

# Sanctuary Says

**ABSTRACT:** In 2018, the New School Working Group on Expanded Sanctuary collaboratively organized a series of workshops in New York to reflect on the question of sanctuary as a conceptual and practical starting point for cross-coalitional politics, including its tensions and risks. This short piece is an attempt to bring together the sentiments expressed in those workshops by activists, organizers, students and academics focusing on anti-racist, pro-migrant, and pro-Indigenous struggles, in a form that engages sanctuary as an ongoing question.

**KEYWORDS:** abolition, accompaniment, community, expanded sanctuary, freedom cities, hospitality, political imagination, restorative justice

## What Is Sanctuary?

In 2018, the New School Working Group on Expanded Sanctuary collaboratively organized a series of workshops in New York to reflect on this question. The workshops brought together activists, organizers, students and academics whose work spans anti-racist, pro-migrant, and pro-Indigenous struggles. Together, we reflected on sanctuary as a conceptual and practical starting point for cross-coalitional politics, including the tensions and risks of such a project.

This short piece is an attempt to assemble the sentiments expressed in those workshops in a form that engages sanctuary as an ongoing question. Our conception of sanctuary is not a consensus vision. It reflects the productive tension between the worlds we inhabit, the visions of justice we hold, and the solidarities we share. For example, the term “community defense” registered very differently for participants in different contexts. While some understood themselves to be working for progressive notions of community defense, others wanted to distance themselves from the term’s deployment as part of right-wing and exclusionary practices. An expansive conception of sanctuary is not limited to conventional associations or historical meanings. Sanctuary entails a way of being as well as sets of principles, practices, affects, and risks. It is at once a political horizon, an already existing reality, and site of contention and risk. For many at the workshops, it was a term that simultaneously evoked promise, disappointment and betrayal, insofar as people felt it had been hijacked by city and state governments who have not honored its more radical commitments. We hope this reflective text will be read as a contingent collaboration—a provocation to open conversations, actions, and connections across communities, struggles, and continents.



The text was compiled by The New School Working Group on Expanded Sanctuary, drawing on the discussions, notes, and sketches from the long table workshops: Individuals from the following organizations participated in the workshops.

**New Sanctuary Coalition of New York**

**Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA)**

**Watch the Med Alarm Phone**

**Asamblea Popular de Familias Migrantes (APOFAM)**

**Red de Pueblos Transnacionales**

**New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia**

**Radio Progreso y Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación (ERIC), Honduras**

**Sanctuary Health, Vancouver**

**Yo Sí Sanidad Universal, Madrid**

**Mijente**

**Audre Lorde Project**

**Black Youth Project 100**

**NYU Dream**

**Make the Road New York**

**The New School Sanctuary Working Group**

**Hemispheric Institute, NYU**

**Undocublack Network**

**African Communities Together**

**Enlace**

**New York State Youth Leadership Council**

**National Immigration Law Center**

**Social Justice Institute of the Barnard Center for Research on Women**

**North Star Fund**

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<b>Sanctuary Strives for . . .</b>	<b>Sanctuary Is . . .</b>	<b>Sanctuary Risks</b>
Radical hospitality	An experiment	<b>Becoming . . .</b>
Community defense	Training for the not-yet	Humanitarianism
Civil disobedience	Taken, not given	Charity
Civil initiative	A threshold	Paternalism
Restorative justice	An interruption	Defensiveness
Web of resistance	A corridor	Containment
Open borders	Imagination	Confinement
The commons	Healing	Limiting
Revolutionary commitment	Autonomy	A Fortress
Uniting struggles	Refuge	A Prison
Radical education	Presence	
Abolition as praxis	Solidarity	
Holding difference	Courage	
Defying norms	Dignity	
Working outside the state	Non-innocent	
The practice of community	Shared fate	
Liberation	A call for equality	
Freedom of Movement	Care	
	Love	
	Always incomplete	

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