

CRITICAL RESISTANCE



ANNUAL REPORT 2012



***2012 was a big year for
Critical Resistance.***

We prevented new prison and jail cells from being built, we fought against the harmful impacts of policing, we amplified imprisoned people's voices and organizing, and we steadily increased our stability and strength to keep fighting.

Here are just some of the highlights of our work last year.



No More Cages in California

Critical Resistance spent 2012 on the front lines of the battle to keep California from back-sliding into notoriety as a prison-building juggernaut. We faced a heightened challenge due to proposals for new jail construction projects under California's realignment program that shifts tens of thousands of prisoners from the state to the county level. These proposals leave the door open for the state to use hundreds of millions of dollars of AB 900 money (California Assembly bond legislation authorizing over \$7 billion in funding for prison and jail construction and expansion) to expand county jails, and keep prison construction on the table.

We focused our energy into preventing new cages for women and gender non-conforming people by joining forces with organizations and individuals in San Mateo County to oppose the construction of a new "green" women's jail and to combat the expansion of the Pitchess women's jail in Los Angeles.

We worked to build resistance by educating local communities about the harmful impacts of prison and jail expansion. CR hosted a community town hall in Los Angeles, and co-sponsored town hall meetings in East Palo Alto, CA (in San Mateo County), and Oakland, generating increased interest in the campaigns.

CR also mobilized communities to fight back. In January we worked with our coalition partners in Californians United for a Responsible Budget

(CURB) to turn out hundreds of Los Angeles residents to resist the LA County Board of Supervisors' approval of a \$1.4 billion expansion of its already massive jail system. Dozens of young people of color kept an energetic crowd engaged for hours, spoke to media outlets—with a combined audience of over a million—and delivered powerful testimony to the Board.

In August and September CR helped mobilize an unprecedented number of residents to a meeting of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors during which residents from across the county registered their opposition to the new women's jail proposal. CR also coordinated media and communications for the mobilizations—generating talking points for speakers, writing and releasing press releases, and connecting media outlets for spokespeople—garnering substantial media coverage and continuing to redefine who the "experts" are on jail construction issues.

Because of strong, sustained organizing by CR and our allies in CURB, we were been able to make some substantial gains related to opposing imprisonment in California during 2012. CR successfully mobilized the swelling community opposition to the jail construction and our work lead to the cut of over half of the funds the state had earmarked for prison construction projects from the state budget.





Stemming the Imprisonment Tide in New Orleans

In New Orleans, CR members continue to fight to maintain the substantial victory of a population cap won through the Orleans Parish

Prison Reform Coalition (OPPRC). Despite repeated efforts by the sheriff to expand the size of the jail, the coalition is standing strong and resisting any expansion.

CR collaborated with other organizations to host community meetings in two neighborhoods in New Orleans—Mid-City and Treme—during which representatives from the US Department of Justice (DOJ) heard testimony about the conditions inside the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP). The powerful testimony, including firsthand accounts and descriptions of loved ones' experiences inside the jail made the impacts of the policies carried out by the sheriff and his staff tangible for legislators. The community hearings also likely influenced the DOJ to join a lawsuit against the Sheriff to compel him to enter into a consent decree to monitor conditions within the jail and ensure that issues of violence, mental health care access, translation and non-English language proficiency, and sanitation are brought into compliance with constitutional standards.

As part of a two-day urban congress dedicated to discussing criminalization of Black and immigrant communities and actions to resist such criminalization, CR participated with other OPPRC members, members of the Right to the City Alliance, and the New Orleans Workers' Center in an action to highlight these issues. Demonstrators protested outside OPP and

painted their hands red to send the message to the mayor and the sheriff that as long as the city continues to neglect population reduction measures and craft plans to expand the violent, harmful New Orleans jail system instead, they will have blood on their hands.

Building Power against Policing

During 2012 CR built on the gains won through Stop the Injunctions Coalition to move from defensive to proactive projects. Having effectively eliminated the political and practical will to implement gang injunctions, CR and our coalition partners went to work investing in the types of projects we know will ensure the long-term health of our neighborhoods and families and help to address the negative impacts of policing.

The first half of 2012 gave us a chance to build on the momentum of the previous year's victories and plant seeds for further gains. Throughout the struggle against injunctions, our demands extended beyond just a particular police practice or policy and included a call for increased self-determination in building healthy and secure neighborhoods. The incredible momentum we built up through our work in STIC has allowed us to prioritize bolstering community support projects that speak to the needs, wants, and dreams of the communities targeted by the injunction zones. In North Oakland we continued to build our relationship with a community center that provides vibrant youth programming despite the threat of closure due to





budget cuts, and have become a key partner in a neighborhood effort to fight gentrification and advocate for food justice. In East Oakland CR is honored to partner with the Aztlan Beautification Movement, conceived of and led by two people targeted by the gang injunction in that neighborhood. The group painted five murals in the neighborhood and plans to do several more. Together we planted and maintain a community garden in which neighbors work together, build relationships and trust, study, play music, and enjoy access to green space.

Critical Resistance and other members of the Stop the Injunctions Coalition additionally prevented the implementation of curfews and anti-loitering laws which, like injunctions, are thinly veiled racial profiling measures. We were also able to keep the issues of gang injunctions front and center during the Oakland City Council elections in fall 2012 by supporting voter education and hosting a “People’s Forum on Public Safety” during which community members were able to learn about candidates’ positions on key public safety issues, including gang injunctions, and were encouraged to contribute their own ideas about what would help make Oakland healthier and safer.

Staying Connected

Whether talking about civil gang injunctions, imprisonment, or community alternatives to either, CR members are taking every opportunity to speak publically about the impacts of the prison industrial complex and resistance to those impacts. Just this year, our members spoke on the radio, in schools, on television, at conferences, or at rallies more than 90 times. We have packed community meetings from Los Angeles to New Orleans, brought diverse groups of people together to learn and teach about the prison industrial complex and get them involved in the work against it. We reached thousands more people in prisons, jails, and detention centers through our prisoner mail project and our newspaper, *The Abolitionist*.

CR was able to forge stronger, more powerful connections between members and between our organization and our allies and supporters by extending our strategic communications work in 2012. In May we launched our new website. Managed and maintained by volunteer members, the new website is more accessible and user-friendly, and has already proven to be a powerful tool for communicating more effectively about our work. In 2012 we also instituted quarterly donor calls during which Critical Resistance donors may learn more about current campaigns and projects from our members and issues central to CR’s work. The calls are also a time during which donors may provide feedback and input to the organization.



Shifting the conversation and sharpening analysis are as important to fighting for abolition as taking to the streets. 2012 saw the launch of CR's Abolitionist Educators Campaign—an effort by and for educators to join forces to leverage educators' individual, institutional, financial, analytical, and labor resources in support of Critical Resistance. The campaign not only creates a stronger network of educators working for liberation from the PIC, but also amplifies the connections between struggles for quality education and against imprisonment and policing. At the chapter level, CR New Orleans is embarking on a new project to provide popular education workshops on the prison industrial complex and PIC abolition to community groups across the city. And, as CR began to rebuild its work in New York City during 2012, members there explored developing a class on PIC abolition for organizers in other sectors.

Our year ended with Radical Futures and Prospects for Freedom, an event in Boston featuring the first public conversation between Angela Y. Davis and Noam Chomsky. Moderated by Vijay Prashad, CR co-sponsored the event with local organizations, The City School and Black and Pink. The event brought together over 1200 people who were joined by thousands more through web broadcast. The conversation included powerful insight on a broad range of topics from Civil Rights Movement history to an analysis of the prison industrial complex and the US education system; from war and militarism to struggles of queer prisoners of color.

Growing Stronger and Stronger

CR emerged from 2012 even stronger than the year before, in good financial health and with renewed energy in New Orleans and New York, and solid membership bases, campaigns, and projects in Oakland and Los Angeles.

After an extensive and thorough search, CR hired Roger White, as our new Campaign Director in September. Roger comes to CR with five years' experience at the Service Employees

International Union, Local 1000, a labor union representing almost 95,000 California state workers. There, he conducted research, analyzed policy, and developed and participated in campaigns. His work with Local 1000 included policy research on the state's prison crowding crisis, the value of programming in prisons and in the community, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's mismanagement of general fund dollars, and partnership with CURB. Prior to the SEIU, Roger worked at Data-Center, a 30-year-old social justice research and training non-profit based in Oakland and as political coordinator for ACORN in Oakland. Roger rolled up his sleeves and got right to work—facilitating campaign planning and assessment sessions with members and participating in the jail fights.



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Thanks to all our donors and funders for investing in CR's continued success last year. Many of you donated time, knowledge, skills, and experience, in addition to your financial resources. We cannot do our work without you. Your effort and energy are at the heart of our fight against the prison industrial complex. Here's to another strong year of dismantling the prison industrial complex.

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