



Resisting State Sanctioned Violence: A Toolkit for Community Organizers

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Marginalized communities have long persisted in the work toward liberation despite continued state-sanctioned violence (SSV). We created a toolkit for organizers, community members, allies, and mental health professionals who want to build individual and community resilience while resisting SSV. We aimed to support marginalized communities through making

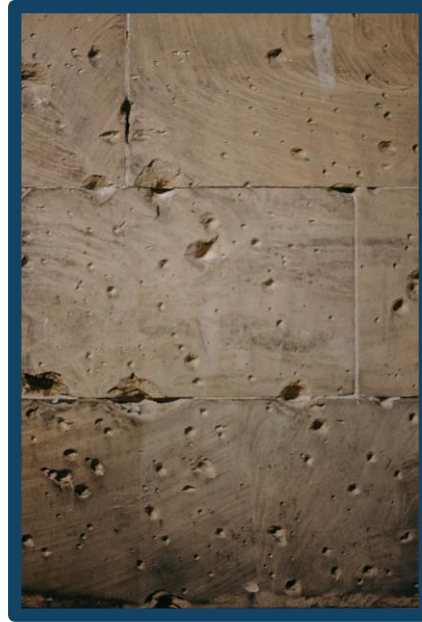


Figure 1 Photograph by Cottonbro. CCO Pexels.

psychological literature accessible and relevant to community-based work. Centering the expertise of internal community stakeholders and their power to resist, we utilize work from the Black and Trans-communities including the Black Lives Matter movement and the CeCe McDonald Support Committee as central examples to demonstrate the application of these strategies.

“Communities must sustain themselves while they pursue the long fight for justice with the ultimate objective of building a society where people can live free from violence and oppression.”

Highlights

To support community stakeholders' persistence in moving toward liberation from SSV, build resilience resources: maintenance, self-efficacy, skills, and knowledge.

Activists and community stakeholders can use this toolkit as they work to facilitate community resilience and build a society free from SSV.

Methods

The impetus for the paper was the frustrated efforts of two of our authors to use psychological scholarship to support their own SSV-targeted communities. We brought the scholarship into conversation with their lived experiences through an iterative review. Using the *Transconceptual Model of Empowerment and Resilience* as an organizing framework, we conducted a search of the resilience, social change, and cultural trauma literatures and identified a list of practically relevant resources and strategies for building them. We facilitated conversations around community-based work to guide the application of this scholarship into our paper and [toolkit](#).

Results

Our group identified four categories of resources that can support persistence in the work to counter SSV: maintenance, self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills. We describe the resources in our paper, and strategies for building them in our toolkit. The resources are meant to be useful both for individuals working within communities and for groups who have come together in some form to address SSV.

- **Maintenance** resources keep people engaged in building resilience. Activists can **maintain** their ability to engage by building connectedness within and across communities, fostering a combination of flexibility and stability, and allowing themselves the intentional time and space to experience and express their full range of emotions.
- **Efficacy** is the belief that one or one's group can accomplish specific goals. People can build efficacy by celebrating successes along the way and identifying role models such as other marginalized groups that have achieved social change.
- A group can build the **knowledge** and savvy needed to act. This includes critical consciousness, useful and relevant systems and community assets, and trauma-focused psychoeducation to understand and manage the impact of traumatic experiences on individuals and the community.
- **Skills** supporting resilience in working toward SSV may include constructing and communicating communal narratives, managing risk factors to decrease the likelihood of harm, and collective decision-making.

HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR WORK?

Applying a Community Psychology orientation, this work aims to bridge the gap between the vast – largely individual-level scholarship on resilience and the practical challenge of sustaining and thriving in communities targeted by SSV. We foreground the expertise of community members and bring that expertise into conversation with the tools psychology has to offer. We aim to foster individual and communal resilience as a means to social change with the ultimate objective of building a society where people can live free from violence and oppression.

Download the Toolkit!
<https://krisgebhard.com/resiliencetoolkit/>

What Does This Mean For?

Research and Evaluation: This work expands the understanding of resilience in the psychological literature. Resilience isn't just a means for individuals to cope, rather it is the process that allows individuals and communities to survive, thrive, and persist in making social change.

Practice: Our [toolkit](#) offers tangible and direct strategies to build resilience in response to SSV. The strategies are meant to be useful both for individuals working within communities and for groups who have come together in some form to address SSV.

Social Action: This work aims to build resilience with the understanding that individuals and communities resisting SSV must sustain themselves during that long fight toward social change and liberation from oppression.

Similar Settings: This work can be impactful for advocates, community organizers, mental health professionals, and academics with the goal of supporting marginalized communities and creating social change.

*Original Citation: Gebhard, K. T., Hargrove, S., Chaudhry, T., Buchwach, S. Y., & Cattaneo, L. B. (2022). [Building strength for the long haul toward liberation: What psychology can contribute to the resilience of communities targeted by state-sanctioned violence](#). *American Journal of Community Psychology*.*

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