

THE ABOLITIONIST

SPRING 2015

FREE TO PEOPLE IN PRISONS, JAILS, AND DETENTION CENTERS • ESPAÑOL AL REVÉS

ISSUE 24: EDUCATION

Voices of Freedom

BY LUIGI CELENTANO



ABOVE, PROTESTERS IN FERGUSON, MO
BELOW, BLACK LIVES MATTER 2015 POSTER



and what do you do exactly?

William Sands: Fractures Photo Collective was created in the spring of 2011 here in Barcelona, and we primarily focus on long-format photojournalism and documentary work. However, the Voices Archive is not exclusively a Fractures' project. In reality, only two members of Fractures are active participants in Voices. The rest of the Voices' team is made up of activists, artists, and other journalists from the collective Groundpress.

What has been your main impulse in taking up this challenge of creating Voices? And how was the project born?

Some of us have been long time participants in a grassroots abolitionist initiative called La Biblioteca de la Evasión or the Library of Escape. La Biblioteca de la Evasión is a prisoner book-sharing program we've been doing for a little

First-person insights into imprisonment and freedom, by ex-prisoners themselves, from Barcelona's Fractures Photo Collective and its project, Voices.

An interview with William Sands, photojournalist of Fractures Photo Collective and Voices (conducted in Buenos Aires-Barcelona, December 2014).

Luigi Celentano: A little introduction for those who do not know you at all: Who are Fractures Photo Collective

more than 5 years. Two weekends a month, we visit a prison near Barcelona called Quatre Camins and give books to family members entering to visit their loved ones, and they pass the books along during the visit. Using the books as a meeting point, *La Biblioteca* seeks to engage prisoners where they are, in a conversation about prison abolition. Inside all of the books [there] is a stamp that explains the project and how they can request specific literature and an address where they can write if they have other requests or concerns. We state very clearly that we are abolitionists and seek alternative forms of conflict resolution.

After years visiting Quatre Camins, *La Biblioteca* organized our first public event: *Voces Desde Dentro*, an art exhibition of artwork done by prisoners and ex-prisoners from all over the world. The exhibit was hosted in an occupied social center here in Barcelona and lasted three days. There was poetry, photography, drawings and sketches as well as a series of presentations. The exhibit finished with a round table discussion of prison abolition, privileging the voices of ex-prisoners, current prisoners' family members, and social workers working in prisons.

The *Voices* Archive is a natural continuation of this process. Given that today we live in a globalized world, we believe that any real lasting conversation about prison abolition has to be international in nature and has to be guided by prisoners and the communities they come from. As a result the idea of creating a global census of the prisoner experience was born, and the *Voices* Archive was created. Looking around the internet we couldn't find a single site that was dedicated to collecting these stories and experiences, and even less so on an international level. So it seemed the project was relevant and worth embarking on.

Are they collaborative interviews, in the sense that anyone in civil society may contribute with such interviews?

Yes! Anyone can participate! Our goal is to include interviews from as many countries as possible, and the only way to do so is through collaboration. We've launched the website with the interviews we've done here in Barcelona and we plan to continue to do more interviews. But in order

Continued on page 5, "Voices"

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

"Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world."
- bell hooks, *Teaching Community*

Dear Reader,

Our focus this edition: education. Our mission: abolition. Though the tactics of control may have changed over time, mechanisms of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism continue to manipulate and restrict the individual bodies of people of color and their communities. This modern machine of explicit violence and dehumanization effectively targets, polices, surveilles and liquidates communities of color and impoverished communities and efficiently confines undesirable people on a mass scale. The prison industrial complex has tools and tactics. But so do we.

We struggle. We write. Prison abolition is not solely about walls; it is about consciousness. Prison abolition extends beyond the erasure of physical manifestations of the carceral state, but does not overlook them. Rather than relying on retributive justice models, such as our current criminal legal system, which are violent

and oppressive, prison abolition challenges us to explore restorative

and transformative models of justice. Prison abolition is an intentional and critical commitment to struggle, but it is also a battle of imagination, creativity, and love. It is about possibilities. It is expanding our mind to imagine a world in which prisons do not exist, one made up of societies and communities that are self-determined, accountable, safe, healthy, and free. To share those ideas with each other by any means necessary. And so, we dream; we read and we write.

Another transformative educator, Paolo Friere, reminds us that "education" may either "facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system" or become "the practice of freedom." In this issue, our authors consider the role of abolition through a number of educational platforms. We hear from the halls and classrooms of the public schools as battlegrounds as well as spaces of youth resistance (as in the pieces by K.S. Peters, Catherine Willett, and Rick Ayers). We inspect increasingly for-profit industry of higher education, which treats our minds like a cash register, and leaves us coming up short. We explore the ways we educate ourselves and each other from deep within the belly of the beast--inside the prison walls, (in pieces by Erica Meiners, Asar Imhotep Amen, an excerpt from Malcolm X, and a dispatch from across the Atlantic in the interview with Spain's Fractures Photo

Collective.)

The recent exposition of the violence of policing through the highly publicized killings of those such as Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice have created an aperture through which our society has widely begun to question the legitimacy of the ubiquitous power of the PIC and to say publicly those words that we have been crying for so long--"Black Lives Matter." Just as many questions about the legitimacy of policing, the criminal legal system, and imprisonment reach new platforms, so too must our critical praxis continue to develop such that we can continue to enervate the very logic which hold the PIC in place.

The Abolitionist has a long tradition and history of serving as a platform, a vessel to transmit and share ideas and knowledge. The act of compiling this paper is transformative because its texts are produced under precarious circumstances; many of its authors are or have been locked up. The creation of this paper is an emancipatory practice. The mechanisms of these pieces allow readers into deeper interiors of the writer's consciousness. In this space, the transfer of thoughts to the written form disrupts how ideas exist in space and time, how we relate to each other, and how we heal from our collective wounds. This work is about survival.

In solidarity and struggle,
The Abolitionist

THE ABOLITIONIST
c/o CRITICAL RESISTANCE
1904 Franklin Street, Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|--|--|
| An Excerpt from <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> , 2 | Youth in the Lead, 6 |
| Remembering Zachary Ontiveros, 3 | Restorative Practices as an Attack on the Prison Industrial Complex, 7 |
| Prisoners Taking Teaching to a Whole New Level, 3 | American Crime Control as Industry, 8 |
| Part of the Neoliberal Landscape: Higher Education Inside and Out, 4 | Cities in Revolt: Chicago, 9 |
| DIY v. The Public?, 5 | Using a "Power Lens" to Unpack the PIC, 10 |

Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. We believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, our work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the PIC. Because we seek to abolish the PIC, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope.

Abolitionist Editors

Mariella Castaldi
Jordan Flaherty
Jamie Gerber
Ashley Masters
Jess Mease
Nick Mitchell
Mohamed Shehk

K.S. Peters
Therese Quinn
David Stovall
Jordan Thompson
Cat Willett

Copyeditors
Susana Draper
Karin Drucker

Spanish Edition Editor

Kentaro Kaneko

Translators

José Alvarez
Mariella Castaldi
Luigi Celentano
Leah Furumo
Kentaro Kaneko
Cyndi Malasky
Alma Muñoz
Yakira Teitel

Contributors

Sam A.
Asar Imhotep
Amern
Rick Ayers
Bermudez
Kimonti Carter
Luigi Celentano
Malcolm X
Erica Meiners
Isaac Ontiveros

Layout

Kentaro Kaneko
Toshio Meronek

To those who are or have been in solitary confinement in California:

Critical Resistance has been heavily involved in supporting efforts by those in solitary confinement through our work to amplify the messages and demands of past peaceful actions. Currently we are working to identify a campaign that will most effectively succeed in meeting those demands. As a part of this process, we are asking people who are currently in solitary, or have been in the past, to correspond with members of our Solitary Project workgroup in order to create better inside-outside working relationships, and to learn about your ideas for how to move forward. We also want to increase our contacts with family members and loved ones in order to deepen our collaboration and support their needs.

To begin, we hope you can answer a few general questions so that we can start to organize the wide variety of ideas that exist. Please do so with the understanding that we would like to share this information with others, and can do so anonymously upon request.

1. Please describe anything about your daily life and experience that you think will help people to understand solitary confinement and the harm that it causes.
2. For better or worse, what has changed about your life in the prison system during the past few years?
3. What do you see as the cause of those changes?
4. What are your thoughts about and/or experiences with the step down program?
5. What kind of impact do you think the various peaceful actions, along with the agreement to end all hostilities, have had on imprisoned people, their families, and those on the outside?
6. Do you have any recommendations for other people we should talk to for this project?
7. What next steps do you believe should be taken by people on the outside to support existing demands produced by people on the inside?
8. Do you have anything else you'd like to share with us as we move forward?

When sending back a response, please add "ATTN Solitary Project" as the first line of the address.

We are extremely grateful for your words and ideas, and we hope this is the beginning of a fruitful relationship!

With respect,
Critical Resistance Oakland

An Excerpt from The Autobiography of Malcolm X

As told to Alex Haley

English and history were the subjects I liked most. My English teacher, I recall—a Mr. Ostrowski—was always giving advice about how to become something in life. The one thing I didn't like about history class was that the teacher, Mr. Williams, was a great one for "nigger" jokes. One day during my first week at school, I walked into the room and he started singing to the class, as a joke, "Way down yonder in the cotton field, some folks say that a nigger won't steal." Very funny. I liked history, but I never thereafter had much liking for Mr. Williams. Later, I remember, we came to the textbook section on Negro history. It was exactly one paragraph long. Mr. Williams laughed through it practically in a single breath, reading aloud how the Negroes had been slaves and then were freed, and how they were usually lazy and dumb and shiftless. He added, I remember, an anthropological footnote on his own, telling us between laughs how Negroes' feet were "so big that when they walk, they don't leave tracks, they leave a hole in the ground."

I'm sorry to say that the subject I most disliked was mathematics. I have thought about it. I think the reason was that mathematics leaves no room for argument. If you made a mistake, that was all there was to it.

Basketball was a big thing in my life, though. I was on the team; we traveled to neighboring towns such as Howell and Charlotte, and wherever I showed my face, the audiences in the gymnasiums "niggered" and "cooned" me to death. Or called me "Rastus." It didn't bother my teammates or my coach at all, and to tell the truth, it bothered me only vaguely. Mine was the same psychology that makes Negroes even today, though it bothers them down inside, keep letting the white man tell them how much "progress" they are making. They've heard it so much they've almost gotten brainwashed into believing it—or at least accepting it.

After the basketball games, there would usually be a school dance. Whenever our team walked into another school's gym for the dance, with me among them, I could feel the freeze. It would start to ease as they saw that I didn't try to mix, but stuck close to someone on our team, or kept to myself. I think I developed ways to do it without making it obvious. Even at our own school, I could sense it almost as a physical barrier, that despite all the beaming and smiling, the mascot wasn't supposed to dance with any of the white girls.

It was some kind of psychic message—not just from them, but also from within myself. I am proud to be able to say that much for myself, at least. I would just stand around and smile and talk and drink punch and eat sandwiches, and then I would make some excuse and get away early. They were typical small-town school dances. Sometimes a little white band from Lansing would be brought in to play. But most often, the music was a phonograph set up on a table, with the volume turned up high, and the records scratchy, blaring things like Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade"—his band was riding high then—or the Ink Spots, who were also very popular, singing "If I Didn't Care."

I used to spend a lot of time thinking about a peculiar thing. Many of these Mason white boys, like the ones at the Lansing school—especially if they knew me well, and if we hung out a lot together would get me off in a corner somewhere and push me to proposition certain white girls, sometimes their own sisters. They would tell me that they'd already had the girls themselves including their sisters—or that they were trying to and couldn't. Later on, I came to understand what was going on: If they could get the girls into the position of having broken the terrible taboo by slipping off with me somewhere, they would have that hammer over the girls' heads, to make them give in to them.

It seemed that the white boys felt that I, being a Negro, just naturally knew more about "romance," or sex, than they did—that I instinctively knew more about what to do and say with their own girls. I never did tell anybody that I really went for some of the white girls, and some of them went for me, too. They let me know in many ways. But anytime we found ourselves in any close conversations or potentially intimate situations, always there would come up between us some kind of a wall. The girls I really wanted to have were a couple of Negro girls whom Wilfred or Philbert had introduced me to in Lansing. But with these girls, somehow, I lacked the nerve. From what I heard and saw on the Saturday nights I spent hanging around in the Negro district I knew that race-mixing went on in Lansing. But strangely enough, this didn't have any kind of effect on me. Every Negro in Lansing, I guess, knew how white men would drive along certain streets in the black neighborhoods and pick up Negro streetwalkers who patrolled the area. And, on the other hand, there was a bridge that separated the Negro and Polish neighborhoods, where white women would drive or walk across and pick up Negro men, who would hang around in certain places close to the bridge, waiting for them. Lansing's white women, even in those days, were famous for chasing Negro men. I didn't yet appreci-

ate how most whites accord to the Negro this reputation for prodigious sexual prowess. There in Lansing, I never heard of any trouble about this mixing, from either side. I imagine that everyone simply took it for granted, as I did. Anyway, from my experience as a little boy at the Lansing school, I had become fairly

adept at avoiding the white-girl issue—at least for a couple of years yet.

Then, in the second semester of the seventh grade, I was elected class president. It surprised me even more than other people. But I can see now why the class might have done it. My grades were among the highest in the school. I was unique in my class, like a pink poodle. And I was proud; I'm not going to say I wasn't. In fact, by then, I didn't really have much feeling about being a Negro, because I was trying so hard, in every way I could, to be white. Which is why I am spending much of my life today telling the American black man that he's wasting his time straining to "integrate." I know from personal experience. I tried hard enough.

"Malcolm, we're just so proud of you!" Mrs. Swerlin exclaimed when she heard about my election. It was all over the restaurant where I worked. Even the state man, Maynard Allen, who still dropped by to see me once in a while, had a word of praise. He said he never saw anybody prove better exactly what "reform" meant. I really liked him—except for one thing: he now and then would drop something that hinted my mother had let us down somehow.

Fairly often, I would go and visit the Lyonses, and they acted as happy as though I was one of their children. And it was the same warm feeling when I went into Lansing to visit my brothers and sisters, and the Gohannases.

I remember one thing that marred this time for me: the movie "Gone with the Wind." When it played in Mason, I was the only Negro in the theater, and when Butterfly McQueen went into her act, I felt like crawling under the rug.

Every Saturday, just about, I would go into Lansing. I was going on fourteen, now. Wilfred and Hilda still lived out by themselves at the old family home. Hilda kept the house very clean. It was easier than my mother's plight, with eight of us always underfoot or running around. Wilfred worked wherever he could, and he still read every book he could get his

hands on. Philbert was getting a reputation as one of the better amateur fighters in this part of the state; everyone really expected that he was going to become a professional.

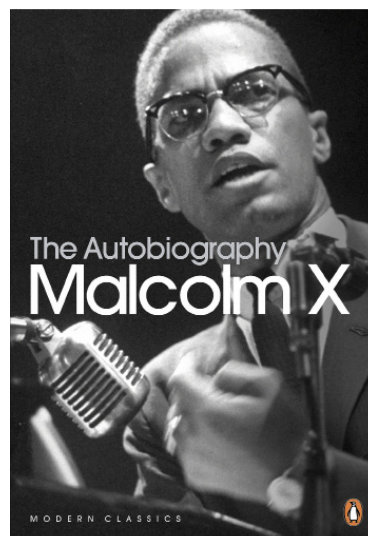
Reginald and I, after my fighting fiasco, had finally gotten back on good terms. It made me feel great to visit him and Wesley over at Mrs. Williams'. I'd offhandedly give them each a couple of dollars to just stick in their pockets, to have something to spend. And little Yvonne and Robert were doing okay, too, over at the home of the West Indian lady, Mrs. McGuire. I'd give them about a quarter apiece; it made me feel good to see how they were coming along.

None of us talked much about our mother. And we never mentioned our father. I guess none of us knew what to say. We didn't want anybody else to mention our mother either, I think. From time to time, though, we would all go over to Kalamazoo to visit her. Most often we older ones went singly, for it was something you didn't want to have to experience with anyone else present, even your brother or sister.

During this period, the visit to my mother that I most remember was toward the end of that seventh-grade year, when our father's grown daughter by his first marriage, Ella, came from Boston to visit us. Wilfred and Hilda had exchanged some letters with Ella, and I, at Hilda's suggestion, had written to her from the Swerlins'. We were all excited and happy when her letter told us that she was coming to Lansing.

I think the major impact of Ella's arrival, at least upon me, was that she was the first really proud black woman I had ever seen in my life. She was plainly proud of her very dark skin. This was unheard of among Negroes in those days, especially in Lansing.

I hadn't been sure just what day she would come. And then one afternoon I got home from school and there she was. She hugged me, stood me away, looked me up and down. A commanding woman, maybe even bigger than Mrs. Swerlin. Ella wasn't just black, but like our father, she was jet black. The way she sat, moved, talked, did everything, bespoke somebody who did and got exactly what she wanted. This was the woman my father had boasted of so often for having brought so many of their family out of Georgia to Boston. She owned some property, he would say, and she was "in society." She had come North with nothing, and she had worked and saved and had invested in property that she built up in value, and then she started sending money to Georgia for another sister, brother, cousin, niece or nephew to come north to Boston. All that I had heard was reflected in Ella's appearance and bearing. I had never been so impressed with anybody. She was in her second marriage; her first husband had been a doctor. Ella asked all kinds of questions about how I was doing; she had already heard from Wilfred and Hilda about my election as class president. She asked especially about my grades, and I ran and got my report cards. I was then one of the three highest in the class. Ella praised me. I asked her about her brother, Earl, and her sister, Mary. She had the exciting news that



Continued on page 7, "Malcolm X"

Remembering Zachary Ontiveros

BY ISAAC ONTIVEROS

Sometime around January 10, 2015 my brother Zachary took his own life. This has been a devastating time for our family, and the loved ones and community Zachary left behind. We grieve and we struggle. We feel deep loss connected to the overflowing feelings of love, gratitude, joy, friendship, and camaraderie that came from living alongside our brother Zachary. This sweetness mixes with the bitterness of an end that has come too soon. We try to draw strength from remembering, honoring, and celebrating Zachary, and from the love and support shared in the grieving we do together.

I was lucky to get to spend my entire life with Zachary. We did all the things siblings often do—played, went to school, got in a little trouble here and there, worked, and spent time with our brothers and sisters Noah, Caleb, Molly, and Hannah, and our large clan of family and friends. A part of our growing up together was learning and growing politically with one another. Coming of age during the 1980s and 90s in the farming city of Santa Maria, CA, we lived next to the hardships of poverty, exploitation, racism, police and *la migra* violence, the so-called wars on drugs and gangs, displacement, and the instability that so affected our neighbors, friends, classmates, and coworkers—particularly those from Mexican@ and migrant backgrounds. In turn, we witnessed everyday resistance, resilience, beauty, vibrancy, pride, sacrifice, and cooperation. We grew to see that however violently institutionalized, the social and economic order was always challengeable; that things could and should be a different way. Zachary helped me to understand that history is not the “high-sounding dramas of princes and states”—as Karl Marx once put it—but is instead the ever-unfolding story of people bravely envisioning and fighting for a better world, and refusing to live on their knees.

From a very young age, Zachary’s love for books, films, and music was infectious and awe-inspiring. From the writings of Malcolm X, Toni Morrison, Mumia Abu Jamal, Howard Zinn, bell hooks, and Vine Deloria, to the films of Spike Lee, Barbara Kopel, and Ken Loach, to the music of The Clash, Neko Case, Marvin Gaye, Public Enemy, and The Staple Singers (to name a random and paltry few), Zachary buttressed and broadened his ability to observe, experience, understand, and enjoy the world. And he, like countless people across countless generations, in his particularly humble way, came to realize that understanding the world needed to go hand-in-hand with struggling to change it. In the early 2000s my brother and I joined the millions of people who came out to oppose the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, and US war-making in other parts of the world. I recall many late night discussions with Zachary (including one or two spent in San Francisco County Jail after some protest or anti-war mobilization), trying to make sense of political events and possibilities; again, trying to use history as lens to interpret the present, and imagine the future.

I think those years set our minds and hearts on fire. Like many others we were encouraged to see how wars abroad were linked to the wars at home, and that, as always, resistance at home should be linked to resistance abroad. In a meandering sort of way, this led us both to join Critical Resistance. I think Zachary saw the prison industrial complex not only as key pillar used to uphold the dominant racial, social,

and economic order, but also as a sophisticated set of tools and strategies meant to put down oppressed peoples’ struggles for self-determination. In turn, I think Zachary believed that abolition—the belief that policing, imprisonment, surveillance, the courts, etc. needed to be overcome, destroyed, and replaced with new and liberatory social relationships and ways of solving our problems—was part of the freedom traditions that lit up his imagination since childhood.

While Zachary participated in a variety of Critical Resistance campaigns and projects, he was most excited and committed to working on the Abolitionist Newspaper, and grew into a leading member of its editorial working group. This always seemed natural to me as the readership of the paper is mostly people on the inside, and the prison front of liberation struggle was something that was key to Zachary’s politics—the legacies of Attica, George Jackson, and Irish Republican political prisoners (again, to name just a few), were things we were lucky enough to learn about and be inspired by as young people. Zachary took his work on the paper very seriously, and poured his humble way of doing things into the project. He was always very interested in hearing from the readers about what was useful to them and responded with particular energy to calls for the paper to be more rigorous and challenging, even as it needed to spread wide and be accessible. He was firm that each issue of the paper try its best to represent struggles from inside and outside the walls, as well as beyond the borders of the US. He helped to direct the project at all levels—from making editorial decisions, writing articles, working with authors, keeping our subscription database accurate, and hauling bundles of the paper from the printing press in Union City, CA, to the various points of distribution. He thought about *The Abolitionist*. He believed in it as a project. And he believed in the freedom dreams of those who read it. He truly wanted it to be a powerful tool and for it be in, and as much as possible, from the hands of those who could use it most.

Zachary’s death is a great loss to say the least. He was my younger brother and I wish I could have been there with him in his time of most critical need—to protect him, and to fight alongside him against the despair that overcame him. I don’t know what my world will be like without him, but as we take hard steps on the path ahead, perhaps we can keep him present by remembering and carrying forward the important work he took up, and the humble and generous style in which he did it. We can remember to reach out to one another, build resilience, and take extra special care. In small ways and large, this world is hard, but it is also so beautiful. It is worth fighting for—we are each worth fighting for. As Zachary did so often, perhaps now we can take care to draw on the wisdom of those who came before us. Perhaps it is helpful in this time to remember the words of Assata Shakur (who did get free!) “...We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.” Perhaps those inspiring words can harmonize with the poetry of Ho Chi Minh from a handful of decades earlier, who while imprisoned, bluntly wrote: “What could be more natural? after sorrow comes happiness.” Perhaps those harmonies can stike a chord with the memories we hold and the stories we tell about our brother Zachary (and all those we may have lost)—and perhaps this can all resonate powerfully, like the music he loved so much—touching our hearts, giving us joy, giving us strength, lifting us up.



ARTHUR WASKOW

Prisoners Taking Teaching to a Whole New Level

BY KIMONTI CARTER

The idea of using college courses in Arts, Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences as a tool for prison reform can be seen as progressive, but when the same classes are being taught by prisoners to the imprisoned population as a way of creating a liberating learning community that is committed to reform it becomes more than progressive it becomes revolutionary!

TEACH was created in 2013 as a college program that started off offering college level classes like world literature, biology and college math at Clallam Bay Corrections Center. TEACH which is an acronym for (Taking Education And Creating History) was created by the Black Prisoners Caucus because the sentiment among prisoners was that the Department of Corrections wasn’t doing enough to help imprisoned people return back to society and assume the role of responsible tax paying citizens.

Education is a symbol of social liberation and has always been an opportunity for those seeking to overcome the social obstacles that exist for any one living at the bottom of the social rung. And classrooms have always been the space that possesses the power to answer any question that can be conjured up by the mind as long as those present maintain a strong willingness to find what they seek.

For years people have always looked at education as an immeasurable opportunity that has the ability to transform a person’s life for the better. But why are prisoners, the ones who could benefit the most, being denied their rights to a quality education? Is it because the remnants of the fourteenth amendment restricts those that are imprisoned to the level of slaves; or is it that society refuses to support a prisoners access to something that many people in society are struggling to afford themselves? The answers will surely vary but none will be good enough to satisfy the two plus million imprisoned across the country, or the families and the communities anticipating their return home.

“Everyone has the right to education” we would assume. These are the same words written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26. But what makes prisoners the exception to that universal right?

The steps to eliminate prisoner’s access to college level education began 20 years ago when Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act restricting access to Pell grants for imprisoned men

and women across the country. A year later Washington State passes a law (house bill 2010) prohibiting the use of public money to support higher education for the imprisoned beyond (ABE) Adult Basic Education, (GED) General Education Diploma and (ESL) English as a second language.

But due to the political uproar over immigrants and their access to U.S. resources (ESL) funding was cut and now all immigrants are denied access to education programs due to their immigration status. Now for twenty years Washington has been standing in support of this legislation which can also be seen as one of the leading causes of high recidivism rates among prisoners today. Most of today’s society may perceive prisoners as unworthy of the resources needed to provide a college level education, and some may even question their competency, but we cannot overlook the evidence that had been provided by years of research that tells us that prisoners who have access to post secondary education will cut their likelihood to return to prison in half by fifty percent! This is the evidence, not an assumption based off of speculation. If those are the numbers then what is the motive for the legislature and the department of corrections to overlook such an important element to safer communities? Why support a policy that argues against the mission of public safety?

In Washington eight thousand prisoners are released back into the community every year, and ninety percent of all prisoners will be returning back to the community at some point. So making sure that all prisoners receive some help that can get their life back on track should be the goal of any conscious thinking criminal justice system. But for the last few decades that has not been the case and prisoners have become fed up with waiting around for the criminal justice system to adjust to the facts and that is the reason many prisoners have become pro-active in creating these opportunities themselves. Victor Hugo once said “Not Even an Army can prevent an idea whose time has come”. And the radical push for postsecondary education among prisoners has begun to spawn many different types of learning programs that are facilitated by prisoners and being held at no cost to the tax payers and now these programs are attracting a growing number of supporters from various colleges and the community. At the Washington State Reforma-

tory (WSR) and Clallam Bay Corrections Center (CBCC) the BPC had become a loud voice for prisoners to become hands on in the push for programs, services and policy changes that may benefit them and their own personal growth, and that has led to two college programs (UBB) University Beyond Bars at WSR and T.E.A.C.H. Other college program have also sprouted up at other facilities (FEPPS) Freedom Education Project Puget Sound at (WCCW) the Washington Correction Center for Women, and at the state Penitentiary Walla Walla. Not all of these programs have prisoners designing curriculums, facilitating classes, organizing board meetings and teaching but the ones that do have some of the best courses that could be taught at any well to do university. Inmates may always be looked at as convicted felons but the actions of these men speak of people who not only value education but those who realize that something as simple as a classroom can allow a person to utilize their critical thinking skills but it also supports

WHY ARE PRISONERS, THE ONES WHO COULD BENEFIT THE MOST, BEING DENIED THEIR RIGHTS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION?

their ability to become whole and feel normal again. College level education may not be the magical combination to eliminate crime and miscreant behavior but whether we want to admit it or not education has the power to save lives. Change isn’t just something that we can just wish for; we have to work to create the change we want to see and it has to be something that is tangible that can not only be seen with the eyes but also touched with the hands.

For many of these prisoners taking college courses for the first time, change came to them in the form of a college math book. Most of them realize that as prisoners they may always be looked at as the scoundrels of the earth, but regardless of how they are viewed, some are using TEACHING as a way of leaving behind a legacy that is slowly transforming prisoners into something other than what society expects them to be: college educated students.

Kimonti Carter is a member of the Black Prisoners Caucus at Clallam Bay Corrections Center, where Carter has worked to start a college in prison program.

Part of the Neoliberal Landscape

Higher Education Inside and Out

BY SAM A.

The college program at San Quentin aims to provide an on-site college education for the program-eligible population. To call this program peculiar is an understatement considering that it's one of the last programs of its kind in California, with faculty volunteers who are sourced from the lively Bay Area intellectual community.

I want to put the organization in context in terms of the broader neoliberalization of universities happening across the country. Many scholars and activists have accounted for how universities are one of many institutions that are participating in the overall privatization of social welfare and individualization of social responsibility, to name only two features attributed with this shift. This has profound affects on the value of education, as university structures begin to mimic the corporate model, and knowledge becomes a strange commodity that requires student and teacher transaction. In other words, universities are trying to become service industries, and grades have become the goods that students want to quickly consume. This poses a general problem for those of us who are doing scholarly or activist work that tries to subvert these transaction-based model, and especially for those of us who work at the margins of knowledge—as feminists, queers, radicals, and abolitionists.

Students at San Quentin can understand themselves as a part of this broader educational landscape. This landscape, which has given birth to the surge in private prisons across the U.S., the increased militarization of universities and communities of color, as well as the rising cost and debt of college students, is of particular consideration when we think of higher education at in prison and the structures that make this program possible. While we've developed a rich language to think about how institutional shifts within the prisons shape our experiences within the broader prison industrial complex, this article is an attempt to contribute to thought about how the shifting conditions of universities (which are very much part of the PIC) more broadly shape higher educational models inside.

So where does SQ fit into this landscape? In 1994, with the passing of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, Pell Grants were banned for those incarcerated, effectively ending higher education programs in the U.S. Founded in the wake of this policy, the college program at SQ was designed as part of the broader Education programs inside. While the program began as a no-budget, low overhead, small program (with only 2 classes running in its first year, 1996), a nonprofit was started in 2003 to provide financial and administrative support.

Because the college program is run by a nonprofit rather than the state or another public entity, this organization is able to provide a service for free for students enrolled in the program. In some ways, this gives the organization the financial freedom from the state and local government. In other ways, however, having to rely on private and donation-based funding lands the organization alongside other

universities who are privatizing social justice programs and initiatives. This move, which is premised on the understanding that universities and governmental institutions can take credit for these initiatives without providing any structural or logistical support, outsources the labor to staff who are responsible for everything from registering students to advising to volunteer coordinating—a multiplicity of jobs for which they are given little training, which often causes them to be overworked and underpaid for these skill sets—and volunteer faculty who understand their role in the organization as charity or service-oriented extracurricular work.

This approach to teaching, one that foregrounds service and/or a charitable impulse, informs much of the sentimentality attributed to the neoliberalization of the university. This sentiment, which has its roots in various forms of patronizing practices that belittle struggles for self-determination by oppressed peoples, captures the essence of neoliberal shifts: it individualizes social responsibility, extracts labor without compensation, and creates a dynamic in which students feel indebted to faculty because of how their service fits neatly into the “rehabilitatory” programs inside. At times, this dynamic has a way of creating a sense of obligation among students, who often express how indebted they are to the faculty and program for giving them time, supporting their growth, and, even for as simple a gesture as calling them by their first names. All of these practices that students feel indebted for should alert us to the ongoing dehumanization students feel daily, and should also make us wary about the hierarchical dynamics at play between teachers and students (which transcend prison walls) that are heightened within prison walls.

UNIVERSITIES ARE TRYING TO BECOME SERVICE INDUSTRIES, AND GRADES HAVE BECOME THE GOODS THAT STUDENTS WANT TO QUICKLY CONSUME.

I fully understand how sticky this situation is, especially because the program allows for some quite progressive engagement in the classroom—where students and faculty alike have the opportunity to engage in intellectual questions, and several faculty members attempt to dismantle the heightened segregation and surveillance practices at play in such a militaristic environment. However, it is crucial for those of us who participate in these programs to make demands that go beyond providing a service to the few that are cleared to be in programs, to dismantle the sentimental hierarchy that makes students feel indebted to us, and to strain against the transaction models of education. Unless we take stock of how higher education in prison contributes to the socio-economic and sentimental proliferation of the neoliberalization of the university, we will be limited in our calls for abolition.



CHRIS BUZELLI

BERMUDEZ

SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and art (in English and Spanish).

Ideas for Articles and Artwork

- Examples of current prisoner organizing
- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to help keep yourself and others physically and mentally healthy while imprisoned
- Updates on what's happening at the prison you're in (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, punishment, and prison
- Experiences of life after imprisonment
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue

What to Submit

- Articles should not be more than 1,500 words (about 5 handwritten pages)
- Letters should not be more than 250 words
- Empowering artwork that will print well

How to Submit

- If you want your name and address printed with your article, please include it as you would like it printed. If you do not wish to have your name or address included, please let us know that when you submit your piece
- If possible, send a copy of your submission, not the original

Writing Suggestions

- Try to write an outline before you write the piece. Ask yourself: does the first paragraph tell the reader what the article is about? Do the middle paragraphs support and strengthen the main argument. Does the last paragraph have a conclusion and some suggestions for action?
- Even if writing is difficult for you, your ideas are worth the struggle. Try reading your piece out loud to yourself or sharing it with someone else. Doing this might help you clarify the ideas in your submission.

Send your submission to:

The Abolitionist (c/o Critical Resistance)
1904 Franklin St., Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

DIY v. The Public?

BY ERICA MEINERS AND THERESE QUINN

In 2013, as part of a free anti-prison teaching collective two female activist/scholars offered a three hour workshop on prison abolition to graduate students at one of the wealthiest private universities on the planet. These students—yearly tuition approximately \$50,000—had organized this workshop because they felt the topic was underaddressed in their program. The university's well-compensated professors weren't offering the content these students wanted so they brought in a group of unpaid educators from the community to fill the gaps.

Many are familiar with this scenario as it is reproduced on campuses across the US. And while we might celebrate the good in this snapshot—students recognized the limits of their curriculum, knowledge outside the university is validated, radical learning opportunities happen—it still gives us pause. As two workers at public state universities, two abolitionists, two queers who have always engaged in DIY or Do-it-Yourself initiatives par excellence, we ask: *What is wrong with this picture?*

Far from unique, beyond this free workshop, as K-16 public education is restructuring new practices and organizations emerge, often under the cover of social justice, to offer access and to deliver, often radical and needed, curriculum and programs. A few others salient examples in our spheres:

- Certified full-time art teachers are replaced by “guest artists” and “working artists” in public primary and secondary schools.
- Non-profit organizations offer free college classes for poor people in “urban sites” and those imprisoned.
- Universities incentivize faculty to record lectures and courses, making these available online to burgeoning numbers of students across the globe.

Contemporary DIY education enthusiasms and initiatives have emerged as seemingly logical and meaningful responses to the reality that K-16 education appears not only inseparable from a punishing capitalist, white supremacist heteropatriarchy; but often seems to be the site for the reproduction and legitimization of these ideologies. Given these forms of analysis it is unsurprising that so many radical educators use their workplace mobility and freedoms to build teaching and learning opportunities outside of institutional walls. The university may be awful, but education is good. “All Power to Self Education!” proclaimed the Edu-factory Collective (2009) in *Toward a Global Autonomous University*.

In particular, DIY education (or self education or freedom schools) is intertwined with struggles against our prison nation. As early as 1917, members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who were imprisoned in Chicago's Cook County Jail organized lectures about the history and social function of industry and throughout the 1960s Black Power movement participants who were imprisoned also used their time to develop political awareness and teach others (Chaplin 1948, cited in Sbarbaro 1995). Jails, prisons and penitentiaries were never spaces intended to develop intellectuals, let alone support liberation movements. But by the late 1960s and 1970s, as outlined in Dylan Rodriguez's *Forced Passages Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (2005), imprisoned radicals were using any resources they could glean from imprisonment to learn, theorize, write and organize with others inside and outside. George Jackson, in his letters written from Soledad Prison, later collected and published as *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (1970) described this focus on self-education. In 1965 letters to his parents, he wrote, “I spend what [money] you have sent me on books.”

Both within and outside prisons, individual and small group study continue to be common strategies of political activists. Popular education, or education organized by and for the people involved in the learning, was common in both “old left” and “new left” movements. For example, The Finnish People's College and Theological Seminary, founded in 1903 near Duluth, Minnesota by clergy who had been active in socialist politics in Finland, initially offered both religious and political instruction (Kivisto, 1984). In 1908, renamed Work People's College, it shed its religious focus and began teaching courses “useful in the revolutionary movement” (Kivisto, 1984, p. 109). From the 1930s to the present the Highlander School (now, Center) offered labor organizers, socialists, civil rights workers, and others involved in left justice work a place to learn and strategize together. And feminist health collectives flourished throughout the 1960s and 1970s, publishing DIY care pamphlets including *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1970) and histories, such as *Witches, Midwives and Nurses A*



History of Women Healers, by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English (1973). Built from sweat equity, offering free programs and no credentials, these and related popular and participatory education projects fueled social movements.

The story of DIY education is, in other words, an old one. And it has always been, at the same time, a story of demands that our structures and leaders be responsive and accountable to the people. Our public schools never been adequate, and we've never stopped asking for more. Political radicals have studied as an act of freedom; we learned alone and with others to be better able to imagine a broadly envisioned justice and a world in which we can all flourish. And we have always attended to repairing the here-and-now.

Yet, the rise of radical alternative DIY education in moments of ever-more restricted access to meaningful and quality K-16 public education demands investigation. Does offering a free prison abolition class at a private university challenge power? Is every university a site of domestication and cooptation? Is the curriculum provided by any institution always inadequate? Yes and no.

Today, criticism of the neoliberal university proliferates and is a professional field unto itself. Marc Bousquet (2002) identifies students as “the waste products of graduate education” (p. 81) and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004) claim that, “the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one” (p. 101). Others call for occupying, feeding off, and communizing the university (see, for example, the Call for Papers and Presentations posted by Elizabeth Johnson and Eli Meyerhoff (2009) at Academia Insurgent). Many note escalating tuition, and that the debt incurred by students is both astronomical and disciplining, with the potential to shape life choices and conditions.

Narratives of choice and crisis have worked to reshape our investments in collective public institutions. Citing parent choice and consumer demand, skilled veteran teachers, often Black educators, are pushed out by school closures in Chicago, while programs like Teach for America place younger and whiter teachers in emergent privatized public schools and programs, from charters to outsourced arts education, for lower wages and no job security. Under the mantra of fiscal restraint, higher education is increasingly adjunctified, and public universities rely, not on state contributions, but on student tuition dollars and the suppressed wage labour of students who essentially run the university (fundraise your fees! fix those computers! teach our classes! design the flyers! sell that coffee!) while taking on increasing loads of debt.

This of course is hardly novel. Across the US states are hurrying to restructure all that remains of the public: Schools, housing, healthcare—even prisons! As the public sphere—institutions that now primarily regulate and support poor people of color—undergoes continued restructuring (i.e. privatization and closure), those who

(think they) rely much less on the public sphere are being seduced by appeals to self-reliance—step off the grid, be natural, start a farm, brew your own, choose organic, birth and school your baby at home, drink unpasteurized milk, skip vaccinations, heal yourself...

Yet what common futures does this DIY educational culture suggest and support? While it is all about you and yours, making smart choices, disinvestments in the public further constrain the most vulnerable populations, including the incarcerated and poor, those with disabilities, and the very young and old. Rather than backing away and accepting less from our public sphere, we should be pressing for more, and asking: What kind of “public(s)” are we? *No police and prisons*, but yes to a free and vibrant public education—that includes ongoing histories of abolitionist movements—for all.

References

Barnes, Harry E. (1921, May). The historical origin of the prison system in America, *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 12(1), pp. 35-60. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1133652?seq=21>

Bousquet, M. (2002). *The waste product of graduate education: Toward a dictatorship of the flexible*. Social Text 20(1), 81-104.

Chaplin, R. (1948). *Wobbly*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edu-factory Collective. (2009). *Toward a global autonomous university*. Retrieved from: https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/Towards_A_Global_Autonomous_University.pdf

Ehrenreich, B. & English, D. (1973). *Witches, midwives and nurses*. New York: The Feminist Press. Retrieved at: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/witches.htm>

Johnson, E. & Meyerhoff, E. (2009). Call for papers and presentations. Retrieved from: <http://www.counter-cartographies.org/academia-insurgent-aag-call-for-papers/>

Karp, Sarah. 2013. ‘Structured’ out of a job. *Catalyst-Chicago*. Retrieved from: <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/news/2013/10/07/63630/structured-out-job>

Kivisto, P. (1984). *Immigrant socialists in the United States*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses.

Moten, F. & Harney, S. (2004). *The university and the undercommons: Seven theses*. Social Text 22(2), 101-115.

Sbarbaro, E. (1995). A note on prison activism and social justice. In H. Davidson (Ed.), *Schooling in a “total institution” Critical perspectives on prison education*, pp. 141-146. Westpoint, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

The story of penitentiaries in the United States is not only a history of ceaseless expansion or of ever-new forms and sites of punishment created through what is always described as reform, it is also a catalog of frustrated, stifled, and silenced conversations. Early prisons practiced the argument that enforced quiet, isolation and spare conditions would stimulate contemplation and reflection and lead to remorse and new habits (Barnes, 1921). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries absolute silence, solitary confinement and hard labor was considered the standard for reform (Barnes, 1921). Minds and hands were controlled; incarcerated people were allowed only one book (the Bible) and their work was regimented (Barnes, 1921).

Erica R. Meiners teaches, writes and organizes in Chicago. She has written about her ongoing labor and learning in anti-militarization campaigns, educational justice struggles, prison abolition and reform movements, and queer and immigrant rights organizing.

Therese Quinn is an Associate Professor of Art History and Director of Museum and Exhibition Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Drawing on her work as an exhibit researcher, developer, and evaluator for the several museums, she teaches courses exploring the histories and pedagogical practices of museums and exhibitions. She writes about the arts and cultural institutions as sites for democratic engagement and justice work.

Continued from page 1, “Voices”

to expand the breadth of the project, we've reached out to specific activists, photographers and videographers asking them to contribute. And on the website there is a how-to manual explaining the basics of a Voices' interview, as well as a list of other ways to collaborate with the project. So it is our hope that eventually the project will boast of a broad international participation.

In order to make the archive as powerful as possible, there are some aesthetic and theoretical guidelines to all of our interviews. They are all anonymous. All interviews use the Voices questionnaire. And, finally we reserve the right to approve all final edits and post-production.

What has been the process of selection of prisoners for these interviews? Did you have certain parameters to follow as to which kind of prisoners to approach, or was it more of a voluntary process on their part? [I talk about prisoners, but I've realized most of them are in the process of getting out, or have been released already]

Anyone that has been incarcerated for more than a month can be interviewed. And we define incarcerated fairly broadly: immigration detention, prison, jail,

juvenile detention, court ordered psychiatric treatment in a closed facility, etc. We've decided on the one month minimum in order to establish a basic common denominator given that the experience can vary so much between institution, state, country, etc.

Unfortunately most of the interviews we've done have come from our own communities. They are friends and family. I say, unfortunately, because we all would prefer not to be so intimately affected by the prison industrial complex.

How do you think these interviews help the prisoners themselves? Is it merely cathartic for them? What has been their reaction to the interviews and to the project?

I can't really presume how this project has helped any of its participants. I'd hope that it is in some way cathartic, however I think the experience for the interviewees varies greatly. This being said, of all the interviewees that we have interviewed ourselves, regardless of how they felt about participating before the interview started, none have responded negatively. All edited interviews must be first approved by the interviewee before they go online, and everyone has been

happy with the final cuts.

While I'm not specialized in mental health, I want to believe this project has some therapeutic value. It is designed to be a safe space to anonymously share an experience that unfortunately too many people in this world have lived. Sharing is an important first step to healing any sort of trauma, and it probably goes without saying, but I consider incarceration a trauma.

Have you encountered any kind of opposition or censorship from penal authorities when coming up with this project?

So far, no. I say so far because we've been doing all of our interviews outside of incarceration facilities. We are currently working on getting access to interview inside some prisons, but it is a slow and very bureaucratic process. Hopefully, in the future we'll have more opposition and censorship, because that would probably mean the project is being effective.

So far we have seen interviews about Spanish and Puerto Rican prisons. Which has been the most difficult to shoot? Is there any subject the prisoners re-

Continued on page 9, “Voices”

Youth in the Lead

BY RICK AYERS

A review of *Educating for Insurgency: the Roles of Young People in Schools of Poverty* (Oakland, CA AK Press, 2014) by Jay Gillen

Sometimes a little book comes along that changes everything. It makes its mark by reframing and redefining something that is right before our eyes but needs explaining from a new perspective. Jay Gillen's *Educating for Insurgency: The Roles of Young People in Schools of Poverty*, from AK Press, is just such a book. With deft strokes and clear explanations, it shatters the standard narrative on the "achievement gap" – the gap in grades and test scores between the privileged and the oppressed in our society.

Gillen, who has worked for years with Bob Moses' Algebra Project – famous for bringing civil rights activism to algebra teaching for Black youth – and has developed successful work with marginalized students in his own role as a Baltimore high school teacher, brings a wide intellectual palette and a razor sharp observation of specific moments to his analysis. All too often, academics, policy makers, and administrators pontificate on the education crisis without once respecting the point of view or the voice of the young people themselves.

As a point of departure, Gillen recalls the period before the Civil War when political divisions raged over the "slavery question." White factions in the various sectors debated and argued. But the whole crisis was fueled by the actions of the enslaved Africans themselves. "Each insurgent act of running away or of poisoning or arson or [harm] against a slaveholder had its own origins in the mind and body of the slave." (p. 41). And the vast majority of the fugitive slaves were between ages 13 and 29. It was the affirmative actions of the enslaved, regardless of laws or political debates, which caused the slavery crisis. If these youths had been docile, compliant, agreeable, there would have been no debate.

He then makes the leap of regarding the struggles of oppressed youth within the context of slavery allows us to better apprehend the relation of young people today to institutions of domination. And he argues, "The uncontrolled movements of young people in poverty today, and particularly of the descendants of slaves, generate debates about educational 'reform' in much the same way that the uncontrolled movements of their insurgent ancestors generated debates about the status of slavery before the Civil War. The indocility of young people in high schools, for example, provokes tensions and hardening of positions around school discipline and policing." (p. 42).

If students did what they were told, there would be no crisis in education – at least not in the context it is framed by policy-makers. Failing schools are not places where students attend, pay attention, and try. They are where students cut class, refuse to pay attention, evade and defy authority, and roam the halls. (p. 57) African American and Chicano Latino students, colonized and oppressed students, are not passive objects of the system; they are the central actors in it. Eric Toshalis in his recent book *Make Me! Understanding and engaging student resistance in school* makes the same point.

This is not to say that the resistance of students today is the same as resistance to slavery but that it follows the same political pattern – white (mostly white) people in conflict with each other over policy without the recognition of the key actors. This insight is earth-shaking but it is not without precedent. Paul Willis in *Learning to Labor how working class kids get working class jobs* made a similar point about working class English youth in a regional industrial city – they resisted schooling not because they were ignorant or morally flawed or failures. They resisted because they knew the system would never work for them, that the ascendance into the middle class was a pipe dream, and that they were preparing for a life of active and agentive participation in working class factory life.

What Willis and Gillen expose is that too often we talk about "education" as if students were faceless automatons and the body of knowledge were a single thing, a set of settled truths, a desirable accomplishment that promises an end to poverty and a happy life. The truth is that such an unchallenged framing of education has only led to decades of reproduction – reproduction of the same class and colonial hierarchies that the country was founded on. But as Gillen says, "Imagining that the purposes of schools are settled is a way of hiding the political world of young people. Imagining that all that remains to do is simply the implementation of proven technologies for the production of accepted social purposes misrepresents the sociological and political problem. The problem is that the social and political purposes of the country are contested and young people are participating in working toward a settlement of the contest, even while their political role remains unacknowledged." (p. 50)

Schools are sites of contention. The standard education department narrative suggests that African American students are simply unprepared for the challenges of school or don't know how the system works. But they are not simply misinformed about the right thing to do. Perhaps they have taken a good, hard look at their options and the possibilities that schools might serve their interests – and they have affirmatively chosen to resist. These young people see schools in the midst of a series of institutions that oppress their communities – institutions that provoke alienation, resistance, and passive or active hostility. Youth pursuing their own purposes, youth who reject the demand for passive conformity, who reject the eurocentric curriculum, continually disrupt the smooth functioning of school.

Gillen's book serves as a criticism and a corrective to so much that passes for pedagogy and policy in schools. No doubt, all cultures worry about the moral development of children and adolescents. But in current US culture, those in power presuppose and never question the rightness and legitimacy of the master narrative and the moral righteousness of those who rule. Adults constantly make moral judgments on students, as in the following statements that are heard far too often in teacher lunchrooms and school meetings: "They know right from wrong. They are stubborn and obstinate; they are trying to 'get over' or to get away with bad behavior. They are lazy or disrespectful. They are traveling with the wrong crowd. They should try harder. They are choosing not to try or are choosing to disrupt." Or even, "their parents are lazy, obstinate, ignorant, and allow their children too much freedom." (p. 52)

These statements do not constitute analysis or understanding of the situation. They are the kind of reflexive racism that justifies further control and repression. In this context, schools worry constantly about classroom management, discipline, and compliance. Generally, they come up with technocratic, behaviorist systems that ascribe moral failure to students. These systems define unacceptable student behaviors and prescribe fixes based on the goal of winning compliance. Consultants are paid millions of dollars to generate lists of goals and objectives, standards, and indicators that have a "scientific" sound. (p. 49) But these regimes of control never address the content of education or its purposes. Instead they rely on coercion.

Gillen points out how the infamous Taney declaration of the Dred Scott decision (the black man has no rights that the white man is bound to respect) can be seen reified in the way that students have no interests that schools are bound to respect. The physical movements of youth are proscribed and controlled. Thirst, hunger, excretion – the most intimate bodily needs – are closely regulated. Students are judged and ranked on a daily basis, subject to testing and sorting, ordered to do arbitrary things by adults. If we are going to talk about bullying in schools, we should give first attention to this bullying by teachers and administrators that goes on all the time. When we begin to probe the fundamental assumptions in today's educational terrain, we find ridiculously backward and colonialist ideas about what it means to be good and "advanced," and what should be judged as bad or "primitive." (p. 55) My own view is that educational ideology is still dominated by what Edward Said analyzed as Orientalist thinking – the idea that the "west" (Europe and the US) are guardians of rationality and civilization; and the "other" – the East, the Mid-East, basically all the Third World as well as people of color within the metropole – are savages needing to be tamed.

We see this belief in practice in endless regimes of control, not just control of the body but even of the mind. One charter school corporation has a practice called "SAVE." This is a requirement that whenever a student is heard to be speaking in slang or their home vernacular, the teacher is to clap her hands twice and say, "SAVE!" This acronym means, "Standard American Vernacular English!" In other words, stop talking like you talk, speak like a white middle class American. Not only is this interruption practiced by the teacher but students are encouraged to interrupt and police each other. Such practices recall the mission of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania which set out to "kill the Indian" in the students in order to make them compliant in white society.

The orientalist turn is found also in the suggestion by foundations and education psychologists that African American youth can't sublimate emotions, can't put off gratification. This is a pseudo-scientific way of claiming the uncontrolled id, the animal nature, of these youth. It is seen again in the denial of youth identity and decision making, the claim that reduces a young person's development to nothing more than parenting or social environment. And parents and communities are thus slandered and identified as wanting.

But the truth is that the resistance of young people is based on consciousness – indeed on a pretty accurate evaluation of their circumstances. The truth is that young people are deeply engaged in profound intellectual pursuits and literacy practices with their peers, even as there is a "strange absence of intellectual engagement in high schools." (p. 60) African American youth, Chicano Latino youth, immigrant youth, queer and othered youth, engage in complex thinking and develop subtle understandings and analysis of the double bind they are in. What is subversive about their actions is that they distinguish their own interests from that of the school and act accordingly.

Finally, Gillen imagines what kind of a place school could be if adults listened to Black and Brown youth. "If evaluation were integrated into the actual purposes of children's lives, it might be possible for teachers and students to collaborate toward creating a world that meets their needs." (p. 53)

And he knows what he's talking about because he has been in just such practice in the Insurgent Algebra Project, which he has learned from Maisha Moses, Lynn Godfrey, and Bob Moses. Building powerful schools does not mean finding new and clever ways to coopt youth into serving adult purposes but rather acting as allies in solidarity with their freedom movement. "Building alliances between and among young people and adults will require pragmatic ways of relating to each other that are generally considered strange in schools." (p. 144)

GILLEN IMAGINES WHAT KIND OF A PLACE SCHOOL COULD BE IF ADULTS LISTENED TO BLACK AND BROWN YOUTH.

One may argue that the task is too challenging, the proposal is too radical, and the enemy is too strong. Gillen's conclusion reminds us that such a transformed approach to education is not only possible, it is the only way forward. It makes me think of the question of asymmetrical warfare. American military strategists worry about this all the time. America has all the resources and the greatest military machine the world has ever seen. Yet since World War II they have not been able to "defeat" anyone. The poor, the invaded, seem to be able to throw them off even with paltry weapons and resources. The Pentagon's gory and elaborate development of means of violence do not represent US military power but its very weakness.

And I think you can make an analogy here to education. The powerful have the test writers, the foundations, the state governments, and the Department of Education. But they don't have the people and in fact are being thwarted again and again by the self-motivated actions of those at the bottom. Gillen's *Educating for Insurgency* reminds us that these are the people, these are the forces, who ultimately hold the trump card. It may be a war of the flea, but in the end it is human beings who shape the world to their purposes. There is yet hope.

Rick Ayers is an Assistant Professor in Teacher Education at the University of San Francisco.



GAY SHAME ANTI-PRISON PROTEST IN SAN FRANCISCO, 2014

Restorative Practices as an Attack on the Prison Industrial Complex

BY CAT WILLET AND JORDAN THOMPSON

What Is The School-to-Prison Pipeline?

In U.S. popular consciousness, the connection between schools and prisons can seem like an indirect one. Schools, we are taught to believe, provide routes to success and social mobility; they therefore have little or nothing to do with prisons. But over the past two years, concerned educators and community members have begun to see a link between punishments given out at school and the drastic rise in imprisonment rates—even as acts of harm committed by adolescents have fallen.

During the late 1990s, after several highly-publicized school shootings, many schools began adopting “zero-tolerance” policies. These policies attempted to create safety at school by imposing rigid and mandatory punishments for what they deemed to be “unsafe” behavior at school. Although zero-tolerance policies seemed like a logical step to address extraordinary situations that led to mass school shootings — harm which is predominately committed by white students from middle-class backgrounds — these harsh punishments have overwhelmingly impacted students of color, students with disabilities, and students coming from high-trauma situations. Critically, these students are often being punished not for harmful actions but are rather suspended for behavior that falls under the catch-all category of “disruption and defiance,” which can include being late to school or coming to class unprepared. Even if zero-tolerance policies began as an effort to address harmful acts perpetrated by any student, these policies effectively became another way of “policing” students of color and forcing them out of school and into neighborhoods where over-policing, lack of job opportunities, and family and community violence may contribute to their eventual imprisonment. According to a 2009 report, “On any given day, about one in every 10 young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates.” The numbers for African-American males are even worse, with one in four African-American high school dropouts imprisoned. This became such a common phenomenon that concerned activists and educators created a name for it: The School-to-Prison Pipeline.

African-American and Latino students (especially males with special academic needs or low English-language skills) are targeted much more frequently for detention, suspension, and expulsion. The problem is so widespread that there are documented cases of expulsions, and even arrests, of students as young as 5 or 6. These students are predominantly African-American or Latino. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights reports that Black children in California are suspended at twice the average rate for all students, and evidence shows that after even one out-of-school suspension the likelihood of later life imprisonment is increased. It has also been shown that African American students are overwhelmingly more likely to be suspended for behavior where suspensions are discretionary and that they are no more likely to compel behavior that requires mandatory suspension than their white classmates. These students are also those most likely to struggle in their classes and who need more academic support. Basically, zero-tolerance punishments target the most academically-struggling students in a school and keep them from being in class as a punishment.

These zero-tolerance policies not only target African-American and Latino students at higher rates, but also punish many behaviors that help keep students safe in their communities or which reflect the need for supportive services. Students are suspended for being disrespectful to adults, even if that student felt threatened or was having a trauma flashback, hadn’t eaten, or had a stressful situation at home. By issuing a suspension or expulsion instead of taking into consideration students’ lived experience and offering support, schools exacerbate, deepen, and extend trauma experienced outside of schools, reflecting to these students how little they are valued by institutions that claim to exist to nurture them and support their growth. Zero tolerance policies and punitive attitudes in schools both enact and intensify the traumas experienced by students living in conditions of structural, institutional, and interpersonal harm. They thus create cracks within the education system into which large numbers of students of color inevitably fall.

IMAGE C/O YOUTH JUSTICE COALITION

Schools that have a better understanding of trauma and its effect on student behavior and can employ tools and skills that allow students to take responsibility for their actions while remaining firmly embraced within their community. Schools of this

nature are better equipped to see all students successfully through their school years and into meaningful education and employment.

What Can We Do?

The link between schools and prisons can feel cemented in place, with little to be done to impact it; however, emerging evidence from restorative justice programming across the country is offering some answers. Restorative practices are both an ancient philosophy and a comparatively new set of practices in schools. It offers concrete alternatives to pushing students out of school and helps students build meaningful relationships and address trauma and inequalities in their lives. It replaces punitive disciplinary practices meant to hurt and shame those in conflict with practices that offer logical consequences to build accountability, address systemic inequality, and help create school communities that offer support and healing for everyone. These practices may be as simple as coaching a teacher to refrain from shaming students who misbehave to formal, hours-long gatherings with a student, their family, and their school personnel to create a plan to avoid expulsion or imprisonment. All of these



practices are based on some simple philosophies. One is that everyone has a story and everyone deserves to be heard. Another is that we are most successful when we do things with young people, not to them or for them. And, finally, restorative practices are based on a philosophy that, when people are hurt, there is a deeply-felt impact on individuals and communities and that all parties affected need time to come together, share their stories of pain, and create a communal solution to move forward in healing. This final part of the restorative practices philosophy is in direct opposition to exclusionary practices (whether it is suspension or imprisonment), which robs people of a chance to tell their story and a chance to make things right.

One exercise done with students helps explore the link between suspensions and the prison industrial complex, and how restorative practices offer an alternative. Students are asked to come up with a common scenario in their school that leads to suspension. When that scenario is written on the board, four circles are drawn around it. Students use the first circle to write down ways that the involved students are impacted by the event and suspension. The next circle is to record how their families and friends might be impacted. The third circle is for how school personnel are impacted. The final circle is to record how communities and neighborhoods would be impacted by this situation. While the final part of the exercise takes longer to fill in, students are very clear on the negative impacts of pushing students out of school and into the streets. They can see what many of our school personnel cannot — that suspensions, expulsions, and exclusionary practices hurt students, families, schools and communities.

We then ask students to reflect on this question: “What if that scenario did not end in a suspension? What if the students involved had caring adults who helped them talk about the situation, figure out the impacts, and find a way to move forward?” We then do the same activity, but charting possible positive outcomes on students, family, and community when students in conflict are listened to, believed, and held accountable to repair harms using restorative practices. Even those students who don’t necessarily believe that the practices will work can still come up with some positive possibilities that could grow out of these practices.

I am particularly proud of the way that the program I work for has tied an understanding of restorative practices, trauma, and systemic oppression into a whole-school

Continued on page 8, “Restorative Practices”



Continued from page 2, “Malcolm X”

Earl was a singer with a band in Boston. He was singing under the name of Jimmy Carleton. Mary was also doing well.

Ella told me about other relatives from that branch of the family. A number of them I’d never heard of; she had helped them up from Georgia. They, in their turn, had helped up others. “We Littles have to stick together,” Ella said. It thrilled me to hear her say that, and even more, the way she said it. I had become a mascot; our branch of the family was split to pieces; I had just about forgotten about being a Little in any family sense. She said that different members of the family were working in good jobs, and some even had small businesses going. Most of them were homeowners.

When Ella suggested that all of us Littles in Lansing accompany her on a visit to our mother, we all were grateful. We all felt that if anyone could do anything that could help our mother, that might help her get well and come back, it would be Ella. Anyway, all of us, for the first time together, went with Ella to Kalamazoo.

Our mother was smiling when they brought her out. She was extremely surprised when she saw Ella. They made a striking contrast, the thin near-white woman and the big black one hugging each other. I don’t remember much about the rest of the visit, except that there was a lot of talking, and Ella had everything in hand, and we left with all of us feeling better than we ever had about the circumstances. I know that for the first time, I felt as though I had visited with someone who had some kind of physical illness that had just lingered on.

A few days later, after visiting the homes where each of us were staying, Ella left Lansing and returned to Boston. But before leaving, she told me to write to her regularly. And she had suggested that I might like to spend my summer holiday visiting her in Boston. I

jumped at that chance.

That summer of 1940, in Lansing, I caught the Greyhound bus for Boston with my cardboard suitcase, and wearing my green suit. If someone had hung a sign, “HICK,” around my neck, I couldn’t have looked much more obvious. They didn’t have the turnpikes then; the bus stopped at what seemed every corner and cowpatch. From my seat in-you guessed it-the back of the bus, I gawked out of the window at white man’s America rolling past for what seemed a month, but must have been only a day and a half.

When we finally arrived, Ella met me at the terminal and took me home. The house was on Waumbek Street in the Sugar Hill section of Roxbury, the Harlem of Boston. I met Ella’s second husband, Frank,

SHE WAS THE FIRST REALLY PROUD BLACK WOMAN I HAD EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE. SHE WAS PLAINLY PROUD OF HER VERY DARK SKIN. THIS WAS UNHEARD OF AMONG NEGROES IN THOSE DAYS...

who was now a soldier; and her brother Earl, the singer who called himself Jimmy Carleton; and Mary, who was very different from her older sister. It’s funny how I seemed to think of Mary as Ella’s sister, instead of her being, just as Ella is, my own half-sister. It’s probably because Ella and I always were much closer as basic types; we’re dominant people, and Mary has always been mild and quiet, almost shy.

Ella was busily involved in dozens of things. She belonged to I don’t know how many different clubs; she was a leading light of local so-called “black society.” I saw and met a hundred black people there whose big-city talk and ways left my mouth hanging open. I couldn’t have feigned indifference if I had tried to. People talked casually about Chicago, Detroit, New York. I didn’t know the world contained as many Ne-

groes as I saw thronging downtown Roxbury at night, especially on Saturdays. Neon lights, nightclubs, pool halls, bars, the cars they drove! Restaurants made the streets smell-rich, greasy, down-home black cooking! Jukeboxes blared Erskine Hawkins, Duke Ellington, Cootie Williams, dozens of others. If somebody had told me then that some day I’d know them all personally, I’d have found it hard to believe. The biggest bands, like these, played at the Roseland State Ballroom, on Boston’s Massachusetts Avenue-one night for Negroes, the next night for whites.

I saw for the first time occasional black-white couples strolling around arm in arm. And on Sundays, when Ella, Mary, or somebody took me to church, I saw churches for black people such as I had never seen.

They were many times finer than the white church I had attended back in Mason, Michigan. There, the white people just sat and worshiped with words; but the Boston Negroes, like all other Negroes I had ever seen at church, threw their souls and bodies wholly into worship.

Two or three times, I wrote letters to Wilfred intended for everybody back in Lansing. I said I’d try to describe it when I got back. But I found I couldn’t.

My restlessness with Mason-and for the first time in my life a restlessness with being around white people-began as soon as I got back home and entered eighth grade.

I continued to think constantly about all that I had seen in Boston, and about the way I had felt there.

Malcolm X was a civil rights leader and prominent figure in the Nation of Islam, who articulated concepts of race pride and black nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

American Crime Control as Industry

BY ASAR IMHOTEP AMEN (T. T. THOMAS)

If one had systematically and diabolically tried to create mental illness, one could probably have constructed no better system than the U.S. prison system.

The prison industrial complex (PIC) basically has a life of its own. It has become an industry, and a very lucrative one for some. Like its cousin the military industrial complex, its pernicious spirit is all-pervasive and needs plenty of crime and long sentences to maintain its financial viability. So who is truly the criminal? Is America a democracy or a corporate oligarchic police state?

There are several reasons why the PIC continues to grow in America, and I will focus on two of the most important. The first is that in punishing people we as a society attempt to appease the fearful side of our own human nature. The second is that vested interests keep this very unsuccessful system going. Just as steel companies need trees, so prisons use people as their raw material.

When it comes to vested interests, there are many groups who have an interest in the maintenance of the status quo of prisons. Let me say clearly and emphati-



BY AND LARGE OUR PRISONS ARE RESERVED FOR THOSE WITH DARK SKIN, LITTLE MONEY, OR UNCONVENTIONAL LIFESTYLES. THE POWERFUL MANAGE, MOST OF THE TIME, TO ESCAPE THE SANCTIONS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

cally that within each group there is a minority who hold opposing views and are much more open and positive in their approach.

The vast majority of prison guards, police, judges, forensic psychologists, prison vendors of every description, prosecutors and even some criminal defense lawyers do not want to know about alternatives. The culture within each of these groupings often seems to preclude much genuine dialogue and discussion about the outcomes of the very work they are employed in doing.

The media have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the media, especially sensational "tabloid" news, keep racist stereotypes alive. They report crime out of all proportion to other news. Where would the tabloids be without a regular front-page crime story? What would the talk show hosts discuss? How would they fill hours of television every night without *America's Most Wanted*, *Cops*, *Criminal Minds*, and other programs? One recent evening on Fox News, nine of the first ten stories related to crime, here and overseas.

The construction and subsidiary industries are also vested in an expanding prison network and are happy to see a high crime rate continue. Warehousing the poor is now a worldwide trend in many industrialized countries, with the United States leading the way. With huge profits being made through prison construction and expansion, while maintaining new prisons and old, the corporate culture has readily taken up the challenge to make a profit out of human misery. A directory called *The Corrections Yellow Pages* lists more than a thousand vendors. While private prisons are the most lucrative, state-controlled ones are also high on the corporate agenda, providing guaranteed payment and regular income. To see an example, look up the California Correctional Peace Officers Association.

Many academics in the fields of law, social work, criminology, psychology, sociology, and psychiatry have a vested interest in keeping things the same. Too many sit in ivory towers teaching outmoded theories, denying students opportunities to develop creative responses to the social problems that are largely responsible for crime.

Politicians also have an interest in preventing research and trials on creative options to crime and prisons.

They believe they will be perceived as soft. The reality is the exact opposite. Most alternative programs are a lot tougher in that they demand accountability (e.g., restorative justice), with offenders having to take responsibility for what they have done. But few politicians are prepared to promote or fund them.

The new corporate elite running prison policy were brought in to try to change a harsh macho prison culture that had been built up over generations. While to a degree some aspects of that old culture have been tackled, they have also brought in the culture of measured success, which in corporate terms often means wage cutting, program deletion, and prison expansion. Prison numbers have been going through the roof for the past 25 years. All this is conducted with the glossy PR expertise so characteristic of the corporate hard sell. Prisons are now presented to the public as desirable industries to have in local communities because of the job creation and new economic spending power available. Little attention is given to the thought of what a prison is, who is locked up, or why. This is a deliberate attempt to shift the public perception of imprisonment from being a scandal and a sign of failure to one that portrays prisons as just another desirable acquisition for a local community like a sports stadium, medical center, or public university.

Prison slave labor is a complement to the international movement of jobs. For decades, U.S. based corporations have been moving abroad to avoid high domestic rates as well as labor and environmental regulations. Now such factors as the increasing costs of overseas slave labor, the expense of relocation, and the shipping expense involved have caused many manufacturers to recognize that US prisons, with their abundant supply of slave labor (2.4 million prisoners), are an attractive alternative to foreign-based production.

Street Crime vs. Corporate Crime and The Truth

As a society we need to reassess our understanding of crime and ask why it is that corporate crime advances virtually unhindered, while localized "street crime" has become such an obsession for so many. The answer lies somewhere in the mixed realm of our own hidden fears and our sense of powerlessness in the face of crime, and the immense power of vested interest who gain so much from the current situation.

Corporate crime is endemic the word over. Very few are ever held responsible for its devastating effects. It reaches into virtually every aspect of our lives, yet so widespread is its influence that we are often unaware of its presence. It hits us in so many ways: from the added costs in our supermarkets to the pollutants in the air we breathe. From the hidden cost of our banking and financial systems to the costs of medicines we take for our illnesses. The tentacles of corporate crime touch all these areas and many more.

Yet we rarely speak of it, read of it, or hear of it for any sustained period. We have become totally preoccupied with individual "street crime," although corporate violence and crime inflict far more damage on society

Continued from page 7, "Restorative Practices"

model for changing school climate and supporting students and staff in schools to be more resilient and more involved in creating healthy nonviolence communities. Catholic Charities of the East Bay, in partnership with the West Contra Costa School District and funded by the California Endowment, has been working to break the school-to-prison pipeline in Richmond by building safe and supportive communities for all youth, with an emphasis on those students most at risk of school failure, violent victimization, and poor life outcomes.

The Restorative Trauma-Informed Practices (RTIPs) programs use a two-pronged approach: direct services to youth who suffer from chronic trauma, including trauma treatment, and a comprehensive program of training, coaching, and technical assistance that develops capacity within schools to understand their student's trauma and implement and maintain restorative justice programming. Schools that have participated in the RTIPs programs have seen a dramatic decrease in suspension of up to 100% (an average of 54% across participating schools) and, more importantly, have a cohort of restorative practitioners who are able to design and facilitate both preventive community building practices and trauma-informed disciplinary practices that replace punitive discipline. Programs such as these that educate students and school-based adults on restorative and trauma informed practices can be a direct attack on the school-to-prison pipeline and, thus, on the prison industrial complex itself.

Without an understanding of the ways that trauma and systemic oppression impact young people and produce behaviors that require support and accountability, not

than all street crime combined. Just one major tobacco company, for example, arguably kills and injures more people than all the "street criminals" put together. Public corruption, pollution, procurement fraud, financial fraud, and occupational homicide inflict incredibly serious damage on people and the environment. Why on earth is a criminal justice system geared to sifting the poor and minor offenders, pretending it is dealing with crime and social harm, when all the major harm is being done by the hidden rulers of our world, the multinational corporations?

A major reason for this is the consistent presentation by the media of crime as being primarily personal. Through newspaper, radio, and especially tabloid talk shows, and in the news and entertainment on television, crime is deliberately portrayed in manageable portions of murder, muggings, burglaries, and theft, allowing old fears and prejudices full reign.

The public perception of crime is largely shaped by corporate media and tabloid television, which focus overwhelmingly on street crime, illegal drug use, robberies, and theft. If the media devoted proportionate time to the corporate muggings and homicides that are carried out through fraud, unsafe products, usurious lending practices, pollution, occupational accidents, and starvation wages, public perceptions would shift to reflect reality more accurately. Without the pressure of a mass movement, this will never happen. The same big business people who perpetuate corporate crime control the media through colossal advertising budgets, cross-directorships, and ownership.

The actual functions of the criminal justice system are unstated, unacknowledged, and even illicit. Any criminal justice system reflects the values (or lack thereof) of those who hold power in society. Thus, criminal law in America has become a political instrument, formulated and enforced by those with status and power against those who are predominantly poor and powerless.

By and large our prisons are reserved for those with dark skin, little money, or unconventional lifestyles. The powerful manage, most of the time, to escape the sanctions of the criminal justice system. Either they have the means to hire good defense lawyers or they are able to make a better impression on juries and judges because they don't look like what we have been taught to expect "criminals" to look like. At another level it's been demonstrated time and again that violations of environmental, workplace safety, and other laws are seldom prosecuted as crimes and punished by incarceration, though they kill and maim far more persons and rob and damage far more property than any actions committed by poor people.

We are left with the question: What is the real crime and who are the criminals? Until we start to focus on violence in its global corporate context and not restrict ourselves merely to the localized street version, we will never learn to identify and grapple with some of the biggest criminals in our society. And we will never create a society where the common good is achieved, where people are truly respected for who they are, where true justice prevails.

Correspondence:
Troy T. Thomas, H-01001, CSP-LAC
PO Box 4430
Lancaster, CA 93539

shame and punishment, schools will continue to be places that push out youth of color and traumatized youth. This push-out will then continue to feed the prison industrial complex. Restorative practices, which are being practiced in a large number of school districts throughout California, is one of our best tools to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and to acknowledge and support the gifts and struggles of our traumatized youth of color.

i "Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment among Dropouts" by Sam Dillon, the New York Times, October 8, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html?_r=0
ii "Police Handcuff 6-year-old Student in Georgia" by Antoinette Campbell, CNN, April 17, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/17/justice/georgia-student-handcuffed/>
iii [citation on work computer]
iv Breaking Schools' Rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to juvenile justice involvement. Council of State Governments. Fabelo, Thompson, Carmichael, Marchbanks, and Booth, 2011.
v Breaking School Rules. Fabelo et al. (2011)
vi "Nashville Schools See Racial Disparities in Suspensions" - National Public Radio, July 12, 2010. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128466061>

Cat Willett is a Restorative Practices Coordinator for Catholic Charities of the East Bay. **Jordan Thompson** oversees the Restorative and Trauma Informed Practices (RTIPs) program for Catholic Charities of the East Bay. Both have a background in social work and a current interest in addressing disproportionality in school discipline and ending the school-to-prison pipeline. They also both require a lot of caffeine to do their work (or, at least, Cat does.)

SUPPORT CRITICAL RESISTANCE AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE ABOLITIONIST!

Your subscription helps us to send the paper to over 5,000 prisoners for free.

- \$10 for 3 issues (3 prisoners get a free year's subscription)
- \$20-\$50 for 3 issues (6-16 prisoners get a free subscription)

Name _____
Mailing Address _____

Billing Address (if different) _____

Please charge my credit or debit card.
Credit card type: _____
Credit card number: _____
Expiration date: _____

I have enclosed a check payable to Critical Resistance.

Yes, please send me email updates!
Email address: _____

Cities in Revolt: Chicago

BY DAVID STOVALL

Educator and activist David Stovall shares his remarks from a plenary session at the *With/Out Borders?* conference this past September. This is the second piece in a three-part series on "Cities in Revolt."

To every person in Detroit who has ever had their water services terminated, to every person in New Orleans who weathered the storm called Katrina, to every family in Chicago that had a child in one of the 49 schools closed last spring, to every family that lives under constant fear of immigration raids in California, Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado, to the families that have lived in Ferguson, Missouri under an apartheid state before Mike Brown's death: we must understand this political moment as one that is not coincidental, unfortunate, or a general instance of happenstance. Instead, it should be understood as a moment where the lives of First Nations (the only Indigenous), Black, Latin@, Arab, and Southeast Asian are deemed disposable in their respective locales.

I speak from the instance of someone who lives in a police state. At any given moment on my block there could be anywhere from one to three police cruisers within 100 feet of my front door. Rookie officers walk beats on foot and ride bicycles to provide a sense of security for "new" residents (read White and affluent with a sprinkling of middle-class Black folks who are new to the area) in the Woodlawn community as the University of Chicago expands its reach to envelop the entire community.

Here in Chicago we have a new nickname—"Chiraq." It was created on the urban legend that in 2012 there were more people killed in the calendar year than were killed in the manufactured Iraqi conflict. This has created a notion that youth of color in Chicago who might reside in neighborhoods classified as low-income are in some way inherently violent or naturally deficient. This is the furthest thing from the truth. Instead, we must understand that the conditions in Chicago are exacerbated through a process that pits one block against another, simultaneously creating a cage in which to collectively kill ourselves.

Chicago is a hyper-segregated city. Despite rampant gentrification in certain areas, Chicago is not a city of neighborhoods but a city of universes. People can spend lifetimes here never experiencing certain parts of the city due to age-old demarcated lines that live in our minds and bodies. Because some of us many not venture out into other areas, it doubly creates a sense of home while also engendering a sense of protectionism. In this moment, the city has lost 200,000 residents since 2000. Of those, 178,000 were Black. Additionally, the city has destroyed 80% percent of its public hous-

ing while only rebuilding 20% of its lost housing stock. Despite the fact that many buildings were in disrepair, there is also the reality that these places were communities that people understood as home. More insidious to the process is the fact that the Chicago Housing Authority had promised to rebuild 100% of the razed buildings. To uproot massive numbers of people without any accountability is criminal. But as we say around here, it's the Chicago way.

This particular way has created an instance that is deeply complicated by segregation, the police state, school closures, and the lack of quality, affordable housing. Since 2004, Chicago has closed or repurposed over 150 schools. In the summer of 2013, they closed 49 schools due to austerity measures under the moniker of budget cuts. As an educator, I always ask my students what would happen if there were two rival high schools and one was closed. I continue the story to say that students from the closed school would be relocated to the rival school. From there I ask them what they think would happen on the first day. The majority of my students reply with "fights."



WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THE CONDITIONS IN CHICAGO ARE EXACERBATED THROUGH A PROCESS THAT PITS ONE BLOCK AGAINST ANOTHER, SIMULTANEOUSLY CREATING A CAGE IN WHICH TO COLLECTIVELY KILL OURSELVES.

Now just do that 49 times in one fell swoop and what is the expectation? Couple this with the fact that people who do not have a history of living amongst neighboring communities due to hyper-segregation are mandated to live in "rival" areas if they are even able to find housing. Add this to the fact that the city of Chicago decided to engage a full-barrage attack on reported "gang chiefs." While some of us may have issues with street organizations (i.e. gangs), it is important to understand that the majority of their organizational structure is maintained by centralized leadership (i.e. chiefs).

The Chicago Police Department, along with the FBI and the Cook County Sheriffs Office, thought a strategy of incarcerating gang chiefs would have the same affect as RICO statutes had on the Mafia. The results were disastrous. Instead of curbing conflict, it resulted in the decentralization of street organizations. Groups that once had large affiliations were now decentralized to block-by-block organizations. With the leadership removed, young people without the stability of the organizational structure began to turn on themselves. As some of the groups already had access to weapons, the conflict resulted in a uptick in homicides.

For the reasons mentioned above, I do not understand Chicago violence as a byproduct of hyper-violent youth. The conditions are the result of an engineered, manufactured conflict that the state uses to justify police brutality, gentrification, and disinvestment. But we are not lying down—currently there is a movement in Chicago (and other cities) to challenge this state of affairs. Communities have begun to organize themselves under the banner of reclaiming our city. In this collective rights movement for Chicago, families are teaming with community organizations to resist the state and their developments that aim to curtail the ability of residents to determine their realities. Whether it's working to decentralize the juvenile detention facility, developing strategies to create authentic community schools, offering moratorium measures on Charter school proliferation, or shedding light on the mental health crisis on the South and West sides of the city, we are not taking it!

Our work stands as testament to the work ahead and the solidarity we need to create in very troubling times. We are not afraid. We are ready.

David Stovall is associate professor of Educational Policy Studies and African-American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A native of Chicago, he has a long history of social justice activism around education, housing and community.

CHICAGO PROTEST IN SOLIDARITY WITH FERGUSON

Continued from page 5, "Voizes"

fused to talk about, despite the questionnaire? And, in which other countries have you made interviews or received interviews from?

All of the current interviews have been shot here in Barcelona or in the surrounding area, including the interview with the woman that was detained in Puerto Rico. Generally, the questions in the questionnaire are designed to be broad, so as to highlight parallels and accentuate the differences between individual interviews. By far, the most difficult question for the interviewees to answer is the question about alternatives.

We are currently working on coordinating interviews in Argentina, Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Venezuela, and France. And in March we are planning on taking the project to the United States where we'll be organizing a series of workshops and presentations, as well as continuing the collection of interviews.

The majority of prisoners interviewed were imprisoned for the first time and they tell about the trauma of such an experience, of being imprisoned, of regaining liberty and its aftermath. Have you interviewed recidivist prisoners? Do you think they deal differently (or better, if we can say that) with the prison system?

So far we have only done one interview with someone that has a long history of recidivism. While I can't point to any specific differences, other than the broader focus of the interview is different, generally speaking the shorter the interviewees' sentence is/was, the more they talk about their detention and entrance in prison. Whereas those interviews we've done with people that have served longer sentences or have been incarcerated repeatedly, the interviewee has focused more on the experience and institution of incarceration.

Many of the prisoners, when asked about who's inside, they all agree on the same thing: the majority of the people incarcerated are individuals without resources, the poor, people who can't afford a good lawyer, immigrants, minorities. The mere thought of it is depressing enough, but isn't this a reflection of our society, of its inability or unwillingness to address its flaws accordingly? Isn't prison a mirror wherein society can actually punish these people even more and in more appalling ways, for being what they are or what circumstances made them to be?

I think this is true. But I'd add that it's also about maintaining very specific power structures and economic structures that guide the globalized capitalist world. Prison is about control and subjugation. It is about guaranteeing the economic and political interests of those in power, those controlling the criminal justice system and the broader economy. More than punishment, I'd say prison is about maintaining white power. It is the ultimate tool of marginalization. As a result, as long as we don't address the broader legacies of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism and understand the prison industrial complex within this framework, it will be hard to affect any lasting change.

Dostoyevsky once said that a society is best judged by the way it treats its prisoners. It already says a lot about Western civilization and the society we live in. Do you think that a change, a change in the way we deal with the established concepts of crime and delinquency and, consequently, with sentencing, imprisonment and prisoners' reinsertion into society, ought to be a progressive and gradual one, both from the inside as well as the outside, from the prisons themselves and from society and its political structures; or should it be a radical one?

In general I think history moves slowly, and as a result so will any abolition debate or movement towards meaningful reform in the dominant logics of criminal justice. Prison abolition or any radical change of the criminal justice system will not occur in a vacuum, it must be part of a broader social transformation. As a result it is part of an extended struggle, probably longer than our lifetime. Undoubtedly, there will be moments of radical change, but I think we should all be planning on playing the long game.

Finally, considering all the accounts of detention and subjugation stemming from the prisoners' interviews, do you see any hope in the fight against the prison industrial complex in terms of better conditions, better treatment of inmates and detainees, or do you see this business becoming more profitable for speculators and at the same time more abusive and tyrannical in its scope, in spite of all the resis-

tance movements against it?

I have to be hopeful; otherwise there is no sense in doing this work. As a documentary photographer and photojournalist I've covered many topics and followed many people documenting their stories of loss, struggle, resistance, consumption, and marginalization. And I'm continuously inspired by the human spirit. Our strength, creativity, and courage are really powerful. As result, I believe strongly in our capacity to affect change. Specifically, in regards to the prison industrial complex, I believe we've reached a critical historical moment where the opportunity for radical change is growing. In the United States, where the prison industrial complex was born, the economic crisis has ushered in a new opportunity for debate. For many states the economic costs of mass imprisonment have become just too much of a burden. This, coupled with shifts in the country's feeling about current drug policy, means there is more space for debate than ever before. I think we have to take advantage of this moment. Internationally, I believe that for the same reasons there is a growing awareness that imprisonment does not work, be it subconsciously or not. So we just have to keep plugging along.

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions. We hope to see more interviews at Voizes in the future and we wish you all the best for the project.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about *Voizes*. We really appreciate it, and we strongly encourage your readers to take a closer look at the website and if possible, collaborate!!! Thanks again.

VOIZES ARCHIVE
Voizes.org

FRACTURES PHOTO COLLECTIVE
Fracturesphoto.com

BERMUDEZ: *Luigi Celentano is an independent writer and translator based in Buenos Aires. As an advocate of libertarian (anarchist) ideas he has been contributing with his work to the abolitionist and social justice movements for several years.*



Using a “Power Lens” to Unpack the PIC

BY K.S. PETERS

Names of students have been changed.

“Oh it looks like *Call of Duty*,” one of my seventh graders says. Our history class just watched a promotional video of the 2013 Urban Shield “First Responder Training” program. Clips of large armed men in camouflage come one after another, often having them aggressively circle unmarked vans or strategically come around the corner of a building, not knowing what will be on the other side. Another shot shows a shiny large tank on continuous tank tread with cannons on top. A third depicts a first-person camera, a large rifle in the fore-front weaving through hallways, each turn matching the dramatic music that plays in the background. “Awesome!” several students yell out, some of them mimicking the motions of the police on camera and making their classmates laugh and smile.

The video had opened with a time-lapse shot of Lake Merritt, showing blurred figures at dusk rushing around the lake. The sky fades into darkness, with the lights of downtown Oakland mirroring off the peaceful water and stars whirling past the Bay. Fewer and fewer people come into the camera shot as the night darkens, and the narrator’s deep voice warns of what happens when the details of our daily lives come to a halt. “What if all of a sudden it stops? Tragedy strikes. Then we look to our everyday heroes, the ones we depend on. Our first responders.” The video cuts to people injured on a race track, fake blood smeared on their bodies and the floor around them, a man screaming out for help. Extras are running around in the background in panic, looking for what to do and where to go for help. The narrator returns. “How do we prepare them for such atrocities? How do we train them for days like these?” I pause the clip.

“What ‘atrocities’ do you think they are referring to?” I pose to the class. The class starts shouting out answers.

“9/11!” “A bombing!” “A school shooting!”

“Do you think they would ever come into your neighborhoods like this?” I ask. Several students chuckle.

“The cops only come when you don’t want them – they never come when you actually call,” one student states.

“Yeah! My cousin saw a guy get shot the other night. He called the cops and they didn’t come ‘til almost an hour later. What if he had been shot real bad?”

It’s the first week of September. I teach at a school in East Oakland, and we are opening up our year by discussing the connections you can make between the past and the present. Urban Shield participants and trainers have already arrived in Oakland, and activists and organizers have been prepping for weeks to protest the existence of Urban Shield and their use of Oakland as their testing ground for police training and the sales of military weapons.

I replay a part of the clip showing the Assistant Sheriff of Alameda County describing the goals of Urban Shield. “Urban Shield is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline training event that incorporates activities of public safety agencies in a full-scale training exercise... to train together, but to also implement technologies which will help these various disciplines do their job more effectively, more efficiently, and ultimately the goal of Urban Shield is to save lives.”

“Remind me, who made this video again?” I ask the class. One student raises his hand and says that he remembers seeing a credits line in the beginning that said “in association with Alameda County Sheriff’s Office.”

“Awesome David! That’s a really great use of observation and attention to detail.” I try to make a mental note of David’s strength here and how I can draw on this as the year goes on.

“So, if this video is made by the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office, and the Sheriff’s Office is the one hosting Urban Shield, do you think this video is trying to show Urban Shield in a positive light, or a negative light?” Almost all the students say it is attempting to portray it positively.

I open up another video, this one of last year’s protests against Urban Shield. Clips of protestors with signs outside of the downtown Marriot come one after another, and different organizers and speakers take turns on the microphone stating why they are against Urban Shield. I pause on a shot of Cephus ‘Uncle Bobby’ Johnson, Oscar Grant’s uncle.

“Does anyone remember who Oscar Grant was?” A few students raise their hand.

“He was a kid that got killed by the police a few years ago, at the BART station.” “Oh yeah, they made a movie about him!”

I hit play on the video again. “Johannes Mehserle and his partner testified that they thought they were going into combat,” Cephus Johnson explained. “And when they came up on that platform, they had that mentality, again, thought, that they were actually at war.”

After the clip ends, I pause it on the closing credits where it has a website: <http://www.facingteargas.org>. “This is a website for the War Resisters League. Now based on that name of this organization, do you think this video is trying to get you to view Urban Shield as positive or negative?”

“Negative,” one student states. “If they are a War Resisters League, they are against war. So they probably wouldn’t want more police and military.”

“Excellent, exactly. Whenever you read or watch something, you always want to know the source. Who made it? Why did they make it? What are they trying to get other people to do, think, or feel? Now, turn your worksheet over and look at the two documents attached. We are going to continue using our sourcing skills to answer today’s lesson question: ‘Why does the U.S. have police?’ Before you start reading, I want you to write down how you would answer this question right now, before looking at any specific evidence. You have two minutes: go.”

I walk around the room and peer over students’ shoulders as they write. I see students answer with: *To protect people. To keep people safe. To make sure people follow the law. To punish people who do bad things.* Part of this is what students have been told by others or believe themselves. For others, this is what they think they are supposed to write, what they think the “right” answer is. After a few students share their answers with the class, I have them move into groups to analyze the documents on the back of the worksheet.

This is a Medieval World History class, intended to teach students the history of all the major civilizations and empires between the years 500 to the late 1700s. While the first document is an infographic that highlights the major legal shifts in the

1980s and 1990s that got us to our present-day reality of frequent SWAT raids and the ongoing “War on Drugs,” the second document attempts to connect the lesson to this medieval timeframe more directly.

This article provides a brief history of policing in the United States. It connects the origins of modern-day police forces to the 7th century English king, Alfred the Great. Families who swore loyalty to King Alfred organized groups of men in their region to look over the land. These groups then appointed a single official to be in charge, who later became known as “sheriffs.” In the 11th century, however, this appointment shifted from being decided by the local feudal lords to the King or Queen themselves, making even clearer the purpose of police to maintain the ruler’s power and laws. The article continues to discuss how this model shifted in the American colonies with the establishment and growth of a slave society. The Night Watches of the early 1700s morphed into slave patrols, surveying and policing the land to look out for enslaved people who were trying to escape, or to head off possible slave revolts before they could become a threat.

As students work, I occasionally give them a time check or remind them of the overall question they need to be investigating: “Why does the U.S. have police?” There isn’t time in class for a whole group debrief – we’ll finish that tomorrow – but I do have students move their tables back into two stacked horseshoes. I ask them to write for five minutes on how they would answer our original lesson question now that they have examined new evidence.

Several students still write “to keep people safe” or “to uphold the laws,” partly because they did not fully read or understand the evidence, others because it is the first period of the day and they would rather still be asleep. But others write “to keep the people in power in power,” or “to stop slaves from escaping,” or “to push the people who are already down further down.” I see that some have referred to specific parts of the documents to back up their opinion, and some have cited partial quotes from the article to make it clear from where they got their evidence. I make another mental note of the students who are and who are not doing this so that I know who I can lean on or need to push further when we do our “evidence and analysis” lesson next week.

This lesson will lead into a unit on “Dominant Narratives” in history, where they will use the state textbook to get a sense of how the dominant culture writes about world history. Issues of historical sourcing will become key, as well as knowledge of which state has the largest influence in what textbooks get mass-produced (Texas) and an analysis of what historical stories make it into the textbooks, and which get left out.

Students will employ a method of reading I call “the Power Lens,” where students are asked to hone in on specific words and determine how that word choice impacts how this history is viewed. For instance, when the textbook describes the Aztec leader Moctezuma II, what words does the author use to describe him and his choices? How do they discuss his relationship and interactions with the Spanish conquistador, Hernán Cortés? Where is Moctezuma placed in the sentence structure: is he the subject or the object? How do these choices give the reader insight into the author’s possible bias of this history?

Many students will struggle with this at first – just as many college students struggle with other forms of discourse analyses in their undergraduate courses. Attempting to see what is not being said is hard. Finding the nuance and bias in our supposed “post-racial society” is intentionally difficult because it is intentionally hidden, or in many cases, unintentionally written if the author has not analyzed their own views on race, colonialism, and the way language matters in discussing history. This type of critical reading and thinking is essential when studying history, however, and especially when studying the history of policing, prisons, and surveillance, all of which have been made to seem common sense. The vast majority of people in the U.S. cannot yet imagine a world without these things, including many students in my class.

Historian Emma Pérez described one way of doing this kind of reading as the “Decolonial Imaginary,” where you “read against the grain” to uncover the voices and perspectives that have been left out, removed, or ignored in the majority of historical sources. “I am frustrated with history’s texts and archives,” Pérez writes in her article, “Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard.” “I’ve always wanted to find in the archives a queer vaquera from the mid-nineteenth century whose adventures include fighting Anglo squatters and seducing willing señoritas.” In the absence of such archival gems, Pérez provides a method for using the documents available to historians without reinforcing the hegemonic lens through which these historical sources are often written.

In an attempt to train my students to use the same care and critique in our history class, I ask my students to engage in a similar “reading against the grain.” They will use this lens again when they go into our Juvenile Justice unit in November, where they will read newspaper articles and case reports of young people in the “justice” system and need to discern when the author is discussing facts of a case, and when the author is implying assumptions of innocence or guilt, often based on the stereotypes around the youth involved. This lens will also come in handy when they enter my eighth grade U.S. history class, which includes a unit on the Reconstruction era and how modern racial categories have been constructed over time. This unit traces the transformation of non-racialized indentured servitude of the early 1600s into the race-based slavery of the late 1600s and 1700s. It then describes the post-emancipation transition from slavery to convict leasing, and then the later shift towards the modern-day prisons we have now. As the 13th Amendment reminds us, “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime...”

As the last minutes of class come, I remind students that this legacy of policing is still alive and well. It is alive in the murder of Oscar Grant, of Trayvon Martin, of Michael Brown. It is alive in the fact that the military-grade weapons and training mentality that the police used during Occupy Oakland are still with the Oakland Police Department, ready to be used for the next rally or protest. And it is alive in Urban Shield, which at the time of this lesson was only a few days away. I remind them of what I wrote in my start of the year letter to them, that I love studying history because of how it helps me understand the present. That when I am working on a campaign with Critical Resistance to stop a jail from being built or end the use of solitary confinement in California prisons, we often research what abolitionists have done before us to get ideas of where we should go from here. That knowing how something was built can help us understand how to tear it down. We never forget that we are a part of the history of abolition, that this fight went on long before us, and that it will continue long after us.

The clock hits 9:30, the students pack up their papers and pencils, and I tell them that we will continue to investigate, explore, and fight tomorrow.

Kaedan S. Peters is a middle school history teacher in Oakland and a member of CR Oakland.

