

IN FOCUS: **YOU ARE HERE** A Body Mapping Workshop for Queer Survivors of Sexual Assault

By Deb Singh,
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As a counselor and activist of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape, I was honoured to co-facilitate **You Are Here: a Body Mapping Workshop for Queer Survivors of Sexual Violence** with Bryn Ludlow of the Canadian Artists Against Sexual Assault (CAASA) during this year's Pride week.

Queer women gathered to create art, work through their process of healing, talk, laugh and cry about their experiences of sexual violence. The two-day workshop allowed facilitators and participants to dive into some of the aspects of queer survivorship using art as a tool for healing. As a facilitator, I witnessed what LGBTQ women had to say about their own healing and resistance of violence through the creation of a piece of artwork. The body maps reflected the complexities of the women we have to become in order to survive violence.

The body maps themselves are life size mural drawings/paintings that

encompass our journeys around violence and being lesbian, bisexual, queer. With co-facilitator Bryn Ludlow, we wanted to create a space where queer survivors could tell a story or timeline of their survivorship through images of ourselves. Women traced a double image of themselves on mural paper, one tracing reflecting one side of themselves and the second tracing reflecting another. Women used many materials to create the artistic images including painting, drawing and collage.

All participants created their own body maps as well as facilitators. For me, it was an experience of truly getting to share and reflect on how my queerness reflects back on my experiences as a survivor. I felt totally taken over by the process and almost left my participants to fend for themselves while creating the piece of artwork. I was able to express the secrets that rape has made me

(continued on page 6)



"I realized that I
am my best
resource and by
putting it out on
paper, through
image and text,
that it is really not
my fault. and I am
not alone."

You Are Here: a Body Mapping Workshop for Queer Survivors of Violence gave a real sense of queer survivorship, making it visible in our centre and the LGBTTSQQI community during Pride week. The workshop gave a real spin on our work at the TRCC/MWAR, exploring how art can be a tool for healing, addressing and sharing the impact of sexual violence in the lives of all women.

When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves. — Viktor Frankl



Body maps from participants of
"You Are Here," June 23 & 25, 2008.

