

Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice

Call for Papers

Special Issue: Transformative Justice as Praxis in Canada

Fall/Winter 2021

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On May 25, 2020, the world shifted. In the aftermath of the execution of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, cities in 60 countries and every major city in North America erupted, for months, into movements of protest and resistance. Two dominant messages have been central to the sustained protest movements for Black life in 2020 and 2021: #DefundThePolice and prison abolition. While the organizing and messaging of last year built upon decades of community organizing, advocacy, and scholarship by abolitionists both within and outside of the academy, these two terms—#DefundThePolice and prison abolition—have reached unprecedented audiences and entered mainstream discourse in ways unthinkable prior to the spring of 2020. Our current moment calls for both a study of and reckoning with these two complex historical terms. In Canada, this moment offers an opportunity to further interrogate our local histories of abolitionism, as well as to explore the current practices and organizing related to abolition that are oft unseen, yet embedded within numerous Black and Indigenous communities throughout the country.

This special issue on “Transformative Justice as Praxis” is devoted to uncovering and archiving these local histories and organizing practices throughout Canada. While a politics of abolition entails a long-term commitment to building a world without our current prison, policing, and surveillance systems, transformative justice is often sidestepped as the foundation of a politics of abolition. Yet, as Ruthie Gilmore and others have noted, transformative justice is the anchor, the root, and the very location from which any serious study of or commitment to a politics of abolition must begin. It is also the part of abolition that has been least explored, exemplified, and detailed in writings—old and new—about abolition. In short, transformative justice is simultaneously the most urgent and least understood subject matter within the context of abolition. It is urgent because without transformative justice, there can be no abolition.

Transformative justice is a set of everyday practices that guides human behavior to respond to harm and violence non-punitively. While this characterization is broad, many individual organizers and community organizations throughout Canada have developed practices and strategies for dealing with harm and violence in families, work, and organizing environments, and within their larger communities. Given Black and Indigenous communities’ unique and proximate relationship to living histories of slavery and settler colonialism, these communities have, over centuries, developed responses for confronting lateral and state violence. As organizer Mia Mingus describes, “transformative justice was created by and for many of these

communities,” including “immigrant communities of color, poor and low-income communities, communities of color, people with disabilities, sex workers, queer and trans communities.”¹

This call invites individuals to submit **scholarly papers (up to 6,000 words) and poetry, interviews, fiction, anonymized case studies and essays (up to 3,000 words)** for publication in the Fall/Winter 2021 issue of *Atlantis* journal to engage the subject of transformative justice in our current moment in Canada. Importantly, this call seeks out contributors who have studied and practiced transformative justice, rather than those who simply aim to theorize it in our current moment. We are particularly interested in the pragmatics of transformative justice—what has worked, what has failed, what has been tried and tried again with varying degrees of success. We are also interested in documenting histories of transformative justice practices within organizing histories and within Black and Indigenous communities nationally, as well as creating a national resource list of practitioners throughout Canada. Through this issue of *Atlantis*, **we hope to archive a shared learning and practice space** where individuals throughout Canada can both learn from and utilize tools for embodying and deepening transformative justice practices in the spaces they live, dream, organize, work, study, and love.

We seek submissions that include but are not limited to the following questions:

- What are the ways you, personally, practice transformative justice in your everyday life, and why is a personal embodiment of transformative justice so important to a politics of abolition? Locate some of the practices that you specifically enact in your interpersonal relationships, including practices that may not be described as transformative justice but function as such.
- What is the relationship between radical Black feminism and transformative justice? How does Black feminism account for patterns of gender violence within radical politics, and simultaneously balance accountability against the perniciousness of state violence and histories of surveillance?
- What does it mean to say that “transformative justice is the foundation of abolition?”
- What are the community conditions that must precede transformative justice in order for local practices to be viable?
- Describe some examples of accountability or more formal community accountability processes that have been satisfactory or successful in your community? (Make sure to anonymize any persons and/or communities involved in the processes.)

¹ Mia Mingus, “Transformative Justice: A Brief Description,” Transformharm.com, retrieved from <https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice-a-brief-description/>

- What is the role of mistake-making in transformative justice accountability processes?
What is the threshold for mistake-making?
- What is the relationship between transformative justice and mutual aid?
- What is the relationship between transformative justice and mental health, neurodiversity, and/or social determinants of health?
- What is the relationship between harm reduction and transformative justice?
- Can a public call-out ever serve as a mechanism of accountability?² Why or why not?
- How has lateral violence disrupted transformative justice work within communities, and what are some strategies that can be used to challenge, circumvent, or dismantle it?
- Recently, Joy James has spoken openly about the shortcomings of the location of abolition within the academy, as well as the “airbrushing” or mythmaking that produced a façade of Black political solidarity during and after the Civil Rights Movement.³ What do we make of these critiques in relation to the current, widespread interest in a politics of abolition and calls to #DefundThePolice?
- In what ways have Black radical traditions and their histories obscured and complicated the work of transformative justice in relationship to intraracial gender violence and rape?⁴ How can these issues be reconciled in light of the reality of state violence and surveillance against Black and Indigenous communities? How do we assess the histories of gender violence within Black radical and other radical traditions?⁵
- How does the personal power of individuals who have caused harm create barriers for traditionally convened accountability processes?

First draft submissions should be emailed as a Word document to *Atlantis Journal* by **May 1, 2021** to atlantismanagingeditor@gmail.com. Those interested in submitting case studies should

² Jessica Bennett, “What if Instead of Calling People Out, We Called them In?” *New York Times*, November 19, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/style/loretta-ross-smith-college-cancel-culture.html>

³ Joy James, “Airbrushing Revolution for the Sake of Abolition,” *Black Perspectives*, July 20, 2020.

<https://www.aaihs.org/airbrushing-revolution-for-the-sake-of-abolition/>; See also <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/we-are-not-our-ancestors-pt-3-w-joy-james/id1504205689?i=1000489212555>

⁴ Rachel B. Zellars, “‘As if We Were All Struggling Together’: Black Intellectual Traditions and Legacies of Gendered Violence,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 77 (2019),

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277539518301420>

⁵ Courtney Morris, “Why Misogynists Make Great Informants,” *Truthout*, May 30, 2010.

<https://truthout.org/articles/why-misogynists-make-great-informants/>

first consult Rachel Zellars at rachel.zellars@smu.ca for ethical guidelines regarding these contributions.

Before submitting work, please read the Scope and Focus section for *Atlantis Journal* and consult our full submission guidelines.

Contributors will be notified by June 16, 2021 regarding publication acceptance. Final revisions are due August 1, 2021.

For substantive questions about this CFP, please contact Rachel Zellars: rachel.zellars@smu.ca.

For questions about the submission and publication process, please contact Katherine Barrett (Managing Editor): atlantismanagingeditor@gmail.com.