

Triple A of Accountability

Introduction

As we witness powerful organizing across colleges in the US, we are reminded time and time again that we keep each other safe. For that safety to be sustained, we must also recognize harm can and will happen within our organizing spaces. **We must recognize that we are all capable of harm and therefore, must be ready for accountability when asked of us, on multiple levels.** In order to hold ourselves accountable, here are the 3 A's:

- Our AAA insurance policy to reduce harm in our society
 - ADAB is self accountability
 - AMANAH is community accountability
 - ADALAH is institutional accountability

We have all experienced harm, and we have all caused harm. Therefore it is important to view mechanisms of accountability at all levels as an invitation to reflect and grow. Harm reduction is a continuous process that starts with accountability with ourselves (ADAB), our communities (AMANAH) and our institutions (ADALAH).

ADAB as Self Accountability

Adab is the Arabic word for manners or good character. This term is often associated with Islamic manners and respect, or ikhlaq. Adab is how we interact with ourselves and others. It is the personal commitments we make to ensure that we do not cause further harm in our relationships and communities. Good character is an important tenet of our faith tradition, and is a way of increasing our closeness with Allah.

According to this Hadith (Prophetic saying): **"The best of companions to Allah is the one who is best to his companions, and the best of neighbors to Allah is the one who is the best of them to his neighbor"** (Al-Tirmidhi).

Good adab means that we commit ourselves to not causing harm to others by being perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. It means that we examine the ways we hold privilege, and actively commit to not abusing others without that privilege.

In striving for adab, it is important that we:

- Approach** with humility and mutual respect
- Depend** on dhikr (remembrance of God) to ground in our relationships
- Acknowledge** your power and positionality
- Be** accountable to God, each other, and yourself

Reflection Questions

- How are you showing others around you respect as you enter into the shared space? What does respect look like?
- What practices are you bringing in to remember God? (e.g. Salat, dhikr, designated time for grounding)
- What privileges do you hold entering in to the space? What power does that give you societally? How can you shift power if needed?

How are you checking in with yourself about any harm that you may be causing? What about the harm you are witnessing? What is in your power to disrupt the harm you are seeing, experiencing or doing?

AMANAH As Community Accountability

In Islam, Muslims believe that many of the responsibilities and blessings they are given are an amanah, or trust, from God. For example, the earth has been given to us as an amanah and must be taken care of. Children have also been entrusted as an amanah for their parents, and have certain rights that must be fulfilled. Similarly, those who are the most vulnerable in communities must be cared for with compassion, equity, and justice.

In this vein, preventing gender based violence and creating safer spaces that reduce barriers to reporting of violence and abuse is our responsibility. **God has entrusted us with this beloved community, and ensuring a violence and abuse free community is an amanah we take seriously.**

Prevention is not simply putting policies in place or mandating your staff and volunteers to participate in annual trainings. True prevention requires making changes at a systems level and working toward entire cultural shifts, and reducing the barriers that face victims who want to report, seek healing, and get some semblance of justice. As such, those in formal and informal leadership positions have the unique opportunity to help facilitate these systems level change.

In striving for amanah, it is important that we:

Acquire knowledge

Mobilize community care funds and resources

Ally with trained professionals

Normalize seeking information, help, and services

Address the root causes of violence

Handle reporting through trauma-informed processes

Reflection Questions

- What do you know about the solidarity encampment? What are the demands? Who is the target of those demands? What are the needs? What are the community asks?
- What resources can you offer to support the solidarity encampment? Funding? Supplies? Professional expertise?
- Who do you know in your networks who can help? What organizations, companies, individuals have what is needed and can you approach?
- If you don't know, who can you ask? Where can you tune in to or page can you view to seek answers?
- Who is pulling the strings behind the scenes that is enabling the violence and harms? How much do you know about the structures and people at play? (.e.g. The chancellor calling campus police, the mayor for local law enforcement, the board of supervisors for sheriff, etc). How are they connected and where can we apply pressure?

For any instances of harm, how are we honoring those who are directly affected to center consent and trauma informed processes? Are you taking power and control way from the directly impacted in your pursuit or actions towards justice? How we move is as important as the move itself.

ADALAH As Institutional Accountability

Organizations must commit to leading with *adalah*, meaning justice and equity. **God is known as Al-'Adl (the most Just) and we are called on to practice *adalah* in the communities we live, work, and pray.** We practice *adalah* by challenging harmful narratives and dismantling toxic systems of power, which is critical to preventing harmful practices like sexual and gender based violence, and building a thriving community. We are committed to sharing power, responsibility, and labor to build safe and secure workplaces communities.

Committing to systematic anti-harm principles means actively making the choice to not work with people who harm. This includes perpetrators, authority figures who protect them, and law enforcement. **Adalah means that we work to disrupt the idea of keeping the peace at the expense of those who have been hurt.** It means that we redefine what we believe to be “the greater good” and how upholding the status quo can and has been a means to protect people who harm.

In striving for *adalah*, it is important that we:

- Allocate** financial and human resources
- Determine** victim-centric restorative practices
- Assess** risk to community and create action plan
- Look** beyond the perpetrator
- Accommodate** victim needs
- Honor** transparency, confidentiality, and accountability

Reflection Questions

- Have you allocated resources towards supporting students in encampments? If yes, what kind of resources have you allocated?
- Do these resources come with strings attached or have folks been given the freedom to make decisions on how to distribute the resources?
- How do you hold your organization accountable to ensuring that it is a safe space for staff and students who work with you who are also community organizers?
- Have you created a plan of action to aid in mitigating risk for the most vulnerable in your organization?

How will you ensure that your organization continues to honor its commitments?

For Campuses:

How would you practice adab, amanah, and adalah in your solidarity encampment community?

How this can be practiced on campuses:

Follow the Students: instead of trying to lead from afar or spread information, community members should follow the lead of the students who are on the ground and showing up. There is a difference between advising and controlling

Consider Safety: assess risk for arrest and what would be at stake if you were arrested (e.g. if you have access to legal representation and resources for bail, caretaking responsibilities, etc)

Gendered Labor: notice how labor is getting distributed (e.g. femmes leading caretaking roles) and disrupt if necessary

Racialized Violence: protect Black and brown bodies who are routinely targeted

Gendered Violence: preventing gendered violence (from mansplaining to sexual violence) by setting community agreements and responding immediately when harm happens. Addressing gendered violence doesn't divide the movement, but makes it stronger

Know Your Role: whether you are supporting with legal observing, jail support, meal train, supply run, safety/security team, community outreach, media and press support, documentation, ie de-escalation - being intentional about connecting with the leads who are directing the strategy

Renew Your NIYYAH (Intentions): if and when you can donate, do not expect acknowledgment or to be able to direct what the funds will be used for. Trust those who are using the funds to put them towards what is most needed (as is aligned with zakat ethos). For organizations, move beyond just statements. Commit to actively being involved in supporting encampments and protests through financial contributions and staff labor

Communication: defer media requests to designated media liaisons. And if asked to speak on the record, think critically about your positionality (what should and shouldn't I speak on? Am I directly impacted?) and the impacts of speaking to media. Never share names or personal details about organizers or vulnerable community members without obtaining their permission