

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With a response by marcela polanco

This writing illuminates a possible stance for an ethic of justice-doing as a frame for community work and therapy. This approach to justice-doing is offered as an imperfection project, and while incomplete and necessarily flawed, it has been helpful to groups of workers striving to practice more in line with our collective commitments for social justice. This approach is profoundly collaborative and informed by decolonizing practice and anti-oppression activism. I will describe the intentions that guide this stance, which include striving towards centering ethics, doing solidarity, addressing power, fostering collective sustainability, critically engaging with language, and structuring safety. Even an imperfect orientation towards justice-doing can open our work to transformations for ourselves, the people we work alongside, and our communities and society, and offer the potential for experiencing the social diving. This article is framed from a keynote delivered at the Winds of Change Conference held in Ottawa, Ontario in June 2012. I acknowledge the Algonquin people whose territories we met on.

Finally, marcela polanco (2011), who describes her work as a therapy of solidarity, will offer a reflection on my position for an ethic of justice-doing.

My work is profoundly collaborative and informed by decades of solidarity with direct action activists, and in particular my work alongside survivors of torture in several countries, and here I include Indigenous peoples who have survived the political violence of what is called “residential schools.” I have been informed and transformed by my work. This work comes from a decolonizing and anti-oppression stance, which is not to say it is correct or safe. I embrace this work very much as an anti-perfection project.

I hold huge gratitude for the imperfect solidarity of fellowships of activists, coworkers, and “clients” across several decades, who have informed this work. My continued respect to David Paré, who invited this keynote and has continually carved out space for me in my tension-filled relationship with academia. As always, heartfelt thanks to my editor, Coral Payne, who continues to make complex ideas accessible. This writing occurred on unceded Indigenous territories, which were never surrendered.

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I am inviting you to lean into the stance I lay out for justice-doing, and see where there are points of connection in our work, and where we are in imperfect solidarity. I would like you to hold on to the important differences in our work as well. There are many paths to justice-doing, and I have respect for yours, as I outline mine. In my work promoting the care, sustainability, and usefulness of teams of community workers and therapists, I ask myself these recursive questions: How can we stay alive and of use working in contexts of social injustice? How can we do this work in accord with our collective ethics (Reynolds, 2009) and our commitments to social justice? How can we hold on to solidarity in political contexts that set us up against each other? How can we experience sustainability and transformation collectively across time? An ethic of justice-doing is my response to these reflexive questions I hold close, struggle with, never fully answer, and never silence.

Our work occurs in contexts that lack social justice because we have not delivered on a just society. The issues of mental illness, addiction, and trauma are medicalized and sanitized in language that hides human suffering and affronts to dignity. As workers and clients, we are collectively up against the privatization of pain and the criminalization of suffering, such as the criminalization of homelessness, poverty, and dissent.

bell hooks (1994) evokes a spirited solidarity when she writes:

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then, a location for healing. (p. 59)

Inspired by hooks, I recognized that theorizing is required for activism, which led me to feminist, queer, and anarchist theory. I am also presently immersed in decolonizing practice and critical trans politics. But there are limits to theory. Liberatory theory is fabulous, but we have not delivered on the promises of a just society (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). I am also informed by American anarchist theorist Noam Chomsky (2005), who writes:

Social action cannot await a firmly established theory of man [sic] and society, nor can the validity of the latter be determined by our hopes and moral judgments. The two—speculation and action—must progress as best they can, looking forward to the day when theoretical inquiry will provide a firm guide to the unending, often grim, but never hopeless struggle for freedom and social justice. (p. 116)

Building a just society is a collective responsibility that requires frontline workers to become activists for social change, both in their work with clients and in their lives. Social justice includes all domains of social life. It is beyond the more narrow scope of human rights and justice systems, which primarily uphold laws. Indian author/activist Arundhati Roy (2005), speaks of attacks on social justice, and draws important distinctions between social justice and human rights:

Today, it is not merely justice itself, but the idea of justice that is under attack. The assault on vulnerable fragile sections of society is at once so complete, so cruel, and so clever—all encompassing and yet specifically targeted, blatantly brutal and yet unbelievably insidious—that its sheer audacity has eroded our definition of justice. It has forced us to lower our sites, and curtail our expectations. Even among the well-intentioned, the expansive, magnificent concept of justice is gradually being substituted with the reduced, far more fragile discourse of ‘human rights.’” (p. 331)

Trans activist Dean Spade (2011) speaks of the limits of human rights, particularly in activism when legal privileges become central. A good example of this is the struggle for gay marriage. There is an understanding that we are working for gay and lesbian human rights, but the message is that we will come back for you trans and gender variant folks later. This is part of a trickle-down discourse of human rights. Spade (2011) says social justice trickles up. People in the margins make more space for everybody. Social justice endeavors that work to improve the life choices of more marginalized folks, such as single lesbian racialized undocumented mothers in poverty, improve social justice for gay white men with money privilege. The inverse is not true.

Spade (2011) illustrates how critical race theory, women of color feminism, queer theory, and critical disability studies highlight the ineffectiveness of the discrimination principle as a method of identifying and addressing oppression, and how ideas of equality are too often tools for maintaining unjust social structures. Part of the complexities involved in practicing resistance politics in what Spade (2011) calls “an age of co-option and incorporation” (p. 34) requires we reconsider assumptions of human rights and legal strategies. Queer and trans theorists suggest a more transformative approach, which includes human rights reforms but is not centered in them. Social justice activism makes demands that exceed what can be won in a legal systems that Spade (2011) says was “formed by and exists to perpetuate capitalism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy.” (pp. 15–16)

So in practice, what would justice-doing look like? There is a poster on the wall in my office which is from Amnesty International, and relates to refugee work in Eastern Europe called “The Return.” It is a sepia-toned picture of a dozen refugees at the moment of embrace, people stepping towards each other with open arms, coming together upon finding each other after the separation of war and political violence. The sense of belonging, joy-filled reconnection and love is palpable—it takes my breath away. One man in the foreground wears a dark coat. This man could be a refugee survivor of torture I worked with. We did not get his family out. He did not kill himself. I guess people say we were successful, as his death was a near thing. But it is the belonging and re-connection depicted in Amnesty International’s poster that we really wanted to deliver. This is justice, this is belonging. In our imperfect way, we delivered therapy, we used medication, and we brought everything we had to the circle to help this man, but we could not deliver the possibility of return to his home country, reconnection, accountability, and justice. This is what I want to try to deliver, as an ethic of justice-doing.

How do we do that? Just theory and just practice are not enough. What is required is that we enact our ethics. I am offering a possible and imperfect ethical stance for justice-doing in community work. I utilized Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the rhizome, for the guiding intentions that comprise my stance for justice-doing. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), offer the rhizome concept to describe horizontally linked, non-hierarchical forms of social organization, thought, and communication. The spirit of the rhizome is illustrated beautifully by Canadian anarchist and liberatory educator Scott Uzelman (2005):

Running bamboo often gives rise to unwitting bamboo gardeners. A single innocent shoot can stand alone for several years and then suddenly an entire field of bamboo begins to sprout. This leaves the unsuspecting gardener with a new bamboo garden that stubbornly resists attempts to get rid of it. While on the surface each shoot appears to be an individual, related but separate from its neighbors, underground all are connected through a complex network of root-like stems and filaments called a rhizome. During the years the gardener watched a single bamboo shoot grow tall, underground the bamboo rhizome grew horizontally, spreading throughout the yard, storing nutrients in anticipation of a coming spring. Like the bamboo garden, social movements are often rhizomatic organisms growing horizontally into new terrains, establishing connections just below the surface of every day life, eventually bursting forth in unpredictable ways. (p. 17)

The guiding intentions which comprise the ethical stance for justice-doing are different than principles, which are clear and precise. The guiding intentions co-exist in relationship to each other, much as the filaments of a rhizome. They are linked, overlapping, living, and fluid. For example, all of the guiding intentions are inextricably linked to structuring safety, and yet structuring safety is itself a guiding intention. Like a rhizome, they are rough around the edges, disorderly, not of equal size, and resist mathematical precision. I will extract each of the guiding intentions in an attempt to describe them. But I offer a caution. In practice and in action, it is not possible or required to completely separate any guiding intention from another. The six guiding intentions are: centering ethics, doing solidarity, fostering collective sustainability, addressing power, critically engaging with language, and structuring safety (Reynolds, 2010a).

CENTERING ETHICS

The first guiding intention in my ethical stance for justice-doing is centering ethics. I believe that if we are able to enact our ethics, we can be sustained in the work. When we are not able to enact our ethics, we experience spiritual or ethical pain. This spiritual pain is a discrepancy between what feels respectful, humane, generative, and working in contexts that call us to violate the very beliefs and ethics that brought us to community work. This spiritual pain can be a resource to us, letting

us know we are transgressing our ethics. It calls for attention and repair. Collective ethics are those important points of connection that are the basis for the solidarity that brought us together and can hold us together. Our collective ethics speak to the values, intentions, and commitments at the heart of our shared work.

What is most important is that we enact our ethics, as it is in the doing that ethics are revealed. Kvale's (1996) hermeneutics of suspicion is informed by Paul Ricoeur's work (White, 1991). This hopeful skepticism invites us to hold our claims to ethics in abeyance, until the practice can be shown to reveal the theory. A hermeneutics of suspicion invites a hopeful yet skeptical position, which requires that we stand in critical distance from the claims to ethics we make, and opens us to the possibility that our practice may reveal something other than our intention. For example, when teams tell me they are client centered, I ask how every action is holding clients at the center of the work, and what clients would say about that claim. This hopeful skepticism invites us to continually ask how we are ethically "walking our talk," as activists say.

DOING SOLIDARITY

My understandings of solidarity are derived from time-honored activist traditions of envisioning collective ethics, looking for connective practices of resisting oppression, and promoting justice-doing. Solidarity speaks to an understanding that just ways of being are interconnected, as are our struggles and sites of resistance. We are meant to do this work together. The work of justice-doing is profoundly collaborative and there are many paths. We do this work on the shoulders of others, and we shoulder others up. When I call my work a Supervision of Solidarity (Reynolds, 2010a), I envision a spirit of solidarity that embraces clients, workers, and the supervisor.

The Zapatistas are people in an Indigenous movement in Chiapas, Mexico, who have inspired a generation of activists. The Zapatista movement is particular to the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas, but they see themselves as connected to communities and people involved in all struggles for social, environmental, and economic justice. Zapatistas call "We are you," and global justice activists respond "I am Zapatista." This is the doing of solidarity. Subcomandante Marcos (Klein, 2002) illuminated solidarity as the wheel driving the Zapatista movement when he identified himself in these diverse yet connected ways:

Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Québec, a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10:00 P.M., a peasant without land, a gang member in the slums, an unemployed worker, and of course a Zapatista in the mountains. (p. 116)

Solidarity invites us to be allies to each other across the differences of access to power that can divide us. When we experience being the subjects of power, we accept allies because we need them, and we cannot be romantic or sentimental about this. We accept allies not because it is safe or because we have reasons for perfect trust. We invite good enough allies, despite past acts that are not trustworthy, as imperfect allies are required when the stakes are high and risk is near. Fluidity makes room for imperfect allies, momentary allies, moment to moment alliances, which are flawed, not safe, but required and of use.

Fluidity is a gift from queer theory (Butler, 1997), and informs the work of fluid and imperfect allies (Reynolds, 2010b). Fluidity invites imperfect solidarity, which resists unity and looks for points of connection “intersecting oppression and uniting resistance” (No One Is Illegal, n.d.). Being in solidarity with other workers requires resisting injurious division between workers, because it never benefits clients. Some mental health workers have told me of the heartbreaking work they do, at times taking a person’s autonomy and admitting them against their will to mental hospitals and psychiatric wards. The rest of us can wash our hands, saying that we would never do that, as if mental health workers are personally responsible for the lack of dignified options. Here, we need to resist blame and lean in, resist judging others, and collectively work for more just options. We need to look for the ethics of the other. I remind myself that no one came to this work to hurt people, and I lean in looking for our collective ethics as a first point of connection and a place for solidarity to begin to grow (Reynolds, 2011a).

ADDRESSING POWER

A reflexive question I am always asking is: How am I responding to power in this moment? Power is always present in our work, and abuses of power are often at the center of community work. I am not neutral about power relations, and always take an overt stand for social justice in relation to power. Addressing power requires contesting neutrality, holding a complex analysis of power, attending to the intersections of privilege and oppression, witnessing both acts of resistance and justice-doing, and collective accountability.

I am informed by the work of Crenshaw (1995) and other critical race theorists who articulate intersectionality (Robinson, 2005). Here we look at our access to privilege and power, and the places we are subject to the power of others. The convergence of different domains of identity such as gender, class, and culture construct this intersectionality. At a RainCity Housing shelter in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side where I was consulting, Aaron Munro showed me a sign put up in the shelter. It was a map of the Vancouver area which was stenciled with the message, “Racism sexism and homophobia are not permitted in this area.” The shelter folks said “You use lots of big words” and spray painted “no hate” on the shelter wall. This is the doing of intersectionality.

Witnessing resistance is at the heart of my work. There is always resistance to oppression (Reynolds, 2010b; Wade, 1996, 1997), and addressing power requires we create finely tuned attention to acts of resistance and sites of resistance, where people are acting for justice, and to maintain a finger hold on dignity.

Collective accountability requires that I be responsible for more than my personal individual acts. This is in resistance to capitalism and individualism, which only require personal responsibility. For example, if my white brother enacts racism, I do not distance myself saying, "I'm not that white guy." I lean in and help my white brother. This is my work to do as a white person. I sometimes refer to racism as the perfect crime, because I acknowledge that I do not have to enact racism in order to benefit from it.

FOSTERING COLLECTIVE SUSTAINABILITY

In the helping professions, burnout is constructed as an individual problem of workers, which measures whether or not we are tough enough for this work. Burnout is backed up by ideas that our clients hurt us. My clients do not hurt me or harm me; they inspire, critique, teach, and inform me. Burnout denies that it is social structures of inequity, and lack of social justice, that harm us in the work. The problem is not in our heads or our hearts, but in the social world where clients live and struggle alongside workers against structures of injustice. The prescription for this individual weakness of burnout is often self-care. I know self-care is important in order for us to bring hope to the helping relationship, and to keep clients at the center. But it is a limiting idea. I do yoga and drink water, and I have not created one unit of housing in my homeless city. Self-care does not change the context of social injustice, which is where clients live and we work (Reynolds, 2011b).

When I speak of sustainability, I am speaking to an ongoing aliveness, a genuine connectedness with people, and a presence of spirit. Solidarity and collective ethics invite us to collective care, and resisting the individualism that burnout constructs. It invites collective accountability, where I am accountable for more than my individual actions.

Paulo Freire (1970) and the popular education folks speak of a revolutionary love that is an act of courage and commitment to others (1970). We do not conflate love and sex. We know we need to be careful about language in the work we use with clients, but I do not believe that love is truly absent from our work.

Sustainability requires we have a knowing-in-the-bones that our work matters. This requires that we attend to the things that are not measured in our work. This is what I call immeasurable outcomes, the ineffable, intangible, and untraceable. Our work in the margins goes unmeasured because of the lack of an instrument of measure, or because what we do is not prioritized, or recognized as having value. I track and name our immeasurable outcomes so our work is not disappeared. The important parts of our work that I am calling immeasurable outcomes include such

things as doing dignity, and fostering safety and belonging. Immeasurable outcomes also include “unhappenings,” which are the things that do not happen, or situations that do not get measurably worse because of the work we do. For example, an elder who does not repeatedly return to the emergency ward because street nurses got them their medication; or a young man who does not attempt suicide because he is connected to an outreach worker.

Borrowing from the 12 Step traditions of “giving it back” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001), I connect with other workers on the differences their work makes in the lives of the people we work alongside. This is not a nice thing to do—it is an ethical obligation for our collective sustainability. It is not the job of our clients to esteem or dignify us. We must take responsibility for this community-making practice. Here is a story of a “giving it back” practice from my work in the Downtown East Side of Vancouver:

Joe, a First Nations elder with shaggy hair and an uncertain smile, shows up at my counselling office and I almost fall off my chair. Outreach workers have been looking for him because his health is so risky, he is homeless again, and he hasn’t checked in with his parole officer. Everyone is concerned for his life. We are beginning to suspect that he is either dead or in jail.

I say, “Joe! How are you?”

He catches me up on the hell he has crawled through. I ask him to teach me how he “crawled through hell.”

He says, “Julie, a worker at detox, kept me alive.” Joe says he puked on her twice and she just kept cleaning him up. When he was thinking of leaving detox, she followed him to the door, telling him she would miss him. He was “nic-ing out” and she found him a cigarette. He said he was rude to her and she refused to take it personally, and told him she knew he could be more respectful.

I said, “That is amazing, have you told her that? Let’s call her!” We place a call to detox and actually get Julie on the speakerphone.

I say, “Julie, Joe is here and he’s just told me that you are a reason he is still alive.”

Julie cuts me off excitedly, “Joe is alive?” She is amazed.

I say, “Yeah, yeah, he is right here and he says that you are a reason he is alive.”

In a shaky voice, Joe says, “She remembers me?”

Julie responds, “Of course I remember you, Joe, you puked on me twice!”

I ask Julie what it means to her that Joe is saying that she is a reason that he is alive.

She responds, “Man, I can go to work for five years on this!”

I ask Joe what it means to know that he is going to help Julie go to work for the next five years. In a dignified voice Joe says, “Maybe I’ll help her keep a couple more guys alive.” (Richardson & Reynolds, 2012, p. 2)

CRITICALLY ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGE

No language is neutral, as power is always in play. My understandings of critically engaging with language lean heavily on the analysis of Canadian response-based

therapists Linda Coates and Allan Wade (2004, 2007), and particularly their work illuminating the following four operations of language in relation to power. According to Coates and Wade (2004, 2007), language can: obscure violence, hide the victim's resistance to violence, hide the perpetrator's responsibilities, and blame victims for violence. I am now going to use the language around rape to illustrate the importance of language and how it operates in powerful ways.

I work as the clinical supervisor at WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women), a rape crisis center in Vancouver. We are living in a rape culture. I am not using the language of rape culture to be provocative or emotional, both of which are used as backlash against feminist voices. I am naming a rape culture as an act of making power transparent, and as Allan Wade would say, putting words to deeds. I use the language of rape culture, because one of three women in Canada will be sexually assaulted in their lives (National Status of Women, 1993). The British Columbia government cut 100% of funding to rape crisis centers in 2002. None of this funding has been returned.

According to Statistics Canada (1993), 6 to 8% of rape is reported to police. Forty percent of those reports get charge approval. Two thirds of the 40% go to court, 1.8% of those cases end in conviction, and 0.8% of convicted perpetrators get jail time. As a society, we ask women why they don't report rape, why they don't speak out, why they don't leave. We are asking questions of the wrong people. The police and the government need to answer to these numbers, and explain why we are in a rape culture, and how they plan to help us get out of it. We need to ask questions of the perpetrators, not the victims. We live in a society that says "don't get raped," not "don't rape," and where feminism is the "F" word. Given the math, it is not hard to defend the claim that rape is functionally legal. Judith Herman (1992) alluded to this in her book, *Trauma and Recovery*, when she said that rape was possibly more complicit than deviant behavior.

In response to rape, police offer advice to whom? The victim. And they talk to women about their responsibilities not to be raped. Many police forces have published public awareness campaigns on how the potential victims of rape need to behave. One such poster from the Sussex Police in the UK (Sussex Police, 2011), says, "Be smart. Say no to any sex you don't want. Make yourself clearly understood." If we consider Coates and Wade's four operations of language, we can see how this language obscures violence and blames the victims. It also conflates sex and rape, which is a project of feminist activism that we had hoped we had won. Police and their consultants are silent on advice to men.

Happily, feminists have some advice for men regarding rape. In a poster entitled "Stop rape: 10 top tips to end rape," feminists offer an activist inversion of language as resistance. "If you pull over to help a woman whose car has broken down, remember not to rape her." "Use the buddy system. If you're not able to stop yourself from sexually assaulting someone, ask a friend to stay with you when you are in public" (Rape Crisis Scotland, 2011). Offering

parallel advice to men seems ludicrous and patronizing, possibly insulting, and certainly fits with what Judith Butler (1997) calls “unspeakable acts.” Women do not tell men how to act.

Critically engaging with language also requires that we contest normalizing language such as suicide and trauma. Here medicalization is used to cover-up oppression and violence in the context of social injustice and human suffering. We now have symptoms and medication, when what we require is justice. The medicalized language of suicide, for example, constructs a person’s death by suicide as an individual act they are solely responsible for. I believe that hate kills. No one kills themselves in a vacuum. When 43% of trans gendered and gender variant people make attempts to commit suicide (National Centre for Transgender Equality, 2010), it speaks more to hate in society than to mental illness in a particular community. Similarly, using a term like suicide when a survivor of torture dies blames the victim of torture for their own death, which lets torturers, governments, and corporations who profit from the torture off the hook. We need to contest the neutrality and hidden power in this kind of language.

Liberatory language practices serve our commitments to justice-doing by making power public, contesting domination, attacks on dignity, and oppression. Excellent examples of liberatory language practices are found in the binary-busting language of queer theory that contests the male/female binary. Here is an illuminating example from Queen and Schimel (1997), who describe “pomosexuality”:

Pomosexuality lives in the space in which all other non-binary forms of sexual and gender identity reside—a boundary-free zone in which fences are crossed for the fun of it, or simply because some of us can’t be fenced in. It challenges either/or categorizations in favor of largely un-mapped possibility and the intense charge that comes from transgression. It acknowledges the pleasure of that transgression, as well as *the need to transgress limits that do not make room for all of us.* (p. 23, my emphasis)

This is what I think Dean Spade means when they say social justice “trickles up.” Trans and queer folks in the margins create more space for all of us. I have huge respect for transformative teachings from these communities.

STRUCTURING SAFETY

Most of what I have learned about structuring safety comes from my work with refugees who are survivors of torture and political violence, where the risks of transgressing safety are huge (Reynolds, 2010c). There are no perfectly safe helping relationships, as there are always risks of transgressing safety. We contest the binary of “safe or unsafe” when we co-create relationships of “enough-safety” with our clients (Bird, 2000, 2006). I work to create “some-safety,” “enough-safety,” or a “safe-r” conversation and relationship. All conversations across difference are

risky, because power is always at play. Doing harm by replicating oppression is always a potential risk. This is true despite our commitments to social justice and our collective ethics.

Structuring Safety describes the practices of negotiating or co-constructing conditions, structures, and agreements that will make space for “safe-enough” work. Therapeutic relationships that are experienced as safe are not capricious, natural, or random. They require intentional practices that create consistency, predictability, and set the space for *safe-enough* conversations. Structuring Safety is not something therapists do to get ready for the real work; it *is* the real work (Reynolds 2010c, 2010d).

Developing a capacity for Structuring Safety requires skill, a complex analysis of power, moral courage, compassion, and critical supervision. In all anti-oppression activism, we strategize against an anticipated backlash. There is always the risk of transgression, and the need for repair. Structuring safety is comprised of acknowledging that we are involved in risky conversations, resisting replicating dominance, acknowledging the limits of accountability, and being open to a critique of our most closely held ideas and theories.

Despite our best intentions and our commitments to social justice, we are going to be imperfect. For example, attending to intersectionality can distance us at times from decolonizing practice (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Richardson & Reynolds, 2012; Walia, 2012). Canadian activist and journalist Linda McQuaig (2011) offered a lovely analysis of the “Occupy” movement, which she said was amazingly successful, despite being flawed, in that it got everyone, including corporate media, to question greed as our highest value. “Occupy” is flawed and imperfect and useful. There is a lovely poster that came from the “Occupy” movement that shows an Indigenous woman in the background and the text reads: “Take back Wall Street. Occupied since 1625.” We can’t occupy occupied land. In taking on capitalism, rampant consumerism, and greed, activists risked losing sight of colonization, and invisibilizing Indigenous issues at best, and participating in colonization at worst. In his book, *500 Years of Indigenous Resistance*, Indigenous warrior Gord Hill (2010) outlines how colonization includes invasion, occupation, genocide, and assimilation. Our failures to make “Occupy” perfect are not a reason to despair, but an opportunity for us to make repair and to engage in decolonizing practice in our imperfect solidarity.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined six guiding intentions which formulate an ethical stance for justice-doing. They include centering ethics, doing solidarity, addressing power, fostering collective sustainability, critically engaging with language, and structuring safety. The practices are emergent from these ethics. We don’t create a

practice and try to bring ethics to it. All of my solidarity practices, Solidarity Teams, Solidarity Groups, and a Supervision of Solidarity (Reynolds, 2010a, 2011c), like marcela polanco's Therapy of Solidarity (2011), are emergent from an ethical stance of justice-doing.

It is important that an ethical stance for justice-doing be put back into the context of the rhizome, where it can be open to change. This stance is a part of social justice activism, no more and no less. The stance must be returned back to the networked communities that fostered it (Lacey, 2005), where all of our work finds points of connection, and counter informs and inspires us collectively.

As an activist, I am enlivened by participating in the spontaneous co-creation of spaces of justice-doing, and embodied connections with unknown others, who embrace me with spirited solidarity in direct action struggles against oppression. These moments amplify my hope for change on many fronts, and inspire me in my community work with people who are marginalized. I am going to finish up with a story that speaks to the heart of my own relationship with justice-doing and the social divine:

It is April 2009. The Olympics, which will cost seven to nine billion dollars, are still a year away, and while homelessness hasn't yet tripled, it will. The "March Against Homelessness" starts in three different parts of Vancouver. People collect and march towards each other, where we will merge and arrive at a site for a rally. I am marching alongside the people of the Downtown East Side, walking with some guys who are pushing shopping carts, smoking cigarettes, and drinking from bottles wrapped in paper bags. Three First Nations women safety-pin a piece of cloth to my back, upon which are the words "Homes not Games." We are a spirited and skeptical crew. A homeless man with stringy hair, who is walking beside me, is making up his own responses to chants, which have us laughing alongside and enjoying his wit. At the moment we come up the incline of Robson Street, we see a crowd of people from the West Side coming towards us. No shopping carts or jerry-rigged wheelchairs, but lots of all-terrain baby strollers and expensive raingear. It is the convergence of two very different communities. The guy beside me stops walking. I am elated, moved, my body expansive. I feel palpably connected to him. This relational moment between me and this man, connecting with all of the West Side marchers, is a moment of the social divine. Our differences back-grounded, not invisibilized: our connections of imperfect solidarity fore-grounded. He looks at me and through a genuinely surprised smile says, "They're here for us." (Reynolds, 2011b, p. 42)

There are no accidents that we are all here today, not in unity (Bracho, 2000), but in a networked community of imperfect solidarity and collective ethics. We have been brought together at The Winds of Change Conference because we have a shared commitment to justice-doing in our work. Social justice activism is a part of our work, for many of us here it is the heart of our work. We know that a socially just world is a mentally well world. No justice, no peace. No peace of mind.

A RESPONSE TO VIKKI REYNOLDS'S ETHIC OF SOCIAL JUSTICE-DOING

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Our Lady of the Lake University

In the early morning of May 24, 2012, Rosa Elvira Cely, a 35-year-old Colombian woman, was found at the National Park in Bogotá, Colombia after she had called the emergency number as she was being brutally raped. She was found shaking, naked, with bruises on her face and neck, and a stab wound in her back. She died at a hospital four days later. Rosa Elvira was a street vendor in Bogotá; she had an 11-year-old daughter, and was finishing her high school studies. She had aspirations of becoming a psychologist, as reported by the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* (Gordillo, 2012). Rosa Elvira is one among millions of other women in Colombia, and other parts of the world, who became subjected to horrific and deadly acts of men's violence for having been born women.

Vikki's "imperfect" and "fluid" proposal for a path to work collectively from a position of an ethic of social justice-doing resonated with me as a proposal to shape possible responses to femicide, sexual violence, or other expressions of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination against women.

As a Colombian woman and immigrant in the US, when working with women, I face the impossibility of being impartial or indifferent to the profound implications of these kinds of expressions of gender disparity. Instead, I feel concern to act in solidarity with the hundreds of Colombian men and women who took the streets of Bogotá to keep the memory of Rosa Elvira alive, to protest against femicide, and to demand justice. It is a concern with the necessary political awareness that events such as this call to overcome the traditions of impunity, solitude, silence, and amnesia that are often put in place by responses of patriarchal systems of justice. In Vikki's words, I could consider such acts as *doing justice* alongside *doing dignity*, and contesting pretenses of neutrality.

Vikki's ethic of social justice-doing, guided by a requirement of naming power to identify injustices, in this case, make visible the historically rooted gender disparities in my Colombian culture, which, as well as other expressions of social disparities, carries implicit binary thinking. As Indigenous women from Antioquia, Colombia said they suffer marginalization three times: by being Indigenous, poor, and women (Gauma, Pancho, & Rey, 2009). Taking a path to attend to intersectionalities, as Vikki proposes, allows entrance into spirited relationships of solidarity when responding to injustices and by abuses of power. In Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) words, I take this to mean working in the borderlands, men and women together, which requires:

. . . a shift out of habitual formations: from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent

thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p. 101)

Vikki's proposal, which I take as an inspiring invitation of inclusion to continue reimagining our worlds, arrives from a land foreign not only to Rosa Elvira's but mine as an immigrant. Yet, its organic and imperfect frame makes visible the cultural gaps among us that seem to intersect at a location from where we could stand in their borderlands alongside one another to sustain our work in our differences, in a virtual collective to contribute to what I hope results in the delivery of more just worlds.

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