A PUBLICATION OF CRITICAL RESISTANCE

THE ABOLITIONIST

SUMMER 2022

FREE TO PEOPLE IN PRISONS, JAILS, AND DETENTION CENTERS • ESPAÑOL AL DORSO

ISSUE 37: Housing Justice

FEATURES ANALYSIS

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

Photo by Brooke Anderson.

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. While 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 being 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 overcrowding 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 families, and gender nonconforming folks. When I worked with formerly incarcerated transgender and gender-nonconforming communities through the Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) in San Francisco, every Friday we worked to rehouse people.

I've learned through my own personal experience and through years of organizing that housing instability is a major barrier to people getting politically 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 left to build a long-term strategy to win what we as a larger collective need for our people, and we 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 gentrifiers criminalize 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

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editors

Beloved Readers of *The Abolitionist*,

We at Critical Resistance (CR) are excited to bring to 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, mortgages, debt and bills, occupying and reclaiming buildings and land for the displaced, defending tenants from evictions, shutting 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 purpose of this issue by unpacking the compatibility and mutually beneficial relationship between housing justice and PIC abolition. The **Feature Action pieces** expose both strategies and tactics that communities are already using to fight for housing justice, including some of the eviction defense work by organizing formations like **Brooklyn Eviction Defense** in New York, as well as practices of punishment and social control that are used in the housing system to expand the PIC, such as *electronic monitoring* as explored by **James Kilgore**, *home demolitions in Palestine* in an article by journalist **Mariam Barghouti**, and *state-sanctioned encampments* for unhoused communities in a critique by **Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP)** organizer **Jade Arellano**. This issue's **Abby Throwback** *elaborates on the features' housing justice focus*, as we reprint **Bruce Reilly's** article from Issue 23 on *housing discrimination against formerly incarcerated people in New Orleans*. We offer these pieces to inspire more strategic action that advances both fights against the PIC and for housing for all.

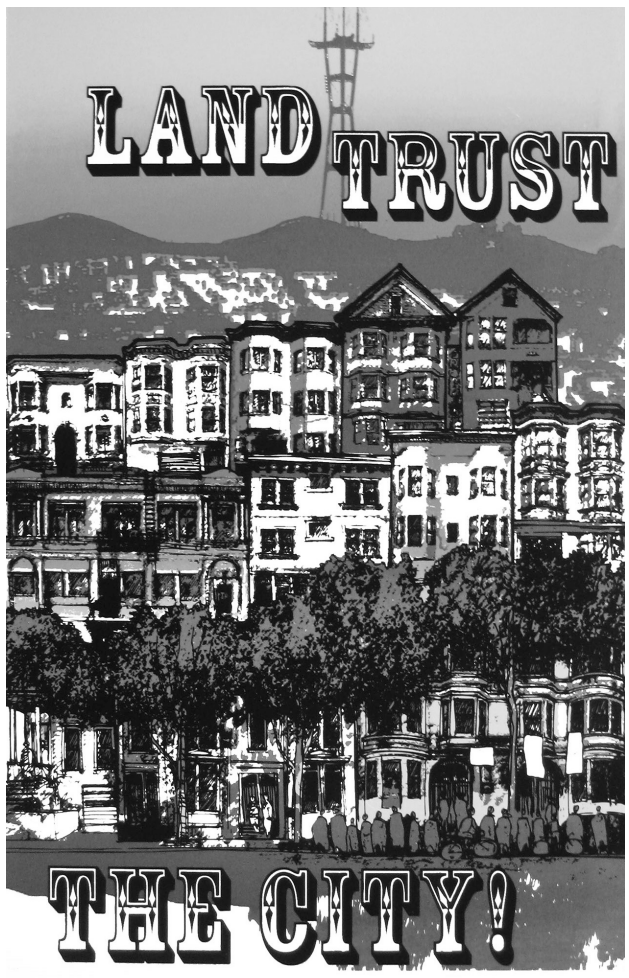
We are also thrilled to continue our remaining columns into 2022: ***Kites to the Editors***, which include letters, poems and articles by imprisoned subscribers of our paper; "***9971***," focused on study for abolition by imprisoned columnist Stephen Wilson; "***Until All Are Free***" covering updates on prominent political prisoner cases, **CR Updates & Movement Highlights** to keep our readers inside cages up to speed on the work CR and movement partners are doing outside; and the "**Inside-Outside Fishing Line**," which for this issue includes an exciting conversation that transverses prison walls between now-released movement elder **Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin** and currently imprisoned **Lawrence Jenkins** courtesy of **Garrett Felber of Study and Struggle**, on the necessity of multigenerational relationship building, mentorship, and leadership by most impacted communities in the PIC abolitionist movement.

As a reminder, this year *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective decided to reduce printing frequency to **two issues per year** in hopes of ensuring a more in-depth and quality publication for all of our readers, and to be able to prioritize using the paper as a concrete inside-outside organizing tool to build an international movement to abolish the PIC that reflects the leadership of communities most impacted. **This project is not possible without *you***, our readers, so please write to us. Send us submissions – check the **Call for Content on page 20** for guidance on how and what to submit to us, or kindly share your thoughts on what you've read. We love hearing from you.

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



By Fernando Marti, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

By William Estrada from Justseeds Coloring Care Package.

THE ABOLITIONIST

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

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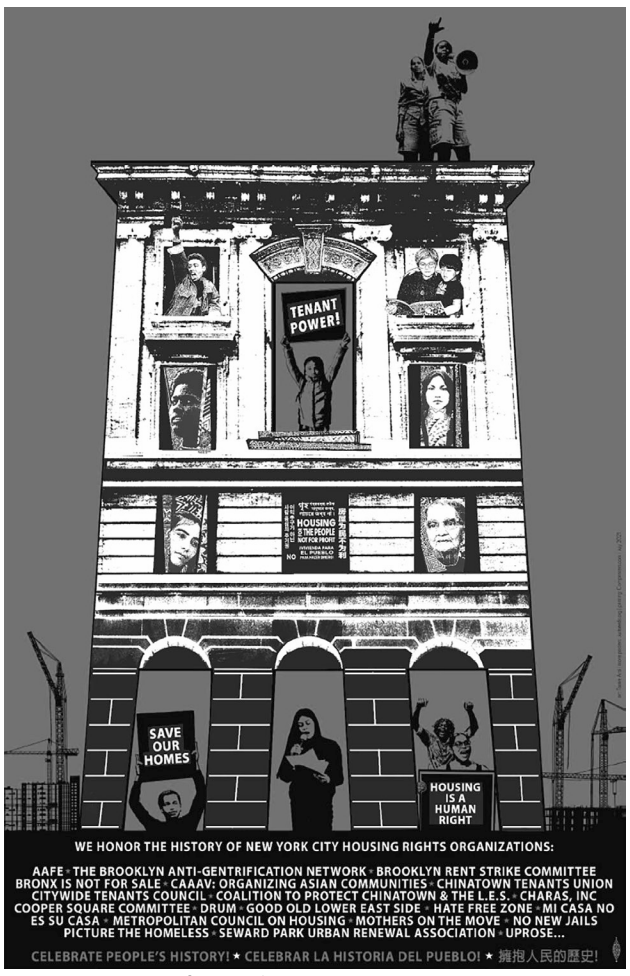

By Tomie Arai, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

for the legal eviction of tenants when any "criminal" 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 time to mobilize barricades 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 public housing discriminate against people with records who are on parole or probation or wearing ankle monitors, or people who don't have documentation—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 PIC reflected in budgets. Policing, surveillance, 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, military, and imprisonment.

Intersections between housing and the PIC are even clearer when we consider other overlapping issues: As climate chaos continues to increase, for instance, more of our people are being displaced globally by disasters and land grabs enforced by policing and military forces, exacerbating housing and land scarcity. As we get clearer about these overlapping intersections, we gain more transformative and abolitionist wins—as opposed to symbolic or transactional wins that don't necessarily help to build momentum 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 capitalism manages social, economic, and political problems like housing by deploying policing, imprisonment, surveillance, and other tools of punishment, i.e. the PIC. **This is why housing justice must be anti-capitalist, like PIC abolition**. Housing organizers now are mostly talking about the housing system as extractive, as "rent as theft", and speaking to the commodification of land and housing. There is a story of individual responsibility in regard to housing and participating in capitalism generally, where homelessness, "crime," or any kind of hardship or "misfortune" like struggling to pay rent is considered a personal problem. Even without rent hikes or penalties, making sure rent gets paid sometimes means not paying utilities, medical bills, and child care costs. All of this is considered the tenants' fault, with substandard living conditions as punishment for not being more successful capitalists.

Corporations have capitalized on the pandemic and economic crisis, and we are seeing a lot of wealthy people snatching up land and buildings. Some of the work I do through media communications is to challenge the idea of housing as a source for private individual wealth building, and instead ***reframe housing as co-operative building***, where our resources generate shared or communal living opportunities and ensure stable and permanent housing for everyone, rather than paying rent to benefit a property owner elsewhere. RTTC has been developing interventions to move housing and land out of the speculative market and into long term solutions like limited equity housing coops and community land trusts to ensure they'll be held by the community permanently—and not used as a site to extract profit and resources from working-class Black and Brown people.

What housing organizing was happening at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020? What were some strategies and demands that were moving forward, as well as opportunities or challenges?

KW: In March 2020, there was a rapid call for general rent strikes. In some ways this was a misassessment, especially regarding how many people were willing to participate in a national rent strike. People couldn't pay their rent on April 1, 2020 due to historic job losses, and they took out cash advances, used credit cards, or picked up side hustles to make sure rent was still paid before the end of the month. For many, there wasn't a pause to question: When millions of us suddenly lost our jobs, when staying home means staying alive—why should we be paying rent right now? Or why is rent, debt, or mortgage relief not a part of the broader response by our government? Instead of radically questioning, we instinctively went to a crisis response, a *"Let me do what I need to do"* individualist mentality for survival.

Even though the call for rent strikes didn't resonate with enough people to be a viable national strategy, some RTTC member organizations, like the **Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco** and **CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities** in New York, organized tenant unions and rent strikes on local levels. Whether it's a prisoner strike inside or a worker or teacher strike, all strikes require immense base building. While a popular strategy within the housing movement has traditionally been to focus on renter and tenant organizing, the foreclosure crisis of 2008 and decades of exploitative housing practices like predatory lending revealed the range of economic classes impacted by the housing system. Therefore, when we called to cancel rent during the beginning of the pandemic, we were also demanding the cancelation of mortgage and utility payments, because people needed running water to wash their hands. RTTC started working more closely with **Human Impact Partners** to organize health workers and medical providers to *name housing as a public health issue and a necessity, especially with the shelter-in-place ordinances.*

This was crucial organizing, because when the US Centers for Disease Control recommended the eviction moratorium, it paled in comparison to the policies in cities and states where there were already bans on evictions during COVID. It was a clear move by the administration in a time leading up to a very contentious election. What hasn't been widely recognized, though, is that formerly imprisoned people, 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.

In response, RTTC worked to share local and state model policies with our member organizations because we knew there wasn't much willingness on the national level to protect renters throughout the pandemic. Our members led some of the first eviction court shutdowns (shout out to **Jane Place Neighborhood Sustainability Initiative** based in New Orleans, one of the first formations to shut down an eviction court), and once more courts reopened, a lot of other RTTC members followed suit. We had a national day of action in 2020, too, but near the turn of the year, the housing movement got derailed by presidential election frenzy. More fractures within the movement emerged as some progressive forces became overly optimistic of change and improvements under Biden. The burst of housing justice energy to cancel rent, mortgages, and bills fizzled out; and all Biden did was kick the can down the road and extend a moratorium to July 2021, still leaving swaths of people unprotected.

What hasn't been widely recognized, though, is that formerly imprisoned people, 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 significant 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 organizations have organized on city and state levels for direct allocations of emergency rental assistance. Historically, we organized by door knocking and meeting in people's living rooms, organizing tenants building by building. But with eviction hearings on Zoom and people facing eviction without Wi-Fi access or familiarity—or needing meetings in languages other than English—we have had to battle many additional barriers to overturn evictions and defend their housing rights.

...Now, we have countless people displaced and significant 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.

While many different groups pivoted to mass digital organizing due to COVID-19 (mass calls, hosting big livestreams, or trying to build out listservs and large networks), this has greatly impacted our organizations' abilities to effectively base build and stay connected with (and not get overwhelmed by) hundreds of well-meaning but new folks. We experience these flashpoint influxes of attention and interest within the PIC abolitionist movement often, any time the violence of policing or imprisonment enters the national conversation. *How do we fully onboard, integrate, train up, and align new people as they come to our movements in droves, while also keeping our campaign work moving forward and staying alive together during a pandemic?*

Overall, the most significant challenges and lessons have been around strategy and cohesion. Maybe externally it seemed like the housing movement was united around canceling rent, but there wasn't a cohesive strategy for all of us to push shared demands due to the abrupt shift in conditions during the pandemic. Even with a shared base of people, we haven't been able to

Continued on next page

Photo by Brooke Anderson.

make as much of an impact beyond state and local contexts. The lesson here is we need to continue to build a sweeping shared understanding of what is needed versus what is possible based on the conditions that exist, 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. There is some building of promising platforms 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 around what's at stake 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. The tenants organized to purchase the buildings through a bird-dogging campaign to track down this landlord, going to his church, and inviting folks to pray with them that he would do 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 hustling now for rent control statewide.

Another organization advancing a campaign with transformative demands is the **Chainbreaker 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, especially in a moment when the federal government is releasing emergency rental assistance money through the US Treasury, but impeded by state and local officials who enact barriers to accessing that relief, like requiring the burden of proof from renters as opposed to landlords. The Chainbreaker Collective worked with city officials to get them in alignment with long-term solutions that provide resources directly to the most impacted people, and to build the momentum needed to ensure the 64 acres is put into a land trust in one of the most low-income neighborhoods in the city of Santa Fe, directly across the street from one of the predominantly Brown neighborhoods.

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 intricate analysis of housing work is needed now because there are gaps in how we're talking about homelessness and organizing unhoused folks. 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 coalitions to defund the police by mobilizing around city and state budgets, pushing states to prioritize people over policing, profit, and imprisonment. Due to the many laws criminalizing unhoused people over the last 30 years—and the eviction crisis during 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 have 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 make this divest-invest strategy 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 in part managed by the PIC. There are so many opportunities to sharpen and specify how to uncouple policing from the housing system for housing and land liberation.

Photo by Brooke Anderson

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 abolition is necessary to win the long-term solutions of any economic, social, or political problem, including housing issues. In other words, we can't have cops and self-determination; they don't work together. PIC abolitionist organizing also demonstrates that while we must organize for incremental material changes, "reformist reforms" compromise abolition by creating changes within a system we're going to have to dismantle in the future. ***Abolitionist reforms*** are changes we won't have to undo in our future fight for self-determination and liberation. Not every housing group needs to start throwing down against the police, but what is necessary is the analysis, communication, coordination, and clarity in the demands and in the ways that we organize. It'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 politic that aren't also 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 of PIC abolitionists in other sectors and movements. This more concretely fortifies our communities against the different arms of the PIC, racial capitalism, and the interests that seek to destabilize, extract from, and punish our communities—whether through money, technology, or actual bodies and people. In an abolitionist world, of course, our vision is not commodified housing. We're not going to win abolition in a world that is set up where we still have giant corporate landlords and the rent is too damn high in most major cities across the country. Abolitionists need clear visions for stable, secure, long-term, holistic housing and shelter.

It'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 politic that aren't also making more room for the PIC to infiltrate our communities?

PIC abolitionists can learn a lot from the large-scale base-building and power-building that the housing movement has done quite well, especially as PIC abolition becomes more mainstream. The housing movement centers the critical role of renters, a core section of the US working class and a strategic base of people to build power with. Renters are at the intersection of a lot of different work that's moving on the left. *Can we examine more critically what neighborhoods are 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? What would it look like if we mapped out the cities and neighborhoods with the highest eviction rates in the cities and neighborhoods with the highest levels of policing, arrests, and imprisonment?* Those could be key sites where we organize our people in more powerful ways to align demands for the abolition of policing with deeply investing in our communities in ways that ensure our safety, stability, permanence, and self-determination.

Applying an abolitionist analysis in other movements' work is important because our movements need each other to ensure the wins we make are permanent, long-term, and impactful, and that we're closing loopholes that allow our people to be destabilized or displaced. What would it look like if we were actually able to organize renters for housing justice and PIC abolition? What would the impacts of a rent strike be on the people who push policies that criminalize folks? This analysis is not only needed for housing justice organizing, but for all the different areas of movement-building work we are connected to. It's important for all communities to be able to concretely name what is at stake for them in the fight for PIC abolition. ♦

About the Authors:

Kamau Walton (they/them) *is the Senior Organizer of Communications at Right to the City Alliance. As a member of Critical Resistance, they have done PIC abolitionist organizing in Oakland, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Atlanta for over a decade.*

Molly Porzig *joined CR in 2006 and has organized with CR on various campaigns and projects ever since. In 2020, she was hired by CR as the Project Coordinator of The Abolitionist, and continues to coordinate "The Abby" as CR's Media and Communications Coordinator.*

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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 (the Department of Housing and Urban Development'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.

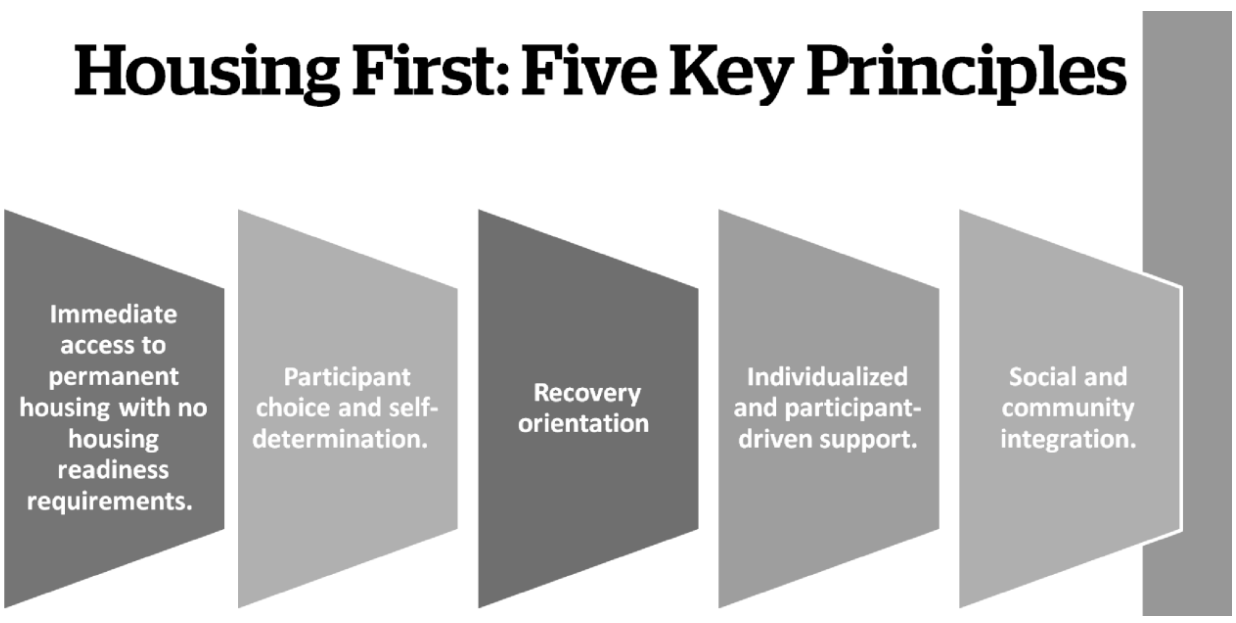
Housing First is being implemented in over 150 cities in the US, and now the US is starting to take a national Housing First approach to ending homelessness. Canada, Australia, and Ireland have already used a national Housing First approach for some time. Currently, Finland is poised to end homelessness within the next five years, using Housing First. We frequently have folks from those other countries visit us in Philadelphia, attend our webinars, and engage with us. There's also really strong Housing First work happening in Norway, Denmark, Japan, 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 going to look like, and what services, including mental health treatment and substance use treatment, they want to engage in. When 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 I 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 our engagement 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 it 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?* For some people it's going back to school, and 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 homelessness, or folks panhandling 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, and everybody says that there's no affordable housing. It's not just a Philadelphia problem. It's not just a Bucks County problem. It's a problem in California, and it's a problem in rural Kentucky, and it's a problem in West Virginia. 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. But we understand 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, a traditional housing alternative that refers unsheltered 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. When you're in there, you can't be disruptive, intoxicated, or use [substances]; you can't let your mental health symptoms disrupt everyone. There are all these rules you have to follow and hoops you have to jump through, and then it's 6am and you have to get out and go figure out something to do all day long. If you can abide by all of those rules for X amount of time, then you'll be referred to a transitional housing program or a halfway house or something where you're still in a congregate setting, but maybe with 30 people instead of 100, and there are going to be new rules to follow there. Maybe you have to show that you're motivated to get a job or be "productive" in society. If you can follow all the new 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 gonna 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. These are the same people who were considered "not ready" for housing by linear residential treatment programs. The traditional housing model is not evidence-based. Linear residential treatment is essentially taking Maslow's hierarchy and flipping it on its head. It's saying, we're going to give you this precarious housing, housing that you can only stay in under certain conditions, so it's not stable. Folks don't feel that sense of safety and security if they know they can be kicked out at any moment. Linear residential treatment says that participants with mental health and substance use struggles need to demonstrate "desirable behaviors" in order to prove that they're ready for or worthy of housing on their own. You have

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Photo by Brooke Anderson

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 discharging 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 our program, 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 unhoused people 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, because they're doing what they need to do to get by 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 supportive services, so we're making sure their energy is turned on, that they're getting food stamps, 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 the 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_pilot 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 session 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 are going to magically 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 restructuring 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 is.♦

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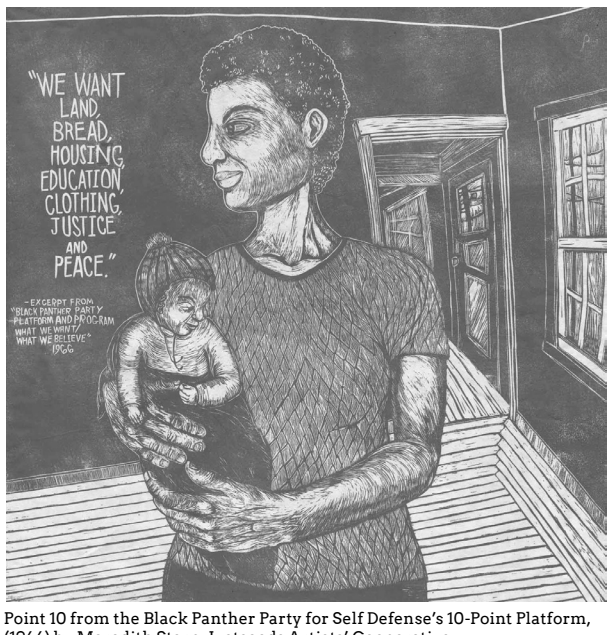


Point 10 from the Black Panther Party for Self Defense's 10-Point Platform, (1966) by Meredith Stern, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

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 freedom while lying on my prison bunk vanished. The parole agent had turned my 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 made up the rules for these devices? Who was making money from them? And most importantly, what did the future hold for this punitive, invasive 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 that the drivers of the prison industrial complex (PIC) would find new ways to use this technology to extend the boundaries of punishment and profiteering, 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 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 2019 to more than 182,000 today, according to NBC News and the Department of Homeland Security. In the pretrial arena, the movement to end cash bail has prompted several jurisdictions to step up the use of monitors, alleging that they are an "alternative to incarceration". In Los Angeles County the number of devices in use rose by 5,000 percent in the past six years. In Cook County, Illinois, EM as a condition of pretrial release increased the number of devices from a daily count of 1,700 in 2015 (*Chicago Tribune*) to more than 2,400 at the outset of the pandemic in March 2020 (CNN). The onset of the pandemic precipitated major expansion in many quarters as well, largely as a tool to reduce the lack of social distance due to overcrowding. The Federal Bureau of Prisons has released 3,600 people to home confinement since March of 2020, many of them on EM. Harris County, which includes Houston, upped its EM numbers from 27 in 2019 to more than 4,000 today.

EM companies saw the market opportunities resulting from the pandemic. As Ordan Trabelsi of Israel-based EM company SuperCom stated in an interview with SNN Network, "Many customers and potential customers around the world asked us if we could use that same platform to do COVID-19 home quarantine tracking and compliance. And we thought, of course we can because it's exactly what we do in the offender tracking space."

HOUSEHOLDS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Given the lockdowns associated with COVID-19, the extension of electronic monitors has serious implications for the organization of households and urban space more broadly. The house arrest that accompanies EM has enormous gender ramifications. While the vast majority of people on EM identify as men, when they are locked down in their houses all too often mothers, partners, even grandmothers have to take up the financial and emotional slack. But beyond the household looms the prospect of e-gentrification—the creation of geo-boundaries that impact both housing and access to land. ***In India, for example, during the pandemic neighborhoods were color coded. The color determined the degree of freedom of movement allowed in the neighborhood. Transferring that dynamic to the US raises the specter of e-gentrification where GPS could become a tool to confine Black and Brown people to certain parts of the city and block them from areas "coded" for the privileged.***

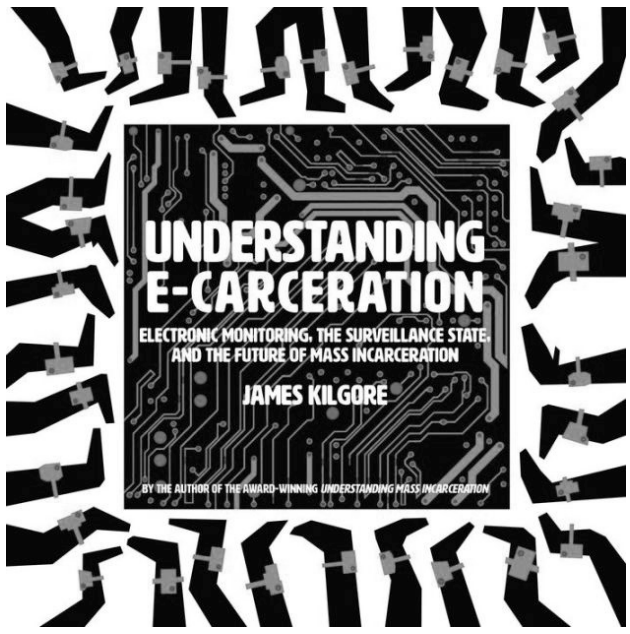
EM is not only a source of profits but another arena in which to expand the reach of the PIC as a driver of racial capitalism. In Cook County, the second largest pretrial EM cohort in the country, 70 percent of those on monitors were Black in a county where Black people comprise just 25 percent of the population, according to a report from the Chicago Appleseed Center. Los Angeles showed even more skewed figures, with Black people making up 31 percent of those on monitors as compared to an 8 percent presence in the general population.

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 2015, 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 technology to phone 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 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.

The expansion of EM and other forms of e-carceration poses a number of challenges for both criminal legal reformers and abolitionists. 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 jail and lead a life in their community, then that may be the best option for a person at that moment.



James Kilgore is the author of 6 books, including Understanding E-Carceration: Electronic Monitoring, The Surveillance State, and the Future of Mass Incarceration

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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. What we fight for at an individual level of harm reduction doesn't equate with our large-scale abolitionist vision. As researcher Emmett Sanders, who spent 22 years in prison followed by 90 days 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 shackle." ***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.***

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. At the same time, we need to avoid the mistake many activists have made with private prisons—to lay the blame solely on the companies. EM and all forms of e-carceration are political projects. They can never come into existence without support and allocations from government budgets. Exchanging jurisdiction from one EM company to another does no more to move us toward abolition than exchanging a private prison for a public one.

Third, we must fight for the elimination of e-carceration devices like ankle shackles as part of our broader campaign for abolition and housing

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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-carceration. We must embrace alternatives that provide opportunities for the oppressed and that remove people from jails, prisons, and all forms of e-carceration. 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. ♦

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.

Author Bio: *James Kilgore is an activist and author based in Urbana, Illinois. He is the Director of the Challenging E-Carceration project at MediaJustice and the Director Advocacy and Outreach at First-Followers Reentry Program in his hometown. He is also the author of six books, including his latest,* Understanding E-Carceration *(The New Press, 2022), and* Understanding Mass Incarceration (The New Press, 2015). *His Twitter handle is @waazn1.*

FEATURES ACTION

Home Demolitions in Palestine: Breaking Homes, Maintaining supremacy, and Fractured narratives

By Mariam Barghouti

In July 2021, Israeli military forces invaded Humsa, the lands in which Palestinian Bedouin communities live in near the Jordan Valley. At first, Israeli army declares the area a "closed military zone"- a common practice by Israeli forces to weaponize national security as a reason to expel Palestinians. Following this, Palestinian Bedouins in Humsa find that Israeli forces would demolish the housing structures, turning the families, including children, homeless. Again, in February 2022, the families already forcibly 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 wearied 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 – and all that we ask for now is to stay," he says as a puff of smoke escapes his mouth. Bilal and his family are merely one story in the large web of Palestinians that have experienced demolition or are under threat of demolition.

The issue of demolition in occupied Palestine continues to threaten and cause terror for Palestinian families. More than this, demolitions act as a mechanism of replacing the Palestinian population with a settler one. It is important to counteract the mainstream narratives of the Development and Humanitarian Aid sector—including international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)— in the context of demolitions in occupied Palestine. The demolition of Palestinian infrastructure is often designated only as a concern to Area C in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is largely due to the narrow focus on demolitions within areas NGOs deem as "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 a term to describe the whole land of Palestine before the creation of Israel, and here refers to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and Palestinians in West Jerusalem). The five governorates in Gaza under a 16-year, military-imposed siege face a variant form of demolition. Carpet bombing. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship on the other hand are facing practices amid a blackout from human rights organizations and media reporting.

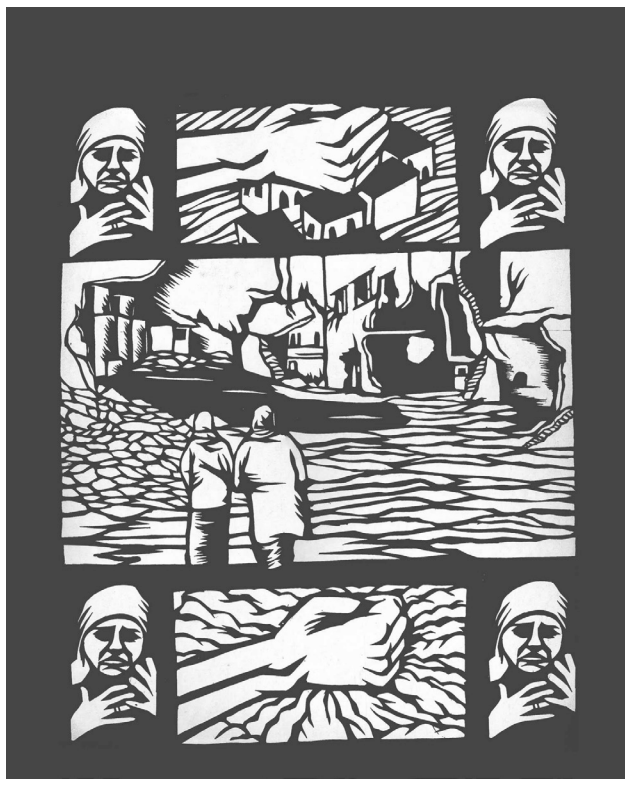
This piece does not aim to provide a list of violations through demolition practice, rather serves to provide an alternative narrative to the destructive impact of demolitions in colonized Palestine. It allows for a lexicon and narrative flow which deviates from that of the development sector or mainstream 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 record of 18,000 Palestinian homes were demolished under administrative, punitive, and operation reasons.

However, the history of home demolitions predates the State of Israel. It stems from the transition between the colonization of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate after it. Together, these regimes further consolidated and built the blueprint of the systemization of demolition within a legal system which Israel continues to employ. Between 1936 and 1939, a total of 5,000 Palestinian homes were demolished by British colonial forces as a way of enforcing collective punishment on a Palestinian population that was, like other parts of the Arab World, uprising against the British Empire.

Palestinian families protest against the planned ethnic cleansing of Masafer Yatta," Jerusalem, 15.3.2022. Photographer: Oren Ziv.


"Home Demolitions" by Eric Ruin, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative

The documentation of demolition practices across the British Mandate era and the perpetuation of demolition by present-day Israel are not only well documented, but the lists of condemnations by human rights organizations and leaders showcase the gravity of it. Yet, beyond the condemnations, testimonies, impact analyses and studies by research institutions and policy think tanks, the practice of demolition not only persists, but has been intensifying and adapting in the past decade. Even with the spread of a global humanitarian crisis under the COVID-19 pandemic, home demolition practices by Israeli authorities and military accelerated unhinged.

BEYOND THE PHYSICAL, HOME DEMOLITIONS AS PSYCHOSOCIAL ENGINEERING

Bilal recollects the times that international diplomats went on field visits to Humsa: "International 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." With 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 demoralization, 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-

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cal engineering of the Palestinian population. It is in fact a torture tactic which mimics the practices of Israeli prison services against Palestinian political detainees.

With the 16 year-long military imposed siege on the five governorates of Gaza city (home to almost 2 million Palestinians, most of whom are refugees dispossessed by Israeli Hagana and Irgun militia in 1948 and the Israeli army in 1967), and the control of all entry and exit points in the West Bank, as well as heavy surveillance and police brutality against Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, Palestinians are being held captive in what we have referred to as an "open-air prison." Inside military political detainment, Palestinians (including children as young as 12) are subject to layers of abuses ranging from beatings, to attack dogs unleashed on them, to sleep deprivation, denial of family visits, overcrowded cells, confiscation of basic materials (including nutrition), teargassing prisoners, and brutalizing them, and the practices of occasionally destroying prison cell spaces. Demolitions of Palestinian infrastructures, are merely another tactic in the Zionist arsenal of policing, imprisonment, surveillance, enclosure, militarism and resource extraction, denial, and destruction deployed to maintain Israeli supremacy over Palestine and Palestinians.

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 international non-governmental organizations, humanitarian aid and development agencies, and even the narrative of our very own Palestinian National Authority (de facto governing authority in the West Bank). These groups often mention the context of demolitions only as they pertain to the West Bank. Yet, demolition practices are intensifying in Jerusalem (East and West Jerusalem), as well as in the laboriously remaining Palestinian populated cities within Israel, such as Qalansawe and Lydd.

To complicate things further, the concept of home demolitions is not addressed in the context of Gaza as it is not "technically" under the pretext of settler expansion due to the withdrawal of Israeli settlers and the demolition of the settlements in the Gaza Strip in 2006. However, Gaza has faced more than 5 full blown military assaults since 2008, killing thousands of Palestinians, displacing hundreds of thousands, and breaking entire families. In 2012, the United Nations alarmingly warned that the Gaza Strip – where a majority of population are children or youth under the age of 29 - would become 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 residential buildings were carpet bombed and thousands were left homeless in the streets. Families were exchanging children in case their homes get bombed and they are all killed; they afford a chance for at least one family member to survive. Imagine that, exchanging children for confrontation of your ethnic cleansing. This too, is a form of mass demolition.

The impact of these measures is not merely to maintain domination, to expel Palestinians, and to ensure a settler demographic majority—it is also a form of psychosocial engineering of Palestinians. The induction of anxiety, traumatic memories, aggressive physical torture, and homelessness means that the entire future of Palestinians is compromised, shaken, and left to bleed. As Bilal says, "if you yell and no one hears and the practices continue you eventually get

"Solidarty Protest for Salem Family" - Jerusalem court, 25,4,2022. Photographer: Oren Ziv.

tired, no?" His three-year old son, Abedallah, comes scurrying at that moment and Bilal notes, "We are tired."

The practice of demolition is not merely a destruction of infrastructure, concrete, and walls. It is the erasure of testaments to old memories, to lineage, and the inhibition of Palestinians to be able to build on the histories they gather and collect. In the Bedouin Community of Ibzeeq in the West Bank, 18-year-old Arkan recollects the moment that Israeli soldiers raided their community with tanks, jeeps, and full weaponry to bulldoze their home shelters down. With a feigned smile that holds hope for a future she does not fully believe in, she notes, "They don't just destroy our home—they take my childhood, my memories, everything. We must start from scratch." This continued systemic forcing of return to point zero is an attempt to re-wire Palestinian minds to not be able to envision new futures and better futures. Yet, as we have seen, Palestinians are resisting these efforts at every turn.

CONFRONTING SETTLER MILITIA

The only avenue Palestinians have to confront these measures is through protest which is often repressed by settler militia violence. More often than not, it is youth at the forefront, the very families that are facing forced expulsion under a pretext of not having an Israeli issued permit system, or as a form of collective punishment if a community member undertook an act of resistance against Israeli settler violence and abuses. To go back to the 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 protesting their forced expulsion in order to pave way for the overtaking of their homes by Jewish Zionist settlers. Muna El-Kurd, only 22 at the time told Ya'acov Fauci- a settler from New York attempting to take over her neighborhood- "you are stealing my house" to which he unflinchingly replied "if 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 (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. More than this, we found that even Palestinian political detainees imprisoned by Israel in the worst conditions of torture and mistreatment, were also revolting with us. In September, 2021 six Palestinian political detainees escaped from Israel's high security prison of Galboa. They had dug a tunnel and escaped. We all thought it was a "shawshank redemption" moment, and in that recognition we saw how even in exchanging cultural productions, we are sharing our stories.

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 population with borders, displacement, checkpoints, and apartheid walls, they remain as unified as ever. The resilience of the Palestinian population inspired—and more importantly was 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, the ongoing Indigenous efforts in the US and Canada to resist the construction of oil pipelines on Native land, to the fight against state violence against immigrants from Latin America at the US-Mexico border, solidarity and connection with Palestine is growing. More and more, communities in resistance everywhere are finding common cause, and uplifting the Palestinian call to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction the state of Israel. Yet what may have been less obvious is that our strength, our confrontation, was an emulation of all the lessons shared with us, all the histories of breaking enslavement. Challenging the New Jim Crow, and the rebellions in the past decade (such as Ferguson), have become part of our spine. What Palestinians are doing is ensuring that our resistance defies the isolation, the solitary confinement of different communities in small areas, the punishment by denying us access to water, sometimes food, and basic medical needs. This is, in essence, our breaking free.

For Palestinians, as with all oppressed communities, 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 in essence, our honoring of our testimony and recognizing that abusers are not to be tolerated, but challenged and confronted. This requires weakening their disproportionate access to power, weapons, and impunity. This needs boycotting, sanctioning, sharing Palestinian testimonies, delegitimizing any manipulation of reality to justify this ethnic cleansing. More than this, we need to share together tools, build new languages and lexicon. To break free out of this prison, we learned, we need not time but constant active effort and the genuine belief that our future will be different. This is how we practice *Sumoud*. Steadfastness, not by thinking liberation is easy, but that if we withstand and persist, time becomes a measurement of change and distance.♦

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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 Wood in West Oakland, California, anticipate the arrival of bulldozers any day now. Cob on Wood is one of the largest homeless encampments in West 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 Wood, Oakland City Council was considering a proposal to give $350,000 to a nonprofit organization to build a city-sanctioned encampment. While 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. These government- or nonprofit-run sanctioned encampments, which guise themselves as progressive and innovative, lead to enhanced criminalization of unhoused people outside of their fenced-in borders. Instead of a genuine solution to the housing crisis, these encampments represent another installation in the long history of warehousing and erasing poor and unhoused people.

Unhoused organizers and allies have been asking for cities to support creative solutions to homelessness for years, and the idea of legalized encampments certainly isn't new. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, spurred local governments to create sanctioned encampments as part of the emergency response to the shutdown of congregate shelters. Typically, inside city sanctioned encampments, tents are lined up next to each other in a fenced-off area, which is then patrolled and policed by a local provider and/or private security. While conditions inside the encampments vary, the decision to make sanctioned encampments part of the service landscape turns them into leverage and territory for law enforcement; they inspire none of the community building, autonomy, or collective direction and organization from unhoused people themselves, and function more as containment zones than "services". Similar to a shelter bed offer, turning down an offer to stay in a sanctioned encampment can result in a person being branded as "service-resistant".

RESISTING "SERVICE RESISTANCE": WHEN AND WHY SERVICES ENHANCE CRIMINALIZATION

The "service-resistant" narrative has been around for a long time and has historically been used to justify the relentless criminalization of unhoused people. The rhetoric behind it is essentially "tough love", that making it functionally impossible for unhoused people to survive on the street by criminalizing them, cutting assistance programs, and covering all flat surfaces in downtowns with spikes, etc., will somehow "disincentivize" homelessness. There's also the notion that people need to struggle to earn the things that other "productive citizens" work for, such as housing and food, with no regard to structural and systemic inequalities. Conversely, even though struggle is a requirement, people are still cast as taking "the easy way out" when they fail to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

The myth of service resistance is also linked to the history of forced psychiatric treatment and the mass institutionalization of people with mental health issues. Policy conversations around service resistance are usually accompanied by discussions of conservatorship. People without housing, people with mental illness, and people who use drugs are lumped into a single category of people who are a danger to society (and to themselves) and need to be reformed. A dual assumption, though, is that these people are inherently "criminal" and unable to be reformed, and that they need to be removed from society entirely.

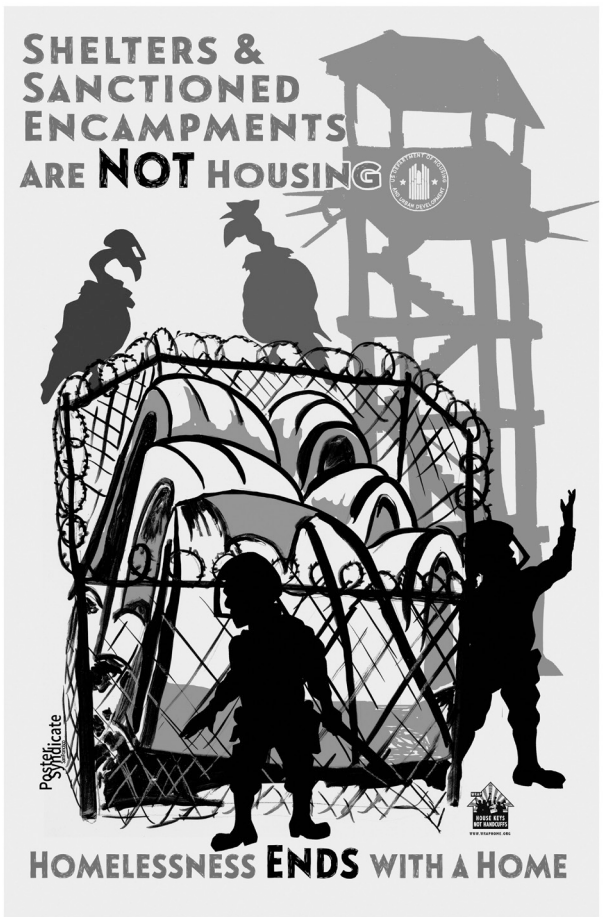
On the heels of *Martin v. Boise*, cities are utilizing "service resistance" as a way to continue business as usual. In *Boise*, the Ninth Circuit court ruled that local governments cannot ticket or arrest unhoused people living outside when no other shelter is available to them. Cities, however, responded to this ruling not by ceasing to criminalize people when they have nowhere else to go, but by creating a loophole. By quickly and cheaply creating more shelter—regardless of whether or not the shelter is adequate or appropriate—they can claim that there *is* shelter available and criminalize whoever turns it down. Making offers of shelter a precondition to the enforcement of anti-homeless laws fuels the narrative that homelessness is the result of personal choices—not large-scale organized abandonment—therefore criminalization is deserved. This tactic becomes even more insidious in light of the fact that an "offer" of shelter can mean practically anything, and that even 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 how 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 twice. This redefines "housing" to include tents in sanctioned encampments, RV parking spaces in designated lots, and tiny homes. Note that these are all living arrangements that would have previously defined someone as home*less*, an absurd rhetorical turn that reveals how all the old talk of "people need four walls for their own good" was and still is connected to a carceral agenda of punishing, repressing, and controlling unhoused people.

In regard to sanctioned encampments specifically, Steinberg said, "I strongly support our new safe ground 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 places in our city where it is not appropriate to camp." Clearly, one of the most appealing aspects of these encampments for local governments is that they 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 unconstitutional displacement of unhoused people.

FROM THE GROUND UP: A STUDY ON CO-OPTATION

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.



By Poster Syndicate & Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP)

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 communal resilience are baked 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".

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 nonprof-

Continued on next page

it tasked with supporting the camp's operations) stepped away, "Village dynamics improved dramatically. Villagers really began coming into their own and investing in the village dream. Meeting participation improved greatly. Community groups were more able to come out and support and engage as some COVID restrictions were lifted." Villagers told the *Portland Mercury* that the villages allowed them to relax and stabilize in a way that they hadn't been able to on the streets.

Eventually, the oppressive dynamics of outside supervision and control erupted when All Good Northwest (AGNW) began staffing the encampment. While AGNW made vague promises to C3PO villagers that things would remain more or less the same, once the ink was dry on their contract they completely dismantled the democratic governance structure and fired all the villagers from their leadership positions. Victory noted that the starkest change was in the way conflicts were (or were not) resolved: "When it was C3PO, villagers enforced their own rules and resolved their own conflicts through a grievance procedure…All villagers felt ownership over the rules, processes, and condition of their community. But under AGNW, staff is cop, judge, jury and executioner. Rules only matter if staff are watching. Conflicts are left to fester until staff break up a fist fight." Ultimately, many villagers felt (and voiced in their official statement) that the new purpose of the C3PO villages was the same as the congregate shelters before them: To police and warehouse unhoused people; to create a shelter without walls.

NOTHING ENDS HOMELESSNESS LIKE A HOME

The institutionalization of encampments reinforces the carceral logic that unhoused people and poor people can only legally exist within a system designed to reform them, even if the only difference between being on the streets and being in the system is that the tent is yours versus issued by the city. Institutionalization also alienates the sense of community that characterizes most encampments on the streets; since the advent of contemporary homelessness in the early '80s, people have banded together in community with friends and allies to protect themselves, their belongings, and each other. It is a natural form of survival and togetherness experienced within lives that are way too often dangerous and incredibly isolated.

Unhoused people living in unsanctioned encampments are fighting institutionalization on multiple fronts, and som e groups have been very successful at waging legal and/or media fights with local governments to protect their communities. For example, Where Do We Go Berkeley, a group of unhoused organizers in Berkeley, California, was able to get a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against the city because the city would not provide housing. Cob on Wood is currently pursuing a TRO to keep Caltrans at bay. In Los Angeles, unhoused folks living in encampments have worked with mutual aid groups and coalitions like Street Watch LA to form blockades of thirty people or more, which have been able to stop sweeps and hold the city accountable to their claim that they are "just cleaning up garbage." Because there are so many extremely well-resourced groups working to clear and disappear unhoused people in public space, survival outside the system is inherently political. Existence *is* resistance.

Governments have the choice to stop the brutal evictions and destruction of encampments created by unhoused people. Rather than co-opt and criminalize, cities could work to support people living in encampments by providing sanitation, water, healthcare, and survival gear. As we have seen in examples like Cob on Wood, Dignity Village, and other places, when unhoused people are no longer shuffled into shelters and jail cells, they can and do create vibrant communities, self-sustained shelter, and self-governance outside of the system. 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.♦

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.

Author Bio: *Jade Arellano grew up in Hemet, a semi-rural small town in Southern California's Inland Empire. They graduated from Stanford in 2019 with a BA in Sociocultural Anthropology, where they conducted research on neoliberal undercurrents in homeless services. At WRAP, they work in collaboration with community leaders across the US to draw out the common threads of local organizing campaigns and build power nationally.*

FEATURES ACTION

We [Have To] Keep Us Safe: An Interview with Brooklyn Eviction Defense

By Dylan Brown

Brooklyn, New York, a notorious epicenter for gentrification, in recent years has earned the title as one of the top five most expensive places to rent in the US. In the summer of 2020, during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, following a refusal by state actors to heed the call from housing organizers to cancel rent, a group of neighbors came together to form Brooklyn Eviction Defense (BED).

The following piece is an edited transcript from an interview conducted by Dylan Brown of The Abolitionist *Editorial Collective with three BED organizers. These organizers asked to remain anonymous, but shared their own analysis and reflections on the work BED does as an autonomous coalition of tenants in solidarity with other tenants facing eviction, harassment, and housing insecurity. Please note, BED is NOT a nonprofit organization, but a grassroots organization that utilizes a diversity of tactics—stoop watches, blockades, tenant support, political education, and tenant association organizing—to create systems of care and support for people not otherwise in control of their housing.*

More information on BED and ways to get involved can be found at their website brooklynevictiondefense.org. *If you or a loved one lives in Brooklyn and is in need of support, BED organizers can be reached through their 24/7 hotline at (917) 982-2265 or email* brooklynevictiondefense@gmail.com.

Photo by Brooke Anderson

Can you give a brief introduction of who you are and the work you do?

BED ORGANIZER (BO) 1: BED at its core is a community group, and we fight against the system 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 against one thing, 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 organizers. And I thought that was the answer to my life, at least for a lot of 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 work and these other systems.

BED ORGANIZER (BO) 3: During the 2020 uprisings, there was an eviction defense at 1214 Dean Street. That defense was the genesis of BED. I was one of the people on the ground at 1214 Dean. I had been organizing with 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 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. Whether it's not getting their repairs 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 isn't as clear as 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 extra-legal evictions 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.

Continued on next page

BO 1: When people call us, a lot of the time, they're calling us about an unlivable situation and our approach to eviction defense is asking: Do you want to stay in your housing? If so, what are the remedies that we can come up with collectively? How can we give you some backup in addressing the conditions or the harassment so that you can stay in your home and continue to build a life where you are?

All of our work is tenant centered, every single thing. Sometimes that can bring us to a sort of contradiction in our work where we're trying not to just provide services like a nonprofit might, but a neighbor might not necessarily realize the different options that they have—whether they're legal or extralegal. It might change their situation significantly to literally just have some repairs made. We can do that with them. We ask the neighbors that we're working with what do you want and what would make your situation more livable? It's always changing what we're trying to do with anyone's housing situation, and we always try to be really accountable to the tenant.

What shifts in your organizing occurred as a result of the onset and ultimate termination of the NY State eviction moratorium in January 2022?

BO 1: Well, 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 be snatched away by cops from their home? 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.

When there's an eviction moratorium and nobody can get evicted, that opens up the condition of, wow, this is not a natural state of things. People are in their homes and they should stay in their homes. So the organizing landscape, the imaginative landscape, is really open. We had a situation where there was illegal harassment by one subletter to another, and the first thing the police did when they arrived on the scene was ask if the landlord knew about it. 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 gone to show how quickly the imaginary for what's possible shrinks. The lapsing throws into even more stark relief that legal and illegal evictions are both 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 it's not as easy to say every eviction is illegal. 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, it's only "good cause" evictions. And I think importantly for BED, we started our whole thing with no evictions, and now coming into the spring of 2022, our whole thing is still no evictions. Period.** We don't have a base that we're trying to reach that's separate from us. We are all neighbors. BED is, at its heart, very much an abolitionist organizing 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 ties into the carceral state that we live in. It's all something that we want to get rid of. We 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 (and policing) in enabling the neglect, 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: Well, I work a lot on the intake side—which is when you manage our hotline, and you call people back and you ask them what's going on. Most of the time people have already gone to the police. The police don't do anything. The police give them the runaround, they direct them to all these different places and ask for impossible levels of follow-up from people because they are incapable of actually addressing the harms and creating safety. When people call us, we're not going to tell them to call the police. We know they're not going to actually address the root cause of the problem. We ask what safety would mean, what beneficial conditions would be like, and what kind of support do you need in order to make those things happen?

We make repairs, we direct people to talk to their neighbors and create a tenant association within their building, and we create stoop watches, which is when the community comes in shifts to watch over the house and make sure that nothing 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. When 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 builds the capacity for BED to not be the only project on the block, but for there to be many groups of people who can address this issue. We are really trying to build up community self-reliance and community self-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. In the same way that when people are like, oh, well, if 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. Why can't I do it? Why 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 that we build. They continue to evolve, and we move through different cycles with them. And that is also where we fundamentally are at odds with the state. When HPD [NYC Housing Preservation & Development] decides that your ticket is closed because an inspector went by and your heat happened to be higher that day than it has been for the last month, it's closed, it's gone. You're done. You just have absolutely no agency in the matter. With BED, we find it really important to check back in with people to make sure that they know that just because the current situation has been resolved, that doesn't mean that's the end of them having to have a relationship with us or with the particular organizer that they have gotten to know.

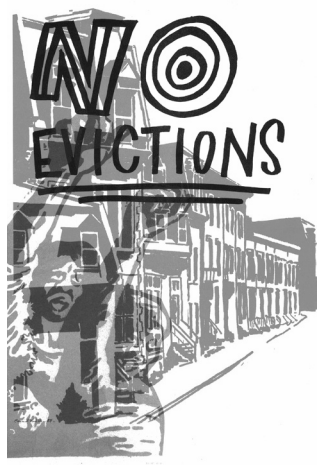
We really want people to join in our organizing and to plug in—we are all tenants or people who don't have control over our housing—and so we at any point in time could be put in a situation where we need BED support. Any neighbor who originally came into us needing support can plug themselves into organizing. We're not about siloing things off. We're not about making these artificial barriers between things. If you have an issue, we'll talk to you about it, that's it. No landlords, no cops.

To that last point, through organizing I've realized the home is not something that you can separate from everything else: The home is where all the different oppressions come to rest. When you're a housing organizer, you're dealing with everything that somebody is dealing with when they come home. This has come up in our organizing because we have no choice but to be trauma-informed. This is a process that we're constantly working on getting better. When we are put in positions where we're interacting with the state [through contact with cops] or with violent actors we internally and externally have to figure out what to do with conflict.

We 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 retreat away from the violence that's coming home to them. 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: We 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 issue that is really people feeling a lot of shame and people feel very alone.



By Josh MacPhee, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

Our hotline is 24/7 and the little win is having a conversation with someone and helping them realize that their situation is not dire if they're being threatened with something, or that your landlord actually has no ground to stand on. Helping someone have some relief—that is a win. We had a situation where someone had recently 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 at a health risk during COVID, and don't have a toilet. 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 talk to each other. Every time they get us to self-evict, landlords are winning. Anytime 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, executed and completed. BED was able to reverse the eviction through community intervention 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 through the fact that there was massive disobedience of the law and so many people creating such a politicized environment for the eviction in this particular case that the cops did not execute the eviction.

BO 3: We are building power every day too. And it's not power the state has given to us and granted to us—we are building power by taking our agency and doing it collectively, which is huge. I had a conversation with a neighbor yesterday who we were supporting through a stoop watch and a blockade at one point. We had helped them get back into their home, and we were there providing sustained on-the-ground support for weeks. They told me that they were feeling good enough to call off the around the clock stoop watch—they felt safe enough knowing that enough of us were nearby. Having even one neighbor know that they're safe and that we're available to them is a gigantic win.♦

ABBY THROWBACK: "Ending The Full Punishment: Fighting Housing Discrimination of the Convicted"

By Bruce Reilly

Editors' Note: *The following was originally printed in Issue 23 of* The Abolitionist, *published in the Fall of 2014.*

New Orleans is the most incarcerated city in the most incarcerated state 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 though discrimination in housing, employment, and voting were unfortunate but indirect consequences of punishment. Yet this is a misnomer. These consequences are quite direct. Despite the lasting and destructive nature of these punishments on an individual's life, they are not even mentioned during the plea bargaining or sentencing process.

Today there is a great deal of energy put towards the end of collateral consequences, including a focus on "reentry." Some of those leading this work—or at least those with budgets to implement and support it—include courts and prisons. In other words, the new "reentry" industry is intertwined with the same people imposing and executing the sentences. Obviously the most effective way to reduce collateral consequences is to not convict someone in the first place, to not send them to prison, and even to change the laws that have disproportionately criminalized so much common behavior.

While many of us work to actively alter the laws so that fewer people face the myriad punishments of the convicted, others are working towards developing a cultural shift that embraces a healthier response than prisons to our social ailments. Many others are also working towards reducing these collateral consequences. People always need to get in where they fit in.

THE MYTHS OF FEDERAL HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

When I was incarcerated, I constantly faced commentary about how people can't move back to the Projects, or to Section 8, after prison. Nobody knew the actual rule, it was just "word on the street" and also what would happen if someone applied to live there on parole. Effectively, families couldn't be reunited and people were desperate for transitional housing that didn't exist. 'Not In My Backyard' applies to all convicted people everywhere, even to their mother's house. After a while, I put this question into my caseload and squeezed the research into my spare time.

Nationwide, people have been organizing against employment discrimination under the slogan "Ban the Box." This name was coined by **All of Us or None**, an organized movement of directly impacted people fighting for the rights of convicted people, inside and outside of prison, as well as the rights of our families. Impacted people have inspired others to take on this issue, including mainstream groups like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and National Employment Law Project (NELP). In 2012, the EEOC finally issued guidance on what constitutes a legal form of employment discrimination due to conviction history, and barred all blanket policies. This has given ammunition to the organizers and others who are both trying to change local policies and win cases in court.

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 Feds bar 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 operating a meth lab on federal property. Considering that tens of millions of Americans carry the mark of a conviction, the people actually banned from publicly 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 people and communities of color. This is in light of its own troubled history of fostering racial imbalance in the housing markets through the "white flight" from cities, leaving public housing to be under-supported and turned into highly-policed 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 low-income residents and workers) came to the monthly meeting of **Voice of the Ex-Offender (VOTE)**, an organization of formerly incarcerated people, our families, and supporters. The Stand members asked if anyone 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: "Communities, Evictions, and Criminal Convictions." The report highlights policies in certain cities where members of the **Formerly Incarcerated & Convicted People's Movement** are active. Ultimately, we put forth a proposal to HANO. We organized our people, including our legal allies and the media. Some of us explained the basic need to create a housing authority that constructively responds to the dilemma of such a high percentage of Black New Orleans families saddled with criminal records. These records are typical effects of poverty, poor education, mental illness, substance use (and abuse), and the classic forces of racism, classism, and capitalism.

Some of us also recognize that bureaucrats often need motivation to act. *How much money will they save? How many political points will they score?* The safest space is generally the square they currently occupy, so it is our job to supply the motivation, beyond altruism or even a desire to actually uphold the HUD mission. Sending people to live under the I-10 highway overpass (where many homeless people in New Orleans reside) is not creating sustainable nor fair housing for anyone, much less the overly impacted Black community in a Black-majority city.

Local housing authorities use their discretion to exclude, have amplified the word on the street that we are barred. They should be reminded that their only basis for exclusion is a criminal record, and that the EEOC already determined that the criminal justice system is a pyramid of race-based determinations: from the decisions on where to deploy police to profiling, lawyering, convicting, sentencing, paroling, and the likelihood of family resources upon release. Thus anything that is based solely on the convictions is based solely on a suspect classification. Without getting too legal jargonish about it, the authorities whose job it is to prevent race-based housing discrimination may be perpetrating it.

In 21st century America, criminal records are a proxy for racial discrimination.

NEW ORLEANS: A PETRI DISH FOR CHANGE

Like much of the US, the punishment has gotten so intense, its devastation on New Orlean has exceeded the harms it was advertised as preventing. Many Americans, however, don't believe the use of courts and prisons was ever about anything more than oppressive control. Regardless of the motives, many are now asking for little ways to avoid the big change.

Because of the agency's history of corruption and mismanagement, the federal government had appointed a "receiver" to run HANO. This head of the agency capitulated and agreed to the basics of our proposal. He then hired the **Vera Institute**, a criminal legal reform policy organization, to draft an official policy, awarding them a $1 million contract to continue work we had been doing with no budget at all. Vera sat down with us and the private developers who accept HUD money in exchange for housing. At first, everyone was in agreement and the whole process appeared to be a slam dunk.

Our proposed policy does not bar anyone. It divides people into two groups: (1) those whose records are not serious enough, and/or recent enough to even bother reviewing; and (2) those who require an individualized review by a board. The first group is obvious, reflecting the public's widespread views that many of us have past criminalized activity that doesn't raise an eyebrow of concern. The second group, those requiring review, acknowledges the safety concerns of someone who previously committed a serious act of violence. The review factors 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 this 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 consultant 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 NewJack's Guide to the Big House, *several plays, and the report "Communities, Evictions, and Criminal Convictions." He is currently working on a book about the criminal legal system. Read his blog at www.Unprison.com.*

9971:
Reading List for Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) Abolition

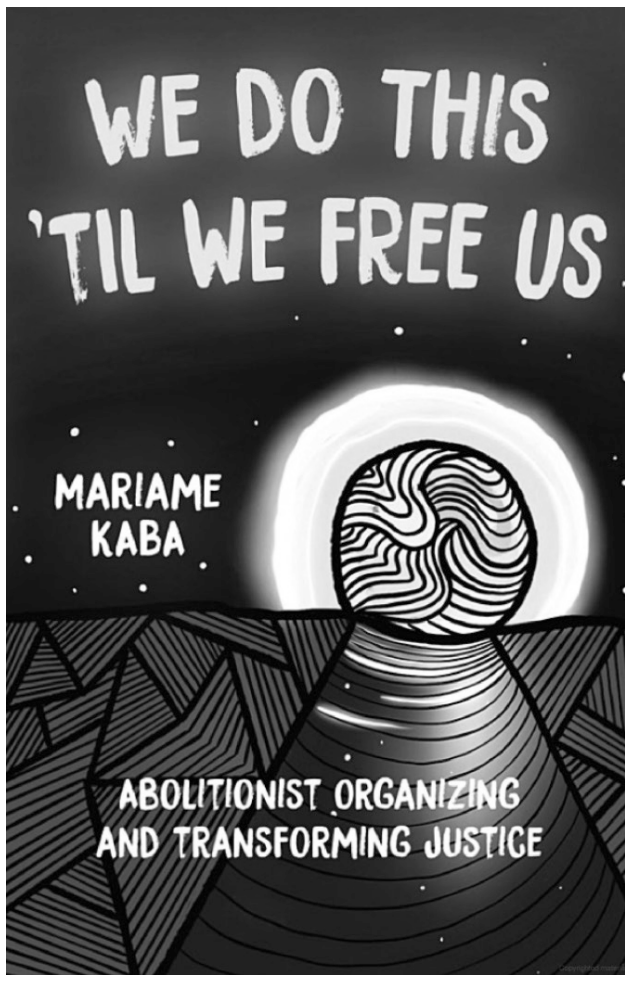
One of the most frequent requests 9971 receives is for book recommendations, so for this issue's column we prepared a list of books we strongly suggest every abolitionist library contains. Before doing so, we would like to share some of the qualities we look for when deciding whether to use a text in 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. **Mobilizing 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.
6. **Zine-able**.
   - › 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 underline abolitionist thought. It not only analyzes how we got into the quagmire of hyper-incarceration, 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 prisons 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 Moshe, 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.
13. Nick Estes, Melanie K Yazzie, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, and David Correia's *Red Nation Rising*
    - › 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.
14. Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *Beyond Survival*
    - › 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.



Mariame Kaba Book Cover: *We Do This 'til We Free Us.*

We never intended to create an exhaustive list of texts. These are some of our suggestions. We 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 Haley's *No Mercy Here*
- Kelly Lytle Hernandez's *City of Inmates*
- Joy 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 Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock's *Queer (In)Justice*
- Harsha Walia'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' *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.*

INSIDE-OUTSIDE FISHING LINE:

Speaking Truth to The People: Building a Mass Movement against the Prison Industrial Complex With Current and Former Political Prisoners

By Lawrence Jenkins & Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin with Garrett Felber

Editors' Note: *This issue's fishing line brings current political prisoner, Lawrence Jenkins, and former political prisoner, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, together to discuss political education inside and their organizing work while imprisoned. A special thanks to Garrett Felber for facilitating this conversation. Lawrence and his comrades are currently fighting for his freedom. Readers can view Lawrence's art, writings, and learn more about him and the Free Lawrence Movement by visiting the following website:* www.freelawrencemovement.com/

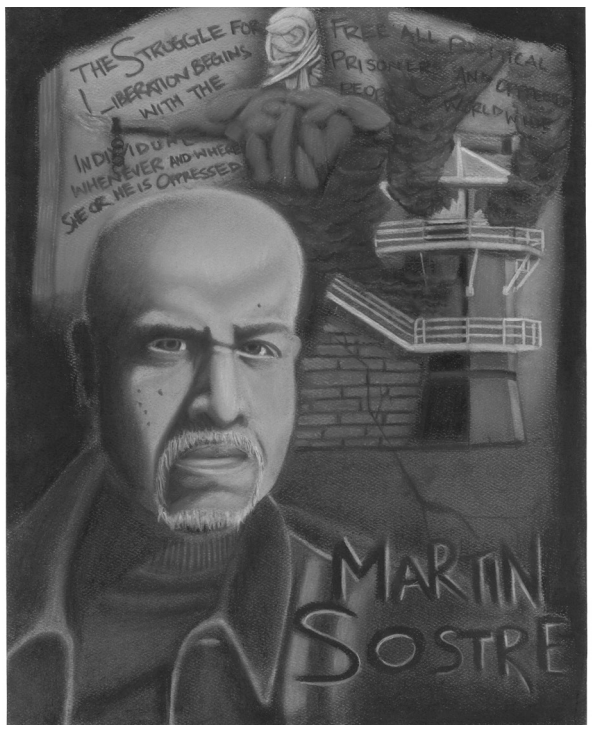
Garrett: ***How did you two get into contact?***

Lorenzo: Lawrence and I met because I had been looking for years for a sincere revolutionary prisoner who I could influence. I was really unsuccessful for years. I could tell that he didn't himself understand *how* he was railroaded into prison and how the system was doing to him what it was doing to a number of young Black people. I was trying to educate him with what I knew in terms of revolutionary politics, in terms of building a new kind of revolutionary prisoner movement that's based in the communities, instead of these allied separate organizations that claim to support prisoners, and also to give him whatever tools I had learned in terms of the steps to activism. I realize that things change and they always do, but so much of it is still the same except now we have *mass* imprisonment. 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 of that, but we need people who have gathered political education and are willing to give it to others. It's one thing to have [the knowledge]—but to have someone you do political education with, me being an older experienced activist having gone through this stuff, and being able to talk to him about things one should avoid, things you should do and so forth—it can be a very necessary and valuable thing. If you convince one person who is sincere, then you may be able to go ahead and build around that person or have that person be a link to the streets and to the prisons and that can fundamentally change a lot of things that need to be changed in this period.

Lawrence: Initially when Lorenzo first wrote and introduced himself to me and about who he was and about his background and the organizations that helped him win his freedom, I think my initial thought was like: *Damn, I am connecting with a movement elder that I can really learn from and really get not just an understanding [of] my situation a bit better but really an understanding of who I am as a revolutionary and why I feel so committed and indebted to the movement.* He listened, and he was patient and he was upfront about how I was thinking and moving at that time.

I think one of the first things that really stuck out was his concern about me putting myself in danger. During this time, I was in solitary confinement for a situation where we had to stand up for a brother who was attacked by the guards, and we ended up taking the unit hostage for hours—it made national news and we were being tortured in the hole. In that moment, a lot of the tactics the state was using on us in the prison were things that I didn't know how to defend myself against at all. I didn't understand prison litigation and grievances and I didn't understand why the repression was so deliberate and intentional on me and the brothers that all went to the hole. Lorenzo really helped put all of the situations I was going through at the time into perspective.



Martin Sostre by Lawrence Jenkins. Art provided by Lawrence Jenkins. "The struggle begins with the individual whenever or where ever she or he is oppressed. Free all political prisoners and oppressed people world wide."

I shared more about my case, being involved in an officer-involved shooting where I defended myself after being targeted by racist police officers. He gave me confidence to really understand the reality that I defended myself against state violence, and I was still fighting and resisting against that. It really took away a lot of fear that I was having around concerns that I made the situation worse for myself or those that I'm organizing with. By speaking about it and by standing up, I was resisting what the prison and the state wants us to be—silent about the injustices that are being perpetuated on us. Up until that point I was being silent, and I really wasn't resisting to the level that was needed for me to come out against the system that threw me away for thirty years. The education around the history of political prisoners like myself, learning about Martin Sostre and Lorenzo's connection with him, and Garrett sending me literature, really helped. Examples of how Lorenzo and Martin were organizing back in the sixties and seventies helped me frame my situation a little better.

By speaking about it and by standing up, I was resisting what the prison and the state wants us to be—silent about the injustices that are being perpetuated on us. Up until that point I was being silent, and I really wasn't resisting to the level that was needed for me to come out against the system that threw me away for thirty years.

From there, we started taking political education seriously as soon as we started to see how effective the tools were. **Our allies and comrades in the community started taking us and our situation more seriously, beyond just writing us letters or getting us to speak about our stories or situations on panels here and there. They started seeing it for what we see it is—it's a war.** The more I was able to come to terms with that through conversations with Lorenzo and study of political education and the history of how the state has designed the prison industrial complex to carry this thing out helped me to solidify my stance as a political activist inside and as a leader inside of prison with a lot of influence.

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 connection between Martin'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 they had no 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 reach prisoners on the inside with 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 inside 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, and he wanted other 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 as much of a central radical movement as 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 40, 50 years, but some remained the same. Can you elaborate on some of the changes you've noticed while talking to Lawrence?***

Lorenzo: We are dealing with a different stage of history, and a different kind of social 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 account 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 prison. We have to talk about the wholesale 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 of radicalized street movement. For me, the most important change in prisons is the scale and scope of prisons in terms of the level of oppression, for instance the so-called "behavioral modification" in prisons, where they are using psychotropic drugs, solitary confinement, and long-term solitary confinement. There has not been a 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 legal reaction, and the strategy done by attorneys or politicians and some in the elitist forces. The strategy must be done by the communities that

Continued on next page

the prisoners are from, and it's got to be done by the prisoners themselves and their allies. That's who it's gotta be done by. It's the same thing I used to say when I was in prison as an organizer and activist and when I was getting out of prison—if you are going to have a prison movement, it has to be community-based. It has to deal with racism and it has to deal with the material conditions that people are forced to live in that cause them to commit so-called "crimes." I think that until we wake up to that realization, this is where the movement itself needs political education.

Lawrence: I like to think about abolition as an action. It clearly means to do away with something, in this case to do away with the prison industrial complex (PIC). To me these are things that call for action. In my experience with the PIC and state violence, I have no other option than to see this for what it really is: domestic warfare being carried out on me and my community and those of us locked up inside. The reality is we have to treat this situation as such, and not leave it to be something that we simply theorize around, or talk about, or imagine. We got to really treat this situation as a real attack and to resist it as such. When we are doing political education with the movement and the community, they need to understand with sincere commitment what a struggle like this entails and how serious it is when prisoners accept allies and comrades in struggle from the community to share this struggle with us. There is a lot of history to it and a lot of resources that the state has put into maintaining conditions that suppress resistance—to perpetrate genocide, to displace, and to dispose of Black and oppressed and poor communities. We can't tiptoe or be passive about that. It does call for more radical organizing, more sacrifice, more sincere commitment, and more active solidarity. That's something that I hope we can be more successful with in our political education in building a mass movement along those lines.

In my experience with the PIC and state violence, I have no other option than to see this for what it really: domestic warfare being carried out on me and my community and those of us locked up inside.

Garrett: *What message would you want to share with readers of* The Abolitionist *both inside and out about what you both have learned through each other and this relationship?*

Lorenzo: I think we need to understand one thing: we don't need a hero. What we really need is a movement, a systematic movement in the streets, in the communities, and in the prisons as well. We deal in the streets, deal among poor people themselves. We put poor people in control of the movement. We have to unite prisoners, the families of prisoners, and their communities along with abolitionist activists to build a mass movement on the outside while we build our prisoner movements with political education and organization on the inside. That's what I tell Lawrence when I talk to him, and anybody else for that matter, in terms of dealing with prisoners' issues and not to continue to allow people who have no concern with prisoners or our communities as a whole to take over the agenda—to hijack the agenda and collaborate with the state. We can't allow that.

Lawrence: With that, it's important for us to really leverage our collective power, our knowledge, our abilities, our skills, and learn how to effectively use these tools to leverage resources outside of government control. As an artist, I try to utilize art to raise awareness and political consciousness and also to bring in more resources to help with mutual aid. Getting the community to understand that we don't need the state's permission, nor will the state fund the revolutionary activity that this action calls for. To end imprisonment and to get people out, we can't be afraid to collectively create new processes and new tactics. We are at that point where we have to figure out alternative means to advance our struggle to abolish the PIC, to help us survive genocide in cages, and not only to help us ultimately *get* free but to *stay* free.

We have to unite prisoners, the families of prisoners, and their communities along with abolitionist activists to build a mass movement on the outside while we build our prisoner movements with political education and organization on the inside.

When you're talking about the PIC, and all of its appendages and mechanisms of oppression that are dependent on us to come crawling to it for some kind of relief, aid, or help, the community has to provide alternatives for prisoners in particular not only for when we are inside but for when we get out. **That's why our work is developing political education programs and organizing trainings and developing leaders for the struggle for liberation and for the freedom movement: We can get out and easily transition not only to a secure situation after imprisonment but also continue our work in the movement**. It's a prolonged, multi-generational struggle that's going to have many stages of development. In turn, we are going to have to have these conversations at multiple points and strategize and re-devise tactics as the material conditions change and we're changing around them. Our work will be met with repression. They will try to suppress us, they will try to do things to counter what we are doing, because that is what the PIC is designed to do. We got to be able to endure those attacks and sustain our movement and our progress going forward.

Lorenzo: As we fight back and build a movement, we've got to have some practical demands concerning defunding the prison system and using that money for the people. We have to have some practical demands, and we have to think about it in terms of building a mass movement to pressure the people in power right now, so that they are forced to take funds and see that those funds go to poor communities instead of the prison system. Right now, they don't have incentive to do away with prisons. They don't have any pressure on them to do away with them until we build a movement strong enough to force them to do that. We need to win some demands, first of all, that educate the masses of people and also push those in power.

Lawrence: We also need to combat the contradictions that mass media put out about what the PIC is designed for, by putting our political education and our narrative out there so the people can align and put energy behind those demands. We need to expose how the PIC is torturing people, through various different ways of doing that, putting that truth out and speaking that truth to the people. As Lorenzo always says, "not speaking truth to the power establishment, but speaking truth to the people" about the reality in here, which will help them make more informed and conscious decisions about how they align themselves with the necessary actions that are needed right now.

About the Authors::

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin *is a writer, activist, and Black anarchist. He is a former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, and Concerned Citizens for Justice. Following an attempt to frame him on weapons charges and for threatening the life of a Ku Klux Klan leader, Ervin hijacked a plane to Cuba in February 1969. While in Cuba, and later Czechoslovakia, Ervin grew disillusioned with the authoritarianism of state socialism. Captured by the CIA in Eastern Europe, he was extradited to the US, put on trial, and sentenced to life in prison in 1970. He was introduced to anarchism whilst in prison, inspiring him to write* Anarchism and the Black Revolution *in 1979. Released after 15 years, Ervin remains politically active.*

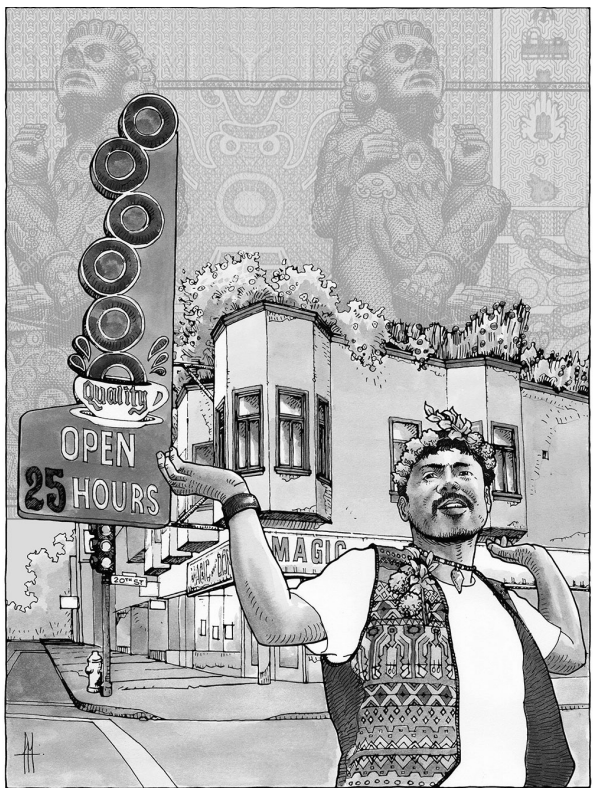
Lawrence Jenkins *is a political prisoner, agroecologist, educator, artist, organizer, and activist. He co-directs Liberation Media Northwest, a prisoner-led online platform for incarcerated/non incarcerated writers, artists, and organizers centering prison abolition. He also helps to organize books to prisoners to facilitate political education in solidarity with Study and Struggle, Seattle Mutual Aid Books, and Noname Book Club. Lawrence is currently planning and developing a self-help legal defense program, prisoners' lobby, and legal clinic for prisoners in Washington state.*♦

KITES TO THE EDITORS

Critical Resistance,

Thank you so much for your summer edition of *The Abolitionist*. Very well put together and inspiring to have gotten and finally read. I live in a Jim Crow–era commonwealth state, [Virginia], that doesn't like abolitionists and activists, and I am surprised to have been able to receive such a gift as *The Abolitionist* newspaper in a place where they often deny it.

Lots of work has been happening on the East Coast with criminal legal reforms taking shape. Some new laws passed last year along with an overhaul of [Virginia's] government where we have a democratic senate, house, and governor who are all champions of new legislation. We are making headway in shaping up and reforming our judicial system and "correctional" centers, and passing new laws based on second chances.



"Futuros Fugaces - Xochipilli Magic" by Fernando Marti. Justseeds Artists' Cooperative

Virginia is a state that abolished parole in 1995 and has an 85 percent sentence-to-serve in prison rate. No drug rehab centers and only two state mental health facilities. Prisons are the new institutions that house everyone together, always treating everyone equally: Harshly, inhumanely, and oppressively!

But, lo and behold, we are finally changing all of this. Years of hard work by us human rights activists and advocates, our friends, families, and communities that have powered countless hours and funds into bringing about meaningful change in a state that used to be last in nationwide legislation and new-era beliefs and freedoms. We are continuing to partner with one another and build coalitions together 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 immensely! I am cofounder and

Continued on next page

vice president of research and development of Realogistix, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that focuses heavily on pre- and post- reentry for returning people to their communities after spending time inside these gulag-style corruptional centers. We had to halt operations due to incarceration and the pandemic, but 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 reentering 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 so far, 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 all are 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 immensely. I wish you all peace and prosperity during these difficult pandemic times.

In Solidarity,

Devin M.

About the Author: *Devin is a prisoner currently at Lawrenceville Correctional Center in Virginia. Write to Devin:*

Devin T. Mergenthaler
#1201286 Seg 11-109
Lawrenceville Correctional Center
1607 Planters Road
Lawrenceville, VA 23868

WE NEED TO ABOLISH THE PRISON IN OUR OWN MINDS, TOO

By Robert Lilly

Why do people who have been in prison return to prison? I think there is no one way this critical question can be answered. There are as many possibilities as there are persons who have experienced imprisonment. What may be true for one individual may not apply to the next. Each person, if honest with themselves, is an expert on their own story. I believe every story can give us a part of a much larger, even if disturbing, picture.

After pondering this query, I have come to conclude that for my story, having lived experience with both reentry and "recidivism", that there are two kinds of factors that may even apply to others. These factors lead to re-imprisonment: 1) inward and 2) outward. Tragically for us, society places greater emphasis on the inward causes. It is almost like the external causes don't exist. Such an emphasis is unfair both to the individual caught in this vicious cycle and to the society grasping for solutions.

People are complex and their decisions are equally complicated. Choices do not grow out of a vacuum. The person *and* the context must be considered.

After my last release from prison, I suffered from a severe case of feelings of inadequacy. My lack of confidence stemmed from my limited life experiences; life was a mystery to me. I would be what is called "system raised" from 12 years old to 35. Essentially, I lack self-efficacy; I was deficient in life skills for survival beyond these walls.

The second factor was external. I had come "home" to a family incapable of rendering support. And the parole office was initially, to me, no real aid or comfort. I was left to fend for myself as best I knew how.

Mistakes are a part of learning and life, however, once you have been successfully labeled a "criminal", the bar of suspicion is significantly lowered. Add to that the scrutiny of the state monitors and every mistake is magnified and possibly fatal. Your mistakes are left little room for explanation or mitigation. Furthermore, when you have an "us" against "them" mentality, a holdover from prison, you become your own enemy.

Freedom, for me, has been a matter of trial and error. I have had to learn from my missteps and although it has been costly, the good news is I'm still alive. I am in prison now, but I will get out —and soon.

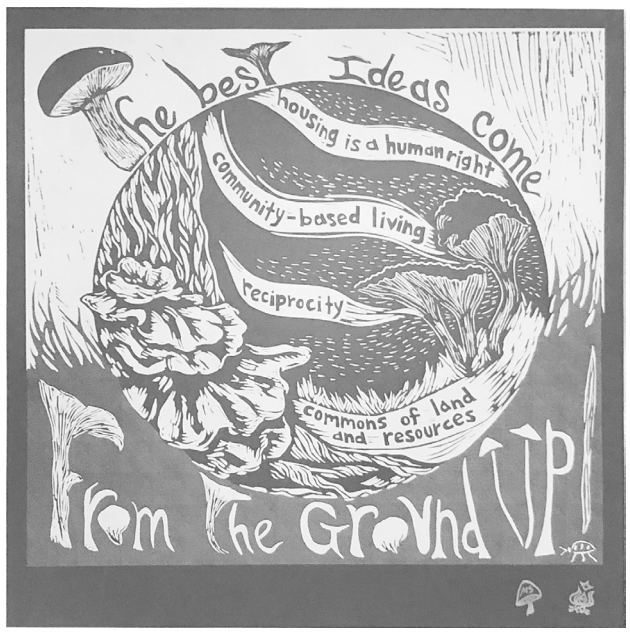
I have had to change the way I thought about myself. And what I knew about life had to be increased. I had to become teachable, less angry, too. This meant letting my guard down and trusting someone. One cannot be taught until they become humble. Prison does not facilitate or foster humility or trust. Prisons, in fact, are a place of pride and ruthless individuality. This is a deadly combination for a person who needs to be mentored.

Eventually, I did change, but only after severe loss and pain. I had to try all I knew to try and fail before I was prepared to admit I did not know how. Once I accepted my deficiencies, I was then ready to see the value of the man in recovery meetings, the relapse prevention counselor, the parole ministers who asked me to sit down long enough to be known, and the professor at the university who truly loved me and wanted to see me mature. The list is even longer.

In conclusion, these revelations and awakenings were the result of painful growth spurts. I wish I did not have to revisit the American cages, but I am alive and sober and using this time to reconfigure my ambitions for the future. I should not have had to come back to prison to get it right, but I am grateful I did not die in the process or take another's life. I believe freedom, the next time around, will be much more navigable. I am older, wiser, more calm and self-aware. I have faith and a sense of the direction I want my life to go. When next these doors open up, I will use my insights and learnings to help not hurt others.

Author Bio & Editors' Note: *Robert Lilly is imprisoned in Texas, and this is his first submission to* The Abolitionist. *In Robert's letter to Critical Resistance (CR), he said: "*I do so enjoy the paper. I can see the quality rising. The articles on neoliberalism (Issue 34, spring 2021), really captured my attention. I am from New York, born in 1970, Harlem and the Bronx. I saw soul-crushing blight that I can never shake. Neoliberalism seems a plausible explanation for the decay we were subjected to."

Robert also made a request for The Abolitionist *to publish a suggested reading list for prisoners on abolition. We're happy to see our work to generate useful content is aligned with our readers' needs, as columnist Stevie Wilson intuited the need for a reading list as this issue's 9971 column.*



"From the Ground Up" by Bec Young & Meredith Stern, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative

"THEY GAVE ME LIFE"

By J. Kayne

They gave me life, they thought they beat me
Though they never could have known
That the freedom that they thought they stole
Is a thing that they can't hold.
They gave me life & think I'm broken
But still, I rise & sing
With shoulders back & head held high
I swagger like a king!
They gave me life and yes they chain me
With cuffs and black box shackles…
Though all I hear is music played
Every time these chains do rattle.
Yeah. Life is what they gave me
And they say, "That man's insane!"
Cuz the freedom I have
Can't be bound by earthly chains
They gave me life and swore they locked me up
& threw away the key…
But no matter how many gates you lock,
In my heart I'll still be free.
They gave me life and in that courtroom
They said, "His knees will buckle!"
I showed them, with cheeky grin
Spoke firm I did then chuckled.
They gave me life, oh lord they caged me
Like some wild and feral dog
But in that cage, I did retain
My freedom all along.
Yes life is what they gave me,
And they thought it was the end
They gave me life and even though at times,
I'm burdened, aloned and stressed
My soul is free and I've decreed
That that, well, it means I'm blessed.
They gave me life within the confines
Of walls and iron gates
But they couldn't incarcerate my pride
Or chain the smile from off my face.
They gave me life and think oppression
Will shrivel up my roots…
They buried me, but I'm a seed
And what grew, was vital truth!
Oh yeah, life is what they gave me
Incarceration, my execution
But what they failed to see, my new life would be
The rebirth of the Revolution.♦

About the Author: *"J. Kayne", aka John M. Kosmetatos, #15B3674, is doing life without the possibility of parole in New York state. Presently in Sing Sing, CF. 345 Hunter St., Ossining, NY, 10562.*

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE: POLITICAL PRISONER UPDATES

In this issue's political prisoner updates, we highlight winter 2022 news regarding a few political prisoner cases. This column is in no way a complete list of all political prisoner cases. As a prison industrial complex abolitionist organization, Critical Resistance fights for the release and ***freedom of all prisoners,*** *whether recognized as political prisoners or not. We resist the use of imprisonment as a tool for political repression and control across our communities.* ***Free them all!***

Leonard Peltier – Indigenous elder Leonard Peltier tested positive for COVID-19 in February, 2022. Peltier is 77 years old and suffering from diabetes, hypertension, partial blindness from a stroke, and an aortic aneurysm. The American Indian Movement freedom fighter, locked up for two life sentences for the past 45 years, recently filed what some call a "last-ditch effort" for clemency after vigorous campaigns to all previous presidents have gone unmet.

Eric King – On March 19, 2022, a jury acquitted anti-racist and anti-fascist political prisoner Eric King on the count of "assaulting" an officer. King was accused during an incident that occurred in August 2018 at FCI Florence. He has been housed in a segregation cell at FCI Englewood since August 2019 while fighting this charge and is on "restricted general correspon-

Continued on next page

dence". He can only receive mail from his wife and mother for a six-month period minimally, and he cannot receive books and magazines. He faces a maximum of 20 additional years in prison and is fighting his case under very bleak circumstances.

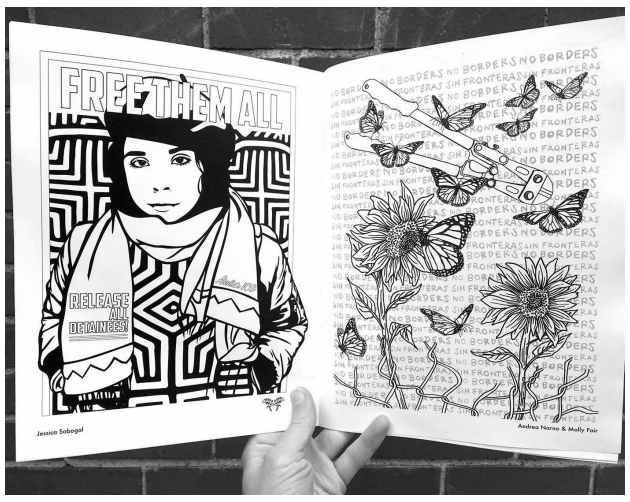
Doug Wright – Welcome home, Doug! On March 17, 2022, the last of the Cleveland Four was released into a halfway house after 3,606 days inside. Doug was arrested on April 30, 2012 after being entrapped by an FBI informant with a plot to allegedly damage a Cleveland, OH bridge.

Sundiata Acoli – Welcome home! Former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member, Sundiata Acoli is now free and reunited with his family after 49 years in prison. Now 85 years old and suffering from dementia, Acoli was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole at 25 years for allegedly killing an NJ police officer in 1974. He was denied parole six different times since eligible, even with decades of good time.

Mumia Abu Jamal - Abu Jamal, 40-year imprisoned radio journalist and veteran Black Panther, had his attorneys file a Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) petition focused entirely on the six boxes of case files that were found in a storage room of the Philadelphia DA's office in late December 2018. The new evidence suggests a pattern of misconduct and abuse of authority by the prosecution in Abu Jamal's case, including bribery of the state's two key witnesses, as well as racist exclusion in jury selection. Attorneys for Mumia are pushing for a new trial given the new evidence in hopes that he will be able to come home as his health continues to deteriorate.

Melvin Mayes aka El Rakun – Co-founder of the Blackstone Rangers, El Rakun is to be compassionately released this year. El Rakun has been imprisoned for three life sentences in a medical prison facility in North Carolina after being charged with racketeering conspiracy in 1989. El Rakun will return to his hometown of Chicago when released to be cared for by his family.

Jeff Fort aka Imam Malik - Long time Chicagoan and co-founder of the Blackstone Rangers, Imam Malik is scheduled for parole review in May. Imam Malik has been imprisoned since his capture in December 1983 on conspiracy and



A page from the *Toward Radical Futures Coloring Book* by Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

terrorism charges, and is serving a 168-year sentence in Colorado in Florence Supermax prison.

Send letters of support for Imam Malik's release to:

#92298-024
USP Florence ADMAX,
P.O. Box 8500
Florence, CO 81226

José Antonio Arreola Jiménez and **José Luis Jiménez Meza** – Two Indigenous rights defenders of Mexico's Nahuatzen Three are free! Jiménez and Meza, members of the Indigenous Citizen Council of Nahuatzen (CCIN), were detained since November 2018 after a politically-motivated attack on CCIN property. This attack was related the P'urhépecha Indigenous community exercising its right to self-determination, which is opposed by local and regional governments. This release is considered by many Indigenous groups in Mexico to be an important precedent-setting legal move.

Mutulu Shakur – Having been eligible for release since 2016, the now 71-year-old Black liberation fighter Mutulu Shakur continues to fight for his life and freedom while suffering from cancer that is spreading through his bone marrow. Incarcerated in federal prison for over three decades, Mutulu has been denied parole nine times despite an impeccable record while locked up. Join Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and other organizations campaigning for his release! Sign the petition to free Mutulu now: https://freethelandmxgm.org/free-mutulu-now/

Call for Submissions for the 2023 Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar!

The Certain Days collective will be releasing their 22nd calendar this coming autumn:

"In lieu of a 2023 theme, we are doing an open call for abolition-related art and article submissions to feature in the calendar, which hangs in more than 6,000 homes, workplaces, prison cells, and community spaces around the world. We encourage contributors to submit both new and existing work."

FORMAT GUIDELINES: ARTICLES

- 400-500 words max. If you submit a longer piece, we will have to edit for length.
- Poetry is also welcome but needs to be significantly shorter than 400 words to accommodate layout.
- Please include a suggested title.

FORMAT GUIDELINES: ART

- The calendar is 11" tall by 8.5" wide, so art with a 'portrait' orientation is preferred. Art need not fit those dimensions exactly.
- We are interested in a diversity of media.
- The calendar is printed in color and we prefer color images. Due to space limitations, submissions may be lightly edited for clarity and concision, with no change to the original intent.

Prisoner submissions are due July 1, 2022 and can be mailed to:

Certain Days c/o Burning Books
420 Connecticut Street
Buffalo, New York 14213♦

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 NY/NJ 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 visitation 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, effort 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 from 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, but visionary 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.

Photo of Jess Heaney.

CR is beyond grateful for Jess and her multi-year leadership and care for our organization.

Continued on next page

Photo by Brooke Anderson.

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 liberating, showing people's collective power to resist, dream and create freedom -- for example: no bars unless they are being broken, no chains 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. 22780, 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 vocation, 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 Pigeonly Correctional. Beyond Prisons delivered the petition to Governor Jay Carney, Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, Rep. Nnamdi Chukwuocha, and Senator Marie Pinkney. 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. Wade, Detroit artist-activists wheat-pasted informational signs reading "Abortion Pills Forever" that included a website, shareabortionpill.info, where people can order abortion pills by mail.

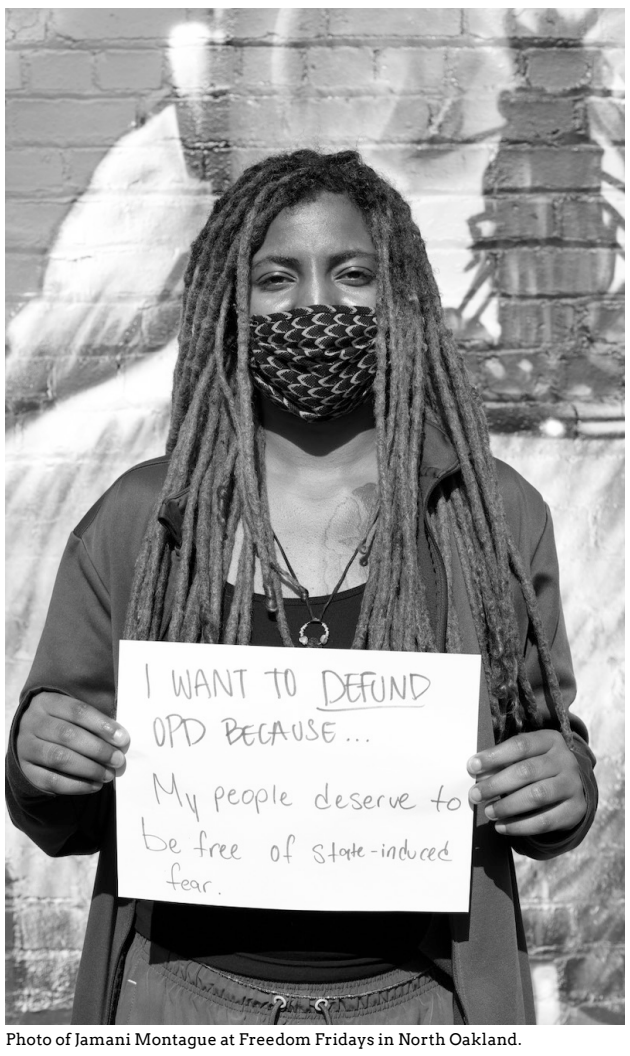


Photo of Jamani Montague at Freedom Fridays in North Oakland.

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 efforts, resisting militarism and authoritarianism within Ukraine, and calling for international support and solidarity for self-determination and liberation.

In Denmark, Greenpeace activists blocked a **Russian oil tanker** from transferring its 100,000 ton cargo to another tanker. The activists put their bodies and kayak in between the two ships and painted "Oil fuels war" in English and "No to War" in Russian on the ships. In a statement from Greenpeace, an activist pointed out that even with sanctions, oil is still being traded, stating, "It is clear that fossil fuels and the money flowing into them is at the root cause of the climate crisis, conflicts, and war, causing immense suffering to people all over the world."

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 100 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 for solidarity (or lack thereof) concerning wars waged by the US and Europe in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Americas. ♦

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, research, a poem, a story, a play, a comic, 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.**
- **Submission Deadline for Issue 39 on Reproductive Justice: Friday, February 10, 2023.**

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 9971 column**, or submit questions on study that you want Stevie to address in future columns

Some approaches to writing Kites to the Editors:

- Elaborate on something that you 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
Attn: The Abolitionist
P.O. Box. 22780
Oakland, CA 94609-2391

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and artwork in English or Spanish.

IDEAS FOR ARTICLES AND ARTWORK

- Examples of prisoner organizing
- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to help keep yourself and others physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually healthy while imprisoned
- Updates on what's happening at the prison you're in (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, 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 vision
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue
- Reflections on how you've used the paper (in your conversations, work, study groups)
- Empowering, liberatory art of resistance and community power (and that will print well)

LENGTH

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

HOW TO SUBMIT

- **If you want your name and address printed with your article, please include it as you would like it printed.** If you do not wish to have your name 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.

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

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