

# Critical Resistance Oakland

## Introduction to the Prison Industrial Complex

### WORKSHOP OUTLINE

(\* = use a flipchart)

**Three key points for this workshop:** The PIC is complex; the PIC works/is not broken; because the PIC is so complex, the fight against it is also very complex

#### **Introductions (20 min.)—Facilitator 1**

- Participant Introductions (name and anything else important to know about you—pronoun, physical things, etc.)
- Warm Up
- Review Agenda\*
- Review why we're doing the session
- Group Agreements\*

#### **CR's Definition of the PIC (20 min.)—Facilitator 2**

- PIC shout out \* (what do they think the PIC is—put brainstorm up on flipchart)
- Participant definitions
- Introduce definition from the **Abolition Toolkit**, relate back to 3 main points\*
- Talk about how all the elements fit together, why CR uses this definition, how this understanding fits into our chapter's work

#### **Picturing the PIC (40 min.)—Facilitator 1**

- Introduce circle exercise\*
  - Introduce each circle
    1. Elements of the PIC are written out on post it notes to the side of the flip chart
    2. Each participant puts up one post it at a time, progressively working from the inside circle to the outside. As they put up the post it, they talk about why they are putting it there and anything they want to say or questions they have about the element—including as it relates to any work they've done with CR
    3. At the end of each circle, open up for additional comments or fill any gaps in the conversation

#### **Closing (10 min.)—Facilitator 2**

- This session is meant to be part of ongoing chapter political education (4<sup>th</sup> session where they read together)
- Pass out handouts (PIC talking points, What is the PIC? Repression Breeds Resistance, LA circle)
- Feedback on the session
- Any outstanding issues?
- Info, for next time (Intro. to Abolition); upcoming events

## **Critical Resistance**

### **Intro. to PIC**

#### **Elements of:**

#### ***The Introduction (20 min.)***

#### **What materials you need:**

- Agenda up on a flip chart
- Flipchart for group agreements
- Facilitator's names and contact information up

#### **What you do:**

This section of the workshop has five parts: 1) introducing the participants, 2) an icebreaker, 3) agenda review, 4) group agreements, and 5) reviewing CR's mission and structure. Overall, it is meant to get everyone thinking a bit about what the PIC is, and why they want to work with CR. As the first section, it's also a really important time to set the tone for the entire workshop. You should get through this section in about **20 minutes**.

#### **Part 1: Introductions (5 minutes)**

Set up: Explain that we're going to introduce ourselves to help get to know each other.

How It Works: People go around and introduce themselves. Say specifically at the start if you only want people to say their names, their names and something else specific (how they heard of CR, for example), or their names and whatever else they want to share that will help them participate better in the space (pronoun preference, if have physical needs, etc.).

Introduce yourselves as the facilitators, saying your role(s) at CR and anything else you want people to know about you.

#### **Part 2: Icebreaker (5 minutes)**

While everyone might not want to do an icebreaker when they facilitate, it can be helpful in transitioning people into the workshop and help set a good tone.

Set up: Explain that you want people to find someone sitting near them to talk with.

How it Works: Each member of each pair will take 2 minutes to describe some way that they have experienced the prison industrial complex. As the first member of the pair talks, the other member listens but does not respond. The facilitator will call time and ask pairs to trade who is talking. Then the second member of the pair takes a turn at the same prompt for 2 minutes.

### **Part 3: Agenda Review (2 minutes)**

Set Up: The agenda should be written out clearly on a flipchart, and already taped up in a part of the room where everyone can see.

#### How It Works:

1. A facilitator explains that we're going to go over the agenda so that we all know what we're here to do, and what we're trying to get out of each section.
2. A facilitator reads through the agenda
3. A facilitator takes any questions there might be from the participants.

#### What to Cover:

There are two points to emphasize:

1. That we're here to learn a **common** definition of the prison industrial complex that Critical Resistance uses, so we can all work together to abolish it.

This workshop, like the whole orientation series, is geared toward helping people figure out what CR does, and if they want to work with us.

### **Part 4: Review Why Doing the Session (5 minutes)**

Set up: Since this is a continuation of the new member orientation series, you'll want to have continuity from the last session—remind them that was Part 1 of four sessions--and also check for understanding of CR's history and structure.

#### How it works:

1. The facilitator talks about the orientation series, and how the pieces build on each other. This session will lay out CR's understanding and analysis of the prison industrial complex. While this isn't the only understanding, it is the frame that CR uses and that we ask our members to use, too.

### **Part 5: Group Agreements (3 minutes)**

Set Up: Have the laminated group agreements flipchart paper up on the wall

#### How it works:

1. Explain that we'd like to agree to a few ways of being together for this workshop as a group to make sure that we all learn together and feel good about our interactions.
2. Go over the standing agreements that CR uses that are already on the paper and informally ask participants if they understand them and agree to use them. These are:
  - i. Be responsible for your own participation
  - ii. Technology silent
  - iii. Step up, step back
  - iv. Check your assumptions
3. Ask the participants if they have any to add (they can just shout them out, popcorn style). Again, informally gauge consensus in the room for that agreement and add it to the list.

After all the agreements are up, read through them one last time, ask if people have final questions or urgent additions, and put the flipchart to the side (make sure it stays visible for the whole workshop).

<b>Important points to cover:</b>
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- **Set a good tone.** For some people in each workshop, this will be one of their first interactions with CR. Many people (including maybe you) will be tired from a long day of work. Do what you need to do before the workshop to get ready to go (eat, get some coffee, sit quietly for 10 minutes, etc), and focus on making everyone feel welcome and excited to be spending their time this way.
- **Be clear.** Especially at the beginning, you don't want anyone to feel lost. Take an extra second to see if people have questions about how to do the icebreaker or when you go over the agenda.
- **Explain what you're going to do**, before you do it. Remember to start Part 3 with "Now I'm going to explain the agenda," instead of just diving in.

## Critical Resistance

### Intro to PIC

#### Elements of:

### *CR's Definition of the Prison Industrial Complex (20 min.)*

#### What materials you need:

- Definition from the Abolition Toolkit (hand out)
- Scraps of paper for definitions
- Laminated Flip chart page with the definition written out

#### What you do:

This section of the workshop has four parts: 1) prison industrial complex shout out, 2) participant definitions, 3) introduction of the definition CR uses to describe the prison industrial complex, and 4) an explanation of why CR uses this definition, where it comes from, and how it fits into our analysis and practice. You should aim to finish this section in about **20 minutes**.

#### Part 1: PIC shout out:

Set up: have a piece of big paper up, and some markers. Ask participants to shout out any and all parts of the prison industrial complex that they can think of.

#### How it works:

1. As participants shout out parts of the PIC, write them up on the big paper. Ask people to be specific, and also be ready to push back when participants add things that are within the logic of the PIC (“broken families,” or “crime,” for example, would be examples of things to ask a further question about).

2. After about **5 minutes**, the facilitator should end the brainstorm and ask people to take a look at the brainstorm as a whole. The facilitator should:

- Ask “what connections do you see?”
- Make sure there is a good range of parts of the PIC up. It should cover policing, imprisonment, and surveillance, for example. It should have structures (**white supremacy, patriarchy**), and institutions (**courts, corporate media**) and interests (**banks, politicians**).

#### Part 2: Participant Definitions

Based on the brainstorm and their own experiences ask each participant to write their own definition of what they think the prison industrial complex is. Ask a few participants to share their definitions with the other participants. What things are consistent across the definitions? What seems different? Spend no more than **5 minutes** on this part.

#### Part 3: CR's definition of the PIC

Set up: un-tape the flip chart page to reveal the definition. Pass out the handout with the same definition on it. State that the first part (the part in bold on their handout) is the core of the definition and that the other part of the definition helps fill out and explain that core description.

How it works:

1. Ask one or more people to read the definition out loud.
2. The facilitator should check for understanding within the group and ask for questions.
3. The facilitator should discuss where the definition comes from and highlight these three points as the “take homes” for the definition:

**Political points:**

- Highlight **all the parts** of the prison industrial complex (imprisonment, policing, surveillance, courts, ICE and DHS, media, etc.)—**the PIC is not just prisons.**
- Related to all the elements that make up the prison industrial complex, highlight the “**complex**” portion of the prison industrial complex (discuss why we don’t focus on privatization, unwaged and low-waged labor, as the central feature of our definition)—**the PIC is not just about privatization.**

**Part 4: Why CR uses this definition**

Set Up: After covering the basic elements of CR’s definition of the prison industrial complex, say that now we want to talk a little about why we use this definition.

What to cover:

1. This definition is from the **Abolition Toolkit** and that it developed out of lots of discussion and looking at a number of different descriptions of the prison industrial complex.
2. This definition highlights the variety of elements that comprise the PIC and the forces at work in keeping the PIC in place.
3. While this is a basic definition that CR uses for training and political education, it is also just a jumping off point for people to develop their own ways of talking about the prison industrial complex. Depending on who you’re talking to and the setting, you will need to focus on how to talk about these ideas in a way that’s most meaningful to the person or people you’re talking to.

# Critical Resistance

## Intro. to PIC

### Elements of:

### *Picturing the PIC Exercise (40 Min.)*

#### What you need:

- For Part 2: Blank circles (laminated) with post-its, LA circles handout, blank post its; fill in the circles with the language that helps you describe each part of the circle in a way that makes sense to you—just make sure you keep the order the same (e.g. the PIC is a set of interests; what systems are empowered by the PIC?, what is the PIC supposed to get rid of?, who does the PIC affect/target?, what does the PIC create?)

#### What you do:

This section of the workshop has two parts: 1) a PIC brainstorm review, and 2) the PIC Concentric Circles. You should aim to finish the first section in **15 minutes**, leaving **35 minutes** for the circles.

#### **Part 1: PIC shout out review**

Review the ideas people came up with during the brainstorm the group did during the definition exercise. Do people want to add anything? Are there new connections that can be made?

#### **Part 2: Concentric Circles:**

Set Up: After finishing the brainstorm, the facilitator should explain that it can also be helpful to look at all these parts of the PIC in a more systematic way. To do that, our LA chapter developed the concentric circle exercise we're about to do.

#### How it works:

1. Untape the laminated big paper blank circles, and the post-its with different elements of the PIC up on the wall.
2. Read through the blank circles ("The PIC is a set of interests...empowered by these forces..."). You can use whatever language is clearest to you, but keep the order consistent—the goal is to make the language from the circles complete a whole sentence.
3. Ask the participants to come up, one at a time, pick an element of the PIC (one of the post-it notes), place it where it belongs in the circle, and explain to the group why that is so. Ask them to start with the inner circle first and work their way out, placing 2-3 post-its in each circle (depending on the size of the group).

4. After each post-it is placed and explained, the facilitator should ask if there are questions, if other participants have something to add, and/or comment yourself on that choice of post-it placement and explanation. Facilitators should trade off taking the group through each circle.

5. Ask participants if there are any post-its they want to move from one circle to another, explaining how it fits in both (or more) circles.

6. Pass out the hand out with the filled-in circles. Ask for questions and close.

### What Goes in Which Circle?

It is helpful to have (at least) one way to rephrase what each circle is about. Some ways to talk about them are:

**“The PIC is a set of interests”** means “Who benefits from the PIC?”

**“Underpinned by these systems of oppression”** means “What systems of power create and are supported by imprisonment, policing and surveillance?”

**“That uses these tools”** means “How does the PIC keep itself going?”

**“As a response to these problems”** means both the real harms we face as well as the problems people who use the PIC say it addresses.

**“That affects/targets these people”** means “Who gets caught up by the PIC?”

**“And produces these results”** means “What happens when we rely on imprisonment, policing, and surveillance as solutions to social, political, and economic problems?”

### Political points:

Some points you might want to make:

- Both the brainstorm and the circles show the same thing in different ways. The brainstorm might be a better way to see how much is part of the PIC, or to search for new connections between elements of the PIC. The circles help us highlight how elements of the PIC do particular kinds of work to keep the PIC moving and growing.
- The circles show really well that the PIC is not broken – in many ways, the interests at the center are more powerful than ever, and the results at the end are being produced more abundantly than ever

- Where are PIC reformers and abolitionists? When picturing the PIC, it might be useful to point out our place(s) in it.
- Of the three words in the phrase “PIC,” “Complex” might be the most important – these models show that the PIC is broad, deep, and intertwined within itself.
- The PIC encompasses our entire society - is there anything that can't be related to punishment, imprisonment, policing, or surveillance?

Trainer Skills
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- **Teaching moments vs. Open Conversation.** Ask questions about why participants put post-its where they did and how they explain each element.
- **Draw People Out.** Ask them to say more, get more specific, and ask questions themselves.

## **Critical Resistance**

### **Intro to PIC**

### **Elements of:**

### ***The Closing (10 mins)***

#### **What materials you need:**

- Handouts (make sure to update the calendar of upcoming events before the session)
- Flipchart to do evaluation

#### **What you do:**

This section has 5 parts: 1) pulling it all together, 2) passing out handouts, 3) feedback on the session, 4) final questions, and 5) information for next time

#### **Part 1: Pulling it all together**

You should explain the following points to everyone:

1. This session is meant to be just part of ongoing political education, which at CR is a central part of everything we do.
2. There are lots of other ways to keep learning, which include talking to other members, asking questions in workgroups as you join and at general meetings, and continuing to find readings and discussing them
3. Introduce “Fourth Intro. Session” where participants discuss the readings from Intro. to the PIC and Intro. to PIC Abolition together. More information on that after Intro. to PIC Abolition

#### **Part 2: Pass out the handouts**

1. Pass out each handout, and explain briefly what each is, where it’s from and why we selected it.
  - **Calendar of upcoming meetings and opportunities to participate**
  - **CR’s Prison Industrial Complex Talking Points.** This set of ideas comes from the CR Organizers’ Toolkit and offers some ideas about ways to talk about the PIC.
  - **“Moving Target”** Justice Policy Institute. This piece is a survey of trends in the PIC from 1998 to 2008.
  - **“Repression Breeds Resistance: Reflections on 10 Years of the Prison Industrial Complex,”** From *Left Turn*. This piece explains in more detail the political history of the PIC and how different elements fit together

#### **Part 3: Feedback**

1. The easiest feedback is a “Plus/Delta.” Draw a line down the middle of a sheet of big paper. On one side, write “Plus,” on the other, write “Delta” (which, in this case, comes from the mathematical symbol for change.

Ask people to shout out what they liked about the session, and what they would change. Write each on the side it belongs to (or in the middle). If you have a workshop evaluation you like better, go ahead and use it.

#### **Part 4: Any outstanding issues?**

This is not a place to dive into a complicated discussion about the PIC, abolition, or CR. Ask honestly and openly if people do have more they want to discuss, but try to suggest a way to continue that conversation elsewhere (see above for other places in CR to do political education) or set up a time to talk with them more deeply. **Note:** *The questions that come out here are probably good to pass on to the facilitators of the Intro to Abolition session, so they can try to incorporate answers into their workshop.*

#### **Part 5: Info for Next Time**

Make sure everyone knows when and where the Intro. to Abolition workshop is. Ask people to confirm their attendance.

<b>Additional points:</b>
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- **Analytical work is work.** The PIC has grown, oftentimes, because people have tried to make it “better,” without a good analysis of how it works. CR was founded in part to create new ways of making political change – which to us includes spending time and energy creating shared understandings of how the PIC works.