

About the Book

From erotic labor, to the rights of people who use psychoactive substances, to reproductive health, and carcerality - we are living through a political moment when debates about bodily autonomy are at a fever pitch. *Body Autonomy: Decolonizing Sex Work and Drug Use* is a bold and timely collection that confronts these charged issues at the intersection of social justice and public health. It reveals the histories behind the United State's ideological wars and illustrates their costs to all of us. It is a primer on healing-centered harm reduction which presents a visionary framework and set of practical strategies to advance unity and care while working to transform conditions for communities that bear the brunt of interpersonal and systemic violence, overdose deaths, and health inequities.

In the words of leading advocates, service providers, and scholars whose lives and communities have been harmed by American neo-colonial policies, *Body Autonomy* offers promising, healing-centered interventions that represent a critical culture shift. The articles, interviews, worksheets, and poems are an offering to expand our collective understanding of survival, healing, and embodied freedom. *Body Autonomy* is a must read for anyone with a compassionate worldview, people seeking to know more about underground economies, and those who know that punishment doesn't lead to security. It is a liberatory design and a prayer for what's possible.

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Discussion Guide

SECTION 1 | WARS ON BODY AUTONOMY

Mechanics of the Sex Trade: An Introduction

- Thinking about your own life and work, in which contexts might you use “sex worker” versus “prostitute?”
- In which parts of the sex trade have you interacted or interacted with?
- What are the differences between choice, circumstance, and coercion?
- How does the criminalization of sex work, including End Demand/ the Nordic Model, increase the potential for violence and exploitation within the sex trade?
- In which ways/ movements is sex worker rights an intersectional issue?

Casualties of War: The Wars on Drugs and Trafficking

- What are some drug war mechanisms used within the war on trafficking?
- The ban on using federal funds for syringes was relaxed in 2017, but several federal funding bans continue today which severely impede bodily autonomy. What are they (hint: one related to reproductive rights isn’t discussed in this chapter)?
- What role does propaganda play in America’s ideological wars?

Wars on Bodily Autonomy: A Timeline

- What surprised you about how different narratives moved on the timeline?
- How does your own community/ ancestral lineage fit into this timeline?
- What was older or more recent than you expected?
- We often think of change and progress as linear in history - things move towards the better and the more just. What does this timeline say about the arc of justice?
- This timeline is US-centric. How has the development of nation/state/borders shaped this timeline?
- How do you think about the role of history in your current social justice and

change work?

SECTION 2 | REFRAMING HARMFUL STIGMAS

Human Trafficking: The Bigger Picture— An Interview with Aya Tasaki

- How is lack of citizen status a trafficking vulnerability?
- What are some elements of culturally sensitive care discussed in this interview? Do you have others to add?
- Why isn't labor trafficking addressed or resourced like it should be/ at par with sex trafficking?
- What is the utility of a transformative justice approach to human trafficking?

Abolition Means No More Policing: When the Afterlives of Slavery Are Repackaged as Freedom

- What is the difference between the story told by mainstream anti-trafficking organizations and the reality of sex trafficking as experienced by the writer?
- What is the significance of these mainstream organizations using names that reference stories told about how people escaped from American slavery?
- Who does the "re-branding" of slavery hurt?
- Who does anti-sex work stigma hurt?
- How do mainstream anti-trafficking movements support the prison industrial complex and perpetuate exploitation?
- How do you see yourself playing a role in creating the radically different society that supports collectivism and interdependence that the writer envisions?

Exploitation Is to Sex Work as Overdose Is to Drug Use

- In your own words, explain the framing of "exploitation is to sex work as overdose is to drug use."
- Do you prefer this framework or the Continuum of Sex Work 3Cs model (presented in *Mechanics of the Sex Trade*)?

Stimulant Stigma: Without Simple Solutions, Punishment and Inequity Persist

- What is the role of comprehensive drug education in safe stimulant use?
- In which ways have stimulants been racialized and/ or associated with marginalized communities?
- What is Chemsex?
- What is the neuroscience behind Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioids versus stimulants?
- What can be done to decrease stimulant stigma?

SECTION 3: HARM-REDUCTION TOOLKITS

Overview of Harm Reduction in the Sex Trade

- Why has the War on Drugs been ineffective as a harm reduction method?
- How does the concept of harm reduction in the context of sex work serve as both a blueprint for survival and a belief in something beyond survival?
- How can individual, community, and policy level interventions work together to build a strategy that reduces violence and exploitation for a sex worker fleeing an abusive situation with a child?
- How do the broader implications and impacts of the Anti-Prostitution Pledge (APP), which restricts government funding to programs promoting abstinence-only agendas in the anti-sex and anti-sex worker sectors, shape the discourse surrounding public health, human rights, and the well-being of sex workers?
- What are the broader social implications of HIV criminalization, and how do they impact public health, stigma, and the rights of individuals living with HIV/AIDS (including, but not limited to, sex workers)?
- In what ways could the allocation of funds for local systems be improved to better support sex workers, considering their unique needs and the challenges they face within their communities?
- How has this reading revealed personal stigmas and biases? What steps

can you take to actively support interventions aimed at reducing harm for individuals engaged in the sex trade?

Compassion, Not Criminalization: Alternatives to Criminalization That Reduce Harm in the Sex Trade — An Interview with Melodie Garcia, Tamika Spellman, Wit López, and Leila Raven

- What's your idea of successful survival?
- Does this change when you apply it to yourself?
- These advocates and programs are shifting away from punishment and towards community care. What stood out to you as impactful? What stood out to you as something you might want to try or be a part of?

Rematriating Drugs: Decolonial Perspectives of Substance Use, Healthcare, and Recovery — An Interview with Andrea Medley, Shirley Cain, and Frederick Cortés Díaz

- Have you heard of the term 'rematriation' before? Does this definition align with what you know, have heard, or experienced with rematriation? How, or how not?
- What does rematriation look like in your personal life? Work life?
- In this article, we heard several Indigenous advocates share their perspectives on decolonizing work. What sticks out to you from their visions for decolonization? What elements do you agree, or disagree, with?
- As Indigenous advocates, we are in relationship with our families, friends, and community. In the article, Fredi asks the question: "How can we promote a sense of capacity and responsibility in the members of our family and community so they become more willing to engage in efforts to better our quality of life and address important social issues?". How do you respond to this question?
- How do the perspectives of those interviewed in this article on rematriating drugs align with what you have heard from other Indigenous people in this space? Why, why not?

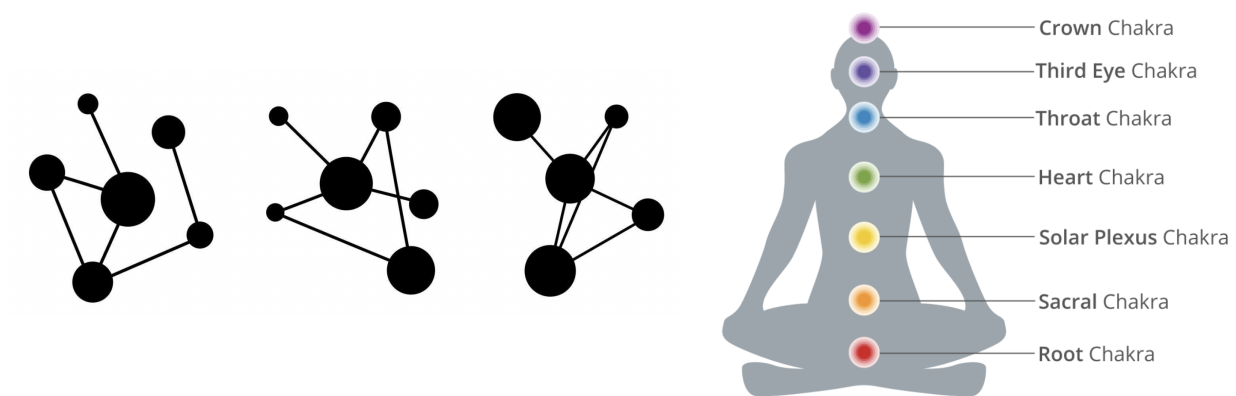
Principles of Healing-Centered Harm Reduction

- In what ways can embracing a healing-centered harm reduction approach empower individuals and communities to navigate and heal from the systemic harm perpetuated by centuries of oppression? How might acknowledging the inevitability of harm while celebrating resilience contribute to collective healing and societal transformation?
- How can we effectively integrate holistic approaches into public health, social services, and social justice work to address both interpersonal and structural harm? In what ways can we navigate the tension between investing in transformative, community-led solutions and acknowledging the immediate survival needs of individuals who may currently rely on conventional criminal legal approaches for support?
- How can we ensure that our approaches to healing-centered harm reduction honor difference, individual autonomy and self-determination, recognizing that what may be perceived as harmful or healing varies greatly among individuals?
- How can we foster empathy and understanding towards individuals who experience and perpetuate harm as a means of survival within systems of institutional trauma and violence, while recognizing the limitations imposed on personal agency by such systemic forces?
- How can we cultivate a non-judgmental approach towards various methods individuals use for survival and healing, examine our biases and privileges and positional power and recognize and celebrate resilience without imposing value judgments on different survival strategies?
- How can we integrate healing-centered harm reduction principles into our collective efforts to address systemic oppression, recognizing the importance of holding space for rest, connection, and learning, while understanding the non-linear nature of healing and the varied impacts of intersecting oppressions?
- In what concrete ways can we actively center community-based, intergenerational, and cultural approaches to resilience, healing, and harm reduction, prioritizing the voices and leadership of those most impacted by these issues, and challenging our reliance on violent state-sponsored systems in favor of transformative justice models that prioritize restoration and repair over punishment?

SECTION 4: PLEASURE-ORIENTED FUTURES

Pleasure as an Access Point

Visual Prompt | How do you see these pictures as an access point for pleasure?



Somatic Prompt

- Where do you feel pleasure in your body?
- Can you move it?
- Does it have a shape, color or form?
- If you are using a substance, how does this inform or give insight or new experiences to what you feel or sense?

Pleasure as Word Play

If you're keen, let's play a game to help explore how we experience pleasure. Pick any definition of "access" and combine it with any definition of "point." Perhaps think about how sex, drugs, or some combination of the two could connect with those mixed definitions

Definitions of “Access”	Definitions of “Point”
❖ permission, liberty, or ability to enter, approach, or pass to and from a place or to approach or communicate with a person or thing ❖ freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something ❖ a way or means of entering or approaching ❖ a fit of intense feeling ❖ an increase by addition ❖ to get at ❖ to gain access to: such as ❖ to be able to use, enter, or get near (something) ❖ to open or load (a computer file, an internet site, etc.)¹ ❖ the ability, right, or permission to approach, enter, speak with, or use ❖ admittance ❖ a way or means of approach: ❖ to make contact with or gain access to; be able to reach, approach, enter, etc. ❖ <i>computers</i>. (of a program or system component) to retrieve (data) for use by another program or application or for transfer from one part of the system to another	❖ an individual detail ❖ a distinguishing detail ❖ the most important essential in a discussion or matter ❖ cogency ❖ an end or object to be achieved ❖ purpose ❖ a geometric element that has zero dimensions and a location determinable by an ordered set of coordinates ❖ a narrowly localized place having a precisely indicated position ❖ a particular place ❖ locality ❖ an exact moment ❖ a time interval immediately before something indicated ❖ verge ❖ a particular step, stage, or degree in development ❖ a definite position in a scale ❖ the terminal usually sharp or narrowly rounded part of something ❖ a weapon or tool having such a part and used for stabbing or piercing ❖ arrowhead; spearhead ❖ the contact or discharge extremity of an electric device ❖ an electric outlet ❖ a projecting, usually tapering piece of land or a sharp prominence ❖ the tip of a projecting body part ❖ a railroad switch ❖ the head of the bow of a stringed instrument ❖ a short musical phrase ❖ a very small mark ❖ a direction indicated by a compass point ❖ a small detachment ahead of an advance guard or behind a rear guard ❖ a unit of measurement ❖ a unit of counting in the scoring of a game or contest ❖ the action in dancing of extending one leg and arching the foot so that only the tips of the toes touch the floor ❖ a position of a player in various games ❖ credit accruing from creating a good impression ❖ to give added force, emphasis, or piquancy to ❖ to scratch out old mortar from the joints of something and fill in with new material ❖ to indicate the position or direction of especially by extending a finger ❖ to direct someone's attention to ❖ to cause to be turned in a particular direction ❖ to indicate the fact or probability of something specified ❖ to lie extended, aimed, or turned in a particular direction

¹ (Merriam-Webster, 2023)

❖ <i>television</i> . (of programming, time, etc.) available to the public ²	❖ to sail close to the wind ³ ❖ to indicate the presence or position of ❖ to direct the mind or thought in some direction ❖ call attention to ⁴
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² (Dictionary.com, n.d.)

³ (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

⁴ (Dictionary.com, n.d.)

Fuck Myself into Heaven

- How do you relate to other people, to the world?
- What practices or disciplines have really helped you see yourself?
- When (if ever) has your existence felt like a novelty? Reflect on this experience and notice your posture, your heartbeat, and your breath.
- Many faiths and religions have a clear concept of heaven and hell, and it's up to the people to earn their spot in heaven. However, divinity and nirvana can be accessed here on earth. What are you doing in your own life that helps you access your own divinity?
- Does your own consciousness ever feel like a burden? If so, how does it affect you? How does it manifest?

Sacred Stripper: Intersections of Religion, Sex Work, Culture, and Consent

- Where do you see the intersections of sex work, religion, culture and consent in your own life and the larger community around you?
- Do you believe that spirituality and religion is available and accessible to sex workers? Why or why not? What would you like to see shift in these areas?
- What is your perspective on the healing properties of the work sex workers do?
- Where did you find yourself challenged, confused or surprised by this chapter?
- What does your spiritual practice look like if you have one? What is your self-defined religion? If you were to create your own religion based on what you hold most sacred, what would that religion be like? What would your rituals, prayers, practices, sacred texts, religious garb and traditions look like?
- How has sex, sexuality, sensuality and beauty healed you? What implications do you see this as having for the rest of society and global culture at large?

Drug Policy for Breaking Intergenerational Curses: An Eco-Futurist Prayer, Analysis, and Reflection on Psychoactive Substances and Their Intentional Use

- Which historical events are necessary to include in building historic memory around the origins of drug prohibition? How can engagement with the past shape the present and future of drug policy?
- How do we measure success in treatment, or progress in social or cultural development, if an experience allows an individual to be temporarily liberated from psychic pain and discomfort, but also fails to interrupt conscious or unconscious participation in structures that cause harm in the social and ecological fabric?
- While miraculous that colonizers lacked the worldview to understand the value of (and thus commodify) the visionary medicines 500 years ago, what obligations and considerations do people bringing them into the imperialist globalized economy have today? To say this in a more pointed way:
- Is exploitative commodification and globalization inevitable, or are there measures that can be implemented to avoid this outcome?
- Altered states, in addition to being transformative for trauma, can also be fun, celebratory, pleasurable, meaningful, and symbolic.
- How can we weave storytelling, archetype, and play into this education and embodied awareness to invite the most ecstatic and loving outcomes?
- Psychocosmology is presently understood to mean a seeking of alignment between the external world as one understands it, and the inner self as one creates it.
- How do the substances you consume support you in making meaning from your experiences? How do they facilitate access to different physical, emotional, and spiritual states?
- To use substances to explore and world-build across the cosmic playgrounds of our minds is a form of magic, a form of entheogenic alchemy.
- What positive world-building can you do in the experiences you have with substances, and how can you bring that forward into the interpersonal and relational ecosystem in which you exist?
- How do patterns of use of different substances in your life inform your understanding of the world you believe in, or are trying to create? How do your patterns of use of different substances reflect your values and relations, both social and ecological?

Black Trans Joy: A Love Letter to Poppy

- What do you know about gender dysphoria either from your own life or the life of another?
- What would gender euphoria look like for you, in a world you could create?
- Consider the indigenous peoples who have had their animals, plants, homelands, languages stolen from them. Only through rebellion and resistance have these people not lost their entire cultures. Have you begun practicing anything lately that is allowing you to tap into a side of yourself that is connected to your ancestors? Do you gain inspiration through learning, relearning or finding practices you are connected to via culture and/or ancestry?
- Plants like tobacco and cannabis are used on a much wider scale now as compared to how they were used pre-chattel slavery. How can we show respect to the agriculture that has given us so much in this life?
- Think of what allows you to feel free and whole and autonomous. Is it something you can share with others, and if so do you? How? How would you feel if the thing you were most passionate about in this life was also your biggest secret?

Ancestral Healing for Liberation

Self

When you read the words “ancestor” or “ancestral”:

- Which emotions feel present?
- Do you notice any changes in your body?
- Do any images come to mind?
- Are any other senses activated for you?

Sometimes when the words “ancestor” or “ancestral” are invoked, people think about many generations before them.

- If you trace back to your parents/caregivers and/or their parents/caregivers, were there times of year, or events, or practices that were sacred to them?
- How do you relate any of the examples you named?

Community / Systemic

Relationships to place and conditions of migration strongly correlate to whether our ancestral medicine and practices are known to us.

- Have you connected with family members or others with similar ancestry about which sacred practices or medicines have been preserved or remembered?
- Are you open to, or currently creating, new or reconstituted sacred practices or practices? And if so, how are they changed by social and environmental conditions?

Another way that many of us are distanced from our ancestral medicine and practices is through family/community rupture, violence or intentional distance. This is explicitly true for queer folx, + folks, and other marginalized folks amongst the marginalized.

- Are there sacred practices or events that you grieve?
- Are there sacred practices or events you are remaking in the spaces that you are, among those who are chosen?
- In which ways is the experience of distance or creating new/different ancestral lines itself part of the ancestral practice of liberation?