

One Million Experiments

This zine is an overview of Relationships Evolving Possibilities launched in the Twin Cities, MN.

“We have faith that we know how to love each other and we can resist, not just theoretically but in practice, the violence that the state and the carceral systems wreak on us.”

Signe Victoria Harriday, REP
Co-founder

Interrupting Criminalization & Project Nia 2022

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Relationships Evolving Possibilities (REP) is a network of dedicated abolitionists showing up to support others in moments of crisis or urgency, with care and respect for the full dignity and autonomy of the people in crisis.

Founded in the Twin Cities in Minnesota in 2020, amidst the uprising that occurred after the murder of George Floyd, REP is a “node in an interconnected network of projects created by communities to manifest safety and center Black life, liberation, and joy.”

REP describes the shoulders they stand on, saying that, “We are the ripples of the movement of fellow abolitionist organizers in Minneapolis including AIM Patrol, MPD150, Resmaa Menakem, Ricardo Levins Morales and countless others who dream of collective liberation from state-sanctioned violence. We continually learn from these projects and comrades in other cities, including the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, CAT911, MHFirst Oakland, and Cahoots.”

REP has a vision that all communities thrive when our needs are met. They are grounded in the belief that, as a community, we have the ability and capacity to love and protect each other without giving our agency to systems that were built to destroy, consume, or commodify us. REP’s programs — Radical Ecosystem Pods, and Revolutionary Emergency Partners — promote wellness and create safer and thriving communities. REP describes itself as “an engagement strategy,” facilitating the formation of localized pods for mutual

aid and reinforcing transformative crisis support within community networks.

Their work is grounded in three main values:

- **Black love and liberation,**
- **Radical consent, and**
- **Ancestral knowledge.**

Loving You Through the Next Step

REP’s origin story starts, “during the uprising in late May and early June 2020, when Jason Sole and Signe Harriday worked together on crisis response in Minneapolis and St. Paul. They saw a need to make it more sustainable, and envisioned strategies and communications technology that could support the incredible work community members were doing (and have been doing for generations).

They invited Rox Anderson, Josina Manu Maltzman, and Susan Raffo to create a core team, and connected with Steve Scofield at Warecorp to develop

[Brandon Bell / Getty]



an app that could support communities dealing with emergencies, but in alignment with principles of abolition, transformative justice, radical love, and community power. Over many months, they learned from and alongside local and national folx doing the critical work of loving and responding to community challenges in life affirming ways."

We Can Do It Better

REP is rooted in the idea, as co-founder Signe Victoria Harriday says, that "we can do it better." We are better able to render support and care in moments of crisis to our neighbors and community — better than the state, and better than we have been doing it.

REP is not a 1:1 replacement for 911. It is an example of a group of people who came together to answer calls in crisis and found that, by creating better communication systems and building right relationships, they have the ability to show up for people in crisis with deeper love and deeper respect. "REP doesn't profess or claim to be the solution to all the harm and trauma facing and circulating in the community," Harriday says.

"We lean on abolitionists past and present, who also didn't have a perfect next step plan but who nonetheless fought like hell for us. Through relationships we can create better outcomes for each other; we cannot do it without each other. We actually *have* been doing this and have been wildly successful at certain times."



[Bloomberg / Getty Images]

REP is Practice

REP Core Member Josina Manu Maltzman describes REP as a tree: "The trunk is relationships evolving possibilities, the pedagogy from which all the work stems. One branch is Radical Ecosystem Pods, and that's a project where we teach up community members in the skills needed to turn to each other in moments of crisis.

The other, Revolutionary Emergency Partners, is a secure hotline that community members can call or text in moments of acute crisis or during ongoing struggle to be met with a community member skilled in crisis intervention, deescalation, mental health first aid, and equipped with a resource list of vetted community partners that can love the person to the next step."

A Collection of Humble Servants

Radical Ecosystem Pods fortify existing networks and support the creation of new networks by improving relationships between neighbors, identifying

webs of support that already exist within reach, and reimagining what loving community looks like.

“Having a well-connected and skilled network of neighbors minimizes the need to reach beyond our own community for crisis support. Many of us already have the skills to assist our neighbors in navigating the minor incidents that arise in our lives – what’s lacking is often connection, coordination, and support. That’s where REP’s Radical Ecosystem Pods and studios come in.

REP supports the formation of pods through ongoing trainings called “studios” that support neighbors in building skills in de-escalation, mental health support, and situational awareness.”

REP defines a pod as “a group of people who have come together (based on geography, identity, values, a time-specific need, or a combination of the above) to support each other through crises, either unforeseen or anticipated.

Pods have agreed-upon parameters and expectations, and have established consent-based communication around how to support each other.”

[REP Facebook]



Abolition is Presence, Not Absence

“When a crisis or problem can’t be addressed by our existing support network, we need a trusted resource to call for help. REP’s Revolutionary Emergency Partners provide emergency care to community members via a secure hotline.” The hotline currently runs on Friday and Saturdays from 7 PM to 12 AM (call or text 952-737-3730), offering two kinds of assistance: direct support from a Community Resourcer and connection to a Response Team.

“When a community member calls the hotline number they will be connected to a Community Resourcer trained in mental health first aid and de-escalation.

Depending on the needs of the caller, the Community Resourcer will either connect the caller to trusted community resources for further support or send a Response Team to the caller’s location to assist in person to provide immediate support.

During this phase of REP’s rollout, they are focusing on the 80% of 911 calls that involve non-violent emergencies.

Things like:

- Noise complaints
- Mental health crises and support
- Neighbor complaints
- Conflict de-escalation
- Referral to community resources
- Some “welfare check” calls”

A Loving Pause

The hotline is one answer to the question, “How do we have somebody else to call?” REP is one of those somebodies and gives people in crisis a place to pause and think consciously about what they need instead of immediately calling the police. Harriday calls it a “loving pause,” explaining that when we are in crisis, we often can’t make the best decisions, can’t think clearly. Creating a loving pause — a call to a human being who sees you as human and worthy of support — allows for space to co-create the best next step together. In this way, REP is, “the in between conduit but not THE answer.” Operators ask questions like “Do you want this? How do you want it to be, whatever the ‘it’ is?” allowing callers to retain agency, and always asking for radical consent.

REP Core Member Susan Raffo describes it this way: “What I love about REP is that it’s like — we don’t know if this is right. We don’t even know what right is. None of us knows what right is. We know what wrong is — big time, we know what wrong is! But right...right emerges. So REP is just about practice. It is the practice to say — over the next ten years, over the next generation, or the next three generations, or the next seven — how is it that we are working to shift the generational betrayal that exists between so many of our people? The way it is held in our bodies and the fact that there are way too many moments where help actually ends up getting met by just more control?”

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SOURCES

Quotes are taken from repformn.org & 1ME interviews.

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