**Homes Not Cages: Intersecting Movements for Housing Justice and Prison Industrial Complex Abolition**

An Interview with Kamau Walton of Right to the City Alliance by Molly Porzig

The Abolitionist: What is Right to the City Alliance and what work do y'all do? As a long-time Critical Resistance (CR) member, can you talk a little bit about why you started working on housing issues?

Kamau Walton (KW): Right to the City Alliance (RTTC) is a national alliance made up of over 90 member organizations on local, state, and regional levels organizing around housing and land. Our work includes renters’ rights, building alternatives such as community land trusts, and policy work like the opportunity for tenants to purchase buildings before small landlords sell them to bigger corporate landlords. RTTC connects members doing aligned work across the country to share strategies, best practices, and ways of scaling up strategies to expand impact beyond local contexts. Member organizations work on a range of social change issues, and the alliance is guided by values and principles that stand against state violence and policing. W hile RTTC is not explicitly focused on housing, our housing work is situated under the Homes for All campaign, where organizing for renters’ rights and community loan funds takes place.

I’ve been a member of CR since 2010, where I developed my politics and commitment to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC). My first job after college was organizing around homelessness in Washington DC. Then, I was homeless, and organized around a shelter about to be closed in the financial district, which taught me about intersectionality—the intersecting factors that lead people to be unhoused. Housing justice isn’t only about putting people in buildings with four walls, but also about addressing the root causes of what pushes people out of shelter. After years of organizing with CR and waging campaigns against the PIC, I started working at RTTC, focusing once again on housing but this time with more campaign and coalition-building skills and more developed PIC abolitionist politics.

I’ve learned that people struggle with housing instability on multiple levels. When we talk about homelessness and being unhoused, it’s not only about the folks that are out on the streets; it’s also about over-crowding in the homes we do have and not being able to live in spaces that accommodate all the folks we know and love, or having to hold down three-to-four jobs and side hustles in order to hold on to shelter, which is especially common for folks with records, transgender, and gender nonconforming folks. When I worked with formerly incarcerated transgender and gender-nonconforming folks, I’ve learned that people struggle with housing instability is a major barrier to people getting political involved and having the capacity to wage organized resistance against systems of oppression for liberation. On the national level, RTTC works to build a united front around how to unify the social movement to build a long-term strategy to win what we as a larger collective need for our people, and anchor that in housing in particular. In other words, we’re trying to move the needle of “housing justice” further to the left. We aim to generate solutions that are not dependent on capitalism, and instead focus on investing in our communities and self-determination for our people and the land.

How is the housing system intertwined with systems of policing, imprisonment, surveillance, and criminalization? How is the PIC used to manage housing issues?

KW: Policing is a direct tool of gentrification. One example is the criminalization of youth who hang out in groups when there aren’t other safe spaces to go or the ones that exist are grossly underfunded. Cops as well as criminals crimi- nalyze youth of color and working-class youth as gang-affiliated, or enforce anti-loitering or anti-truancy laws.

Policing is also used throughout the housing system. Nuisance ordinances penalize landlords and encourage them to push out tenants if the cops show up at their properties a certain number of times within 30 days, or if alleged “crimes” occur at a property. There are no exceptions for folks who need emergency assistance. The fact that the cops were called and showed up at the property is enough reason for eviction. There are also official “crime-free” leases, which allow landlords to evict tenants who may have been arrested or simply have a record.

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Letter from the Editors

Beloved Readers of The Abolitionist,

We at Critical Resistance (CR) are excited to bring you Issue 37, featuring a set of interviews and articles examining the intersections of housing justice and prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition. At the core of PIC abolition as a politic and movement is the need for housing and shelter, both of which are a requirement for survival, health, and true safety. Since the beginning of CR in the late 1990’s, CR has insisted in our mission that “basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure.” Yet as the dominant response to social, economic and political problems, the PIC is deployed at every turn to manage and ensure the interests, side effects and ramifications of racial capitalism. Systems of social welfare, like housing, become entrenched within institutions and practices of punishment and control through policing, surveillance, and imprisonment.

After shelter-in-place orders rolled out around the world in early 2020, it became quickly apparent that housing is essential as protection against COVID-19 (on an individual scale as well as community-wide and globally). Housing justice organizers and allies were some of the quickest to respond to the pandemic, making eager and bold calls to cancel rent, mortgage, debt and bills, occupying and reclaiming buildings and land for the displaced, defending tenants from evictions, shuttering down housing courts, creating community funds and land trusts, resisting police raids of encampments and tent cities, distributing personal protective equipment, COVID-19 testing and vaccines to unhoused communities, and much, much more.

As usual, we recommend readers begin with this issue’s Feature Analysis, an interview with Kamau Walton, long-time Critical Resistance member and now Right to the City Alliance. This piece lays out much of the intention and implementation to abolish the PIC that reflects the leadership of communities most impacted.

As a reminder, this year The Abolitionist Editor Collective decided to reduce printing frequency to two issues per year. This issue’s CR Updates & Movement highlights is not possible without the 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.

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CR Updates & Movement Highlights
Keeping Families Together

As always, we hope this issue feeds your mind and fuels your spirit for a world a without walls. Yours in struggle,

Critical Resistance & “The Abby” crew
for the legal eviction of tenants when any “crimi
nal” activity occurs, even if the tenant was the
person who experienced harm or violence. Some
housing activists see individual cops as well-
meaning because they might warn of evictions and
organizers have timelines and barricade to
prevent them. But in these cases, the cop isn’t
doing their actual job. This proves that cops
shouldn’t exist, not that some cops are good.

Additionally, many barriers to affordable or pub-
clic housing discriminate against people with rec-
ords who are on parole or probation or wearing
ankle monitors, or people who don’t have docu-
mentation—whether it’s undocumented folks,
unhoused people who don’t have IDs, or maybe
transgender folks whose IDs don’t match up
with their government surveillance records.

We also see the entanglement of housing and the
PICO reflected in budgets. Policing, surveil-
ance, and imprisonment take up such a huge
amount of local, state, and national budgets to
the point where even during a pandemic—when
the best thing to do is to shelter in place—the
government only offered enough resources to
address barely half of the housing problem,
while continuing to invest more in policing, mil-
itary, and imprisonment.

Intersections between housing and the PIC are
even clearer when we consider other over-
lapping issues. As climate change continues to
increase, for instance, more of our people are being
displaced environmentally or by disasters and
land grabs enforced by policing and military forces,
exacerbating housing and land scarcity. As we
gather clearer about these overlapping intersect-
ions, we gain more transformative and abol-
itionist wins—as opposed to symbolic or transac-
tional wins that don’t necessarily help to build
movements toward long-term solutions.

Would you say the housing system under racial capitalism is a punishment system, where we’re exploited in order to pay for shelter? Is it even possible to untangle the housing system from punishment?

KW: The housing system under capitalism is punitive, because capitalist society, economic, and political problems like housing—by deploying policing, imprisonment, surveil-
ance, and other tools of punishment—is a site to extract profit and resources from people. This is why housing justice must be anti-capitalist, like PIC abolition. Housing organizers now are mostly talking about the housing sys-
tem as extractive, as “rent as theft,” and speak-
ing to the commodification of land and housing.
There is a story of individual responsibility in
regard to housing and participating in capital-
ism generally, where homelessness, “crime,”
or any kind of hardship or “misfortune” like
struggling to pay rent is considered a personal

In response, RTTC worked to share local and state models with our member organ-
izations that were building communities and
willfulness on the national level to protect rent-
ers throughout the pandemic. Our members led some of the first eviction court shutdowns through our local tenant and community-lead
Sustainability Initiative based in New Orleans,
one of the first formations to shut down an evic-
tion court, and another, where a lot of other RTTC members followed suit. We had a
ded national day of action in 2020, too, but near the
turn of the year, the housing movement got de-
taled by presidential executive de-

What hasn’t been widely recognized,
though, is that formerly imprisoned
people, with people with conviction history or arrest records, or folks whose trauma from police interactions has impacted their jobs or ability to stay in the country,
were all being pushed out of their homes—eviction moratorium or not. These covert or de facto evictions have been nearly impossible to track as they are supposedly voluntary, or otherwise not moved through the courts...

Now, we have countless people displaced and signif-
ificant rent and utility debt accrued with no
moves by federal or state levels to meet the needs of the people or the scale of the problem.
Throughout the last year, RTTC member organiza-
tions have organized on city and state levels for direct allocations of emergency rental assistance. His-
torically, we were organized by door knocking and
meeting in people’s living rooms, organizing ten-
ants building by building. But with eviction hear-
ings on Zoom and people facing eviction without
EVI access or fami

KW: Housing justice is the site where the government surveillance
records. And even in the most marginalized of communities—whether it’s undocumented folks,
unhoused people who don’t have IDs, or maybe
transgender folks whose IDs don’t match up
with their government surveillance records.

While different groups pivoted to mass digi-
tal organizing due to COVID-19 (mass calls, hosting big livestreams, or trying to build out listservs and
large networks), most tenant organizing organ-
zations’ abilities to effectively base build and stay
connected and over the overwhelming by hun-
dreds of well-meaning but new folks. We experi-
enced the kind of grassroots organizing that
in 
the PIC abolition movement often, any time the violence of policing or imprisonment enters the national conversation. How do we

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Overall, the most significant challenges and les-
sions have been around strategy and cohesion.

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make as much of an impact beyond state and local policy as possible, and we need to continue to build a sweeping shared understanding of what is needed versus what is possible based on the current political climate. At the heart of this work are the level of alignment, and the capacity people have to seriously shift our material conditions.

What would you say the state of the housing movement is right now? How do you see housing justice intersect with PIC abolition, and how can these two movements advance toward collective liberation together?

KW: Within RTTC, there's a lot happening to build our members' capacities and sustainability for the long haul, since the last two years have been so much crisis and rapid response, or winning concrete gains to stabilize our communities hit hard by COVID and racial capitalism in general. There's a lot of re-grounding happening. Then there's the building of programming initiatives within the housing front, like the more progressive groups that built out and launched a national housing justice platform about a week and a half before COVID hit, which could be revisited and sharpened to help deepen alignment and explore shared strategies across the housing front.

Housing is still not seen as a key priority issue among the social movement left, and it should be. We need to organize our folks to be in alignment with where state and how essential housing and shelter are, in order to ensure that our people are in stable places to throw down and show up in movement building work.

Through grassroots organizing in 29 states, RTTC member organization have won serious victories in several cities. One of the most significant victories was won by the Sky Without Limits Cooperative in Minneapolis, which campaigned and organized around winning five different apartment complexes, mobilizing roughly 40 families around a landlord who lost his ability to be a landlord in Minneapolis for the next five years. Then there's the building of the building campaigns through a bird-dogging campaign to track down this landlord, going to his church, and inviting folks to come and learn. We would say this is what he was supposed to do. They were able to win the buildings, and they formally started a co-op and a childcare co-op. They run all of their own maintenance and the organization that supported them, Renters United, is also supporting and organizing renters in other parts of Minneapolis and is housing now for rent control statewide.

Another organization advancing a campaign with transformative demands is the Chainsaw Collective in Santa Fe, which is pushing to win 64 acres and transformed a former college campus into a land trust. They developed a program where emergency rental assistance was directly allocated to residents without folks having to apply. They've created a new precedent, expanding how state and how essential housing and shelter are, in order to ensure that our people are in stable places to throw down and show up in movement building work.

The housing movement centers the working class and a strategic base of people to organize in coalition with abolitionist forms. It make the most sense for us to strategically organize in coalition with abolitionist formations, but also making more room for the PIC to infiltrate our communities?

KW: PIC abolitionists can learn a lot from the large-scale building and power-building that the housing movement has done quite well, especially as PIC abolitionists face a moment of different work that's moving on the left. Can we examine more critically what neoliberalism has most impacted by both housing injustice and the PIC, and where could it make the most sense for us to strategically organize in coalition with abolitionist formations? We also need to delve deeper into connections between housing, the PIC, and education, because right now it's basic: Defund the police and put that money into housing. But what housing? And how do we invest strategically in work in a way that doesn't set back either movement's advances, especially because, as it is now, the housing system is individualist, exploitative, oppressive, and can be repaired by the state. There are so many opportunities to sharpen and specify how to uncouple policing from the housing system for housing and land liberation.

Because the PIC is the “guard dog” of racial capitalism and used to manage various social, economic, and political problems in order to repress dissent, a PIC abolitionist analysis allows us to see that PIC abolition is integral to any fight for self-determination and community control. A more in-depth analysis of housing work is needed now because there are gaps in how we're talking about homelessness and organizing unhoused people. We need to understand more deeply the barriers to housing for undocumented and formerly imprisoned people, and the ways electronic monitoring transforms people's homes into cages.

RTTC member organizations have been able to build and strengthen political relationships by joining with Center to the solicit the police by mobilizing around city and state budgets, pushing state to prioritize people over policing, profit, and imprisonment. Due to the many laws criminalizing unhoused people over the last 30 years—and the new laws being added through these last two years—there has been more conversation around the growing volume of encampments of unhoused folks in cities all across the country. Throughout the last two years, there has been a lot more efforts to tackle what else is possible beyond paying rent or owning a home, like helping people meet their needs and stopping harassment and harm from police.

What are some opportunities you think we need to seize to strengthen solidarity between the housing and PIC abolition movements?

KW: We see solidarity between the two movements in the ways housing and abolitionist organizations have joined forces and in many of the demands of campaigns. Cancel Rent DC is a coalition of organizations that integrated calls for defunding the PIC in housing work, and a mix of our member groups across the country have been trying to think about more opportunities for the movements to collaborate. There's a need to delve deeper into connections between housing, the PIC, and abolition, because right now it's basic: Defund the police and put that money into housing. But what housing? And how do we invest strategically in work in a way that doesn't set back either movement's advances, especially because, as it is now, the housing system is individualist, exploitative, oppressive, and can be repaired by the state. There are so many opportunities to sharpen and specify how to uncouple policing from the housing system for housing and land liberation.

That's not enough to have more money for housing if it comes with loopholes and attachments tying that housing to policing, surveillance, and to the criminalization of our people. How do we shape demands that are reflective of an abolitionist politics that aren't making more room for the PIC to infiltrate our communities?

Integrating more abolitionist practices isn't only the necessary work of housing organizers, but also PIC abolitionists in other sectors and movements. This more concretely fortifies our communities against the different arms of the PIC, racial capitalism, and the state that seek to destabilize, extract from, and punish our communities—whether through money, technology, or actual bodies and people. In an abolitionist world we must focus on large-scale building and power-building that exist in most major cities across the country. Abolitionists need clear visions for stable, secure, long-term, holistic housing and shelter.

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I wouldn't argue that housing justice and PIC abolition are separate, but complementary, because PIC abolition is integral to any fight for self-determination and community control. A more in-depth analysis of housing work is needed now because there are gaps in how we're talking about homelessness and organizing unhoused people. We need to understand more deeply the barriers to housing for undocumented and formerly imprisoned people, and the ways electronic monitoring transforms people's homes into cages.

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“Housing First” is the Floor, Not the Ceiling

By Andrew Spiers with Billy Ray Boyer

Andrew Spiers is the Director of Training and Technical Assistance at Pathways to Housing PA. He runs Housing First University, where he provides training to agencies and communities across the country on the Housing First model, harm reduction, and practices for working with individuals experiencing homelessness, psychiatric disability, and substance use disorders.

The Abolitionist: What is Housing First, where is it being used, and what are its origins and core principles?

Andy Spiers (AS): Housing First—capital H, capital F—is a model for how to provide permanent, supportive housing and wrap-around supports that aim to help individuals who have a “history of chronic homelessness, serious persistent mental illness, and/or substance use patterns” to manage independent living. Developed by Sam Tsembaris in New York City in 1992, the original Pathways to Housing program no longer exists, but Pathways to Housing PA, Pathways Vermont, and Pathways to Housing DC all grew out of that initial New York office. Pathways to Housing PA, for instance, has been around since 2008.

The model was originally developed for single adults with a history of chronic homelessness, meaning homeless for 12 months, documented consecutively, or 12 months cumulative over a three-year period; that’s HUD’s definition of chronic homelessness. The model says to immediately offer rental subsidies and permanent housing to these individuals with no preconditions or barriers. There’s no predetermined end point to the services, and we provide wrap-around supports that help them maintain their tenancy.

Housing First is being implemented in over 250 cities in the US, and now the US is starting to take a national Housing First approach to ending homelessness. Canada, Australia, and Ireland have already used a national Housing First approach for some time. Currently, Finland is poised to end homelessness within the next five years, using Housing First. We’ve seen countries in the United Kingdom, South Korea, and New Zealand.

Housing First has five key principles and 38 fidelity measures (see image for Principles). These principles state that housing is a basic human right, and that everybody deserves a safe place to live. We also believe in offering folks choice at every stage of the process, and allowing them to chart the course for what their treatment is like—looking at what services, including mental health treatment and substance use treatment, they want to engage in. W hen I say “treatment,” I mean that very broadly to include all of the support and services that we offer. Treatment might just be going out for a community inclusion event or joining the gardening club; we consider all of those interactions therapeutic. We’re connecting folks to mental health support and substance use treatment if they want that.

Case managers or social workers talk to all the time say, “Well, we offered this person housing a whole bunch of times, and they kept saying no, so we discharged them.” At Pathways, we have people who have been on the management list for years, and we just go and see them every two weeks, even if they don’t want a house. There are other things that we can help with, like buying somebody lunch or bringing them a new pair of socks or a new sleeping bag, or taking them to the eye doctor. They have the choice to not accept housing. We’re empowering folks to determine what their goals are and what they want to work on. So, if housing isn’t a priority for somebody, which for a lot of people it’s not then we support them with whatever other goals they want to work on in the meantime, and as we do that, we build trust.

Along these same lines, we recognize that there’s no one way to change your relationship to substances or to your psychiatric experience or mental health. Obviously, Housing First doesn’t exist without harm reduction. You can talk about harm reduction without Housing First, but you can’t talk about housing First without harm reduction. The Housing First model is about helping people make decisions that incrementally move them toward better health and wellness, but that means the way that our participants interpret better health and wellness for themselves, not the way that we interpret as providers.

Lastly, social and community inclusion is the thing that gets left out of Housing First conversations most often. We don’t just get somebody into an apartment and then leave them there. A Housing First orientation is about continuing to include and build community with a person. Okay, we got you into a house. What do you want to do now? What sounds exciting for you? And how can we help you do that? And how can we help you do that for some people it’s going back to school, for some people it’s volunteering, and for some people, it’s going to a baseball game. It’s figuring out how to help people connect to their new neighborhood and community in meaningful ways. Think about folks who have been experiencing unsheltered life, folks who are on the street. Think about how much they’re ignored by everyone passing them by. Community inclusion may be the most important principle of Housing First. Housing is literally the foundation upon which any and every other part of recovery can be built.

We don’t just get somebody into an apartment and then leave them there. A Housing First orientation is about continuing to include and build community with a person. Okay, we got you into a house. What do you want to do now? What sounds exciting for you? And how can we help you do that?

The reason I think Housing First hasn’t been more widely implemented in the US is a general lack of funding for this type of work, and a lack of prioritization of funding. The biggest problem right now is a lack of affordable housing. I talk to people all over the country all day long, every day, I want to work on and really wrestle with affordable housing. It’s not just a Philadelphia problem. It’s not just a Bucky County problem. It’s a problem in California, and it’s a problem in rural Montana, and it’s a problem in New Hampshire. It’s everywhere. Medicaid expansion has been great for some states, but in other places the inability to bill Medicaid for this kind of work has been a big challenge. We have a lack of funding for housing, and a lack of funding for housing as fundamental to health care. Housing is simply a form of health care.

How does Housing First promote self-determination for its participants in a way that is different from other housing programs and social service models?

AS: Prior to Housing First, linear residential treatment was really all we had. We had traditional housing alternatives that referred unserved people to a congregate shelter where they need to share space with lots of other people. You have to be on time for intake or for curfew at night; otherwise you lose your bed. W hen you’re in there, you can’t be doing the biggest or use [substances]; you can’t let your mental health symptoms disrupt everyone. There are all these rules, you have to figure out something to do all day long. If you can abide by all of those rules for X amount of time, you’ll be referred to a transitional housing program or a halfway house somewhere where you’re still in a congregate setting, but maybe with 30 people instead of 400, and there are fewer rules to follow there. M aybe you have to show that you’re motivated to get a job or be “productive” in society. If you can follow all of those rules, then maybe you’ll be rewarded by being placed in a rapid rehousing program, and you’ll have your own place. You have two years to figure out how you’re going to pay your rent on your own, and then we’re hands-off, and you’ve got to figure it out from there, which is not feasible or realistic for a whole lot of people.

The statistics on housing retention in a linear residential treatment program are around 24-40%, whereas in a Housing First program, we see about 85-90% of individuals remain stably housed after five years. T hose are folks who were people who were considered “not ready” for housing by linear residential treatment programs. The traditional housing model is not evidence-based, but linear residential treatment is essential in a way that is different from other housing programs and social service models. How does Housing First promote self-determination for its participants in a way that is different from other housing programs and social service models?
to have serious mental health struggles or substance use issues to qualify for these programs, but the second you set foot in the door of the program, you have to stop demonstrating any symptoms of these conditions. In these types of programs, housing is offered as a reward for compliance. People who display symptoms of the things that qualify them for treatment in the first place are punished. In other words, linear residential treatment is all about clinical assumptions. Participants have very little say in the trajectory of their care, or where they’re housed. It’s a “take what you can get” type of situation.

With Housing First, participants are regarded as the experts on their own experience. We believe you know what you need. And so you’re gonna set your own goals; we’re gonna offer you choice at every stage; and then we’re gonna provide wrap-around support services. In the event a participant loses or is evicted from their first home, we help them secure a second home.

And the fact that people are supported into getting that second apartment, as opposed to losing their shot after it goes sideways with the first place, is what Housing First is about. When someone loses their housing, other programs might be like, “Well, they weren’t ready. I guess we’re gonna discharge them now.” This is a time when participants need more support, not to be abandoned.

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If someone is living in a congregate setting where you’re not supposed to use substances and they experience some new substance use, the program usually says, “Alright, we’re charging you because you can’t use here.” So now this person has lost their home, and they’ve lost all of the supports that they were depending on. That’s not what we want to do when folks are experiencing a crisis; it doesn’t make any sense. It’s completely counterintuitive. It’s punishment, not support.

**How much overlap is there between Housing First participants and the prison industrial complex (PIC)?** And then how, specifically, does Housing First seek to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of participants being criminalized, re-criminalized, having future interactions with the PIC?

**AS:** I don’t know the percentage of participants in prison, but a significant number of people we work with have harmful interactions with police or being in the system in some way. We see people get locked up for being homeless and being poor. Being unhoused in public is criminalized. “Loitering” or “obstruction of highways” are two simple ways poor people and folks who are unhoused are criminalized. Then there are folks who are also experiencing mental health crises, getting arrested for “disturbing” people in public, which also takes a range of forms, from just looking and being poor in public and making wealthy folks uncomfortable to needing to engage in survival “crimes” to live, like selling drugs or engaging in sex work. A lot of our participants end up imprisoned at some point; some do it by design, as if they’re deemed to go to prison in a world where their needs are not met, and they’ve been left behind by a system that’s theoretically supposed to support them but doesn’t.

If we can get somebody into housing, there’s going to be less of a need for them to engage in criminalized survival activities because they don’t have to raise enough money to stay in a motel for the night or find their next meal. In Housing First, they get wrap-around support services, so we’re making sure their energy is turned on, that they’re getting food support, that they’re connected to food banks in their neighborhood, that they get support if they want to change their relationship to substances. We see 63% of our participants who have an opioid use diagnosis accessing some form of treatment within six months of getting housed, including Suboxone, in-patient, or out-patient services, but treatment is never a condition for them to stay housed.

We did a program study in 2011; a couple of years after Pathways first launched, and even in those first three years as a program, among our participants, Philadelphia prison system episodes decreased by 50%, and days of imprisonment and jail time decreased by 45%. We know that getting folks housed is drastically going to impact whether or not folks end up imprisoned again, because folks are being imprisoned because they’re trying to get their basic needs met. And when we meet those basic needs there’s less likelihood of risk.

We have a forensic liaison on each of our teams who works with people’s probation officers, shows up to advocate for folks at court, and goes to see them in jail so they maintain that supportive relationship with us. We partner with the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services on the Frequent Users Systems Engagement lot program called “Hi-Five,” which helps folks who have a lot of re-criminalizing experiences. This program will allow us to hold some of these folks’ apartments for a longer period of time than 90 days, so that when out, they have a place to go immediately. The hope is that, over time, this will help decrease the likelihood of re-criminalizing experiences.

In some ways, Housing First has been co-opted as a term if not an idea, for example by HUD under the Bush administration, which used the language of “Housing First” in official policy. Do you have any critiques of Housing First that speak to this co-optation?

**AS:** I think “Housing First” has started to turn into a buzzword because agencies know that their grant applications need that language and they know that their funders want to see it. In meetings, trainings, and calls, some people often say, “Please come train our staff on Housing First and harm reduction.” Then I get into a discussion with the individual providers, and they’re like, “We don’t know why we’re here; we’re already doing Housing First.” As the conversation progresses, they say all of these things that are completely in contradiction with the Housing First model that they’re supposedly using. Instead they use horribly stigmatizing language. They’re talking about kicking people out for using substances. This is the problem; everybody thinks they’re doing Housing First just because they’re allowing folks with psychiatric disabilities or substance use histories into their programs. They think that folks going to maga-ically stop displaying behaviors consistent with their lived realities, without any support or time.

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You could ask 1,000 people what harm reduction means, and they’re all going to tell you something a little different. People have heard the language of Housing First, and they just believe what they’ve heard from some random person who doesn’t even really know what it is and has no experience with the model. People come to us and say, “We want to start doing Housing First,” and they think that I’m gonna train them for two hours, and then they’re gonna know what to do. If you really want to do what we do, how we do it, then we’re looking at a 30-week training series, and a total restructurining of your program. It’s not just a mindset that you can hear about once, and then change the way you do everything.

I really believe in Housing First, and I really believe in the work we do at Pathways. But is Housing First the ceiling or the floor? It’s the floor. It’s the floor.

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Point 39 from the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense’s 3-Point Platform, “By any means necessary, by any method necessary.”

**HOUSING FIRST UNIVERSITY**

**STAFF AWARDED THE SHOW INDEPENDENT PRIZE FOR EXEMPLARY ARTISTIC WORK**
E-Carceration is still Incarceration: Abolition is still the answer

By James Kilgore

In May of 2009, after six and a half years in federal and state prisons in California, I was paroled to my family in Champaign, Illinois. On my second day home, a cheery white woman from the Department of Corrections showed up and strapped a black plastic band to my ankle—a GPS monitor. I knew this was coming, but after several years in cages, I wasn't afraid of a piece of plastic. I was free. The next day my parole officer phoned. "You'll be allowed out of the house Monday through Friday from 6am to 10am. That should give you enough time to take care of your business." All those visions I had of free- dom while lying on my prison bunk vanished. The parole officer gave me any safe space into a carceral space and made my loved ones into prison staff.

From that moment on, I took on the project of researching electronic monitoring (EM). Who makes money from this economic sector? How are they making money from it? And most importantly, what did the future hold for this punitive new technology? This was still early days in the digital world; smart phones were just catching on, laptops still had CD drives. But my journey through the prison system had taught me what new technologies, especially in post prison industrial complex (PIC) would find new ways to use this technology to extend the boundaries of punishment and surveillance, to find more ways to invade households and communities.

Since that time, electronic monitors have gone through incredible changes. Two stand out. First, even though we have no precise national EM census, we know that the use of these devices has increased dramatically, growing their presence in pretrial release, parole, youth justice, immigration, and DUIs. Second, the capacity of these devices to capture data means the state can delve deeper into the daily details and relationships of families and communities, growing, intensifying, and restructuring carceral space.

GROWTH OF EM DEVICES

Immigration has probably seen the most rapid expansion in EM device usage, going from a total of 99,349 devices under ICE authority in late 2012 to more than 202,000 today, according to NBC News and the Department of Homeland Security. But though growth in numbers alone has been a critical change, the increased surveillance capacity of the devices looms even larger. Before GPS monitoring became commonplace, ankle monitors simply told authorities whether a person was at home; it did not share more about the person’s precise location. In 2005 there were just 2,900 devices in use with GPS tracking. By 2019, that figure had increased thirtyfold to 88,000 according to a report from Pew Charitable Trusts. Though we lack a precise count today, virtually all new ankle monitors include GPS tracking, with some even switching their ankle monitors to smartphone apps or smart watches, with tracking, audio, and video capacity. This growth extends the penetration of what we call E-Carceration—the use of technology to deprive people of their liberty.

ORGANIZING AGAINST ELECTRONIC MONITORING

The GPS tracker is a genuine member of the surveillance state technology family, capturing location and other data in real time and sending it all to the mega storage cloud, the majority of which is owned by the robber barons of our era: Google, Amazon, and Microsoft. EM surveillance adds to the data extracted from all the other forms of e-carceration: facial recognition, license plate readers, shot spotters, risk assessment tools, Stingrays (that surveil cell phones). Data brokering and processing firms grab the data from all these technologies, run it through algorithms set up to target consumers and dispose of those deemed unworthy of inclusion in the virtual marketplace. Like the raw materials of traditional colonialism, the data extracted from our lives becomes a source of profits and a vehicle for controlling systems of imprisonment—restricting movement, blocking access to housing, and undermining community solidarity.

Some activists have written off an ankle shackle as part of their broader campaign for abolition and housing, and lead a life in their community; then that may be the best option for a person at that moment. While abolitionists may support an individual accepting EM as a measure of harm reduction in the absence of better options, we also constantly keep our eye on the big picture. W hat we fight for at an individual level of harm reduction doesn’t equate with our large-scale abolitionist vision. As researcher Emmett Sanderson, who spent several years in and out of prison on an ankle shackle, stated abolition means “rejecting the false binary that the only two options are to stay in a cage or go into the community on a shackling. This means in the future that destroys the binary, the option that we must fight for wherever possible. It is our job to keep putting freedom on the agenda, to reject the idea that an ankle shackle constitutes an alternative to incarceration and recognize it as an alternative form of incarceration.”

Second, as with all the technologies of e-carceration, a cohort of companies extract profit from their product. In EM, BI, a subsidiary of the GEO Group, the largest private prison company in the world, dominates the market. BI has a contract with ICE that includes the more than 180,000 people on some form of GPS monitoring. We need to target these companies in our campaigns. And, in many instances, reformers have been champions of ankle shackles, arguing they are vehicles of decarceration that offer individuals the opportunity to work, spend time with their families, and prepare a legal defense. Such arguments often carry considerable weight when considered at the individual level. If being on a monitor, especially during COVID-19, offers the only opportunity for a person to be out of prison and lead a life in community, then that may be the best option for a person at that moment.

The right materials of traditional colonialism, the data extracted from our lives becomes a source of profits and a vehicle for controlling systems of imprisonment—restricting movement, blocking access to housing, and undermining community solidarity.

The expansion of EM and other forms of e-carceration poses a number of challenges for both criminal legal reformers and abolition-
Justice. This means rejecting compromises and carve-outs that add monitoring and other surveillance technologies into alleged solutions to violence and imprisonment. These technologies only deepen the control and power of the PIC, while destabilizing our homes and neighborhoods. Already activists in a number of communities have attacked the use of electronic monitors as part of an abolitionist agenda. The Chicago Community Bond Fund spent two years mobilizing for serious EM harm reduction measures in the 2021 Pretrial Fairness Act. Justice LA is confronting local authorities who have expanded the use of EM by 5,000 percent in the past six years. Perhaps the most powerful resistance has emerged in the struggles against ICE, where organizations like Mijente and the Detention Watch Network have combined an ambitious research agenda with popular education and targeted actions to shed light on the rapid growth of GPS and other forms of e-carceralization. We must embrace alternatives that provide opportunities for the oppressed and that remove people from jails, prisons, and all forms of e-carceralization. Abolition means not only destroying the elements of the PIC but imagining and building alternatives that improve the lives of communities that have been devastated by imprisonment and neoliberalism. Creating those alternatives requires confronting the powers that drive racial capitalism and the tech giants—Amazon, Google, and Microsoft—that are shaping the contours of late-stage capitalism and the surveillance state. Fighting for abolition means fighting to usurp their power and to appropriate the technology that they own; controlling and deploying it for peace, development, and the preservation of the Earth; and halting the expansion of the carceral state into our homes and communities. This is not an empty challenge: The future of the world depends on our ability to imagine these changes and make them a reality.

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FEATURES

Home Demolitions in Palestine: Breaking Homes, Maintaining Supremacy, and Fractured Narratives

By Mariam Barghouti

In July 2021, Israeli military forces invaded the Hamusla, the lands in which Palestinian Bedouin communities live in near the Jordan Valley. At first, Israeli army declared the area a “closed military zone” - a common practice by Israeli forces to weaponize national security as a reason to expel people. Following this, Palestinian Bedouins in Hamusla found that Israeli forces would demolish the housing structures, turning the families, including children, homeless. Again, in February 2022, the families already transferred once, would find themselves at risk of being dispossessed. Once again, at the hands of the Israeli military.

Bilal, 48, sits on a plastic chair in the chill outside, and in a weared voice explains the continued abuses they face. “This is an agricultural land and where we were there was a well. Now it’s a closed military zone. They took water, electricity — all that concern for area C in the West Bank. And East Jerusalem. This is largely due to the narrow focus on demolitions within areas NGOs deem “vulnerable communities.” What this has done is splinter and fragment Palestinian communities as well as allow for a reductionist approach to demolition. It not only ignores the realities faced by Palestinian communities in Areas A and B of the West Bank, but also discards the concept of demolition as it relates to Gaza and historic Palestine (“historic Palestine” is an area in which the whole land of Palestine before the creation of Israel, and here refers to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and Palestine (State of Israel or “Israel” system). The five governorates in Gaza under a 36-year, military-imposed siege face a variant form of demolition. Carpet bombing, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship on the ground and the very act of facing practices amid a blackout from human rights organizations and media reporting.

Freedom is the option that destroys the binary, the option that we must fight for wherever possible. It is our job to keep putting freedom on the agenda, to reject the idea that an ankle shackle constitutes an alternative to incarceration and recognize it as an alternative form of incarceration.

This piece does not aim to provide a list of violations through demolition practice, rather serves to provide an alternative narrative to the destructive impact of demolitions in colonized Palestine. It allows for a lexicon and narrative flow which deviates from that of the development sector or main media. In a way, it’s an attempt to emphasize the impact of institutional practices not only on the immediate well-being, health, and rights of communities, but the destruction of potential futures, the right to live safely, to grow, to be safe and protected. To remain, despite the settler militia.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1948, around the same time that the United Nations allowed the entry and legitimization of Israel as a member state, 125,000 emptied homes from which Palestinian were expelled were demolished and destroyed. This violent mass destruction of Palestinian infrastructure sought to (1) erase any trace of Palestinian families that have been turned into refugees, and (2) to ensure that they are unable to return. This practice was dubbed as “cleaning up national views.” Continuing this process, between 1967 and 2011—under full Israeli settler rule—a regime of demolition by present-day Israel are not justified by the ICJ, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or any other international authority. The Israeli authorities and military accelerated unheeded.

BEYOND THE PHYSICAL, HOME DEMOLITIONS AS PSYCHOSOCIAL ENGINEERING

Bilal recollects the times that international diplomats went on field visits to Homusla: “Internationally deployed diplomats used to come here and they would bring their international aid, but in front of their eyes the soldiers would confiscate them and [the diplomats] would say nothing.” W ith a sigh, he continues, “At all times, we are facing danger. Day and night.”

Demolition of Palestinian infrastructure—especially home spaces—acts as a strategy of moralization, inflicting shock and domination, and carving space for settler colonial expansion and annexation. In a sense, the process of home demolitions should be observed in the context where they contribute to the overall psychologi-
ic memories, aggressive physical torture, and Palestinians. The induction of anxiety, traumatization is also a form of psychosocial engineering of your ethnic cleansing. This too, is a live. Imagine that, exchanging children for considerations of Hope and Dignity," Palestinians reunited.

In a sense, the process of home demolitions should be observed in the context where they contribute to the overall psychological engineering of the Palestinian population. It is in fact a torture tactic which mimics the practices of Israeli prison services against Palestinian political detainees.

The pressing reality in Palestine necessitates that we transcend the frameworks of internationality. We need to resist the isolation, the soli- darity and connection with Palestine.

To complicate things further, the concept of home demolitions is not addressed in the con- text of Gaza as it is not technically under the pretext of settler expansion due to the with- drawal of Israeli settlers and the demolition of the settlements in the Gaza Strip in 2006. Never- theless, Gaza has faced more than 5 full blown mili- tary assaults since 2008, killing thousands of Palestinians, occupying their lands, homes, and breaking entire families. In 2012, the United Nations alarmed warning that the Gaza Strip – where a majority of population are children or youth under the age of 29 - would be uninhabitable by 2020. This prediction did not include the eruption of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Israel launched another full- fledged military assault on Gaza. Gaza’s resi- dential buildings were carpet bomb and thousand- s were left homeless in the streets. Families were forced from their homes, their belongings got burned and they are all killed; they afford a chance for at least one family member to sur- vive. Imagine, that, exchanging children for con- fiscation of basic materials (including water, sanitation, and medical resource extraction, denial, and destruction deployed to maintain Israeli supremacy over Pale- stine and Palestinians.

The only avenue Palestinians have to confront these measures is through protest which is often repressed by settler militia violence. More often that not, it is the Israeli military police, the very authori- ties that are facing forced expulsion under a pre- test of not having an Israeli issued permit system, or as a form of collective punishment if a com- munity member undertook an act of resistance against Israeli settler violence and abuses. To go back to the then the most recent instance of mass violence by Israel - the Israeli attempt in 2021 to displace Palestinians and annex their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, along with the Israeli military’s aerial assault on Gaza triggered one of the most widespread waves of Palestinian resistance in recent memory.

Palestinian communities in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of occupied Jerusalem were pro- testing their forced expulsion in order to pave way for the occupation of their homes by Israeli Zionist settlers. Muna El-Kurd, only 22 at the time told Ya’acov Faucci - a settler from New York about her experience of being stretched. She said: “I don’t steal your house, someone else will.”

Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and across historic Palestine took to the streets in mass protest, and resisted violent police and military repression. Under the title of “Intifada (upris- ing) of Hope and Dignity,” Palestinians unified. We learned, that just because we are separated by apartheid walls, military checkpoints and a colorful identification system which separates us on a hierarchy of accessing basic privileges, does not mean we cannot unify. Perhaps for the first time since 1936, Palestinians across all of historic Palestine engaged in a general strike that brought the whole society to a stop- and im- pacted Israel’s economy concerning the num- ber of Palestinian employees scattered across the different sectors. Under the title of “Intifada (uprising) of Hope and Dignity,” Palestinians unified. We learned, that just because we are separated by apartheid walls, military checkpoints and a colorful identification system which separates us on a hierarchy of accessing basic privileges, does not mean we cannot unify. Perhaps for the first time since 1936, Palestinians across all of historic Palestine engaged in a general strike that brought the whole society to a stop- and impacted Israel’s economy considering the number of Palestinian employees scattered across the different sectors. This display of resistance sent a message that despite attempts to fracture the Palestinian popu- lation with borders, displacement, checkpoints, and apartheid walls, they remain as unified as ever. The resilience of the Palestinian population inspired—inspired—inspired—inspired by—the thousands of protests, marches, and actions all over the world in solidarity. It became more obvious that the growing global movement to defend Black lives has inspired indigenious efforts in the US and Canada to resist the construction of oil pipelines on Native land, to the fight against state violence against Ameri- can Indian people in America at the US-Mexico border, solidarity and connection with Pales- tine is growing. More and more, communities in resistance everywhere are finding common cause, and uplifting the Palestinian call to Boy-cott, Divest, and Sanction the State of Israel. Yet what may have been less obvious is that our strength, our confrontational, was an emulation of all the lessons shared with us, all the histories of Struggles for freedom, such as Ferguson, have become part of our spine. What Palestinians are doing is ensuring that our resistance defies the isolation, the soli- darity of different communities in small areas, the need for economic dependence on access to water, sometimes food, and basic medical needs. This is, in essence, our breaking free.

For Palestinians, as with all oppressed commu- nities, the demands are the same—the right to housing, land, dignity, and self-determination. And like a home, hopes and dreams are built one block and one brick at a time. More than this, our resistance is built upon our own testimony and recognizing that abusers are not to be tolerated, but challenged and confronted. This requires weakening their disproportionate- amount of power and wealth. However, our resistance is also built upon our own testimony and recognizing that abusers are not to be tolerated, but challenged and confronted. This is how we practice Sumoud. Steadfastness, not by thinking, but by doing—by acting—by creating a space where our experience of resistance defies the isolation, the soli- darity of different communities in small areas, the need for economic dependence on access to water, sometimes food, and basic medical needs. This is, in essence, our breaking free.

Author Bio: Mariam Barghouti is a Palestinian- American social activist who has co- founded the Sumoud. Her work has been published in the New York Times, Al-Jazeera English, The Washington Post, and others.
Exist and Resist: Sanctioned Encampments and Co-opting Strategies of Survival

By Jade Arellano, Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP)

A community of unhoused Oaklanders, living at Cob on W ood in East Oakland, California, anticipate the arrival of bulldozers any day now. Cob on W ood is one of the largest homeless encampments in W est Oakland, where residents have built their own tiny homes, a community clinic, and even a free commissary. While this beautiful and sustainably built settlement has been heralded in the media as a creative solution to Oakland’s housing crisis, there remains an ever-present threat that California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the public entity that “owns” the land, will evict everyone living in the encampment and destroy it.

In the summer of 2021 around the same time the city issued a “cease and desist” order to the folks at Cob on W ood, Oakland City Council was considering a proposal to give $350,000 to a nonprofit organization to build a city-sanctioned encampment. While such encampments created by unhoused people are vilified and violently dismantled, cities across the US are proposing establishing “sanctioned encampments” as a tier of the formal shelter system. The government- or nonprofit-run sanctioned encampments, which guise themselves as progressive and innovative, lead to enhanced criminalization and institutionalization of unhoused people outside of their fenced-in borders. Instead of a genuine solution to the housing crisis, these encampments represent another attempt to push the unhoused out of the formal housing landscape and make them into leverage and territory for the formalization of the criminalization of extreme poverty.

WHEN AND WHY SERVICES ENHANCE PENALTY

Offering $350,000 to a nonprofit to build a city-sanctioned encampment is one of the most appealing aspects of these encampments. They allow the city and its contractors to easily坞and quickly坞turn down an offer to stay in a sanctioned encampment. The mere pretense of an offer seems enough to circumvent the requirements set forth by the Ninth Circuit.

Local governments have been very straightforward about what kind of sanctioned encampments will be used as part of a larger strategy to destroy all the “unsanctioned” encampments and communities. In Sacramento, Mayor Darrell Steinberg introduced “Right to Housing, Obligation to Accept,” as a clarification of the Boise ruling, which, if passed, would make it illegal for unhoused people to refuse offers of housing more than once. “This becomes an easy loophole” to legalize their stays in sanctioned encampments, RV parking spaces in designated lots, and tiny homes. Note that these are all the same arrangements that would have previously defined someone as homeless, an absurd rhetorical turn that reveals how old the old talk of “people need four walls for their own good” was disconnected to a larger agenda of punishing, repressing, and controlling unhoused people.

In regard to sanctioned encampments specifically, Steinberg said, “I strongly support our new safeguard movement to organize designated tent and tiny home encampments. It is our best short-term strategy to triage the thousands living in the numerous tent encampments and then regulate the spaces in our city where it is not appropriate to camp.” Clearly, one of the most appealing aspects of these encampments is that local governments try to increase their capacity to make offers by cheaply and quickly increasing their shelter stock. The greater the number of offers, the easier it becomes for cities to continue the brutal and blatantly unconstititutional displacement of unhoused people.

Communities created by unhoused people can be places for revolutionary dreaming, radical mutual aid projects, and political resistance to the criminalization of extreme poverty. The institutionalization of encampments undermines what can be empowering about living in an encampment by turning the encampment into a “service.” This became devastatingly clear in a group of encampments based in Portland, Oregon called Creating Conscious Communities With People Outside, or C3PO for short.

Like many sanctioned encampments, the C3PO project was conceived as an emergency response to the pandemic. It was modeled after Dignity Village, a community established in Portland after a highly publicized and hard-won victory by a community of unhoused folks over local sit-lie ordinances. At Dignity Village, “villagers” govern collectively through a democratic decision-making structure, with established processes for creating and changing community agreements and for airing grievances. In an interview, Victory LaFara, a social worker tasked with designing and implementing C3PO, explained, “Naturally, the Village model mirrors the many common-sense ways that poor people survive together. We know and check on our neighbors and get all up in each other’s personal business. We survive poverty communally by sharing our social and material resources in mutual aid networks. Democracy, dignity, and community are real and naked into the very core of the Village Model.”

Communities created by unhoused people can be places for revolutionary dreaming, radical mutual aid projects, and political resistance to the criminalization of extreme poverty. The institutionalization of encampments undermines what can be empowering about living in an encampment by turning the encampment into a “service.” This became devastatingly clear in a group of encampments based in Portland, Oregon called Creating Conscious Communities With People Outside, or C3PO for short.

Because the circumstances surrounding the community in C3PO were very different than Dignity Village—namely that the COVID-19 pandemic was the circumstance that led to C3PO—staff and villagers there encountered some unique challenges, especially due to staffing and capacity limitations. Despite these challenges, the C3PO Villages started to come into their own. Other groups in the C3PO coalition stepped in to help with funding and staffing, and combined with a dedicated group of volunteers they were able to temporarily fill the administrative vacuum.

According to Victory, who was involved in an advisory capacity after JOIN (the previous nonprofit

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The continued refusal to honor the ingenuity and creativity of folks who must survive on the streets reveals that the agenda behind "sanctioned encampments," like many other services created to "help the homeless," is to corral poor people and conceal them from the public. Thirty-nine years of failed policy should speak for itself. Criminalization is cruel and dehumanizing; nothing ends homelessness like a home.

Author Bio: Jade Arellano grew up in Hemet, a semi-small town southeast of Los Angeles. She received her B.A. in Sociocultural Anthropology, where they conducted research on neoliberal undercurrents in a citywide prison industrial complex. They graduated from Stanford in 2019 with a B.A. in Sociocultural Anthropology, where they conducted research on neoliberal undercurrents in a citywide prison industrial complex.

Jade has been organizing for the last 12 years in various capacities. They have been involved in social movements and campaigns to build power nationally. Their work has focused on decarcerating folks who are displaced by both legal and extralegal removals. They are now pursuing a master’s degree in Urban Planning at Portland State University.

Jade is a member of Mutual Aid Network West (MAWN), a network of community groups that provides support to folks who are displaced by both legal and extralegal removals. They are also involved in the Portland Tenants Union, a grassroots organization that advocates for tenants’ rights and provides support to folks who are facing eviction. Jade is also a member of the Portland Antifascist Network, a network of community groups that works to prevent and address fascist actions.

The continued refusal to honor the ingenuity and creativity of folks who must survive on the streets reveals that the agenda behind "sanctioned encampments," like many other services created to "help the homeless," is to corral poor people and conceal them from the public. Thirty-nine years of failed policy should speak for itself. Criminalization is cruel and dehumanizing; nothing ends homelessness like a home.

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THE ABOLITIONIST SUMMER 2022

“Bed at its core is a community group, and we fight against the system through their 24/7 hotline at (917) 982-2265 or email brooklyn evictiondefense@gmail.com. Can you give a brief introduction of who you are and the work you do? BED ORGANIZER (BO): I am a community organizer, and we fight against the system by creating systems of care rather than for it. Coming into BED, I realized that I had never really thought concretely before about how housing is really at the root of all of these other interconnected systems of oppression that we fight against. When you’re organizing and fighting against one, you end up having to organize against many others at the same time.

BED ORGANIZER (BO): 2. Yeah. I’ll say that I ended up in BED because I had individually struggled against my landlord, and the end of me fighting this landlord coincided with the beginning of COVID-19 when there was a wider call to cancel rent coming from housing organi- zers. And I thought that was the answer to my life, at least for a while. The problems that I had, if I didn’t have to pay so much money for rent, I would be free to do so many other things with my life. It would eliminate a lot of the coercion in my life and my housing.

BED ORGANIZER (BO): 3. During the 2020 uprisings, there was an eviction defense at 1234 Dean Street. That defense was the genesis of BED. I was one of the people on the ground at 1234 Dean. I had been organizing on a pandemic mutual aid group, and I learned about this eviction defense happening, a couple of blocks from my home. I ran over there. And within the next couple weeks after that defense, there were a lot of meetings about forming an eviction defense group.

How does your group define “eviction defense,” and how does your organizing work seek to interrupt the way tenants are displaced by both legal and extralegal means? BO 2: We define eviction as displacement, really any attempts at that, and that includes all the different types of harassment that occur. So if it forces us to be creative, right, because the state apparatus only has so many ways of trying to combat the bullshit that everyday people are dealing with in terms of their housing. W hether it’s getting made or having a landlord knocking on their door, harassing them. Finding ways to address those things has forced us to constantly be creative. There’s a certain nimbleness that’s required.

The distinction between a legal eviction and an illegal eviction is more as a group of people who don’t work in this area might assume. You could have a tenant that started out with a legal eviction and then filed for ERAP (New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program), or you do something through the court system that’s intended to keep this person in their home through legal means, and the landlord takes that as an opportunity to escalate in an illegal way to try to displace the person differently. What we have found is that these landlords have cops on their side. We had armed landlords coming with cops to try and remove people from their homes illegally within the last two years. It didn’t matter if it was a legal or illegal eviction because the prison industrial complex, as an extension of the state, was still present. The distinction between the legal and illegal eviction in practice is almost meaningless because at the end of the day, it’s still just people getting kicked out of their fucking home. That’s what we aim to organize against.

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What shifts in your organizing occurred as a result of the onset and ultimate termination of the NY State eviction moratorium in January 2021?

BO 1: We will, I think one thing that comes up is the interaction between grassroots organizing and the mainstream housing movement. Again, going back to the sense of accountability, what is your responsibility to a neighbor when you’re organizing as tenants together with the shared goal of ending for-profit housing and having nobody get evicted from their homes.

That is a fundamentally different landscape than when you have a group that is saying, actually, let’s just make the worst of the evictions go away. W hen then is an eviction moratorium and nobody can get evicted, that opens up the condition in a new way. It’s not a new state of things. People are in their homes and they should stay in their homes. So the organizing landscape, the imagination of what that looks like is different now.

We had a situation where there was illegal harassment by one sublet to another, and the first thing the police did when they arrived on the scene was ask if the landlord, the new owner, the cops can only protect the private property regime, and our organizing was and is based on imagining a world beyond evictions.

Ever since the lapsing of the eviction moratorium, it’s been the case that COPING COOP is the imaginary for what’s possible shrinks. The lapsing throws into even more stark relief that legal and illegal evictions are essentially two extremely violent, extremely terrorizing processes to be put through. It forces us as organizers into a defensive position where we are forced to interact with the state in a lot more ways because there is no way to imagine an eviction non-legal. There’s a lot more legal gray areas, and the cops who are there to enforce the gray areas on the side of the state don’t really know their rules.

BO 2: At this stage in the pandemic and with the eviction moratorium lapsing, what we’re seeing from the nonprofit housing movement and those folks who are not on the ground in New York is, instead of no evictions, there are evictions of a different kind. I think importantly for BED, started our whole thing with no evictions, and now coming in 2022, we’re seeing still no evictions. Period. W e don’t have a base that we’re trying to reach that’s separate from us. W e are all neighbors. BED is, in its heart, very much an abolition project and is a radical project. It might not be immediately obvious when we interact with the state, even when it’s not explicitly cops and it’s supposed to be landlords or marshals, it all still feels very much like a war. We’re living in it. It’s all something that we want to get rid of. W e have the chant at rallies “no landlords, no cops” for a reason, and they’re not paired by accident.

How do you see and understand the role of police in the eviction process, through the new context, brutality, and attempts at displacement landlords enact on tenants? What tactics does Brooklyn Eviction Defense utilize to build tenant power and work toward a prison industrial complex (PIC) abolitionist horizon?

BO 1: W e’re still a lot on the inside-site—which is where they manage everyone, and you, and you talk to and ask them what’s going on. M ost of the time people have already gone to the police. The police don’t do anything. The police give them the information, and then it’s up to the three different courts to evaluate all these different places and ask for impossible levels of follow-up from people because they are not able to actually addressing the harms and creating safety. If the people say, we’re not going to tell them to call the police. W e know they’re not going to actually address the root of the problem. If we were to say, what safety means, what beneficial conditions would be like, and what kind of support do you need in order to make those things happen?

W e maker repairs, we direct people to talk to their landlords and their tenant union with them in their building, and we create stoop watches, which is when the community comes in shifts to watch over the house and make sure that something nefarious happens, no cops or goons come to interrupt the peace of the tenant or whoever’s in the residence. Those things are affirmative systems that actually do create safety through the relationships that we’re building outside of the system. W hen somebody calls us and enters into this sort of relationship where we’re figuring out together what safety could look like, it’s a project that is based on experimentation and relationships.

Everything that we do is about relationship-building and teasing out possibilities with each other. Doing that with BED to me is the only project on the block, but for there to be many groups of people who can address this issue. W e are really trying to build up community self-reliance and community defense, which are part of the project of abolition.

BO 2: The heart of the abolitionist project is providing care. It is providing the care that is not provided by the state. W e really do that. People are like, oh, well, we get rid of cops, what’s going to happen with this guy or that one or whatever, right? If we don’t have landlords and people don’t own property, and if people aren’t responsible for doing the repairs, well, I’m going to fucking change your faucets. W hy can’t I do it? W hy can’t you change your friend’s faucet?

We are really trying to build up community self-reliance and community self-defense, which are part of the project of abolition.

BO 1: There’s never an end to the relationships we build. We actually evolve, we move through different cycles with them. And that is also where we fundamentally are at odds with the state. W hen HPD [NYC Housing Preservation & Development] decides that your ticking and teasing out possibilities with each other, sometimes that can bring us to a sort of relationship—building and realizing the home is not something that you can separate from everything else: The home is where all the different oppressions come to rest. W hen you’re a housing organizer, you’re dealing with everything that somebody is deal- ing with when they come home. This has come up in our organizing because we have no choice but to be traumatic formation and feeling that we’re constantly working on getting better. W hen we are in positions where we’re interacting with violent actors or with violent actors we internally and externally have to figure out what to do with conflict.

W e have to figure out how to keep us safe, for real, at all times. Because if somebody’s home is under threat, there’s nowhere they can go and get away from the violence, whether it’s coming to home to home. The home is the heart, in a way.

What are some of the wins you have made? What challenges and lessons have been learned from the organizing work of Brooklyn Eviction Defense?

BO 2: W e have multiple little wins every day. It’s a win anytime that we have a politicized conversation about housing because it’s been so individualized that to get people to understand, you’re not alone in this. There are people who are going to support you through it. No matter what the courts find about who is at fault here. That, to me, is a win because it’s collectivizing an individual that really people feeling a lot of shame and people feel very alone.

Our hotline is 24/7 and the little win is having a conver- sation about housing because that’s the only project that we’re being threatened with something, or that your land- lord has no ground to stand on. Helping one person have some re- lief—that’s a win. W e had a situation where someone recently had returned from surgery and their landlord had thrown all of their stuff out and removed their toilet. You just had surgery, can’t go to a congregate shelter because you’re a health risk, and you’re like, oh, we can’t make this because the toilet was broken. So, we installed a toilet. It doesn’t solve everything, but it’s a tiny little win. Anything we can do to build relationships and build community care is a win.

BO 1: Landlords profit and win every time they get us to not go to court. E ven if they get to use us, they get to use us to self-evict, landlords are winning. Any- time we intervene in that process, we are winning. In terms of big wins, BED helped to reverse a legal eviction in part with a blockade. There was an eviction that was signed by a marshal, exe- cuted and completed. BED was able to reverse the eviction through sustained organizing and creative legal strategies through some legal comrades that stepped up to the plate and took care of the legal situation. But it was primarily about building the capacity for people to move through different cycles with them. And to ask what safety would be like, what beneficial conditions would be like, and what kind of support do you need in order to make those things happen?

BO 2: When people call us, a lot of the time, when people are like, oh, well, if we get rid of landlords and people don’t own property, and if you don’t have landlords and people don’t own property, and if people aren’t responsible for doing the repairs, they should be able to clean their faucets. W hy can’t I do it? W hy can’t you change your friend’s faucet?

We are really trying to build up community self-reliance and community self-defense, which are part of the project of abolition.
New Orleans is the most incarcerated city in the most incarcerated nation in the world. That is quite a title. This means a high proportion of New Orleans families are navigating the punishments impacting not only individuals arrested and convicted, but entire communities. Punishments beyond a prison sentence or probation are commonly called “collateral consequences,” as through discrimination in housing, employment, and voting we are not only criminalizing the convicted, but the communities of which they are a part. This means that the federal government has banded agencies together into a National Reentry Council, including the EEOC and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Reentry Council put out a series of “myth busters” to address the inaccurate word on the street about reentry. Among these myths is that the federal government has all people with felony convictions from living in public housing. In fact, they only bar people who are on a lifetime sex offender registry and those convicted of more than two federal crimes of violence or drug-related property. Considering that tens of millions of Americans carry the mark of a conviction, the people actually banned from public subsidized housing represent the tiniest slice of the whole. The vast number of exclusions are all discretionary.

Discretionary exclusions and evictions means that people are, in the housing authorities’ view, erring on the side of caution—but whom does this caution benefit? HUD has a mission to improve and stabilize housing for low income residents and communities of color. This is in light of its own troubled history of fostering an imbalance in the housing markets through the “white flight” from cities, leaving public housing to be underfunded and turned into high-policy Bantustans.

WHAT CAN WE DO? ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE, ORGANIZE.

Here in New Orleans, we built a coalition to win this fight. It started when two organizers from Stand With Dignity (a member-based organization of Louisiana residents and workers) came to the monthly meeting of Voice of the Ex-Offender (VOTE), an organization of formerly incarcerated people, families, and support. The Stand With Dignity member was interested in helping draft new policies for the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). The room turned to look at me, as I had been working on a full report to act. Homelessness, Evictions, and Criminal Convictions.” The report highlights policies in certain cities where members of the Formerly Incarcerated & Convicted People’s Movements have always done: Organize.

and inclusion. Ultimately, we need to do what we can: Organize. mistrust with us and the private developers who accept blanket policies. This has given ammunition to the new HANO board may fear doing anything for the nation. The new board has a chance to begin a new era of cohesive response. Ideally, the board will include one’s current circumstances and frame of mind, including their current actions (such as work and education). Creating a review process is the only way to alleviate fears, both realistic and fabricated, regarding who is given the apartment next door. Ideally, the board will include a formerly incarcerated person who will provide a good vantage point upon someone’s ability to be a good resident.

After years under federal oversight, HANO is returning to local New Orleans control. The developers may or may not fully realize that the housing policies are not theirs to create, only to follow (or get out of the business). Furthermore, the new HANO board may fear doing anything controversial despite Gilmore’s moves in this direction. Thus, HANO’s new leadership may be less inclined to finalize an inclusive admission policy if the developers are not eager to implement it.

HANO now has an opportunity to create a model for the nation. The new board has a chance to make an immediate positive impact on the overall community by discarding a practice of widespread discrimination and replacing it with a nuanced approach that promotes family unity and inclusion. Ultimately, we need to do what we have always done: Organize. 

Author Bio: Bruce Reilly (Tulane Law, ’14) is a policy advisor and board member of VOTE, a co-founder of Transcending Through Education Foundation, and a founding steering committee member of the Formerly Incarcerated & Convicted People’s Movement (FICPM). He served nearly twelve years in prison, where he became active in law and policy. He is the author of The Neelakaj’s Guide to the Big House: How to Survive and Thrive upon Release. He is also a co-founder of Justice Evictions, and Criminal Convictions.” He is currently working on a book about the criminal legal system. Read his blog at www.Unprison.com.
One of the most frequent requests 9971 receives is for book recommendations. For this issue’s column we prepared a list of books we strongly suggest every abolitionist library contains. Before doing so, we would like to share some of the qualities we look for when deciding whether to use a text in our study groups:

1. We look for works that are intellectually stimulating and vigorously researched.
   - One way we check for these qualities is by reading the index, bibliography, and acknowledgements sections before reading the actual text.
   - This practice gives us a good idea of the topics covered by the text, whom and what other ideas the text is in conversation with, and the breadth of the author’s research and influences.

2. Clear and direct language.
   - We try to avoid jargon-heavy works.
   - We look for accessible works written by authors who write like they want to be read.

3. Mobilising texts.
   - Some books encourage their readers into action and create space for readers to develop a sense of agency while others don’t inspire much once someone finishes. We prefer works that motivate the reader to change their condition.

4. We look for works that are in conversation with other works.
   - We also look for texts that spotlight the experiences of marginalized populations.
   - These works deepen our understanding of people, events, and places.

5. We prefer works by responsive authors.
   - We appreciate writers who don’t behave like the conversation ends with publication.
   - We often reach out to writers and ask questions about their work. Those writers who engage with readers rank high with us.

   - Many departments of corrections have limits on books receivable so not everyone can keep numerous books in their cells. This is where zines come in handy. They are cheaper and easier to copy and disseminate.
   - We look for works that can be zined, whether by isolating excerpted chapters or creating a distillation of the text.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

The following are what we consider foundational to an abolitionist library. These are the works one will find referenced over and over again as one deepens one’s understanding of abolition:

7. Angela Davis’s Are Prisons Obsolete?
   - This text is a brilliant and concise introduction to the major questions that underlie abolitionist thought. It not only analyzes how we got into the quagmire of hyper-imprisonment, but also offers ways out. A must-read.

8. Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s Golden Gulag
   - Using California, the incarceration capital of America, as a case study, Gilmore debunks commonly held misconceptions about just what caused the build up of prisoners in America and engagingly outlines the political and economic causes that turned America into Incarceration Nation.

9. Dan Berger and Toussaint Losier’s Rethinking the American Prison Movement
   - This 200-page text is an indispensable survey of the anti-prison movement in the United States. It highlights the agency and struggles of those who have been targeted most for imprisonment and policing in this country.

10. Andrea Ritchie’s Invisible No More
    - Public discourse on prisons and policing continues to center the experiences of cis-het, able-bodied men. Ritchie’s text is an intervention that spotlights the lived experiences of women, especially women of color, with policing and imprisonment. What often goes unmentioned when discussing incarceration in America is that the incarceration rate for women outstrips the rate for men. Ritchie’s work is an eye-opener.

11. Liat Ben M oshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C Carey’s (editors) Disability Incarcerated
    - Another brilliant intervention and collection. Those experiencing disablement behind the walls are often ignored by activists both inside and outside of prisons. The connections between disablement and criminalization are rarely studied. This collection opened our eyes and broadened our understanding of imprisonment, sites of unfreedom, the social construction of disability and what abolitionists can learn from the disability justice movement.

12. Eric A Stanley and Nat Smith’s (editors) Captive Genders
    - Queer and trans folks have always been targeted for policing and exile, if not total destruction. Another needed intervention into public discourse about policing and imprisonment, this text challenges us to broaden our definitions of community, justice, and solidarity. It reminds us that our solutions must bring all of us closer to freedom.

    - Native liberation and indigenous struggles were areas where we lacked knowledge. We didn’t know of the long struggle Indigenous folks have engaged in against state violence and imprisonment in this country. This work lucidly connects settler colonialism, state-sanctioned violence, criminalization, and the struggle for Native liberation.

    - Abolition is not just an absence. It’s a presence. It is concerned with building life-sustaining relationships and institutions. This text focuses on a tool and process that helps us address harm without caging and exiling others: transformative justice. This term is being batted around a lot today, but if you want a solid grounding in just what transformative justice entails, then pick up this text.

15. Mariame Kaba’s We Do This ’til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice
    - This collection of essays, articles and interviews is indispensable. Kaba’s words continually remind us of what the heart of abolition is. She reminds us of the necessary internal work, the internal revolution that must occur, if we are to create an external world based on care and justice. Too often, we neglect this work and our movement suffers. The text is a touchstone for abolitionist growth.

We never intended to create an exhaustive list of texts. These are some of our suggestions. 9971 would like to hear your suggestions too. Connect with us and let us know which texts have deepened your knowledge and praxis of abolition. Here are some other books we found beneficial:

- Sarah Halley’s My Mercy Here
- Kelly Lytle Hernández’s City of Inmates
- Joey James’s (editor) The New Abolitionists and Imprisoned Intellectuals
- Victoria Law’s Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women
- Beth Ritchie’s Arrested Justice
- Dylan Rodriguez’s Forced Passages
- Emily Thuma’s All Our Trials
- Angela Davis’s Freedom Is a Constant Struggle
- INCITE!’s Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology
- Joey M ogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay W hitlock’s Queer (In)Justice
- Harsha W alia’s Border & Rule
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor’s From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation
- Zoe Samudzi and William C Anderson’s As Black as Resistance
- Garrett Felber’s Those Who Know Don’t Say
- bell hooks’s The Will to Change
- Vijay Prashad’s Darker Nations
- The Creative Interventions Toolkit

Always,  
Stevie

9971

Author Bio: Stephen Wilson is a Black, queer abolitionist writing, (dis)organizing, and building study groups and community behind the wall in Pennsylvania. A subscriber of The Abolitionist for a few years now, Stevie became a columnist of our newspaper in 2020. “9971” is his column focused on radical study for abolition, and also refers to an inside study group.
Garrett: How did you two get in contact?

Lorenzo: When I went to prison in 1969, there were about three hundred thousand prisoners. Now we are talking about almost two and a half million prisoners.

Lawrence also is an introvert and is a bit afraid on the reintegrative side and as a leader inside of prison with a lot of experience because they had a lot of power in prison and how the system was doing to him that he was railroaded into prison and how the system was doing to him.

Garrett: You brought up Martin Sostre, who connects all three of us. Lorenzo, when you talked about finding one person to impart this knowledge upon who can then form a link in the chain, I was thinking about how Martin did that with you; at the time you met Martin you were half his age. How do you see the continuing influence of Martin Sostre’s relationship with you during fall of 1969?

Lorenzo: First of all, Martin Sostre stands as a really important historical figure at that moment. The prisoners were just building up in terms of population and civil rights. They also knew, having looked at the years of reporting on the civil rights movement and the Black power movement, they knew that there was a movement in the streets that was representing a real threat to the way the system was being run back in the day. He had been trying to get other prisoners in the inside political education. His ability to file writs of habeas corpus and other legal actions against prison officials, as well as civil rights lawsuits, forced changes under the New York state prison system. When I met him, he was telling me and young people that he was winning the lawsuits to change the conditions for prisoners, for the people to file similar cases all over the country in order to have a national application for what he was doing legally.

Sostre wanted the prison movement to become an organized movement that was willing to take on any of the other movements of the day. He succeeded at that—a living example of someone who was challenging the system in that setting but not as some type of savior/hero, rather inviting others to work with him in whatever capacity they could. It was really important to me and changed my life, and it changed the lives of others.

Garrett: You mentioned earlier a lot of things have changed in the last 60, that there are some years, but some remained the same. Can you elaborate on some of the changes you’ve noticed while talking to Lawrence?

Lorenzo: We’re dealing with a different stage of history in the kind of political organization of people who are in the system. We are talking about mass imprisonment now—the largest prison population in the world, the longest prison sentences in the world, and the acceptance of fascist obedience from the population at large to accept the idea of imprisonment due to there supposedly being no alternative.

They are building a fascist police state, which has always been used against Black people. When you look at history, and specifically at the creation of prisons in the country ever since the destruction of chattel slavery, you are looking at: a tool, a weapon against Black and poor people in the US particularly. They have already brainwashed people to accept the existence of this as normal as well as a justification for the massive destruction of, and of course organize, a mass movement against the prison, and all these abolitionists and so forth have to come together in some form to do battle. For me, the most important change is the scale and scope of prisons in terms of the level of oppression, for instance the so-called “behavior modification” in prisons where they are using psychotropic drugs, solitary confinement, and long-term solitary confinement. There has been no mass movement to fight this tooth and nail.

The state has also taken over the agenda and subverted the movement in this period; everybody thinks it’s just got to be legal action and legislative action, and that by attorneys or politicians and some in the elitist forces. The strategy must be done by the communities that
KITES TO THE EDITORS

Critical Resistance,

Thank you so much for your summer edition of The Abolitionist. I think the print edition is the best, though I miss it in digital format. Critical Resistance has been inspired to have completed several projects, but I hope to have regained a bit

Virginia is a state that abolished parole in 1995 and has an 85 percent sentence-to-sentence in prison rates. No drug rehab centers and only two mental health facilities. Prison is the new institutions that house everyone together, always treating everyone equally. Health, fluency, and options are important.

But, if and when we are finally changing all of this. Years of hard work by human rights activists and advocates, our friends, families, and communities that have powered countless homes and businesses, bringing about meaningful change in a state that used to be last in the national legislation and new-era beliefs and freedoms. We are continuing to partner with the other arts and build coalitions to bring about change and directional focus in abolishing the prison industrial complex. We are learning about each other through word of mouth and social media platforms that focus on like-minded views.

It’s been a long time in the making, but we are finally formulating coalitions that are advocating for change. I am so encouraged.

Continued on next page

THE ABOLITIONIST ISSUE 37

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Critical Resistance,

Thank you so much for your summer edition of The Abolitionist. I think the print edition is the best, though I miss it in digital format. Critical Resistance has been inspired to have completed several projects, but I hope to have regained a bit
vice president of research and development of Realogistics, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that focuses heavily on pre- and post-release for returning people to their communities after spending time inside these gulag-style correctional centers. Along with ongoing operations and the pandemic, we look to re-ramp up this summer of 2022.

I also have an inside group called the Freedom Collective. We focus on building leaders, mentors, advocates, activists, and business-oriented people to return to their communities and help change the stigma and beliefs that many community members think or feel about men and women returning society after incarceration. They are worthy of second or tenth chances. We are in the process of teaching our members along with their families and children. It’s been great and we look forward to branching off into other state facilities.

I am a product of the school-to-prison pipeline, 38 years old, having spent the majority of my life incarcerated. I am a human rights activist going on 13 years of steady activism. I correspond with Critical Resistance New York City (CRNYC), and I love working with Critical Resistance. You are all so awesome and inspiring! A few more years left and I will be standing next to you on the front line. Cannot wait.

I am a youth mentor and advocate in my community and enjoy that work the most. I sincerely wish you all peace and prosperity during these difficult pandemic times.

In Solidarity,
Devin M.
CRITICAL RESISTANCE (CR) UPDATES AND & MOVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

CRITICAL RESISTANCE (CR) UPDATES

CR Chapters:

Critical Resistance Oakland and LA chapters continue their work as part of the California Prison Closure Campaign. Their focus is on advocating for legislative activity in Sacramento to close prisons through less funding as well as full closures of facilities and building a broad grassroots movement throughout the state. CR Portland has joined the Oregon Prison Coalition and Demilitarize PDX to Palestine Coalition. CR New York City continues to grow its chapter and has joined the Abolish ICE N.Y./N.J. Coalition to break the collaboration between local, state jailers and ICE.

CR Nationally:

In February 2022, our Development Director of 8 years, Jess Heaney, transitioned out of her position. In a public “exit” letter to CR’s international network of supporters and comrades, Jess wrote:

CR has been my political home for over a decade. I’ve been a CR volunteer since the 2008 CR10 conference (via the Freedom Archives) and then joined as a volunteer chapter member of CR Oakland through the 2010-2015 Stop the Injunctions campaign in Oakland. I’m humbled and modestly proud of the victories that CR has secured with coalitions and movement partners in this time: a full grassroots victory against gang injunctions with Stop the Injunctions Coalition, an end to the Urban Shield SWAT training and weapons exposition, halts on jail expansion and a jail closure in San Francisco and Los Angeles, a people’s victory against proposed package and vessel import restrictions in New York State Prisons, to name a few. With tens of thousands of people, we’ve shown that abolition is practical and actionable. Thank you for your contributions, efforts and donations to fuel this organizing. It’s been inspiring to organize with you all in order to build CR’s financial resources and fuel our organizing to dismantle imprisonment and policing. Thank you—truly. When I joined staff at Critical Resistance in 2014, I was given the mandate to continue to build our grassroots fundraising base, continue to stabilize the 2008-2010 financial crises, and then re-grow our budget, following a 65% grassroots income and 35% foundation income strategy. Building off the strong support of people’s love for CR as a political organization since 1998, we enacted a modest annual series of annual grassroots fundraising plans. Together, with your generous and multi-year support, we have steadily replenished CR’s capacity to budget generously and sustainably for our organization, campaigns and projects. We really appreciate your gift.

CR is beyond grateful for Jess and her multi-year leadership and care for our organization. Continued on next page
CR is now looking for a new Development Director, accepting applications on a rolling basis. Formerly imprisoned people are highly encouraged to apply. We also encourage people of color, women, queer and trans/gender-nonconforming people to apply. We welcome people from all educational backgrounds to apply. For more information on the position and application process, go to: criticalresistance.org/were-hiring-national-development-director.

Around this same time, Jamani Montague left her position as CR’s Membership Coordinator, which she held since 2019. Jamani came to CR and coordinated our membership with a fierce commitment to community care and healing. We thank her for loving spirit; her dedication to transformative care, and contributions to our organization.

Please note that if you were corresponding with either Jess or Jamani directly, they are no longer reachable through CR.

Call for art submissions for CR’s 2022 holiday postcard

Each year, Critical Resistance sends a postcard with an end-of-year holiday message to all our imprisoned comrades sharing that we are thinking of folks as we struggle for abolition. We have used art from different artists on both sides of prison walls for these postcards, and would love to have someone who’s currently imprisoned design this year’s postcard. We try to make sure our images and art are liberative — showing people’s collective power to resist, dream and create freedom -- for example: no bars unless people are breaking free, no locked cages unless they are being burst open. If you or someone you know inside is interested, please submit your art to us by September 1st, 2022! Please send your art submissions to this address:

Critical Resistance
Attn: Holiday Solidarity Postcard
P.O. Box, 22788, Oakland, CA 94609-2301

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing your beautiful art!

MOVEMENT UPDATES

The South

Florida: Prisoners in January called for a strike that began on January 3, 2022, calling for no work, no vocational, and no canteen. In a statement, prisoners outlined the strike’s purpose: “As of January 3, 2022 begins “our” days of action. “We” as Florida’s incarcerated population are disengaging from all forms of labor at every institution in the state.” Their four demands are:

1) No more slave labor; 2) The creation of parole; 3) The dismantling of reclassification and sentence-enhancing statues; and 4) An independent citizen and prisoner committee overseeing Florida Department of Corrections.

Delaware: On April 8, 2022, Beyond Prisons delivered 681 signatures and dozens of comments from people demanding the Delaware Department of Corrections’ end its contract with Private Correctional. Beyond Prisons delivered the petition to Governor Jay Carney, Rep. M. Lisa Blunt-Cruz, and Senator M.3

Delaware’s efforts to prevent prisoners from receiving physical mail is being bolstered by false accusations of contraband being brought into the prisons. In a statement, Beyond Prisons said, “As of April 4, 2022, the program has gone into effect, but we will continue to fight for free and physical communication between incarcerated people and their loved ones. Thank you to everyone who supported and continues to support this campaign.”

Mid-West

Detroit: On the 49th anniversary of Roe v. W. A. D., Detroit activist-activists wheeled-pasted informational signs reading “Abortion Pills Forever” that included a website, shareabortionpillinfo, where people can order abortion pills by mail.

As more states work to attack abortion rights, resistance and mutual aid projects have continued to pop up across the country.

Coast to Coast: Solidarity from California to New York!

In two of the largest jails in the US, California’s Santa Rita and NYC’s Rikers Island, hunger strikers rallied in solidarity against unsafe, unsanitary and inhumane conditions faced by prisoners at both jails. “We stand with you because it’s the same everywhere,” was one statement from a hunger striker at Santa Rita jail.

INTERNATIONALLY

Europe:

Activists in Oldham, UK were able to permanently shut down an Elbit weapons factory as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people. Elbit tests their weapons on Palestinian communities and then exports the weapons around the world. This win demonstrates how direct actions against weapons factories, such as occupying buildings to stop production, can be successful.

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, forcing millions to flee the country. Ukrainian anarchists and anti-authoritarian forces formed their own international detachment within the Territorial Defense of Ukraine to resist the Russian invasion. Organizing armed resistance to the invasion, anarchists and anti-authoritarians have also been providing mutual aid to refugees, mobilizing horizontal, grassroots self-defense, the…

Since the beginning of Russia’s invasion, Russian citizens have continued to protest against the war even with harsher penalties being used against protesters. By the end of March, nearly 15,000 Russians were arrested in over 320 cities for protesting the war.

During the mass exodus of refugees from Ukraine, many white-passing Ukrainian citizens – recognized as “Ukrainian” due to their skin color—were able to flee to neighboring countries, while non-white people fleeing Ukraine (some citizens, others visitors, students, and immigrants), especially African students studying in Ukraine, have been denied access to cross the border or have been detained in long-term detention centers in Poland and Estonia because of alleged “non-citizen” status. Black people in Ukraine who have been denied exit from the country reported being handed weapons to “go fight the Russians.”

The white-supremacist considerations of who classifies as a refugee and who is deserving of safety have exposed grave double standards in European and US foreign policy, immigration practices, and wartime interventions. In response, organizations globally have organized political education events and media efforts discussing white supremacy and racism in the global refugee crisis, as well as exposing other contradictions of media coverage and calls to solidarity for lack thereof.

This war, waged by the US and Europe in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Americas, is just one example of the global war on humanity — brought to us by the US and Europe.
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

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

• Submission Deadline for Issue 38 on Labor & Abolition: Friday, August 5, 2022.

There are many ways for you to shape the content of the paper, either by submitting a piece to our Features section or by 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 in Features can be different functions of writing—including theoretical, to reflective or action-oriented—and they will all share a common focus, theme, or topic of consideration. **Check the Feature focus for issues 38 and 39!**

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. Suggest a few topics you would like to discuss for the fishing line’s discourse.
  • Contribute a report or an update on organizing inside for our Movement Highlights column
  • Write a poem or song lyrics that relate to the features or any other topic of your choice
  • Make visual art to complement the Features section or one of our columns
  • Create a political cartoon for our Features focus for either Issue 38 or 39, 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 9771 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 agreed with in an article and explain why you agreed 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 necessary in this political moment and that you would like answered by Critical Resistance.

Send submissions to the Kites to the Editors section to:
The Abolitionist Paper
Attn: Kites to the Editors
P.O. Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609-2391

Please make sure you 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 94609-2391

SUBSCRIBE TO THE ABOLITIONIST!

Are you locked up?
Sign up for a free subscription!

Name: ________________________________
Prisoner Number: ____________________
Mailing Address: ______________________

*Return your slip to: Critical Resistance
Attn: Abby subscription
P.O. Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609

Are you not locked up, but want to support?
Sign up for a paid subscription!

Paid Subscription Options:

• $10 for 2 issues/ year, supports 3 readers (you + two prisoners)
• $15-$50 for 2 issues/ year, support multiple readers (you + 3-35 prisoners)

OR Complete your info and send your slip back to us:

Credit card type: ____________________
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Mailing Address (if different): __________
Email: ________________________________

Subscribe on our website:
criticalresistance.org/the-abolitionist

Notes on Editing:

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 edited.

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, punishment, imprisonment, and surveillance
• Experiences of life after or before imprisonment
• Creative or reflective writing with an abolitionist message
• Freedom dreams and imaginative pieces with radical content
• 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 or 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 and 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.

Send us your writing and artwork for an issue that you believe is timely and necessary in this political moment. Suggest a few topics that you believe are timely and necessary in this political moment and that you would like answered by Critical Resistance. 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 edited.