

THE ABOLITIONIST

FALL '24-WINTER '25

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

ISSUE 42: Anti-War Organizing
Dedicated to Masai Ehehosi

FEATURES ANALYSIS

Cohering a 21st-Century Anti-War Movement: A Conversation with War Resisters League & Dissenters By Critical Resistance

By Susan Kingsland, Daz Park, and Khury Petersen-Smith with Dylan Brown

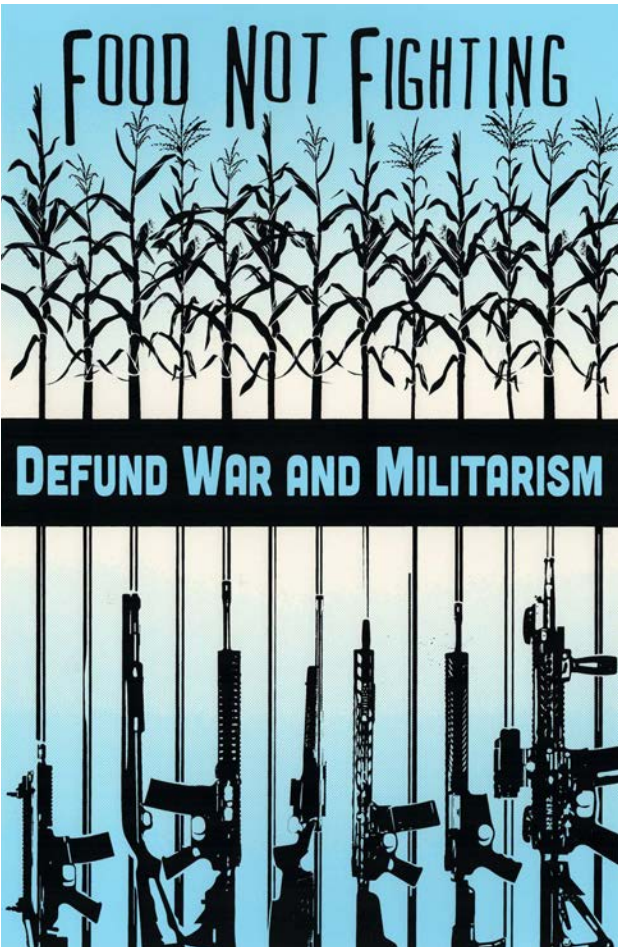
What would it take to “stop the war” when, in late-stage capitalism, war is constant? The Abolitionist Editorial Collective’s Dylan Brown interviewed Susan Kingsland and Daz Park from War Resisters League (WRL) and Khury Petersen-Smith from Dissenters for Issue 42’s feature analysis article to explore this question and more.

Founded in 1923, WRL is the oldest secular pacifist organization in the US. Dissenters is a youth anti-war organization conceived in 2017 to make the connection between militarism in Black and Brown communities in the US and war abroad. By bringing together members from old and new anti-war organizations, this conversation touches on the century-long history of the US anti-war movement, the role youth have played historically, the contemporary challenges and threats today, and what it might take to build a victorious anti-war movement that is powerful enough to end this state of permanent war in the 21st century.

What roles has your organization played in the anti-war movement over time, and what movement conditions have informed your organization’s work and approaches?

Susan: WRL’s history spans over 100 years, and so WRL’s role in the movement has shifted as the movement has shifted. We try to leverage our history by providing the resources, archival materials, trainings and tools to examine non-violent direct action over decades of organizing. We try to be a hub for organizers, while working with direct action campaigns, and as part of different solidarity efforts. The siloing of work overtime is how social justice work gets piecemealed out, professionalized, and how we diminish our collective power on the left.

Daz: When reflecting on the current terrain of anti-war organizing today, I think a lot about narrative power and promoting historically accurate narratives to counter the mis- and dis-information of *not factual* narratives that the war machine uses through all sorts of war propaganda. Organizations’ abilities like WRL’s to have consistent presence and longevity have been ex-



By Ivan Irenas, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

tremely valuable, because it adds to the credibility and legitimacy the organization can provide to counternarratives and counterpropaganda.

Khury: Shaped by the Movement for Black Lives, with founding organizers developed as activists in young Black- and youth-of-color-led movements resisting policing and prisons since 2013-2014, Dissenters is a project that calls attention to US violence abroad and the connections to violence domestically. While Dissenters emerged in the US context of a conversation about militarization nationally that was mostly about the militarization of domestic US police forces—particularly how police forces use assault rifles and armored personnel carriers as weapons of war that don’t belong at “home” in US communities—Dissenters offered an extremely important addition that completes the conversation—that says, “These weapons don’t

belong anywhere, actually.” If you’re disturbed by armored personnel carriers and assault rifles in Ferguson, Missouri, or Chicago or Brooklyn, we should also oppose those things in Iraq and Palestine. The problem is not the fact that military weapons are used by US police departments but that these military weapons exist at all.

Shortly after Dissenters got rolling, Russia invaded Ukraine, which made for an interesting perspective on militarism in the US, its relationship to global repression, and US support for other military occupations or aggressions. Once more (as Ferguson had shown us), this moment echoed that we cannot resist war and militarism without considering police militarization and racism, and we won’t be able to do this work without a rigorous and critical analysis of Cold War politics and anti-imperialism. More recently, the Israeli genocidal offensive in Gaza since October 2023 has made for more conversation about US militarism and military aid since the US is backing the colonizing force. The context of the Movement for Black Lives and having anti-racism at the center of Dissenters’ critiques of US violence ground how we navigate this terrain today.

“If you’re disturbed by armored personnel carriers and assault rifles in Ferguson, Missouri, or Chicago or Brooklyn, we should also oppose those things in Iraq and Palestine. The problem is not the fact that military weapons are used by US police departments but that these military weapons exist at all.”

What key historical flashpoints of resistance to warmaking do you think have been pivotal to the terrain of anti-war organizing in the US today?

Khury: In the 1970s-1980s, the US supported coups, civil wars, and genocidal campaigns by far-right forces and dictatorships in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and across the Global South including Africa and Southeast Asia, affecting a whole generation of activists around the world. Amidst this era of renewed US imperialist intervention

Continues on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Features

Cohering a 21st-Century Anti-War Movement...	1
Letter from the Editors	2
Dedicating Issue 42 to Masai Ehehosi	4
Deadly Exchanges & Police Militarization.....	6
Resistance in Puerto Rico	8
Resistance in Hawai’i.....	11
Media Against Apartheid.....	13
Feature Kite to the Student Movement for Palestine	14
The War on Drugs & Border Militarism	15
Costs of the War at “Home” Factsheet.....	18

Managing Post-Traumatic Stress	19
--------------------------------------	----

Columns

9971 with Stephen Wilson	20
Inside-Outside Fishing Line.....	21
Kites to the Editors:	22
Political Prisoner Updates.....	24
CR Bulletin	25
Call for Content & Submission Guidelines.....	26

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Letter from the Editors

Dearest Readers,

2024 has turned out to be a trying year of more grief for our communities and movements globally. As we bring this issue into the translation and design phases of our editorial process (in October-November)—after a year of Israel’s all-out bombardment on Gaza, courtesy of US taxes and military aid—**apartheid Israel has now expanded its Zionist crusade into southern Lebanon**, targeting and decimating hospitals and historic places of worship and deploying white phosphorous bombs. Meanwhile, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump duked it out in another US presidential race between two warmongering parties. Critical Resistance (CR) anticipated how regardless of the results, the military industrial complex (MIC) and the prison industrial complex (PIC) will continue to expand in the coming years. Since winning, Trump has already pledged his first orders once he takes office in January 2025, slashing checks to his power, gutting the existing meager social welfare net, deploying military forces against communities in the US, and mass deportations. We at CR see a harrowing horizon before us, thus figure insights into anti-war victories and strategies are as timely a need and offering for PIC abolitionists to study now as ever.

In the US, we’ve seen the biggest anti-war protests in the past year since the US war on Iraq, though you wouldn’t know this from watching mainstream media. **The mass student protests and encampments for Gaza and Palestinian liberation have formed the largest student protest movement of the 21st century so far**, according to Vox, even though this past year’s protests have not yet reached the scale of the student movements against the US’s war on Vietnam in the late 1960s or of movements against South African apartheid in the 1980s. For 14 months and counting, communities and organizations around the world have hit the streets and mobilized direct actions, mass gatherings, and civil disobedience to demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire and now a full arms embargo of apartheid-Israel’s ongoing genocidal campaign to wipe Palestinians out of Gaza. **Calls to unite against the global war machine** and for **solidarity with the peoples of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** specifically have also (re)emerged in anti-war conversations. have also (re)emerged in anti-war conversations.

Across the continent of Africa and into the Middle East, the US has had an active hand in thwarting independence movements and revolutionary advances since the late 1800s; the US has backed military coups and dictatorships and incited war through political and economic instability to secure western imperialism’s control of regional resources and raw materials,as mentioned in **this issue’s feature analysis article**—a cutting discussion between **Susan Kingsland, Daz Park, and Khury Petersen-Smith** with movement partners **War Resisters League and Dissenters** on how to cohere an anti-war movement in the 21st century. Amidst a resurging anti-war resistance in the US, with “Free Palestine” at the helm, we’re currently seeing a riptide of legacies from US and European imperialism in Sudan and the DRC, resulting in escalated violence from military occupation and **some of the world’s most severe refugee, food, health, and land crises yet as tens of millions of people combined are forced from their homes and on the brink of starvation**.

While **Palestine holds massive potential oil and gas reserves** (a major incentive for apartheid-Israel’s military occupation to maintain itself as a “laboratory” for the world stage on settler colonialism, repressive strategies, social control, punishment, torture, and ethnic cleansing)—**Sudan, too, is rich in arable land, ample agricultural opportunities, a young labor force, and several natural resources**—including natural gas, gold, zinc, iron, aluminum, granite, and cobalt (used, for example, in rechargeable batteries for iPhones and in “green” technologies for electric cars). **The DRC has an estimated \$24 trillion in value of untapped mineral deposits** (including cobalt) and is also home to more than 70 percent of the world’s coltan, which is processed into tantalum, a metal used in electronic devices such as mobile phones,laptops,and military equipment. The violence that has erupted in both Sudan and the DRC in the past year is a **byproduct of the “green colonialism” akin to Israel’s greenwashing** (as explored previously in Issue 41), as both lands are ravaged through extractive, inhumane and exploitative labor practices for the sake of “green” and “environmentally friendly” products for First-World consumers.

CR understands that the struggle for ecological justice to save the planet from hastening climate collapse, as explored in our previous issue, is an intersecting struggle not only to abolish PIC but also the MIC—hence why we selected these two feature topics for 2024’s issues. **The US military, for starters, has the largest military in the world with the largest military presence internationally, currently standing at more than 750 military bases in over 80 countries and is the world’s largest consumer of oil and producer of greenhouse gases**. Weapons testing sites, training areas, bases, bombings, and combat not only annihilate lives by killing people, animals and plant life but also destroy the land,air,and water—the life force of the planet for generations and ecosystems to come. We no longer see only one war to stop: rather, **late-stage capitalism, with US imperialism in the driver’s seat, is waging a constant war—through low-to-high-grade warfare—on our communities worldwide** and on our right to live and live well every day.

Issue 42 on anti-war organizing is **dedicated to Masai Ehehosi**, a longtime Black freedom fighter, a co-founder of CR, and the organization’s longest-standing member to date, who unexpectedly passed away in April this year. A veteran drafted and coerced to fight in the US’s war on Vietnam during the GI and Black Power movements, Masai had over 50 years of struggle in liberation movements under his belt. For this issue’s **feature reflection, we shed light on how Masai’s contributions to PIC abolition fall within a broader commitment to anti-war resistance**. Moving within this tradition, we chose to work with contributing authors and organizations who wage campaigns and struggles that resist the PIC and MIC by challenging militarism, militarization, and US imperialism, to consider how abolitionist strategies can abolish the PIC *and* the MIC.

Many of the feature articles, then, detail past and current campaigns against initiatives like **deadly exchange policing programs from California to Georgia as shared by “A” with the Demilitarize Atlanta 2 Palestine coalition** and **CR’s campaign director Mohamed Shehk**, as well as the layered impacts of US military occupation in Hawai’i with the **international campaign to cancel RIMPAC** (Rim of the Pacific Exercise) and youth organizers **resisting military recruitment of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth** in the islands, as explained by **Misty Pegram and Tia Marie**. Seeking wins against military weapons testing and trainings sites, we then turn from the Pacific to the Atlantic and Caribbean, uplifting the four-decades-long **people’s struggle to expel the US Navy from Vieques**, Puerto Rico in a historic interview with intergenerational members of **Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses**.

Feature action articles continue with **Lara Witt and Maya Schenwar of Media Against Apartheid and Displacement**, who consider how journalism has been used to resist war and genocide—as we see now in the radical and brave work of countless **journalists and media organizers worldwide who cover Israel’s genocidal assault of Gaza despite Israel’s continued targeted assassinations and censorship of journalists**. We also offer a look into war-making as an essential feature of neoliberalism and capitalism in a combined piece from author **Dawn Marie Paley** and **imprisoned contributor Ricardo Vela Jr** as their research and parallel personal reflection **explore the war on drugs, border militarism, and possibilities for the anti-war movement** in its current resurgence, from opposite sides of the US-Mexico border.

Because this issue is heavy, and times are tough, we also include **two feature resources: a mental health and trauma therapy tool** to regulate your nervous systems and any post-traumatic stress that may be triggered while reading this issue, and **a fact-sheet on the costs of the US’s post-9/11 wars, homelessness, and veterans**, which highlights connections between the “war at home and the war abroad.” Please keep in mind when reading any of the feature articles, that the editorial collective works with several authors to generate content and completes *content editing from August through the beginning of October*, so some data, statistics, or figures may change slightly once subscribers receive the paper.

Lastly, most of our columns return this issue, including **Kites** to the Editors, **“Until All are Free”** on political prisoner news, **the Inside-Outside Fishing Line**—this time a cross-wall conversation on the impacts of imprisonment on families—and **part two of Stevie Wilson’s conversations** with young men in prison on guns and safety for **9971**. (Also note that we’ve changed the CR Updates and Movement High-

lights column to a shorter **CR Bulletin** with quick announcements again, to save more space in this issue for feature articles. This issue’s “Abby Throwback” is included in Masai’s feature reflection tribute.)

2025 brings 20 years of CR publishing *The Abolitionist*—that’s right! Two decades of radical, cross-wall, abolitionist political education and publishing. We’ll be **celebrating with a cross-wall strategy and power building summit Fall 2025**. Check out the CR Bulletin and share your input and your interest in the planning by responding to our questionnaire on page 25 (Send it back to CR’s *The Abolitionist* Project Coordinator, Molly Porzig, by February 2025 or so). We’d love to collaborate with you. Also **check out the Call for Content on page 26 to submit writing or art** for Issues 43 and 44.

Onward for a life worth living,

-Critical Resistance & *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective

THE ABOLITIONIST

FALL '24-WINTER '25 • ISSUE 42

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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SHUT DOWN THE WAR MACHINE



By Aaron Hughes, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative,
Iraq Veterans Against the War Portfolio.

abroad, the US state turned towards neoliberal austerity policies throughout Central and South America—divesting from public schools, housing, hospitals, schools, and social services and gutting the social welfare net.

Going back even further, there were—and still are—many contradictions within the project of US militarism. For instance, Black soldiers who served in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War—who were told that they were “defending democracy” in Europe and Asia—came back to a legally segregated Jim Crow US. This contradiction is part of the story of the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Black people drafted into the Vietnam War saw similarities between the oppression of capitalism and empire against the Vietnamese and the experience of the Black community in the US, and the GI resistance movement grew alongside the Black Power movement. The experience of Black veterans living within this contradiction is critical for understanding the civil rights movement. The Black freedom struggle of course was a struggle that extended across generations in the US but was deeply connected to events happening all over the world, including US militarism and wars.

Dylan: Thank you for that Khury. What you mention about US-backed coups in Central America in the 1980s recalls for me the specific role of training centers like the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning (renamed Fort Moore) in Georgia, which trained military leaders and dictators such as Manuel Noriega in counterinsurgency warfare strategies and tactics. Training centers like SOA showcase how the US, as an imperial power, continuously refines and exports its ability to enact militarized state violence. **Daz, anything you would like to add in response for WRL?**

Daz: With the legacy of Vietnam, specifically, the role of US imperialist propaganda and disinformation is again important. By controlling the narrative, image, and coverage of the war, it became easier for the US government to delegitimize anti-war direct actions and other organizing efforts. Another pivotal thing to understand is the squashing of the New Left in the 1970s and the rise of the New Right through a coalition of what seemed like unlikely bedfellows. I don’t think the anti-war movement ever congealed or grew in the same way that the new right did at that same time. That same strength of coalescence hasn’t materialized for the anti-war and civil rights movements.

Dylan: Yes, and the prison industrial complex (PIC) has much to do with that—as the boot on our movements’ necks. It’s no coincidence that Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X were both assassinated after becoming more adamant about the need for the civil rights movement and Black Power to resist the US war on Vietnam.

What role have youth—broadly defined—played historically in the anti-war movement in the US? How are Black and Brown poor and working-class young people targeted for military recruitment and how does this relate to the PIC?

Khury: Youth have been essential to every iteration of the anti-war movement. Young people generally are more willing to reject or are more open to critique the normalized violence we learn in the US. We learn to accept the notion that prisons are “normal” and that policing is an unchangeable aspect of daily life, and this same process of normalizing state violence is present with viewing the US’s roles, relationships, and interests abroad.

We need to combat this kind of US chauvinism that says there’s certain violence that we don’t deserve as people who live here, with the corollary being that other people deserve that violence because they live elsewhere. What we saw with the rise of student encampments at more than 120 US college campuses in the spring of 2024—which was subsequently dubbed the student intifada (Arabic for uprising)—shows the enduring importance of young people as leaders in the anti-war movement, from the student organizers of the Students for Democratic Society in the 1960s to the current era of young people protesting genocide in Gaza. Moreover, it matters that this generation of young people who were in high school and middle school during the coalescence of the Movement for Black Lives in the mid-2010s. Their early childhoods were shaped by mass protest against white supremacy and policing, so it doesn’t surprise me that this same generation is identifying with the mistreatment of the Palestinian people and is joining the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

A few years ago, there was a conversation among members of Congress and there was an explicit discussion about the need to limit social services and job opportunities for young people because if there were too many opportunities, that would undermine military recruitment. When thinking about the language and media apparatus that the PIC uses to demonize young people, particularly young Black and Brown people, there is this narrative that you need to get off the streets or you’re going to end up in prison, so joining the military becomes seen as a “way out”. As poor and working-class young people are pushed out of the formal economy and excluded from opportunities, the underground economy is criminalized, and folks become trapped in a net of criminalization.

However, the military has been struggling for years to meet its recruitment goals. It’s important to examine what’s driving that—it’s not like the formal economy is great or better for young people and people of color. I think that despite all the efforts to render the war on terror invisible to people in the US, there is an awareness that’s seeping in. Hundreds of thousands of people in this country have cycled through combat over these past two decades and that’s feeding back into domestic society. **There are young people that are saying “no thanks” to military recruitment,** and it’s the job of anti-war activists and organizers to push to politicize these folks further and bring as many people into our movement as possible.

How do you understand the relationship of the military industrial complex (MIC) and the PIC?

Khury: The connections between the PIC and US militarism are numerous. The war on terror represented not only a moment for US militarism around the world but was also a key historical development and opportunity for the PIC. The way that US officials described the need for a prison camp like Guantanamo Bay was, “We need a place for the worst of the worst.” That is precisely the language that they used to sell the public control unit prisons, as readers will know from Issue 40 of *The Abolitionist*. US violence functions through a practice of dehumanization that is incubated against Black and Brown people in this country, deployed against others (in particular Muslim and Arab folks and folks racialized as Muslim around the world), and then

fed back into the logics that govern policing, imprisonment, and surveillance here.

There are **direct systems that connect US violence abroad with imprisonment and policing domestically:** various programs the US transfers “surplus” or “excess” weapons from the military to police departments, such as the 1033 Program, and other financial incentives that go to US military veterans to join US police departments. The connections between the PIC and the MIC are not just shared logics but actually shared personnel. Military combat experience is considered an asset when it comes to US policing.

Historically, among anti-war (often referred to as “peace”) organizations in the US, non-violence has been a central principle and approach. In the face of rising global fascism and ongoing state-sanctioned imperialist violence, what is your organization’s stance on the relationship between nonviolence, self-defense, and armed struggle for collective self-determination of oppressed people?

Susan: We have a strong, dominant narrative of and investment toward war currently in the US. One main challenge throughout US history has been to have a unified anti-war voice and movement that works in concert domestically, partners internationally, and with regional loci and decentralized planning to hit maximum reach into various other movements and those disenfranchised from organizing. Sometimes we are strategic and can form broad coalitions to achieve a shared goal. For some in the anti-war movement, even if we don’t land on the same page around the role and analysis of non-violence, that doesn’t mean WRL never works with or coordinate with folks along a spectrum of resistance tactics.

WRL has always believed in the right to resist occupation and apartheid, to struggle for self-determination and liberation, and dismantle structures and systems of violence. I would say within the rank-and-file membership of WRL there are differences of opinion of what this looks like in practice. The right to fight for liberation is an international one and exists on a continuum of what WRL has historically engaged in—from civil rights struggles to resisting war and mass atrocities in Central America, to ending the siege and genocide in Gaza and now spreading into Lebanon.

The ethnic cleansing occurring in Palestine calls people to think about armed struggle, and how the specific historical context of the Israeli occupation and US imperialism informs the terrain for resistance and for Palestinian self-determination. But this question is not a new nor current quandary for our politic. WRL recently hosted a webinar, “Thwarting Israel’s Genocidal Plan: A Call to Action and Report back from the occupied West Bank,” where we addressed head-on settler colonial violence in the context of the siege on Gaza, its impacts on folks living there, and the various ways people are resisting. Beyond merely educating, we want to help people plug in, build long-term involvement, create ways for folks to connect, get involved and stay involved in action and solidarity.

Daz: I’ve come to learn through study that **we must analyze the conditions under which violence occurs and wrestle with what actually constitutes violence.** At WRL, we don’t usually consider property damage a form of violence, whereas some other pacifist anti-war groups do.

Khury: Dissenters also organizes through non-violence. One of the things we must do given the varied, broad base of people who have been activated around Palestine is to figure out how to sustain that breadth. What’s challenging is that the longer this protest wave goes on, the more repression we experience—people across the country are getting charged with felonies for nonviolently protesting a genocide. The purpose of that kind of repression is to make protest riskier and therefore to discourage people from participating in it. We need to be very aware of the kind of risks that we’re asking people to take, and, therefore, nonviolence requires us to

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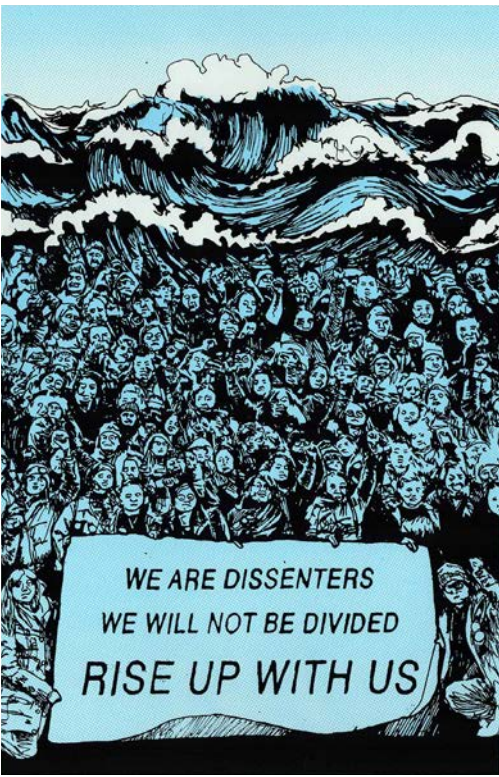
move as strategically as possible. It’s also about making the movement as safe as possible for as many kinds of people as possible. While everyone is taking some risk in attending a protest in this climate, even a permitted one, each person is at a different level of risk based on their background and position within society or how they interact with or are targeted by the PIC already.

The US and its allies are really ushering in a far more violent world. If we’re looking at the diplomatic negotiations for a ceasefire to end the fighting in Gaza, these negotiations have been thoroughly, systematically undermined by the US and its unconditional support for Israel, who literally assassinated the Palestinian negotiator. When you undermine diplomatic conversation and other nonviolent pursuits, you’re foreclosing nonviolent approaches and allowing Israel to sustain this genocide as long as possible under the pretense that Israel is defending itself against antisemitic terrorism, when in reality Israel is the aggressor and the oppressing force. The Israeli government has been quite explicit about this, and it’s been enormously popular in the Israeli public and the US.

How can the left build an anti-war movement in the “belly of the beast” that is powerful enough to stop war and militarism and end imperialism? What threats and contradictions do the anti-war movement face? Can PIC abolition be a useful, practical organizing strategy for ending the state of endless war or reconciling these contradictions at all?

Daz: One of the greatest challenges I see is the power and effectiveness of US counterintelligence on its own citizens—a project the US government has had decades of practice to hone. Long before COINTELPRO, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), for instance, was formed in large part for the purpose of surveilling and destroying leftist movements. Its predecessor, the Bureau of Investigation, carried out the first Red Scare in the 1920s, and it was a young J Edgar Hoover who headed that department. To overcome this challenge, **we need to prioritize coalition building** and think critically about how and where our goals align and develop a coherent, coordinated strategy to win our various campaigns and fights. Similarly, we need to build our movements intergenerationally to ensure longevity.

Khury: I think we also need to continue to **address the connections between the MIC and the PIC in our organizing more.** In recent years, much more attention and rightful scrutiny has come upon US police forces training with the Israeli Occupation Forces. It’s not an exaggeration to say that **every single major police department in the country trains with**



By Aaron Hughes, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

Israel—every single major city in this country. In Boston, where I live, even the transit police train with Israeli forces. But the connections between the MIC and PIC are much deeper than this, too. The linkages are countless, so what we need to do as organizers is pick the one that we want to target and work to **dismantle both ends** of those linkages.

Susan: We’ve seen a resurgence of the anti-war resistance in the streets over the last year. Overall, this work is organized and autonomous but decentralized. It’s important that our movement doesn’t end in the streets; **we must develop organizing principles and tools and ultimately institutions that have the wherewithal needed to create lasting change.** We need groups that engage in different tactics while still holding that we are fighting against similar root causes. *Do we have different analyses and strategies at times?* Yes, and that is healthy. At times, there has been too much sectarianism that divides the left.

There are important differences we shouldn’t flatten, but we also need to ask: *Why is the US left at where it’s at? Why are we not more clearly part of a global left? Are we shutting ourselves off, are other places more connected?* Our movement really needs to be international, because right-wing forces are all out for us around the world. We need to be building—having caucuses, bringing national movements together, and get all hands-on-deck so we aren’t squashed. *What would a coordinated global strike against war look like?—one against military spending, highlighting the militarization*

of our society and its unchecked growth into all areas of our lives, challenging the manifestation of racialized capitalism that pushes these forces to the forefront? What can we do with recent union membership growth? How have movements supporting political prisoners and abolition informed antiwar organizing and addressed similar strategic questions? And how can we contribute together to a newly formed approach utilizing these lessons?

With strong reactionary forces, neoliberal austerity, increased bigotry and racial violence growing in the US, these aren’t just questions to mull over, they are our call to action to act, to be fierce. **As people are increasingly unable to meet their basic needs, how are we building power to demand enough is enough?** These are some of the questions I’ve been asking and thinking creatively about how we address these challenges. ♦

About the Speakers:

Susan Kingsland is a social worker, advocate, activist, and current member of WRL’s National Committee and International Taskforce. Susan has worked for years with various Central American solidarity movements, participating in international delegations and border convergences. After the US invasion of Iraq, Susan joined an artist/activist collaborative, co-producing the “We Will Not Be Silent” t-shirts, based on the White Rose, a nonviolent student resistance movement in Nazi Germany. Susan recently supported WRL’s webinar, “Thwarting Israel’s Genocidal Plan: A Call to Action and Report-Back from the Occupied West Bank.”

Daz Park (they/he) is the current Secretary of the Board of Directors for the Voluntown Peace Trust (formerly the Community for Nonviolent Action) and a founding member of the Connecticut Committee for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (both affiliate groups of WRL New England). Daz wrote a weekly blog on the anti-war movement from 2019 to 2023 (voluntownpeacetrust.org/a-peace-of-history-blog) and served on an WRL Editorial Committee from 2020-2021. They started anti-war organizing in high school through Youth Peace, a WRL-affiliated program. During the day, Daz works as a social studies teacher.

Khury Peterson-Smith is the Michael Ratner Middle East Fellow and the Co-Director of the New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank. He researches US empire, borders, and migration, and strategizes with activists to work against the violence that the US carries out and supports around the world, while currently on Dissenters’ Advisory Board. Khury focuses especially on US militarism in the Middle East and in the Pacific and movements that resist it. He graduated from the Clark University Graduate School of Geography in Massachusetts, after completing a dissertation on US military bases in the Pacific. He is one of the co-authors and organizers of the 2023 Black Voices for Ceasefire statement, which was signed by over 6,000 Black activists, artists, and scholars.

FEATURES REFLECTION

Free the Land, Free the People: Long Live Masai Ehehosi

Reflections by Molly Porzig, Kerness, and Stevie Wilson with Excerpts from Masai Ehehosi

The loss of Masai Ehehosi, a longtime, co-founding member of Critical Resistance (CR), has weighed heavy on our organization since his passing in April 2024. Along with the numerous other organizations he was an essential part of, including **the Jericho Movement and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)**, Masai taught CR much while with us. He challenged abolitionists and anti-prison activists to understand **how militarism and the prison industrial complex (PIC) wage war on our communities**, and particularly how US empire uses the PIC to wage war on Black people, freedom fighters, and especially the New Afrikan independence movement.

While **we printed Masai’s movement obituary in Issue 41 of The Abolitionist this summer**, detailing some of his work over the 50 years he dedicated to the movement, the Edito-

rial Collective also wanted to **dedicate this issue on anti-war organizing to our dear Masai** and offer more personal reflections on his impact. To say Masai’s passing has been a major loss is an understatement. Having personally known Masai for 16 years, I often can’t find the words. To me, Masai was everything for CR and our mission.

When I first joined CR as a brand-new 20-year-old in 2006, it was love at first sight. It wasn’t just the vision and the politic, but its people—the cofounders and conference organizers who were such brilliant political minds and movement giants. Before meeting Masai, I had heard of him for about two years. I finally met him in 2008 when he came to Oakland for CR’s 10th anniversary conference. My mentor Rachel Herzog suggested I connect with him and fellow cofounder kai lumumba barrow to support street outreach in the weeks leading up to the conference. I took kai and Masai out to as many different neighborhoods across Oakland as I could, door-knocking, passing out flyers, and talking to

everyone we saw about the PIC, the struggle for abolition, and CR. Masai and kai had been close comrades for decades, so to see these two giants love, laugh, heckle each other in the streets while talking to the people about abolition was like a sacred gift I recognized even in my doe-eyed entry into the organization. They were both steeped in movement history, but still asked me all the questions about Oakland—the birthplace of the Black Panther Party—which felt like an offering, inviting me to share and be curious and to question with them.

Ever since that summer, any time he was in town for CR retreats, Masai chose to stay at my house in West Oakland. I gave him my bed while I slept on the couch, and he would come out to the living room and sit with me and share pamphlets he had been carrying around probably for decades and teach me about **the Republic of New Afrika** and the New Afrikan independence movement. Mind you, this was after a full day of politicking and strategizing with our comrades. Into the wee hours of the morning, Masai would keep going. Masai was relentless, and so gentle and generous. He taught me to understand my own experiences within a continuum of radical politics and revolutionary struggle, and that ev-

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everyone can and must fight for Black liberation, even young white folks like me. And he did all this with such kindness.

Over the years, Masai became one of my many go-to comrades, someone to call when I felt stuck or needed to connect more with our struggle’s history. When I think of Masai, I can still hear his voice and how he always said, “MOLLY” when he answered the phone with his subtle twang. I could feel his love and smile every time we talked, even though our conversations were often about heavy, real shit like how to challenge gang criminalization or torture, or how to amplify prisoners’ demands during hunger strikes against solitary confinement. **Masai never told us what to do. He listened. He made connections and asked questions. He reminded us of the discipline needed** for this fight. But I could speak candidly with him with no fear of judgment or shame—ask honest questions or throw out ideas just to test them out with him. He would help me ground my thoughts in the politic more or offer another piece to complicate my reasoning.

Maybe it was my age when I joined CR, but CR was like a family to me—a chosen family when my biological one couldn’t understand or see me or the collective vision I fight for, a place where I’ve really grown up as an adult and an organizer over the years. And Masai was like my favorite uncle—the one who helped you see the fuller family photo. Whenever you needed him, Masai would talk, listen and walk with you.

And you didn’t need much personal time with Masai to experience his decades-long impact or unyielding, loving spirit and kinship. **Masai showed us all that even in the face of insurmountable odds, we can and must still struggle for collective liberation, together.** That one day we will be free and that’s why we must still fight. And as a Black nationalist and a Muslim, Masai spoke to an articulation of PIC abolition that situates it squarely within a continuum of resistance to war, warmaking, and imperialism for the collective liberation of our peoples worldwide.

As abolitionists, when we understand our politic within a constellation of struggle in defense of life and against war, **we must also create space in our movement to grieve.** Trauma, grief and loss have all undoubtedly shaped the evolution of *The Abolitionist* newspaper as a political project, as Masai—a repeat contributor and ongoing guide from Issue 2 to 40—is not the only dear one we have lost. In my experience in CR and in this world, I’ve learned that an essential part of liberation is the ability and practice to grieve collectively. *How can struggling together, working on projects like this newspaper be a tool for collective grief and liberation? To pass on and get free?*

It’s in this vein that we **share some more words in Issue 42 from Masai himself, his beloved comrade Bonnie Kerness, and from Stevie Wilson.** Together these voices weave together remnants of Masai’s contributions and offerings that make clear the call to abolish the PIC is a cross-wall strategy for Black liberation, and thus requires PIC abolitionists to resist the warmaking machine at all costs.

As Masai would say in nearly every salutation, referencing his commitment to the New African Independence Movement: *free the land.*

-Molly Porzig, Project Coordinator of *The Abolitionist*

MISSING MASAI

By Bonnie Kerness

I had the privilege to work with Masai for a decade while he was employed by the **AFSC Prison Watch**, AFSC is an abolitionist organization and Masai and I were strategists. Our work fell largely into a couple of categories – **maintaining full and constant contact with US political prisoners was central.**

Those of our US political prisoners (PPs) and Prisoners of War (POWs) who weren’t mur-

dered were often held in solitary confinement for extended periods of time. Our office paid for regular telephone calls, responded to mail, family members, and the practical needs of those with whom we were in touch.

In 1998, we decided to develop “**The Survivor’s Manual – by and for people living in isolation**”. We knew that the use of extended solitary was being used for Special Needs, Security Threat Group Management Units (young black and brown boys accused of being gang members), and Communications Management Units specifically designed for Muslims. Our work began to focus on the importance of such a manual as we were receiving multiple mail from throughout the country. **While the PPs and POWs handled solitary with great understanding, we heard letters of panic and mental deterioration.**

We sought contributions from political prisoners along with social prisoners working with Holbrook Teeter of California Prison Focus. We continue to send out about a thousand Survivor’s Manuals a year – with people noting that it is a lifesaver. **Masai’s perspective was instrumental in this as it was in all of the work of Prison Watch.**

Because AFSC is an abolitionist organization, our other focus inside US prisons was Viet Nam war veterans. Both Masai and I felt very close to this generation of soldiers who came home so damaged that **at one point almost 40% of the US prison population were veterans.**

Because we take student interns, and engage in public speaking at colleges and universities, Masai and I were able to transmit the concepts and the acute need for abolitionist thinking and framework. Often these dialogues were intense with young people as they are difficult concepts to embrace. His work with young people was extraordinary in his ability to listen and to change hearts and ways of thinking.

On a personal level, **Masai was the kindest, most thoughtful, most loving person to work with.** It is these qualities that brought so much of the soul to our offices, our work and the young people with whom we engaged. I will always miss working with him, I will always miss hearing his voice on the phone. One of the great gifts he left me was contact with his amazing family. Masai was well loved.

- Bonnie Kerness, CR Community Advisor & coordinator of AFSC’s Prison Watch Program

ON MASAI’S LEGACY

By Stevie Wilson

First and foremost, Masai struggled to create and expand spaces of freedom, places where people can live and thrive. He was for life, and war is anti-life. So, it is very appropriate that this issue centering the anti-war struggle is dedicated to Masai.

The Black Liberation struggle and the fight to abolish the PIC are inherently internationalist anti-imperialist movements. Masai continued to remind us of this fact. He taught us to make the connections between here and there, to connect the dots. At its core, **the Black liberation struggle is a struggle for self-determination, for autonomy, for life. The anti-war movement recognizes people’s right to self-determination, the right to be free from colonialism, neo-colonialism, and state-sanctioned violence. These struggles—PIC abolition, Black liberation and anti-war organizing—are braided together.** Masai helped many of us see this.

I had the privilege of speaking with Masai. He didn’t have to speak with me. But he did. He was generous with his time, ears, and heart. I will never forget this. He was a movement elder who made the time to teach and connect with young-



Photos of Masai and Critical Resistance over the years.

er generations. He had abundant knowledge but was open to learning, even from people new to the movement. We all need this quality if we are going to build a mass movement. He leaves a great example of effective organizing praxis.

I had some younger members of 9971 read the announcement of Masai’s passing in *The Abolitionist*, Issue 41. I wanted to hear their impressions of him. What everyone commented on first was his perseverance. He spent over 50 years fighting for freedom. A half century. Too often, people join a struggle and fade away within a few months. Some stick around for a year or two. But Masai was in it for the long haul. He knew that these struggles require long term, lifetime, commitments.

Second, they noticed the diversity of the struggles he was involved in. They also noticed that he didn’t leave a fight to pick up another one. He continued to fight on many fronts. His work against solitary confinement lasted for decades, and it began way before solitary confinement became a hot button issue in the mainstream media. His struggles for self-determination for Black people and other folks around the world was also decades-long. He stayed grounded in the fight against the PIC and lent his time and energy to movements and organizations working to expand freedom.

Always,
Stevie

EXCERPT FROM MASAI IN ISSUE 2 OF *THE ABOLITIONIST* (2005), AN INTERVIEW WITH AFSC’S BONNIE KERNESS AND MASAI EHEHOSI ON ALTERNATIVES TO THE PIC

Some folks they need to disappear. Because of their ability to put forward positions the people can relate to and their ability to motivate folks to act on them, the US feels like it’s better to just get rid of them if they can’t outright kill them. Then you put them away in units where no one will see them for many, many years. Or if they do, the contact is so limited it’s not that effective. In other cases, there’s the disappearance of those who may not even be that conscious, but they have the potential to be. They’re not coming back out here to the neighborhoods; the US doesn’t want them out here. To maintain oppression, the oppressor has to kill that part of the group that desires to separate. In the case of people of African descent here, those people who have advocated for self-determination have basically always been the target. It’s genocide.

I also have a problem with a lot of folks now over-relying on the legal system. I think that’s where the human rights thing comes in. If in fact we have a human right, we struggle for that. If in fact the law catches up, that’s cool, but it don’t mean we stop struggling. It’s ridiculous for me, for us, to sit there and watch people starving to death in the streets. To see people starving, to see people without decent medical care, and then to be talking about how we going to wait for 90 years for the legal system to work. No. We do what we have to do. Again, if they want to save face, they change the legal system.

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When I think about some of the models of the '60s and '70s, I think about the breakfast program, I think about the housing I worked in. When I first got out of the military, I was looking for something to be involved in. I was in Brooklyn, and I was working with this Third World group, and they suggested I go to a place called Ocean Hill Brownsville Tenants Association. The building was supposed to go to a community group, but the community group was violating their standards. So, we took over the building. We brought in a revolutionary electrician. Some of us borrowed power from outside sources, which we didn't have. A lesson I learned from that was that when people struggle for something, and they really think it's theirs, they aren't giving it back. It was the people working together that I think developed more unity and a positive political atmosphere as opposed to the slogans. When you came into the building, it was clear which way people went. You'd see Che, Malcolm, or whatever, but it wasn't a lot of sloganeering. It was like stuff people could work towards.

I also think about the response of the state and the fact that we weren't really that prepared. To follow those models now, I think we really need to learn that it's a war. We've said that before, but then it was like we started being real careful, so we're not passing on what people passed on in real wars.

It don't mean we all walked around armed all day but without that mentality. I think organizers and activists really have a responsibility to study much more than some do. If we're going to talk about organizing now, there's no reason in the world why folks aren't really looking into something like COINTELPRO. Not just something that they heard or they read about. They really need to look at it, so we don't repeat it. Older folks is going to remember some of those eras and they're not going to get involved in certain things like they did before.

MASAI FROM “NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS: ORGANIZING UNDER SURVEILLANCE,” AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHANTI ALSTON AND MASAI EHEHOSI IN ISSUE 18 OF *THE ABOLITIONIST* ON SURVEILLANCE (2012)

I know there's a lot of fear amongst folks, but I don't think it's necessarily among the young, and it's not just fear holding us back. I think, especially among younger folks now, people think it's a legal struggle and that holding demonstra-

tions will change things. Even the masses at these demonstrations that get a little unruly—I can relate to them, but as far as organizing and doing the things that need to be done, I just don't know if they know what's really necessary.

“To follow those models now, I think we really need to learn that it's a war.”

The prisons are filling up. We have more control units now than ever and the folks in them ain't even being heard out here. To think we can just keep petitioning is bullshit to me. For example, enough of us out here don't know the role gang units or gang related charges play on the inside. Not only is it hard for certain reasons to organize due to the guards and whatever, but also organizing itself is deemed a gang related activity. When prisoners do attempt to organize, they're thrown into the gang units. How those units work is in order to get certain things that you may need or to be released into general population in the prison, you have to name somebody as part of gang. I know CR has played a major role in supporting the hunger strikes that came out of Pelican Bay in California, running the media team, connecting with prisoners and family members and what not. I did similar work connecting with folks in these units when I worked at AFSC, so I know a major challenge is struggling through the prisons control over communication and letters being used with surveillance to put more people in the gang units and to stop the organizing. We know from these situations that it's about organizing; that's all “gang activity” really means. It's not about things being negative; it's about what poses a threat to the system.

When people get involved with PIC abolition, if they're serious about their involvement, I don't need to tell them certain things to do. If they're serious about it, they're going to run up into it. Back in the '70's with the [Black Panther] Party, radicalizing folks wasn't about the words of the Party or other organizations; it was about participating in the programs in the community. Our work had an effect on them, so when the police started to shut down the breakfast programs and other programs, the community came out. They didn't immediately rise up all the time, but they came out and they saw and understood why it was happening. I didn't need to explain who the enemy was.

People need to read up on things like COINTELPRO and they need to do the work. I know it was called being underground, but I used to think of it as being above ground. We weren't talking about supporting prisoners we were talking about liberating prisoners. Ashanti and I spent time and we actually left a lot of folks behind.

When we were inside, folks inside were being politicized and we were working in there. The revolution didn't stop for us. People were being trained to go back outside. We got out and it was like the revolution had stopped.

MASAI EXPLAINING “POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF WAR” FOR THE BREAKING DOWN THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX VIDEO PROJECT (2017)

When I talked about some of the people I know who are Muslim, even some people involved in the New African Independence Movement, for many of them, if they're political or lean that way, they've never really put it like “Them first”. They really don't. The biggest stuff we can give them is—again—maintaining the struggle.

It's like, especially if they were prisoners of war (POWs), members of armed units, [...] they knew what they were getting involved in. It don't mean we say, “You in there,” and we leave you. We're supposed to do what we need to do to get you out, and in case of POWs, [...] we have a right in international law, under the Geneva Convention: the duty of a Prisoner of War to escape, you know. When I went in, that's the way we thought, but we have a duty for those of us out here to maintain, support their families, and [...] you know, push through all available channels—that includes like even through the courts, through their rights as POWs if they're political prisoners.

So, when we do what we need to do in the communities, then we help to provide a base for POWs' families. That's one of the concerns of people—that when we sacrifice ourselves to improve the conditions for the whole community, we are helping to improve the conditions of our families. We provide security for the community. We even help each other with some of the negative habits we have, that we can't have. “... So we can help you do something else. If you got a problem with substance abuse, we'll help you with that.” [...] So again, that helps all community. If we talking about the folks who working on another level, the whole community become the base. [...] To me again, it all relates to abolishing the PIC and what is there for oppressed nations within the US. Their goals and objectives a little bit different than folks from the oppressed nations, which are another reason for knowing the struggles. I can't go into an oppressed nation to tell them they need to do it. ♦

FEATURES ACTION

Deadly-Exchanges: Resisting Policing to Resist Global Repression & Warmaking

By “A” & Mohamed Shehk

The fundamental goal of policing is to control racialized and dispossessed populations through violent force. While policing has looked and operated differently over the years, its core function as an institution of repression has not changed. But in the last two decades since September 11, 2001, throughout the ensuing “war on terror”, police departments have become increasingly militarized while simultaneously developing closer collaborations across cities, states, and even international borders.

The term we're using to describe the rising collaboration of police and military units is “**deadly exchanges**”, a term borrowed from **Jewish Voice for Peace**. The implications of deadly exchanges are grave and far-reaching. On the one hand, they facilitate police departments global capacity to share tools, weapons, tactics, and information to more effectively control and harm our communities. In this way, the import and export of policing approaches and machinery are the latest fine-tuning of how imperialist pow-



Photos by Brooke Anderson of Stop Urban Shield direct action outside fairgrounds of expo.

ers are broadening and deepening their power and ability to wage war across the globe. On the other hand, **these exchanges equip police departments to look, behave, and operate like military units**. Policing is rooted in militarized counter-insurgency, which has been propagandized as “counterterrorism” post 9-11. **Through the lens of deadly exchanges that increasingly militarize police forces, public spaces and**



neighborhoods become warzones; community members become enemy combatants. To say that deadly exchanges must be dismantled and defeated for the sake of our survival and our ability to resist is not hyperbole.

New proposals to develop more deadly exchange programs are proliferating across the US, but we draw hope from the powerful resistance ef-

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SITES OF STRUGGLE AGAINST DEADLY EXCHANGES: GILEE & URBAN SHIELD

“In this way, the import and export of policing approaches and machinery are the latest fine-tuning of how imperialist powers are broadening and deepening their power and ability to wage war across the globe.”

On the other side of country, the San Francisco Bay Area hosted the largest militarized SWAT police training program in the world for over a decade, an urban warfare program known as Urban Shield. Made possible by a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) “counter-terrorism” funding program, Urban Shield was created and held annually by the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office. The program brought together police and military units from across the US and the world to train and exchange tactics, tools, and technologies of destruction. Notably, some of the regular participants in Urban Shield were police-military units from the apartheid state of Israel, among other participants from countries with notorious records of human rights abuses.

► DOMESTIC ◀

► GLOBAL ◀

Militarism is the use of violence and coercion to control people and resources. Militarized US forces and institutions include police, prisons, ICE, and the military. We demand an end to both domestic and global warfare waged by the US – from police killings in our neighborhoods, to drone strikes abroad.

to terrorism”, with most of the trainings based on “killing terrorists” and “neutralizing enemy combatants”. These trainings would transform schools, hospitals, train stations, and other public spaces into mock war zones to allow militarized police to practice their war-games scenarios. **The violent goals of Urban Shield were clear: to create material links between policing institutions globally to teach and learn about how to repress communities worldwide.**

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST FIGHTS: URBAN SHIELD

Because policing and militarization are fundamentally violent and repressive, we did not seek to reform Urban Shield. Rather, we sought to understand how we could best build and leverage power to dismantle it. Alameda County Sheriff Gregory Ahern, a tough-on-crime official with ties to far-right militias, was the mastermind behind Urban Shield. The sheriff wields a lot of institutional power; even the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, the highest decision-making body on the county level, had little power to dictate the sheriff's decisions. However, they did have power over the county budget, which included the budget of the Sheriff's Office. We determined that getting the Board of Supervisors

A crucial feature of our campaign was creating alternatives to Urban Shield that decision makers and the public could support instead. The sheriff had been deceitfully branding Urban Shield as a necessity to prepare for and respond to disasters. **We researched and created alternative models for what real community preparedness and disaster response could look like—models that were not based on militarized policing, but on collective care and community resiliency.** We amplified these alternative models to our communities and elected leaders, arguing that the millions of dollars going into Urban Shield could be better spent on models that would truly make our communities safer.

This victory was not the last one we had to win, but it was a decisive one. The supervisors who voted to end Urban Shield “as currently constituted” wanted to make it align more closely with the county’s human rights values. Uninterested in reforming Urban Shield, we sought to propose “human rights-oriented” changes to Urban Shield that would disqualify it from receiving the grant money. To the dismay of the sheriff, we were successful in codifying those recommendations and 2019 was the first year in 12 years that Urban Shield did not take place. In what was truly a local and international anti-policing and anti-war victory, we dismantled Urban Shield. It has not returned since.

CONDITIONS OF A SHIFTING STRUGGLE: GILEE

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GILEE’s role in the sharing of counterinsurgency tactics and strategy between Israel’s apartheid state and militarized policing in Atlanta is one that results in heightened levels of repression for our movements domestically and internationally. Police escalation and brutalization against protesters, expulsion and criminalization of university students, and swift measures by the state and it’s political actors to insulate apartheid Israel and ultimately the US empire from accountability represent the vast force and scope of a larger threat that distinguishes this fight against GILEE. **Actively constructing greater levels of cooperation between local, state, and federal policing through its facilitation of training and knowledge sharing, GILEE is more than just a “research center” at GSU; it is an integral part of the US government’s “national security” strategy and apparatus.**

For these reasons, any struggle against GILEE will draw the attention of the federal government. And it’s precisely GILEE’s relationship to the apartheid state of Israel that provides the biggest opportunity for us compared to previous fights. Public opinion towards the apartheid state of Israel has drastically shifted over the course of the last year, with greater opposition and awareness growing every day. This change in conditions fosters a space for unprecedented moral legitimacy which can be leveraged to build power against GILEE.

BUILDING POWER TO END GILEE FOR GOOD

The DA2P coalition restarted in a critical moment, assembling a few months before apartheid Israel’s escalated genocide campaign and on the heels of a challenging 2023 for Atlanta-based organizers. Given those conditions, a strategic first step in 2023 was to protect ourselves against state repression by building a security culture that protects both the individual and the collective as best we can. We also have been developing our media and outreach strategy, bringing awareness of GILEE to the GSU campus and beyond. Given that Cop City, the 2024 student encampments protesting apartheid Israel’s genocide, and Operation Shield all have such salient ties to GILEE, there has been a lot of synergy in making international connections to everyday people around why GILEE must end.

Additionally, we have been researching campaign targets. In the university system, we are focused on the **Andrew Young School of Public Policy**, which houses GILEE, and GSU President M. Brian Blake. We also believe one of the main institutional levers with the power to shut down GILEE is held by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents. If GILEE can no longer be housed at GSU, it loses the position within a public university that enables its federal support, which will weaken the program and make it vulnerable to being defeated entirely.

The coalition is also exploring a divestment strategy as one of our campaign prongs. From a funding perspective, Atlanta’s corporate “usual suspects” are all donating to GILEE: The Home Depot, UPS, Delta Airlines—every major Geor-

gian company we know contributes in some way. GILEE also works closely with the Atlanta Police Foundation and its front organization for training, the Atlanta Police Leadership Institute, which has a 5-figure allocation for GILEE in its annual budget. **While attacking funding streams is important, many of these donors may not be integral to the day-to-day operations of GILEE itself. Maintaining trainings, workshops, and delegations to and from the apartheid state of Israel does not demand large capital expenditures and the program can collaborate with other organizations and nonprofits to diffuse its programming costs outside the boundaries of GSU. This is one of the most consequential points of interest for the coalition to consider.**

Another campaign prong should be legislative. By legal statute banning requests related to GILEE, we have limited access to information via the Georgia Open Records Act. Additionally, in this past legislative session, the Georgia legislature successfully passed new laws related to suppressing protest. Given that Georgia, at the state level, is predominately republican, we’re not under the illusion that we’ll flip those legislative seats or compel enough legislators to change the laws; but we shouldn’t lose an opportunity to make the consequences of these bills clear to the people of Georgia, while attracting them to our base in the process.

Defeating GILEE will require a rigorous and dedicated coalition of individuals and organizations united in an anti-imperialist front against warmaking. GILEE is just one piece of the puzzle, but it’s an integral one. Defeating it demands a multi-year struggle with a diversity of strategies and tactics anchored to clear campaign demands. We must continue to synthesize, analyze, and advance the lessons of related struggles, like the fight to Stop Cop City and other campaigns to end deadly exchanges across the country. As the genocide in Gaza continues, we must urgently seize the opportunity to delegitimize any association between US institutions and the occupation. **Building popular support against GILEE must emphasize the international call against the occupation, the legal right to resist genocide, and the direct consequences for people in the US being policed by militarized forces.**

TRUE SAFETY AND DEADLY EXCHANGES CANNOT CO-EXIST

Over the course of 2024, we have witnessed one year and counting of one of the most vicious genocidal offensives waged by apartheid Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Yet if there is anything to draw inspiration from in the face of so much death and destruction, it is the continued resilience and steadfastness of Palestinians. **Gaza has been given a new nickname in Arabic: “The Exposer”. It has exposed to the world the fundamental genocidal basis of Israel and Zionism, the hypocrisy and complicity of the US, and that systems of policing and militarism are centered on control, repression, removal, and violence against**

whole communities. It has exposed for us how imperialist forces collaborate, and how that collaboration only grows their appetite for warfare.

“Building popular support against GILEE must emphasize the international call against the occupation, the legal right to resist genocide, and the direct consequences for people in the US being policed by militarized forces.”

Communities in the US and internationally are learning from the lessons Gaza is teaching us. As the war rages on despite fierce opposition and outrage, police forces and the politicians that support them continue to move ahead with proposals to build over 60 “Cop City”-like projects across the country. And GILEE, almost 20 years after being made known, has yet to suffer any defeat or losses. They all must be defeated for the sake of our collective safety and survival.

We are learning to make stronger connections across our struggles. Urban Shield and GILEE reveal the ways that our foes work together across borders; it would be a severe mistake for organizing efforts to work in silos. **Our resistance must be interconnected and internationalist**—not just in theory, but in practice. The Palestinian who wants to see an end to the killing of his family members in Gaza, the schoolteacher whose school is facing closure, the overworked nurse whose hospital is facing budget cuts—we all have a stake in stopping the billions of dollars being wasted on policing and war used by those in power to target us. We all have a stake in organizing to build a better world, both for ourselves and for our future generations. As organizers, as communities in resistance, we have a duty to build with all those impacted by deadly exchanges, the PIC, and the MIC. And we have a duty to win. ♦

About the Authors:
A is an organizer based in Atlanta with the Black Alliance for Peace and a member of the Demilitarized ATL to Palestine coalition, focusing on research. Their organizing work focuses on political education and drawing connections of the threat of US imperialism abroad and its impact in the states. As a Pan-African and scientific socialist, A is dedicated to discovering and building the next revolutionary movement for Black and African people in the US.
Mohamed Shehk is the national campaigns director of Critical Resistance (CR). He has supported CR’s campaigns and projects to shrink and end policing programs including ending Urban Shield, fighting against new prison and jail construction projects including stopping new jails in California, and closing down existing cages—most recently in shutting down three state prisons in California and working to end immigrant detention in New Jersey and New York. He has also been engaged in amplifying international solidarity with people’s struggles outside of the US and supporting the movement for Palestinian liberation.

FEATURES ACTION

Vieques: A People’s Victory against the US War on Puerto Rico

Introduction by The Abolitionist Editorial Collective & An Interview with Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses

From 1943 to 2003, the US navy seized and occupied two thirds of Vieques, a small island 8 miles off the mainland of Puerto Rico, for a bombing testing range and military training area. Organized groups actively resisted the US’s military practices for decades, using different strategies of direct action, encampments, as well as international and local community organizing. This resistance was victorious, forcing the US Navy to withdraw from Vieques on May 1, 2003.

This struggle—between the goliath that is the US military and a small island—occurred before a backdrop of over a century of active US military occupation working to repress militant, revolutionary resistance from generations of Puerto Ricans. The US has deployed all the oppressive tools, tricks, and might it has—in fact many of its military tactics and strategies from the prison industrial complex (PIC) come from the US experimenting on Puerto Ricans through strategies of repression, counter-insurgency, and genocide, making Puerto Rico a laboratory for domination—all to stop Puerto Ricans from gaining independence. Maintaining colonial control over Puerto Rico

*for over a 100 years has been possible through counterinsurgency initiatives like the **carpetas program**—100,000 FBI files on Puerto Ricans in at least 1.8 million pages of secret police surveillance—and the **infamous Gag Law**, which the US Congress passed in 1948 and repealed in 1957 as unconstitutional, which made it a felony punishable by 10 years in prison to say a word, whistle a tune, sing a song in favor of the independence of Puerto Rico or in opposition to the US government. This included singing the Puerto Rican national anthem, La Boriqueña, or having the Puerto Rican flag in your own home.*

*Over time these repressive laws coupled with generations of militarized policing and genocidal experimentation on Puerto Ricans, as **Nelson A Denis**, former Assemblyman of New York and Nuyorican journalist thoroughly ex-*

Continues on next page

plains in his book **War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution & Terror in America's Colony**. This violent program of social, economic and political control has been nothing short of a warmaking campaign against Puerto Rican life and autonomy, including generations of mass sterilizations of Puerto Rican women to develop various birth control methods for Americans (making Puerto Rico have the highest rate of forced sterilizations in the world), instating several US Army generals as governors and police chiefs to squash rebellions and oversee the island colony, multiplying the militarized force of policing in Puerto Rico decade after decade, and even subjecting imprisoned revolutionary Puerto Ricans, like **Albizu Campos**, to radiation experiments and other forms of torture.

Denis argues **“the original value of Puerto Rico to the US was primarily a military one:** Puerto Rico conveniently was one of the first islands as military ships came from Europe to the Americas.” In competition with Europe to build a new empire at the turn of the 20th century, the US needed to protect its expanding reach by seizing Puerto Rico as a military key for the US's influence and control into Central and South America. However, this military advantage that US empire has seized by occupying Puerto Rico stretches beyond geographic implications. The 1917 Jones Act declared Puerto Ricans citizens of the US, but Nelson explains one month later the US sent its declaration of war to enter World War I (WWI) in Europe. Because US politicians didn't want to send their own sons to fight, they sent mostly working-class soldiers, including 18,000 Puerto Ricans to fight in the US Army. Returning from WWI a year later, Puerto Rican veterans expected to receive the same rights as US citizens. However, a series of cases called **the Insular Cases** ruled that the territorial supremacy clauses of the US Constitution make it so that the Constitution did not fully apply to Puerto Rico as an “unincorporated territory,” rather than an incorporated property like the states. Therefore, all the rights, privileges, and protections of the Constitution do not apply to Puerto Ricans, including a minimum wage.

Within this web of insidious repression, we can see more clearly why oppressed people have chosen the strategies and tactics they have to defend themselves and fight back, including at times armed struggle. While Puerto Ricans have fought for their independence from US imperialism and Spanish colonialism since the beginning of colonization, the Puerto Rican independence movement gained new heights from the 1950s-1970s on the island of Borikén (the Indigenous, Taino name of the main island) and in the diaspora in the US. Similarly to the Black Power movement, the Puerto Rican independence and its anti-imperialist solidarity movements have understood revolutionary Puerto Ricans engaged in armed struggle who have been imprisoned for their resistance as **“prisoners of war” captured by US imperialist forces**.

Moreover, the fierce organizing from the people of Vieques over 60 years paralleled the development and height of and aftermath of the Puerto Rican Independence movement. In the 1979 edition of their movement newsletter **BULLETIN**, the **Interim Committee for a New Puerto Rican Solidarity Movement published:**

“The case of Vieques exposes the sham of US claims to recognizing Puerto Rico's right to self-determination — beneath the cover of the Free Associated State is colonial violence and genocide. The growing struggle in Vieques demonstrates the heightening level of the independence movement today.”

Susana Draper of The Abolitionist, and **Mariana Iriarte Mastronardo**, abolitionist lawyer based in Puerto Rico, interviewed **Zaida Torres, Katherine Martínez Medina, and Diana Ramos Gutiérrez** to talk about the intergenerational memory of the Vieques struggle to expel the US navy and continued organizing resisting its damaging legacy, as well as the new forms of territorial expropriation taking place since the people's historic victory in 2003.

“WE NEED TO CONTINUE FIGHTING BECAUSE WE MUST ERADICATE MILITARISM.” An intergenerational conversation on the Vieques struggle with Zaida Torres, Katherine Martínez Medina, and Diana Ramos Gutiérrez

By Mariana Iriarte Mastronardo and Susana Draper

How is the struggle against imperialism and colonialism seen from the specific experience of the long Viequense fight?

Zaida: During my grandparents' time, they struck against landowners who sold land to the Navy and left Viequenses out. They forcefully removed them to an unknown area without any rights whatsoever. By 1968, there already was a direct confrontation with the US military. Most entertainment at the time was only for the Navy and Viequenses would always end up beaten after a riot. By 1979, stronger and more organized struggles emerged. **It took us 60 years to kick out the military from the area: we engaged in direct action, carried out encampments, and organized a referendum that determined that they had to leave.**

To win against militarism, the community must know the military is a structure that harms all communities, regardless of their location. Military practices bring diseases, not economic development, and we must insist that if we don't fight to expel them, we won't achieve anything. Vieques is a people that has been in a state of war for 60 years.

In 1997, my youngest and only daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. Her illness was caused by pollution from the Navy. Vieques is a small island with no industries to pollute us—the *only industry is the Navy*. When I visited the Philippines, I noticed it faced the same issues with pollution from US militarism and imperialism. My main priority (as a nurse) since her death has been to *focus on the health of the people: I wanted to act on her memory, effect change, and bring some real alternatives to the table.*

How was the international and feminist perspective articulated from the Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses in the fight against patriarchy and militarism?

Zaida: The **Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses (AMV—Alliance of Viequense Women)** was established on May 14, 1999 focusing on demilitarization, social justice, and the right to a decent life for the people in Vieques. In 2002, I got involved in all aspects of the organization, and it has been my ally for over 20 years. The struggle grew stronger when we received global support. A women's organization was not well-received by men. The AMV did things that stepped out of feminism, of what we are as women and see from another perspective. We created a space to hang ribbons at the fence of the military base to show support from people and organizations, but since this was done by women, many considered it childish despite all of the organizations that visited wanting to put a ribbon there. *It became quite pretty, covered mostly in white. I traveled with Judith Conde, one of the founders of the AMV, across the US to carry our message: how we, as women who work, struggle, and do the reproductive labor, saw the issue of militarism.*

Vieques was like the ham in a sandwich: the eastern corner was being bombed, while the western corner stored the bombs, and we were living right in between. Vieques is our home. Militarism caused problems, affecting every aspect of daily life for a Viequense family—either because your husband was a fisherman and couldn't go fishing until allowed to, or be-



By Grea Rosa, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

cause family members disproved of the occupation and committed to resist it, and were disappeared or targeted. *Ties within the family and the community are damaged because they invade and pollute your life in different ways. We spoke from an everyday perspective of how everything is impacted, and people would tell us, “Now I see how much damage the military can inflict within the community.”*

Diana: Vieques is a community that has organized to cover our needs including services to compensate for the state's debt to the people who used to live here. There once was capacity to agriculturally sustain a greater population than exists today. Militarism has destroyed, and transformed these tiny islands—let us remember that Roosevelt Roads was the largest US military base, encompassing the island of Culebra. After withdrawing from Culebra in 1979, these practices intensified in Vieques. After Hurricane Maria in 2017, with disaster capitalism, the leftovers of that Roosevelt Roads base became the port to reach Vieques, which was previously located in Fajardo. It is a huge place, now completely abandoned, empty, with no specific terminal—only tents with portable restrooms and a rundown parking lot.

For years, the government tried to implement different projects marred in capitalism and oppression: a Disney World-like park, a tourist space like Cancún, an Amazon distribution center. In the end, by moving the ferry terminal, the community in Fajardo —where the former ferry terminal was located—was destroyed and the hospital was moved farther away from us. Privatization is a cruel violence, an attempt at genocide, a denial of our existence and exertion of extreme harm. They turn birth into torture. Delivering a child here is an act of resistance, because we have no dignified hospital or health services whatsoever, not even a dignified maritime transport system.

During the fight against the Navy, the slogan was “Peace for Vieques.” On the twentieth anniversary, we asked children in schools what gave them peace and whether they believed there was peace in Vieques. Our community is well-aware of what it deserves, its wounds, and of the violence it has been exposed to, with plenty of hope and an ability to acknowledge the active lessons in our country.

Your organizing connects food sovereignty, health, memory, history, debate, and collective imagination as keys to a full struggle: an approach to community health that affirms life against decades of death and destruction. Do you believe the AMV could help open and grow anti-imperialist or anti-war struggle in that regard?

Katherine: In Vieques, we see this intergenerational changeover of mothers, daughters, nieces becoming involved, acting, and organizing themselves to establish other groups to address different issues. The AMV redirected the strug-

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gle toward the role of art, feeling, and expression of lived experience that wasn't properly reflected in civil disobedience, and therefore began to play a role that integrated health and the experience of women. **Vieques en Rescate (Rescue Vieques)**, a nonprofit organization, was founded by women who were also part of the AMV and who said, "*We will create little rescue actions.*" We attend to the needs of Viequenses who suffer extremely high rates of cancer. **The Colmena Cimarrona (Maroon Behive)** began after Hurricane María with a group of women offering warm meals to the community. It became an agroecological farm that struggles for food sovereignty in Vieques, to address the health crisis, which in part is the result of our food choices and food apartheid: traveling from the US to Isla Grande, in Puerto Rico; distribution, another ferry, more trucks to reach Vieques—we are talking weeks for a product to reach our plate, if it arrives at all, because of the costs that raise the price of the breadcrumbs we get here in the *colony of the colony*.

In the Colmena, our managing team involves a multigenerational group of people, which lends incredible value to our thinking and action within the organization. In the AMV, we have a pairs project, in which an older and a younger member work together in a project that is deliberate and ensures intergenerational changeover. From the union of the Colmena, the Archive, and other projects, we are also organizing a collective to address the issue of housing and access to land, which we call Dignified Housing. We are pursuing strategies through which we can defend our spaces and territories. We have an active community that is attending to different struggles and demands for human rights.

Diana: Robert Rabin Siegal, founder of the **Archivo Histórico de Vieques (Vieques Historical Archive)** who sadly passed away from cancer, said two things: what the Navy couldn't achieve in 60 years, ravenous capital could do in less. Also, there used to be a common enemy, to expel the Navy, and now struggles around so many things at once are seemingly separate: the hospital, maritime transportation, education, health, food, and cultural entertainment. The fronts are so many and the attacks simultaneous make it hard to resist effectively and strategically. We have the right to a healthy environment and to health. The first right to be violated is the right to life. *How are you going to live if they don't let you, if you have no place to deliver your baby, if your home is being sieged by all these things?* With no right to life, there can be no other.

The US Army is the main polluter of this planet. It's all documented. **We face this every single day: this has left scars that are not easy to repair.** Reparation is economic repair—cleaning, hospitals, development of dignified housing, and land back. People were never given back their land. New natural reserves were created on the lands plundered from Viequenses, because they didn't have to remediate those lands, since no one lives there. They whitewashed their image, gated and forbid access to those lands, a gate they open and close whenever they please. **The "4 Ds"** claims are still current, **demands that came about in the struggle for demilitarization** when the Navy was withdrawing: *demilitarization, devolution of lands, decontamination, and development*. Capitalism makes solutions and salvation individual. And the truth is that *either we save each other or no one will*.

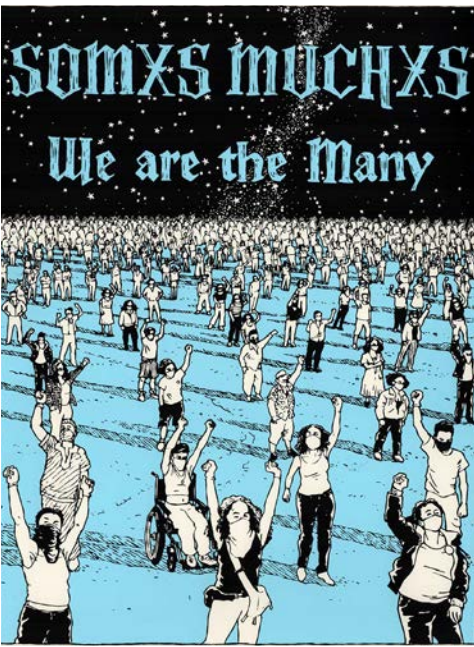
How is intergenerational memory sustained and how does the struggle continue? How do you convey to the newer generations the memory of so many decades of fighting?

Diana: When I moved to Vieques after studying communication in La Plata, Argentina, **Radio Vieques** was starting out, a community radio project that lasted about eight years. I began to act as a facilitator for the community, and continue to work with the Vieques Historical Archive. When I saw the collections, full of oral history and photography, I thought everyone should have access to it and kickstarted a democratization process of that material and knowledge. I also dreamed of developing a film and human rights festival here, so we began that project—building a platform to address and open dialogue about the issues that affect our community: we touched on *fair recovery* in the third year, the *right to remain* in the fourth, and now *justice and healing*. *These subjects help us spark a conversation and allow for this memory and history to continue to reach out to the public. As part of this project, we also visit schools and universities, and develop this cultural program centered around memory.*

Katherine: I was born in 2002 and did not live through the active struggle to expel the Navy, but as a Viequense, it has made me who I am and has prompted me to continue the legacy of struggle by acknowledging the importance of my role as an intergenerational changeover. It wasn't something I chose; rather, I was assigned to it, and I cherish and defend it wholeheartedly with respect. I am a part of the AMV, the Colmena Cimarrona, and I collaborate with other organizations such as Vieques en Rescate and the Archivo Histórico de Vieques. Even though I did not witness all that history of expropriation at the hands of the Navy, I'm living other kinds of expropriations carried out by a wave of wealthy individuals who are destroying lands, spaces, and communities. It is a struggle that goes on and on.

All my life I've lived in Vieques, and I still don't know the entire territory, because I have not been able to reach fenced out, prohibited, polluted areas, which is a violation of my right to connect with my land and with my community. It's beautiful that the community has remained active, starting with those pioneering women who fought to extract the Navy and those who took on roles in the kitchen, in household chores, in fundraising; the fisherwomen too, who launched themselves with their partners against those military boats; teachers, professors who, from art, from their classes, from poetry, also represented this utopia, challenging and hoping for a different day.

Zaida: To us, conveying the struggle is paramount because **the struggle continues, and we must keep moving.** Most youth at the AMV are daughters, nieces, granddaughters of those who took part in this struggle. This brings us joy because it means that the seed sprouted, and we've forged an intergenerational bond. We've been struggling for 20 years, and we still have a lot of work to do. We need to educate people in the history of how our current problems have a direct connection to militarism. We must deal with the pollution left behind by bombs, which continues to do harm, because there are outdoor explosions. There are containers to protect the military, but not for Vieques. We still have the fence, since these lands are still under their



By Fernando Marti, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

control, although they now call them "shelter," and keep someone on watch to decide whether we can access our own land. In 2003, a handful of lawyers launched an investigation to file a demand with the International Human Rights Committee. It was accepted ten years later and we are currently in the process of establishing talks with the US. Even if it's 10 or 20 years later, my grandchildren and great grandchildren will see these demands are met. We still have many needs: a hospital, a delivery room, a mammogram screening machine, a vocational school. We still run out of electricity or water at times.

We managed to expel the Navy, but we are coping with collateral damage, *something that the people will always have to struggle against: that is the reality of a whole population or country with these military bases on their land*. I think a lot about every Palestinian child that is dying or is left orphaned in Gaza. Vieques also represents a genocide. They brought destruction, disease, poverty... *They are killing us, they continue to kill us. A people without health cannot move forward*. I've always said and will always say that there is a genocide being committed against the Viequense people. ♦

About the Speakers:

Mariana Iriarte Mastronardo is a feminist and abolitionist activist. She is professor at the University of Puerto Rico and a lawyer interested in the struggle of Vieques women for their right to remain in their territory, and struggle against ongoing territorial dispossession and displacement.

Zaida Torres is a mother and nurse who has participated in the fight against militarization in Vieques for decades. She has been part of many organizations and an active member of the AVW, where she created spaces to promote community health practices for the people in Vieques.

Katherine Martínez Medina grew up on Vieques and currently studies social work and women and gender studies at the University of Puerto Rico. She is part of La Colmena Cimarrona, a community initiative led by women to achieve food sovereignty in Vieques and a local solidarity economy that promotes mutual support and equity, and of the fight against displacement and land speculation on the island.

Diana Ramos Gutiérrez is a social communicator and cultural manager based in Vieques. She has collaborated with various media outlets in Latin America, the United States and Europe. She is the director of the Vieques Film and Human Rights Festival.

FEATURES ACTION

Resisting Military Occupation of Hawai'i

An interview with Misty Pegram from the International Cancel RIMPAC Campaign and Tia Marie from Hawai'i Peace & Justice by Molly Porzig

Hawai'i is **the most militarized** state of the US: significant portions of its islands are owned by the US military (6 percent across the islands, and over 20 percent of specific islands like O'ahu), and military personnel constitute about 17 percent of the total population. In

addition to its numerous bases and weapons testing and training areas, Hawai'i regularly hosts global military training programs, including the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) — the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise.

Hawai'i's limited housing — a product of US military occupation and remote geography — make it one of the most overpriced places to live. Though Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders make up only 10 percent of the

state's population (after decades of genocidal practices against Hawaiian people and culture), they represent 39 percent of the homeless population. Young people in Hawai'i, especially Native Hawaiian youth, face even higher rates of poverty, and are ready targets for military recruiters. Recruitment is aggressive in schools across the state, as the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs

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replace continuation options for youth who struggle to finish high school. In spite of the grave effects of colonialism and militarism, Native Hawaiians have resisted US imperialism and military occupation for generations, ever since the US military worked with the sugar planter elite to overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893.

As Critical Resistance works to dismantle the prison industrial complex (PIC) through our “shrink and starve” strategy — curtailing funding to the PIC; challenging the idea that these systems make us safe; and reducing the scale of the PIC and the tools, tech, and tactics it can use — we became curious about the strategies the people of Hawai‘i have been using to resist and ultimately dismantle the military industrial complex (MIC). The Abolitionist interviewed **Misty Pegram of the International Cancel RIMPAC Campaign with Tia Marie of Hawai‘i Peace & Justice** to learn more about the impacts of the MIC on Hawai‘i and what organizers on the ground are doing to free Hawai‘i from the US’s military occupation.

Mahalo nui loa for doing this interview with us. Can you start by introducing yourselves and sharing a bit about your organization or the anti-war organizing you’re doing in Hawai‘i?

Misty: Aloha. I am one of the leads for the **Education Committee of the International Cancel RIMPAC Campaign** and a member of **Anakbayan Hawai‘i**, which is a comprehensive Filipino youth organization that fights for national democracy in the Philippines. This summer I was at the International Cancel RIMPAC Summit & Mobilization at University of California in San Diego (UCSD), joined by others from San Diego to Oregon. **RIMPAC stands for the Rim of the Pacific Exercise** and consists of a month-long series of training exercises the US Navy hosts every two years.

During RIMPAC, numerous countries come to Hawai‘i to learn the most effective strategies and tactics in “defending” the Pacific, or as they say, maintaining “a free and open Indo-Pacific.” This year 29 countries participated, including Australia, Canada, Israel, the Philippines, and Tonga — another Pacific island nation. Every RIMPAC, they do **activities like SINKEX** (“sinking exercise”), where they all go on their boats and shoot large missiles at these decommissioned ships and sink them into the waters off of Kauai.

Tia: Aloha, I’m really grateful to be in connection, and to be part of this interview, representing **Hawai‘i Peace & Justice (HPJ)**, where I’m a youth organizer. I was born and raised in the Punahou neighborhood north of Honolulu on O‘ahu, near Manoa Falls. I grew up with a single mom, because my dad was in prison, and this newspaper is so powerful to me, so mahalo.

HPJ is a **multi-generational organization**. Our mission is to promote social justice, promote *ea*, which in Hawaiian translates to life, breath, and sovereignty. Due to the way our Hawaiian ancestors viewed everything, ***ea* describes our breath, our life, and sovereignty—with our peoples, with our lands, with our waters.** In the 2024 context, the US’s military occupation of our lands has directly been in opposition to our *ea* and to *true* justice in our communities. Because our mission is about promoting, honoring, and protecting *ea*, we work to challenge anything that threatens *ea*, including the MIC.

We’re also a **multi-ethnic organization**, currently moving toward becoming a Kānaka Maoli-led organization, or Indigenous Hawaiian-led organization. We also work closely with lineal descendants of people who immigrated during the plantation era — Filipino, Japanese, Chinese communities. I am Hawaiian, Chinese, Filipino, Samoan—a very common experience in Hawai‘i given that many Hawaiians are now mixed due to the genocide of Hawaiian life through colonization and the plantation system that was established by colonizers. So, HPJ includes all of us working together, as well as with other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) communities to bring collective movements away from

the idea of “national security,” sold to us by the military, toward what a lot of feminist liberation spaces refer to as ***genuine security***. In other words, “building a wall” is national security, but **having clean water and someplace to live** is genuine security.

As you know, Hawai‘i has one of the largest US military presences within US borders. What are some of the impacts of this presence overall and, specifically, its impacts on the economy, politics, culture, ecology, and overall life in the islands?

Misty: Programs like RIMPAC create **harmful environmental and ecological impacts**, including leaking dangerous chemicals like PFAS into the water — not only from decommissioned ships (there are no clear reports on how well they’re cleaned because the military hides that information) but from missiles launched — which deeply affect the water and its marine life. They also host amphibious assaults near Bellows, another training site on O‘ahu, which disturb the natural nesting season of *honu*, or turtles. Since tanks come from the water onto the land, the sand and entire beach are disturbed, and so are the nesting areas for the *honu*. Covid (in 2020) was the first time in a long time when we saw *honu* able to nest properly, because there was no amphibious assault during RIMPAC.

Every convening, RIMPAC brings thousands of military personnel to Hawai‘i, who stay at these hotels in Waikiki, on base, or on their ships. While here, they really take advantage of the tourism industry — which not only displaced Kānaka Maoli from the land itself but *continuously* displaces them, economically, culturally, because the tourist industry aggressively exploits Hawaiian culture. And this is exacerbated every time that RIMPAC comes around. For instance, during RIMPAC we see a worsening of the exploitation of native women by military men in clubs and other tourist attractions marketed to military personnel.

RIMPAC has international impacts. Military personnel from 29 different countries attend and learn from the US about the best ways to kill and exploit people across the globe. This year the IOF (Israeli Occupation Forces) attended and exchanged machinery and weapons for its genocide of Palestinians. **Even the Iron Dome, Israel’s missile defense system, was something that they practiced in Guahan (or Guam).** Another example is the 25th Infantry Division of the US Army, based in Wahiawa, Hawai‘i, which trains the Philippine military in another exercise, Balikatan. The Philippine military then uses that training to kill farmers and workers in the Philippines. RIMPAC is one part of how the MIC works to expand its reach and tentacles into different places of the world.

A core part of RIMPAC is the **testing of weapons and arms that are or will eventually get sent to different countries** and used against their people. This includes coordination with programs like **Trident Warrior**, whose weapons are being developed in collaboration with universities, including the University of California system and the University of Hawai‘i system. **University Affiliated Research** Centers work to enhance the lethality of these weapons. These sorts of collaborations also show how the MIC uses the education system to expand.

Tia: Yes, I agree. This makes me think of two of the biggest impacts: the first is **mili-tourism**, which ties the MIC directly into the tourism industry — logic like “what will soldiers do to ‘relax’?” — and relates to the US’s occupation of the Philippines and Korea. Mili-tourism uses propaganda that not only promotes the military but also, in tandem with tourism, creates a through-line in the way that Black, Brown, and Indigenous folks here in Hawai‘i put themselves into that line of work, which people think will provide stability or what their family needs. Mili-tourism then leads to the second biggest impact, relating to the sex trade industry.

There’s all kinds of ways that the military’s extensive presence in our lands is normalized. But what it truly looks like is the exploitation,



Photo courtesy of Hawai‘i Peace & Justice.

commodification, continued rape and pillage of our women and our *māhū* (nonbinary gender) communities. The first-ever report on the sex trade and the MIC in Hawai‘i came out about two years ago, and it found that **77 percent of women who were trafficked in Hawai‘i fit a specific profile of a native Hawaiian girl between the ages of 15 to 25**, young women, in Waikiki. When Hawai‘i police ran an operation pretending to be a 14-year-old online, **35 percent of the men who were arrested for attempting to solicit sex were active military personnel.** This trend of military sexploitation of women, girls, and *māhū* is happening across our islands. This is why **AF*IRM Hawai‘i** (or Association of Feminists Fighting Fascism, Imperialism, Refeudalization, and Marginalization, a transnational feminist organization) has a saying **“land back, bodies back.”**

Another major harm is that the US military has no integrity and takes no accountability for the perpetual harm that they are causing to our people, our land and waters, or to those around the globe. It’s like they have no humanity. That’s not a moral judgment, it’s the fact of dealing with an entity as ruthless as the US military. From a Hawaiian point of view, what goes up must come down. There is always a price.

The impact then is that we pay the price. We pay the price with our bodies, minds, children, lands, and waters. **It’s our families that become the prisoners, it’s our families that become the soldiers, it’s our land that becomes imprisoned; our waters become poisoned.** It’s powerful and necessary to acknowledge that they’re not going to hold themselves accountable, because it clarifies why we’re doing this work, and what and who *we’re accountable* to.

What has your organization or campaign been doing to dismantle the MIC? What has been the most effective with advancing your fight? What have been some of the challenges?

Tia: As one of HPJ’s first youth organizers, I was brought on to develop this **youth organizing program**. We’re working to foster strong youth organizing in Hawai‘i through two concrete approaches: What we call **“Aloha ‘Āina Clubs”** in the high schools and the internships that we run with college-age students— right now, mostly out of UH Manoa and the community colleges. In Hawai‘i high schools, there are three general tracks that you will land in: college, a low wage job, or the military. The Aloha ‘Āina clubs serve as our codename for anti-recruitment. The large military presence in Hawai‘i includes the ROTC, whose practices recruit poor local youth and youth of color, especially Kānaka Maoli and other Pacific Islanders, into different military programs. Our youth organizing program **provides a meaningful alternative** for youth to commit to.

We then pull a lot of the Aloha ‘Āina club folks who graduate and go to the college into internships, so we get to work with and train the same youth for years. A result of this is the solidarity work our interns have supported for Palestine — including the UH walkout they planned, and connecting them to Hawai‘i Dissenters, who are calling for UH Manoa to divest from Israel. They also did a die-in at the UH Manoa Starbucks as part of the broader Boycott Divest & Sanction (BDS) movement. And we also participated in the Solidarity Peace March here in Hawai‘i in January.

Through popular education, the internships train youth to be organizers, not just teaching them about theory or words, but developing praxis — getting to apply it. By **developing**

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youth organizing praxis, we’ve also been able to improve HPJ’s campaigns, most recently prioritizing our **Cease the Lease campaign**. The US Army leases Hawaiian lands with absurd rates and contracts — **one dollar for 65 years to be on the land**. HPJ is working to build a youth-led campaign in Hawai’i that targets the US Army leases coming up in 2029 and 2030.

We’re also heavily focused on **coalition-building** within the Pacific community. One way we do this work is through our **DeTours**, sharing the truth, the lesser-known histories, the Indigenous histories, the **Hawaiian mo’olelo** (the gods and goddesses that used to dwell in this space), and specific sites of US military occupation. This is actually how I met Misty — we did a **Pu’uloa DeTour** (Pu’uloa is the original name of Pearl Harbor). Misty was at **K-VIBE** (Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange), working with young Micronesian and Marshallese men and boys from the community.

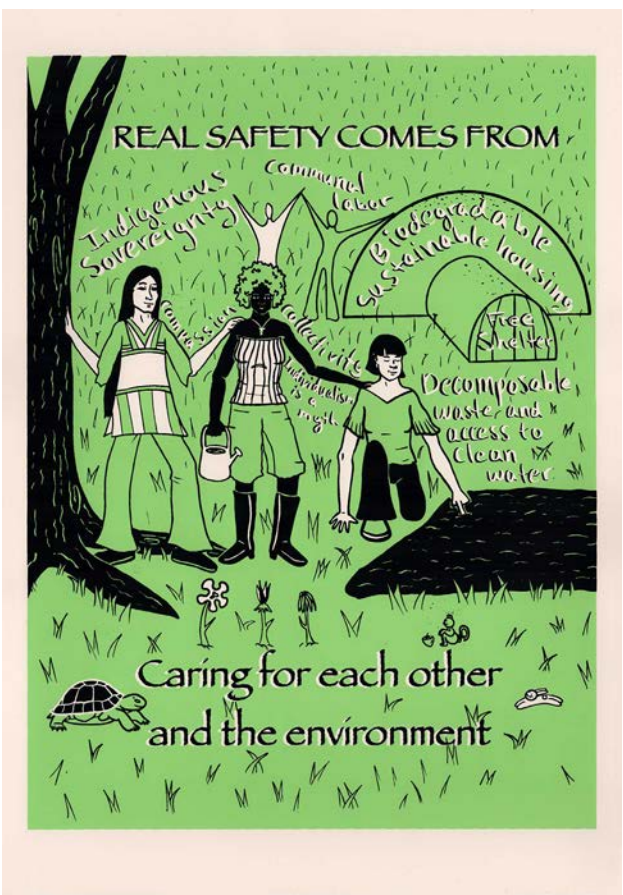
Because the US military has pit us against each other in our communities, the **Micronesian community** experiences a lot of harm in Hawai’i at the hands of Hawaiians and locals. The way Misty and K-VIBE folks genuinely hold space for those boys is just everything in and of itself. They worked with HPJ — they provided the bikes, and we provided the DeTour guiding with our youth. We came together with this bike ride, eating food collectively and building Pacifica connections — understanding that the US military is doing the same to Micronesia that it is to Hawai’i, but unimaginably worse. The **US bombs their islands to the point where they can’t even live there**. There’s this horrific term “jellyfish baby” that describes the common birth defects babies are born with. The US poisons their people to the point where the medicine that’s available is ineffective, so they have to come here, and there is so much tension. **Bridge-building, connecting, educating, and bringing communities together** across shared struggles and experiences are key.

Misty: For the International Cancel RIMPAC Campaign, one of our main objectives is to build awareness and solidarity with Kānaka Maoli from different parts of the world. That’s something that we are able to do, particularly along the West Coast and in some countries outside the US, in Southeast Asia or West Asia. Canceling RIMPAC is part of the broader issue of imperialism and of movements against militarism across the world. The campaign is also about showing up for those who have been fighting for decades, like Kānaka Maoli.

Right now, we’re prioritizing **bringing the campaign to places where people don’t know about RIMPAC or military exercises** in the first place. This **gives more breadth to the anti-war movement** and enables us to bring different organizations together — from San Diego to the Bay Area to even Canada — to disrupt some of the lead-up activities to RIMPAC. One of them is **CANSEC**, one of the largest arms trade shows in Canada. We did the same in San Diego, which is a very militarized city, with hundreds of people protesting these military exercises.

We’re also organizing in **solidarity with the Palestinian people**. As I mentioned, Israel attended RIMPAC this year, so we had the **Palestinian Youth Movement** and the **Palestinian Feminist Collective** join us in different activities and speak on panels during the UCSD mobilization this summer. A lot of coalition-building to target the US military Indo-Pacific command for RIMPAC, but also the US military in general. Within the international campaign, there are people also targeting the RIMPAC member states. We had some folks who were out in Thailand doing the work there, so we’ve translated our materials into Thai for them to use locally. We’re also targeting transnational weapons corporations — at the UCSD summit, one of the workshops focused on organizing universities to divest from them.

About a week after this summer’s Cancel RIMPAC Summit, a lot of participants joined a mobilization resisting NATO in Washington DC. **People are fighting the MIC on the US’s East**



By Asha Edwards, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative.

Coast, on the West Coast, and in Hawai’i, in Thailand — everywhere, really. It’s all part of the same global problem, which is imperialism. Realizing the interconnectedness of our struggles is a victory.

In addition to building **more global solidarity**, one of our approaches is to get participating countries to pull out of RIMPAC, by building localized pressure on politicians and decision makers, in addition to international pressure.

Tia: The biggest challenge for HPJ’s youth organizing is the **misinformation and propaganda spread through mass media** about the US military. The US military has always produced propaganda, but it shifts online now, with social media videos from paid influencers portraying killing and violence as patriotic. It’s all to normalize selling your soul to this oppressive government and doing whatever they want you to do.

Another major challenge is the emotional attachment our communities have to the financial security provided by the US military. We hear a lot: “My uncle’s in the US military, and he bought his house and he sold it to us, and now me and my family live there, so my uncle is a bad guy?” People have a hard time separating the individual from the system and understanding that these systems use individual benefits to sustain and normalize the violence and our participation in it. That’s what we do in our youth programs — opening those kinds of conversations and questioning that deep emotional attachment people have to the financial security provided by the military.

Misty: I started organizing back in the Philippines, where I’m from. Coming here, it was such a difference organizing in the “belly of the beast” of imperialism. You have to fight off distractions and ensure that you’re still facing the primary target, which is the US military and imperialism. Ensuring that every day is the same fight. There’s such an urgency now, which I think we’ve seen over the past year. We’re one year into this escalated genocide in Palestine, and there doesn’t seem to be an end to it, unfortunately. But how do we keep going? How do we keep fighting?

There’s a long legacy of Hawaiians and allies resisting militarism, military recruitment, expansion, and ecological destruction in the islands — including some major historic victories like the stands at Kaho’olawe to Red Hill — and now the struggle continues in many local issues like the Pōhakuloa Training / Toxic Area (PTA) on Hawai’i island.

How is the work you’re doing now a part of this longer history, and how might historic struggles inform more potential victories against

militarism and for Hawaiian sovereignty in the future?

Misty: The campaign to cancel RIMPAC started when RIMPAC began — and even before that, with the work of Kānaka Maoli activists and people fighting US militarism for generations.

Speaking as a Filipino in Hawai’i, the 1980s and 1990s were also a significant period of anti-militarism, anti-imperialism in the Philippines. We were able to ban US bases in 1991 in the Philippines. Unfortunately, they found a loophole and are back, but knowing that it is possible and something that can be achieved is important. When we look at land leases or anything else the military uses to maintain occupation, we can build off that history of activism. The victory in Vieques is such a great example, as well, and in Okinawa also.

Tia: Mahalo ia for that share, Misty. Hawaiians have an innate understanding of a word we use: **mo’oku’auhau**, which means genealogy, but more like **succession**. We understand that you come from everyone that’s ever come before, and your responsibility is to everyone that comes after you. **Resistance to US military occupation began in the kingdom era during the illegal overthrow of the sovereign Hawaiian monarchy**, starting in the 1890s with the **Ku’e Petitions**— tens of thousands of signatures contesting the overthrow, fighting for their nation and sovereignty.

In the 1960s and 1970s, worldwide resistance movements were happening, and we as Hawaiians understood that there were *ho’omau* (struggles) other than our own. The organizing of the **Kaiapuni schools**, or Hawaiian immersion schools, for instance, preceded more well-known markers of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement — like the **Kalama Valley struggle** (1971), **Kaho’olawe** (1976-1981), and **Sand Island evictions** (1976), which were **all inspired by the civil rights movement’s and the Black liberation movement’s tactics and strategies** against white supremacy and segregation. We see **anti-imperialism as a succession of resistance** struggles across different places. It shows that we’re always learning from the people that came before us, so we can best serve those who come after.

It’s important to remember that many of the activists of this succession — like **George Helm**, a leader for Kaho’olawe — are young people. George was 26 when he passed away. In our resistance, **we see youth as having a kuleana (responsibility) to challenge what is not working** anymore, including all the outdated beliefs and practices in our community. George came from a time when a generation of Hawaiians were silenced and violently assimilated. George himself didn’t know how to speak Hawaiian, because our language was outlawed and forbidden. Even a lot of Hawaiians judged him, treated him as *haole* (white outsider). But George took upon his *kuleana* for his generation, organizing within community.

Because of this succession, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is still alive now—it’s the reason the **Mauna Kea movement** in 2015 and 2019 continues to prevent TMT (Thirty Meter Telescope) from being built on our *mauna* and is the reason the effort to defuel the Red Hill facilities succeeded. **HPJ applies mo’oku’auhau to our resistance in organizing for our people, for our lands, for our waters**. And we’re seeing this tradition live on with solidarity for Palestine — youth organizing around the world to resist genocide again. It’s all a part of a succession of resistance. ♦

About the Authors:

Misty Pegram: An organizer with the Education Committee of the International Cancel RIMPAC Campaign and a member of Anakbayan Hawai’i, Misty is currently living in the illegally occupied kingdom of Hawai’i, on the island of O’ahu in Waikiki.

Tia Marie: Also based on O’ahu, Tia is a youth organizer with Hawai’i Peace & Justice.

Movement Media Organizations Are Uniting for Palestinian Liberation

By Lara Witt and Maya Schenwar

The US-backed Israeli siege, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in Gaza and the occupied West Bank is raging on. Since October 7, 2023, Israeli airstrikes with 2,000-pound US-supplied bombs and Hellfire missiles, on-the-ground invasions, snipers, and executions have left more than 42,000 Palestinians dead in Gaza (the vast majority children and women) at time of writing, erasing entire bloodlines from civil registries and obliterating most of the land's infrastructure. **Most Palestinians in Gaza have been multiply-displaced**, as Israel targets different neighborhoods, preventing people from accessing remaining water wells, shelter, food, medicine, and care. Because of **Israel's systematic targeting and elimination of hospitals, sanctuaries, homes, and shelters, over two million Palestinians are currently at risk of dying** from imposed starvation, indiscriminate bombing, and the spread of infections and diseases like polio. During the first week of September in Jenin, in the occupied West Bank, Israel launched **Operation Summer Camps**, forcibly displacing 4,000 Palestinian residents, **razing 70 percent of the city's streets**, killing 19 people, and destroying water and sewage pipes, as well as electrical and communication cables. This largest colonial incursion in two decades is an escalation of US nonprofit-funded settlers and the apartheid government's military campaign of terror.

Israel has made no secret of its genocidal and settler-colonial intent to fully overrun all of Palestine with support from Western nations, especially the US, which has sent over 500 weapons shipments and billions of dollars of taxpayer funding at time of writing. But you might not have known this if you were purely relying on mainstream media sources. The vast majority of television news networks, corporate-owned newspapers, and even small nonprofit outlets have worked overtime to platform Israeli state and military sources—with the objective of denying that a genocide is happening while simultaneously justifying and manufacturing consent for it. Even as the Israeli government blatantly expresses its intention to obliterate Gaza, most Western news outlets persist in portraying the genocide as a “conflict” with two equally culpable “sides.” The battle against truthful media is itself a front of struggle. Much like mainstream local news coverage that sensationalizes “crime” and depicts prison as a necessary solution to violence—rather than a form of violence in itself—many mainstream news outlets absurdly portray Israel's genocide as a route to keeping Israelis “safe.”

This is why movement journalism (“journalism in service to liberation,” in the words of the Southern media collective *Press On*) is crucial, and why it is the responsibility of movement media to intervene and center Palestinian and anti-Zionist narratives. If we take this responsibility seriously, media-makers who prioritize Palestinian liberation must work together to amplify the truth, pushing back against the dominant corporate media that are working overtime to obscure it.

Last November, for example, we joined 25 media-makers from independent US-based organizations in Chicago to talk about the future of media and how we might build it together. We originally planned to focus on jointly covering the 2024 presidential election. With the drastic escalation in genocide against Palestinians and the US corporate media's complicity, we decided to focus on Palestine instead. Over two days, we built the collaboration that became **Media Against Apartheid & Displacement (MAAD)**, a website and social media presence that points readers toward articles from trustworthy, independent



By Sarah Farahat, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

news sources reporting on the genocide, occupation and colonization of Palestine, the Western backing that makes these atrocities possible, and the global protest movement in support of Palestinian liberation. MAAD also gathers media focused on other parts of the world in which settler colonialism, apartheid, genocide, state violence, surveillance, displacement, and occupation are occurring, uplifting coverage and narratives that point the way toward a future of real freedom. Our partnerships grew, and MAAD collaborators now include *Prism*, *Truthout*, *In These Times*, *Mondoweiss*, *Palestine Square*, Haymarket Books, *The Real News Network*, *The Forge*, *Waging Nonviolence*, *The Dig*, *Kansas City Defender*, *Briarpatch*, *Baltimore Beat*, *Hammer & Hope*, *Scalawag*, *Convergence Magazine*, and *Analyst News*.

“The battle against truthful media is itself a front of struggle. Much like mainstream local news coverage that sensationalizes ‘crime’ and depicts prison as a necessary solution to violence—rather than a form of violence in itself—many mainstream news outlets absurdly portray Israel's genocide as a route to keeping Israelis ‘safe.’”

Alone, none of these small, independent outlets could thoroughly cover the genocide in Palestine. MAAD makes it possible for us to write together a wide-ranging first draft of history. MAAD also represents an unprecedented organizing effort among media organizations, uniting in our refusal to be complicit in the politics of mass murder. This refusal requires us to provide readers and listeners with the historical context missing from most US narratives.

Israel's genocidal campaign did not start last October. It is a brutal extension of more than 75 years of European and US settler-colonial state-making. Yet, as Palestinians are slaughtered, **US mainstream media has abandoned its duty to accurately report on the ongoing genocide, ethnic cleansing, and illegal occupation.** As *Truthout* has noted, corporate media has spent many decades denying Palestinians' humanity, both implicitly and explicitly, deploying the mainstream myth of “objectivity” to silence Palestinian journalists.

In Palestine, **part of Israel's genocidal campaign involves literally silencing Palestinian journalists through targeted murders.** As of September 30, 2024, the **Committee to Protect Journalists** reports the killing of at least 116 media workers and journalists in Gaza since October 7, 2023, making this the **most lethal period for journalists in the region** since the organization began collecting data over three decades ago. Many other reporters have been arrested or injured. The **Israeli military raided and shut down the offices of Al Jazeera** in the West Bank; throughout Palestine, journal-

ists and their families have been threatened, assaulted, and doxed.

Meanwhile, in the US, one of the many ways mainstream media quells dissent within its newsrooms is through the repression, firing, and blacklisting of those journalists who report on the genocide and through the marginalization of Palestinian-American and Muslim reporters, who are censored or hindered from doing their jobs simply because of their ethnicities. In an op-ed titled **“Why journalists must speak out about Gaza,”** nine movement journalists argued that the **attacks on journalists in Palestine are part of a regime of occupation, apartheid, and extermination that dates back to before the 1948 Nakba.** They also described the censorship of journalists within the US, stating:

On US soil, journalists and media makers are being fired or pushed out of the profession for their advocacy. Jewish journalist **Emily Wilder** was fired from the **Associated Press (AP)** in 2021 after conservative activists targeted her for pro-Palestinian social media posts written prior to her employment with the AP. In 2022, **The New York Times** fired Palestinian journalist **[Hosam] Salem** in Gaza, citing his personal Facebook page that he used to speak out against the occupation he lives under. Multiple journalists have also resigned or canceled contracts with *The New York Times* in part because of its Gaza coverage, and in late October, **Artforum** fired editor-in-chief **David Velasco** for his participation in an open letter supporting Palestinian liberation. **eLife** editor-in-chief **Michael Eisen** was fired in October for retweeting an article from the satirical paper *The Onion*. These acts go hand in hand with the recent cancellation of campus groups at **Brandeis University** and **Columbia University** that are critical of the Israeli occupation and siege in Gaza.

This kind of **media manipulation** and the **pattern of censorship and blacklisting** of reporters isn't new. Black, Indigenous and people of color—including Palestinian refugees and Palestinian Americans in the US—are acutely familiar with these journalistic failures. The way the media is covering Israel's occupation of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza **mirrors how journalists and editors have long portrayed systemic injustices and state violence committed against Black people** in particular. There is no clearer example of this than how the US covers the criminal legal system. Like Israel, the US is a settler-colonial state, and the **mainstream media manufactures the propaganda necessary to continue settler colonialism and imperialism.** The US committed—and continues to commit—a genocide against Indigenous peoples; it enslaved and tortured millions of Africans and continues to target Black people through the violence of surveillance, policing, and imprisonment. **Through its drawing of borders and hostile, anti-asylum, and racist policies, it ongoingly designates Black, Indigenous, people of color, disabled, neurodivergent, poor, undocumented, substance-dependent, and vulnerable people as worthy of death or imprisonment.** The current government puts migrants in camps, uses cruel and unusual techniques to deter migration, and devises ways for migrants to die in the borderlands.

While the US government commits atrocities across the globe and calls it freedom, the media largely falls in line and parrots state propaganda, creating a system that either breaks trust with the public, creating a breeding ground for misinformation and disinformation, or fuels the forces of fascism, manufacturing consent for imperialist forever wars and genocide. Traditional media primes US readers to simply accept that there is nothing to be done beyond

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the ballot and obscures the power of resistance movements and solidarity across communities. What’s more, **social media algorithms are deprioritizing and sometimes outright censoring coverage of Palestine.** These realities make it all the more urgent for us, as movement journalism organizations, to say without reservation that we are committed to a free Palestine and to put that commitment into practice through our work.

“While the US government commits atrocities across the globe and calls it freedom, the media largely falls in line and parrots state propaganda, creating a system that either breaks trust with the public, creating a breeding ground for misinformation and disinformation, or fuels the forces of fascism, manufacturing consent for imperialist forever wars and genocide.”

For many of our organizations, this commitment to Palestinian liberation is deeply tied to our dedication to prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition. As **Nadine Naber** writes in *Truthout*, “During this profoundly terrorizing moment of Palestinian genocide, we need to acknowledge how the structures of incarceration, anti-migrant violence, and US conquest have always gone hand in hand.” In our publications, we document training exchanges between local police forces and the Israeli military, the imprisonment of many thousands of Palestinians in administrative detention in Israeli jails, and the

surveillance and policing of anti-Zionist movements across the country and worldwide. **We chronicle how**, even before Israel began its escalated genocide against Palestinians, **Gaza was widely understood as an open-air prison** because of Israel’s blockade on movement, travel, food, and other goods, and restrictions on exports and construction. Our publications further portray the ways in which anti-carceral struggles—from Palestine to the US and beyond—are interconnected, from **the messages exchanged between imprisoned hunger strikers in the US and Palestine to the formation of INCITE Palestine Force**, an arm of one of the longest-running abolitionist organizations in the country.

Many of our publications bring this abolitionist lens to our coverage of the police repression of pro-Palestine protests and direct action, some of which have resulted in mass arrests (both planned and unplanned), leading protesters to experience the violence of jails firsthand. As **Sumona Gupta** writes in *Scalawag*, “Militarized police responses, as noted in the response to US student protests, are part of a long history of colonial repression tactics, meant to quell disruptions in the state status quo.”

Movement journalists are drawing these connections between systems of oppression across borders and across seemingly disparate issues. For example, as **Mondoweiss** has observed, **activists have long protested the imprisonment, torture, and sexual abuse of growing numbers of Palestinians** in Israeli jails, as well as the broader occupation and apartheid. Documenting these intersections is critical, as **dominant media tend to report on issues in silos, creating an illusion of conflicting struggles that feeds imperialist agendas.**

We recognize, too, that the repression of journalists who are truthfully covering Palestine is part of a broader reality of media repression that props up the PIC, colonialism, and imperialism around the world. **The repression of accountable journalism is a state tool against resistance** movements everywhere. This includes **censorship of journalists writing from inside prisons and jails.** It includes the surveillance, prosecution, and imprisonment of whistleblowers and media workers who expose state secrets. And it includes the **assassination of journalists beyond Palestine**, including, in recent years, in Sudan, Myanmar, Brazil, India, Mexico, and the US.

By coming together in this time of genocide, our movement media organizations are **saying no to an ethos of competition and isolation**, recognizing that a principled coalition strengthens all of our work. Together, as MAAD, we can better work to **shift the political narrative, change public opinion, and record the vital work of movements**, even amid censorship and repression. Our publications are breaking with the rules of normative media to **tell the true stories of colonization, occupation, and genocide—and the liberatory grassroots movements** that hold the power to free us all. ♦

About the Authors:

Lara Witt is a writer, the editor-in-chief of **Prism**, and the co-founder of *Media Against Apartheid & Displacement*. Their goal is to provide platforms for marginalized voices and reshape the media landscape.

Maya Schenwar is director of the *Truthout* Center for Grassroots Journalism and co-founder of *Media Against Apartheid & Displacement*. She is also *Truthout*’s board president and editor-at-large. She is the co-editor of the forthcoming book *We Grow the World Together: Parenting Toward Abolition* and co-author of *Prison by Any Other Name*.

FEATURES KITE

Beyond Decorating the Walls: A Letter from a Political Prisoner to the Students Fighting for Palestine

By Rene Goddard

“There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen.”

-Vladimir I Lenin

I first saw you on TV in my housing unit, while I was rushing off to work at my 40-cents-an-hour prison job. Here, you have to buy a shitty pocket radio from commissary to watch TV, because the audio is only transmitted through FM radio. I couldn’t hear anything because my radio was broken, but I could still see the headline: PRO-PALESTINE TAKEOVER ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

Images of people—young people, people around my age, people who looked like I did when I was in college four years ago—flashed across the screen. They were in keffiyehs and flags of red, green, and black, waving banners, climbing flag poles, stacking food and supplies, locking arms in front of riot police and in front of graffiti on college buildings. They were chanting, singing, clapping, resisting.

Tear gas never comes out of your clothes. It’s a smell you never forget. Or the sound—a pop when the canister is released, and a high-pitched whine when it flies in an arc, trailing thick, stinging smoke that makes the air acrid. When the police make mass arrests at protests, they often use zip ties because they don’t have enough cuffs. The feeling of those cutting into your wrists is something you never forget either, or the feeling of your face slamming into concrete when they arrest you. You don’t forget the crying and the screaming and the scuffles. You don’t forget your friend running to you with a water bottle to help you wash out your eyes. You also don’t forget the chanting, the singing, the laughter, the music. Speakers on wagons and bikes. Kids dancing with their parents, or hiding

behind them shyly, or sitting on their shoulders and chanting right along with us.

One of the last things I did before I was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison was travel to DC to march alongside 300,000 people from all over the country for a free Palestine. I marched with a Korean anti-imperialist organization called **Nodutdol**, which brought pungmul drummers to the demonstration. Pungmul is a Korean style of drumming with a rich history in mass protests and demonstrations. Sometimes pungmul incorporates dancing in a performance art known as samul-nori. More specifically, pungmul has often been associated with the Korean democratization movement: Student-led mass demonstrations against US-backed dictators and US military occupation in South Korea in the mid-twentieth century.

At one point, a Korean organizer from Nodutdol and a Palestinian organizer began trading the mic with each other, leading chants of “Free, free Palestine!” in rhythm. Suddenly, the crowd parted as three Palestinian men began dancing in tandem to the beat of the pungmul drummers and the chanting. Later, I learned this dance is called the “dabke,” another art with a rich history, also rooted in protest and resistance. Most notably, Palestinians—including children—have bravely danced the dabke in front of the occupier’s snipers. It is a symbol of freedom, prosperity, and liberation.

“Free, free, free Palestine!” The two chant leaders continued, the Palestinian men dancing to the Korean pungmul drummers, everyone’s hearts on fire, people whose heritages and cultures come from half a world away from each other united in struggle, with no need for explanation. A *halmeoni* (the Korean word for grandmother, used as a respectful term for any elderly woman) joined in the circle to dance, her



Photo by Brooke Anderson.

face the picture of joy, as she struck a small hand drum to the beat. She was carrying a sign that depicted the beautiful shape of a unified Korean peninsula filled in blue, above a red heart, then the beautiful shape of historic Palestine filled in red, black, and green. How shapes, outlines, and colors can speak more volumes than words.

The other day I found this in a copy of *USA Today*, from Columbia student protester **Allie Wong**: “We sang with broken yet mighty voices, ‘Your people are my people, your people are mine; your people are my people, our struggles align.’ We were a group of activists of differing faiths and none, friends and strangers united, linking arms with one another and, in spirit, with the generations of courageous students who came before us.”

Right now, **as you sing and laugh and chant and resist, you’re giving hope to a political prisoner in the middle of Alabama**, a thousand miles away from your college campus. You’re giving hope to a people resisting occupation half a world away. Your efforts are documented in zines that officers shove into my hands when I hear my name at mail call. You don’t know me and I don’t know you and we don’t know that little girl who died in Gaza or her father clutching her in his grief, but we have all looked into each other’s eyes, half a world away from each other.

“Palestine has revealed the conscience of the world.” I have no idea who said that, or if I even remember the original quote correctly. The US government—the same government arming the Zionist entity with weapons to enact a genocide—has determined that people who have

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committed “crimes” shouldn’t be able to look things up, or write essays like this, or see our family and friends when we want to, or be an active member of our communities and families. But they can’t take away our memories, and this quote has stubbornly remained in mine.

Prison robs you of your freedom—but even in circumstances where human beings are exposed to extreme limitation and repression, we find ways to exercise autonomy and resistance. A girl in here who’s done 17 of a 22-year sentence said to me once: *“Just because your body is incarcerated, doesn’t mean your mind has to be.”*

Seeing you on TV standing in your power, I feel not only connected to you, having marched for the same cause, but also curious about what other connections might lie between us while I’m in prison. The most coveted job in the prison is **UNICOR**, which pays a whopping \$0.90 to \$1.20 an hour. The UNICOR girls work the hardest and make the most money. “What do they do in there?” I asked my coworker once. “Um, I think they make sleeping bags,” she said. “For the army.” The closer you look, the more connec-

tions you see. These CAT machines we maintain for the prison look a lot like the ones used by the Zionist occupiers to demolish Palestinian homes. Materials used by the US military—the same military that supports and trains, arms and supplies the Zionist occupiers—are created and distributed with prison labor. Our cops cross-train with the Zionist occupiers. And they look a lot like the killer cops we protested against in 2020, and a lot like the cops who arrested us for destroying their vehicles and defacing Confederate iconography.

The question is, ***what can we make of these connections? What does this information mean to people who are captives of the US, inside and outside of prison?*** We all play a crucial role as citizens and residents of the very same imperialist superpower responsible for the Zionist entity’s existence and current positional-ity in our world, and at the same time, it feels as if our hands are tied.

As Lenin reminds us, decades happened in the summer of 2020, and decades are happening now. But the “nothing” in between is not actu-ally nothing: Those are the years of growth. As

important as it is to make bold political state-ments and to take a stand through protest and direct action, it’s just as important to study with your comrades. If I have any advice at all, it’s to reach out to your communities. Learn about the Palestinian struggle, about Congo, about Cuba, Korea, China, Chile, your own region, your city, your neighborhood—the **war zone wherever you are**. Read and join an organization that is dedicated to abolishing capitalism and imperi-alism.

Tomorrow is the first meeting of our prison book club. Just because our bodies are incarcerated, doesn’t mean our minds have to be. ♦

About the Author

Rene Baek Goddard is a US-born Korean social-ist organizer, journalist, and adult entertainment worker incarcerated for charges related to the 2020 George Floyd uprisings—referred to as an “ama-teur pornstar and domestic terrorist” by right-wing media (something she is very proud of). She was recently released to a federal halfway house. Her girlfriend, Ángel, is still a political prisoner and is facing deportation.

FEATURES ACTION

Border Militarism, Drug Wars & Freedom

By Dawn Marie Paley and Ricardo Vela Jr

Editors’ Note: The Abolitionist Editorial Col-lective spoke with two authors on different sides of the US-Mexico border to examine border militarism, the “war on drugs,” and resistance. Below we publish a piece based on **an interview The Abolitionist conduct-ed with journalist Dawn Marie Paley**, who resides and writes in Mexico and is the au-thor of **Drug War Capitalism**, published by AK Press in 2014. This interview is combined with a written submission by a returning contributor to The Abolitionist, **Ricardo Vela Jr, who is locked up in Texas (TX)**. Dawn of-fers insight from her decades-long research on how the neoliberal state uses the prison industrial complex (PIC) to create a con-stant war on people across the Americas, particularly Central and South America. Ri-cardo then shares personal experiences and historical reflections on growing up in the border town of Laredo, TX, and surviving the “war on drugs” from a US-based Latinx perspective.

WARMAKING AND NEOLIBERALISM: A WAR ON THE PEOPLE

Dawn Marie Paley

The “war on drugs” entered the national se-curity lexicon in countries outside the US, particularly in Colombia, México and across Central America, in the 1980s and 1990s. By the end of the 1990s, there was a shift away from the Cold War discourse of the “war on com-munism” toward a *depoliticized discourse* centering on the so-called “war on drugs” and on “organized crime”. During the rise of neo-liberalism, this shift materializes in major US assistance packages to foreign nations, specifi-cally to Colombia through the **Plan Colombia** in 1999 and then to México in 2006. When we are interrogating the relationship between neo-liberalism and constant warmaking, it’s key to understand how depoliticizing the discourses surrounding the “war on drugs” are. The police and increasingly the army are positioned as pro-protecting people from harmful substances and the people producing and trafficking them.

One of the key arguments I sustain in my work is that this framing of **the “war on drugs” is a pretext to carry out a war on the people**. Poor people, Indigenous people, rural people, and folks living in urban neighborhoods are being displaced from where they live, often through vi-olence or through the threat of violence. Those same territories, those same neighborhoods, are then gentrified or taken over by corporate inter-ests, whether in mining, tourism, or otherwise.



By Melanie Cervantes of Dignidad Rebelde & Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

Territories and neighborhoods that remain in the hands of traditional owners, people who’ve been there for generations, are seen by capital as blocking progress. And when other means don’t work, they are displaced through violence. Today that violence is justified by appealing to the “war on drugs.” For their part, **journalists are forced into silence**, which means we know little about what’s actually happening in many parts of the country.

Though we’re constantly told this is about controlling narcotics, it’s actually about guaranteeing the conditions for capitalist expansion.

This is a reactionary war. In México, over 500,000 people have been either disappeared or murdered because of this war since 2006. Then there is displacement, and people living under threat; some folks are internally dis-placed, and others have become refugees in other countries. This **social violence has as its backbone the repressive actions of the army and the police**. And then there are all these so-called drug cartels, which are better understood as paramilitary groups, that have multiplied and strengthened through this process of militariza-tion.

RESISTING THE DRUG WAR IN MÉXICO

The “war on drugs” has created a panorama of extreme violence in México. Engaging in resis-tance is something that’s extremely scary and

sometimes dangerous. Even so, we’ve seen mas-sive protests over the years against the violence associated with the “war on drugs,” specifically **the disappearance of the 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Teacher Training College** in Guerrero in 2014. On a micro level, staying where you are and surviving by not saying any-thing and hanging on to your family home or to your land can be forms of resistance, albeit in-visible ones. At the same time, choosing to leave and migrate to somewhere safer can also be a form of resistance.

There are also practice of resistance taking place at the neighborhood, town, and village lev-els. These include the work of different kinds of self-defense groups which watch over their ter-ritories in a more organized fashion. Sometimes these groups are armed, and sometimes they’re unarmed, working with the goal of ensuring those who do harm or are actors in the “war on drugs,” including parts of the state repressive apparatus as well as members of the paramili-tary groups, don’t come into their territories.

In México, there are currently over 160 groups, the majority of which are women-led, that are called **colectivos de búsqueda**, or “**search col-lectives**.” These groups **search for over 110,000 people who’ve been disappeared since 2006**. These collectives are self-organized and au-tonomous, and they work toward justice. Most are looking for human remains, but some are looking for people who are alive, entering plac-es where disappeared people could end up, like prisons, hospitals, red-light zones, and shelters. This organizing is **another kind of self-de-fense**, one that raises the issue in the media and gets people talking about disappearance. The women who are leading these groups do this as unpaid, voluntary work and have become key in their communities.

When there’s a disappearance or someone’s getting fucked over by the police, these lead-ers get a call from the victim’s family or friends. And there are different responses depending on the context. If someone was last seen being picked up by the cops or disappeared, then it’s, “let’s go to the police station en masse,” or, “let’s gather at the military base and try to get them to release that person.”

Because of the way the court system and the larg-er PIC is structured, disappearance ties families to the state. These groups always have to make sure that there is a formal complaint made be-fore the police and through the PIC’s channels. But the searches and the provision of support and advice for family members are ways to work around the system to get results. The state has no interest in finding the disappeared.

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There are also **caravans**, which have been used in all different contexts, starting around 2011 with the **Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad, (the Movement for Peace and Justice with Dignity, or MPJD)**, led by **Javier Sicilia**. These were the first caravans organized in response to the “war on drugs.” The idea of a caravan is to travel from city to city; folks in the caravan include victims, survivors, and potentially members of support groups or friendly media. Their goal is to spread the word about the injustices taking place, to gather more testimonies, and to meet with more victims and supporters.

The initial caravans traveled all over México and to the US. There was a strong stigma attached to being a victim of the “war on drugs” or the family member of a victim, because the implication was that you were somehow involved in drug trafficking, which is highly stigmatized. One of the key impacts of the MPJD was to start to break that stigma. Today, there are many different caravans, especially searching for the disappeared. For example, the **mothers of Central Americans who’ve disappeared in México** regularly use caravans as means of searching for their loved ones in a very public way.

Then there’s the **feminist movement, which right now is the biggest, most vibrant social movement in México**. It can **convene more people on the streets across the country simultaneously** than any other political or social movement. The feminist movement is all about ending the many forms of violence against women, including state violence. A huge part of the feminist movement is against *machista* violence, which is often understood narrowly to mean partner violence. But I think it’s much broader than that. Women also face violence from police, from the army, and from other state officials. They are revictimized by the injustice system if they’re already victims. The feminist movement has overflowed the traditional channels of institutional feminism that prescribed what women were allowed to do to resist violence.

Indigenous resistance is ongoing and has been for more than 500 years. Today, organizing through assemblies to prevent the sale and expropriation of land, or the entry of transnational capital into the land, is another way to respond to drug war violence. There are well-known examples, like the example of **Cherán, Michoacan**, an Indigenous community whose strong (initially women-led) organizing prevented organized “crime,” especially related to illegal logging, from taking lands in their territory (a struggle covered in issues 33 and 34 of *The Abolitionist* in 2020-2021). Communities throughout the country are using assemblies and communitarian forms of government to protect themselves. We see this in the attempts to defend communal lands in the face of the **Mayan Train** and the **Trans-Isthmus Corridor** projects in the southeast (covered in *The Abolitionist* Issue 41).

Additionally, there are efforts to use the legal system to stop some of the most flagrant harms. Mostly feminist-led, these organizations pressure the Supreme Court to try make sure that the National Guard isn’t formally recognized as a military force and they are organizing to end detention without trial.

A COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

I remember very well the protests against the US-war in Iraq and the feeling that something else could happen. Those were huge protests. They did not stop the war, but it was important that they happened. They politicized a lot of people around US empire.

One of the questions I had when I started working on *Drug War Capitalism* was: **“Why isn’t the ‘war on drugs’ included in the broader anti-war movement, especially since the hand of Washington is so clear?”** Washington starts giving billions of dollars to México for security in the context of the “war on drugs,” and the number of people being killed and disappeared skyrockets. There’s a very clear connection between those two things. Within the US and beyond its borders, this is a war on the



By Josh MacPhee, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

people, and it’s a war waged on clear territories strategic to capital, and to break down social forms, to allow for the penetration of neoliberal capitalism and transnational corporations.

“Within the US and beyond its borders, this is a war on the people, and it’s a war waged on clear territories strategic to capital, and to break down social forms, to allow for the penetration of neoliberal capitalism and transnational corporations.”

What makes sense today is connecting with people doing the work, whether through the prism of migrant justice, the prism of Indigenous struggle, in relation to organizing against disappearance, with grassroots labor groups, with collectives promoting harm reduction, or through the feminist movement. While it may not be their central focus, all these movements are resisting the drug war, because they are all up against the disciplinary violence it imposes through terror.

IS THE “WAR ON DRUGS” A “FAILURE,” OR HAS IT SUCCEEDED BEYOND THEIR WILDEST DREAMS?

Ricardo Vela Jr

A BOY IN A BORDERTOWN

The burnt-orange sunset glows on the western horizon; night will soon fall over the South Texas plains. The young boy knows he should be on his way home and people who love him will worry, but sometimes he feels safer out here, alone with his dog. Often struggling to connect with other boys and not interested in girls yet, the boy spends a lot of his free time down in the *arroyo*, Chacon Creek, occupied with what he has started to think are “mind games.” It’s a phrase he learned from his father, who once drunkenly shouted: *“Are you playing mind games with me?”* The boy loves and admires his father, only wants to make him proud, but he doesn’t like being around him when he’s drinking. In no hurry to get home, the boy carefully hides behind the thick wall of *carrizo* that grows where the creek meets the river.

Recalling the stories passed down to him by his father and his uncles, the boy imagines being a proud, defiant *tequilero*, a tequila smuggler, attempting to avoid detection and certain ambush by *los rinches cobardes*, the cowardly Texas Rangers. As the twilight fades he decides it’s time to get moving. Casting a quick, furtive look up and down the riverbank one final time, he confidently begins to make his way up the embankment and down into the *arroyo*. As his eyes adjust to the fast-approaching night, he cautiously ducks under low, thorny branches of

mesquite and the saw-like palm branches gently swaying in the early evening breeze, expertly sidestepping pads of *nopal*, the spring prickly pear cactus that covers the land as far as the eye can see. Taking great care to keep his body as close as he can to the rock walls that line both sides of the *arroyo*, he begins to climb a huge sandstone boulder – this one’s as big as a house, he thinks to himself, amazed, as he makes his ascent. Reaching the top, he makes a complete 360-degree survey of his surroundings and is relieved to see no sign of those sneaky *rinches* (rangers). Satisfied the reconnaissance mission was a success, the boy drops back down into the walls of the *arroyo* and leads his horse (actually his dog) back to the smuggler’s cove where the rest of his small band of *tequileros* awaits his return.

It’s past 10:00 pm when the young boy finally arrives home. Peeking through the front window, he notices the TV is on but the La-Z-Boy, where his father can usually be found when he’s home, is empty. Relieved that he doesn’t need to explain where he’s been, he steps into the living room and, turning to the TV, he sees the news is on. He watches as the new president, Ronald Reagan, says something about “the Sandinistas” being only a “two-hour drive from Harlingen, Texas.” Familiar with Harlingen from family vacations to South Padre Island, the boy wonders why Reagan thinks it would be a bad thing for Sandinistas to drive to Harlingen. After all, aren’t we taught that “America” is for everyone? Must be some kind of “mind game” Reagan is playing.

The young boy has seen some of Reagan’s movies when he watches Westerns with his father. Like all other cowboys in those Westerns, Reagan kills a lot of “Indians” and “bandits.” Their brown skin and distinctive features resemble a lot of people in Laredo. Threatened, the boy grabs the remote for the new color TV his dad bought and turns to the new channel everyone’s talking about, MTV. He’s intrigued by the music video, by both the sound and the look of the four musicians who are encouraging everyone to “Rock the Casbah!” As the song ends and the credits appear at the bottom left corner of the screen, he almost misses it, but he sees it clearly – The Clash, “Rock the Casbah”, “Sandinista!” – and wonders what it all means.

“KNOW YOUR ENEMY”

I had no way of knowing it back then, but **growing up in Laredo I was immersed in white supremacy, multi-grade war, genocide, and resistance**. Still years away from my first broken bone, which eventually led to a broken heart, *how was I to know what was mere child’s play was in fact the residue of the terror, lynching, criminalization and trauma that mark the true history of the Texas Rangers along the Rio Grande?* This residue hardens into the social conditioning and resignation that cause most residents of the area to take up the path of least resistance – to “go with the flow,” down that deceptively slow-moving but mighty river – while others furiously struggle against it. *How was I to know?*

The capitalist class in the US has long recognized the usefulness of various programs of drug prohibition and regulation to make money and control people. The Hague Convention, for example, for the control of opium sales in 1912, the **Harrison Act** in 1914, and the **Boggs Act** in 1951, which put cannabis in the same category as cocaine and heroin, are a few well-known policy initiatives. It wasn’t until popular people’s movements in the 1960s and 1970s threatened the status quo and in turn were met with repressive terror from the state during the neoliberal restructuring of the global economy that things took a more ominous turn. When these trends dovetailed, and global elites and their goons began to recognize the need to sideline surplus labor and repress political dissent, the Nixon administration built the “Trojan Horse” that is the modern-day “war on drugs.”

Sold as an urgent effort to combat “out-of-control” drug use in the summer of 1971, this federal

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offensive included **increased surveillance and policing**, the **reclassification of certain drugs**, and the implementation of draconian sentencing for the use, possession, and distribution of criminalized substances. While Main Street might have been duped, more perceptive members of communities across the US saw the writing on the wall: the **“war on drugs” was actually a sophisticated, cleverly designed, full-frontal assault** on the political opponents of the paranoid Nixon administration and, more generally, a **ruthless attack on surplus workers left out of the emerging neoliberal global economy**. All of this laid the groundwork for the PIC as we know it.

“The capitalist class in the US has long recognized the usefulness of various programs of drug prohibition and regulation to make money and control people.”

In the late 1980s, with the Base Closure and Realignment Act, Congress authorized the transfer of “surplus” or “excess” real properties to other federal, state, or local agencies for use as penal/correctional facilities or “drug treatment centers” (usually locked facilities). As if that wasn’t enough, the federal **1033 program** both expanded police resources and allowed for the militarization of domestic “law enforcement” agencies by authorizing the **Department of Defense (DoD) to funnel military equipment into the already bloody hands of cops around the country**. If you ever wonder why the local pigs have tank-like armored personnel carriers to bust the local weed dealer or the unhoused veterans numbing their trauma with dope down the street, that’s why. Setting aside amendments to the **Insurrection and Posse Comitatus Acts**, two things that should concern all freedom-loving people, it’s clear that there has been a deliberate blurring of the lines between the military and domestic spheres, leading to an enlarged role for the DoD in traditionally civilian activities. For example, after 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina, George W Bush called for an increased role for the DoD and federal armed forces in responding to domestic emergencies. On the border, the military has long supported **Border Patrol operations with National Guard troops operating surveillance systems**, analyzing intel, and installing fences. Most alarming of all is the **Homeland Security Act** of 2002, which was followed by the formation of **“USNORTHCOM”** (US Northern Command), whose mission is “to provide command and control of DoD homeland defense efforts and to coordinate defense support of civil authorities.”

Our enemies continue to devise new ways of waging this destructive war, hunting us down, caging us, and killing us. Look at the cost and carnage: more than a trillion dollars, tens of millions of arrests, many lives wasted behind bars, whole communities devastated, whole countries invaded, countless deaths across Latin America and the broader Global South resulting from drug wars that are fueled by lucrative drug prohibition policies—stretching now far beyond **Plan Colombia**, the **Mérida Initiative**, or the **20-year poppy war in Afghanistan**. For all these costs, there has been no appreciable decline in drug use or production. In fact, teenagers are using drugs at twice the rate that they did in the 1980s.

ABOLITION NOW

As abolitionists, it is our work and responsibility to educate ourselves and others, to interrogate and complicate common (mis)understandings, to think critically and challenge the so-called “common sense” that surrounds the PIC and the various interlocking, overlapping methods and schemes used by those in power to expand and protect racial capitalism. Committed to principled and disciplined praxis, we are called upon to organize our communities, raise awareness, shift power, and develop healthy alternatives to the PIC, staying true to our overall strategy and ultimate goal: the complete dismantling of the PIC and the ending of the wars it both gives birth to and feeds on.

As abolitionists, we understand the PIC is not a “broken system to be fixed but instead works precisely as designed: to cage, control and kill those representing the greatest threat to state power,” as Critical Resistance has worked to prove since the late 1990s. Similarly, **we should reject and challenge the dangerous reformist rhetoric that attempts to characterize the “war on drugs” as a “failure”**. This emerging

consensus is dangerous, because it implies the “war on drugs” might have “succeeded” if only it had been waged “differently.” This ignores its core purpose and historical impact.♦

About the Authors:

Dawn Marie Paley is a journalist covering extractive industries, trade, and organized violence and criminalization throughout the Americas, with a focus on southwest Colombia, Guatemala, pre- and post-coup Honduras, and northeast México. She is the author of *Drug War Capitalism*; a contributing editor at Canada’s only independent news cooperative, *The Dominion*; and a cofounder of the *Vancouver Media Co-op*. With a Master’s in Journalism from the University of British Columbia, Dawn is a doctoral student at the Autonomous University of Puebla in México.

Imprisoned in Texas, **Ricardo Vela Jr.** dreams of a world with no borders, no flags, and no cages. He hopes to one day raise milk goats successfully ... and maybe even one day meet his daughter.

Write to Ricardo at:
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Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice
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REFORMIST REFORMS vs ABOLITIONIST STEPS TO END THE DRUG WAR

Recently, **Interrupting Criminalization (IC)** and the **Movement for Family Power (MFP)** released a report, **“Building Black Feminist Visions to End the Drug War,”** which includes an organizing resource inspired by CR’s shrink-and-starve organizing strategy and assessment of **reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps**. The report applies this framework to some common proposed responses to the “war on drugs.” Like CR’s charts, this new resource weighs how a reform in question:

- Reduces the role, funding, and violence of drug law enforcement;
- Reduces surveillance, criminalization, and the social control of drug users;
- Reduces coerced drug treatment and mandated medical interventions;
- Reduces stigma surrounding drug use, sales, growing, and/or other drug involvement; and
- Affirms drug users’ rights to autonomy, self-determination, dignity, and freedom from violence, and increases access to voluntary, harm-reduction-based interventions and care.

These criteria show that many of the popular “solutions” to the drug war currently gaining traction are in fact reformist and won’t do much if anything to end the drug war’s violence. **These reformist reforms include:** court-mandated treatment; mandated drug “treatment” through diversion programs; mandated or non-consensual drug testing; eliminating felony offenses or criminal offenses for certain drug offenses; bans on public services, benefits, and participation in civic life for people who use drugs and people with prior convictions; enhanced penalties for drugs that are already illegal (or new drugs); criminalizing use in public spaces; creating drug-free zones; and creating “drug-induced homicide” offenses and enhanced penalties for people who sell drugs. These criteria above also show, however, that **a number of abolitionist solutions do exist that would end the violence of the drug war** by shrinking the PIC. **These abolitionist steps include:** decriminalizing drug use, drug possession, drug using supplies or equipment, and places where people use drugs; ensuring universal access to no-cost, voluntary harm-reduction-based, accessible care for drug-users regardless of pregnancy or parental status, migration or citizenship status, or other diagnoses; ensuring access to age-appropriate and factually correct drug education and overdose prevention information; ensuring access to greater drug checking technology and/or a safe supply of drugs; eliminating state-sanctioned sexual assault; ending the forced sterilization of drug users; and putting an end to the exporting of the drug war abroad.

Check out this new chart at: www.interruptingcriminalization.com/resources

If you’re imprisoned and would like a copy of CR’s charts or for a CR mail program to send you the new chart from IC & MFP, contact CR’s national office at:

The Abolitionist
Attn: IC Resource
PO Box 22780, Oakland CA 94609

FEATURES RESOURCE

Drawing Connections: The Cost of “War Abroad” to the War on Homelessness

Editors’ Note: *The week the Editorial Collective printed our summer issue of The Abolitionist 41 on ecological justice, the US Supreme Court issued its ruling known as “Grants Pass,” deciding that the US Constitution does not protect people against cruel and unusual punishment for sleeping outside, even if they have nowhere else to go.*

City to city and coast to coast, we’ve since seen a wave of statewide and local orders for police to attack, round up, sweep and disband encampments of houseless people. Meanwhile, the US has continued to give Israel carte blanche military aid for its genocidal campaign of Palestinians, as the rate of homelessness rises in the US due to

continued lack of affordable housing. This contradiction got the Editorial Collective thinking about the connections between the military industrial complex (MIC) and homelessness.

The following factsheet combines research and writing from a variety of sources—

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first, text from a **flyer Critical Resistance (CR) Oakland created with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW, now a new organization called About Face: Veterans Against the War)** in the early 2000s that makes connections between the prison industrial complex (PIC) and MIC to reveal how the US's wars abroad are bound with the war machine domestically within the US. "The War is Not Over" flyer is the expanded into a feature factsheet by adding current statistics and figures from Brown University, the National Library of Medicine, US Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Department of Justice's Office to Access, as military veterans still face high rates of homelessness and imprisonment once out of military service.

“THE WAR IS NOT OVER” BY CR & IVAW

US imperialism destroys lives. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the hundreds of thousands more related to attacks on infrastructure such as water systems and hospitals in those countries, and the generations of trauma and instability war leaves in its wake, war has a devastating impact on the soldiers sent to do the killing and the dying. **Wars abroad are directly connected to the war at home.**

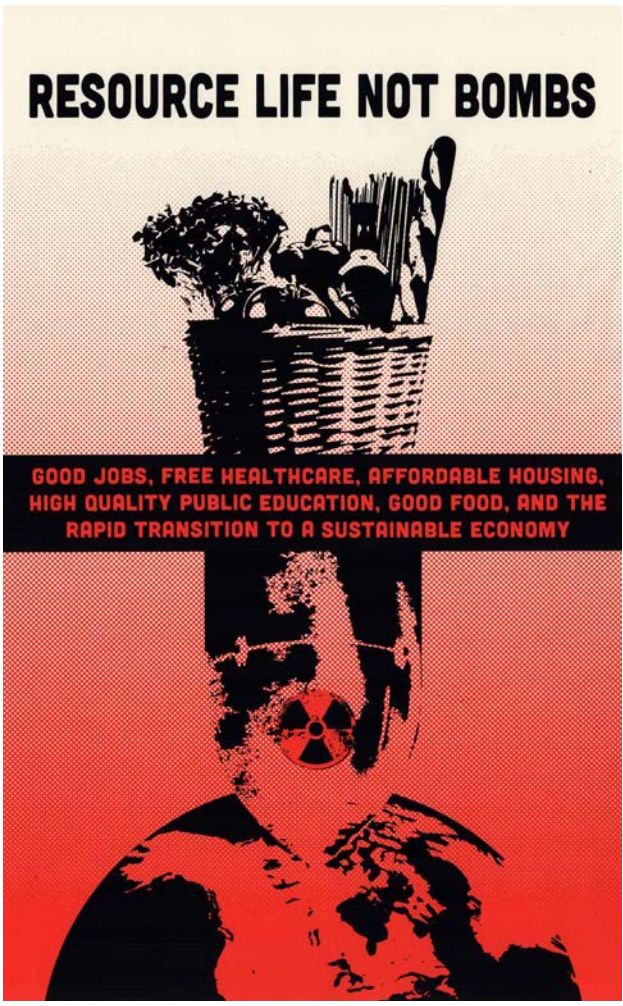
Many people recruited into the military, especially people of color, are pulled from low-income communities—the same communities suffering most intensely from economic inequity, racism, lack of access to meaningful work, good schools, decent housing, environmental destruction, and reliable healthcare, as well as gentrification and displacement. They are also the communities most negatively impacted by the violence of policing and imprisonment. Indeed, **we see more and more veterans returning home not to the good jobs, free education, or the veneration they were promised—but to debilitating mental and physical health problems, poverty, and prison cells.**

Furthermore, **some of the same weapons** (guns, helicopters, armored vehicles, surveillance technology), **tactics** (no knock entry, kettling, aerial surveillance), **and players** (Haliburton, Raytheon, Kroll) **employed to wage foreign wars are used to surveil, police, and imprison our most vulnerable communities at home** as well.

FROM “HUMAN COSTS OF WAR,” BROWN UNIVERSITY, WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

At least **940,000 people have been killed by direct war violence in the US's post-9/11 wars** in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan. The **number of people who have been wounded or have fallen ill because of these wars is far higher**, as is the number of civilians who have died indirectly due to the destruction of hospitals and infrastructure, and environmental contamination, among other war-related problems.

Thousands of US service members have died in combat, as have thousands of civilian contractors. Many have died later from injuries



By Ivan Arenes, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

and illnesses sustained in the war zones. Hundreds of **thousands of soldiers and contractors have been wounded and are living with disabilities and war-related illnesses.** Allied security forces have also suffered significant casualties, as have opposition forces. Far more of the people killed have been civilians. **More than 432,000 civilians have been killed in combat** since 2001.

Millions of people living in the war zones have also been **displaced by war.** The US post-9/11 wars have **forcibly displaced at least 38 million people** in and from Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya and Syria. This number exceeds the total displaced by every war since 1900 except World War II.

FROM NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

Homelessness continues to be a major public health problem in the US. In 2020, the number of people experiencing homelessness in the US was estimated to be approximately 600, 000, although the true figure is likely much higher (according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development). **Military veterans comprise a substantial proportion of the US homeless population** and they represent a group at elevated risk of experiencing homelessness. Although the US has seen substantial progress in reducing homelessness among veterans over the past two decades with the rate of veteran homelessness decreasing by nearly half since 2009, it is estimated that on a single night in 2020, at least **37,000 veterans** were experiencing homelessness.

ACCORDING TO US DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS

- In January 2023, 35,574 veterans experienced homelessness in the US, which was a 7.4 percent increase from 2022. However, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness has decreased by 52 percent since 2010.
- In January 2023, 20,067 veterans were experiencing sheltered homelessness, while 15,507 were experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Sheltered homelessness includes emergency shelters, transitional housing, and other supportive settings. Unsheltered homelessness includes living in cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, and on the street.
- 87.8 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness in January 2023 were men, and 11.2 percent were women.
- 30 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness in January 2023 had **chronic patterns** of homelessness.

ACCORDING TO THE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- In 2021, **76 percent of low-income veteran households** reported a civil legal problem, and 44 percent experienced at least five civil legal problems.
- Low-income veteran households did not receive any or enough legal help for 84 percent of their substantial civil legal problems in 2021.
- Unaddressed legal problems can worsen the risks that veterans face – from homelessness to incarceration and from joblessness to suicide.
- Veterans from vulnerable and marginalized communities often face unique legal problems because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other status.
- In 2021, **72 percent of homeless veterans in emergency shelters**, safe havens, or transitional housing programs reported **having a disability.**
- **Seven of the top ten unmet needs of homeless veterans are legal issues:** court fees and fines, credit issues, expungement of criminal records, child support, family law, discharge upgrade appeals, and tax issues.
- **One in three of the US's 19 million veterans report having been arrested** at least once in their lifetime, and an **estimated 107,400 veterans are incarcerated** in state or federal facilities.
- Veterans make up nearly 8 percent of the state prison population and almost 6 percent of the federal prison population.
- About 1 in 4 male veterans in state prison (28 percent) and 1 in 5 (20 percent) in federal prison are combat veterans.
- **Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are 61 percent more likely to be criminalized and targeted by policing** and veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) are 59 percent more likely to experience criminal legal involvement.
- **About 30 percent of incarcerated Veterans have a history of homelessness.** ♦

FEATURES RESOURCE

Regulating Traumatic Stress

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a common side effect of war. The term emerged during the US's war on Vietnam (1965-75) to describe the delayed effects of combat exposure, but there were earlier terms that described the violent impacts war has on survivors, soldiers, and veterans, such as "shell shock," "war neurosis," "battle exhaustion," and "thousand-yard stare." Since PTSD was officially recognized as a mental health condition in 1980, research has furthered our understanding of how any experi-

ence of interpersonal, institutional, or state violence may cause someone to have PTSD.

According to the Center for Health Care Strategies, trauma "results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being." Such experiences can include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; childhood neglect; living with a family member

with mental health or substance use struggles; sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one; poverty; and racism, discrimination, and oppression, in addition to violence in the community and, of course, war. The prison industrial complex (PIC) certainly creates and exacerbates layered traumas for us and our communities. A person taken away from their family and community while locked up can create trauma for the imprisoned person and their family and friends.

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It is possible for people to heal their trauma and learn to regulate traumatic stress. Treating trauma can involve many approaches, and even within different schools of therapy, there are options. Our bodies store trauma – and instructions for how we instinctively respond to similar circumstances in the future – in the inner brain, nervous system, and in tissues and muscles. While working with a therapist through a form of “talk” therapy including cognitive behavioral therapy can be very helpful – and is a great resource for additional support, especially to manage symptoms of PTSD including depression, isolation, or self-harm tendencies – talking about and cognitively processing trauma doesn’t fully heal the wounds in our brains and nervous systems to resolve trauma completely. This is why specific “trauma therapy” exercises are important. They stimulate the inner parts of the brain involving emotions, memories, and impulses (and therefore trauma) and help us regulate our nervous systems by moving stress chemicals and hormones through our bodies, so **we can move trauma through rather than keep it stored** inside of us. **Somatic therapy** is one type of trauma therapy that focuses less on talking and more on stimulating the inner brain by activating the nervous system through body awareness (or “scanning”) and movement. Other trauma therapy modalities include **eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)** and **brainspotting**.

Issue 42 on anti-war organizing of *The Abolitionist* is a heavy one, and it may bring up a lot of different triggers for our readers. *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective looked through some mental health resources on managing traumatic stress and even practiced a shortened version of one of these exercises together as a tool for regulating our own nervous systems. **The first exercise “The Squirrel” was taught to an editor of *The Abolitionist* in her own trauma therapy sessions, while exercises two and three are adapted and modified from the *Somatic Psychotherapy Toolbox: 125 Worksheets and Exercises to Treat Trauma and Stress* by Manuela Mischke-Reeds, MA, LMFT. *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective edited these exercises for imprisoned readers to use while in various conditions of imprisonment.**

Keep in mind that many trauma therapies, like somatics, rest on the notion that you are able to do these exercises in a safe place, often in sessions with a trauma therapist, where you can feel and experience all your most intense emotions in physical and emotional safety. **In other words, they are based on the idea that while**



CULTIVATE RESISTANCE

By Luke Thomas, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative.

doing these exercises, the trauma or threat is over. If you are imprisoned, this is not the case. If doing these exercises brings up more fear or pain, know that you are not alone, and remember that emotions are not good or bad. Make sure to be able to clearly identify any risks or threats to your immediate safety before doing any of these exercises given your surroundings. We suggest finding a trusted friend while inside, or someone to call outside, to debrief or decompress with before and after the exercises if you find that useful.

In the *Somatic Psychotherapy Toolbox* there are also more than 100 other somatic therapy exercises, including tools like the three below, for you to begin exploring your emotions and trauma and how it lives in and affects your body. If you’d like a copy of the entire toolkit or specific exercises, contact Critical Resistance and *The Abolitionist* Editorial Collective.

EXERCISE 1: QUICK NERVOUS SYSTEM RESET TO MANAGE PANIC OR A PROLONGED ADRENALINE STATE

“The Squirrel”

Imagine you are a squirrel, and you sense a forest fire. You run quickly to safety, or at least out of the forest fire’s reach. Your body immediately starts to shake, and then you’re able to stabilize.

Do you ever wonder why you’re unable to calm or reground yourself after you’ve experienced a state of panic? It’s because adrenaline is still coursing through your body and you have yet

to move it through your nervous system. This is why it’s often hard to sleep after experiencing something stressful. If you’ve panicked, or if you feel pressure and stress mounting, do “the squirrel”:

- Go to a private place or an area with less people aren’t looking at you.
- Take a deep exhale, emptying all the air from your lungs.
- As you inhale deeply, clench your fists, clench your core, squinch your face, and shake, shake, shake it all out for at least 20 seconds.
- Exhale all that shaking out once 20 seconds of shaking is over
- Finally, take a deep inhale and exhale.

You may feel a little lightheaded or see floating shapes or colors. If so, you can run your wrists or face under cold water for another 20 seconds.

If you’ve been really stressed and activated, you can do this exercise a few times periodically throughout the day to continue to move your adrenaline through your system. You can also bring in a routine body movement that helps you expend your energy, like lifting weights, jogging in place, or working out somehow—anything to get your heart rate up for at least 20 minutes so your body processes your adrenaline.

EXERCISE 2: TRACKING YOUR OWN NERVOUS SYSTEM

PURPOSE

This tool allows you to learn about how and what you can do to increase your sense of safety, get connected, and learn to calm yourself when activated.

INSTRUCTIONS

Use the chart below to track and learn about your nervous system. By engaging your nervous system, you can teach it to help you to become more engaged, calm, or active.

- The social engagement system is activated by talking to a trusted friend, spending time with a beloved pet, or doing activities that make you feel safe.
- The sympathetic system engages when you are playful and active, such as moving your body to music, playing sports, journaling your thoughts, or stretching your body.
- The parasympathetic system activates when you listen to soothing music, practice conscious breathing, receive a nourishing touch, hear a pleasant voice, etc.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	SYMPATHETIC	PARASYMPATHETIC
What makes you feel connected?	What makes you feel active?	What makes you feel calm?
How do you reach out? What works?	How do you support your engagement with others?	How can you create healthy habits to train your calm state?

EXERCISE 3: BREATHING TOWARD CALM—REGULATE YOUR BREATH

PURPOSE

This is a quick intervention breath. If you notice yourself becoming dissociated or activated, you can do this breath. The focus is to shift the state you are in and regulate yourself up or down.

INSTRUCTIONS

Make sure you are tracking your level of dissociation through this exercise. If you can’t be with the breath, stop and regulate yourself by thinking and talking about the experience. Look for signs that you’re becoming regulated and shifting out of the dissociated state.

Some indicators of this shift are:

- Clear voice

- Ability to know where you are at in your inner experience
- Not terrified or overwhelmed
- Able to follow instructions for the exercise
- Calming down
- Curiosity and engagement

When you notice this shift, pause and notice your body and how you have moved from a dissociated to a regulated state.

Steps:

- With eyes open, take a full inhale all the way toward the pubic bone.
- Notice how the breath fills you up.
- When you exhale, make the sound: “Ahhh-hhh,” or “Phaaaaa.”
- Notice how the chest empties and a slight pressure arises in the belly.

- Empty the breath completely but comfortably.
- Take another strong, full inhale and follow it with the sound again as you exhale.

Repeat the breathing until you feel a shift in activation. Then say out loud:

- “I am breathing in and I calm my body.”
- “I am breathing out; I smile.”
- “I am breathing in; I calm my mind.”
- “I am breathing out; I stand in my power.”

If you feel lightheaded, make the inhale smaller and less full.

Notice how you are changing right now.

Pay attention as you are calming and gaining back control.

Once the shift happens, take a moment and notice the change.♦

9971: Safety or Control?

In my previous 9971 column, I wrote about the necessity of engaging the people most directly impacted by gun violence if we want to eliminate it. I shared the responses of two young Black men from a group of currently imprisoned people I have been listening to and building with. They answered the question, *Why I won't put my gun down?* A recent report by the US Surgeon General entitled "Firearm Violence: A Public Health Crisis in America" further underscores why we must listen to these young men. While the report acknowledges the proximity to harm and death by firearms that these young men encounter daily, it never engages them. They aren't understood as the "experts"; their lived experiences don't count as knowledge. Until we end epistemic injustice we won't create solutions to gun violence. These young men know why they carry guns, why they use guns, and how gun violence harms them and their communities. And, they know what's needed instead.

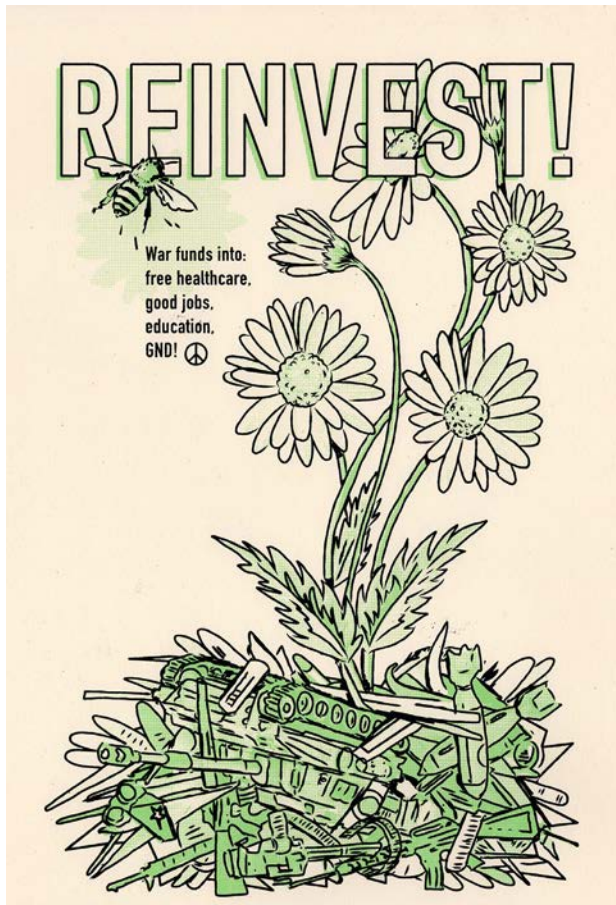
For me, the biggest takeaway from the responses to the first question was that **safety is the reason** these young men won't put their guns down. They don't feel safe without one. And everyone wants to feel safe. The second question I asked was, *What would it take for you to put your gun down?* My intention was to activate their imaginations. The initial responses to the question were similar. **Robert Patterson** wrote, *"For me, I would say the people in charge would have to ban guns so no one could have them."* **Rameek Page** responded that *"they would have to get rid of all guns."* **Ibrahim Sharif** said, *"Firearms would have to be done away with completely. No one could get one."* Every one of the group's members also mentioned moving away from their neighborhood. Robert said, *"To put my gun down, I would have to move out of Philadelphia, far out to a safer environment."* Rameek mentioned changing the place he lived. Ibrahim agreed, stating he couldn't see himself dropping his gun if he lived in the same environment he came from.

"Until we end epistemic injustice we won't create solutions to gun violence. These young men know why they carry guns, why they use guns, and how gun violence harms them and their communities. And, they know what's needed instead."

These responses didn't seem imaginative to me. I challenged the young men to think deeply, to describe the place they would move to, the place where they felt safe. *Who was there? What was there? What happens there?* Here is what they came up with.

IBRAHIM SHARIF

It would be a place where I know everyone. We all get along. And when there are problems, people don't get locked up. People care for each other. People talk their problems out. Anyone struggling with poverty would get their needs met. People with mental health or substance use problems would get consensual treatment in the community and not in jail. There would be more spaces for people to come together and



By Roger Ourthiague Jr, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, DE-MIL-I-TA-RISE Dissenters Portfolio.

build community. People could get healthcare regardless of how poor they are. No one would need a gun because no one would be robbing or shooting people. People would have their needs taken care of whether the need was financial, medical, or even spiritual. If I lived in a place like that, I would throw my gun away. **There wouldn't be a need for one.** I wouldn't feel like someone is going to shoot me or kill me over an argument or disagreement. **No one would rob me because collectively, we would ensure that people's needs get met.**

ROBERT PATTERSON

This is kind of hard for me. I guess I would have to either be surrounded by friends and family or at the very least people I don't know who don't have beef with me. That is who would have to be there. I feel safe around family and friends. I don't need a gun around them. I don't feel in danger around strangers I don't have beef with. But if it's a place like my hood where people are struggling to make a living, I wouldn't put my gun down. **So, it would have to be somewhere people weren't financially struggling.** A place where people don't feel they have to rob and steal to make ends meet. **Because a hungry person will hurt you.** I think it would also have to be a place where certain kinds of activities aren't glorified. Stuff like drill rap music sometimes glorifies a way of life that encourages shooting, beefs, and getting money at any cost. People are looking to build their reputations, good or bad, and social media just makes it worse, often helping instigate the beefs. I would have to be in a place where people don't think hurting someone is a good thing, a way to gain respect. And when people do hurt others, instead of retaliating, they **try to resolve it without further harm.** No place is perfect. But that's some of what would need to happen for me to put my gun down

RAMEEK PAGE

In order for me to put my gun down, I could not be around people who want to hurt me. People trying to harm me couldn't be in this new place.

Sometimes people hurt people, but it isn't personal. When people stick strangers up, for example, they don't have a problem with those people; they are just trying to get some money to survive. So as long as people are and/or feel forced to do things like that to survive, I will need a gun. This new place would have to be somewhere people's survival is not criminalized, somewhere survival is not contingent on hurting other people. **Poverty would have to be a thing of the past.** Most "crime" stems from poverty. If that were eliminated, there would be fewer problems and less harm and violence. I wouldn't have to carry a gun. **People wouldn't feel so desperate and act so often out of desperation.** So the new place would be the opposite of desperation. **It would be a place of hope.** A place where people have what they need. In a place like that, I would and could put my gun down.

• • • • •

This second question got the group **thinking about what actually makes us and keeps us safe.** They understand guns don't do that. In his response to the first question printed in Issue 41 in June 2024, Robert Patterson mentioned how one can die with one's hand on a gun. But guns make them feel safer as if they have a better chance of surviving. *Surviving what?*—the proximity to death and harm they live with daily. They desire to live otherwise. Away from danger and closer to safety.

Asking those young men what it would take for them to put down their guns and then deepening their thinking around how we actually create safety gets more to the root cause of gun violence than the prison industrial complex (PIC)'s answers ever will. Notice that not a single one of those young men—all most impacted by gun violence—said anything about needing or wanting more control. None of the responses included more police, stiffer gun laws, more background checks, or longer sentences. Those things (all parts of the PIC) won't convince those young men to drop their guns because those things don't produce safety—for them or us. Safety, not control, is the main concern for those young men and a lot of people like them. The things they did mention include healthy relationships, a sense of community/belonging, food, housing, health care, jobs, and ways to solve conflict without harm—all tenets of producing safety. Investing in life-affirming resources and not policing, prisons, punishment, or social control gets us all closer to safety.

I strongly believe that if we attend to the safety concerns and needs articulated by these young men, we move closer to eliminating gun violence. **Everyone deserves safety. And when we create safety for those closest to harm and death, we create safety for everyone.** ♦

Always,
Stevie

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 project.

INSIDE-OUTSIDE FISHING LINE:

“Prisons Don’t Disappear Problems, They Disappear People”: The Impact of Prisons on Families and How They’re Resisting

By Jaycia Diamond Foster and Bryce Huber
with Liz Atkins-Pattenson for The Abolitionist

Editor’s Note: For this issue’s Inside-Outside Fishing Line, CR’s The Abolitionist Editorial Collective facilitated a cross-wall conversation between **Jaycia Diamond Foster**, a former youth **Project WHAT! (We’re Here And Talking)** alumna and child of an imprisoned person, with **Bryce Huber**, an imprisoned uncle to his 14-year old niece, Jaxon. Both Bryce and Jaycia wrote each other a series of questions about their experiences of family, connection, and imprisonment. In the conversation below, they talk about the impact that prisons have on families and how forging strong connections across walls and within community is a means to resist the prison industrial complex (PIC) and survive. Together they explore themes of trauma, abandonment, family separation, and resilience, while sharing their wisdom and offering strategies and tools for other children of incarcerated parents and incarcerated parents or caregivers to know and possibly use.

A core trauma that the PIC uses to break apart families is shame and a sense of abandonment.

Jaycia: The most difficult part about having an incarcerated parent was learning how to not internalize their actions. Growing up I always thought it was a simple decision: your kids or the streets, and my dad just never chose me. This left me suicidal and often depressed which stemmed from the feeling of not being enough while also feeling abandoned. I didn’t understand why I was created if I wasn’t important enough for him to “do better”.

When people ask if there were any advantages to not having my dad around, such as more freedom or less rules, my answer is no. **Incarceration is a loss. You go through all the emotions of losing someone like a death.** Any freedom I was given was only granted so that I could pick up the slack of my absent dad until he returned. **No one, especially a child, should have to deal with mourning a loss on their own while also needing to pick up responsibilities and keep going like nothing happened.** I guess that made me mature for my age, but I’d rather not had to grow up so young.

Bryce: My only niece only knows her only uncle as a prisoner. When I was handcuffed and escorted to my trial, my two-year old niece at the time, Jaxon, looked at me with a blank face, because she didn’t recognize me at all. This was a heartbreaking moment for me but I also know: *how could she recognize someone who had never even gotten to hold her?* There was something about my little niece, this new life that somehow carried, or represented, a hope for me in the form of a beautiful baby girl that I wanted to recognize me.

I’ll never forget when she first asked me, “Are you in prison?” I was most definitely unprepared for this question. The visiting room was instantly as small as my prison cell, and I was overwhelmed by my own questions: *Should I tell her what I’m imprisoned for? Will she look at me differently?* My face flushed red. I stuttered and finally mumbled out some version of my answer, “Yes, Jaxon, I am in prison.” To my relief, her follow up question wasn’t anything that had fearfully crossed my mind and instead she asked, *very excitedly*, “Do you sleep on a bunk bed?” The conversation turned out to be very lighthearted, and I was grateful for that, but it made me realize that one day Jaxon will be very capable of filling in the blanks on her own. I also started to see how important her trust, love, and respect for me are as her uncle.



Bryce, his sister and his niece Jaxon.

“How could she recognize someone who had never even gotten to hold her? There was something about my little niece, this new life that somehow carried, or represented, a hope for me in the form of a beautiful baby girl that I wanted to recognize me.”

Breaking apart families exacerbates interpersonal conflict and trauma. In other words, as Angela Davis has argued for years, “prisons don’t disappear problems, they disappear people.”

Jaycia: My family forced me to join Project WHAT! when I was 13 years old, because I stopped verbally communicating after the police brutality I experienced at the time of my father’s arrest. He and my grandma were faced down on the ground handcuffed with the cops threatening their lives pointing an AK-47 to their heads while arresting him. This was all around the time that Oscar Grant was murdered by police, and it started my father’s longest period of incarceration.

Visiting him in prison was really intimidating. I was sickened with the possibility he may never come home but was willing to overcome every fear and pain to make sure he was okay, despite my trauma and the added resentment built over the years from becoming homeless every time he went back to prison. This is why I’ve always felt so betrayed—he chose the streets over being in my life, which made me unable to trust anyone or have any friends. While my father has apologized and acknowledged how his actions have affected me, **I wish he could have addressed my trauma from day one** to prevent me from growing up with so much conflict to solve on my own.

Bryce: I can’t begin to tell you how much I hate the fact that I’ve had to watch Jaxon grow up from a distance. Not being able to play with her when she was little except for on visits, not being able to take her swimming, shopping, or seeing her walk for the first time—it’s these little things that I wish I could do as her only uncle and consistent male figure in her life.

While I’ve been so blessed with the ability to develop a healthy relationship with my now 14-year-old niece despite being incarcerated, I know that so many people in my situation don’t get to know their children or families as they age. Feeling like a burden or a memory to your loved ones, knowing that you’ve created a void in a child’s life, makes it easy to feel guilty, embarrassed and inadequate, and at the same time, it’s no wonder that maintaining a healthy relationship (let alone repairing a broken one) will be more challenging from inside a cage. By

design, prisons separate parents from their children, breaking apart families and leaving family trauma in its wake.

Cross-wall relationships forge connections for belonging, resistance, and transformation.

Bryce: After I was sentenced, I was sent to Clallam Bay Corrections Center, which is four hours away from my family in Seattle. I’d get pictures of Jaxon and see her grow and mature from afar. I felt like I knew her but wondered if she remembered me. I received my answer the first time she came to visit me with her mom. She had a love for me similar to the love I have for her. This was incredible to me and I didn’t quite understand it, but gradually, it began to make sense. It was my family’s doing. My sister, parents, and grandparents all played a role in keeping my memory alive in their homes, making me still feel like part of the family to our newest member, even though I was locked up and far away. I doubt that this was even done intentionally; however, it has been such a priceless and amazing gift they have given me.

“Feeling like a burden or a memory to your loved ones, knowing that you’ve created a void in a child’s life, makes it easy to feel guilty, embarrassed and inadequate, and at the same time, it’s no wonder that maintaining a healthy relationship (let alone repairing a broken one) will be more challenging from inside a cage. By design, prisons separate parents from their children, breaking apart families and leaving family trauma in its wake.”

When I see my niece now, she always runs up to me and gives me a hug. We play games and she tells me about her friends at school. I’ve been talking about the ongoing event of developing a healthy relationship with my niece despite being locked up, but what I’m really saying is that I’ve been lucky to have a family that cares enough to help facilitate this relationship between my niece and me. The old saying that “it takes a village to raise a child” is something that comes to mind. While I don’t live in that village anymore and live in a different one, one that’s more like the jungle, thanks to the love of my family, I’m still part of the tribe.

Jaycia: I’ve been so hurt by my dad’s incarceration that honestly I’ve struggled to build a relationship with him even when he’s out of prison. By the time my dad got out my siblings and I got an apartment and lived in a two-bedroom with eight other people. We’d see my dad every day when he picked us up and dropped us off at school, but he went right back to doing the same things. This time, I decided to not get close to him so that I wouldn’t be as hurt when he left again. I didn’t speak to him for longer than one minute during this time until I joined Project WHAT! at the end of 8th grade.

Project WHAT! is a youth-led program for children of incarcerated parents that teaches literacy, Know Your Rights for youth with incarcerated parents, history of the prison system and other issues we’re impacted by, public speaking, and other skills that are important to have since we’re often underestimated by friends, family, and other people who are aware of our parent’s incarceration. As youth advocates, we use our lived expertise to advocate for other children

Continues on next page

with incarcerated parents and work to break the cyclical impacts of harm that the PIC creates. By representing ourselves with pride, we gain our respect and our voice back, and people listen.

Before joining the project, no one in my family had a clue about the abuse and trauma I had experienced during my father’s arrest. My sister and I never talked about how our dad’s incarceration affected us, so when I shared my story for the first time and no longer had to internalize it on my own, she understood me, and so did other people. Knowing I wasn’t alone helped me deal with my PTSD and depression, and I started embracing my life instead of hating it.

What do you want imprisoned parents or caregivers to know about maintaining healthy relationships across walls to resist the PIC and keep our families together?

Bryce: I’ve never had a mentor until recently. He’s the instructor from my prison fellowship class and recently said to me, *“I promise you that many of tomorrow’s leaders of society are gonna come from the prison system.”* My advice to you is that you surround yourself with people who are also trying to grow and better themselves, and allow yourself to be positively influenced. Be the change you want to see, the parent you wished you had, or the community member your neighborhood needs. Support organizations like Project WHAT! and our young folks so that we can end cycles of trauma and violence, and heal our families.

Talk to your kids. Just because you’re locked up doesn’t mean you aren’t still a parent. Be present. Apologize to them for your absence from their lives. Write them and send them cards

and gifts. Figure out what their goals are and support them, then tell them your goals and let them support you. Most important of all, make sure they know you love them.

“Before joining the project, no one in my family had a clue about the abuse and trauma I had experienced during my father’s arrest. My sister and I never talked about how our dad’s incarceration affected us, so when I shared my story for the first time and no longer had to internalize it on my own, she understood me, and so did other people.”

And what do I want my family to know? I want them to know I’m sorry. I thought I was invincible and took a lot for granted. I’m sorry for letting you down. I’m sorry for not being there for you. I’m sorry for my reckless actions. I’m sorry for hurting you. I love you.

What strategies or tools of resistance would you want other children of imprisoned parents to know and possibly use?

Jaycia: It gets easier. Things have gotten better over time because now as an adult, I can separate my worth from the abandonment I experienced every time my father was taken away and use my lived experience as motivation. Invest in yourself. Practice self-care and putting time into things that benefit your character development.

These are important so that you can avoid following bad habits you were exposed to or feeling like you aren’t enough, which is common amongst us children with incarcerated parents. And lastly, it’s okay if you don’t want to or don’t know how to repair your relationship with your mom or dad. Finding programs like Project WHAT! where you can build community with other kids who have incarcerated parents and share similar struggles can be really healing. Also, with the other support systems you have in your life. Just know that you are not alone.♦

Author Bios:
Jaycia Diamond Foster is a 22-year-old Oakland native and a child of an imprisoned parent. A former makeup artist, Jaycia transitioned into entrepreneurship as a boutique owner. Passionate about creative expression, she enjoys styling, writing poetry, and makeup artistry. In her free time, Jaycia is committed to driving meaningful change within her community, staying actively involved in initiatives that foster positive impact.

Bryce Huber is a new contributor to The Abolitionist who was born and raised in Seattle, WA and has been imprisoned for 15 years. While imprisoned, Bryce received his AA in business from Walla Walla Community College and during his studies discovered a love for creative writing. He has written many essays/short stories and has one completed screenplay. He is currently taking a restorative justice course and works as a clerk for the Prison Fellowship Academy in the Washington State Penitentiary where he’s grown exponentially from his involvement in the program. He can be reached by email on Securus.com or by mail at:

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KITES TO THE EDITORS:
The following contains letters and submissions from imprisoned people to The Abolitionist Editorial Collective. Printed as “Kites to the Editors,” some reference this issue’s anti-war theme or content from previous issues of The Abolitionist, while others address different topics of the authors’ choosing.

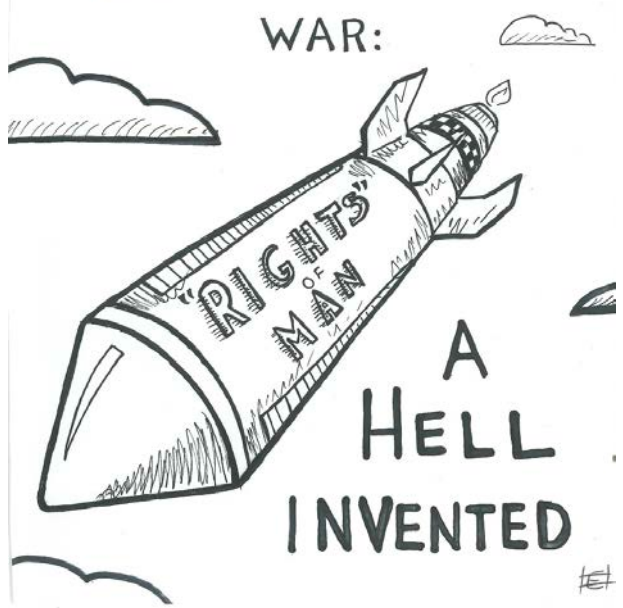
Responding to Issue 41

By James “Jimbo” Clark

Greetings Comrades,
Thank you for the extremely timely issue emphasizing the intersectionality between the fights for prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition and ecological justice, which Issue 41 provided so clearly. I write this as 12 fires rage out of control just five miles away from **Snake River Correctional Institution (“the snake pit”)** where I’m currently caged, and the smoke fills my lungs so badly that I wake up choking in my sleep. There’s been talk since last week of evacuating the most medically vulnerable, but the fires have closed freeways and pinned more than 3,000 of us against the southwestern Idaho border. In our remote location, surrounded by heat and flames, it’s not difficult to imagine **“the snake pit” as a site for ecological disaster.**

Crises like these are growing increasingly common. In September of 2020, I was caged at the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP) when two massive fires converged on the Willamette Valley, forcing an evacuation of three prisons, which resulted in the transfer of over 1,400 prisoners to the already overcrowded OSP, effectively doubling the facility’s population overnight. Mattresses were sprawled across every inch of floor space, and we were crammed together like sardines in a refugee camp. As I looked around amidst the chaos, I thought to myself, we’ve become climate refugees. Keep in mind, this all occurred during the height of the global pandemic while the world was being told to maintain six feet of distance.

As we race towards a critical point in the climate crisis and the crisis brought on by the PIC, it’s



“War: A Hell Invented” By Elena House-Hay, an imprisoned artist and The Abolitionist subscriber. You can write to Elena at: Smart Communications / PADOCS - Muncy Elena House-Hay #PA4953 PO Box 33028 St Petersburg, FL 33733.

growing increasingly impossible to ignore the fact that the **continued wholesale warehousing of human beings, and its consequent harms to both humanity and the environment, is an untenable practice.** It’s no longer a matter of daring to struggle. It is struggle or perish.

“As we race towards a critical point in the climate crisis and the crisis brought on by the PIC, it’s growing increasingly impossible to ignore the fact that the continued wholesale warehousing of human beings, and its consequent harms to both humanity and the environment, is an untenable practice.”

It’s also no surprise that imprisonment is a clear contributing factor to our climate disaster. In the article “Locked into Emissions: How Mass Incarceration Contributes to Climate Change,” Julius A McGee describes three ways this occurs: through an increased demand for prison construction, increased demand for goods necessary for day-to-day living within prison, and the prison labor used for industrial production. Because cli-

mate change so disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations within our existing patriarchal and white supremacist power structures, the increase in overall emissions from all sources perpetuates climate disaster on a macro scale. However, nowhere is this fact more salient than inside our prisons, where extreme weather events grow in both frequency and intensity, a multiplying factor that impacts an already disadvantaged, and predominantly poor, Black and Brown population.

We cannot dismantle the master’s house with the same tools used to build it. Anything short of a complete paradigmatic overhaul of the current systems that continue to cage and control our people and pillage our planet, will only delay the inevitable climate injustice and related harms visited upon our humanity and planet. To affect meaningful change, our solutions must lie in collective action and ideals over individualism, and in healing over retribution.

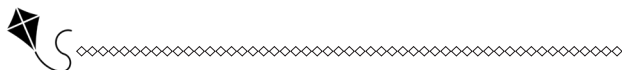
Spending the last 25 years in cages has inspired in me the belief that it is the obligation of all of us who understand the devastating impacts of trauma in our communities to make connections between the trauma being inflicted on all human beings and the planet on which we live. I believe that one of the ways this will be made possible is through **coalition-building at the intersections of our ecological justice movement and the struggle for PIC abolition.** If our public leaders are not working to create spaces and opportunities for us to heal ourselves and are not taking the bold action necessary to save our planet, then it is up to us.

In solidarity,
James “Jimbo” Clark

About the Author:
James “Jimbo” Clark has been incarcerated since he was a youth in the 1990’s. He’s currently imprisoned at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Oregon state where he’s earning his bachelor’s degree from the University of Oregon. He’s a restorative justice discussion group facilitator, has held several board positions in various prisoner-led clubs and programs, and advocates relentlessly for healing over retribution. You can write to him at:

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Community Voice

by Ronald Cundiff

We seldom reflect on our past. That is, the history, wisdom, and resistance of those who came before us. By neglecting to pass down the history and traditions of the freedom fighters who shaped our present, we negatively impact our youth’s moral upbringing and lose sight of the principles and organization needed to shape our future, leaving our youth vulnerable and ill-equipped to advance the struggles waged before us.

The political organizing and growing revolutionary consciousness of the 60’s and 70’s helped create the conditions needed to properly interact with one another in urban communities and abroad. The **Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP)** serves as an example to us all in how creating systems that cater to the needs of the people is essential for our liberation and survival. **BPP’s 10-Point Program** was a set of guidelines establishing the principles and direction of the Party’s operation that helped instill a respect for the elderly and a sense of pride in our youth. By organizing tenant patrols for community-based safety, establishing community centers, youth education programs, community clinics, and other survival programs, BPP was able to address the needs of the community and make real advances toward community-based self-determination.

Neglecting to instill the principles of organizations such as BPP in our communities and our youth has led to a vulnerability in our movements. We lack the community-based safety and alternatives we need to keep our children from being murdered at the hands of cops. We lack respect and commitment to our elders and are losing important traditions across our generations. By not investing in our youth, community centers and youth programming disappear across our cities. This lack of community participation keeps us ignorant and unable to meet our needs for survival and, ultimately, leaves us disunified.

I say it’s **time to regroup and reorganize our strategy**. The solution to these problems lies first in organization. By utilizing the tools available within our communities as a means to invest in our children, we can provide culturally relevant education that aligns with the interests of our youth and provide safe environments for them to enjoy themselves and learn. Secondly, we must follow BPP’s commitment to protecting our communities and ensure the safety of our children by organizing patrols and establishing our own means for community safety. This includes **organizing tenant committees** for the purpose of caring for our neighbors, monitoring tenant needs, and resolving issues in a timely and organized fashion without involving cops. Third, but certainly not last as I am merely outlining the beginning stages of redeveloping a more secure and well-structured community, our youth must be taught to respect and assist our elders, even in the smallest ways like offering help by carrying their bags, helping them cross streets, and holding open building doors when they see an elder in need of assistance.

While public schools are now mandated to provide free breakfast and lunch to students, the Panthers first started the **Free Breakfast Program** with the understanding that our children need a **nourishing** breakfast every morning so that they can learn. They made the program possible through grassroots fundraising, which brought in donations from the community and fed tens of thousands of children across multiple cities. Their **liberation schools for youth** consisted of daily topics and activities on revolutionary history and culture, current events, movies, and field trips. Their political education classes taught children and adults about Black history and class struggle, preparing them to be agents of change.

The BPP also was responsible for the creation of the **first free health clinic in the US** when it opened **The People’s Medical Care Center** in

Chicago, which treated **more than 100 patients a week free of charge** with the assistance of doctors, registered nurses, and a large number of interns from medical schools around the city. **A member of the BPP served as “people’s advocate,”** to help identify barriers to receiving medical care and other issues that exacerbated health conditions, such as paying rent, access to adequate food and clothing, lack of employment, or challenges in school. The BPP created programs like the liberation schools, The People’s Medical Care Center, and others as a direct response to community needs for survival, which went unmet by the state.

Today, our current **lack of organization and community engagement leaves us vulnerable to state violence and police terror**. One way we can combat the issue of police violence is through building unity within our communities. Through implementing community programs, community-organized safety plans and providing self-defense training, we can better protect our children and each other against the senseless butchering of our people. I’ve noticed that in most reports, youth are murdered by cops while they’re alone in a vehicle or on foot. We need to stick together and be ever watchful of cops when they are making what appears to be routine stops or arrests. We have the right to question them about what they are doing and why; it is our community’s business and right to keep us safe. We may not be able to right all the wrongs, but we can take the responsibility to invest in us, to protect ourselves and our communities, to create our own solutions for self-determination, and to lift up our children who in their hands hold our future.

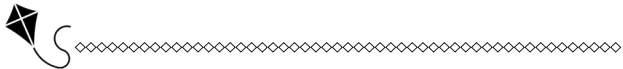
In peace and solidarity,

R M Cundiff

Author Bio:

Ronald Cundiff is currently imprisoned at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York State. You can write to him at:

Ronald Cundiff #22B2785
Attica Correctional Facility
50 East Court Street; PO Box 576
Hudson, NY 12534-0576



“Convict” Chronicles: Feeling Off? You’re Not Alone

By Leo Cardez

I read an article in *Men’s Health* that really struck me. It wasn’t specifically written for the imprisoned community, but it should have been. In the piece a psychiatrist, Dr Gregory Scott Brown, is discussing something called adjustment disorder (AD).

In layman’s terms, AD is a disproportionate reaction to something stressful in one’s life and can make one feel worried, hopeless, or a general sense of unease. Sound familiar? Post-COVID issues affecting imprisoned people are similar across the US: anger over job/program/assignment loss, despair about the difficulty in staying in touch with loved ones, frustration over racial discrimination and disrespect, and general malaise over extended lockdowns brought upon by anything from quarantine protocols to staff shortages. In time, all these attacks to your routine and well-being add up.

In prison, these aggressions are a part of life. Small and large, hostile attacks can come from anywhere – from the guards, nurses, counselors, and teachers, or from fellow prisoners based on everything from general dislike to race (although mostly based on race). For the most part you learn how to let them slide off your back but combine these microaggressions with COVID-19 related stressors and now we can be looking at mental, emotional, and physical distress. Research shows that those who feel they are being treated differently because of their race often feel stressed (duh), and that can lead to problems in the future, both seen and unseen, like feeling isolated and angry.

In prison, we’re told to be tough and that if we are disrespected the correct response is anger and, if necessary, violence. The rules of the facility, though, tell us that such a response can get us in serious trouble, and even get us more time. So, we push down our feelings and let the indignities build up inside of us. What’s worse is we are not getting or seeking help. A 2018 study by Robert Motley and Andrae Banks estimated that 56-74 percent of Black men in America who have experienced trauma (like prison life) “may have an unmet need for mental health services.” Those percentages are likely much higher today and for the imprisoned community.

Take Mayor (not his real name, but something we call him because he has a politician’s charm and knows everyone in the camp), a respected ex-gang chief with long braids and

the body of someone who has recently lost a lot of weight. He’s well-liked on both sides of the fence, knows all the right people, and can make things happen. We’d worked together for five years in the prison law library where we’d become something as close to friends as you can have in prison. He once helped me get a new celly when he saw I was having issues, but over the past couple of years something changed in him.

He became short with people and a cell slug in the rare moments we were allowed social connectivity. I tried to talk to him about it. “I can’t sleep through the night. I’m scared shitless over this bug because of my asthma. And something is off in my brain. I had to read a page in a book three times before I finally understood it. That’s not like me and I’m nervous,” Mayor explained. He told me he felt like he was finally losing it and worse, taking it out on innocent bystanders. He shared a story about how he blew up at his celly for finding a hair in the sink — which turned out to be his own. Per Dr Brown’s article, it seemed he had all the symptoms of AD, but didn’t have the tools necessary to work through them. It was clear COVID-19 related social side effects had messed with the Mayor’s ability to be at his best.

Knowing that AD is possible, maybe even common, when our life is upended (like going to prison or being stuck in prison during a pandemic), we can start to recognize the effects in our daily lives. Listen, in prison or not, life will throw us some curveballs, or even hit us with a couple of pitches (to complete the metaphor). It would benefit all of us to know how to deal with them. Based on Dr Brown’s suggestions in the article, I would recommend to:

1. **Reconnect with the world, in any way possible.** Call friends and family (video visit, in-person visit, letters, text messages, whatever). Get a workout buddy or a chess nemesis. Spend time with others in a space where you are focused on something other than your problems. Find something to get excited about and then share it with others in your life.
2. **Re-engage in life by creating new goals and hopes to aspire to, then create a plan to achieve them** — even in this stained and constrained new environment. Sure, everything you had planned may have been blown to bits by COVID-19. Focus on what you can do now. Get creative. We prisoners are nothing if not inventive; Mayor recently started to paint and take a correspondence paralegal course. The goal is to do something that can help fight against the feelings of helplessness, loneliness, and stagnation.
3. **Get help.** Talk to a counselor, nurse, someone. They may recommend yoga or meditation, or you may even temporarily need medication (to help you sleep, for example). The point is, do something before you fall into a death spiral you can’t pull yourself out of.

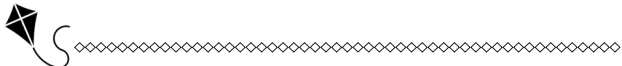
The reality is we are constantly being asked to make hard life adjustments while imprisoned by a lengthy sentence, and whether we know it or not, we are in a constant state of flux, dealing with a litany of unknowns which are out of our control. That’s just imprisonment. The May-

Continues on next page

or knows that now and he has started to make some small changes to work on his feelings. I don't know if we'll ever get back to the law library; I don't know if one or both of us will be transferred soon, but I do know that whatever happens, we'll know how to recognize AD and take steps toward addressing it. And that's a pretty good start.

Author Bio: **Leo Cardez** is currently imprisoned at the East Moline Correctional Center in Illinois. You can write to him at:

Ignacio Carrillo #M55630
East Moline Correctional Center
100 Hillcrest Road
East Moline, IL 61244



“Political Poison”

By J. Kayne

Lies from fascists we hear
rolling from tongues of capitalist swine.
Fabricated falsehoods mistook for truth....
a bleak future, we envision united waste
of the terror struck, view our war torn past
cowards who refuse to accept that race means
but human
though ethnic roots differ.
In essence, all be of a kindred flesh
so why does war divide old republic?
Know not I, but surely is the senate to blame....
their battle grounds slick with our nation's
blood
as they filibuster away our lives
Poisoned we are, 'tis most vicious of chemical
warfare
be our politicians gripped in their vice

Charlatans caper with dollars of tax
As they splurge finances on war from Sweat....
Yours! View this! Eyes opened, as from slumber!
Wake now, revolt, & be deprived no more
Sleep never again 'pon lies & deceit!
Arms, they take up, not to make war, but cease
Vanguardian, sequester not your rage....
swallow not pride, rather purge and release
Let the charge be sounded
like bugles & trumpets on fields of old
embrace courage and forsake such toxic plagues
defined by historical text as men
voted into service of politics
Cease surrender to the cause of their war
endlessly 'gainst my people & for what?
Sip no longer from deception's chalice
be victims no more
to venom secreted from the fangs of govern-
ment
who seek to poison the masses with war
in simplest terms, political warfare.
POISON.

Author Bio: **J. Kayne aka John M. Kosmetatos** is presently serving life without the possibility of parole in the Step Down Program at the Mid-State Correctional Facility, a solitary supermax SHU alternative program that's keeping solitary confinement & punitive sanctions alive in New York state. He's presently working on a 440.30 motion and wants to tell our readers that nothing is impossible, and that "even with all of his projects and work, he has TIME on his hands, which the prison system and jaded, corrupt legal system saw to." You can write J. Kayne at:

John M. Kosmetatos # 15B3674
Mid-State Correctional Facility
9005 Old River Road; PO Box 2500
Marcy, NY 13403-0216



A NIGHT BEFORE

By Joseph Nichols

T'was the night before Christmas, and all
through the block,
not a creature was stirring, except for a cop.
He was walking his beat, just doing his rounds,
when he thought that he heard a curious sound.
So he crept to the window, and what did he see?
Stuffing a sack was little ol' me.
In went a watch, a billfold, and more,
then the cop drew his gun and kicked in the
door.
"Freeze. On the ground!" He confusingly said,
and pointed his gun straight at my head.
Well, what could I do? I could barely decide.
There was nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.
"I've done nothing wrong." Said I, insisting.
That's when he shot me, said I was resisting.
Ain't that a shame, for it was my home.
Now there I lay with lead in my dome.
Want to know something that is even more
shocking?
That sack I was stuffing was really a stocking.

Author Bio: **Joseph Nichols** has been published in 'The Insiders Zine.' He is currently imprisoned at the Williamsburg Federal Correctional Institution in South Carolina. You can write to him at:

Joseph Nichols #21647-075
FCI Williamsburg
Federal Correctional Institution
PO Box 340
Salters, SC 29590

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE: POLITICAL PRISONER NEWS

In this issue's political prisoner updates, we highlight news from late spring through early fall 2024 regarding a few political prisoners' cases that we thought were especially important to circulate. This column is in no way a complete list of all political prisoners' cases. As a prison industrial complex abolitionist organization, **Critical Resistance fights for the release and freedom of all imprisoned people, whether they are 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!

Ed Poindexter, Presente—Former Omaha Black Panther and COINTELPRO target Ed Poindexter joined his ancestors last December after spending 53 years behind bars. He was never considered for compassionate release, and his health had deteriorated rapidly. **Rest in Power, Ed!**

Veronza Bowers—Last May, former Black Panther member Veronza Bowers regained freedom after half a century in prison. Prosecuted for the alleged murder of a US Park ranger in 1973, Veronza has survived his prison ordeal, even despite countless parole denials. **Welcome home, Veronza!**

Alfredo Cospito—On June 26, Turin's criminal court sentenced Italian anarchist Alfredo Cospito to 23 years' imprisonment. Cospito, who has been under the 41-bis, also known as the *carcere duro* or "hard prison" regime, is accused of placing two package bombs that exploded and left nobody harmed. The 41-bis regime is generally reserved for mafia bosses and other organized crime leaders. Last October, Cospito started a hunger strike against the regime that lasted until April of this year. While he was facing the prospect of a life behind bars, his sentence was reduced on account of "mitigating circumstances." **Free Alfredo Cospito! Free Them All!**

Simón Trinidad—On August 29, a new international campaign began calling for the liberation of political prisoner Ricardo Palmero, aka Simón Trinidad, and his return to Colombia. In 2004, months after his detention as part of the FARC-

EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army), the Colombian government extradited Trinidad to the United States on charges of money laundering and drug trafficking. Today, Trinidad is serving a 60-year sentence in ADX Florence in Colorado under solitary confinement. Sign the open letter to return Simón home: <https://bit.ly/bringsimonhome>. **Free Simón Trinidad NOW!**

Jamil Al-Amin—The 80-year-old civil and human rights activist and Muslim cleric Jamil Al-Amin, formerly known as H. Rap Brown, is currently serving a life sentence at USP Tucson. For years, a gag order prevented him from speaking with journalists and biographers while imprisoned. Evidence supporting Al-Amin was suppressed during his trial, and his defense team and family have been fighting for his release, demanding a new and fair trial.

After a stint in ADX Florence supermax prison in Colorado, and a multiple myeloma diagnosis, Al-Amin was transferred in 2018 to USP Tucson, where he confers with supporters who are fighting for a retrial on his behalf. An event about his wrongful imprisonment was held on May 18 at the Valley Ranch Islamic Center to raise awareness about his situation and the fight for a retrial. Write to Imam Jamil to show solidarity. Send your letters to:

Imam Jamil al-Amin #99974-555
USP Tucson
US Penitentiary
PO Box 24550
Tucson, AZ 85734

Mumia Abu Jamal—Black political prisoner and activist Mumia Abu-Jamal has turned 70 in prison. In a powerful address to all students at the City University of New York last April, Jamal praised the pro-Palestinian student movement that spread like wildfire across US university campuses, arguing that this movement is on the right side of history. "It is a wonderful thing that you have decided ... to speak out against the repression that you see with your own eyes," said Mumia. "You're against a colonial regime that steals the land from the people who are



By political prisoner Xinachtli (Álvaro Luna Hernández).

Indigenous to that area. I urge you to speak out against the terrorism that is afflicted upon Gaza, with all of your might, all of your will, and all of your strength. Do not bow to those who want you to be silent." **Free Mumia!**

Leonard Peltier—On August 27, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples José Francisco Cali Tzay visited Leonard Peltier, an imprisoned Native American activist and American Indian Movement leader, at USP Coleman I Federal Penitentiary in Florida. This humanitarian visit allowed the Rapporteur to hear from Leonard directly regarding his health and the circumstances of his imprisonment. Leonard requested that the Special Rapporteur recommend an emergency medical transfer to a facility such as the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minnesota, to help with the treatment of his chronic and severe medical conditions, which independent medical experts have concluded cannot be adequately addressed by medical personnel at USP Coleman I.

On July 2, after spending almost 50 years behind bars, **Peltier, now 79—the longest serving indigenous political prisoner in the United**

Continues on next page

States—was once again denied parole. This was Peltier’s first parole hearing in 15 years. His attorney Kevin Sharp says they’ll appeal the decision while acknowledging that, coupled with a series of health issues, this was likely Peltier’s “last chance” for freedom. His next parole hearing has been set for 2039. Enough is enough.

At the time of writing, Peltier has been hospitalized. While specifics have not been disclosed, it is clear that Peltier should be transferred to a medical facility equipped to meet his medical needs. A medical transfer to FMC Rochester not only ensures adequate medical care, but also proximity to his homelands and family, consistent with the Bureau of Prisons’ policy. **Free Leonard Peltier NOW!**

To learn more about Leonard Peltier, visit www.freeleonardpeltiernow.org or write to him at:

Leonard Peltier #89637-132
USP Coleman I
PO Box 1033
Coleman, FL 33521-1033

Palestine Action (UK)—Palestine Action is a UK-based organization composed of a network of activists who take direct action against Israeli weapons factories in Britain in solidarity with the Palestinian people. In August, several activists were sentenced to a total of five years and two months in prison after causing over £1 million worth of damage to Thales UK, an arms factory in Scotland. In June, seven organizers were arrested after they attached themselves to two vehicles and blockaded the only road leading into the British headquarters of Elbit Systems, Israel’s largest weapons company, for nine hours. Police had to drill through concrete in order to remove and arrest the activists. The action successfully ground Elbit’s operations to a halt, disrupting an integral part of the genocidal arms company’s business, which Palestine Action vows to see forced out of Britain. Palestine Action cofounder Richard Barnard has been charged with violating the Terrorism Act after delivering a series of speeches in Manchester and Bradford. He is accused of “expressing an opinion that is supportive of a proscribed orga-

nization contrary to section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000.”

Álvaro Luna Hernández—Chicano anarchist revolutionary Álvaro Luna, aka Xinachtli (meaning *seed* in Nahuatl), is serving a 50-year prison sentence that began in 1996. Widely known as a jailhouse lawyer and Latinx advocate, Xinachtli assists many prisoners in seeking new trials and filing suits against the repressive, inhumane Texas prison system. He also works as editor of the *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners* calendar. A new parole hearing, scheduled for September 2024, has been delayed until January 2025. His attorney is optimistic that he’ll be granted a much-coveted parole. He urgently needs support, and a fundraising effort is in place with that aim in mind for 2025.

For more information, visit freealvaro.net or write to:

Álvaro Luna Hernández #255735
W.G. McConnell Unit,
3001 Emily Drive,
Beeville, Texas 78102

Critical Resistance (CR) Bulletin

Editors’ Note: *To make more space for original feature articles each issue, the Editorial Collective has removed its CR Updates and Movement Highlights column for now. Instead, CR will send quarterly mass letters in between issues of our newspaper to share organizing updates with our imprisoned comrades. Each issue moving forward, we will include some timely announcements for The Abolitionist subscribers in this Bulletin.*

If you’re a subscriber of our newspaper who is not imprisoned (or have access to a personal email account), make sure you’re on CR’s contact list to receive CR’s regular e-newsletters. Sign up at criticalresistance.org.

- ✦ **CR is opening a new chapter in Central Appalachia!**
CR has been working with comrades in Central Appalachia to start a chapter and join the national organization. CR Central Appalachia (CRCAPP) includes community members and long-time anti-prison organizers and activists focused on a national campaign to stop federal prison expansion in Letcher County, through the Building Community Not Prisons coalition (BCNP). Check out more about CRCAPP and BCNP’s work to stop the expansion of Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Letcher in the previous issue (41) of *The Abolitionist* and look out for ways to connect coming soon.
- ✦ **Want to Talk to CR? Call CR’s Prisoner Solidarity Phone Line!**
Call Critical Resistance & speak with a member or volunteer any-time between **8am-6pm PST any Friday-Monday**
☎ 510-444-0484

- ✦ **Each of our chapters continue to support CR’s National Prisoner Solidarity Mail Programs**
Write to us **at our National Office** and we’ll direct your mail to the corresponding chapter in **Oakland, Los Angeles, Portland, or New York.**
✉ Critical Resistance
Attn: Mail Program
PO Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609
- ✦ **The Abolitionist Newspaper: Project Updates**
2025 marks 20 years of CR publishing our cross-wall bilingual newspaper. To celebrate and take this radical political education project and broader international movement to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC) to new heights, **CR is organizing a Cross-wall Strategy & Power Building Summit in the fall of 2025.** CR is convening movement partners who organize different prison media projects to take stock of the challenges we face in these projects and how we can grow them to support prisoner resistance more effectively.
You can support the planning of CR’s Cross-wall summit by:
 - Sharing your thoughts in the questionnaire below and sending them back to us by February 2025.
 - Submitting content for issue 43 on how you see censorship or repression intensifying lately and what you think we need to do about it.
 - Letting us if you’d want to participate in lead-up meetings to inform the summit planning.**Contact CR’s Project Coordinator of the Cross-wall Summit & The Abolitionist Newspaper, Molly Porzig:**
✉ Critical Resistance c/o Molly Porzig
Attn: Cross-wall Summit
PO Box 22870
Oakland, CA 94609

Cross-Wall Summit Questionnaire for Imprisoned Subscribers: Send your thoughts back to CR’s Project Coordinator in a letter addressed with the info above by February 2025!

- What are the main challenges you face as an imprisoned person in building relationships with organizations outside of prison or getting involved in organizing or collective resistance efforts?
- Have you or anyone you know inside faced repression, censorship or retaliation of some kind, either as a subscriber of *The Abolitionist*, or for your activism or resistance while imprisoned? Explain as much of what this experience has been as you feel comfortable doing, and keep in mind the more details and coherent explanation you can provide, the better we can understand and consider for the summit’s strategy sessions
- What do you think has been effective in how outside organizations support and build with imprisoned people? What do you think needs to improve and how?
- The cross-wall summit will be convening organizers with prison media projects to generate shared strategies. What are some other prison media projects you connect with who you think we should invite to strategize with us? In general, what do you think prison media projects can be doing differently to better support prisoner resistance?

CALL FOR CONTENT

Help shape the content of *The Abolitionist*
**Write a piece for either our Features section OR
one of our columns!**

The Features of Issue 43 will focus on **censorship and repression**; it will be our first issue of 2025 and will print in June. Issue 44's Features will focus on CR's cross-wall summit and will be released by early December 2025.

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

- **Issue 43 Submission Deadline: Friday, March 7, 2025.**
- **Issue 44 Submission Deadline: Friday, August 8, 2025.**

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and art 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
- Alternativestopolicing,punishment,imprisonment, and surveillance
- Experiences of life after imprisonment (or before!)
- Creative or reflective writing with an abolitionist message
- Freedom dreams and imaginative pieces with radical vision
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue
- Reflections on how you've used the paper (in your conversations, work, study groups)
- Empowering, liberatory art of resistance and community power (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 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.*** As institutional mail can be slow, purposefully delayed at times, or even disappeared, please make note in your submission of the phrases or sections you would like the editorial collective to print untouched.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE ABOLITIONIST! *Free to people in prisons, jails and detention centers.*
Paid subscriptions help us send the paper to thousands of prisoners for free.

ARE YOU LOCKED UP?

Sign up for a free subscription!

Name: _____

Prisoner Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____



***Make sure to let us know if you are transferred or released.**
Formerly imprisoned subscribers can receive a ****free* lifetime subscription*** if you keep your mailing address or email updated with us.

***Return your slip to:**

Critical Resistance
Attn: Abby subscription
PO Box 22780 Oakland, CA 94609

ARE YOU NOT LOCKED UP, BUT WANT TO SUPPORT?

Sign up for a paid subscription!

- ➡ *Single Subscriptions for individuals outside of prisons*
□ **\$10, \$15, or \$45** for 2 issues / year, supports 3-16 readers (you + 2-15 prisoners)
- ➡ *Bulk Packages for Movement Partner Organizations*
□ **\$75 - \$525** for bundles of 10, 25, 50, 75 or 100 copies of each issue / year, help distribute the paper and sponsor 17-88 imprisoned readers
- ➡ *Subscribe on our website:*
criticalresistance.org/subscribe-to-the-abolitionist