

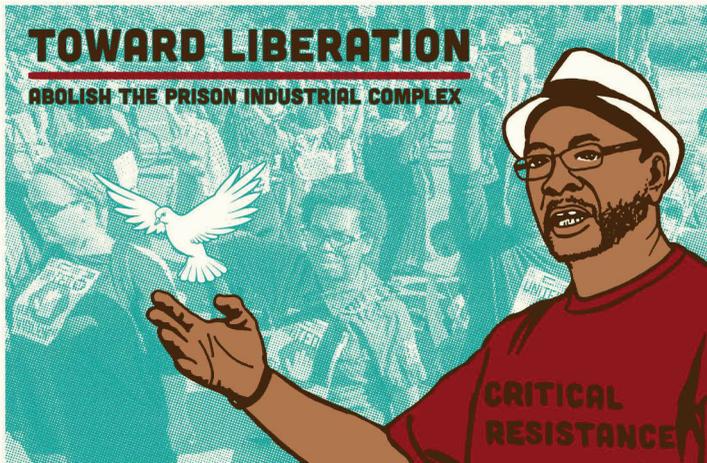
CRITICAL RESISTANCE



DECEMBER 2016

Dear Friends of Critical Resistance,

There was absolutely no mention of the abolition of police or prisons in mainstream headlines at the time of the founding Critical Resistance conference in 1998 or when Critical Resistance (CR) officially became an organization in 2001. Now, almost 20 years later, a columnist for The Washington Post writes, "Cop culture, historically rooted deeper in racism than in justice, simply cannot be 'reformed.' It must be abolished; the institution where it festers must be dismantled."



Design by Melanie Cervantes of Dignidad Rebelde

Our years of diligent work and wild dreaming are paying off. This shift in the discussion is a mile marker victory, and it is energizing and somewhat astonishing to see the questions and demands CR has been raising for years entering public discourse in full force through popular outlets. **Thank you for being with us on this historic journey.** We remain dedicated to the work of making abolition common sense, shifting who is recognized as a movement expert, building campaigns and projects that are used as models for abolition, and amplifying life-affirming, abolitionist solutions. As our September event in New York City referenced, the road to abolition is hard, but we couldn't be more inspired, vitalized, and ready to continue the fight.

As the year draws to a close, we are being met with grave challenges. Our current political climate is one filled with divisiveness and fear mongering. The threats posed to our immigrant, Muslim, Black, native and queer communities are very real. We know we must move now to redouble our efforts. Our vision for liberation, health and wellbeing in our communities is ever more clear and urgent. Our goal at CR is to continue lifting up visions of freedom and self-determination as we tear down walls, cages, and policing. **Together, we will continue to fight back against attacks on our people and build the road to abolition.**

2016 has been an incredible year of struggle and gains in our efforts to dismantle the prison industrial complex (PIC). **Every step of the way, we forefront the necessity to invest in health and community resources as we divest from the systems of policing, cages and surveillance that harm us.** As you read this letter, we ask you to reflect on how CR's work across the country has helped prove that it is possible to dismantle the PIC piece by piece and build up alternatives block by block. Would you help us continue to prove this? **We're committed to the movement, and we value your support. Can you make a donation to Critical Resistance this year and keep us moving toward liberation?**



Profiles in Abolition

This year we kicked off **Profiles in Abolition** with events in Los Angeles, New York City, Oakland, and Atlanta. The Profiles in Abolition initiative is designed to **deepen critical understandings of the prison industrial complex, strengthen popular understanding of abolition, and bolster our movement building efforts.** Profiles in Abolition has been a vibrant success, bringing together over 2,000 people in four cities to dream of a world where the political horizon is not dominated by cages and policing and to highlight the practical steps people can take to advance abolition with us.

We are building on this series and making a movie: the Profiles in Abolition Video Project! This movie will help us continue to make PIC abolition common sense and highlight ways that PIC abolition is being put into practical action. Featured participants so far include Alicia Garza (co-founder of Black Lives Matter), Mariame Kaba, Ruthie Wilson Gilmore, Angela Y. Davis, and more. **Your gifts will help us make this quality popular education tool and expand our reach to audiences across the country.**



“I’m happy that I got to be in the space and vibe with such genius and positive energy. The panel was amazing, and it opened a lot of doors for me on my process with abolition. It was one of the best panels I have been on.”
—Abraham Paulos, Families for Freedom

Critical Resistance organizes at the grassroots level through our local chapters and also as a national organization. CR’s campaigns, projects, workshops, and public events are dedicated to making abolition common sense and practical. We have developed and amplified tangible abolitionist reforms that fight and erode systems of policing and imprisonment. Our work includes research, report writing, media and communications, outreach and advocacy, and coalition building. Because the PIC segregates and isolates individuals, communities, and movements from each other, we know that chipping away one piece at a time can only be successful if we build stronger, deeper, and wider alliances as we go.

CR plays a critical role in the movement by forwarding an analysis of how the PIC undermines everyone’s ability to live healthy, empowered lives. We put this analysis into action as we build broad coalitions; facilitate spokesperson trainings with people impacted by the PIC; and support the leadership of current and former prisoners, youth, and loved ones to shift who is recognized as a movement expert.

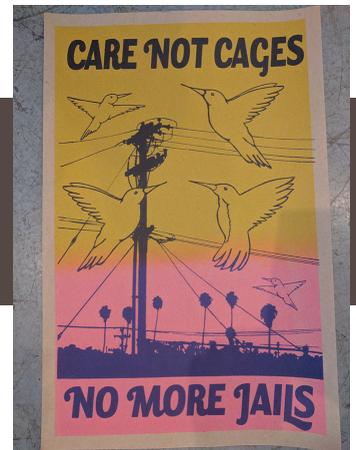
Help us build toward liberation on the hard road to abolition!

CR-Los Angeles

CR-Los Angeles (CR-LA) and the LA No More Jails coalition are in the thick of the fight to stop construction of a women's jail at a former ICE detention center on toxic land in Lancaster, a high desert town far from the LA communities where most imprisoned people in the county live. In the face of a Sheriff's Department that shamefully claims the new county jail would be a "treatment-oriented facility," CR-LA and the LA No More Jails Coalition are debunking the logic that sheriffs are legitimate treatment providers for Black, brown and poor Los Angelenos. **We know that putting "services" inside a jail is coercive and inhumane; jails never have been and never can be health centers nor service providers. Instead, we are highlighting and demanding positive**

solutions that actually work for women and communities in LA County: life-affirming mental health and substance use treatment and services, supportive housing, employment opportunities, and sustained connection with their families in their communities.

CR-LA has fought jail expansion in LA for over a decade, and this campaign against a proposed new women's jail has been our focus for the past four years. **CR-LA members have been leading outreach, media, and messaging for the fight, reaching thousands of people and making the proposed new women's jail plans a county-wide controversy.**



CR-LA recently produced a video, "5 Reasons Why LA County Doesn't Need a New Women's Jail!", which succinctly challenges the legitimacy of jail expansion meeting women's needs and features community members as experts on the impacts of jailing, the need for life-affirming resources and diversion plans, and the toxic environmental and health hazards of the jail plan.

This year has been full of action. In the first half of the year, CR-LA spearheaded opposition to the project on environmental grounds, exposed the toxic impacts of the new jail, and also helped form Antelope Valley People's Coalition, a new anti-jail coalition based in the region where the new jail would be built.

In October alone, we organized two mass mobilizations to stop the state from approving this hazardous plan. Early in the month we won a two-week delay of the project due to our powerful advocacy, tireless pressure, and expert testimony from people imprisoned in Southern California. Yet at the following hearing on October 25th, the County Board of Supervisors once again showed that they do not serve the interests of the people. After shutting out the public, the Board voted to approve the controversial environmental review and ignore the hazards of the toxic site. Despite this setback, **we will continue to fight against jail construction and the bold-faced lie that a new jail on toxic land could ever be a life-affirming "treatment center" for women.**



Your support has helped us build a strong LA No More Jails coalition, develop powerful leadership, create community reports and resources, and foster greater unity against jail construction in Los Angeles.

Please make a gift to keep Critical Resistance strong.

CR-New York

CR New York City (CR-NYC) has been growing steadily, building correspondence with hundreds of imprisoned people in the Northeast and Pennsylvania regions, and contributing to abolitionist common sense in New York.

In September we hosted over 300 organizers and activists at “The Hard Road to Abolition// Strategies to Win,” an event in our Profiles in Abolition series that inspired us to think deeply about the opportunities that abolition creates. The event also served as a launch for the first issue in a new zine series based on CR-NYC’s Attica Interview Project. The first issue, available online and in print, outlines the history of Attica and details prisoners’ reflections on organizing inside and their visions for a NY without prisons.



As CR-NYC is campaigning for decarceration in NY, we are also shifting the political landscape nationally. On the 45th anniversary of the Attica rebellion, CR-NYC spearheaded an action with the Beyond Attica coalition demanding that Governor Cuomo close the notorious prison in upstate NY. The rally, held outside Cuomo’s NYC office, featured people formerly imprisoned at Attica, youth organizers, family and community members. and was endorsed by over 20 organizations. The action hit the mainstream when MTV News featured the rally messaging and posters created by CR-NYC to accompany a provocative conversation on prison abolition, again demonstrating the ways that CR’s abolitionist politics, messaging, and campaign agendas push the boundaries of the abolitionist reforms, changes, and goals we imagine are possible.

CR-Oakland

CR-Oakland (CR-OAK) is fighting on the hard road to abolition against jail expansion and the violence of policing with campaigns and projects that have been years in the making.

Last year CR-OAK and the No New SF Jail coalition successfully defeated the proposal for a new jail in San Francisco at 850 Bryant St. Now we have been focused on making sure that new proposals to build a smaller replacement jail or a locked mental health facility—a jail by another name—do not move forward. To this end, CR developed a popular educational resource, “8 Steps Toward a Jail-Free



San Francisco,” which has been used by decision makers as a tool to evaluate alternative proposals to a jail, and contributed to “The San Francisco Community Health Initiative,” a comprehensive people’s plan that prioritizes meeting social and economic needs as solutions to ending imprisonment. On October 28, this year’s hard work paid off when the “Alternatives to a Jail Rebuild” community-city workgroup rejected the Sheriff’s two “mental health” jail proposals and endorsed non-jail alternatives instead. We will continue to pressure the County Supervisors to ensure that our victories are not undermined and that no new jails are constructed in SF, especially in the name of health and treatment.

**Help us build toward liberation on the hard road to abolition!
Please make a gift to keep Critical Resistance strong.**

For over three years, CR-Oakland has been part of a national and regional effort to end Urban Shield, a law enforcement, military and emergency services program that trains police in using militarized tactics and weaponry under the guise of “emergency preparedness.” A co-founder of the Stop Urban Shield coalition, CR-OAK plays a role in the core strategy team, media, action planning, and outreach teams.



building on this powerful day of resistance and pressuring decision-makers to defund the program. CR-OAK is sustaining diligent outreach and mobilizations with the SUS coalition, activating community members to speak out at the Board of Supervisors meetings, and educating the supervisors about their power to redirect funding of SWAT and military tactics toward healthy and life-affirming emergency preparedness.

This campaign is a powerful demonstration of abolitionist common sense: whether for emergencies or daily life, we must invest in health and wellbeing and divest from policing. We’ve successfully exposed this as a sheriff’s program that uses public funds to militarize local police and co-opt emergency service resources for warfare, and we are now campaigning to stop the existence of the Urban Shield expo entirely.

On September 9th, CR-OAK and the Stop Urban Shield (SUS) coalition held a vibrant action, live-streamed across the country, to disrupt this year’s war games and weapons expo. With hundreds of participants, excellent coordination and powerful spokespeople, we shut down one of the trainings and won media coverage in over 45 articles. We are

CR-OAK has also spent the year honing our first Oakland Power Project, an alternatives to policing initiative that is building out concrete ways to invest in health and divest from policing. In addition to playing a critical expert role in the Stop Urban Shield campaign, the Anti-Policing Healthworkers Cohort facilitated over 15 “Know Your Options” workshops to Oaklanders on how to intervene in situations of physical or behavioral health crisis without calling 911 and how to act as a healthcare advocate if the cops arrive with 911 or are present at a medical clinic or hospital. Through their increased organizing, workshops and popular educational tools, they are shifting common sense to understand that policing is a health hazard which we can oppose and decrease.

CR-Portland

After a year and a half, CR Portland (CR-PDX) has established itself in the local community with a prisoner mail program, an Anti-Policing Community Conversations series, dozens of workshops and regular participation in mobilizations. We also recently established office space at In Other Words bookstore, which builds the chapter’s infrastructure and enables us to strengthen collaborations with other social justice organizations! In 2016 we grew our capacity to launch an anti-policing campaign: we trained and developed our members’ skills in workshop facilitation, campaign tools and planning; we carried out campaign research; and we strengthened alliances with

community partners. Our research and analysis topics include Portland’s policing structures and budgets, changes to police protocol, the impact and reach of the police union, the violence of policing against community members who have mental health needs or are homeless, and current mental health service options in Portland.

In all, we’re thrilled to be building up Portland communities to resist policing and make inroads to decouple healthcare from the cops. We appreciate your steady support as CR-PDX builds its capacity and advances on the road to abolition.

Prisoner Mail and *The Abolitionist* Newspaper



“I just want to say that the work you guys do at *The Abolitionist* is inspiring. I have been receiving your paper for years now. I feel compelled to act: I would like to join the struggle to abolish the PIC.”
—Imprisoned newspaper subscriber

CR plays a crucial role in amplifying the voices of imprisoned people through politically engaged correspondence with thousands of prisoners across the US via our prisoner mail program and our newspaper, *The Abolitionist*. We produced three issues of *The Abolitionist* in 2016 and sent a total of 15,000 copies of the paper to readers inside; prisoner subscriptions have doubled in the last three years to a current total of 5,000 imprisoned readers nationwide!

Together, CR-PDX, CR-OAK, and CR-NYC have engaged imprisoned people in writing articles and contributing art work for the paper, and fulfilled several thousand requests for political education materials such as CR's Abolitionist Toolkit and *Instead of Prisons*, a seminal book. Further, CR-LA conducted a mail survey of people imprisoned near the proposed new LA County women's jail and developed a valuable campaign report of their responses, which won a delay in jail construction plans. **Your donations and Abolitionist paper subscriptions increase this essential abolitionist strategy to organize with and empower people who are fighting behind prison walls.**

Our organizing and dreaming toward liberation would not be possible without your support. This increased attention around the harms of the PIC reminds us not only that we have an opportunity to engage more people than ever in this fight, but that what we fight for now will have lasting impacts on our perceptions and experiences of public safety for decades to come. Thank you so much for all you've contributed to amplify our analysis and increase our impact!



As you may know, you have helped us intentionally and successfully transition from being funded primarily by foundations to being funded primarily by grassroots donors. **Individual and family donors like you now provide 65% of our total budget, which gives us increased stability and a strong base from which to keep growing.**

We are aiming to raise \$40,000 this month. Will you help us hit this mile marker on the road to abolition? Every penny helps chip away at the PIC! You can:

- **Donate \$50, \$500, or \$5,000.** Please support us by giving online or by sending a generous check.
- **Become a monthly sustainer.** Contribute \$15, \$25, or \$50/month online or by check (some workplaces have giving programs!) to keep CR strong and steady.
- **Order CR merchandise and gear - for yourself or as a gift!** See our goods at <http://criticalresistance.org/cr-gear/>
- **Subscribe to *The Abolitionist*, our bilingual newspaper that we send to imprisoned people for free.** Outside subscribers like you sponsor the readership of over 5,000 people inside prisons, jails, and detention centers.
- **Spread the word** to family and friends and encourage people to support CR.



Thank you! Our work and our vision would not be possible without you. And, with your help, 2017 will edge us closer toward liberation. Together, we'll continue to make abolition common sense and irresistible.

In solidarity,
The members and staff of Critical Resistance
CR Co-Directors: Lily Fahsi-Haskell | Jess Heaney | Mohamed Shehk