

Book Review

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Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (eds). *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*. Chico. AK Press, 2020. (347 Pages, paperback ISBN 184935362X, ISBN13: 9781849353625)

In *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement* editors Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha have compiled a prolific collective of stories, outlines, and models for the transformative justice movement. Through this intensive work, the editors have paved the way for fellow activists who share the desire to work against the nefarious societal systems fueled by poisons like settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. The authors remind readers that while today's criminal justice, immigration systems and other symptoms of oppression detrimentally affect society as a whole, these processes remain most harmful to the marginalized among us. Therefore, like any transformative justice project must, the book deliberately focalizes the communities and voices of those who identify as Black, queer, transgender, people of color, Indigenous, immigrants, disabled or low-income.

Editors Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's book *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement* is erudite, instructive, and often visceral. The book provides hope not only that society can change in totality but that individuals can also change themselves remarkably, as long as they are allowed the resources to do so. *Beyond Survival* often explores and challenges the dichotomy between good and bad. In the work, this dichotomy also extends to the abuser and survivor archetypes. The book does this boldly by incorporating essays written by activists who have assiduously worked to support the healing process of a survivor of abuse while juxtaposing experiences from those who have helped the abuser unlearn patterns of abuse, stand accountable for their

actions and heal from the traumatic experiences or oppression that caused them to initiate harm. *Beyond Survival* will surely be able to be utilized by anyone interested in helping design the master plan for a society built on love, empathy, and understanding instead of a society strangled by the isolating perils of punishment and banishment.

The research outlined in the book arises from grassroots experiences that often indicate the bleak reality that prisons, deportation of immigrants and any other violent manifestation of white supremacist capitalism exists to render certain individuals useless, disposable, and unnecessary. The authors expertly argue that to move society forward, all oppressive and punitive systems must be sufficiently eradicated. The work provides readers with practical methods of transformative justice with the common goal of catalyzing individual, societal, and systemic healing that will elicit sustainable change. The failures and successes of these processes are courageously explicated by the featured activists who were brave enough to begin this daring, but vital work. The various authors share their first-hand grassroots research, displaying the ongoing learning associated with this type of work.

Beyond Survival suggests that in order to move away from adverse societal conditions, community must be upheld and prioritized. The book utilizes an ethnographic methodological approach by incorporating essays detailing real-life experiences. One such essay called for disassembling the colonialist and patriarchal state by maintaining community-based information. This particular essay called for community access to information surrounding missing and murdered women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. Here, withholding information from the affected community is an example of outrageous settler colonial violence. The book's concept of transformative justice emphasizes that moving away from systems of punishment and control necessitates access on a community level. Another essay states community accountability means recognizing an individual's potential for growth and transformation. The book fundamentally indicates a world without injurious incarceration directly correlates with community healing. *Beyond Survival* asserts that

self-care, self-reflexivity, and collective healing are completely mandatory to destroy the oppressive mechanisms that prevent people and society from transforming.

The voices featured in *Beyond Survival* call for widespread societal transformation and justice based on inclusivity and extensive healing. This justice affirms the concept that rendering a human being disposable is flagrant injustice and violence with its roots deep in oppression. The authors acknowledge the detrimental effects internalized oppression, ableism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy have on society's most marginalized communities. Authors often challenge the dynamics between aspects like privilege and patriarchy. The real-life experiences woven into the work exemplify alternatives to policing, punishment and jails through community accountability and transformative justice processes. Working both with survivors and perpetrators of abuse, the authors highlighted in this book honor the humanity that inevitably binds us all. *Beyond Survival* displays that a genuine commitment to transformative justice demands intentional collaboration, community involvement, bravery and, ultimately, perseverance.

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