The Demand is Still Defund the Police

By Andrea J. Ritchie

In 2020, incited by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks and hundreds more Black people killed by police in the midst of a global pandemic and the ongoing economic and environmental crises devastating Black communities, the civil rights movement of our generation united against police brutality. Organizers across the country brought the power of the streets to bear to push policymakers to cut over $840 million nationally from police departments, saving an additional $35 million, and advocating to invest over $160 million into public safety initiatives beyond policing.

#DefundthePolice was - and remains - the demand as organizers entered the 2021 budget season armed with a deeper knowledge of the operation of city, county, and police budgets, a clear commitment to non-police, community-based safety strategies, broader networks of community-organizing, training, and budget tools to calculate the costs of policing and alternatives. Groups in Seattle and beyond are working to #DefundThePolice victories they won in 2020, while pushing for deeper cuts and investments.

But this is neither the beginning, nor the end, of the story of demands to defund police – nor are they isolated from broader struggles for prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition. The notion of diverting from police and investing in community-based safety strategies is deeply rooted in Black radical abolitionist traditions. It represents a step in the long arc toward the abolitionist horizon of dismantling policing, and the PIC that requires it, altogether.

WHERE DO DEFUND DEMANDS COME FROM?: A LONGER HISTORY

Calls to divest from policing, imprisonment, and prosecutions echo the demands of the Black Panther Party’s 10-Point Platform for Black Liberation: “We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people... We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.” The demands were articulated by former Panthers and political prisoners like Eddie Ellis, who, speaking about his concept of “human justice,” explained, “right now the [PIC] is so massive that it’s almost beyond our imagination. But if we shrink it, not only in terms of the number of people who are captive within it, but also in terms of the money that’s being spent as a consequence of it, we begin to make it more manageable.” They are also rooted in global struggles to divest from the state violence that maintained apartheid South Africa and militarism worldwide that many organizers of my generation cut their teeth on.

Since the 1970s, demands to defund the police and prisons have paralleled spikes in prison populations and the size, scope, and budgets of police departments. In a 1995 Nation article about California’s booming prison industry, fueled by exponential growth in the number of imprisoned people driven by newly enacted “three-strikes laws,” radical geographer and historian Mike Davis observed, “To keep even the most rambunctious set of prisoners under control, the state will have to loto its higher education budget for dozens of new prisons.” Davis went on to report that, in response to projections of skyrocketing prison costs, a gubernatorial spokesperson admitted, “If these additional costs have to be absorbed, I guess we’ll have to reduce other services. We’ll have to change our priorities.” Davis went on to explain, “As a result of a successful campaign to stop a new prison in California through CPMP to stop a new prison in California through October 2020, one of CR’s first campaigns led by the California Prison Moratorium Project (CPMP), founded in 1999 by Craig Gilmore, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and others to advocate against new prison construction. In fact, as shared in CR’s “Our Communities, Our Solutions: An Organizers’ Toolkit for Developing Campaigns to Abolish Policing,” released in October 2020, one of CR’s first campaigns led by the California Prison Moratorium Project (CPMP) to stop a new prison in California through a divest-invest strategy to “shrink and starve” prison construction. Even though the prison was ultimately built, California abolitionists successfully halted the world’s most aggressive prison construction project through this anti-

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Beloved Readers,

What a year 2021 has already been and we are only halfway through. We welcome you to Issue 35 of The Abolitionist, our second issue of the year, with features on the defund policing movement and a return of each of our columns.

This issue was written, edited and printed at a time of transition and the continued fortification of grave inequity as we’ve entered the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the reopening to “business as usual” as more people in the US have accessed COVID-19 vaccines this spring, the pandemic rages on in many communities around the world, and inside and outside of cages. 43.3 percent of people in the US have been vaccinated (according to Our World in Data), supposedly slowing transmission rates, though testing sites have become more limited. UNAIDS reports that wealthy nations like the US are vaccinating one person every second, while the majority of poor countries have yet to administer a single dose, and continue to face critical shortages of oxygen and other medical supplies to combat the virus. Meanwhile, the US, UK and entire European Union are blocking poorer countries of the Global South acquiring access to the vaccine through the World Trade Organization.

According to the Marshall Project, by the beginning of June 2021, at least 398,623 imprisoned people in the US have tested positive for CO-VID-19, 248,099 of whom have recovered, with 2,700 confirmed deaths. The Federal Bureau of Prisons’ adopted a policy in recent months of removing COVID-19 cases and deaths from reports. As a result, the Marshall Project has been unable to get a more accurate data on COVID-19 in federal prisons, which have had the highest spread than any other institution. The Marshall Project has released to report that 31,000 federal US prisoners requested compassionate release during the COVID-19 pandemic so far, while the Bureau of Prisons has only approved 36 cases. Based on the data the Marshall Project does have access to, California prisons continue to have the highest COVID-19 rates, followed by federal prisons and then Texas.

This time has been marked by the passing of so many people, particularly many movement elders. We are grieving the passings of Linda M. Thurston and former Black Panther and political prisoner Romaine Marbre Stahly-Butts, and include efforts to honor them both in “Until All Are Free” Political Prisoner Updates, and The Abby Throwback. May 2021 was the one year anniversary of George Floyd’s death and the rebellions that spread across the world in his name. We reflect on this past year of collective grief as organizing to defend police and dismantle policing programs burst into the mainstream in a three-angle interview for this issue’s featured reflective piece “One Year Later”, with Miski Noor from Black Visions in Minneapolis, Aima, a UK-based youth activist who founded All Black Lives UK last year, and Lara Kiswani from the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) in the Bay Area. Additionally, Andrea J. Ritchie contributed this issue’s featured analysis piece breaking down the origins of the defund policing movement and how it connected to the movement to abolish the entire prison industrial complex (PIC).

These two central pieces are accompanied by a set of action-oriented articles and interviews. Activists across the US that explore in detail some of the robust anti-policing organizing our communities have been advancing this past year. These pieces cover a range of topics from getting cops off campuses in K-12 schools and post-secondary education in a joint interview with Black Organizing Project in Oakland, CA and Police Free PA, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to data-driven policing and surveillance-technologies, like the work of Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, or the organizing by Stop the Sweeps PDX and others against Business Improvement Districts and Enhanced Service Districts. We also include organizing examples to decriminalizing weed through the light for cannabis legalization, and challenging and replacing the “% Crime Bill with legislation created through a People’s Process with the People’s Coalition for Safety and Freedom. Together these grassroots examples demonstrate a range of creative and diverse strategies used and angles leveraged to resist policing and further the abolitionist movement. Nonincidentally, many of these example campaigns touch on similar points and lessons for sharpening our organizing in our present moment and beyond. We offer these articles as resources for understanding and strengthening defund strategies for abolition, and to enhance our collective resistance across cages and walls.

As demonstrated in the Movement Highlights of this issue, and several of the features particularly “One Year Later,” we see the global character of the PIC and its role in protecting racial capitalism, and we understand defunding as one of many abolitionist strategies. For Critical Resistance, PIC abolition is an internationalist political rooted in anti-imperialism and an anti-colonial vision. Whether the struggle is defunding police departments and dismantling policing programs in the US, or resisting the ongoing occupation in Palestine, or against neoliberal austerity policies in Colombia, or standing up for each other when cops or guards brutalize one of us, CR will continue to find ways to be present and contribute to making sense of the movement. Our final issue of 2021, Issue 36 to be printed by summer, will feature “Pathways toward Freedom,” where we will explore different strategies for getting out of cages inside and outside the US. We invite all our readers to help share the content of our newspaper, by reviewing our submissions guidelines in our Call for Content on page 22 and submitting content for this issue or other issues to follow (Note: Our mailing address has changed!).

As always, we hope Issue 35 fuels your spirit and sharpens your tools for resistance, collective liberation and self-determination.

Onward,

Critical Resistance and The Abolitionist Editorial Collective ♦

Letter from the Editors

THE ABOLITIONIST

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Critical Resistance (CR) 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.

CONTRIBUTORS
Abe and CRNYC
Aima
Andrea J. Ritchie
Chris Rogers
Erika Perry
Gustavo Martinez-Aquapacho
Ian Alexander
Jackie Byers
Kaitlyn Dey
Kamasi Butcher
Kassandra Frederique
Kira Shepherd
Krystol Strong
Lara Kiswani
Linda M. Thurston
Marbre Stahly-Butts
Matt Meyer
Miski Noor
Ricardo Vala Jr.
Ross Cullen Plumb
Stephen Wilson
Stop LAPD Spying Coalition
Tasha Brown
War Resisters League

EDITORS
Billy Ray Boyer
Dylan Brown
Ian Baran
Molly Portig
Nick DeRenzi
Rehana Lerandue
Rory Elliott
Susana Draper

THE ABOLITIONIST

ISSUE 35

ARTISTS

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expansion, anti-prison strategy, and California has not built a prison in the over twenty years since.

This campaign also led to the formation of Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), an alliance of over 70 anti-prison organizations continuing to lead abolitionist divestment campaigns and budget organizing in California. In 2004 CURB helped found the No New Jails coalition in Los Angeles, which successfully defeated a measure to introduce a new sales tax for public safety in 2008. While in 2010 CR Oakland members applied their “shrink-and-starve” anti-expansion strategy fighting prison construction to “chipping-away” at policing by voting in managerially appointed commissions and the charter process in California, California through the Stop the Injunctions Coalition.

These strategies are in no way unique to California organizing. Across the country, New York City’s Real Real Estate Project fought to stop the construction of youth jails at a cost of $64 million, calling instead for investment in schools and youth programming, and an end to the school-to-prison pipeline. While not always organized explicitly under the banner of “defund the police,” demanding divestment from all arms of the PIC has been a long-standing horizon. The blog post, reproduced in forms that could move us closer to the abolitionist framework for addressing mass criminalization shared the 6Ds Until She’s Free and Investing in a Just Recovery and into their coffers. The exponential expansion of criminalization since the 1970s and 1980s is no accidental or isolated phenomenon—it is a corollary to the economic policies that produce the city budgets are targets of fund demands. Each fuels the other: neoliberal policies gut the safety net and loot the commons for private profit, causing widespread unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. The fallout of these economic policies is met with increased criminalization, requiring more and more police and pushing more and more people into jails and prisons. The costs of criminalization are then in turn used to justify further cuts to social programs and basic infrastructure, and the cycle continues.

Increasingly, surveillance, policing, arrest, and criminal punishment have become the first line of defense against addiction, poverty, mental illness, youth behavior and school discipline, and countless other social problems, real and imagined. Crime and its (r)acial capitalism as a whole. Explicit calls to defund police began to emerge in post-Ferguson liberation movements when Mariane Kaba penned a blog post in 2014 for organizers seeking solutions beyond expensive book contracts and fruitfully outlined a list of non-reformist police reforms that could move us closer to the abolitionist horizon. The blog post, reproduced in Kaba’s recent book We Do This Til We Free, placed cuts to police department funding at the top of the list. In 2015, CR co-founder and former staff person, Rachel Herzing, wrote that the easiest way to decrease police violence is to reduce police contact in an essay entitled “Big Dreams and Bold Steps Toward a Police Free Future.” She described a campaign by California’s Youth Justice Coalition to divert just 1 percent (roughly $100 million) from the Los Angeles Police Department budget and direct it toward programs and services for young people instead of youth suppression. Also in 2015, Oakland’s Anti-Poison Project launched RealDefund Oakland Community campaign, which successfully fought to halt construction of a $95 million dollar police academy, demanding that these dollars be spent instead on educational investments that could move us closer to the abolitionist horizon. The blog post, reproduced in Kaba’s recent book We Do This Til We Free, placed cuts to police department funding at the top of the list. In 2015, CR co-founder and former staff person, Rachel Herzing, wrote that the easiest way to decrease police violence is to reduce police contact in an essay entitled “Big Dreams and Bold Steps Toward a Police Free Future.” She described a campaign by California’s Youth Justice Coalition to divert just 1 percent (roughly $100 million) from the Los Angeles Police Department budget and direct it toward programs and services for young people instead of youth suppression. Also in 2015, Oakland’s Anti-Poison Project launched their Defund Oakland Police Department campaign—obliged with a $30 million dollar police expansion, anti-prison strategy, and California has not built a prison in the over twenty years since.

In 2016 the Movement for Black Lives released its Vision for Black Lives, featuring demands to divest from policing and invest in life-affirming institutions instead. In 2017, Sea Change led a campaign to “Block the Bunker,” a 150 million new police precinct. In 2019, Interrupting Criminalization launched the 6D Until She’s Free framework for addressing mass criminalization and incarceration of women, girls, trans and gender nonconforming people—calling for de-criminalization and divestment in the criminalizing, and impunity of systems of punishment, and demanding new approaches to safety. Organizers across the country, including in Minneapolis, have been fighting explicitly to divest police budgets and resist increases in police force size, equipment, and power for decades.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?: DEFUNDING, DISMANTLING, REBUILDING

Defunding the police means investing the billions currently poured into policing and the PIC and monies to support anti-prison community-based safety strategies, and into meeting basic needs like housing, health care, access to health care, food, water, education, youth enrichment, access to care for disabled people, childcare, elder care, and living wage jobs accessible to people regardless of immigration status, while also addressing climate, escape, intervenue in, and transform the conditions that create violence and criminalized behaviors. As an abolitionist strategy, it is a process of creating community centers and networks, including our relationships, and institutions that will create genuine and lasting safety for all. Centering human needs and collective care, defunding the police is also an anti-violence strategy. By reducing the power of police to enact violence and working to ensure that survivors of violence—the majority of whom neither seek or obtain protection from police—have access to a multitude of options and resources to prevent, interrupt, avoid, and escape violence, it is also a survivor-led anti-violence strategy.

Defunding policing is far more than a budgetary exercise—it means striking at the root of the socio-economic and political forces that have created a society that extracts resources from Black communities, disables, and low-income populations, deprives them of the means to meet basic needs, infrastructure, and shared public goods, and then capitalizes on and invests in their suffering. It means more than just reducing and ultimately eliminating the resources spent on policing, but shifting shared society’s resources to health care, education, and infrastructure to meet basic needs. They are the surest way to decrease police violence is to prevent, interrupt, avoid, and escape violence, working to ensure that survivors of violence—the majority of whom neither seek or obtain protection from police—have access to a multitude of options and resources to prevent, interrupt, avoid, and escape violence. It is also a survivor-led anti-violence strategy.

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According to the Marshall Project, defunding the police is an exercise in which about 190,000 incarcerated people surveyed in the fall of 2020, with levels of support of up to 90% among Black imprisoned people. Many incarcerated people surveyed said that their conditions of incarceration have prevented the circumstances that led to their incarceration, including access to mental health care, education, social services, and payback to society. If the anti-expansion strategy fighting prison expansion, anti-prison strategy, and California has not built a prison in the over twenty years since.

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Defund the Police

By Ross Cullen Plumb

Defunding the police is a movement to save lives, countless lives, like the life of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old shot to death by police only seconds after they arrived on the scene. The stories are endless...Trigger-happy police and wild-west policing are the standard practice and can no longer be tolerated. Countless lives are being destroyed as those responsible hold themselves above the law.

We can no longer stand idle as people’s lives are being thrown away, eaten alive by the ever-expanding prison industrial complex (PIC).

The courts are out of touch, unsympathetic, and outright corrupt. The policing system is not based in a love for the community and it refuses accountability, answerability, and responsibility.

Prosecutors demand responsibility and accountability from everyone except themselves and law enforcement fails to turn over and even destroy critical exculpatory evidence, send informants on missions to get testimony or make up stories and regularly engage in misconduct as part of the widespread “win at any cost” attitude.

By moving to defund the police, we move against exploitation, the greatest theft of our time. We don’t have a justice system; it isn’t about justice, it’s about money and oppression. It’s the sword and shield of systemic racist capitalism, completely illegitimate and for profit, hiding behind its legitimacy, weaponry, and influence. The war on drugs, the war on terror, the war on crime—lies. Oh, you have rights—lies. Legal recourse—lies. Keeping people as “offenders”, expanding the value gap between have and have nots. How fast? 73 million people as “offenders”, expanding the value gap between have and have nots. How fast? 73 million people as “offenders”, expanding the value gap between have and have nots. How fast? 73 million people as “offenders”, expanding the value gap between have and have nots.

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The police are not reforming while we cry for justice. They offer us crumbs and words to console us and another cover-up begins. If we do not defund the police, the war on drugs, the war on terror, the war on crime will only continue.

We have to organize our hard push to defund the police and redirect funds to support the legitimate, weaponry, and influence of policing across the US. The demand is, still, defund the police.

About the Author:
Andrea J. Ritchie is a Black lesbian immigrant whose organizing, research, litigation, and advocacy has focused on policing and criminalization of women and LGBT people of color for the past two decades. She is the author of Invis- ible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color, co-author of Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women (AAPF 2015) and Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States. She works with groups across the country to support campaigns to defund police and end police violence, criminalization, mass incarceration, and deportation through the Interrupting Criminalization initiative she co-founded with Mariame Kaba and with the Community Resource Hub. She has been learning from CR since she met Rachel Herzing in 2003 and attended the CR South conference. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Linda Marie Thurston.

San Francisco high-school youth planted activism from San Francisco’s housing, labor and immigrant rights movements. To paint in permanent yellow letters “Defend the Police” on the facade of San Francisco City Hall on June 20, 2020. Smoke drifts through anonymous photographs (courtesy of Brielle Andrews).

“"Our visions for community support, mutual aid projects, and mobilizations of grassroots organizations must be made into clear demands to have resources and community support. We have to organize our hard push to defund the police and redirect funds toward human need.”
With Miski Noor, Aima and Lara Kiswani by Molly Porzing

“Daddy changed the world.” – Gianna Floyd, daughter of George Floyd, 6 years old.

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police arrested a 66-year-old Black man for allegedly using a “counterfeit” $20 bill at a corner store. The lethal position George Floyd was thrown into when he was pinned down by a police officer peeling on his back and neck killed him. As video of this common but deadly policing move went viral, hundreds of cities internationally mandated COVID-19 quarantine procedures, protests of all kinds spread worldwide. Fed up, we burst into a historic moment where we learned to “organize like the police” entered the international mainstream. To delve into the complexity and dynamism of 2020’s summer of global rebellion as a historic moment in struggle for prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition, The Abolitionist Editorial Collective interview abolitionist organizers from three different cities in Minneapolis to share their experiences.

First, we interviewed Miski Noor (pronouns they/them), a co-founder and co-executive director of Black Visions, a power and base-building organization for Black queer and trans communities. Black Visions was founded in 2017. Second, we interviewed Aima (they/she pronouns), a 19-year-old new abolitionist and activist based in London, who co-founded the organization All Black Lives UK last year, as protests in response to the murder of George Floyd went global. We’re a youth-led organization committed to the liberation of Black people in the UK. The UK’s Black youth are suffering, and it’s never really spoken about; the state and Seabourn’s racism especially targets young Black men. We focus on Black lives, especially trans and queer lives, because Black trans women need to be protected, with so much transphobia and racism we do community education and organize a lot of protests against police and racism in particular.

Since George Floyd’s death and all the protests, the government cracked down and is trying to pass a new policing bill - the Police, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The Kill the Bill movement is opposing it in Parliament now. In February 2021, the bill allows police to deem a protest “too noisy” or disruptive and then stop it instantly. If you resist, cops can use any violence against you by law. You can also go to jail for 10 years for organizing a protest the police don’t like. Throwing a tomato at a statue gets 10 years in prison. If you’re not from the UK, and police stop you at a protest, they can deport you just because you’re foreign. Then the bill also expands discrimination against the Roma community, requiring that they “have travelers” rights. The United Kingdom basically makes schools prisons. We’ve been organizing protests against the bill, and we delayed it in Parliament two months ago.

Lara, Palestine: Before the death of George Floyd, AROC was a lead organization with CR in Stop Urban Shield to defend the world’s largest SWAT training and militarization expo. AROC joined to expose the relationship between policing, militarism, and surveillance, as it relates to both apartheid Israel and war-making more broadly. We knew our Bay Area corner stores and surveillance footage is illegal law enforcement. That beat cop was a friend of the store owner and was trained by Israel. That surveillance was also used by the FBI. Since our community understood the FBI and the Israeli military, we could use that. Since people most impacted know what it takes to shift our conditions, we ensured those most impacted by militarism and policing were at the forefront. We successfully defunded Urban Shield; those funds are now reprioritized and redistributed to our community. Defunding Urban Shield provided our own community practice of solidarity as joint struggle, while offering a concrete win for the Bay Area and beyond. Urban Shield exposed fascism, surveillance, militarism, and Zionism.

We’ve also worked on Block the Boat to stop port workers unloading an Israeli ZIM ship. In 2014, Israel was bombing Gaza, a spectacle of Palestinian families and children massacred was all over the news. We decided to build with the port workers’ union in Oakland, in solidarity with workers in Palestine. We built that coalition similarly to Stop Urban Shield, with deep anti-militarist principles around abolition. We built directly with ILWU Local 10 rank-and-file, a predominantly Black union, that historically chose not to unload apartheid ships, stood against the Holocaust, in solidarity with the Justice for Oscar Grant movement, and in case in solidarity with Palestine. Through on-the-ground outreach for weeks, our youth and community spoke to union members about why to not unload that ship, and how a ship bringing in weapons from Israel impacted communities in Palestine and US Black and Brown communities.

We own a statement from Palestine saying, “Please stand in solidarity with us.” The union—a Black labor union that has historically stood up against US imperialism, capitalism, and racism—responded to that call and did not unload. This shows what’s possible when you build relationships with communities who are impacted, who share struggles and fates, taking collective action together, to chip away at the systems that are harming us.

AROC has also worked on creating alternatives to policing. Through our partnership, CR’s analysis of the PIC and abolition has very much informed our thinking to translate that analytical work in a way we could bring to our Arab-speaking base, AROC worked with Ra’as Social Enterprise (co-founder and longtime former member) to develop alternatives to policing in the Arab-Muslim community. What does it mean for Arabs to be abolitionist? What does it mean for Arab Muslims to stand against the PIC? The language doesn’t exist in Arabic. We didn’t want to just come up with a document; we wanted to come up with practices. What could we actually do to embody an abolitionist worldview, and what could we do to put that into practice, to profoundly change the world and also be solidarity to protect others? We’re still working on those practices, but we developed this document, translated into Arabic in 2017, and made it available again after the death of George Floyd. It became much more sought-after in 2020 because there hadn’t been such frameworks in the Arab-Muslim community prior. It was also a building block for us. Now we do training for many organizations, are in conversation with businesses, with community partners around what it could look like to have alternatives to policing, to not call 9-1-1, and to no be in compliance with the FBI.

Right after George Floyd was killed, we did a series on the history of Black-Palestinian solidarity. If you were raised in that tradition, our organization’s historical memory ensures that people understand the history of struggle. From its inception, AROC has been deeply committed to Palestinian liberation as a contribution to all

One Year Later: Reflections from Minneapolis, Palestinian Solidarity, and UK Youth on George Floyd Summer of Global Rebellion

continued on next page
movements against US imperialism and settler colonialism, a belief shaped by and informed by the Black radical tradition. This should also be in service of our collective liberation, and anything we do that undermines any one’s liberation actually undermines our own.

**Aima, what was the response in the UK after George Floyd was murdered and rebellions spurred across the world in streets?**

**Aima:** The main response was anger, not shock, especially from Black Europeans. One thing we spoke about is the link between policing in the US and in the UK. A lot of us understand police violence and killings here, too. We like everyone, realized that it’s a global issue. George Floyd showed how much the death of Black people in the UK is ignored because Britis h media likes to focus on the US and US racism but ignores the amount of anti-Black oppression in this country. We were marching for George Floyd last summer, but we were also marching for an ice building on grassroots organizing, and there’s been a lot of ice building that’s happened. Again, the Kill the Bill movement is working to stop Priti Patel’s bill that attacks our rights to protest, discriminates against the Roma community, but also increases the amount of policing we have. The fact that our protests made the government delay on whether they are going to actually pass the bill shows that a lot of people are out on the streets and how much pressure we are putting on the government. They knew that if that bill had passed, it would not end well.

**Lara, what are some of the roots of Black-Palestinian solidarity? How has BlackPalestinian solidarity been expressed in the current response to George Floyd’s death and the rebellions in his name?**

**Lara:** For a lot of us, Black-Palestinian solidarity didn’t recently emerge; it’s a part of how we understand Palestinian liberation. Specifically, we have an analysis of racial capitalism and liberation of Black and Indigenous people, in the US but also globally. The roots are quite deep, in terms of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. We’re not alone in this. Any kind of anti-colonialism is informed by the Palestinian movement, how the Black radical tradition is very much in formation, and the ways that the Black and Palestinian movement is informed by the Black radical tradition. The tenets are internationalism, anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, a deep emphasis on the importance of grassroots organizing, and on cross-movement building locally and internationally. That is reflected in the Palestinian left, globally, in diaspora, and on the ground in Palestine. We trace it back to political disillusionment in Palestine reading Angela Davis, how Malcolm X shaped and influenced the Black liberation movement in the US and solidarity with Palestine, and how that shaped the Palestinian movement’s understanding of Black liberation.

Today, the movements in the US against the PIC still inform the movements on the ground in Palestine and the ways people in the US understand Black lives, imprisonment, imperialism, and militarism as global in character. Palestine offers a lens for everyday people—a window into internationalism. That’s why we have a relationship between US imperialism and the construction of the state of apartheid Israel. While over 400 police departments around the US get trained to deal with low-level crimes, this does not make the fact that the Israeli defense forces come and train or bring police departments from the US to Israel the problem with police; instead, policing in Palestine is organized by the Israeli state but in corporate and political campaigns. That collaboration exposes the role of Israel in global policing.

The murder of George Floyd propelled newly formed commitments toward understanding anti-Blackness in the Palestinian community and the US. The fact that the corner-store where George Floyd was killed was Palestinian-owned is not unique; many corner stores are Arab-owned. People moved very quickly to condemn that it was an Arab corner store or to sound off about Blackness within the Arab community. On the other hand, we can see that the movement distacts from a clear critique of racial capitalism, from asking the needed questions: Why is it that those corner stores exist in the first place, and why is it that they are rewarded for doing policing? Why are corner stores deputized to become their own form of law enforcement in communities, and how are we working to disrupt that model if we want to have true police abolition? How has that been enforced and normalized in this country? Beyond that, how is the history of solidarity, movement building, and relationships between the struggles of Arabs, Palestinians, and other Black and Brown communities in the US and globally? Many people made it seem like the first time Palestinians realized that we own corner stores, that we in many ways reinforce oppressive relationships, or that Palestinians are learning about anti-Black racism both within which is absolutely not true; it’s ahistorical.

**Miski, what are some of the key things we have learned about Black and Indigenous people, in the West Bank, depicting George Floyd wearing a kufiya, a symbol of Palestinian resistance and solidarity. Photo from The Popular Chorus.**

Particular to this last year, people were forced into a deeper conversation into what principled solidarity looks like, and we can take it as campaigns that advance Palestinian liberation without undermining abolitionist movements in the US. So many more people finally ask about alternatives to policing, what defunding the police means, and what will be refunded. In many ways, Black-Palestinian solidarity looks like solidarity period. In other ways, it was very particular because of our relationship to militarism. Our folks in Palestine marched for George Floyd, making direct connections between the Israeli occupation and what’s happening in the US with another settler colonial state. During the Ferguson rebellions, Palestinians tweeted from Palestine: “This is how you deal with tear gas—we have a long history of dealing with tear gas; here are some tips.” The 2020 rebellions were a little different; they weren’t offering advice. It was more: “We, as Palestinians, are with you, in joint struggle. We understand what’s happening to you deeply, and we’re also learning.”

**Miski, since George Floyd’s death, Minneapolis has become a beacon for Black liberation and solidarity. What are some of the challenges with this? What does Minneapolis need to do to become a model city for Black liberation?**

**Miski:** Folks always pay attention to the East or West coasts, but there are lessons to learn from the Midwest. There’s incredible organizing that’s happening. We are not just fly-over communities; there are youth, under 25. Leading this movement are out on the streets and how much people are protesting and going to the streets countless times. Again, the Kill the Bill movement is working to stop Priti Patel’s bill that attacks our rights to protest, discriminates against the Roma community, but also increases the amount of policing we have. The fact that our protests made the government delay on whether they are going to actually pass the bill shows that a lot of people are out on the streets and how much pressure we are putting on the government. They knew that if that bill had passed, it would not end well.

**Aima:** The defund policing movement is definitely in the UK. We know how much money the government is using for law enforcement and the amount of money we’re spending on the police. The UK’s abolitionist movement is getting bigger, but the government’s response in the UK to George Floyd’s death has been harder if we hadn’t built alignment with each other around the abolitionist and transformative justice and our practices.

**Aima and Lara, has the defund policing movement reached the UK or Palestine? How, if so?**

**Aima:** The UK: The defund policing movement is definitely in the UK. We know how much money the government is using for law enforcement and the amount of money we’re spending on the police. The UK’s abolitionist movement is getting bigger, but the government’s response in the UK to George Floyd’s death has been harder if we hadn’t built alignment with each other around the abolitionist and transformative justice and our practices.

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Lara, Palestine: Where we can find some clear connection is with the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against apartheid Israel, modeled after the movement against apartheid South Africa. In many ways, that is a defining campaign. It removes resources from that which is at the center of the criminal apparatus of the state and provides the organizing power for the international community to put pressure on Israel economically, politically, and culturally. BDS in the US pushes the US government to stop funding Israel $3.8 billion a year. Many are even having our first protest yet when The Daily Mail had written an article on us in 2020. Our protest was actually the first time in the UK a lot of people saw how much strength the movement has. I didn’t realize how many people felt emotional for me, because I’ve never seen that before. I was overwhelmed and felt comfortable speaking in public about racism. Then there were 20,000 people plus talking about racism in our country. It was a really big moment.

Lara, Palestine: Clear as day to me is the need to build organizing around these questions and build real solidarity in the communities themselves, to build across communities, to move people toward action, then our collective impact is limited. The most hopeful moment was when I’d be in conversation with elders or youth learning about our shared history and experience. When we did that political education with our members, many people were unaware of that long history of struggle between Black, Arab, and Palestinian solidarity leaders—Malcolm X in Egypt, talking about the statement on Zionism from SNCC—and seeing that as part of our history, ourselves as part of that history of struggle. We need to talk about prisons enough—about detention, increasing for so many people around an issue and a long-standing movement, and it is an opportunity to situate ourselves and today’s work into something much bigger.

Looking forward, what do you hope for the defend policing movement? How do we need to grow or strengthen this movement right now?

Miski, Minneapolis: We need strategies for all our enemies—from the white supremacists and fascists to the neo-liberals and reformers. Decolonization is a huge tool, sussing out what is strategic, what are the ways we need to build, with whom, where we can compromise, and where we have to stand strong. Sometimes conversations are convoluted and not easy to tell what is really for us and what is yet another trick. What does it mean for our country if we call each other out? What does it mean to be able to hold the principled versus the unprincipled? The personal versus the organizational? We all have to ask ourselves if we are good at responding to Black death and trauma. The way our communities, and how we’re collaborating with folks in more real ways.

My shining light is George Floyd Square. I want folks to know that since May 25, 2020, George Floyd Square has been an autonomous, police-free zone. The police come to harass and terrorize folks, but it’s been the community that’s held down that space. There are multiple memorials, not just for the murder of George Floyd and his killing at the hands of police; it was the rebellion against the murder of George Floyd and the ways it cages people. Imprisonment is a huge part of Palestinian everyday lived experience. This offers some point. Imprisonment is a huge part of Palestinian everyday lived experience. This offers a whole bunch of stuff because I’m trying to fight for my rights. I know that I have a community that supports me, people to talk to who want the same and who are going through the same thing, but it’s terrifying feeling like the rest of the country is against you. Black people are so gaslit, we can’t even say that we find something racist without other people calling us racist for talking about race. Plus, we have the SpyCops, who work to infiltrate activists. You always have to be aware, know everything that’s going on. The way the government is moving, you don’t know what could happen one day.

Also, take time for yourself. I never knew how much Black trauma there was that I had to witness and still had to handle. It definitely takes a toll. I feel like activists need breaks sometimes, to realize that we can’t always take control of everything. Even if you work so hard for something, it won’t break and break down. It’s no good having you not okay, watching what’s happening and feeling like you can’t do anything about it. I think that is actually the most important lesson.

The most inspiring moment was the first protest organized, marching from the US Embassy to Westminster with over 20,000 people in London. I didn’t realize how many people felt the same way, not just in Palestine, but worldwide. I felt like I wasn’t alone as a Black woman in the UK. I felt I actually had people who cared about my life, that my life mattered. I think that was the first time I felt like if you work hard enough and break out and break down. It’s no good having you not okay, watching what’s happening and feeling like you can’t do anything about it. I think that is actually the most important lesson.

We all have to build our skills if we’re going to co-govern. Sometimes it’s convoluted and not easy to tell what is really for us and what is yet another trick. What does it mean for our folks to call each other in, or call each other out? What does it mean to be able to hold the principled versus the unprincipled? The personal versus the organizational? We all have to build our skills if we’re going to co-govern.

Nothing new, nothing old, there’s even more youth-led formations, which feels really amazing to see.

Aima, UK: This is a global issue. It’s very important we all connect on a global scale and have conversations and educate each other about our countries, how we have organized, and how we can resist police and oppression. Another thing is you can’t trust anyone. It’s terrifying to say that, but I have never experienced so much racist hate in my entire life until last summer started. For example, we hadn’t even had our first protest yet when The Daily Mail had written an article on us in 2020. Our protest was actually the first time in the UK a lot of people saw how much strength the movement has. I didn’t realize how many people felt emotional for me, because I’ve never seen that before. I was overwhelmed and felt comfortable speaking in public about racism. Then there were 20,000 people plus talking about racism in our country. It was a really big moment.

Lara, Palestine: Everything we do must be from an internationalist perspective. Everyone around the world understands it that way. Globally, people suffer due to US foreign policy and ultimately are committed to our liberation in the US, it is in service of our own. As abolitionists, as anti-racists, or as communities impacted by racism and classism, to see ourselves as part of a global movement against racist capitalism, policing, and militarism, we must learn from lessons around the world. We have a responsibility as people to see the “bility of the beast” to do better, and to center people within prisons globally. We need to understand the anti-prison movement is inherently internationalist. In Palestine, prisoners, particularly political prisoners, are leaders of our movement. Their photos are plastered all over walls as heroes, informing the movement outside of the prison walls, developing strategies our people are accountable to. About 25 percent of our population become political prisoners at some point. Imprisonment is a huge part of Palestinian everyday lived experience. This offers a whole bunch of stuff because I’m trying to fight for my rights. I know that I have a community that supports me, people to talk to who want the same and who are going through the same thing, but it’s terrifying feeling like the rest of the country is against you. Black people are so gaslit, we can’t even say that we find something racist without other people calling us racist for talking about race. Plus, we have the SpyCops, who work to infiltrate activists. You always have to be aware, know everything that’s going on. The way the government is moving, you don’t know what could happen one day.

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Growing Abolition through Police-Free Schools: Coast to Coast

By Jackie Byers, Chris Rogers, and Krystal Strong with Dylan Brown

In June of 2020, in California the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) voted unanimously to pass the George Floyd Resolution, eliminating the OUSD Police Department from K-12 schools. This decade-long campaign against schools. This decade-long campaign against the “school district’s special force” was led by Black Organizing Project (BOP), a Black-led community organizing project working for racial, social, and economic justice through grassroots organizing. At the same time on the East Coast, a new student formation emerged, Police Free Penn, dedicated to dismantling the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) Police Department, abolishing all forms of policing, and transforming community: the goal is Police Free Penn are organizing their communities to transform educational landscapes to build learning environments from kindergartens through college free of the violence of policing.

What sparked the creation of your work to get cops off campus and out of schools?

Chris: Police Free Penn extends from a petition made in May of 2020 during the height of the George Floyd moment, making a connection between Penn’s complicity in the police state within this country. The petition got around 11,000 signatures in a week. We knew the petition alone wasn’t going to advance the type of abolitionist praxis that needs to happen, so we discussed how we moved from this idea of a petition as the end of this campaign to moving forward with the administration—to moving forward with strategies of direct action, partnerships with Black-led abolitionist movements on the ground in Philadelphia, and to think about our responsibilities as reaction—of saying this is what we want of the institution and the community.

Krystal: For decades, universities like Penn—but Penn very specifically—have worked to normalize policing and construct policing as part of our common sense. It’s important to reckon with the structural contradictions we have to navigate. When you look at highly resourced Ivy League institutions like Penn—which exist to reproduce the political and economic elites of the world and knowledge systems that just and continue to normalize political and economic systems—we see a casted organizing landscape. We are working against an institution that exists to incorporate, co-opt, and redirect dissent for the maintenance of the current structures of domination.

Then let’s say you want to engage in fugitive study or some kind of insurgent practice within this space that structurally exists for the opposite. We now have a lot of work with the extractive and antagonistic relationship between the institution and the community. How does one engage with and act in solidarity with the communities that are dispossessed and disenfranchised by the institution? That’s where abolition becomes not only a political objective but an ethical imperative, in order to even imagine being in relationship with the communities that are dispossessed and disenfranchised by the institution. Cops-off-campus is not simply about undoing the police state that is maintained by the univeristy, but abolition is also about repair—the beginning of repair—for the ways in which we are complicit in these kinds of structural relationships.

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Jackie: There were many challenges and that’s really important to underscore. Sometimes when you win a fight, people think “I’ll just do that too! You did that over a summer? No problem!” Then they get discouraged when they hit obstacles or when the system reverts back. It’s critically important and powerful to go through the hard work of organizing—the struggles, the ups and downs, the ebbs and flows of having to do and learn from it, and make corrections. From this process, we learned reforms don’t work and undermine the larger goal. Some time you think you’re going to win something, but the compromise is too great. It’s important to go for the larger vision. You’re really tested during this process, because it’s not only transformative in all the systems and structures, but collectively and individually around our own struggles and questions.

For BOP, our demand was elimination—completely. We did some reforms along the way, but never planned to stop there. That’s why we did a campaign strategy and said in 2020 we will eliminate the department. That has always been the goal. Building out the organization, getting people involved, and trying to develop systems so we could collect data, we did do some reforms. However, we always were clear that was not the end goal—we had to eliminate completely not only the department, but purge the practices and address all forms of policing. That’s where we’re still working towards as we are implementing the Resolution.

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One of the systemic challenges that emerged was police don’t have to prove themselves, even though all kinds of harm has happened. They can kill people, do harm, and still the burden is on us—as a community—to prove that we have an “alternative” that will solve all of society’s ills. That is always a frustration. Every time we’ve pushed for abolishing the school police force, the OUSD School Board comes back and gives us this impossible task of resolving everything. Even after we won the Resolution, they went and made a plan with us, to go forward with elimination. We pushed back. We said this sort of transformation is years in the making, and that we have to let go of an old model in order to put energy and investment into new ways of doing things, but that isn’t going to happen overnight. That burden doesn’t just lie with us at BOP that lies on all of us, all of us in this movement, and all of our communities.

What challenges and tensions emerged from conversations with administrators and faculty school boards? How did you attempt to address and transform concerns that were raised in these conversations?

Krystal: Interpreting what is radical, what is abolitionist, and what is even change-oriented as opposed to performative has been a challenge, a huge challenge for campus organizing and organizing in general. I think about the abundance of diversity statements and solidarity statements that happened in the summer and early fall of 2020 and how that has become its own kind of industry of expressing solidarity and alignment with the struggles that have been happening. In addition to those performance acts, we also fact a number of convenings that appear to be investigating, like task forces. Task forces are where real transformative shit have happened.
The abolitionist movement challenges institutional racism and seeks to address the deep roots of white supremacy in society. It involves the dismantling of systems that perpetuate harm and the creation of equitable alternatives. Abolitionists work to bring about a world where violence and punishment are no longer used to control or punish. They advocate for the elimination of systems such as policing and prisons, and the replacement of these with structures that prioritize restorative justice and community health. This includes the abolition of police and private security forces, and the creation of alternative models for public safety. The abolitionist approach is rooted in the recognition that systemic change is necessary to truly address the issues of racism and inequality, and that this change requires a comprehensive transformation of society.
**Fighting Back**

We spent much of 2019 and 2020 assessing our strategy and creating a plan to make it clear that we don’t want a reformed ESD. We want to abolish the districts entirely, including eliminating all security and policing within these districts.

We worked to ensure we knew everything we possibly could about the districts as a means to expose them. One of the main challenges we faced during the Central Eastside formation is that ESDs are deliberately difficult to understand. We began submitting public records requests to the Mayor’s Office, Office of Management and Finance (which oversees the ESDs), Council Clerk, and Portland Police Bureau. We sought to obtain any and all memoranda, communications, contracts, scope of work, complaints, etc. in relation to ESDs. During this process we learned the city does not keep many of the documents we were requesting. They attempted to charge us thousands of dollars to search for records which had no guarantee of even existing. We began placing pressure on the City Auditor’s Office to do an audit of ESDs, since there had never been an audit in the 25 years since their inception.

Our continued pressure worked. In August 2020, the City Auditor’s Office released an audit focused on the management of Portland’s three largest BIDs, known as Community Benefit Districts (CBDs). This report was led by the Portland Community Benefit Districts (PCBD) and the community oversight board created by Mayor Wheeler.

To begin this process, the Mayor’s Office created its own presentation about core patrol services and it was clear that we don’t want a reformed ESD. We mobilized quickly to oppose it. We’re noticing a trend of private policing filling in the gaps where public policing ends. We don’t want policing to be replaced with policing by another name.

As the city of Portland and its business lobbying groups attempt to regain the flow of tourism and commerce in the city after a year of the pandemic and large-scale protests, they are concentrating significant power in policing. Portland Business Alliance is pushing the city to begin managing Portland’s largest economic zones—both the first laws passed, which were led by my party and market communities of color by decades of racist marijuana enforcement. As a result, thousands continued to be saddled with lifelong conviction records that impede their ability to access housing, employment, education, and public benefits. In fact, some of these laws, like Oregon’s marijuana legalization initiative which now works hand in hand with local organizing to defund the police, we flooded the public comment survey filled in the gaps where public policing ends. We don’t want policing to be replaced with policing by another name.”

**DEFUND, ABOLISH, RESIST**

Meanwhile, our fight has gone hand in hand with local organizing todefend the police. In response to the 2020 uprisings nationwide and locally in Portland, Mayor Ted Wheeler announced a 19-point police reform plan. Part of this plan was a review of Portland Police’s “core patrol services.” This review is being led by the Portland City Auditor’s Office to an audit of the ESDs’ budget process. In addition to the $5 million in ESD funds, Clean & Safe also receives $25,000 from the city’s general fund. We are urging the city to no longer provide public funds for ESDs.

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**Weed Legalization and Defunding the Police**

By Kassandra Frederique

Like many reform movements in the US, the movement to legalize marijuana is neither monolithic nor unified. Marijuana legalization has the potential to either exacerbate racial inequities or to alleviate them. To realize marijuana legalization’s potential as a tool of racial justice, reform efforts must be embedded within an abolitionist agenda. Increasingly popular, marijuana legalization can be a powerful tool from the arsenal of police. Thus, it is crucial that as public policing is defunded, private policing does not become the go-to solution.

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In response to the growing number of BIDs nationwide, many organizations have begun investigating, exposing, and ultimately organizing against these entities. In San Francisco, BIDs known as Community Benefit Districts (CBDs) have played a large role in increasing surveillance, even if only if the audit is what helped us launch our current campaign opposing the upcoming Clean & Safe contract.

**DEFUND, ABOLISH, RESIST**

Where ESDs/BIDs exist, people are fighting back. BIDs in D.C. have also played a large role in facilitating gentrification and displacement of Black residents. Current Movements, Empower PCBD, and Portland big businesses joined other groups working to defund the police in an effort to begin organizing against them.

Our fight in Portland is a part of a movement to divest and abolish all forms of policing and social control. Dismantling the structures that allow for the private policing and criminalization of poor and unhoused people is particularly urgent in this moment of community demands to defund police.

In Washington, D.C., the North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA) BID drafted an open letter asking the city to implement “pedestrian safe-passage zones” at the security cameras unhoused people were living. Within months, the city removed people from the underpass after putting up a police ‘sweeping’ program—known as the ‘sweep and passage’ way.” BIDs in D.C. have also played a large role in facilitating gentrification and displacement of Black residents. Current Movements, Empower PCBD, and Portland big businesses joined other groups working to defund the police in an effort to begin organizing against them.

Author Bio: Kaitlyn Dey is an abolitionist researcher and organizer based in the Northwest. She currently organizes with Stop the Sweeps PDX and Western Regional Advocacy Project, fighting against sweeps and those who profit from the exploitation of pov-erty and public space.

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wealth, and doing nothing to bring in Black and Brown sellers working in the pre-existing market to repair the harms of marijuana prohibition. This is why drug policy reform must be in service to abolitionist agendas and movements, centering and prioritizing the experiences of Black and Brown people and communities that have been most harmed by policing, including Black and Brown people and communities that have been most harmed by marijuana prohibition.

We understand the author, while critical and aware of this history, chose to use it in order to more precisely refer to the policy work happening in the fight for the substance’s legalization and to decriminalize drug reform and drug users’ rights.

“Decriminalization, done correctly, is a parallel and complimentary abolitionist strategy to defunding, both limiting the power of police.”

Kassandra Frederique is the Executive Director of the Drug Policy Alliance.

*Editors’ Note: Critical Resistance and The Abolitionist Editorial Collective ask our readers to be critical of using the word “marijuana” in the context of historic, racist colonialism and the history of criminalisation, particularly used to criminalize Latinx and Brown communities.

“Legalizing marijuana,” as it has racist connotations in a history of criminalization, particularly used to criminalize Latinx and Brown communities.
This September marks the 27th anniversary of the 1994 Crime Bill’s passage, one of the most harmful pieces of legislation in modern US history. The flaws within the bill are both substantive and structural, as highlighted by the late Senator Joe Biden in collaboration with police union leadership and without any substantive input from communities of color. The bill ran over one thousand pages, and it would devastate. As the movement to divest from policing and cages gains momentum, it’s vital that we change our investments to keep our communities safe, as well as the processes by which we decide how to allocate resources. The People’s Coalition for Safety and Freedom (PCSF) is working to replace the Crime Bill with proposals that would cut, cancel, and reinvest in communities, because we can’t rely on the architects of our oppression to legislate us out of it. We must take the reins to create the safety we deserve.

THE POLITICS OF ANTI-BLACKNESS AND THE CREATION OF THE CRIME BILL

Throughout the 1960s-1980s, shifting racial demographics of cities across the country were the backdrop for increasingly neoconservative policies of city governance and the “tough on crime” approaches to community safety that followed. As severe community divestment and austerity budgets changed the color of some communities, these communities raised concerns over safety that stemmed from lack of resources and opportunity. The scope of policing and its impact on Black and other communities of color, these proposals for surveillance are offering attention, buzz, and grant funding to push the language of policing today, who knows what tomorrow – our people also know that proposals for surveillance are as old as incarceration. The reformers win-at all costs because the goals of policing are inherently “criminal.” These views informed the federal government’s push for punitive measures to surveil and control criminalized neighborhoods and communities.

By the time the Violence Against Women Act and Support Our Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (aka “the Crime Bill”) was drafted, law enforcement leadership knew that police budgets also expanded substantially during this time. The broken windows theory influenced a policing institution that maintained racist views of Black people as inherently “criminal.” These views informed the federal government’s push for punitive measures to surveil and control criminalized neighborhoods and communities.

The politics of anti-blackness and the creation of the crime bill...
ties. Joe Biden and Democratic leadership re-
jected that foresight. During a 1993 Senate floor speech, Biden said, "The pendulum of these wacko liberals who only want to look at the causes" when addressing community safety. He went on to say: "It doesn’t matter whether or not there was a person of any particular race or ethnic group involved. It doesn’t matter whether or not they’ve been the victim of society. It doesn’t matter whether or not they’re the victims of society. Do you ask, ‘What made them do this?’ They must be taken off the street.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE CRIME BILL

The Crime Bill has numerous harmful compo-

cents, including expanding mandatory mini-

mum sentencing and the Community Oriented Police Services, or “COPS” Program, explored more below. In order to more clearly reveal the link between crime and punishment, and how specifically the Crime Bill expanded both, we highlight a few lesser-known yet devastating pieces of the bill: Three strikes laws, gang en-

hancements, and imprisonment.

The Crime Bill enacted a slew of three strike laws, which force an automatic life sentence upon someone who is convicted of certain felonies if this person has previously committed two convic-
tions. These laws are especially harmful to Black and Brown people, since racist laws and inequi-
table enforcement have resulted in increased arrest rates and convictions among Black and Brown people. Moreover, shortly after the Crime Bill was intro-
duced, dozens of states enacted three strike laws of their own to meet the conditions for increased federal subsidies. This increased incarceration rates of Black and Brown people substantially in certain states. For example, close to half of the people incarcerated for life in California’s three strikes provision are Black.

Additionally, the Crime Bill asserted that some-
done deemed to be involved in a “criminal street gang” can have an additional ten years added to their prison sentence. Unsurprisingly, the Crime Bill’s definition of “gang” is so broad that a prosecutor could easily tack up to a decade onto someone’s sentence for associating with a group of people who have engaged in a number of ac-
tions deemed “criminal,” such as selling drugs and assault. Predictably, this tough-on-crime approach criminalizes people for their social rela-

tionships and circumstances, which often stem from poverty and harsh social policies.

In addition to gang enhancement and three strike laws, the Crime Bill made it much easier for the government to deport immigrants with-

out due process. This provision, which already contains two convictions that take away immigrants’ due process rights and allow them to be deported without a hearing if convicted of an aggravated felony, has been used extensively in detention centers and throughout the country. This provision was given more teeth in 1996, when the Department of Justice (DOJ) to funnel unused military equipment to local police forces. Over $7 billion worth of DOD property has been trans-

ferred since the program began, with over 8,000 law enforcement agencies around the country enrolled. These numbers underline the size and influence of policing and draw stark contrast to the local funds allocated for community-led, non-police safety initiatives.

These large investments in policing have inevi-
tably contributed to the continued and acceler-
cated caging of our people. For example, in Flor-
da, the total number of incarcerated people increased over 67 percent from approximately 58,000 in 1994 to over 104,000 in 2010. In Wis-
consin, the total number of incarcerated people increased from just over 9,500 in 1994 to over 22,000 in 2019, an increase of over 134 percent. These data are staggering, though not unique. Since 1994, more people have been locked up for more things and for longer periods of time, de-

spite there being no definitive proof that these investments in policing have actually made communities safer or reduced crime.

The reforms contained in the Crime Bill rep-
resent a template for many of the reforms that law enforcement have proposed since it passed. These reforms, like those passed in 1994, will con-

tinue to expand the scope of community caging for resources needed to create true safety.

SAFETY COMES FROM COMMUNITY, NOT COPS

The safest communities across the country are not the communities with the most police—they are the communities with the most resources. The problem is that the federal funding stream that invest in health-affirming infrastructure has forced community caging and imagination to create safety for ourselves. In Atlanta, for example, the Policing Alternatives and Diversion Initiative conducts regular outreach to community members experiencing issues connected to mental health, extreme poverty, and substance use, intervening in lieu of policing the lower interactions between the public and the police. This program was established in 1999 when Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act and Antiter-
rorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which together broadened the definition of “aggravat-
ed felony” and thus expanded the grounds for deportation. Together, these laws disproportionate-
ately impact immigrants and people of color, which are those more likely to be deported due to legal records.

The Crime Bill laid important political, financial, and cultural foundations for the prison in-
dustrial complex (PIC) as it functions today—entrenched as police as arbiters of public safety, financially incentivizing local governments to enact laws criminalizing more people, and ex-

panding the role of policing and prisons in ‘ad-
ressing’ social problems.

POLICING CAN’T BE REFORMED

The pattern of popular reform proposals in the wake of flashpoint instances of police violence is well-known and enduring: More diverse po-

ces and leadership, better training, more oversight, more community engagement with officers, so on and so forth. These reforms pres-

ume the legitimacy of the police as a conduit to public safety, pumping more resources into train-

ing, equipment, and payroll. These reforms feed, rather than minimize, the very root cause of police violence: Policing itself. For example, the Crime Bill’s COPS Program has awarded over $14 bil-

lion to local law enforcement agencies since 1994, subsidizing local police budgets nationwide. Of that $14 billion, more than $1 billion has been allocated to the expansion of policing and sur-

veillance infrastructure in public schools.

Additionally, reforms that expand police re-

sources lead to more militarized police. The TOoppel Program, established in 1997, empowers the Department of Defense (DOD) to funnel unused military equipment to local police forces. Over $7 billion worth of DOD property has been trans-

ferred since the program began, with over 8,000 law enforcement agencies around the country enrolled. These numbers underline the size and influence of policing and draw stark contrast to the local funds allocated for community-led, non-police safety initiatives.

In contrast, public safety initiatives at scale.

BREAKING THE CYCLE THROUGH A PEOPLE’S PROCESS

The federal legislative process lacks accountabil-
ity, extracts power from Black and other commu-

nities of color, creates barriers to participation for the people directly impacted by the legisla-

tion, and silos issues, leading to narrowly crafted solutions which fail to account for the way social phenomena intersect and compound. To over-

turn the harms of the Crime Bill, we must listen to those most impacted: People in jails and pris-

ons and their family members, communities tar-

geted by police, students who attend schools with school police, and communities impacted by di-

vestments from the social safety net.

Beginning this September, PCSF will facil-
itate a national People’s Process that will shift power to our communities to confidently create the legislation we want to replace the ‘94 Crime Bill. Our goal is to establish new federal funding streams that invest in health-affirming infrastructure and resources that actually keep us safe, and to flip the traditional cycle of making legislation on its head. The People’s Process will use focus groups, digital outreach, surveys, and people’s movement assemblies (PMAs) to solicit the expertise of those most impacted by the ‘94 Crime Bill. It will rely on and strengthen existing grassroots organizations, networks, and connections of community members fighting to curb crimi-

nalization and create safer communities. The conclusion of the People’s Process will be a col-

laborative legislative drafting process, in which participating communities will draft the bill that will replace the ‘94 Crime Bill with new invest-

ments in our communities. We know what we need to create safety for ourselves, beyond cops and cages. Together, we can create policy solu-

tions that center dignity and wholeness instead of punishment and disposability.

About the Authors: Kamau Butcher, Kira Shepherd, Erica Perry, and Marbee Stalby-Butts are current and former members of Black-led, abolitionist orga-

nisations, as well as national movement lawyer and community networks. As individuals, their work and organizing have shaped campaigns including Bronx Defenders Organizing Project, Law for Black Lives, Common Justice, Workers Dignity, Peoples Co-

llation for Safety and Freedom and many others.”
This last year, Critical Resistance has been rebuilding our work in New York. Since the beginning of the pandemic, CRNYC members joined the national call to #FreeThemAll and focused the work on community support and struggle to release as many people from ICE jails as possible. While contributing to different parallel or defense campaigns with Ni Muer- tas Ni Presas for the release of Latinx women at ICE-contracked jails, CRNYC also formally joined the Abolish ICE NY-NJ Coalition and worked with other grassroots groups to pressure both New Jersey and New York governors and elected officials to use their emergency powers to stop any and all transfers of people from local ICE jails to others.

As part of this work, CRNYC organizers have been working with imprisoned people in ICE-contracked jails like Bergen, Hudson, and Essex County Jails in New Jersey. Since the onset of the pandemic, especially since No- vember 2020, imprisoned people in New Jersey ICE-contracted jails have been demanding collective release and to be treated with dignity and respect. Many prisoners throughout New Jersey and beyond have protested through hun- ger strikes and organizing nonviolent disobedie- nces and work-stops.

For this issue’s Fishing Line, we share a tran- script of a phone conversation between a CRNYC member and an imprisoned per- son inside Bergen County Jail (BCJ) who wit- nessed an intense scenario of repression and state violence in early May, 2021. We re- fer to the person as “Abe” so as to protect the identities of the CRNYC member and Abe. The transcript may be triggering to read- ers, especially people who have experienced or are currently experiencing similar situations.

We print it to highlight the organizing and communication strategies between organiz- ers inside and outside of cages, and in effort to bring light to the complex issues as: polic- ing tactics in different contexts by police and guards: from cage to cage and across Black, Brown, and poor communities.

Abe: Yesterday around 11 o’clock, two officers at BCJ came into someone’s cell harassing and searching them. They keep coming and ag- gressively searching and sexually harassing them. There’s nothing they could find, we don’t have enforce- ment agencies into ICE custody, and end ICE-jail contracts.

11 or 12 guards started dragging the young guy off the steps. He was holding on to the rails, so his face didn’t get smashed, he wouldn’t let go. They were struggling, but the guards smashed him down on the floor. Then two other kids tried to help, and the guards arrested them too. It was wild.

They have cameras here 24/7, and I know they recorded it. I called the inspector general, and I reported it to a couple other organizations. The tape needs to be released and something needs to be done. This can’t happen.

CRNYC: Are the people who were brutalized by police still in solitary confinement? Toussaint and the young guys?

Abe: Ya, they’re all still in lock up. Six people got in solitary still. They say the guys were resisting arrest. And they kept attacking us; they were pepper spraying everybody.

CRNYC: How many officers were using pepper spray?

Abe: 3 of them. It was bad, they came in wilding out. Eventually like over 25 officers came in, in riot gear. It all happened in like 15 minutes, from attacking Toussaint to attacking everybody.

CRNYC: And what about the guys in solitary, where are they from?

Abe: Two of them are Haitian, one is from Sierra Leone, and the other guys are from the Domini- can Republic.

CRNYC: Thanks so much for sharing this with us, “Abe.” Did you get injured in the process?

Abe: No, when they said “lock in” I locked in. I’ve experienced a lot of stuff like this while in- side, and so I kinda knew. But something needs to be done: they almost killed at least two people, choking Toussaint and then dragging the other guy down the steps. If he would have let his arms go off the rails, they would have dragged him to death. Even though I’ve seen stuff like this, this was another level. It was actually unexpected how intense it was. The way they all came in, it’s like as ICE officers they thought nothing would happen to them. Something needs to happen. This should never happen to people, whether they resist locking in or help other people or what. It could have happened to me, it could have happened to anybody, out of nowhere. It’s heartbreaking.

“Even though I’ve seen stuff like this, this was another level. It was actually unexpected how intense it was. The way they all came in, it’s like ICE officers they thought nothing would happen to them. Something needs to happen. This should never happen to people, whether they resist locking in or help other people or what. It could have happened to me, it could have happened to anybody, out of nowhere. It’s heartbreaking.”

CRNYC: It must have been very scary and trau- matizing, so I hope you take a second. Call your family members, tell them how much you love them.

Abe: Yeah.

CRNYC: I think we should follow up with the inspector general as you did and demand the video be released. We should also demand the people in solitary be released. This is the same tactic that is being used in police killing people outside cages, so it should be released.

End of phone call

This was a gross, although perhaps common, incident of violence by guards, who became in- furiated when their invasive search tactics did not result in finding any contraband. Rather than walking away admitting mistake or hu- mility to an unnecessary commonplace pro- cedure, guards escalated the situation by pin- ning a young Haitian man to the ground using the same tactic that asphyxiated George Floyd to death. Understandably, one of “Toussait’s” peers bravely jumped into action to prevent another killing by a cop. In all, five individuals were put in solitary confinement— all of African or Afro-Carribbean descent. As one of our aboli- tionist elders reminds us, one of the major dif- ferences between police brutality experienced by Black and Brown communities on the out- side and violence inside cages is that one does not come with social media videos or sensation- alized news headlines. Prisons are increasingly deadly places and mortality figures are increas- ing with little to no awareness. According to a recent report by the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2018, more than 1 in 6 state prison deaths (17%) were “unnatural,” or preventable, compared to less than 1 in 10 (9%) in 2001.

“One of the major differences between police brutality experienced by Black and Brown communities on the outside and violence inside cages is that one does not come with social media videos or sensationalized news headlines. Prisons are increasingly deadly places and mortality figures are increasing with little to no awareness. According to a recent report by the Prison Policy Initiative, in 2018, more than 1 in 6 state prison deaths (17%) were ‘unnatural,’ or preventable, compared to less than 1 in 10 (9%) in 2001.”

Luckily, “Abe” and others immediately alerted organizers on the outside to draft a list of demands, alert local reporters, and launch a so- cial media action targeting local elected officials and the jail administration. Abe has been in communication with the CRNYC member since late December 2020, so he and others called her and other organizers with Ridgewood for Black Liberation, Borderless Existence Initiative and
On March 28, 2021, political prisoner and Black Liberation fighter Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald joined the ancestors. Chip was the longest imprisoned member of the Black Panther Party, incarcerated since he was 20 years old. In 1976 Chip first became eligible for parole, yet was still locked away for another 51 years. Continually denied adequate medical care, Chip suffered a stroke in February 1998 that left him partially paralyzed. California would still not release him. Chip was a parent, grandparent, uncle, mentor, and Black Panther. He was 71 years old when he passed. 

Rest in power, Chip Fitzgerald!

**HONORING ROMAINE “CHIP” FITZGERALD**

“Chip never compromised, though he continued to the end to seek redress for this egregious wrong by working with his lawyer, family, and defense committees to end his half-century nightmare of a slow death behind bars. For us living, Chip’s passing is a lesson to keep fighting the good fight. To give when perhaps it’s hard to give. And to live when perhaps life seems to be Chip’s life, or life as we leave without a clear message. During his final days in the hospital, the authorities felt the need to chain and shackles Chip to his bed. Despite the fact that he was hardly conscious, they saw this demeaning action as necessary. What they failed to understand is that you cannot chain nor shackles the spirit of someone you all aspire to leave this same impression of daring to struggle until our last breath. And may Chip’s stalwart example give us the courage to dare to win.”

A statement from Chip before he passed, entitled: “Upon My Release”

**UPON MY RELEASE**

I will welcome the warmth and laughter of my grandchildren. I look forward to their hugs and smiles. I will be the Grandpa present to soothe them through occasional scrapes after they show me their somersaults and expert bike riding maneuvers.

I will have the chance to witness numerous bird species and listen to their songs. I’ll hope for a rain to nourish the vegetables and flowers plant-

ed days before, just as my mother used to do, and for them to see the world from a new vantage point after the rain. I will feel the mist on my face and rejoice.

I will experience the waves of the ocean reflecting the moon filled sky and the cozy breeze and graceful waves. I will be comforted in nature’s healing environment as it soothes and comforts my body allowing my aged filled bones to heal and rejuvenate in ways lost for most of my life. At the end of the evening, I will look forward to a soft bed and sinking my head into fluffy pillows as I curl up in soft covers and dream of sweeter knowing I will awake to a new day of freedom.

I will have my eyes dazzled by the spectrum of radiant colors that only a city can sparkle. I look forward to enjoying the sights from a car window recognizing the aroma of the city’s possess all together.

I hope to share love and laughter, the joys and hardships of life with a special woman. We will lift each other’s hearts as equals to face a brighter tomorrow.

I will continue to appreciate the love and challenges of family. I imagine our dialogue will include our sense of community, our country, the world, our contributions and help to our neighborhoods and our course, sharing my personal sorrows and hope. I will lead by example with spontaneous acts of love, compassion and kindness thereby demonstrating my belief in the transformation of others. I will enjoy volunteering in preschools and/or visiting the elderly in convalescent hospitals.

I will always give special devotion to finding peace and moving full speed to overcome the screams of terror and absence of dignity that have engulfed my prison environment.

Most of all, I will be dedicated to the journey and opportunity of spending my remaining life giving of myself to achieve the many treasures and purposes of what it means to be a valued human being, embracing freedom.
HONORING LINDA M. THURSTON

Critical Resistance mourns the loss and celebrates the legacy of our Community Advisor Linda Thurston, who organized on the steering committee of the Critical Resistance (CR) East Northeast Regional Conference. Linda passed away on the weekend of May 22, 2021. At the time of her passing, she was the Operations Coordinator at the War Resisters League (WRL) where she had worked since 2007.

Linda will be remembered for her warmth, generosity, and grounding ability to welcome organizers into the movement. Within the varying organizations she’d been part of, she did the hard, consistent work of setting up the back-end systems and infrastructure that integrate and support the everyday participation of many within our movement. She worked to connect people cross-locally, from local to national and internationally, often through her steadfast communications work and organizing.

Linda’s contributions to the abolitionist movement are innumerable. Before CR, Linda demonstrated fierce commitment to the anti-prison movement including her work to free political prisoners. She was a co-founding member of the National Criminal Justice Program, she coordinated the 2003 launch of the Center for Constitutional Rights’ Coalition to Stop Solitary Confinement, and she worked with numerous organizations, including the Brecht Forum, Prison Radio Project, Fundraising Exchange, and Human Rights Watch. Her contributions were rooted in care for everyday people with a broad vision of movement history knowledge. More recently, Linda served on the Community Advisory Board for CR.

During her long, impactful career, Linda was also the Center for Constitutional Rights’ Coordinator of Education, Outreach, and the Ella Baker Internship program, and she worked with numerous organizations, including the Brecht Forum, Prison Radio Project, Fundraising Exchange, and Human Rights Watch. Her contributions were rooted in care for everyday people with a broad vision of a more just and inclusive world.

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Linda’s research on prison abolition spanned her support for the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s and her work with Amnesty International to abolish the death penalty during the 1990s, through her time with CR and WRL.

We recognize Linda’s role in helping to build CR as an organization. She was one of the coordinators of CR’s Northeast Regional Conference from 1999-2001, which took place in New York City in 2001. The second of CR’s conferences, CR East seaboard prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition as a strategy. Geared toward sharing skills to make local organizing against the PIC more effective and prioritizing the participation and leadership of people most impacted by the PIC, this conference helped launch CR as an organization just two months later. Linda contributed to a wide range of essential tasks to move CR’s work forward, such as her editorial support in CR’s 2005 publication of Instead of Prisons by the Prison Research, Education Action Project and her work in 2006 to support outreach and communications for the Campaign for Amnesty for Prisoners of Katrina. Over the years, Linda attended CR national retreats building with and guiding younger members, and she supported organizers through CR’s New England chapter, regularly sharing her wealth of movement history knowledge.

More recently, Linda served on the Community Advisory Board for CR.

Linda is survived by her mother Barbara Thurston; her brother James Thurston Jr. (both of Bangor, Maine) and his children Tom and Dena; her partner Dr. Mutulu Shakur; her sister Nicole Thurston Thibeudeau of Rhode Island and her husband Christian and their children Cade and Robert; her sister Kristine Keeling; and many other beloved kin, mentees, and dozens of organizations and hundreds of activists to whom she gave so much.

In Linda’s own words, when honoring Malcolm X, she wrote, “What is re-remembered, lives.” With Love and Solidarity, Critical Resistance

ABBY THROWBACK:

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

By Matt Meyer, War Resisters League

Editors’ Note: For this issue’s ‘Abby Throwback’ we reprint a 2009 interview with the late, great Linda M. Thurston when she was the office coordinator at the War Resisters League national office. Though this interview was not in a previous issue of The Abolitionist, we thought it important to share with our readers some of Linda’s leadership and contributions to building the abolitionist movement in her own words. We are grateful to the War Resisters League for letting us reprint this timeless piece. This piece was minimally edited for length. Long live Linda M. Thurston!

Linda Thurston (LT): When I became the director of the New England Criminal Justice Program of the Quaker-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), one of the big issues that came up was a tendency to lock any prisoners who spoke out on any issues in solitary confinement, sometimes for years. These were clear cases of political repression—locking people up not because they posed any threats but because they were willing to fight for their rights, even as prisoners. We worked with them. They may not have landed in prison because of political activities, but they certainly got politicized once in prison.

Matt Meyer (MM): You have a long history of working for political prisoners, and for the rights and freedom of prisoners in general, as we have mentioned before. You’ve worked with a number of key regional and national organizations. Would you share some of those experiences?

Linda Thurston (LT): When I became the director of the New England Criminal Justice Program of the Quaker-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), one of the big issues that came up was a tendency to lock any prisoners who spoke out on any issues in solitary confinement, sometimes for years. These were clear cases of political repression—locking people up not because they posed any threats but because they were willing to fight for their rights, even as prisoners. We worked with them. They may not have landed in prison because of political activities, but they certainly got politicized once in prison.
Partly because I was in Boston, where there was a very strong anti-apartheid movement and a very strong Central American solidarity movement, I learned about many people doing time because of refusal to cooperate with federal grand jury investigations. At the Red Book Store in Cambridge, I remember meeting some people—like Tommy Manning and Juan Laaman of the Ohio 7 case—who are still political prisoners to this day. Kazi Toure, now out of prison and the national co-chair of the Jericho Amnesty Movement, was around in those days, along with his brother, Arnie King, who is also still doing time despite community support and support and work. I think there are some regional, cultural differences that have shaped people’s political development differently. In New York City, for example, most of the political prisoners came directly out of the local Black Panther Party. But in Boston and later in Philadelphia, with the case of MOVE and the MOVE9, I had a different framework. While I was working for AFSC, I began to learn more about political prisoners through my own writing and radio projects.

As an AFSC staff person, I was involved in the 200 years of Pendleton Project, which recognized Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Jail as the first prison in the US. The campaign was a way of doing prison abolition work in the 1980s, and I got to dress up in my Sunday best and speak to the Quaker groups, Methodists, Presbyterians, and United Church folks. From there, I worked with the National Prisoner’s Rights Force to fight criminal justice. Those networks, with people like Episcopal Minister S. Michael Yasutake (founding chair of the Prisoner of Conscience Project) building networks of and political prisoners, helped create lasting relationships and commitments. Fast forward some years to the early 1990s, I ended up working with Amnesty International USA on death penalty issues. I actually had, from the beginning, some very real issues with Amnesty International. In part, this was because Amnesty refused to name Nelson Mandela, or any number of other people, as political prisoners. I didn’t understand that moment the human rights movement’s nuanced differences in definition regarding political prisoners, war, and prisoners of conscience. Nor did I understand how amazingly egg-headed legalistic and academic the whole human rights framework could be. At that particular moment, between 1994 and 1995, executions in the US had almost doubled in one year. It seemed important to do that work with those resources, but it was one of the most frustrating and time-consuming parts of my life. Growing out of the Cold War mentality, Amnesty began as a group that issued bulletins on behalf of political prisoners. Over time the whole framework changed, and so was the notion of political prisoners. I learned about many people doing time in a social and political perspective and aren’t interested in working on political prisoner issues. The key is to see the connections between these struggles and not to pit them against one another. We’ve got lots of work ahead of us.

Some people who work on political prisoner cases have, in a general theoretical sense, the idea that prisons themselves are bad, but also that prisons are where bad folks are. If you stole something, you’re a thief. If you sold somebody, you’re a murderer. And that is what you are, that is who you are, and that is all you are. I really have a problem with that idea, maybe coming from my spirituality or maybe just my common-sense political analysis. Nobody is only one thing, and no one is only as bad as the worst thing they ever did. If that were true, we’d all be in big trouble, because we’re all human.

It also has now gotten way more complicated, because more and more political prisoners are spending vast, unbelievable amounts of time in prison, and not getting out. Political prisoners are dying in prison, so the issue becomes more urgent. At the same time, as I’ve said, vastly increased numbers of people are being sent to prison, also for long periods of time. In countries where the concept of “political prisoner” is recognized as a legal category, there may still be human rights problems and justice issues, but the complications and divisions between tend to be easier to deal with. It is agreed that there are political prisoners, and it is agreed that there are major problems. But in the industrial complex (PIC). Here in the US, an urgent task of the current political moment is for folks doing political prisoner support work to recognize the broader context of the PIC. One place where we’ve seen this take place is around the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia’s case has brought so many people from different political movements and perspectives together. How we do that, what we do, and how we make more opportunities for all kinds of interaction and discussion. Not to be naïve, but these dialogues between those of us doing basically similar work are an urgent necessity. We’ve got to find greater ways to work together.

MM: You’ve been active, since the beginning, in the development of Critical Resistance (CR), which in some ways tries to present a new framework about how to do some of this work. And you continue to help bridge the gap between work around prison abolition and political prisoner support work. Could you describe the current national scene, around the time of the 10th anniversary of CR, and discuss how things have changed, and how they’ve stayed the same?

LT: It may be a new framework and a new concept in this current iteration, but the notion of prison abolition is much older than the 1998 founding conference of CR. I actually didn’t get involved in CR until after that initial national conference in Oakland, but I did attend the original conference. There were many folks at the first CR gathering who were overjoyed that people were talking about prisons, but again, we didn’t know that over a thousand people would show up, with energy to build local and regional chapters. We were on a conference when people were ready to work on issues involving the role of prisons in US life. One issue that we’ve been dealing with and need to continue to deal with is the role of people who have been convicted of and sentenced to death. These organizations can’t only be made up of people who want to work on an issue. They have to include people who did time and people whose family members have done time. These folks must be in the leadership of the movement and the leadership of the struggle, because in many ways they can best understand and convey the complexities of the system on a local and national level. As we all need to step up and become active when that is needed, we also need to learn to step back and take leadership from the folk who haven’t been in leadership. Some of us older folks need to learn that in regard to the youth, too.

Another thing that’s fairly unique about CR in my experience is the way in which the regional chapters and networks reflect the national program as well as the specific political context in a given region of the country. We’ve been weaving a sort of web between the local networks and the national groups.

There’s also a great deal of attention in CR given to political education. Far too often in our movements we don’t find out where people are coming from. If somebody shows up for a meeting, we’re so glad that they’re there, and we’ll just give them some things to do and tell them when and where to go for the next meeting. But CR recently...
ally works to build community. I feel very connected to the local folks in the organization even though I work more with CR nationally. We are in a situation where someone can put a call out and say, “To the sister who was at the meeting last night. Her kid just got arrested. Can any of you get to court?” And people do it. I re- minds me of working with the groups in Boston when I was younger: that sense of community, of family, of connectedness. That feeling also comes up when I get emails from different political prisoner support groups saying, “So and so on the inside is sick. We’ve got to jump in here and deal with this.”

I guess I’ve come full circle after all these years, realizing that we need the political analysis, we need the educational work, we need the strategizing, we need more bodies, and we need resources. But we also damn sure better remember that we’re human beings and we need to support one another on all levels or we’re not going to make it. Sometimes our failure is as simple as calling a meeting at dinner time and not having so much as a pitcher of water at the table. If we’re going to survive, if we’re going to make it when we win, if we’re going to free folks, we’ve got to get better at doing the human piece of building movement by building community.

Interviewer Bio: Matt Meyer, New York City activist-educator, is founding Co-Chair of the Peace and Justice Studies Organization and co-author (with Bill Sutherland) of Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan-African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation. A longtime member of WRL’s National Committee, he was a pub- lic draft-registration resister in the 1980s and served as WRL’s Chair. He is author, editor, or contributor to nine other books, including the 2012 WRL co-publication We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America.

9971: A Column on Abolitionist Study with Stephen Wilson

Editors’ Note: For this issue’s 9971 column, we share the second and final portion of a 2020 interview from columnist Stephen Wilson with his friend and comrade on the outside, Ian Alexander. This first part of the interview, printed in Issue 34 of The Abolitionist, focused on considerations for setting up study groups while imprisoned. This final portion of the interview highlights the importance of study in connection to political struggle.

IA: How do you inspire long term interest and growth in new, old, and potential comrades?

SW: Really, it has never been about them trust- ing me because they haven’t heard of abolition. It is about getting them to trust themselves and their communities to handle things without calling the cops. Part of our task is convincing people that we have within us the resources to handle harm. We can make us safe. For so long, people have been told only the cops can make us safe. Only prisons can keep us from being harmed. People are starting to see that cops don’t produce safety. All of the police violence captured on camera is making people question the supposed link between cops and safety. We need to do more to get people to see that prisons don’t produce safety either. Because the quotidi- ian violence of prisons is mostly hidden from the public, this task becomes harder than showing that cops don’t make us safe. One of the big- gest challenges we face is convincing people that the walls is convincing people that we can keep each other safe.

“We can make us safe. For so long, people have been told only the cops can make us safe. Only prisons can keep us from being harmed. People are starting to see that cops don’t produce safety. All of the police violence captured on camera is making people question the supposed link between cops and safety. We need to do more to get people to see that prisons don’t produce safety either.”

IA: How do you decide when to jump into action, and when to wait something out?

SW: How do I decide when something is worth it? Is it the right thing to do? That is the ques- tion. I don’t tend to think about what the ad- ministration will do to me personally. Because the tactics I use aren’t those that will give the administration grounds to oppress us, tactics that knowingly subject others to possible harm by officers, my main issue is doing what is right and alleviating oppressive conditions. Recently, I have been thinking a lot about developing a criteria regarding when we implement action plans. This new way of thinking occurred to me after a recent incident. We are not under normal oper- ations. So our time out of cell has been curtailed. We are being held in a cell at a time. We are given limited time to shower, make phone calls, use the kiosks, and exercise. Certain of- ficers purposely slow us out too late and push us early. This creates problems for us and between us as we try to stay in contact with family and friends and stay clean. I attempted to address this issue with the unit manager. I thought we had come to a solution. But an officer did exactly what we discussed shouldn’t happen in front of the unit manager. And the unit manager re- fused to do anything. Instead, he wrote a false misconduct against me to get me removed from the block. And it didn’t end there. The next day, my comrade was placed in solitary for emailing people informing them of what happened to me. Their solution is simple: Whoever is complain- ing, remove them. And it works to produce a chilling effect upon others.

I began to think about how we could approach this official tactic. What counter-tactic would work? One thing I learned, and [Russell] Ma- roon [Shoatts] wrote about this many years ago, is that we need to develop hydras and not drag- ons. There is only so much space in solitary. They cannot lock us all up. Moving together is always much more powerful than moving alone. The incident made me think about deep organ- izing and assessing just how much strength we have and how we can use it. We are more success- ful and emboldened. Reading about people like Martin Sostre, who was wrongly arrested and sentenced to nine years because he educated the people, keeps my head up during these peri- ods of repression. Many of our elders have been physically, mentally, and emotionally abusing, but they remained strong. History becomes a living tool.

Oppression breeds resistance. And often, resis- tance breeds more oppression. It is a dialecti- cal relationship. The walls, oppression can take many forms: Solitary confinement, physical assault, constant shakedown, constant transfers (diesel therapy), destruction of prop- erty, denial of parole, and even frame-ups on new charges. The administration will employ many different measures to effect compliance. They don’t want us to learn anything that will keep us from coming back to prison. They don’t want us to learn anything that will enable us to benefit our communities. I have said before: A learned prisoner is an affront to the prison in- dustrial complex.

IA: Beyond study, what about struggle? How do you decide when to jump into action, and when to wait something out?

IA: So the struggle leads you back to study. How do you help others bring those two aspects of the work together?

IA: The struggle leads you back to study. How do you help others bring those two aspects of the work together?

SW: Generally, going into any study situation, my goal is to convey meaningful knowledge. I want people to learn things that will enable them to better understand the world and empower them to change it. Specifically, I do an assessment be-
fore determining what text we will study. I try to figure out what participants already know about certain topics. I try to understand the different ways participants learn. This can only happen if I build relationships with potential participants first. My point is that study circles need to be participatory. I often facilitate study circles on the syllabus and getting through the texts. The focus needs to be on those in the group and facilitating understanding and application. If we get through a text and the participants haven’t extracted any-thing meaningful, something they can apply to their lives, I feel we haven’t succeeded.

“Generally, going into any study situation, my goal is to convey meaningful knowledge. I want people to learn things that will enable them to better understand the world and empower them to change it.”

Out there, you have to talk prisons up. Not so in- side. Prison is our environment, our world. So everyone inside has an opinion about prisons and policing. I don’t have to create interest in these topics. It is already there. What I try to do is get people to see these issues differently. And many are willing to take another look. One good way to get started is by doing definitional work. Generally, I find that many folks know that at very certain terms is really about getting them to think about how they view the world. Two of our first definitions to explore are community and safety. How people define these terms is impor-
tant. And often, we find that people change their definitions after study.

1a. How do you combat reactionary tendencies, patriarchal behavior, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, anti-Blackness, ableism, and other forms of chauvinism and anti-solidarity thinking and behavior?

SW: Prison is a hypermasculine environment. Patriarchal thinking, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism are rampant behind the walls. The only way to handle these oppres-sive behaviors is to confront them straight up when they manifest. I do so by questioning the person’s motive. We have sports teams inside. Often, teams are created through a draft pro cess. The coaches often don’t know whom they are drafting until it’s over. During one volleyball season, a coach selected an openly queer pris-oner. He didn’t know it until the first game. He didn’t start the prisoner until late in the first game. That is when he realized the queer pris-oner was a great volleyball player. Players on his bench balked at playing with the queer prisoner and began to make homophobic comments. I walked over and asked them if they felt they were better players than him. They knew they weren’t. I asked them if they thought they would become gay if he played on the team with them. They vehemently denied this. So what is the problem? They were there to win a game. The best players on this team are non-hetero. So what. When confronted with their bigotry, most prisoners, being unable to defend it, pipe down. When enough of us do this, things will change. And they need to. Homophobia, trans-
phobia, and ableism are prejudices that are still acceptable in our society.

1b. How have you navigated the guards?

SW: Most officers stay out of the way. They see it as studying and leave us alone. They walk by and only spy on us, but they don’t try to break us up. They allow us to pass out materials on the block. From the officer’s perspective, our studying is a good thing. We are not causing any trouble, especially the kind of trouble that would require more work from them. It is the upper administration that must make a decision. We don’t participate in study groups. They see us building influence and they don’t like it. They are the ones who create obsta-
cles to study, not the front line officers.

At Smithfield, we were able to do more because the administration actively recruited us to cre-ate positive outlets for prisoners. Fayette is very different. 180 degrees different. We do more work on our own. But I find that Fayette has cre-ated, through its oppressive acts, a hunger for knowledge among the prisoners. The organic desire is greater here.

1c. Why do you go through all of this, comrade?

SW: All I am doing is passing along the goodness that has been given to me to make the world better.

Author Bio: Stephen Wilson is a Black, queer aboli-
tionist writing, (dis)organizing, and building study groups and community behind the walls in Penn-
sylvania. At the start of 2021 Stevie was transferred from Fayette to Will, a tactic of repression as mentioned in this interview. •

America great would require redistribution of economic and political priorities. We could start there. There are no perfect solutions to end centuries of intolerance and injustice. However, what doesn’t help is ignoring it or making ex-
cuses; we can’t close our eyes and wish it away. Society itself must be reformed.

SOLUTION

I read somewhere, “Liberty is an individual re-
sponsibility.” Oh the other world, where one must attain our own cognitive liberation by awakening from our mental state of lethargy. “Talk is cheap like day dreams”. The fact that anti-Blackness has its knee on our necks does not absolve us of our responsibility. Our responsibility to form multi-
racial solidarity, our responsibility to educate ourselves and our children, our responsibility to call pizz—well, pizz. You will no longer piss on my foot and tell me it’s raining. Underneath the perfume of pretty speech, I still smell urine.

Author Bio: Tasha Brown is a youth-to-adult pris-
oner at Chowchilla in CA, doing 37 years-to-life for a conviction at age 15. She asks for readers to con-
sider lending support for a commutation of her sen-
tence www.gov.ca.gov/clemency Write to Tasha: Tasha Brown X08560 CCWF 506-08-03L PO Box 1508 Chowchilla, CA 93610

DEAR COMRADES AT CRITICAL RESISTANCE AND THE ABOLITIONIST,

First of all, I want to thank you for the material you sent. Along with The Abolitionist Issue #33, dealing with COVID-19 and other great topics and articles, I also read with great interest the 5-page pamphlet explaining more about CR’s vision, goals and methods to organizing against the prison industrial complex (PIC). I like what it says and leave forward to learn more and, in time, taking a more direct and active role in organizing with you. I think I’ve always had some awareness of most of this, but I want to continue learning. And I think that by showing the connection between policing, im-
prisonment and surveillance, and articulating the PIC as a whole especially the point about the system not being broken, but instead working
exactly as intended. That one single idea resonated deeply, and stands out as a simple, undeniable truth for analysis. Thank you.

I’m including a recent article published in The Echo, the Texas prison newspaper—essentially an organ of state propaganda. Like most articles published by The Echo, on the surface the editorial work is positive and intended to highlight the benefits of forming a strong work ethic and some of the “rehabilitation” value in vocational, and other on the job-training programs: “productivity” and “keeping skills sharp,” etc. Nobody would deny the benefits of forming good, strong, productive work habits, and we need in prison—should I say especially when in prison. It might even help maintain sanity, or the last shreds of it in some cases (I’m reminded of the fictional character Dr. Manette in Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities, who worked as a cobbler if memory serves me).

But all of this ignores the whole history and foundation of “work in prison” as developed by the Texas state prison labor system which really took off after the Civil War. To this day, any work done in TDC is nothing more than modern-day slave labor. To add insult to injury, the “work time” that is “earned” is worthless to many of us as it has no bearing at all on our parole eligibility. In spite of all this we are encouraged to be good workers, as we are expected to keep and work for peanuts—actually less than peanuts: NOTHING! At least other states pay their prisoners something—whatever it is. But that’s my point: if the state was truly interested in “rehabilitation” and giving prisoners real hope for a future they may start by paying prisoners an honest day’s wages for an honest day’s work. But that’s not its goal at all.

As serious as this slave labor issue is, it’s not even the worst thing about “work in prison.” Although I’m no longer at Ramsey Unit Facility, I was very much aware that I got up at 3:00 every morning to manufacture for court rooms, Senate chambers, and “special project” orders for other high-ranking government officials. I saw myself in their orders with the prices for the products. Thousands of dollars for desks and benches and other fancy pieces of furniture—even the gavels used by judges to sentence people to prison are made by prisoners at Ramsey. To be honest not a lot of prisoners saw the irony of it: we’re forced to make the gavels that sentence us to prison...

Anyway, The Echo and “work in prison”—it’s a sophisticated way of using propaganda to keep prisoners “thinking the right thoughts,” i.e. the thoughts they want us to think. They make such great effort to control our minds with articles like Work in Prison because it’s like I think Noam Chomsky pointed out in Manufacturing Consent: basically, if we control our thinking, we also control our behavior, and what we want is a little nice conformist “model” prisoner who’s trained to maybe one day be released into the “workforce” to support their neo-liberal, capitalist system of oppression and corporate domination, all run by Wall Street financial managers, the “masters of the Universe.” They took the blueprint from the plantation and applied it to industry, actually the same plan only more sophisticated.

I’m interested in any feedback I can get from this analysis. I’m also interested in learning more about the PIC and how I can help “defeat” it, “change” and “build,” as CR’s organizing framework is. Please send one of the three books you offer. Any one is fine, but I would like to read them in logical order if there is one. If not, just send any one of the three. Thank you.

I am very much interested in ongoing dialogue and strategizing about specifics of this struggle, and I hope it’s clear by now, that yes, I do want to “go deeper” and do what is necessary to help build this movement.

Also, I loved the Tierra y Libertad article by Yunesí Torres and Susana Draper in Issue 32 of The Abolitionist. I love women’s self-determination and challenging entrenched patriarchy and I must admit I was reared in a “macho” culture in Laredo, TX, and 30 years of effort on my part to uproot the toxic, unhealthy ideas of masculin-
After uprisings against state violence and settler colonialism sprung up around the world in the last year after the death of George Floyd and others by police, organizers and communities continuing to work to advance abolition have succeeded in getting police out of schools, cutting police department budgets, and closing jails or starting the process of closing prisons while also fighting back against home confinement and all kinds of systemic incarceration. Simultaneously, amidst a rising tide in white nationalism, fear mongering through criminalization of poverty, and pitiful communities against each other with the fear of "Them" and the Biden administration continues to bolster police departments on massive levels through the guile of reform or transition. We have learned vital lessons, and we'll keep building on our wins as we break down the P&C and settler colonial state. From Turtle Island to Palestine to the Philippines to Colombia—we do this 'til we free us.

**WEST COAST**

**Uprising At Allegheny County Jail In Pittsburgh**

Prison rebels in Pittsburgh set fire to pod 8e, the segregation, solitary confinement unit of the jail. They are protesting the poor medical conditions, the lack of hand sanitzer, and the incarceration that the jail has refused to provide for those caged at the jail before and during COVID.

**Uprising At St. Louis City Jail**

Prisoners at the St. Louis City Jail revolted and striked over COVID conditions in the jail for the third time this year on April 4. They are demanding better treatment and timely court dates. At the time of the second uprising, of the 1,003 prisoners held at the St. Louis County Jail, 319 have been waiting more than a year for a trial, 127 have been waiting more than two years, and one prisoner has been waiting more than five years. Chants of "we want court dates" could be heard from the prisoners who smashed out windows at the downtown jail.

**Care First Resolution Unanimously Adopted By Alameda County Board Of Supervisors**

After powerful testimony by family members, providers, and advocates from Decarcerate Alameda County (DAC), the Alameda County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted the Care First Resolution. This is a crucial first step in ending the mental health crisis in Alameda County and towards our community goals: To stop jailing people with mental health and substance use needs and build out community-based models of care.

**Kern County Community Holds People's Trial at Detention Facility**

In Bakersfield, CA on March 26 community members held the Kern County ICE mock trial outside the notorious Mesa Verde detention facility. The people's verdict proclaimed that "ICE, GEO, the Bakersfield Administration, City Council of McFarland, and the Yuba County Jail have violated that law and their own detention standards. They keep people locked in detention centers with filthy, dirty conditions, feed them rotten food, and profit from their forced labor. (They) did everything they could to hide their abuses. For all these reasons, our verdict is that ALL detention centers must be shut down!!"

**Blocktheboat Celebrates Historic Victory**

In a move of international worker solidarity, the Israeli-operated ZIM shipping line was blocked by hundreds of organizers and union workers who stood in solidarity with the Palestinian people and people. The Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) and The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 held down the calls to action as they kept the ship from docking for days and ultimately from being offloaded once it tried to sneakily dock at the Port of Oakland. "Long live international solidarity, free Palestine!"

**Expel The Philippine National Police**

Malaya Movement NorCal and BAYAN NorCal have launched a campaign to demand the San Francisco Philippine Consulate provide a public report in order to be transparent regarding the consulate’s annual budget and the operations of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Outpost with the ultimate goal of ridding the FNP from the Bay Area. The FNP are known for working hand-in-hand with the drill and corruption that occurs within the Philip- pines, using "red-tagging" to target and neutralize organizers fighting against imperialism, and enforcing policies set forth by the regime.

**Colombian National Strike against US-Austerity Policies**

On April 28, social organizations in Colombia called for a nationwide popular strike against a pandemic-related tax overhaul, one of many new neoliberal austerity policies. Waves of protests rocked the country for weeks. Despite horrific repression by police that killed at least 43 protestors, injured thousands and disappeared hundreds, the PNP claims that the people of Colombia remain committed to resistance and self-determination.

**Global Solidarity With Palestine**

In the response to escalated violence by the settler colonial state of Israel against the Indigenous Palestinian people, global protests have been held with the largest protests occurring on the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," when Israel (10) held down the Gaza strip and 250 Palestinians, 66 of them children. Israel also bombed the homes and apartment complexes, the associated press offices, a COVID-19 response hospital, and other infrastructure in Gaza. Actions globally have brought attention to the ethnic cleansing currently occurring in Palestine, with the US continuing to back the Israeli state. In the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in Palestine, an Israeli court is currently processing an "eviction order" that would clear the historical Palestinian neighborhood for Israeli and US settlers. This struggle has been another catalyst for uprisings and criticism against the apartheid state.

**FEATURED UPDATE: Defund OPD Campaign**

In anticipation of Oakland’s next two-year budget cycle decision, the Defund OPD Coalition continues to ramp up pressure on City Council to follow the campaign’s recommendations aimed at reducing the Oakland Police budget by 50% ($190 million). Launched by the Anti-Police Terror Project five years ago, the campaign has evolved into a vibrant coalition of 13 grassroots organizations with deep roots in Oakland, including: AROC, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Bay Rising, Black Organizing Project, Causa Justa-Just Cause, Community Ready Corps, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, CR, East Bay Alliance for A Sustainable Economy, Ella Baker Center, Oakland Rising, and the Urban Peace Movement. Currently OPD’s budget takes up almost half of the city’s general fund, and this campaign seeks to keep our communities truly safe through diminishing the size and scope of policing through reinvesting in living wage jobs, housing for all, healthcare, and other essential services that promote strong and self-determined communities.

Despite political maneuvering on the part of Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf, the Oakland Police Department, and their allies to sow divisions in our communities, the coalition continues to take great strides in achieving its campaign goals through both advocacy in task forces and city council meetings, as well as on-the-ground grassroots outreach, research, movement building, and community surveys.

On March 17, the coalition mobilized to the final Reimagining Public Safety taskforce meeting. After hours of debate and powerful testimony from community members, the taskforce moved to approve 33 of the coalition’s recommendations to City Council, who will have to vote on them before the June 30 budgetary deadline. This was an important win, and it’s only the beginning!

On April 18, the coalition held a Community Forum at Akoma Market/Liberation Park in Deep East Oakland. Through speaker programs, flyering, and community visioning activities, hundreds of Black and Brown community members were able to engage with the campaign and get information on how to mobilize in support. Through building radical community, strategically putting pressure on officials, and connecting with allies, the coalition is primed to continue building collective power on its way to victory!
CALL FOR CONTENT

Help shape the content of The Abolitionist
Make your voice heard in our paper!
Submit content by writing a piece for either our Features section
OR one of our columns!!

The Features section in Issue 36, to be released by December 2021, will focus on “Pathways toward Freedom,” or strategies for getting people out of cages. Issue 37’s Features will focus on housing and shelter and will be released in late Spring 2022.

Send us an essay, article, research, a poem, a story, a play, a comic, art, personal reflection, or questions on these topics for our upcoming Features sections!

• Issue 36 Submission Deadline: Friday, August 27, 2021.

There are many ways for you to shape the content of the paper, either by submitting a piece to our Features section or supporting one of our columns. Check out all of the ways you can submit content for The Abolitionist:

1. Write a piece for our Features
   • Pieces can be in each of these different forms of writing—from the theoretical, to the reflective, and action-oriented—but they will all share a common focus, theme, or topic of consideration. Check the feature focus for issues 36 and 37!

2. Submit content for one of our Columns
   • Send a Kite to the Editors
   • Request to be an author of an Inside-Outside Fishing Line
   • Contribute a report or an update on organizing inside for our Movement Highlights column
   • Write a poem or song lyrics. It can relate to the features or any other topic of your choice!
   • Make visible art to complement the Features section or one of our columns
   • Create a political cartoon for our Features focus for either issues 35 or 36, or work with us to become a regular political cartoonist for the paper!
   • Reflect on how you use The Abby in your study and share that reflection for our 9971 column—or submit questions on study that you want Stevie to address in future columns

Some approaches to writing Kites to the Editors:
• Elaborate on something that you disagreed with in an article and explain why you disagreed with it.
• Elaborate on something that you disagreed with in an article and explain why you disagreed with it.
• Relate an article to other things you have read, watched, heard, or experienced.
• Write a note to the editors sharing questions that you believe are timely and needed in this political moment and which you would like Critical Resistance to answer.

Send submissions to the Kites to the Editors section to:
The Abolitionist Paper
Attn: Kites to the Editors
P.O. Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609

Please read our Submission Guidelines before working on a submission to ensure your piece aligns with how we decide what to print.

Send your submission to:
Critical Resistance
P.O. Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!
We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and artwork in English or Spanish.

IDEAS FOR ARTICLES AND ARTWORK
• Examples of prisoner organizing
• Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
• Ways to help keep yourself and others physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually 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, imprisonment, imprisonment, and surveillance
• Experiences of life after imprisonment (or before!)
• Creative or reflective writing with an abolitionist message
• Freedom dreams and imaginative pieces with radical vision
• Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue
• Reflections on how you’ve used the paper (in your conversations, work, study groups)
• Empowering, liberatory art of resistance and community power (and that will print well!)

LENGTH
• Articles should not be more than 1500 words (about five handwritten pages)
• Letters should not be more than 250 words

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 and address included, please let us know that when you submit your piece. Instead of your name, you can choose an alias, publish your piece anonymously, or use your initials.
• If possible, send a copy of your submission, not the original

WRITING SUGGESTIONS
• 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.

Notes on Editing: We edit all pieces for both content and grammar. We will send you a copy of the piece before printing it. As an abolitionist publication, we do not print material we find in some way perpetuates oppression or legitimizes the prison industrial complex. Given that institutional mail can be slow and purposefully delayed at times (or even disappeared), please make note in your submission of phrases or sections you would like the editorial collective to print untouched, if that is the case.

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