

## Gender, Race and Class Justice

Creative Interventions is committed to a gender-, race- and class-justice movement. Our analysis is intersectional meaning that we cannot separate gender from race, or race from class, or class from gender. While interpersonal violence (domestic violence or intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child abuse and other forms of intimate violence) are predominantly committed against women and girls, we do not always refer to these forms of violence by the category of "violence against women and girls."

This is not to say that violence is "gender neutral" or that women are as violent as men. We do not agree with this tendency towards "gender neutrality" as promoted during this era of backlash against feminism. Nor do we believe that a complex understanding of variance within the categories of gender and sexuality (same-sex relationships, gender-variant relationships, transgender identities and so on) requires that we make gender invisible when we talk about interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal violence remains deeply "gendered." It is also structured by the dynamics and power relationships of race, ethnicity, class, ability/disability, nation, immigration status, age, education, religion and other powerful forms of discrimination and oppression.

These systems of oppression determine who among us is most vulnerable to violence; who is believed; and who has access to help and resources for justice and healing. These systems also tell us who is most vulnerable to incarceration; who is likely to be labeled as a public danger; and who is denied access to resources which could lead to healthy transformation and change. These systems deny our understanding of how the historic conditions of poverty, colonization, state-based and corporate violence shape the context in which interpersonal violence is inflicted. This is not to say that political and personal histories excuse violence, but that they are critical to our understanding of how violence was shaped, how it is experienced, and to the creation of responses which do not simply reproduce violence in other forms. We do believe this is true for survivors of violence. We also believe that our solutions to violence must include the community and persons doing harm. This is what we mean by a holistic approach towards violence intervention and prevention.

We are often bound by the difficulties and inadequacies of language. The term, "gender-based violence" may more adequately capture the ways in which interpersonal forms of violence are often a reflection of patriarchal power. At the same time, we understand that survivors/victims of interpersonal violence may be women, girls, men, boys and gender variant persons. In certain contexts, it is useful to talk about "violence against women and girls." Generally, we have opted to shift our language and often use interchangeable terms to reflect the instability and inadequacy of any fixed set of language to reflect such a pervasive and complex phenomenon as violence. We have also moved away from the use of criminalizing language such as that reflected in terms such as "offender, perpetrator, batterer" or the language of "predator." More commonly, we use the terms "survivor" and "person doing harm" although when we specify a type of violence, we may say, "perpetrator of domestic violence," for example, to specify the form of violence that was committed. Most commonly, however, we work with human beings — our friends, colleagues, family, fellow community members — therefore, we use names, not labels. We also come to understand the specifics of violation — what was done, in what context, how it was experienced along with the powerful emotions of shame, guilt, fear, and disgust. Admittedly, at times, names are said with fear or contempt. What we are moving towards is to hold onto the passions of outrage and despair while incorporating compassion, resilience and, ultimately, the capacity to remain in community with

safety and integrity for all — even when the bonds of intimacy or relationship are no longer options.

Violence can describe a variation of the ways in which power is exercised. The now familiar power-and-control wheel used in domestic violence curriculum describes a continuum of violence — physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, using isolation, financial or economic, and spiritual. In our work at Creative Interventions and in collecting stories for the [StoryTelling & Organizing Project](#), we have witnessed or experienced all of these forms of violence as ways in which people have harmed others.

We also understand that change is difficult but that it is ultimately necessary on the level of individual, the collective and society if we want not only the end to violence — but also liberation. The goals and objectives of Creative Interventions, our values, our models and tools reflect this intersectional and holistic understanding of the problem of violence and the solution.

Again, our language is often inadequate. And language can also make these very discussions inaccessible to many. We hope that the generation of new knowledge and tools and the rediscovery of the value of what we already know will bring us closer to a social justice understanding of violence and a clearer pathway towards self-determination, collective transformation and liberation.

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### **About Creative Interventions**

“Our goal is not ending violence. It is liberation.” Beth Richie

Embracing the values of social justice and liberation, **Creative Interventions** is a space to re/envision solutions to domestic or intimate partner, sexual, family and other forms of interpersonal violence.

Creative Interventions assumes that the relationships, families and communities in which violence occurs are also the very locations for long-term change and transformation. It assumes that those most impacted by violence are the most motivated to challenge violence. It assumes that friends, family, and community know most intimately the conditions that lead to violence as well as the values and strengths which can lead to its transformation.

Creative Interventions was established as a resource center to create and promote community-based responses to interpersonal violence.

<http://www.creative-interventions.org/about/>