

Why We Fight

Through its reach and impact, the prison industrial complex uses policing, surveillance, the courts, detention, and imprisonment to secure the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other structural privileges. In enforcing and defending inequitable power distributions, the PIC supports oppressive governments, capitalist industry, and individuals who benefit from a well-managed status quo through:

- creating dominant media images that perpetuate oppressive stereotypes
- earning profits for governments and companies;
- facilitating political gains and increasing the influence of prison guard and police associations;
- and eliminating social and political dissent by people who make demands of self-determination and reorganization of power.



We are always trying to understand the impact of the PIC on our communities more fully. It is extremely difficult to predict what a world without the prison industrial complex will be like. **We believe that it is possible and essential to build a new world piece by piece even as we tear down the prison industrial complex.**

Get Involved:

Becoming a member of Critical Resistance is the best way to get involved with CR. If you're interested in stopping prison and jail construction, mobilizing communities impacted by state violence, upending policing, or developing alternative methods of accountability that make our communities stable and secure, then CR may be a good fit for you!

Critical Resistance is committed to building and expanding the movement against the prison industrial complex by encouraging work at a local level. Our goal is to inspire people in all communities to join forces in the movement against prison industrial complex. **Join the movement!**



Critical
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CRITICAL RESISTANCE

Our Vision of Abolition:

Critical Resistance envisions genuinely healthy, stable communities that respond to harm, violence, and conflict without relying on imprisonment and punishment to resolve problems. We believe that the prison industrial complex (PIC) is not a broken system to be fixed. The system, rather, works exactly as it is designed to—to contain, control, and kill those people representing the greatest threats to state power. Therefore, our goal is not to fix the system, but to dismantle and shrink it into non-existence.



We know that more policing and imprisonment hurt and reduce our power rather than make us safer. Instead, we know that things like food, housing, and freedom are what create healthy, self-determined families and communities. An integral part of abolition is building up systems of care, safety, and accountability.

Who We Are:

Critical Resistance is a national grassroots organization building an international movement to abolish the prison industrial complex. We use the term prison industrial complex to describe the interconnected relationship between public and private interests that employ imprisonment, policing, surveillance, the courts, and cultural tools as a way to maintain social, economic, and political inequities. **Our work for abolition is part of struggles against white supremacy, capitalism, and imperialism. Because the PIC is a huge, complicated system, we have to attack it from different angles using different strategies. Our broad abolitionist approach uses three main frames: Dismantle, Change, and Build.**

CR's local chapters determine their own projects and campaigns with support from the staff and other members. Chapters must support the CR mission and meet specific benchmarks.

Members to the organization engage in a high level of work commitment, responsibility, political unity, and consensus decision-making. The members make CR run: they plan and implement projects and campaigns, share our analysis and help make abolition common sense, and tend to the health and wellbeing of our organization.



What We Do:

Our chapters develop and carry out organizing projects and campaigns to dismantle the violence of the prison industrial complex and build healthy, self-determined communities. The work reflects the local problems we think are most pressing and local solutions we think are most appropriate. What unites these projects is a commitment to working for the elimination of the PIC as well as taking practical steps to build more self-determined communities.

CR Los Angeles is currently fighting against a proposal to build two new jails - a mental health jail and a women's jail - at the cost of \$3.5 billion. The chapter continues to insist that mental health care cannot be delivered in a jail and there can be no jail that is gender responsive or appropriate.

CR New York City has been steadily building opposition to plans that would reopen, expand, and renovate jails. It's imperative to put forward demands and prioritize a way forward that shrinks the system as city officials try to fast track the jails by skipping over required oversight and accountability processes. We must shut down Rikers without building new jails.

CR Oakland is fighting the militarized policing program of Urban Shield, organizing health workers to educate and empower community to respond to harm and crisis without engaging 911 or the police, and fighting jail expansion in San Francisco.

CR Portland continues to anchor Care Not Cops, a Mental Health Care Not Policing campaign that is fighting for a reduction in the 2018-2019 Portland Police Bureau budget. We are demanding that mental health care be centered in the hands of community, and are calling for a reduction in police spending towards ultimately disarming and defunding the police.

Our History

For nearly 20 years, Critical Resistance has worked to build an international movement for prison industrial complex abolition. Our work has been as diverse as our members and has sought to make as wide an impact as possible. Throughout our history Critical Resistance has:

- Brought thousands together by hosting groundbreaking national conferences in California, New York, and Louisiana
- Founded chapters across the US and put our ideas into action in powerful coalitions
- Developed the skills, politics, and leadership of hundreds of volunteer, members, and coalition allies
- Prevented new prison and jail construction across the country
- Resisted racist and destructive police policies such as civil gang injunctions
- Developed and delivered skill building workshops on responding to crisis without engaging the police
- Published *The Abolitionist* newspaper three times a year, spreading analysis, news, arts, and culture to thousands of prisoners nationwide
- Supported prisoner organizing from the historic California prisoner hunger strikes to the day-in-and-day out communications across walls of our prisoner mail programs