

CRITICAL RESISTANCE

December 2015



photo credits: Critical Resistance, Ramsey El-Qare (stop urban shield images)

Dear Critical Resistance Community,

Abolishing the prison industrial complex (PIC) is both a beautiful vision of liberation and a practical organizing strategy. This year Critical Resistance has fought to make this vision a reality through the hard work of our members across the country. Our chapters are digging deep in their work and CR is sharing its analysis far and wide. In addition to our local campaigns and programming, we've traveled to non-chapter cities including Austin, TX, Atlanta, GA and Miami, FL to support exciting abolitionist events that strengthen our movement. In total in 2015, CR made over 150 presentations and hosted over 50 workshops and events! CR is ready to grow in order to meet the demands of our communities.

In this moment of heightened public consciousness around policing and imprisonment, Critical Resistance (CR) is relying on our 15+ years of steady organizing to erode the power of the PIC and shift the balance of power into the hands of people on the ground. Our anti-PIC organizing contests the common refrain that policing, imprisonment and surveillance keep us safe. While we fight the PIC, we affirm a vision for true community wellbeing: investments in stable affordable housing, job training and meaningful employment, education and programs for youth, quality resources for communities and people coming home from prison. Our work strives to demonstrate that PIC abolition is both practical and a beautiful vision. We hope that you will help us advance this abolitionist practice.

Thank you for supporting Critical Resistance along the way. Together we've built strong movements that make our dreams and strategies for abolition even more real. We need your help to grow and sustain these wins. This month, will you make a donation to grow our organizing power and meet the demands of our campaigns?

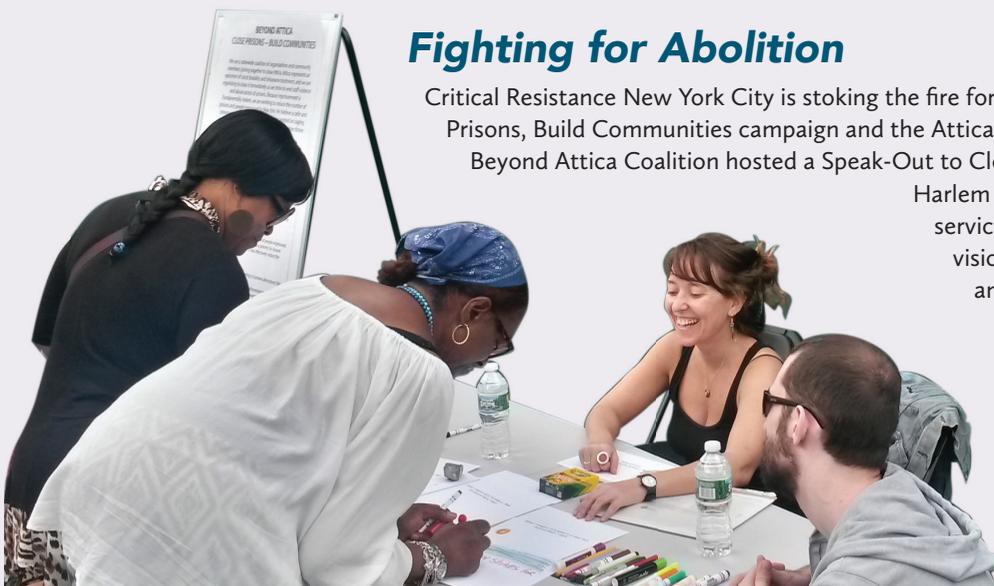
2015 was not without challenges. We are still deeply feeling the loss of Zachary Ontiveros, a vital member of the Oakland chapter and The Abolitionist newspaper team who passed away in January of this year. In Zachary's honor, the Ontiveros family has seeded The Zachary Project, a resource that will help support community members in need. Your donations to The Zachary Project are greatly welcomed this year as we approach the one-year anniversary of his passing.

Fighting for Abolition

Critical Resistance New York City is stoking the fire for abolition by advancing the Beyond Attica—Close Prisons, Build Communities campaign and the Attica Interview Project. In September CR-NYC and the Beyond Attica Coalition hosted a Speak-Out to Close Attica, which drew hundreds of passers-by in

Harlem to join in banner-making, connecting to re-entry services, contributing video testimony and offering their visions of a New York with vibrant education, housing, and healthcare instead of prisons. This winter,

CR-NYC will launch the Survivors of Attica Interview website and a zine so the public can engage with the project by reading and listening to the testimony and visions of people formerly imprisoned at Attica. CR-NYC is proud of a strong year in which we amplified the vision that a New York beyond Attica is not only imaginable, but irresistible.



2015 was a powerful year for our jail fights in California!

On June 9 CRLA and the LA No More Jails Coalition won a momentous toe-hold in the fight. Our consistent pressure culminated in a Board of Supervisors vote to stall construction plans for the summer in order to assess alternatives to jail expansion. This signaled that our consistent messaging and mobilizing was shifting common sense and compelling decision makers to look beyond cages. Though the Board decided to move forward with the jail plan, the fight isn't over. We will continue to build opposition to jail construction in Los Angeles County, including challenging the jail plan on environmental grounds and activating communities to demand investments in a healthier Los Angeles without cages.

To this end, CRLA has stoked the fight for abolition in LA by curating and hosting Freedom Functions, a four-part public Political Education series with the LA No More Jails coalition. Topics included: Fighting Gang Injunctions and Criminalization from LA to the Bay, featuring CR-Oakland members and other STIC allies; Community Based Alternatives to LA County's Dangerous 2 Billion Dollar Jail Plan!; and Jails are Not Service Providers: LA's Mental Health and Gender Responsive Cages. By bringing together people across neighborhoods, sectors and experiences, Freedom Functions has activated people across Los Angeles to claim their stake in the campaign against jail expansion. In total in 2015, CRLA made 40 public presentations on the negative impacts of jail expansion in a wide variety of venues from LA's Skid Row to public events with healthcare professionals to presentations to LA County decision-makers.



In San Francisco, CR-Oakland and the No New SF Jail Coalition galvanized strong grassroots opposition this summer and made the proposed jail project a controversy. This mobilization compelled elected decision-makers to publicly question the utility, necessity, and ideological legitimacy of building a new jail in SF. In 2015, we won the support of four elected officials, supported the SF Letter Carriers Union passing a resolution against the jail project, and made 30 presentations detailing the environmental, social and economic harms of building a new jail in SF. To increase our impact, CR-OAK authored No New SF Jail: A People's Report, which raised up first-hand narratives from San Franciscans impacted by imprisonment and policing and laid out practical, life-affirming alternative investments that are needed instead. The report was a huge success, catching the attention of NBC News and being quoted frequently by organizers and decision-makers. CR-OAK also activated opposition to the County's negligent environmental impact assessment and drew public attention to the fact that SF's jail architecture proposal violates California's regulations that prisoners must have access to outside exercise areas. Can you help CR continue to make gains in our fight against cages?





Building the movement to abolish solitary confinement

This fall CR along with the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition celebrated a momentous gain in the struggle to abolish solitary when prisoners won a groundbreaking legal victory in their case, *Ashker vs. Brown*. This was brought on behalf of prisoners held for ten years or more in Pelican Bay State Prison's infamous Security Housing Units (SHU). The victory comes as a result of the tremendous organizing by prisoners and the momentum gained with the hunger strikes of 2011 and 2013, during which CR served as the press office and contributed to the grassroots outreach, mobilization and legislative strategy efforts.

To continue to identify the system's vulnerabilities and potential targets for a long-term campaign, CR-OAK initiated a letter correspondence project this year with people currently or recently imprisoned in solitary confinement in CA; we've already gathered 60+ letter interviews and new responses arrive to the office every week. This summer, CR-OAK launched an #ABOLISH SOLITARY social media campaign that drew participation from organizers, cultural workers, world renowned artists, and imprisoned people's loved ones. It fired up incredible abolitionist conversations online and kept the spotlight on the issue for the 2-year anniversary of the 2013 hunger strikes. Your support is critical to bolster our inside-outside organizing to end the torture of solitary confinement.

Building for Self-Determination

Building for Self-Determination is integral to Critical Resistance's political framework. Our capacity to dismantle the prison industrial complex is bound up with both our ability to resist power structures and to recognize our own power to create the world in which we want to live. This double movement is part of what makes Abolition a practical strategy: everyday we work to challenge the power of the PIC through changing and re-envisioning the social relationships that underpin collective well-being and freedom.

Decoupling policing from essential health services

We know from personal experience and stories shared in our communities that cops are not medics. Whether someone is facing a mental health crisis, a social conflict that involves interpersonal harm, or an accident, when police respond to a situation that needs medical attention or de-escalation, they only serve to make the situation worse. There are countless examples in Oakland and across the country of police harming and even killing the person who needed care. This not only prevents them from receiving the care they need in a critical situation, but often additionally targets the person who needs care for arrest or deportation.

CR-Oakland launched the Oakland Power Projects (OPP) this year to build Oakland communities' capacity to resist the everyday violence of policing. The first Power Project, an Anti-Policing Healthworkers Cohort, aims to strengthen people's skills and resources to respond to community emergencies in ways that minimize police contact and ultimately decouple access to health care from policing. The Health Workers Cohort is made up of a range of health care practitioners, from EMTs, free clinic workers, emergency room doctors and nurses to folks providing traditional/non-western remedies such as acupuncture or herbal care. This fall the cohort designed three "Know Your Options" workshops around mental health crises, acute injuries, and chronic health issues such as diabetes or a seizure disorder that could escalate into a health emergency. The cohort will facilitate at least 3 workshops before the end of the year to ally organizations and community groups, with plans to offer more in 2016. CR-OAK is excited to build on this initial work to plan how we can bring our lessons learned to future cohorts here in the Bay Area and beyond. Your donations to CR will help us share the Power Projects beyond Oakland!

Mental healthcare not policing!

Nationally over the past 40 years, we have seen a disinvestment on the part of federal and state governments in the provision of mental health care for marginalized communities across the US. In Portland, OR, a city with a notorious history of police violence, CR PDX is building off their Community Conversation series to begin a campaign to break the connections between mental health crisis and police response. As they conduct research for their campaign, they are launching a series of workshops on Abolition of Policing, accountability, and the PIC's relationship to healthcare. We hope this workshop series builds up the self determination of Portland communities to resist policing and decouple healthcare from cops.

The Abolitionist grows its distribution

2015 was a substantial year for CR's bilingual newspaper, *The Abolitionist*. Subscriptions from imprisoned people exploded from just over 2,000 in 2014 to more than 4,300 in 2015. We produced two editions of the paper, one on Education and the PIC and another on Policing. Given the growth of the paper and the participation from multiple chapters and national members on the editorial board, as well as increased use of *The Abolitionist* as a communication tool for all chapters, we are shifting *The Abolitionist* out of the Oakland chapter to be a project of the entire organization. Your donations help us send this much needed political education and organizing resource to our readership inside and outside prisons across the country.

Stoking policing resistance

This year in Oakland, Critical Resistance and the Stop the Injunctions Coalition celebrated a huge victory in our 6 year campaign against gang injunctions, when the city formally announced that it was dropping its two injunctions from the books. This historic victory is the first full defeat of gang injunctions in the history of the country! In this fight, CR-OAK and STIC also stopped youth curfews and loitering ordinances from being implemented in Oakland, and activated hundreds of Bay Area residents to oppose Oakland contracting with notorious “Supercop” William Bratton. We are honored to have built such a strong anti-policing front with our allies and we are committed to keeping growing policing resistance in Oakland!

Urban Shield out of Alameda County!

Building off our 2014 victory when we kicked Urban Shield out of Oakland, this year CR-OAK and the Stop Urban Shield Coalition put the pressure on Alameda County decision makers to stop hosting this war-making expo in the neighboring city of Pleasanton. CR OAK helped make the opposition this year vibrant and visible; we helped organized a march and rally to the County Supervisors office, where CR OAK members spoke on the mic about the historical legacy of militarized police forces such as SWAT teams and the everyday impact of the militarization of police on urban communities. Following the expo, we successfully convinced decision makers to reject the Sheriff’s \$130,000 request for new surveillance technology!

The Stop Urban Shield Coalition is building a long-term strategy with our coalition partners to demand an end to Urban Shield and CR OAK is contributing campaign planning, media and communication, and research to the fight. We’re bringing our strong analysis of the links between policing, surveillance and the rest of the PIC in order to fight the violent militarization of emergency response services that Urban Shield promotes. Make a gift today to erode the power of policing!



Sharing Resources

CR is proud of what we have built as an organization and a movement. This year again confirmed our role in the struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex: to lay bare the PIC’s death-dealing violence and to boldly envision a world free of the prison industrial complex. We know our fight is far from over; can you help us advance our vision and goal by making a generous gift today? Over the last five years, CR has transitioned from being primarily funded by foundations to grassroots funding becoming our primary source of income. Thanks to all our donors and funders for contributing to CR’s ongoing success!

We are asking for support in any of the following ways:

Donate \$5,000, \$500 or \$50 to help us reach our goal of \$30,000 for abolition in Dec. 2015.

Become a monthly sustainer. Contribute \$15, \$25, or \$50/month to keep CR strong and steady.

Organize a fundraiser, house party or *Abolitionist* paper release event to raise funds to fight the PIC.

Spread the word to family and friends and encourage people to support CR.

Our fight against the PIC would not be possible without you. And, with your help, 2016 will be a year of growth—for our vision, the movement, and our organization. **Onward!**

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