Letter from the Editors

Beloved Readers of *The Abolitionist*,

We welcome you to issue 39, printed in June 2023, featuring articles focused on **reproductive justice** and prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition. A year ago, the US supreme court overturned *Roe v Wade*. As a result, maternal mortality rates in the US have skyrocketed, with Black women more than twice as likely to die than white women, while criminalization of abortion has expanded in dozens of states. As thousands hit the streets in defense of "women's rights to choose," supporting abortion funds and demanding safe access to abortions, we at Critical Resistance (CR) saw a dire need to **define reproductive justice as an essential field of struggle for PIC abolition**. Because at their core both reproductive justice struggles and PIC abolition are about self-determination and body autonomy, both are avenues for collective liberation. We offer this issue of *The Abolitionist* to do just that.

Issue 39 **situates the most recent attacks on reproductive rights within a wider web of social control and gender oppression orchestrated by the PIC.** For instance, some of the state legislation that criminalizes abortion and other reproductive and gender-based health decisions also deputize civilians to enforce these laws and police fellow community members, and even menstrual-cycle and birth-control tracking digital applications can be used in court against people seeking abortions. Each article of Issue 39 features section, then, examines **not only how the PIC is used to strip away body autonomy and control reproductive labor**, but also how we can use PIC abolition as a lens and strategy **to disrupt some of the *binaries*, dichotomies & contradictions** that reinforce the PIC emerging within reproductive justice struggles in this current moment.

While the right for pregnant people to exercise self-determination over their pregnancies has been under right-wing fire for generations, this most recent decision overturning *Roe v Wade* and the subsequent tidal wave of local and state initiatives criminalizing abortion have also **synchronized with a severe escalation of gender-based state violence against queer and transgender communities**. In the past few years, hundreds of legislative efforts have cascaded across the US criminalizing queer and transgender youth and adults, threatening the health and lives of one of the most vulnerable populations and criminalizing those who provide support and care. Currently the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is tracking 428 anti-queer and trans bills in all but five US states**. Issue 39 considers the impacts and tactics of gender oppression used and perpetuated by the PIC across the gender spectrum, considering the targeted and grave impacts on women, especially Black, Brown and Indigenous women, as well as queer and transgender communities. As such, many articles speak to the rights of "pregnant people," maintaining people's self-determination to decide their own gender identities.

This issue's **feature analysis article by Maria Thomas and Ash Williams** breaks down not only the everyday ongoings of racialized gender oppression in the PIC and healthcare systems, but also makes clear that reproductive justice and liberation—inherently centered on the power & freedom of Black people, and transgender and gender-nonconforming or gender-oppressed peoples—is a direct threat to the white nationalist project. Similarly, in **Azadeh Zohrabi and Targol Mesbah's article on revolution-making in Iran, reproductive justice, and abolition**, we see how the PIC's enforcement of gender oppression in Iran serves to consolidate authoritarian power by cracking down on reproductive rights for women, queer and transgender peoples. **Maximiliano Calabotta, Tien Estell, and Rumba Yambú of Intransitive in Arkansas** explain their organizing for gender autonomy and transgender liberation, and access to gender-affirming care in a battleground state and testing site for white supremacist and transphobic legislation.

Issue 39 also **reveals the role of genocide and eugenics in the US's state-making project** — from the medical experiments and reproductive oppression to **maintain US imperialism and extraction in Puerto Rico** as explored by **Zoán Tanís Dávila Roldán of La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción** (Feminist Collective Under Construction), to the **forced sterilization of imprisoned people** from Georgia to California, as explained by **Moonlight Pulido and Diana Block of CA Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP)**, reflecting on CCWP's work to win reparations for imprisoned women who have been forcibly sterilized while locked up. **Lisa Sangoi** and **Erin Miles Cloud** from **Movement for Family Power** as well as **Youth Justice Coalition's Tauheeda Shakur** explain **the violence of the family policing system**, the racist underpinnings of family separation and regulation strategies, and some of the growing work to resist these practices as a means of chipping away at the broader PIC.

Stevie's 9971 column engages men inside and supporters outside of prisons to consider why reproductive justice must be a concern of men. Similarly, this issue's **Inside-Outside Fishing Line** amplifies anti-colonial resistance struggles **of Indigenous Mapuche women in Argentina under house arrest,** and the impacts of this form of imprisonment on their families, autonomy, and Indigeneity.

As you read this issue, **consider the broader context in which the tightening restrictions of reproductive care and access are occurring**. It is **no coincidence that the PIC's dragnet is widening at the same time of economic crisis and intensified climate collapse**, and amidst a consolidation of right-wing political control and a rise of fascism in the US. The overturning of *Roe* and the cascade of abortion bans are not random or new threats to our lives. Part and parcel to a multigenerational program of social control, state violence and capitalist consolidation of power and resources that criminalizes dissent, resistance, and at times our very existence, this recent attack is part of a concerted effort to re-establish and maintain right-wing power. These restrictions historically and presently are used to target Black, Indigenous, poor and low-income, migrant, disabled, queer, gender-non-conforming and transgender lives and bodies most especially.

Body autonomy, gender affirmation, and reproductive rights are all cornerstones of PIC abolition, so understanding the criminalization of reproductive rights is paramount not only to our movements but to our collective survival. Just as revolutionaries like Fred Hampton worked to build rainbow coalitions, **we must build solidarity across our communities and movements to transcend racial, gender, and class divisions. The recent bursts of reproductive justice fervor may just be the openings we need to do so**. PIC abolition is an intrinsically internationalist, feminist politic. Whether talking about labor struggles (issue #38), reproductive justice (issue #39), or **control units (issue #40, printing by December 2023)**, maintaining PIC abolition's feminist foundations allows us to see through the devastation and fear of our current conditions that it is our collective duty to fight for and protect the people most vulnerable to premature death in our communities, and that another world is possible if we unite and fight together.

We hope this issue of *The Abolitionist* ignites your freedom spirit. Be sure to check out **submission guidelines on the Call for Content on page 24** and then write to us. Also, consider the **call for art celebrating 25 years of Critical Resistance fo this year's end-of-year holiday prisoner solidarity postcard mailing on page 20**, or **submitting feedback on *The Abolitionist* newspaper on page 21** so we can work to improve the project for our readers. If you submitted Work and Us surveys after reading the previous issue 38 on labor struggles, *thank you!* All surveys are being processed and shared with Stevie and his Work & Us research team as they come in.

Yours in struggle, with radical love-

Critical Resistance & *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective

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

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