

Creative Interventions Toolkit

A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence



creative interventions

Resources for everyday people
to end violence



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Creative Interventions
www.creative-interventions.org
info@creative-interventions.org

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Creative Interventions: The Story Behind the Toolkit

[What Is Creative Interventions?](#)

Creative Interventions (CI) started in 2004 in Oakland as a national resource center to create and promote community-based interventions to interpersonal violence. Its founders worked with survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault for many years but found limitations in the U.S. approach to working with violence. CI was established as one way in which we could use our experiences and knowledge to equip everyday people to confront, challenge and overcome violence.

The organization was started with the purpose to develop what it and others call a *community-based approach* to ending interpersonal violence. This approach is an alternative to the more common way that organizations typically deal with interpersonal violence. Organizations that deal with domestic violence and sexual assault generally view violence as an individual problem or rely on the police and criminal justice system as a solution. We wanted to turn back to our communities and strengthen community-based systems to resist violence in all of its forms.

For CI, the community-based approach is one in which everyday people such as family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, members of community organizations such as faith institutions, civic organizations or businesses are the people who take action to intervene in violence.

[Incite! Women of Color against Violence](#)

CI was inspired by a social movement that led to the formation of a national organization called *Incite! Women of Color against Violence* (see www.incite-national.org) in 2000. At that time, over a thousand people, most from communities of color, gathered at the first *Color of Violence Conference* in Santa Cruz to seek new, alternative responses to violence – a response that turns towards communities and away from policing and prisons to address interpersonal violence.

It is also inspired by a statement that was created by Incite! Women of Color against Violence and another organization, Critical Resistance, that was founded in 1998 at a conference also attended by thousands committed to prison abolition. Together Incite! and Critical Resistance found common ground in their joint statement, *Incite! Women of Color against Violence and Critical Resistance Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex* (downloadable at http://www.incite-national.org/media/docs/5848_incite-cr-statement.pdf).

The Incite!-Critical Resistance joint statement opens with the words:

We call on social justice movements to develop strategies and analysis that address both state AND interpersonal violence, particularly violence against women. Currently, activists/movements that address state violence (such as anti-prison, anti-police brutality groups) often work in isolation from activists/movements that address domestic and sexual violence. The result is that women of color, who suffer disproportionately from both state and interpersonal violence, have become marginalized within these movements. It is critical that we develop responses to gender violence that do not depend on a sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic criminal justice system. It is also important that we develop strategies that challenge the criminal justice system and that also provide safety for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. To live violence free-lives, we must develop holistic strategies for addressing violence that speak to the intersection of all forms of oppression.

In the spirit of this statement and in honor of the many who have resisted violence over the generations, we at CI started what we planned to be an organization that would exist long enough to help create new resources to continue this work. At the end of the distribution of this Toolkit, we also planned to end the organization and rebuild new ways to support a community-based response to violence that would truly rely upon local communities, from informal friendship networks to community institutions such as faith institutions, unions or community organizations – and not upon a single organization such as CI.

The limited time horizon of the organization was deliberate and served the purposes of:

- Keeping focus on the community-based nature of the project rather than on the institutional life of CI; and
- Allowing for risk-taking within the organization (since many of the concepts and practices of CI were and are considered experimental, controversial and risky) due to reduced concern regarding long-term reputation or well-being of the organization

[The Work Leading to This Toolkit](#)

This Toolkit the result of a 3-year period from 2006 to 2009 during which CI joined with partner organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area including Asian Women's Shelter, Shimtuh, Narika, and La Clinica de la Raza. We also had partnerships with other individuals and organizations such as those listed in Section 0.2: *A Community Effort*.

Our organizations worked closely together to create a different, alternative approach to issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. All of our organizations have years of experience working in mostly immigrant communities on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. And all were interested in coming together to try to create different options for people experiencing violence. We sought answers to the questions:

- How can family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers and community members get actively involved in ending violence when their own loved ones are experiencing interpersonal violence? These people are what we end up calling *community allies* or what others might call *bystanders* or *social network*.
- How can we use our connection and care for people who are victims or survivors of violence to not only provide safety but also opportunities for them to heal and re-connect to healthier relationships?
- How can we all provide greater safety for survivors or victims of violence even if they stay with or need to co-exist in the same community with people who have harmed them?
- How can we get violent or abusive people to stop the harm they have caused, repair it – and change their attitudes and behavior so that they become part of the solution?
- How can we change violent behavior by using our connection and care for people who have caused harm rather than by using threats, punishment or policing?
- How can we change everyday beliefs, practices and skills to address, reduce, end and prevent violence?
- How can we use all of the above to create the safe, respectful and healthy communities that we all seek?

These are challenging questions that called for a new approach and model for addressing interpersonal violence.

The 3-year project that we called the *Community-Based Interventions Project* brought our team together to create a new vision for violence intervention, to work with people experiencing violence, and to develop a model and tools from our work during that time.

During that time, we answered calls and requests from people facing some form of interpersonal violence who were seeking something different than what they could find from other existing domestic violence or sexual assault services. We partnered with them to find our way towards the concepts, tools and lessons in this Toolkit. We were initially guided by the questions listed above and the values that we had created at the outset of CI (See Section 3.3: *Guiding Your Intervention with Values*). Our process was open and experimental. Much of it was based upon the knowledge we had about the dynamics of interpersonal violence and the answers we all developed using the key questions found in Section 4. *Tools to Mix and Match*. Each situation was unique. But these common questions led us to figure out a response that fit the values and needs of those who came to CI. Many times, the people coming to CI found satisfaction in imagining what they truly wanted and needed – without being told what that should be. They found support in asking friends and family members to come together to find a different way to think about their situation of violence and to create strategies that could bring about change. They often considered but did not necessarily follow through with all of the steps of what could be a long, difficult and risky process.

From the beginning, we offered a *community-based* approach that was different than what is usually available. And it mostly involved asking questions that would help lead those seeking our help to find the resources that they needed among their own friends, family and community and find the answers from what they knew about their own situation of violence, their values and their goals.

Because we helped to ask questions and hold a process that relied upon those facing the situation of violence to come up with their own responses and resources, we call this a *facilitated model*. We are not the experts. We are there to help people find their own expertise within a situation that is often filled with enough confusion and strong emotions to make it difficult for one to do on one's own. During this period, we encountered about 25 situations of violence and met in person with over 100 people coming together to seek solutions.

Together, with the facilitators at CI and their allies, they were able to think differently about what they needed and what they wanted to do to resolve violence: through self-reflection and clarification (A: Getting Clear); thinking more clearly about safety (B: Staying Safe); finding help among their friends, family and community (C: Mapping Allies and Barriers); coming up with what they really wanted (D: Setting Goals); supporting survivors or victims (E. Supporting Survivors or Victims); thinking about what they wanted from the person doing harm (F: Taking Accountability); finding ways to work collectively

with their community (G: Working Together); and moving through what could be a long and winding process towards their goals (H: Keeping on Track).

This Toolkit is the result of this project. It contains the model that we built together with our partners and with those who came to seek our help. It includes any tips and useful information that we were able to gather during this period of time. And we expect that it will be used and then improved upon by all of you who may use it in your own situations of violence and in your own communities.

The Toolkit is available on the website www.creative-interventions.org and also accompanies stories of people who have taken action to end violence, stories that are featured through the Story Telling and Organizing Project (STOP) available at www.stopviolenceeveryday.org. We hope to expand the Toolkit from English to other languages with the help of others who find this Toolkit useful.

[The Toolkit and the Goals of Creative Interventions](#)

With this Toolkit on the website, CI has reached its organizational goals:

1. Develop a model and tools to support community-based responses to violence.
2. Document these models, tools and lessons through creating useful and accessible websites, Toolkits, audio clips, stories and so on.
3. Make these models, tools and lessons available to the public.

[We Invite You to Build Upon Our Collective Work](#)

With this, we are closing down the other formal operations of CI except for maintaining the website (www.creative-interventions.org) as we had planned from our very beginning, and to make room for you who use this Toolkit to make it your own. Our email at info@creative-interventions.org will also be answered by volunteers who continue to work to keep the Toolkit, accompanying resources and ongoing discussions a living collaborative project for as long as it is useful and viable.

Through the website or whatever other connections we create, we encourage you to add to it, share stories, and develop new approaches for communities to end violence in all of its forms.

The project, StoryTelling & Organizing Project (STOP) (www.stopviolenceeveryday.org), carries on as an independent and companion project to continue to support community-based interventions to violence, collect and share stories as all of us seek to end interpersonal violence, and to grow the movement towards liberation. Your experiences with the Toolkit and improvements can be shared on this website and its volunteers and collaborators,

as well.

A Community Effort

A collective community is behind this community-based response to violence. Many of us as individuals and as organizations are working together to challenge violence in all of its forms. Many have been involved in working both on the *Community-Based Interventions Project* that has generated this Toolkit.

The key partner organizations towards the creation of this Toolkit are:

- Incite! Women of Color against Violence (National). Creative Interventions is an affiliate of this national organization and is a creation of the social movement that Incite! represents.
- Creative Interventions (Oakland, CA) (with many, many individual supporters – volunteers, board members, advisory board members, staff, organizational partners, large and small funders)
- Asian Women’s Shelter (Oakland, CA)
- Narika (Oakland, CA)
- Shimtuh, a project of Korean Community Center of the East Bay (KCCEB) (Oakland, CA)
- La Clinica de la Raza (Oakland, CA)
- StoryTelling & Organizing Project (STOP) (National). STOP is a spin-off project of Creative Interventions and is working with a partnership of community organizations to promote community-based responses to violence through story telling and organizing around successful strategies for communities to challenge violence in all of its forms. See www.stopviolenceeveryday.org.

The individuals who made up these teams:

- CI Staff: Rachel Herzing, Mimi Kim, Isaac Ontiveros
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- Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network (Chicago, IL)
- Close to Home (Dorchester, MA)
- Communities against Rape and Abuse (CARA) (Seattle, WA)

- Community United against Violence (CUAV) (San Francisco, CA)
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