

CRITICAL RESISTANCE

April 29, 2015

Dear allies and supporters,

Hello from Critical Resistance Oakland! We hope this letter finds you in good health and your work going well. Critical Resistance (CR) has been heavily involved in prisoner organizing to abolish solitary, from the first California prisoner hunger strike in 2011 to the 30,000-strong strike in 2013. We are currently building an outside strategy to keep solitary confinement in the spotlight. We are writing to ask for your support for a project that will launch this summer.

To commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the biggest prisoner strike in history, we are organizing an “Abolish Solitary” social media campaign to kick off in July 2015. Each day in July we will post photos of loved ones, survivors of solitary, and cultural leaders like you holding the sign attached with the call “Abolish Solitary.” **Prisoners have explicitly asked us to reach out to leaders in the hip hop and arts community to popularize this call. We aim to amplify the message so it lands strongly with the broader public and most importantly with Black and Brown communities who are most impacted by solitary and imprisonment.** Will you participate?

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

To contribute to this project, we ask that you take a photo of yourself with the “Abolish Solitary” sign, attached. We encourage you to personalize this sign by writing a message saying who you stand in solidarity with, why you believe solitary confinement must be ended, what you dream for instead, or by personalizing it with a message to someone you love who is inside prison. Please email this photo back to crnational@criticalresistance.org, with #AbolishSolitary in the subject line, and include your twitter handle and any other way you want to be credited. We will post these photos on social media and on our website, beginning on July 8. **Deadline to submit: May 21, 2015.**

We hope that you will join us to amplify the call to abolish solitary confinement, and help us build the movement for a world without cages and policing – a world that is built on strong communities, stable housing, beautiful art, and quality food and education. Your contribution would give this campaign a huge boost.

In solidarity,
Critical Resistance Oakland

P.S. On the back you can read more about Critical Resistance and how CR has amplified the call to abolish solitary confinement. We hope you will join us in carrying the struggle into the next phase!

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How Critical Resistance has amplified the call to abolish solitary confinement

As an anchor organization for the California prisoner hunger strikes of 2011 and 2013, CR served as the press office, generated national and international media attention, and developed grassroots strategies that built the hunger strike support movement on the outside. In 2014, CR continued to amplify the core demands of the California prison hunger strikers by coordinating rallies, facilitating spokesperson trainings for formerly imprisoned people and loved ones with family in solitary confinement, and developing strong media messaging that kept the issue of solitary confinement in public consciousness.

In 2015 we are extending our strategy in partnership with imprisoned organizers to compel grassroots organizing and advocacy to abolish the use of solitary. 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 gather ideas for next steps. We also want to increase our contacts with family members and loved ones in order to deepen our collaboration and support their needs.

More about Critical Resistance

Critical Resistance is a national organization that does grassroots political organizing to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC) - the interlocking systems of state violence such as prisons, policing, surveillance and courts that as a "solution" to political, social and economic problems. In each of our chapters (New York, Oakland, Los Angeles, Portland), members build campaigns and projects that fight the violence of imprisonment, policing, surveillance and the court system in ways that are most relevant and suited to the local context. We have a small national staff of 3 people, and all of our work is led by volunteer members.

Our mission

Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) 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.

Our vision

Critical Resistance's vision is the creation of genuinely healthy, stable communities that respond to harm without relying on imprisonment and punishment. We call our vision abolition, drawing, in part from the legacy of the abolition of slavery in the 1800's. As PIC abolitionists we understand that the prison industrial complex is not a broken system to be fixed. The system, rather, works precisely as it is designed to—to contain, control, and kill those people representing the greatest threats to state power. Our goal is not to improve the system even further, but to shrink the system into non-existence. We work to build healthy, self-determined communities and promote alternatives to the current system.

Critical Resistance (CR) is building a member-led and member-run grassroots movement to challenge the use of punishment to "cure" complicated social problems. We know that more policing and imprisonment will not make us safer. Instead, we know that things like food, housing, and freedom are what create healthy, stable neighborhoods and communities. We work to prevent people from being arrested or locked up in prison. In all our work, we organize to build power and to stop the devastation that the reliance on imprisonment and policing has brought to ourselves, our families, and our communities.