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WORKSHOP TEMPLATE

«BEYOND POLICING.
A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY-LED
SOLUTIONS TO THE VIOLENCE OF
POLICING IN WESTERN EUROPE»

GOALS

- > For people to think about why police exist (to maintain status quo, to keep poor and people of colour in check); provide some historical understanding of policing.
- > Encourage participants to start thinking about a world without police.
- > Give clear examples of what resistance to policing looks like in general and in their local area.
- > Start thinking of ways they can refrain from calling the police and use alternative resources/strategies.
- > Generate ideas about where to plug in to local resistance.

Duration: 2 hours

Materials: paper, pens, poem, name tags

WELCOME (20 MINUTES)

- > Welcome to the space.
- > Introduction of facilitators and participants.
- > Participants turn to a partner and ask each other: what motivates you in this political moment?
- > In a big group, take turns to share names, gender pronouns, access needs, and group affiliations.
- > Discuss group agreements for how we treat each other today.
- > Share goals for the workshop: participants to think collectively beyond policing, to leave with clear examples of what resistance to policing looks like, and to start thinking of ways they can refrain from calling the police and use alternative resources/strategies.

VISIONING PRACTICE (20 MINUTES)

- > A collective practice in creative thinking. Often, we are clearer on the problems than we are on possible solutions. This exercise is an opportunity to connect to our visions.
 - # Question for the group: What movements in history have held a powerful vision, against seemingly impossible odds, and through tenacity won out?
- > Share the poem “Imagine the Angels of Bread” by Martín Espada.
- > Get comfortable and think about your answers to these questions:
 - # What’s your vision of the world we’re working towards?
 - # What’s your vision of social justice?
 - # What would need to change in your home, family, community, city to eliminate violence?
 - # How would people relate to each other?
 - # What would children do after school?
 - # Where would food come from?
 - # What quality of water would babies drink?
 - # What jobs or work roles would still exist?
 - # How would people relate to resources and the planet?
 - # Would there be fresh air? Let yourself feel that.
 - # What would be valued, who would be valued, and how?
 - # What kind of institutions would or wouldn’t exist in your region, or at all?
 - # What kind of services or support would people be offered?
 - # What values would the economy be based on?
 - # How would decisions get made about things affecting your region?
 - # How would conflict and people hurting each other be dealt with?
 - # What would housing and healthcare be like?
 - # What would people do for inspiration and joy?
 - # What would art look and sound and feel like?
 - # Think about other communities or other places... Are there ways people are organised and values they share that inspire you? Are there things that you draw from your community or family that inspire parts of your vision?
- > Solo reflection: Journal, draw or imagine that vision.
- > Group discussion: Was that easy or difficult? What kinds of things have movements before us had to fight to win that we might take for granted today?

DEFINITIONS OF POLICE (10 MINUTES)

Put posters on the wall with these definitions:

1. Policing is a social relationship made up of a set of practices that are empowered by the state to enforce law and social control through the use of force.
2. Policing has evolved as a set of practices that keep oppressive social and economic relationships in place. This can look like protecting private property, breaking strikes of working people, preventing people from sitting or sleeping in certain areas, preventing people from entering or exiting borders, and repressing any work done outside capitalist markets, among other practices.
3. Policing keeps social and economic relationships in place and is aimed at maintaining social order. The beliefs and practices of policing were often fabricated by nations to secure and manage colonies, enslavement, occupation, displacement and land dispossession.

Group discussion:

- What stands out?
- What do you want to add?
- What feels important?

TIMELINE OF POLICING (25 MINUTES)

- > Before the workshop, create a timeline of 20-30 important points in the evolution of policing in your context. This could include key events in society around race and racism, moments where policies and practices of policing changed, and key moments in resistance movements. What historical points help illuminate how we got where we are today? Write a short paragraph about each point and possibly include a picture. Print these moments out, each on a separate piece of paper.
- > In the workshop, pass the papers around. Piece together the timeline. Have a group discussion. What is it like to see this history? What does this mean for our work today?

SCENARIOS (30 MINUTES)

Divide into four groups.

Assign one of the following scenarios to each group, as well as the discussion questions.

1. You live in an apartment building. Your upstairs neighbours argue frequently but tonight it sounds like it's getting violent. You don't know your neighbours very well, but you have said hello and chatted in the hallway once or twice.
2. Your neighbour knocks on your door to tell you that their house was broken into. Several valuable items, including a laptop and tools they use for work, were taken. Your neighbour is fearful that these people may come back. They are also worried about how they are going to be able to do their job without the tools.
3. You see the police harassing a group of youth as you are walking home from the shops. They have them against a wall and it looks like some of them are going to be arrested. The police are being rough with them and are yelling. You know that these young people hang out in the park every afternoon and one of them is your next-door neighbour's son.
4. You are driving and while stopped at a traffic light you are rear-ended. You and the person who hit you pull over to talk. You look at your car and find that one of the rear lights has been smashed and the bumper is falling off. You know that you do not have the savings to get these fixed. The person who hit you confesses that they do not have insurance and are on probation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Work together to find solutions.

Answer these questions and take notes.

1. How do you react during and after the incident in ways that do not involve – or that mitigate the effects of – the police, courts or other parts of the prison industrial complex (depending on the scenario)?
2. What resources exist in your community that you could use? What resources are missing that you would like to see?
3. How can you support both the people who were harmed and the people doing the harm in ways that make your community stronger?

DEBRIEF

- > Each group reports back on their scenario and solutions.
- > Was it easy to come up with solutions? Did people have personal experience with similar situations? What solutions worked and didn't work?
- > Key take-aways:
 - # People and communities have always been resolving conflict without police getting involved. We need to uplift those strategies that mostly exist in communities where policing inflicts the most harm.
 - # Police do not represent safety for everyone, and we are often challenged to de-escalate by convincing neighbours, community members and authorities not to call on the police.
 - # Through policing, the state has built up a monopoly over emergency response, dealing with crisis, resolving interpersonal conflicts and much more. By opposing policing, we are challenged to also create non-police and non-state infrastructure to respond to a variety of issues.

CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

This is when we discuss recent wins against policing, current organising that is happening, and tools/resources that can help people in their daily lives. Participants will also be challenged to think about ways they resist policing in everyday life, and one thing they will do to avoid calling/relying on the police.

Some ideas for structuring this conversation:

On a poster paper taped onto the wall and divided into two columns, have participants draw/sketch/write ways they resist policing in day-to-day life, and one new way they will begin to challenge the use of policing/police in their everyday lives. One column says: Ways we already resist policing. The other column says: Ways we will start resisting policing.

- > If there are organisers in the group, facilitate a (short) discussion about how their organising can better work towards the abolition of policing.
- > If they are involved in policy or legislative work, how can reforms be designed so as not to further empower the police and build up community-based alternatives instead?
- > If your organisation or community is involved in anti-police work, share what you are working on and anything that may help participants understand what this work entails.