Alternatives to Police

Rose City CopWatch

2008

Contents

abolition. It includes inspiring and extensive examples of alternatives to prison, from decriminalization and decarceration to community-based crime prevention strategies. Among the groups profiled are CLASP, CAP, rape crisis centers, and Sex Offenders Anonymous.

Sista II Sista. "Sistas Makin' Moves: Collective Leadership for Personal Transformation and Social Justice" in The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology, edited by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006.

Sista II Sista is a collective of young and adult working-class Black and Latina women in Brooklyn. Throughout their existence they have engaged in political education work as well as community organizing against imperialist war and police violence. This article includes a history of their organization and information about their projects, including Sista's Liberated Ground.

Williams, Kristian. Our Enemies in Blue. Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2004; Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007.

This book provides a detailed history of police violence in the United States. The final chapter discusses why alternatives to the police must be part of the strategy of cop abolition work, and summarizes several examples of popular and restorative justice programs around the world (in particular, South Africa and Northern Ireland).

Ashgate/Dartmouth, 2002.

While focusing on the period since 1994, this essay provides a brief history of the development of the Street Committees and compares their operations during Apartheid and after.

Mika, Harry and Keiran McEvoy. "Restorative Justice in Conflict: Paramilitarism, Community and the Construction of Legitimacy in Northern Ireland." Comparative Justice Review 4:3–4 (2001).

Mika and McEvoy detail some of the innovative restorative justice programs that evolved in Northern Ireland as a response to crime and antisocial behavior. The article briefly recounts the punishment violence that preceded nonviolent alternatives, and explains how the community-based alternatives operate in Northern Ireland and could become a model for alternatives elsewhere.

Mirsky, Laura. "The Community Conferencing Center: Restorative Practices in Baltimore, Maryland." Real Justice. March 9, 2004.

www.realjustice.org/library/cccbaltimore.html

This article details the history, philosophy, and structure of the community conferencing program, relates success stories, and considers the relationship of the CCC to the criminal justice system.

Myers, Ched. "Looking for Justice, Holding the Peace After the LA Rebellion, a Gang Truce Breaks New Ground." Network News, Nov-Dec 1992.

This article describes the Blood/Crips gang truce negotiated after the 1992 rebellion in LA following the Rodney King verdict. It also discusses the police's vindictive response and media misrepresentation.

Prison Research Education Action Project. Instead of Prisons. Syracuse: PREAP, 1976; Oakland: Critical Resistance, 2005.

This book provides a detailed analysis of the futility of the prison system and makes the practical and moral case for

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Whether we call them because of a dispute between neighbors or a robbery, a shooting or sexual violence, the police rarely meet our needs. They don't help us heal. And they don't prevent future harm. Rather than serve as advocates for true justice, they use their incredible power to reinforce the oppressive status quo. They threaten us with violence and incarceration and target the most oppressed and vulnerable people in our society. This is the current state of policing, and it will be the future unless we work to change it.

For Rose City Copwatch, our long-term vision is a world without police, a world in which communities function and thrive without the intervention of the heavy and often deadly hand of the State. But it can be difficult to imagine a cop-free world. Who would respond to emergencies? What would we do about crime? The existing police, prison and court systems have presented themselves to the public as the only possible answers. As police abolitionists, we need to find other solutions. If we can create and support liberatory alternatives to the police, we can meet the community's basic needs for dealing with harm, disrupt the idea that the work of the police is legitimate, and help people imagine a world without police.

Since its inception in 2003, Rose City Copwatch has promoted discussion about alternatives to the police. In 2007, we decided to take a step back and learn about alternatives-to-cops projects in action, both historical and ongoing. We began by looking in books, magazines and on-line for descriptions of these alternatives and how they work.

Oakland, CA, 2004.
This workbook provides different starting points for understanding how our communities understand crime and safety, and how activists can re-frame the discussion surrounding prisons and prison abolition. It offers specific ideas of alternatives to punishment. www.criticalresistance.org

Grumbs, Alexis Pauline. "Just Us: Transforming Justice by Building Communities." Left Turn. April-May 2008.

Grumbs explains how co-optation has hindered the potential for developing authentic, community structures to address harm. She then goes on to describe several groups doing work to build alternatives to the prison system: SOS Collective, UBUNTU, Sista's Liberated Ground, and Freedom Inc. (www.myspace.com/freedomincorporated).

Haddad, Ann. "Team Spirit: A Local Program Turns Conflict Into Cooperation." Urbanite: For Baltimore's Curious. October 2005.
http://www.urbanitebaltimore.com/sub.cfm?issueID=33&sectionID=4&ar

This human interest article profiles the Community Conferencing Center in Baltimore. It describes how a neighborhood dispute involving young people playing in the street was resolved through the facilitated conferencing process. There is also information about the history and philosophy of the program.

Koppelman, Alex. "Congress to New York (and Chicago and L.A.): Drop dead." Salon.com. 2007
http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/10/04/sanctuary/
Koppelman considers different ways of defining "sanctuary cities" and discusses how right-wing activists and politicians are on the attack.

Lee, Rebekah and Jeremy Seekings. "Vigilantism and Popular Justice After Apartheid" in Informal Criminal Justice, ed. Dermot Feenan. Aldershot, England:

Annotated Bibliography

Abel, Richard. "Introduction" in The Politics of Informal Justice, Volume 2. New York: Academic Press, 1982.
This essay contrasts informal justice and formal (especially state) justice systems. It identifies key characteristics of informal justice systems, such as their non-coercive emphasis and decentralized structures. And it considers how such informal arrangements have functioned under very different types of social systems, including socialism, fascism, and welfare states.

Colorado Forum on Community and Restorative Justice. Restorative Justice in Action. Spring 2001.
http://www.coloradorestorativejustice.org/publications/schools2001.pdf
A special issue reviews practical aspects of school-based restorative justice programs operating in the United States. Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA). "Taking Risks: Implementing Grassroots Community Accountability Strategies" in The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology, edited by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006. This piece describes an anti-rape organizing project that works with survivors of sexual violence and their communities, calling for "intentional engagement" with the people and contexts involved.

Critical Resistance, Shana Agid, Berndt Brooks, Rachel Herzing, and Ari Wohlfeiler. A World Without Walls: The Critical Resistance Abolition Organizing Toolkit.

It wasn't our aim to find or create a perfect model. Instead, we looked for projects that would help us in our thinking about the strengths and challenges of different approaches. We prioritized groups working towards some sort of collective liberation and de-emphasized professionally-based groups such as social service agencies. We did not consider projects administered by the police, the prison system, or the courts; but we did look at some groups that might function as auxiliaries to the police. As an organization working in the United States we chose to focus on other work done in the U.S, but we did include a couple examples from other countries that indicate the importance of such projects in broader liberation struggles.

Over the course of six months, we read articles and met to discuss them together. We took notes on what we found inspiring and documented our questions and concerns about the different projects. We learned a lot and decided to make this booklet to share our research with other people and hopefully hear about their ideas and experiences as well.

The booklet can be read from beginning to end, or it can serve as a reference to be skimmed in search of what most interests you. We begin with a brief discussion about useful criteria for evaluating alternatives to the police. Then we get into the bulk of the booklet: summaries of about fifteen different projects along with our thoughts about them and suggestions for where to go for more information. Given the brevity of this pamphlet, our descriptions can only be basic introductions. We've included an annotated bibliography showing what we read in producing this booklet. And we end with an opportunity for you to share your stories about alternatives to the police, and to give us feedback about this project.

What do we want?

Let's remember, at the outset, why we want to do away with the police: we seek a more just, free, equitable, and peaceful world. This larger vision must inform the alternatives we advocate and the institutions we develop.

Not all alternatives to the police are liberatory. Consider, for example, the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps: a group of volunteers who act as vigilante immigration cops, mainly along the U.S. border with Mexico. The Minutemen's ideology and practice both encourage greater oppression against people of color. They are an example of how an organization that formed as an (adjunct) alternative to the police can be just as frightening as the police, if not more so.

How can we create alternatives to the police that both empower us to keep one another safe, and encourage us to live lives that are free of violence and oppression? We have to hold these alternatives to the same standards we demand of existing institutions: they must be democratic, accountable, transparent, and reflective of real community control. We found a helpful set of criteria in the work of Harry Mika and Kieran McEvoy, who wrote about restorative justice in Northern Ireland. They outline seven principles of legitimacy, which they identified as being necessary for the success of community-based alternatives to the police.

- Mandate articulates the need for a program in a community. It is determined through local consultation and research into the community's needs.

makgotla were replaced by more inclusive and democratic organizations — first "People's Courts," and later "Street Committees." Young people and women slowly gained more of a role.

The Street Committees were elected in public meeting and charged with keeping peace within their area. While sometimes utilizing violence and other punishments (especially against those collaborating with the Apartheid government), Street Committees focused primarily on healing and restorative justice. In addition to addressing normal street crime, the Street Committees also addressed disputes between neighbors, family conflicts, employee or tenant grievances, and the like.

By the end of the Apartheid period, there were an estimated 400 Street Committees operating throughout South Africa. Many have continued their work, though their role is different in the new political context. They are, in principle, no longer at odds with the police, and in some places the cops refer minor cases to the Street Committees rather than the courts. But the Street Committees remain incredibly popular in the areas where they exist, and it is this popularity — not state approval — that guaranteed their continuance after the fall of the Apartheid regime.

More info: Williams, Our Enemies in Blue, (pp229-31); and Lee and Seeking, "Vigilantism and Popular Justice."

We were particularly impressed with the level of community involvement in the projects. The projects have an extraordinary degree of buy-in from perpetrators and survivors of crime, local paramilitary powers, community organizations, and the neighborhood residents. In a pilot project in Derry, for example, 98 percent of the residents signed onto the project's charter, which outlined the program's commitment to collective rights and responsibilities, anti-oppression and non-violence. It was also notable that the paramilitaries were willing to turn over the job of crime control to the CRJ projects while working to support the projects' success. A lot of this support can be credited to the amount of effort that was invested in identifying and addressing the needs and resources of the neighborhoods, to articulating respect for human rights, and to creating a culture of ownership within communities. The articles we read documented the early stages of these inspiring projects, but more recent information is harder to find. What were the outcomes, and were they able to replicate and sustain themselves over time? Also, in 2007, Sinn Fein (the main Republican political party) agreed to start cooperating with the police. Will the state manage to co-opt these restorative justice programs?

More info: Mika and McEvoy , "Restorative Justice in Conflict"; Williams, Our Enemies in Blue (pp231-33).

Street Committees in South Africa

During Apartheid, the police were an almost entirely repressive force, offering almost no protection to the Black population. To address the real need for public safety, in the 1970s Black communities adapted traditional structures to form a kind of community court, called "makgotla." The makgotla tended to perpetuate hierarchies within the community, especially those based on age and gender; they were almost wholly dominated by older men. In the 1980s, however, as the anti-Apartheid movement was increasingly youth-based, the

- Moral Authority exists when the community grants representative members the power to act on its behalf in instituting a program.

- Partnership is the way in which a program works constructively with other community groups, builds skills and power within the community, and addresses the needs of members of the community–both victims and offenders.

- Competence addresses the need for participants to have the skills to effectively carry out the work of the program. Examples might include training in human rights or conflict resolution.

- Practice involves the standards for action in a program, including its principles (like fairness, flexibility, confidentiality), its terms of participation (like voluntary participation, and making room for both victims and offenders), and its relationship to the community (like access, representation and evaluation.)

- Transparency is the method by which the project is subject to public scrutiny, local control and community input.

- Accountability is the ongoing evaluation of the project to ensure that it is following its standards and actually being effective in meeting its goals.

More info: Mika and McEvoy, "Restorative Justice in Conflict"

Alternatives to the Police

Call a friend, not the cops!

There are a lot of situations that we are not equipped to face alone. We need someone's help, but that someone does not have to be the police! So call a friend instead of the cops!

We should choose someone who can arrive quickly, help de-escalate the situation, and figure out "a comfortable ending." This will work best if we set up support networks in advance. Designing our support network can be as simple as checking in with people we know to see who we can call when we need help or support, and letting folks know that they can call us.

The real beauty of this idea that it encourages people to do something free and easy: build better communities by having an advance networking plan for who/when to call instead of the cops when stuff goes down.

More Info: Critical Resistance, A World Without Walls (pp 32–33)

Rape Crisis Centers

Rape Crisis Centers began the early 1970s as community-organized responses to rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence. They were started by feminists who saw that the justice system did not take violence against women seriously. As such they served as a standing critique of the criminal justice system and provided a real service addressing needs that the state was

law enforcement. It is, however, an example of an intervention that started out as an action by a group of affected people who were taking care of their peers, and is now funded by the local public health department and a social service organization. The fact that a government agency and a publicly-funded nonprofit host the project has its pros and cons; on the one hand, its institutional support provides a steady source of money, staff and volunteers to administer the project. On the other hand, local health departments and nonprofits have funding and reporting requirements that leave any radical project with some risk of co-optation or termination.

More info: http://www.myspace.com/portland_bad_date_line

International Examples

Community Restorative Justice in Northern Ireland

In the late 1960s, the British colonial state abandoned its efforts to police militant neighborhoods in Northern Ireland, leaving crime control in the hands of paramilitary groups (e.g., the Irish Republican Army [IRA]). By the mid-1990's, nearly everyone was eager to find some alternative to the punishment violence that characterized crime control for the previous 30 years. After an extensive study by criminologists and conflict resolution experts and thorough consultation with the residents of the affected areas, a series of "community restorative justice" (CRJ) projects were initiated with the endorsement and support of the IRA.

The mechanics of addressing disputes and social crime are similar to many other restorative justice models around the world, and include investigation, formal mediation, and referral to community resources. In its first two years, CRJ projects opened about 700 cases, and closed more than 90 percent of them.

volved serious political study, a formal negotiated agreement, regular social events including members of both gangs, and efforts to initiate discussion with local merchants.

Gang truces are negotiated between some of the people most involved with gang conflict, and they happen in the face of incredible risk. It seems that they have the potential to save lives and improve life in some of the most oppressed communities, but what actually happens? Do other gang truces tell a similar story? How do they hold up over time? And how can oppressive police responses be avoided or challenged?

More info: Myers, "Looking for Justice."

The Portland Bad Date Line

The Portland Bad Date Line (PBDL) was started in 1999 by women working in the sex industry. One of the women told her friends about a violent date she'd had with a trick in a pickup truck. The crew faxed his description to agencies that served prostitutes. Shortly afterwards, a woman was hurt during an in-call private show. A group of women created a phone tree and called escorts who had ads in local magazines. For several years, the PBDL was operated by Danzine, a nonprofit started by and for sex workers. After Danzine closed its doors in 2005, the PBDL was taken on by the county government and a local social service agency.

In its current incarnation, the Portland Bad Date Line produces a double-sided sheet that includes descriptions of violent and abusive customers in the sex industry. People who are working/trading/tricking or people who hear a description of a dangerous customer can report the physical description of the person, the car and/or location and the event by phone, email, fax or in person at a number of social service agencies.

The PBDL is a clear example of people stepping up to take care of themselves and their friends withoutthe intervention of

neglecting. Women were taking care of women instead of depending on the patriarchal state.

It's easy to forget this grassroots history, because Rape Crisis Centers have largely been institutionalized as non-profits, often funded by (and thus to a certain degree controlled by) city, county, or state governments. While the centers are still doing very important work, the transition to state funding and professionalism has changed the role of these organizations and obscured their origins in community struggle.

Nonetheless, many of these original Rape Crisis Centers are still operating today, though their tactics and structures may have changed.

- Bay Area Women Against Rape (BAWAR), founded in 1971, focused on empowering survivors, posted "street sheets" with rapists' identifying information, and counseled cops and hospital workers to better understand the needs of rape survivors. http://www.bapd.org/gbanpe-1.html

- The Washington D.C. Rape Crisis Center was formed in 1972 and stressed community education and rape prevention, and organized speakers and self-defense classes in junior high schools, high schools, community colleges and workplaces. http://www.dcrcc.org/home.htm

- Women Organized Against Rape was founded in 1973 in Philadelphia, and concentrated on reaching poor women and women of color, and provided individual counselors to support survivors who were entered into the hospital or whose cases made it to trial. http://www.woar.org/history.asp

To find a Rape Crisis Center where you live: http://centers.rainn.org/

More info: Prison research Education Project, Instead of Prisons (pp 146–149)

Sista's Liberated Ground (SLG)

Sista's Liberated Ground is a project of Sista II Sista (SIIS), a collective of young and adult working class Black and Latina women in Brooklyn. SLG is "a space where violence against sistas is not tolerated, and where women turn to each other instead of the police to address the violence in their lives." They reach out to the community with flyers, T-shirts, posters and stickers; have an "action line" that women can call to get involved with the project; and use murals to mark their territory. At the time the Sista II Sista article was written, they were planning workshops to educate the community about "sexism, conflict resolution, [and] collective self-defense" and to build relationships with more women in the neighborhood. They were also organizing Sista Circles to support and intervene in cases of gender violence.

SLG is clearly working to build direct alternatives to the police, and it is doing so from a radical feminist perspective based in the experiences of working class women of color. Their neighborhood approach helps make their work very concrete, and they are able to build support through community organizing with a variety of tactics including street theater and door-knocking. It is refreshing that they see skill-building as crisis prevention. And it is particularly inspiring that SLG has taken a stance against being co-opted by the state, seeking community rather than foundation support.

We're interested in thinking about how this type of project, which is so rooted in its community, could happen in other neighborhoods and contexts. And we want to learn more about how the skills SIIS is building within their community are put into practice during a crisis.

More info: www.sistaiisista.org : Sista II Sista, "Sistas Makin' Moves"; and Grumbs, "Just Us."

scene—that applied these principles. While the results vary, all the efforts lead to positive outcomes and incorporated the survivors' needs in the process.

CARA's principles are clear but flexible in different situations. We appreciate their efforts to distinguish one's "actions" from one's "person," and their acknowledgment that many outcomes of recovery and healing are possible. It is exciting that CARA's focus is on building the society we want to create.

We like the organization's willingness to improvise solutions based on the actual situation involved, and we are inspired by the possibilities of adapting CARA's principles to other examples of social crime. Even though many of the people involved in CARA's projects wouldn't have called the police, we think this is a good example of delegitimizing the cops. The more people do to take care of themselves, the less the state is relevant.

More info: Communities Against Rape and Abuse, "Taking Risks"; www.cara-seattle.org

Gang Truces

Fed up with the fighting and deaths, rival gangs sometimes agree to a truce. An important example of this happened in Los Angeles California in 1992. The Bloods and Crips had been in the process of negotiating a truce when the verdict in the Rodney King case was announced and the rebellion in LA began. The Bloods/Crips truce began after the rebellion and held throughout the summer. The government and media were hostile, and the police responded with violent efforts at disruption. Local residents reported significant improvements in their lives but citywide violence did not appear to decrease.

Details of the organizing behind the truces are sketchy in part because established institutions were only marginally involved (if at all). It is clear, though, that the truce process in-

CARA: Communities Against Rape and Abuse

CARA is a Seattle, Washington based anti-rape organizing project that works with survivors of sexual violence and their communities "to identify their own unique goals, values, and actions that add flesh to their distinct safety/accountability models."

The group's basic organizing tenet is to recognize the humanity of everyone involved — the survivor, aggressor and community. CARA's method includes many clear principles for accomplishing this:

- prioritize the self-determination of the survivor

- identify a plan for safety and support of survivors and others in the community

- try to anticipate and plan for potential consequences of the strategy

- organize collectively

- make sure everyone in the group shares a political analysis of sexual violence

- be clear and specific about what the group is demanding from the aggressor

- communicate the group's analysis and demands to the aggressor

- consider help from the aggressor's community

- prepare to engage with a long-term process

CARA has been involved with several organizing efforts–from holding a popular anti-cop organizer accountable for ongoing sexual harassment to addressing rape in the punk music

Safe Outside the System: The SOS Collective

The SOS Collective is based in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, where it works to end violence against queer people of color without involving the police. They formed out of the Audre Lorde project in 1997, and have worked to respond to police violence by participating in the founding of the Coalition Against Police Brutality, advocating for community members who have been brutalized by the police, and organizing against broader issues of state violence such as the War on Terror.

More recently, they have focused on responses to queer-bashing and other hate violence, which brings the added challenge of holding individual strangers accountable. They have responded by creating "safer spaces." But rather than create new, isolated safer spaces, they want to see every institution in the neighborhood — from churches to schools and stores to laundromats — participate as a place for queer people to go to if threatened or attacked.

We're excited by this effort to connect to the larger community and make violence against queer people of color everyone's concern. We'd like to better understand what a "safer space" consists of: what steps are taken and what are the specific responsibilities of folks in the neighborhood when someone comes for help?

More info: http://www.alp.org/whatwedo/organizing/sos/ andGrumbs, "Just Us."

Sex Offenders Anonymous (SOANON)

In 1971, a former exhibitionist and his wife began to meet with other sex offenders in Los Angeles and founded Sex Offenders Anonymous. The group was aimed at male sex offend-

ers and their female partners. They had weekly meetings and followed the model of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The Los Angeles group does not appear to exist anymore but there is a group in Denver, Colorado.

SOANON is unusual, in part, because the group consists of offenders who have taken the initiative to change their own behavior. The adaptation of the AA model to address interpersonal crime was really very smart, since AA-type groups require few resources but deliver substantial successes, while genuinely addressing the causes of misbehavior without violence or government action. The potential here seems great, and we'd be interested to learn of any similarly structured programs tackling problems like domestic violence or abusive parenting.

(Ironically, since such self-help recovery programs stop problems from reaching the crisis point, they are not typically recognized as addressing crime as such. But consider, for example, which has kept more drunk drivers off the roads: Alcoholics Anonymous or police checkpoints?)

While we're intrigued by the idea of SOANON, we mostly have questions: How exactly does the group work? How do new members find out about it? Do they accept referrals from social workers or the courts, and does this run the risk of making the group an extension of the punishment system? How do they define "sex offender"? What's their political understanding of sexual violence? How appropriate is the "addiction" model? And what constitutes "recovery"?

More Info: http://www.coloradoservicegroup.org/rsoa.htmand Prison Research Education Action Project, Instead of Prisons (page 153)

community, then were brought together to craft a formal agreement.

CAP's strengths included using lay mediators who lived in the neighborhood, encouraging folks involved in the dispute to work out solutions themselves with minimal intervention, and periodically checking up on the agreements afterwards. Our main criticism is that, while serving as a less punitive option than prison, programs that work as referrals from the courts often function as an adjunct to the system rather than as an alternative to it. More info: Prison Research Education Action Project, Instead of Prisons (p 118)

Restorative Justice in Schools

Restorative Justice In Action (RJIA) is a quarterly newsletter published by the Colorado Forum on Community and Restorative Justice. In a special school edition from 2001, RJIA reviews practical aspects of school-based restorative justice programs operating in the US. This short publication gives brief accounts of several programs and discusses the creativity and political work needed to implement restorative justice in schools. The newsletter includes anecdotes and statistics showing success in reducing expulsion and increasing positive behaviors, and provides contact information for staff and students doing the work. However, it lacks comprehensive examples of power analysis in youth/school settings and how that might affect restorative justice. We include this example because we're excited by youth-led and youth-focused examples of alternatives to the system.

More info: Colorado Forum on Community and Restorative Justice, Restorative Justice In Action newsletter.

tionships with the legal system, including the police, and got many of their referrals from these systems.

The Community Conferencing Center (CCC)

The Community Conferencing Center was started by Dr. Lauren Abramson in 2000, and addresses conflict primarily in inner-city neighborhoods in Baltimore, Maryland. It is a non-profit organization focused on juvenile offenders in and out of the court system, and on conflicts in schools and neighborhoods. It uses "community conferences" based on indigenous practices of "hearing what happened, letting everybody say how they've been affected by the situation, and then having the group come up with ways to repair the harm and prevent it from happening again." By 2004, the Community Conferencing Center had facilitated over 500 conferences and reached compliance with 90% of its agreements.

We appreciated CCC's philosophy that all people can learn the skills to work out conflict, and that the legal system alienates individuals and community from these skills, providing little real justice. We were impressed with the examples where all parties involved, notably including youth, worked together to define the problems and take steps to solve them. More info: www.communityconferencing.org; Haddad, "Team Spirit"; and Mirsky, "The Community Conferencing Center."

Community Assistance Project (CAP)

The Community Assistance Project began in 1970 in Chester, Pennsylvania. CAP worked with poor folks and people of color to provide mediation in family and neighborhood disputes, and programs for those on bail and parole. People involved in a dispute first met individually with a mediator drawn from the

Citizens Local Alliance for a Safer Philadelphia (CLASP)

In 1972, residents of a multi-racial, mixed-class area in West Philadelphia came together and organized to prevent crime in their neighborhood. They started as the Block Association of West Philadelphia and later joined with CLASP, Citizen's Local Alliance for a Safer Philadelphia, who adopted the Block Association's community action model. CLASP worked to prevent burglaries with locks, lights, homemade burglar alarms, engraving machines, improved community ties, and an awareness of strangers. They also worked to address street crime through the use of neighborhood walks. Walks were conducted by a group of at least two unarmed and unmarked neighborhood residents. When they saw a crime happening, they used flashlights and freon horns to signal other neighbors to come out with their horns. By 1976, there were 600 organized autonomous blocks throughout the city. People were more comfortable spending time outside, and a CLASP survey showed an average of 75% less crime on organized blocks compared to their respective police districts.

We are excited by the scope of this project, and the creativity and accessibility of the crime prevention tactics. Also, bringing people outside to participate in their neighborhood encourages healthy communities in a way that demonstrates the possibility of shifting power back to people. (Imagine a world where every time there's a police stop in the neighborhood, people step out on their porch and watch it!) We are curious if CLASP, as it grew across the city, was able to avoid the problems that plague many neighborhood watches: pressure to partner with the police, and a tendency to reinforce discrimination based on class and race as people define who is and is not a part of their neighborhood.

More info: Prison Research Education Action Project, *Instead of Prisons* (p 164)

Sanctuary Cities

In the wake of federal anti-immigrant policy and law enforcement, several cities and municipalities have declared themselves to be "Sanctuary Cities." The term, which has no legal meaning, generally refers to a city's refusal to allow public funds or resources to be used to enforce federal immigration laws. This prevents local cops from asking about a person's immigration status or assisting federal police in immigration raids. Sanctuary cities include several of the largest cities in the U.S., including Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, many small towns and counties, plus two states, Oregon and Alaska. Recently, sanctuary cities have been a favorite target of anti-immigrant groups and right-wing lawmakers, and several bills currently making their way through Congress would cut off federal funds to these jurisdictions.

A city that refuses to cooperate with the federal government presents a unique version of community control. However, our questions and concerns are abundant. A lot of the support for sanctuary city policies actually comes from the police themselves, since they want to win the trust and cooperation of immigrant communities, and also maintain their own jurisdictional authority. How might such policies actually reinforce state power? Also, none of the sanctuary cities we studied attempt to prevent federal agents from conducting immigration raids or otherwise harassing these communities. How effective are these laws at actually protecting the rights of immigrants?

More info: Koppelman, "Congress to New York."

Restorative Justice Projects

Restorative justice seeks to heal communities rather than punish individuals. (It is sometimes described as "transformative" rather than "restorative," because many communities where it is applied never saw justice to begin with.) The process generally begins with the people affected by the conflict voluntarily meeting with one or more mediators. They seek to understand what happened and why, share how they feel, and develop a contract that everyone supports, addresses all concerns, and can prevent the problem from recurring.

One of the things we found inspiring about restorative justice programs is that problems can be addressed before the cops get involved. This helps build stronger communities by enabling people to hold discussions around the issues that directly affect them and to come up with their own decisions. Through restorative justice models, all people have a chance to be involved and have their voice heard. This dialog also allows people to understand how one's actions affect the larger community and therefore create a solution that addresses the actual harm done and the real needs of the people involved.

One concern about restorative justice is that it may maintain existing power dynamics within the community, such as those based on age, race, gender, and class. And we're interested in learning more about what restorative justice can and can't offer in terms of abolishing the police. It seems that some restorative justice programs, particularly when they involve formal relationships with the legal system, function more as auxiliaries to the police than actual alternatives. While many of the examples we studied involved situations where people came together to address conflicts that might have otherwise been handled by the police–and were also able to address disputes that would have otherwise gone unreported, unnoticed, unattended, or ignored–many other examples established rela-