



WHY PODS?

“Every vision is also a map. As freedom fighter Kwame Ture taught us, ‘When you see people call themselves revolutionary always talking about destroying, destroying, destroying but never talking about building or creating, they’re not revolutionary. They do not understand the first thing about revolution. It’s creating.’ PIC abolition is a positive project that focuses, in part, on building a society where it is possible to address harm without relying on structural forms of oppression or the violent systems that increase it.” - Mariame Kaba

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and practical strategy that, at its core, seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence. One of the essential building blocks of TJ is strong interpersonal and community relationships. Because of the importance of community and relationships, as well as the nebulous, romanticized and wide-ranging nature of these concepts, in 2014 the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective coined the terms “Pod” and “Pod Mapping” as ways to identify specific relationships of support in instances of harm and violence “whether as survivors, bystanders or people who have caused harm”. (Mia Mingus) Pods are one way to conceptualize, identify and concretize our support systems (or lack thereof) in order to create more robust networks of care that can support the radical vision of abolition.

“Pods are essential to transformative justice and abolition work because they are a critical building block for creating caring and accountable communities.” (Mia Mingus)

Many of us call on our communities and relationships all the time to help us through harm! Pods are just a way to identify, expand and solidify these structures. This helps us to feel supported and pushes us to create non-carceral structures for moving through violence and harm in our lives. Pods are also a way to prevent acute harm and violence in our communities as we build skills to address miscommunications, conflict and other tensions before they become extreme.

GLOSSARY

Transformative justice (TJ): a political framework and approach that aims to address violence, harm, and abuse - without creating more harm and violence, and/or using harm-reduction to reduce violence. TJ responses and interventions do not rely on the state (which perpetuates systemic harm) and cultivate things that we know promote safety and prevent harm such as healing support, accountability pods, mutual aid, etc. (credit to Mia Mingus for this definition)

Pods: intentionally developed groups that aid in accountability and support, based on trusting relationships with folks who have consented to be in the pod. Pod can act as a tool to prevent and address harm, violence, emergencies, crisis or specific needs. They often meet on a regular basis and can be thought of as the building blocks of transformative justice.

Accountability: the acceptance of responsibility of one's own actions; a willingness to be transparent; acknowledging the interconnected nature of community relationships and committing to working through processes of repair and connection.

Safety: Being protected from, or less likely to experience an injury; having one's needs met (physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually).

Harm-reduction: Strategies and approaches that reduce harmful impacts of certain behaviors or actions. Harm-reduction in substance use may look like access to safe-injection sites, which reduce the chance of overdose, infectious diseases, and being criminalized.

In the work developed through The Whatcom Peace and Justice Center's volunteers and community members, we addressed several needs. Here's a sample of them:

Pod Intention/Goals	How Many in Pod?	Meeting Frequency
Mother Pod: Offers troubleshooting support, community accompaniment and resources to people in Whatcom interested in skill-building, studying and creating new practices through pods for Transformative Justice. This Zine is a product and a process of those practices.	10	Bi-weekly for 3 months in the summer and monthly during the fall of 2023
Accountability system for rest and preventing misalignment, exploitation, hyper-productivity and burnout culture in academia	3	Checking in via text and meeting in person quarterly
Creating community and care systems for masc-presenting folks that are connected through activism	5	Meeting in person quarterly
Material and financial resource redistribution pod	8	Monthly via zoom
Hybrid of Every-day Needs TJ Pod, Direct Impact Pod, and Accountability Pod: Creating a container to hold space for femme folks to discuss internalized/external oppression and find support to process the challenges and powers of our intersecting identities. Also a space for rest.	4	Quarterly in person
TJ Art Building Pod for BIPOC folks	9	Quarterly in person

WHAT PODS DO WE ALREADY HAVE?

Everyday TJ Pod for Parents	5	TBD
National pod for Afro-socialist studying intercalated with socials for community building and solidarity	4	Monthly via zoom
Accountability Pod for White People	5	Quarterly in person
Survivor Pod for Responding to Violence	3	Twice a Year or as Needs arise
Accountability Pod for community organizers working on alternatives to policing to support through burnout and reconnect with joy in organizing	5	Monthly in-person or via Zoom if needed

WHAT NEEDS DO PODS ADDRESS?

Pods are one way of responding to how existing systems don't fulfill our needs in terms of preventing and addressing harm or provisioning and distributing care. Institutions like the carceral system (cops, courts, jails, prisons, etc.), our education system, and our medical system all have major gaps. Lots of us face issues these systems weren't designed to address, and many who have been harmed by those systems can't trust them. That's where pods come in. When they're well organized, they can provide crucial support in both times of crisis and with improving everyday life. Building a pod is about creating a structure where we can address each other's needs mutually, non-commercially, and non-coercively. Rather than just reacting to problems, pods allow us to consciously craft community within a society that atomizes us through commodification, toxic individualism, and fear of difference.

RESOURCES

Most of these are available free online and can connect you to even more possibilities in the world of transformative justice:

Resources for supporting survivors of harm:

- Support for Survivors (Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs)
- Healing from Domestic Violence (Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence)
- Children and Adolescents Exposed to Domestic Violence (ICSDV)
- Niños y Adolescentes Expuestos a la Violencia Doméstica (ICSDV)
- Survived and Punished - End the Criminalization of Survival: "The Survived And Punished Project demands the immediate release of survivors of domestic and sexual violence and other forms of gender violence who are imprisoned for survival actions, including: self-defense, 'failure to protect,' migration, removing children from abusive people, being coerced into acting as an 'accomplice,' and securing resources needed to live."
- Safety Planning and Intimate Partner Violence - A Toolkit for Survivors and Supporters

Resources for when someone causes harm:

- Accountability in Healthy Relationships (ICSDV)
- Responsabilidad en relaciones saludables (ICSDV)
- Self accountability:
 - Centered self-accountability by Shannon Perez-Darby
 - What is self-accountability? with Shannon Perez-Darby

Recent books:

- *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement* by Ejeris Dixon and Leah L Pipezina-Samarsinha
- *Practicing New Worlds: Abolition and Emergent Strategies* by Andrea Ritchie
- *Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care* by Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba
- *Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom* by Derecka Purnell

General Resources:

- Abolition X "is the podcast that brings abolition to the culture. In every episode, incarcerated people, organizers and artists... leave

us with a new vision of how we can treat ourselves and each other outside of revenge and punishment.”

- SOIL Transformative Justice Project - “SOIL's mission is to build the conditions for transformative justice to grow and thrive.” Specifically helpful is the in depth toolkit about pods: Pods: The Building Blocks of Transformative Justice & Collective Care
- The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Partner Abuse in Activist Communities
- Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence - a super in depth look into community-based solutions to
- Transforming Harm - a bunch of great abolitionist resources!

QUESTIONS TO START YOUR TJ JOURNEY

(inspired by Mia Mingus)

Transformative Justice:

- What does community health/support look like?
- How do we navigate conflict and act to prevent or interrupt violence?
- Who receives the most care? Who receives the least care? Who does the most care labor?
- Why do survivors and people who have caused harm have so few options in our community?

Starting to build your pod:

- What are the skills we need to be able to prevent, respond to, heal from, and take accountability for harmful, violent and abusive behaviors?
- What do survivors and people who have caused harm need?
- What are the needs that YOU have?
- What kind of pod would meet that need? (accountability, safety, TJ general, etc)
- Who do you feel like you have a trusting relationship with?
- What are the skills that others could bring?
- Who has those skills?
- How can I foster a safe space to be vulnerable with my pod?

The Transformative Justice Learning Lab (TJLL) is a project of the Whatcom Peace and Justice Center.

The 2023 TJLL included Kat, Aline, Beth, Brooke, Eve, Fiona, Josh, Kaia, Lindsey, Rachel, Shannon, Sonja, and Theresa.

Cover art by Kat including an excerpt from *Undrowned* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs.

Thanks to all the TJ practitioners, experimenters, and advocates in whose footsteps we follow. Please reach out if you'd like to continue to deepen and expand this work.

The Whatcom Peace & Justice Center promotes lasting peace, social justice, and a culture of nonviolence at home and worldwide. We accomplish this through partnerships, education, and direct action.

office@whatcompjc.org
1220 Bay Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
360-734-0217

