

## **Black Queer Dom's Restorative Accountability Process for Kink & BDSM Communities**

*A Framework for Collective Healing, Responsibility, and Transformation*

**"What if accountability wasn't rooted in punishment, revenge or superficiality, but rooted in our values, growth, transformation, healing, freedom, and liberation? What if the work of accountability was held as so supremely sacred, that people who got to practice it—truly practice it —were considered lucky and those who had the honor of supporting it and witnessing it were also changed for the better from its power?" -Mia Mingus**

This document is designed to support processes being held by accountability teams when mistakes have been made and hurt or pain has been caused (intentionally or unintentionally) within our community. Within the Black Queer Dom Society, we recognize the erotic as sacred, complex, and deeply vulnerable—requiring nuanced, not binary, responses to mistakes. We also recognize that it requires tremendous courage by those impacted or hurt to come forward in these moments. That accepting the stories of those impacted as truth is vital. We ALSO recognize that there can be (and often are) multiple truths in one exchange or experience—because we are all seeing things through our own lived experiences and lens. We ALL cause pain. We ALL make mistakes. We ALL have the ability to grow. To be more than the biggest mistakes we have made. And thus this process is ESSENTIAL for living in authentic relationship with one another. We engage its principles in interpersonal and communal conflict.

To that end, we honor that there is ALWAYS accountability that can be taken for the role(s) played in causing pain. Taking responsibility for your actions—especially when it's uncomfortable—is the mark of an accountable and evolving human being. Something all of us must strive to be. We reject labels like 'harm,' 'offender' or 'victim.' Instead, we seek to practice a shared culture of accountability where growth is possible. To create a cultural practice of owning our mistakes and learning lessons that allow us to become healthier and more whole human beings. Intent does not equal impact, and yet they are both essential. One does not negate the other. We honor that we do this work to continue to be in community with one another. We offer grace because it is the world we want to live in—and it is inevitable that all of us will at some point be on the accountability end of hurt.

In our culture, people cling to the belief that punishment creates accountability. But we know the truth: punishment actually disrupts genuine accountability. It breeds fear, avoidance, defensiveness, and the kind of shame that shuts people down rather than opens them up. When folks are terrified of being punished or exiled, they're far less likely to tell the truth, take responsibility, or show up with humility. And when the image we hold of ourselves crashes into the reality of our imperfections? That cognitive dissonance gets loud. But we don't build community from fear—we build it from truth, courage, and care. Here's what we know to be

true:

- **Genuine accountability is healing.** It supports the person who was hurt **and** the person taking responsibility. It strengthens our collective capacity for radical honesty, trust, and care. And gives us a chance to PRACTICE being brave in our communication.
- **Genuine accountability is both personal and communal.** It names the individual work each of us must do and the shared responsibility we hold to one another as members of a community committed to growth.
- **Genuine accountability strengthens belonging.** It honors that harm happens in relationship—interpersonally and within the Society—and that belonging is central to our well-being. We don't throw people away. We wrestle with the rupture and seek pathways back to one another. And finally;
- **Genuine accountability is a cultural practice.** It reinforces the norms, expectations, and values we want to live by. It invites us into deep dialogue about who we are, what we believe, and how we move in alignment with our commitments—individually and collectively.

**"We live in a society based on disposability. If we want to build a different way of being together, we have to look closely at the feelings and behaviors that generate the desire to throw people away."** -Dean Spade

### **Guiding Principles**

- **Accountability without Punishment:** This process is rooted in liberation—not domination. A space for truth-telling, repair, and re-commitment, not punishment or exclusion.
- **Mutual Accountability:** rupture often happens in complex dynamics. This process recognizes that multiple people may have roles in rupture and healing.
- **Radical Honesty & Grace:** We believe transformation requires truth-telling, humility, and space to grow without shame.
- **Consent & Voluntary Participation:** All accountability engagement is rooted in full, informed, enthusiastic consent. And we ALSO hold that a willingness to be accountable is essential to being a member of the Black Queer Dom Society.
- **Dignity & Care:** Every person in this process is treated with respect and seen fully.
- **Avoid the restoration of “norms”** when those norms were unjust to begin with. Instead, we create new agreements and new ways of being that reflect our values.
- **Refuse Punitive Mimicry** (e.g., shame, exile, carceral thinking), even in community processes. The goal is never revenge, banning or destroying one another.
- **Center Relational and Communal Responsibility** over “reputation management.” While recognizing that how people show up and are seen outside of this space is important.

- **Forgiveness is Not Required** to hold an accountability process. Being accountable is essential for those who have caused hurt/pain regardless of whether they are forgiven. We are not entitled to forgiveness. We give it to ourselves. We recognize that we are committed to our own growth and healing. And no one should be reduced to their biggest mistakes in life. We commit to being better and we release. Being forgiven does not have to happen for someone to be accountable.

**Activity:** Everyone in an accountability process should reflect on an experience in their own life where they have caused hurt/pain or made mistakes. How did they take responsibility to make amends? In doing so, we recognize how painful it is to take responsibility and how often WE do not take responsibility when we have made mistakes. But when we do, there is often a relief in taking responsibility and doing some form of repair.

### Core Process Structure [This template should be adapted as needed]

#### 1. Initiation: Request for Process

- Any person (impacted or involved) may request a restorative process.
- A trained facilitator/experienced community leader does an initial intake to determine:
  - Who is involved and how they relate to the rupture?
  - Whether all parties are willing to engage voluntarily
  - Any immediate safety concerns or community impact

#### 2. Pre-Process Conversations

Facilitators can meet individually with each party to:

- Clarify the purpose of the process
- Establish personal intentions and boundaries
- Offer support around nervous system regulation, emotional preparation, and consent
- Identify what accountability looks like for each person—are there specific asks being made?

#### 3. Collective Dialogue (if all parties consent)

With an experienced facilitator, participants engage in:

- **Storytelling:** Each person shares their experience without interruption or correction.
- **Impact & Needs:** Participants name how they were affected and what they need.
- **Reflection:** The person who is accountable reflects on what they heard, how it landed, and what they are learning.
- **Commitments to Repair:** Together, participants co-create actions that:
  - Address needs and impacts
  - Asking about everyone's needs to forge avenues for repair

- Support personal and relational healing
- Are realistic, culturally relevant, and time-bound

#### **4. Accountability Agreements**

Facilitator documents the agreements, including:

- Specific actions and timelines
- Emotional, community, or relational commitments (e.g., a public reflection, withdrawal from a space, attending consent training, co-created boundaries). Accountability means:
  - Acknowledge that your actions caused hurt/rupture/pain.
  - Acknowledge that you had agency in those actions.
  - Understand the full impact of your actions on anyone who was impacted.
  - Take steps to repair the pain and make amends (if possible).
  - Identify patterns/habits that led to hurt and take steps to change those habits.
- Shared check-in structure to revisit progress

**Accountability Team Formation:** The establishment of one (or more) Accountability Teams with community members, mentors, coaches, healers, and advisors to support holding the long process of restoration, growth and eventual reintegration of the person accountable into the community. These Teams can and often do liaise with the Community Care Pods supporting those in the process.

They will include ongoing accountability measures to ensure that the person who is accountable is following through on their commitments and taking steps to repair. This may involve regular check-ins or progress reports, as well as ongoing support and resources to help the person maintain their commitment to change.

#### **5. Support, Growth & Community Care Pods Form**

*“No one heals alone, and no one is accountable in isolation.”*

A critical step in any Restorative Accountability Process is offering Community Care Pods to both those who were impacted and those who are being accountable. These pods are not optional support—they are integral to the process of repair, resilience, and re-alignment. These pods exist to ensure that everyone has the emotional scaffolding, practical support, and community-based reflection they need throughout the process. Each pod works with their respective person to co-develop and steward a personal care, mental health, and personal growth plan rooted in love, truth, and transformation. These pods not only hold the emotional, spiritual, and practical dimensions of healing—but they also serve as containers for deep learning and unlearning. For individuals being accountable, healing is inseparable from

education. Our frameworks of power exchange—that it is seen through race, gender, hierarchy, ability, class, privilege and/or community status—must be confronted, dismantled, and transformed.

#### Purpose of Care Pods

- Create a nonjudgmental space for processing emotions
- Prevent isolation, retraumatization, or shame spirals
- Encourage self-accountability and reflection without defensiveness
- Help clarify what repair, healing, and learning look like in practice
- Support implementation of agreements and healthy boundaries
- Witness and reflect growth over time

Each Care Pod may include 2–4 trusted people, chosen in consultation with the facilitator or process holder. Pod members should be:

- Emotionally grounded and capable of offering honest, loving feedback
- Not currently entangled in the rupture dynamic (this can include close allies but while they are invested in the related party they should be able to hold an essential level of respect for folks on the other side—especially best/close friends & romantic partners).
- Committed to the values of the process (grace, growth, non-punitiveness)
- Willing to co-create agreements, attend periodic check-ins, and walk with the person through discomfort, change, and healing

#### For Those Who Were Impacted:

- Support in processing emotions and defining needs
- Help draft and clarify asks before dialogue
- Support setting and maintaining healthy boundaries
- Co-create a personal care and healing plan (emotional, physical, spiritual)
- Accompany them through check-ins, debriefs, and post-process transitions

#### For Those Being Accountable:

- Support reflection on actions and impact
- Help build a sustainable accountability/growth plan (not just one-time actions)
- Normalize discomfort, shame, and fear without coddling or avoiding truth
- Assist with preparation for dialogue and implementation of commitments
- Challenge and celebrate growth; hold long-term vision

All accountable-side pods are expected to co-create a Liberatory Learning & Growth Plan with their person(s). This plan should reflect the reality that power exchange is inherently vulnerable and must be rooted in care, consent, and accountability. This plan should explore:

- How power is held, shared, and sometimes misused within chosen dynamics
- What deeply rooted/held beliefs make each of us vulnerable to ego abuse in dynamics
- Ways to responsibly repair power exchange that goes wrong, despite their intentions
- How internalized systems (white supremacy, ableism, patriarchy, capitalism) influence how we perceive, perform, and receive power in scenes and relationships
- Building a practice of aligned, consensual power that deepens intimacy rather than replicating rupture

## 6. Follow-Up

At intervals (e.g., 1 month, 3 months):

- Check-ins with each person to assess:
  - If agreements are being upheld
  - What's shifted or still unresolved
  - Whether any further dialogue or support is needed

## 7. Facilitator Guidelines

- **Be multipartial:** Not neutral, but equally committed to everyone's healing and growth.
- **Hold space with dignity:** Everyone deserves care—even those who've caused rupture.
- **Adapt for culture, trauma, and access needs.**
- **Don't rush resolution:** Go at the speed of trust and clarity.
- **Prioritize dialogue:** It is more important than fixing things/people.

### Types of Accountability That May Arise

- **Personal:** Therapy, education, somatic work, naming patterns (including offering those in direct mental health support documentation from the accountability process).
- **Relational:** Apologies, clarifying boundaries, co-healing. We recognize that apologies begat criticism, which begat more apologies. And that the goal is an authentic apology that centers those impacted, NOT the person taking accountability.
- **Community:** Public commitments, stepping back or down from teaching/leadership roles while participating in an ongoing accountability process, repairing rupture to group spaces, taking a break in vetting/dating in BQDS & community spaces. Their Excellency will, when necessary, ask that a Society member not vet/date others in the Society when they feel that person cannot hold those connections with care and integrity.
- **Transformational:** Changing behavior, roles, or practices in community

### **Optional Reflection Questions for All Parties:**

- What does healing mean to you in this context?
- What is not working among us?
- How do each of us need to change to take care of all of us?
- What's your honest role in this situation? Where have you grown? What do you still need to learn? What support do you need to continue to grow?
- What are you willing to commit to so this kind of rupture is less likely in the future?
- How do you want to be in community with each other after this process?
- How do you define self-accountability?
- How is a practice of self-accountability useful in your personal life? In your work life?
- Why are relationships important when it comes to supporting someone in being accountable?

### **In addition to emotional support questions, Care Pods & Accountability Teams can ask:**

- What privileges shape how you move through power exchange or community spaces?
- What does it mean to lead or play with responsibility, when our ego is present?
- How are systems of oppression showing up in this conflict?
- Who have you been taught to center in moments of rupture—and who do you want to center now? What does that look like? What shifts will be necessary to do that well?
- What is one reading/experience that changed how you view your role in this process?
- What are you learning about liberation as a practice—not a theory—in this moment?

### **Example 1: Consent Boundary Breach**

Scenario: Kai asked not to be touched during a group play party unless they made eye contact first. Jay touched their back during a scene without checking in.

Impact: Kai shut down and left early. Jay said it was an accident but didn't reach out.

### **Accountability Commitments (from Jay):**

- Writes a reflection on enthusiastic consent for the group zine
- Steps back from play party roles for 2 months
- Engages in a 4-session consent workshop
- Sends a letter of acknowledgment to Kai without expectation of reply

**Communication Example:** In some instances, folks holding the accountability process will create a webpage dedicated to the process that allows the community to get in touch, receive public updates as steps are taken, and actively support the person accountable in their restorative process as it unfolds.

## **Suggested Political Education Tools**

Pods should support and track engagement with at least 2–3 of the following:

### Readings / Study Topics

- Audre Lorde: "Uses of the Erotic" + "The Transformation of Silence"
- bell hooks: "All About Love" or "The Will to Change"
- Coach Felyne: Work on Trauma Informed Consensual Kink (TICK)
- Mia Mingus: Writings on accountability & transformative justice
- Dean Spade: "Mutual Aid" or "Normal Life"
- The Combahee River Collective Statement
- Articles on consent in hierarchical relationships, emotional labor in queer relationships, racialized power in BDSM

### Podcasts / Audio

- Pleasure Activism episodes with adrienne maree brown
- Beyond Survival (community-based responses to sexual violence)
- How to Survive the End of the World
- Interviews with Kai Cheng Thom, Alok Vaid-Menon, Prentis Hemphill, or Mariame Kaba

### Activities

- Write a reflection on how you've wielded power in ways that felt disconnected from your values
- Create a "liberated Top/Dom/Mommy/Daddi/Alpha/Master" identity map—what does healthy, consensual, anti-oppressive leadership look like?
- Attend a community workshop or class on emotional intelligence, trauma, or liberation-centered kink