

Black Youth Project (BYP 100) Community Accountability Process (Chicago, 2015-2016)

Posted by [Sarah Daoud on behalf of Kyra](#)

[November 27](#), 2015 ·

Trigger Warning: Sexual Assault
Please share widely, but do not tag the survivor.

To [BYP 100](#) and the larger community of Chicago activists:

As you may know, I recently disclosed that I am a survivor of a sexual assault perpetrated by your co-chair and regarded community organizer, Malcolm London. I came forward during the intense social media campaign surrounding his recent arrest at a demonstration for Laquan McDonald.

While I understand the campaign was necessary for the movement, and for Malcolm's safety, having my social media bombarded with images of the person who harmed me accompanied by descriptions of him as a hero and upstanding human was nothing short of traumatizing. So I decided to share my story.

While I didn't plan or expect my disclosure to become as public as it did, I appreciate the swift and largely loving response I received from all over the country, as well as the seriousness with which your organization is regarding this issue. BYP, thank you for contacting me so quickly and starting your internal accountability process immediately upon Malcolm's release. And while I am looking forward to speaking with you in person, I believe that true accountability cannot begin unless the entire community is aware and involved in holding our leaders to a standard that will keep us safe. That is why I am writing this letter.

The assault happened three years ago on this exact day. I had met him a few days prior at an event and he asked me if I wanted to go see a movie after I'd finished Thanksgiving dinner with my family. On the way to the movie, we talked about his activism and my role as a sexual health and assault educator on my college campus. He told me sexual violence prevention was something he was really passionate about and I felt relieved to finally be around someone who understood. Because I thought he was a safe person, I disclosed to him that I had been assaulted a few months prior and that I was in the middle of a court process that was equally as traumatizing as the assault itself. He seemed outraged and concerned. I felt like I could trust him.

After the movie, he asked to come up to my apartment for coffee and I obliged because I thought he needed it to stay awake during his drive home. But when I offered it to him he said he didn't actually want any, and just wanted an excuse to come upstairs. He made a few sexual advances, and each time I asked him to stop. I was clear that I did not consent, and I thought he got the picture that he'd made me uncomfortable. But because it was late, at some point I dozed off and I woke up with Malcolm's fingers in my vagina. (For those who are unaware, unconscious people cannot consent to sex.) I immediately asked him to leave and once he was gone I told him what he did was an act of sexual violence. He was apologetic, but did not understand why what he did

to me was assault. To this day, he still refers to what occurred between us as “a misunderstanding.”

As someone who works with survivors of sexual violence and has dedicated much of my time to educating people about the history of rape in the Black community, I know my story is far too common. Black and Brown women are abused at the hands of men of color and we’re told to stay silent about our experiences in order to “help the movement.” And as Black and Brown women, we carry the community on our backs and will do anything to protect our sons, brothers, and fathers even when they are harming us. I’ve had Black survivors tell me that they didn’t press charges against their attacker because they “didn’t want to put another Black man in the system.” Prominent Black male leaders like Huey Newton have abused their power raping Black women and we erased those women’s stories out of history.

When I came forward this week, there were activists who messaged my friends saying that sharing my story was damaging to the community, and that I needed to be quiet until Malcolm was released because it was inconvenient timing. But liberation isn’t convenient, or easy. We don’t get to say “Hold up while we free these people real quick and then we’ll come back for the rest of you,” which is in essence what Black women have been told throughout history. Solidarity is for Black men and white women, not us.

As a Black woman, the idea of a “safe space” is currently a fallacy for me. I am not safe out in the world, I am not safe in my own community, and I am not even safe in activist spaces around people who claim to be working towards my liberation. You can’t fight for me while I’m awake then rape me while I’m asleep. I want be a bigger part of the movement, I want to join protests, I want to organize, but I can’t do that when the person who hurt me is a figurehead in those spaces.

I doubt I’m the first person who hasn’t felt safe in communities because of violent masculinity and coercive sexual scripts. I doubt I’m the only woman Malcolm has harmed. We’re keeping important voices of Black and Brown women out of the movement because they are scared to join. Liberation for some is liberation for none.

We can’t trust the justice system to protect us or to hold perpetrators accountable— that much is clear. So, we need to work towards a way to do that ourselves. By sharing my experience, my short term goal is to come up with a system by which we can hold people in the organizing community accountable when they hurt people, and to educate folks both before and after harm is done. And maybe that system can turn into inspiration for ways we can protect the community at large without police. I’m not exactly sure what that looks like yet, but I am looking forward to working with you to figure out a plan.

Sincerely,

Kyra

BYP 100

November 28, 2015

We have been made aware of a sexual assault allegation involving a BYP100 leader. As an organization rooted in a Black queer feminist framework, we take reports of sexual assault extremely seriously. When this allegation came to our attention, we immediately embarked on our accountability process. We are committed to seeing it through. The BYP100 member has been placed on a mandatory membership hiatus. BYP100 has initiated a course of action involving both parties to assess next steps. Our next steps will be centered in a transformative and restorative justice process, rooted in compassion, accountability and a belief that no one is disposable. We ask that throughout this process that no one resorts to victim blaming, conspiracy accusations or any other defamation against the intentionally unnamed party who brought forth the report.

Community and Organization Accountability Process Update (3/1/16)

Posted: <http://transformharm.tumblr.com>

This is a statement by the accountability teams that have been working since early December 2015 to address an incident of sexual harm by BYP100 member Malcolm London that occurred three years ago.

We are publicly releasing this statement with the consent of all parties involved. While previous formal and informal updates have been shared with the immediate community impacted by this incident, we have not until now shared information about our process more broadly.

Quite frankly, it is because of the generosity of Kyra that we do so today. We consider this to be a gift to the broader community which is not familiar or accustomed to formal processes of community accountability and transformative justice. We are grateful to Kyra for her courage and willingness to allow this window in the hope that it might serve to inspire more such efforts in your communities when harm is done.

Below is a statement by Kyra about the process so far:

"I'm very surprised and thankful for the way in which BYP100 has responded to this situation. When I initially shared my story, I had no idea what to expect from the organization, Malcolm, or the public. But this process has truly centered my needs as a survivor and has taught me what transformative

justice and community accountability truly looks like. I'm looking forward to working with BYP to develop their enthusiastic consent curriculum and to seeing what else I can do for the community as a part of this process. I realize there are far too many stories like mine within social justice organizations and within the black community in general, but I hope that by sharing my experience we can work towards more effective and transformative ways of addressing sexual violence within our spaces."

Accountability process and procedure

On November 23, BYP100 put out a statement to its membership that addressed an incident brought forth by a woman who had experienced past sexual harm by a leader within the organization, Malcolm London (ML). This statement was written three days after the survivor brought her concerns directly to BYP100 leadership, and agreed to a restorative/transformative justice accountability process. It was shared and vetted by people who are experienced in leading community accountability processes around sexual violence to make sure that the language was appropriate.

Immediately following the statement to membership and to the broader community, BYP100 leadership handed over the primary implementation of an accountability process to experienced transformative/restorative justice (TJ) practitioners who have facilitated accountability processes regarding sexual violence.

The following update includes information about:

- 1) Formation of the Support Team for the Survivor*
- 2) Formation of the Accountability Team*
- 3) Relationship between the Survivor Support Team and Accountability Team*
- 4) Survivor Team Goals and the Next Steps for the Accountability Process*

1. Formation of the Support Team for the Survivor:

Kyra met with members of BYP100 leadership Charlene Carruthers and Rose Afriyie who asked if she would like to engage in a community accountability process. She said yes. BYP100 leadership reached out to an experienced local CA/TJ facilitator, Mariame Kaba, who independently reached out to Kyra. Kyra had heard of Mariame's work through her networks. After a discussion with Mariame, Kyra decided that she wanted her to lead her process. Mariame suggested that she could select a co-facilitator with whom she would be comfortable to also support the process. Kyra selected Mayadet Cruz. So Mariame and Mayadet are advocates and supporters for the survivor in this process.

a. Both Mariame and Mayadet are trained in restorative justice and have experience in community accountability processes. They are not BYP100 members.

b. The Survivor Support team is the lead committee to determine the implementation and evaluation of the consequences, reparation and transformative justice process. They meet with and talk

regularly with Kyra. Another person who is a friend of the survivor is also included in the meetings and in the process.

2. Accountability team formation

a. This team is tasked with working with ML (the person who caused harm) to ensure he will follow through on the accountability process as outlined by the Survivor Support team.

b. Xavier MaatRa is the lead on the Accountability team. BYP member Jasson P is serving as a support person on the team. Xavier is an experienced RJ/TJ practitioner and Jasson is not but he is committed to a process that follows the lead and centers the needs of the Survivor and Survivor support team. Both X and J were selected by the Survivor Support team.

3. Relationship between the Survivor Support team and Accountability team

a. Survivor Support team

i. Focused on the survivor's needs and desires throughout the TJ process

ii. Support the survivor's healing process as an individual and within the TJ process

iii. Define the scope and outline steps that the person who caused harm needs to undertake to repair harm and demonstrate accountability.

iv. Initiate, monitor and evaluate accountability according to the survivor's guidelines.

v. Define scope and to do steps for organizational accountability

b. Accountability Team

i. Commit to a survivor centered process at all times through written and signed agreement by person who caused harm

ii. Work directly with person who caused harm to achieve accountability and transformation as dictated by survivor team.

iii. Implement steps for organizational accountability

iv. Report to survivor team on implementation of steps laid out by the survivor team.

4. Survivor Team Goals and steps for Accountability Team to implement

- Public acknowledgement by Malcolm of the harm caused. (see below)

Statement by ML shared with BYP membership and posted on Facebook (2/7/16)

“When someone says I’ve harmed them, I do not believe I get to tell them how they’ve been harmed. I want to publically apologize to Kyra for the harm I caused her. I am committed to and am engaged in a survivor led transformative justice process. I have done wrong and I am committed to being held accountable for the harm I have done that centers the needs of the person I have done harm to. Through a survivor led transformative justice process, I am committed to being held accountable in a way that reflects the values of the broader movement community I am part of. As a hetero cis man I’ve been taught to dismiss or ignore harm. I do not want to reinforce these traditions. What I want to do is acknowledge the harm done into learning what atonement looks like & how accountability can manifest into a process committed to survivor led restoration.”

- Person who caused harm to undergo a political education process about sexual violence and enthusiastic consent that is tailored and designed for their level of knowledge. (ongoing)
- Confidence building measures that might lead to a meeting between the two parties. (ongoing)
- BYP100 implementing in its orientation and political education/organizing process a curriculum around enthusiastic consent informed by the survivor. The survivor, Kyra, has 5 years of experience in sexual violence prevention education and is working with BYP100 to develop a curriculum for incoming members about enthusiastic consent and the history of sexual violence in the black community. (in process)
- Creation of platforms within the broader movement for conversations about sexual violence in activist/movement spaces and how other organizations might address the issue. [long-term]

We continue to work towards the goals set by Kyra in this process. Every community accountability process is different because every survivor and community has specific needs, interests and goals. Each process is more art than science. We hope that sharing some of our process provides information that can help others who are struggling to address various harms in your communities.

Peace and solidarity