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The Abolitionist

c/o CRITICAL RESISTANCE

P.O. Box 22780, Oakland, CA 94609
We offer this study guide to help our readers dive deep into Issue 35

Defund the Police emerged as the dominant rallying cry and anti-policing strategy amidst the rebellions waged worldwide summer 2020. How did we get there and where did this demand come from? How is it being used, what are its goals, its visions? Has it been successful? Why do the police have so much money? What does safety look like without the police? Issue 35 explores in detail these questions and just some of the robust anti-policing organizing our communities have been advancing this past year. We created this guide to support our readers in navigating the topics discussed in this issue. It is our hope that this guide serves as a useful political education tool, and allows for folks on the inside and outside to engage in generative, principled discussion on the on-going efforts to defund and abolish all forms of policing. We broke the issue up into 4 main themes, they are:


Some key take aways from the issue we hope you meditate on throughout your reading and study:

- Study is not the enemy of insurgent struggle, but rather deeply central to prison industrial complex abolition, and all struggles for social transformation.
- We must have an internationalist and global lens in our work. We must say "no" to Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) politics.
- Defund strategies are fundamental in the history and movement for prison industrial complex abolition.
- Defund demands, and abolitionist strategy more broadly, is in direct response and opposition to neoliberalism. To fight the PIC effectively, and to resist neoliberal individualism, we must move together. “Moving together is always much more powerful than moving alone”- Stephen Wilson

Onward towards abolition!
- The Abolitionist Newspaper Editorial Collective
**EDUCATION**

“A learned prisoner is an affront to the prison industrial complex.” - Stephen Wilson

**Readings:**
“9971: A Column on Abolitionist Study with Stephen Wilson”
“Growing Abolition Through Police-Free Schools Coast to Coast: With Black Organizing Project and Police Free Penn”

**Relevant Key Terms:**
Fugitive Study – Insurgent Practice – Hypermasculine

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Abolitionist study, which exists in many forms and spaces, is central to movement work. To advance our freedom struggles and understand our contemporary material conditions, we learn from movement elders and rigorously study the past.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the relationship between study and struggle? What does Stevie mean when he says “history becomes a living tool?” Put differently, why do we even bother to read and study the past?

2. What are three ways that schools and education came into this issue? Why do you think it is so prominent throughout?

3. Why are schools and educational institutions a worthy site of abolitionist struggle? How does the struggle for police-free schools relate to other anti-policing and anti-prison campaign-work in our movement?

4. In his column Stevie writes, “Really, it has never been about them trusting me because they haven’t heard of abolition. It is about getting them to trust themselves and their communities to handle harm without calling the cops.” How do you define safety and what systems of care and support are necessary to keep your community safe?
EDUCATION

Key Term Definitions:
Fugitive Study - As explained by Black studies scholar Fred Moten, fugitivity is a practice of refusal. Fugitive study is a practice of learning in an effort to transgress, it is study in service of radically transforming material conditions.
Insurgent Practice - Refers to actions that exist as a means of undermining, disrupting, revolting against or otherwise challenging the legitimacy and functioning of institutions and systems which perpetuate structural oppression.
Hypermasculine - is a term which refers to the exaggeration of stereotypically male behaviors and gendered expectations. Hypermasculine attitudes reinforce a binary understanding of gender, a culture of toxicity, and ultimately perpetuate white supremacy.

ACTIVITY
If you were to build a school for your community--what would study look like? What “meaningful knowledge” would you want yourself and your peers to learn? Discuss in a small group or write out your thoughts below.

WORK AREA
“Demanding divestment from all arms of the PIC has been a long-standing strategy for abolition.” –Andrea Ritchie

Readings:
“The Demand is Still Defund the Police”
“Defund the Police” by Ross Cullen Plumb
“Weed Legalization and Defunding the Police”

Relevant Key Terms:
Shrink and Starve – Criminalization – Legalization – Decriminalization – Racialization

Defunding the police is one strategy of many advancing abolition. It is vital to learn where the calls to defund the police emerged from, and to understand that at their best they disable and delegitimize the prison industrial complex.

Discussion Questions

1. What history does Andrea Ritchie outline as being influential to calls to defund the police? Where did calls to defund the police emerge from?

2. Ross Cullen Plumb says that by moving to defund the police we are moving against exploitation. Who or what is being exploited? What does that exploitation look like?

3. Why does Kassandra Frederique make a point to say that decriminalization is necessary in any plan to legalize weed? In what ways is decriminalization attached to abolitionist steps against the prison industrial complex? Frederique decries money from weed taxes going towards the police. What does she propose as the alternative?

4. Ritchie cites a Marshall Project survey which says many people they interviewed supported defund demands, and named interventions that could have changed life circumstances leading to their targeting for arrest – had money not been funneled so heavily into the prison industrial complex. How could less money in policing and imprisonment, and more money into life affirming structures change you and your community’s situations for the better?
Key Term definitions:

Shrink and Starve - An abolitionist strategy focused on halting new infrastructure of the PIC, increased budgets, new cops, etc. Generally pulling resources away from arms of the PIC.

Legalization - Drug legalization is the process of making formerly illegal and unregulated activities partially legal and regulated. The activity is still criminalized because people can still face criminal (and/or civil) consequences for engaging in it the "wrong way."

Decriminalization - Decriminalization is the process of making an activity formerly considered a crime no longer considered a crime, so that people who engage in that activity no longer considered "criminal." This means that a person would no longer be subject to surveillance, arrest, incarceration, or a criminal record for engaging in that activity.

Racialization: A political process of ascribing ethnic or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group that did not identify itself as such.

ACTIVITY

Los Angeles spends 53.8% of taxpayer dollars on funding the police. That’s a cost of $5.38 billion or $7.9 million per day on police services. This percentage is not unique to LA. As a small group, talk about where this amount of money could go in the city you were raised in. Draw or write about what it would be like.

WORK AREA
PLACE AND LOCATION

"Everything we do must be from an internationalist perspective" - Lara Kiswani

Readings:
“One Year Later: Reflections from Minneapolis, Palestinian Solidarity, and UK Youth on George Floyd Summer of Global Rebellion”
“Data-Driven Policing: Abolition Requires a Culture of Resistance”
“Repression Breeds Resistance: Police Violence in ICE Jail”

Relevant Key Terms:
Data-Driven-Policing - Reform Abolitionist Reforms- Internationalism

Effective abolitionist work means saying “no” to the PIC anywhere and everywhere. We look at how abolition is rooted in internationalism, and how reformist-reforms strengthen the PIC everywhere.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What global connections can be made across these pieces? How do the authors show that internationalism is critical to abolition? What are ways internationalism is brought up in these pieces??

2. How do tactics, strategies, and organizational connections get developed across place and region? What are some examples of this in the pieces? What are connections between movements in the US and Palestine? Why are they important?

3. How is the growth and development of LAPD interconnected with police agencies across the US, and across the world? How do non-abolitionist reforms in LA and elsewhere, strengthen the system of policing?

4. Which countries are mentioned in "Repression Breeds Resistance: Police Violence in ICE Jail"? How does the PIC work to criminalize immigrants and immigration? Who is targeted by this criminalization?
**Key Term definitions:**

**Data-Driven-Policing** - The collection and mining of mass data to determine which people and places will be policed. These systems draw from a vast web of surveillance sources and make them available to police.

**Reform** - Reform means to make changes in (something, typically a social, political, or economic institution or practice) in order to improve it.

**Abolitionist Reforms** - Abolitionist reforms, or Non-reformist reforms on the other hand, work to chip away at the prison industrial complex and make it less effective, and not improving caging, controlling and killing.

**Internationalism** - Internationalism is a political principal that understands that our collective oppression and therefore our collective liberation are tied up with one another’s. It is a commitment to solidarity, and collective action.

**ACTIVITY**

In each circle, name a place or location that comes up in this issue. Connect these different places together with arrows and explain how they are connected. Connections could be: shared movement strategy, places where police training is exchanged, and anything else you can think of. Draw more circles if needed.
**NEOLIBERALISM**

“Neoliberalism creates conditions where a cycle of state and extra-legal violence can thrive.”

Woods Ervin

**Readings:**

“BIDs, Pigs, and Private Security: Resisting Business Improvement Districts in the Fight to Abolish Policing”

“From Cops and Cages to Resources and Repair: The ‘94 Crime Bill and the Need for a People’s Process”

“Prison Abolition, Political Prisoners, and the Building of Critical Resistance: Linda Thurston Talks Community”

**Relevant Key Terms:**

Neoliberalism - Authoritarianism - Austerity - Racial Capitalism

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Neoliberalism, authoritarianism and the rise of the PIC are inextricably linked. This issue shows how neoliberalism is central in the rise and strengthening of some of the PIC’s most harmful arms.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the relationship between neoliberal policies and state-sanctioned violence? How do they pave the way for gentrification?

2. In examining ESDs in Portland, OR how do you see the relationship between gentrification and houselessness? What are ESDs designed to do? What is the consequence of this relationship on community health and safety?

3. Neoliberal reformism would have us make nicer, gentler cages and cops rather than defund police budgets and close jails and prisons for good. How is the ‘94 Crime Bill’s creation and devastating impacts a strong case-study that reform does not work when it comes to getting our people safe, healthy, and free? How would you leverage it as an example to advance abolition over reform?

4. Linda Thurston makes clear that movements must be led by people most impacted (PMI). Where do you see power in centering PMI in the fight to abolish ESDs, the People’s Process, and in fighting for the release of prisoners and political prisoners? How can centering PMI upend neoliberal values of hyper individualism, tough-on-crime rhetoric, and racial-capitalism?
**NEOLIBERALISM**

**Key Term Definitions**

Neoliberalism - A political approach that favors free-market capitalism, deregulation, and reduction in government spending.

Authoritarianism - The enforcement or advocacy of strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom.

Austerity - Austerity measures are reductions in government spending, increases in tax revenues, or both. These harsh steps are taken to lower budget deficits and avoid a debt crisis.

Racial Capitalism - Racial capitalism is a concept proposed by Cedric J. Robinson, which describes the process of extracting social and economic value from a person of a different racial identity, referring, predominantly, to the extraction of value from those of a nonwhite identity.

**ACTIVITY**

Create a set of talking points supporting a) abolishing BIDs/ESDs b) defunding the police or c) repealing the '94 crime bill.

**WORK AREA**

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