

Accountability Report Back: TRJ - October 3, 2019

At the last Accountability meeting, we processed harm and impact on BRIDGE caused by white folks in Accountability, in regards to ongoing silence and bystanderism (at TRJ and in many other BRIDGE spaces), avoidance/lack of specificity, prioritizing white comfort over the safety and well-being of POC and unwillingness to call out and name dynamics at play, individualism and lack of group functioning, and disregard and disrespect for BRIDGE leadership. In the last TRJ meeting, an individual shared openly about experiencing a racist attack by a white woman at the Monterey dump. White folks in the room were silent or focused on white comfort or white learning instead of honoring and embodying BRIDGE's values of:

- Accountability
- Authentic presence
- Cultural humility
- Working alongside/with marginalized folks vs. "for" or "on behalf of"
- Decentering whiteness
- Responding with humanity, vulnerability and care

White people in Accountability have committed to upholding the norms of TRJ and prioritizing the safety of POC and still have been/are silent in BRIDGE spaces which continuously undermines BRIDGE's work around accountability and causes pain, trauma, and exhaustion for folks of color. The impact here extends beyond BRIDGE, as BRIDGE works in collaboration with and supports numerous local POC-led organizations and initiatives, including the Berkshire Branch of the NAACP, Harmony Homestead, Macedonia Baptist Church, and the Women of Color Giving Circle, among others.

We also discussed the impact of the group's silence in response to SURJ National's recent violent email, which was toxic deluge of white supremacy that (among many other things) criticized and put financial demands on BRIDGE. The Accountability group did not respond to defend BRIDGE/BRIDGE's work and required Gwendolyn to call us in. During last month's White Caucus report back, we avoided naming the violence in the email, the specific harm caused by B-SURJ, and to reflect adequately on the issues in that Caucus meeting. This again, compounded the harm already at play.

DESPITE the years of coaching from Gwendolyn, education at TRJ and other BRIDGE spaces, and six months of bystander trainings that Stephanie shared with TRJ, we have absorbed that learning and STILL continued to choose silence and inaction. This behavior is incredibly disrespectful and hurtful to the BRIDGE's work, to our commitments, to our relationships, and to the work of racial justice locally.

White folks have failed to care for POC leaders at BRIDGE, and we are responsible for a deterioration of trust within the group and direct harm caused to Gwendolyn, Stephanie and Vanessa in these dynamics and instances. Community members (such as Luci) are no longer

involved because of the lack of trust and toxicity of white women who were organizing B-SURJ, and now TRJ White Caucus.

We also discussed the damage to BRIDGE caused by our ongoing lack of transparency and honesty about the full scope of BRIDGE's history with SURJ over the last three years; BRIDGE's work and resource in bringing B-SURJ into accountability and the specific harms caused by white folks in the work during that time.

Gwendolyn also asked for written reflections on parts of the agenda not covered in the meeting, regarding Caucus and Internal BRIDGE Relationships--staff, volunteer, board, accountability (in the meeting, we discussed these questions in the context of SURJ and TRJ):

- How is your white supremacy (for white people) showing up in these particular dynamics?
- How has this taxed BRIDGE and minority leadership?
- Name the places that require a correction. Name that correction.

Accountability has been given an immense amount of tools by Gwendolyn, Stephanie and BRIDGE to deepen our cultural humility, move into accountable action, and work collectively toward safety and justice for POC. It is on us to repair the harm of the last three years, the last three months, and to move forward with much greater care, authenticity, and integrity.