

Cover page:

Doing it All the Time: A Queer Consent Workshop

Page 1:

CONTEXT

Me:

I didn't always have the language for consent, or know what the word meant.

Consent is part of the erotic vocabulary I learned as a baby dyke, thanks to peer mentoring and practice.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

I drank too much wine at a party last fall, found myself quoting Muriel Rukeyser to Geoff Maines, all about the backside, the body's ghetto, singing her words, "Never go despising the asshole nor the useful shit that is our clean clue to what we need."

Me:

The lexicon I have for consent is drawn out of queer experiences. That's why I call this a QUEER consent workshop.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

"The clitoris in her least speech," he sang back, and I loved him for that with all my soul. We fed each other fat baby carrots and beamed at our own enjoyment.

Page 2:

Me:

I'm not at all saying queer people are more skilled at having consensual relationships, only that our cultures have had to get comfortable talking about sex and consent.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

I am angry all the time lately, and being angry makes me horny, makes me itchy, makes me want to shock strangers and surprise the girls who ask me, please, out for coffee and to talk. I don't want to talk. I want to wrestle in silence. It isn't sex I want when I am like this. It's the intimacy of their bodies, the inside of them, what they are afraid I might see if I look too close. I look too close. I write it all down.

Me:

I feel like queer interest in consent can be traced to the histories of the Sex Wars, cultural trauma around the AIDs crisis, and ongoing violence and betrayals, large and small, of mainstream society against LGBTQA communities.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

I intend that things shall be different in my lifetime, if not in theirs.

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Me: A theory is a fantasy about the way the world works.

Consent is a good fantasy, if you ask me—the idea that we can learn to negotiate boundaries & limits, power & pleasure, disclosure & risk.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

Paul, Geoff—I am doing it as much as I can, as fast as I can. This holy act.

Me: How do we fight homophobia and transphobia? How do we survive and thrive in a racist, sexist, classist, ableist world?

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison:

I am licking their necks on Market Street, fisting them in the second floor bathroom at Amelia's, in a booth under a dim wall lamp at the Box—coming up from her cunt a moment before the spotlight shifts to her greedy features.

Me:

How do we learn to love? To form relationships? How do we learn to respect, reciprocate, hold each other accountable?

I wanted to show consent beyond sexual consent without leaving the sexual element behind.

Page 4:

Boundaries

Here's how to know
If someone
Would make a good lover:
Set a hard boundary.

Page 5:

Desire

There's so much
About desire
I don't understand,
Like my fear of
Vulnerability
And my craving for it.

Page 6:

Pleasure

None of that
“when I touch you,
I touch myself” bullshit.
When I touch you, I am
Touching you.
There is a queer eroticism
In being close.

Page 7:

Power

There is no play
Without power.
Consent is how
We come to know
Our own power
And use it well.

Page 8:

Risk

What does it mean
To get close enough
To smash
Each other apart,
But we don't?

Page 9:

When academics talk about consent, it tends to be in the dry

language of institutional review and informed consent, a one-time process negotiated through documents.

These workshop prompts were created for the Coalition of Women Scholars in Rhetoric & Composition event at the 4Cs conference in 2015.

Consent is rhetorical because it has to do with how people use language and our bodies as we move through community spaces and relate to each other.

Consent is an ongoing negotiation of power, privilege, & desire. Consent is a process and a set of teachable practices where we can come to know our own power and use it well.

Excerpt from Dorothy Allison's "Her Body, Mine, and His":

I am doing it, boys and girls, I am doing it all the time.

Page 10:

Listening

Consider the last time someone said NO to a request. How did you respond?

(reflect)

Page 11:

Boundaries

Write down 5 boundaries. These can be personal boundaries, relationship boundaries, sexual boundaries.

Which ones of these are hard boundaries?

Why? (You do not need to share your why, but you do need to know it).

(reflect)

Page 12:

Disclosure

A student discloses they are a survivor of violence in the past.

3 pieces of information:

1. the student does not feel in danger
2. they are already in therapy
3. they do not want police involvement

You are a mandated reporter at your institution. How do you negotiate consent with the student?

(reflect)

Page 13:

Vulnerability & risk

How do you understand vulnerability and risk? Write it down.

How does your theory of vulnerability & risk change how you teach or do research?

(reflect)

Page 14:

Desire

What is the first thing you remember desiring?

Tell a story.

(make)

Page 15:

Self-identification

Draw your body and label it with words that feel good to you.

(make)

Page 16:

Self-education

Define consent for yourself.

(make)

Page 17:

Support

2 participants

participant 1: Write down a disclosure you're comfortable making about who you are. Something your partner would not guess.

Disclose to your partner.

Participant 2: practice listening and offering support.

Switch roles.

(connect)

Page 18:

Checking in

2 participants

Practice checking in before you crash.

Participants face away from each other and a ways apart. Both move backwards slowly.

The purpose is to find ways to communicate with your co-participant where you're at.

(connect)

Page 19:

Touch

What kinds of touch do you like?

(make)

Page 20:

Communication

How do you prefer to communicate your: boundaries, desires, limits, preferences, style with a partner?

Discuss.

(connect)

Page 21:

Respect

In an employer / employee relationship, how do you know you're

respected.

Describe what it feels like.

(reflect)

Page 22:

Risk

A student tells you they are participating in a high risk activity.

How do you discuss risk with your student?

(connect)

Page 23:

Being present

What are 5 things you do to feel like you're in your body?

What does it feel like?

Make a list.

(connect)

Page 24:

Access

Write down 1 thing you will commit to doing to improve access for historically marginalized students at your institution.

(reflect)

Page 25:

Risk

Make a list of the risks you take on a weekly basis.

Commit to doing 1 thing to reduce your risk.

You are precious.

(reflect)

Page 26:

Reciprocity

As a researcher, what steps do you commit to taking to make sure your research is reciprocal, not coercive?

Consent & reciprocity are an ongoing negotiation.

(reflect)

Page 27:

Triggers

2 participants

What are your triggers?

Participant 1: practice communicating a trigger to your employer.

Participant 2: role play employer

(connect)

Page 28:

Desire

Take a sexual or relational self-inventory.

Write down 3 things each in your yes / no / maybe list.

Map your YES onto the community map in green.

(make)

Page 29:

Limits

Take a sexual or relational self-inventory.

Write down 3 things each in your yes / no / maybe list.

Map your MAYBE onto the community map in yellow.

(make)

Page 30:

Boundaries

Take a sexual or relational self-inventory.

Write down 3 things each in your yes / no / maybe list.

Map your NO onto the community map in red.

(make)

Page 31:

Accountability

A student makes a racist, sexist, classist, ableist, homophobic, or transphobic remark.

How do you hold them accountable without humiliating them?

(connect)

Page 32:

A colleague makes a racist, sexist, classist, ableist, homophobic, or transphobic remark.

How do you hold them accountable in a way that improves the culture of your department?

(connect)

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Power

Consent is a process and set of teachable practices where we can come to know our own power and use it well.

In your current position, how do you use your power well?

(connect)

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Notes

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Resources

Ask First! by Cheyenne.

www.zinelibrary.info/ask-first

Community Accountability working document. by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

<http://www.incite-national.org/page/community-accountability-working-document>

“Her Body, Mine, and His” in Skin: Talking about Sex, Class, & Literature by Dorothy Allison.

Learning Good Consent by Cindy Crabb + friends.

The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Partner Violence in Activist Communities. Edited by Ching-in Chen, Jai Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

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Support by Cindy Crabb. <http://www.phillyspissed.net/node/18>

The Survivor’s Guide to Sex. Staci Haines.

Why haven’t we talked about consent yet? by Elle Abeles-Allison + Zoe Jackson.

Yes Means Yes by Jaclyn Friedman & Jessica Valenti.

Feel free to adapt them for your context –or- bring me to your town to do a consent workshop!

Page 43:

\$3 or best trade

You are here. You are real. You are fierce and irreducible.

Hand-drawn picture of boots.

Contact me at: Kathleen Livingston ka.livingston@gmail.com

