

Alana Campbell

22 Feb 2023

Prof Pugh

SOCIAL ACTION REPORT #1: LOCAL

- 1. Write a paragraph of the mission of the organization. Some questions to consider are: what are the organization's goals? What are their values? What do they do? (5 points)**

[Restorative Justice Initiative](#) (RJI) is a network of community members who are seeking to help others reimagine criminal justice through a restorative justice lens, which will lead to less punishment and more healing. They believe these practices will be more effective at achieving actual justice for the victims of crime, the perpetrators, and the community at large. They foresee them becoming more popular in courtrooms, prisons, schools, and workplaces. Restorative justice places an emphasis on the harm caused and how to remedy it rather than punishment for breaking rules. Through workshops, presentations, and partnerships with different organizations, RJI tries to bring people together in order to increase acceptance and, eventually, implementation of these practices on a wider scale.

- 2. Pick a 1) review an archived webinar, 2) a live virtual event, 3) listen to a podcast episode (if they have one) or 4) read a resource document or report (any type of written document regarding the organization's research/advocacy, etc) and write 2 or three sentences about what it was about (5 points)**

I watched the [October 2020 Restorative Justice Panel from the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution](#), a prosecutorial reform think tank that seeks to increase community safety and dignity. This was part of a series of virtual panels, and the panelists (ranging from advocates to lawyers to organization leaders) all offered their expertise and experiences regarding the value and efficacy of restorative justice. Across the 90-minute virtual discussion, they explained the background, defined the concept, presented some overarching discussion questions, discussed the failures of punitive justice, and differentiated it from standard modes of criminal justice. Some practitioners of restorative justice circles, both on the offending side and the victim side, discussed their experiences with it and how healing it was for them.

- 3. Relate what you learned from the webinar, event, podcast, or resource document or report from #2 back to course material. Make 3 separate connections. (1 paragraph) (5 points)**

Four I's of oppression – the Four I's are Ideological, Institutional, Interpersonal, and Internal. I think when talking about the criminal justice system, it's really interesting to think about how these 4 concepts present themselves. Our criminal justice system consists of a set of institutions – the prison system, policing, courts...etc. But it's shaped by ideology, specifically a hyper-individualistic white supremacist ideology that focuses on punishment and individual responsibility. The shift that these panelists are looking for is largely ideological: a shift in values is necessary away from punishment and towards collectivism and healing. A lot of the work they do is also intrapersonal. Human connection is an essential part of restorative justice – bringing people together to share common ground and work

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through their issues. Lastly, the panelists that shared their personal experiences illustrated just how important the “internal” aspect is here too. This form of justice made them all feel better about what happened to them – both the victims and those serving time. Deciding that instead of holding onto hate, they wanted to be more forgiving allowed them to show compassion to one another.

History matters – History is relevant in every social structure and inequality but especially when discussing the criminal justice system. One of the panelists, who was formerly incarcerated, discussed a lot about the racist history of the criminal justice system and how that continues to impact and harm both individuals and entire communities.

Power – we talk a lot about “power” in this class, and that was similarly discussed in the panel. There are various power structures and power dynamics at play within the criminal justice system, especially when it comes to determining what the criminal “deserves.” It’s never up to the person that was wronged – they have little power over the situation. It’s almost completely up to the state. One benefit of the restorative justice mode, namely the practice of “restorative justice circles,” is that, due to the structure of the circle itself, power is shared. People are working together, and no one is over or under anyone else. Additionally, as was stated in the testimony of Jinsoo, whose father was fatally attacked, the RJ circle was the first time in the whole process that he felt empowered and like he was given choice.

4. Indicate what you thought about the webinar/podcast/resource document. Tell me what you liked, what you think could be improved, and provide some suggestions on how they could have improved it. Your suggestions could be based on the content itself, delivery or presentation. (1 paragraph) (5 points)

I really enjoyed the panel discussion and felt like I learned a lot. I think it’s great that some of the panelists were those that had both been victims of crimes and perpetrators of crime, and I found their personal testimonies and their insights about restorative justice processes to be incredibly valuable to the discussion. As I was taking notes on the panel, there were so many quotes and ideas that stood out to me. For instance, “the circle” as a structure means everyone has a chance to be heard, everyone listens equally, and power is shared. It gives people the space to be human in a system that dehumanizes them. Overall, it just places an emphasis on human connection and healing rather than isolation and punishment. The panel did a good job of making known what the pros were of these kinds of practices – how communities as a whole can benefit from them and how flexible they are to adapt to various kinds of conflicts.

I also liked how seamlessly the moderator incorporated questions and concerns from members of the audience into the discussion. Although there were 180 viewers and I wonder how many didn’t get their questions answered or their perspectives heard. I also would've liked for them to differentiate restorative justice from other kinds of radical justice approaches like transformative justice. They mentioned it but didn’t really explain how it differed.

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