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**BLM HAS INITIATED  
THOUGHT ABOUT THE  
HARMS OF THE PRISON  
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX ON  
MINORITY COMMUNITIES:  
*ABOLITION IS  
THE ONLY  
OPTION***

# **THE SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK HOW YOU THINK IT DOES**



In the light of the killing and recent verdict of the case against the murderer of George Floyd, It's important to acknowledge that George Floyd's death is not uncommon, a case of one bad apple as many would like to argue. Police killings and the application of excessive force is commonplace for those living in oppressed identities. The violence that this system doles out is not exclusive to just police brutality. The Prison Industrial Complex has made profit off of imprisoning minority populations since it's inception. Not only do the police function to arrest people they are given incentives to do so. In her book "We Do This Till We Free Us" By Mirame Kaba she addresses how the system functions to uphold racist, classist, and sexist systems. Some of the things she touch on include the adultification of Black children, deligitimization of fear of the police, women of color experiencing law enforcement abuse at higher rates, daily indignities such as no warrant home searches, and stop and frisk encounters in minority communities. The increasing privatization of prisons and mainstreaming of prison labor works in the favor of large companies such as Victoria Secret that make large amounts of money and offer low to no wage to the prisoners creating their products. Those prisoners doing the work are largely marginalized people.

**The extraordinary presence of police in our communities, a result of a drug war aimed at us, despite our never using or selling drugs more than the unpoliced white children, ensured that we all knew this. For us, law enforcement had nothing to do with protecting and serving, but controlling and containing the movement of children who had been labeled super-predators simply by virtue of who they were born to and where they were born, not because they were actually doing anything predatory" (Patrisse Cullors and Asha Bandele 26).**

# WHY REFORM DOES NOT WORK



Prisons are so deeply entrenched in the culture of the west as a solution to crime and stopping harm. But prisons clearly do not work this way considering violent crimes have been around since the inception of the Prison Industrial system. These acts continue to reproduce themselves despite the ever changing laws meant to improve and reform the justice system. This becomes clear when looking at how as Davis suggests in "Are Prisons Obsolete?" the tough-on-crime laws that got passed during the Regan area did nothing to reduce crime rates. The Prison Industrial Complex is continually expanded incarcerating mass amounts of people year after year. As Mirame Kaba states in her novel, calls for reform were made back in 1991 when Rodney King was murdered, yet again and again this legacy of violence is reproduced. When faced with this it is logical to conclude that just simply modifying the current system made to uphold oppressive systems will not solve the issue at hand. The violence of the Prison Industrial Complex will continue to repeat itself if it is not torn down and replaced with a system rooted in improving conditions to actually prevent harm.

**Thus, if we are willing to take seriously the consequences of a racist and class-biased justice system, we will reach the conclusion that enormous numbers of people are in prison simply because they are, for example, black, Chicano, Vietnamese, Native American or poor, regardless of their ethnic background. They are sent to prison, not so much because of the crimes they may have indeed committed, but largely because their communities have been criminalized"**  
**(Angela Davis 113)**

# IMMEDIATE STEPS NEEDED TO REDUCE CONTACT WITH THE POLICE FORCE

From Mirame Kaba in "We Do This Till We Free Us". (p 13)

- Defund the police.
- End cash bail.
- Overturning the police bill of rights.
- Abolishing police unions.
- Crowding out the police in our communities.
- Disarming the police.
- Create abolitionist messages to reach the public to disrupt ideas of cops equaling safety
- Building community based response to harm as an alternative to policing.
- Evaluating any reform based on these criteria.
- Thinking through the end of the police and imagining alternatives.

**"We can't reform the police. The only way to reduce police violence is to diminish the contact between the public and the police"**  
(Mirame Kaba, 14)



# **WHAT DO WE DO WITH ALL THE "DANGEROUS" PEOPLE?**



An abolitionist perspective keeps in mind the humanity of prisoners at the forefront of it's analysis. It is known that harms done by "dangerous" people are usually a result of oppressive social and economic conditions. By simply punishing and locking away the individual the conditions that created the "criminal" in the first place go unexamined so the harm can continually go unaddressed. In her novel on abolition there is an interview with Mirame Kaba and Shira Hassan about how the justice system does not actually work to provide justice to sexual assault survivors and never stops rape from happening. In this Kaba asks a very important question "What in our culture encourages people who assault people and harm people to take responsibility?" Imprisoning an individual does not require them to take ownership or accountability for the actions that took place. It never addresses a way to eradicate rape culture that ultimately is influences the mindset of those who sexually assault others. Then when the individual is charged within the prison system, they are caged and subject to violence both mental and physical, often times including acts of sexual assault.

**American crime stories are not stories of good versus evil, because the system is not and has never been good or heroic, and criminal harms are usually much more complex than we would care to acknowledge."  
(Mirame Kaba 23).**

# ***CENTERING WOMEN OF COLOR EXPERIENCES IN THIS CARCERAL SYSTEM***



The violence that takes place in women's prisons is not generally recognized by society. The array of violence that takes place are described in 'Race, Gender and Prison Industrial Complex' by Angela Davis and Cassandra Shaylor as "medical neglect, sexual abuse, lack of reproductive control, loss of parental rights, denial of legal rights and remedies, the devastating effects of isolation, and, of course, arbitrary discipline. They also emphasize that among the growing prison population Black, Latina, and Indigenous women make up a large portion of those imprisoned. It is important to point out that systems of racism and sexism are not mutually exclusive. When talking about the issues facing for instance Black women in the prison system you have to acknowledge how the intersecting identities attribute to the violence dilled out on them by the prison system. In the article it is also stated that a study done in 1999 stated that two thirds of the imprisoned population were women of color. Since we know this and the violence of women's prisons it is evident that women of color who are imprisoned experience high rates of all of the harms listed earlier. Another aspect that is important to recognize is brought up in Mirame Kaba's work in which she highlights how police deligitimize and criminalize women of color who are victims of assault. She says that "Black skin is a repellent to empathy, which makes it difficult to redress in courts of law and public opinion".

**The destructive combination of racism and misogyny, however much it has been challenged by social movements, scholarship, and art over the last three decades, retains all its awful consequences within women's prisons." (Angela Davis 83).**

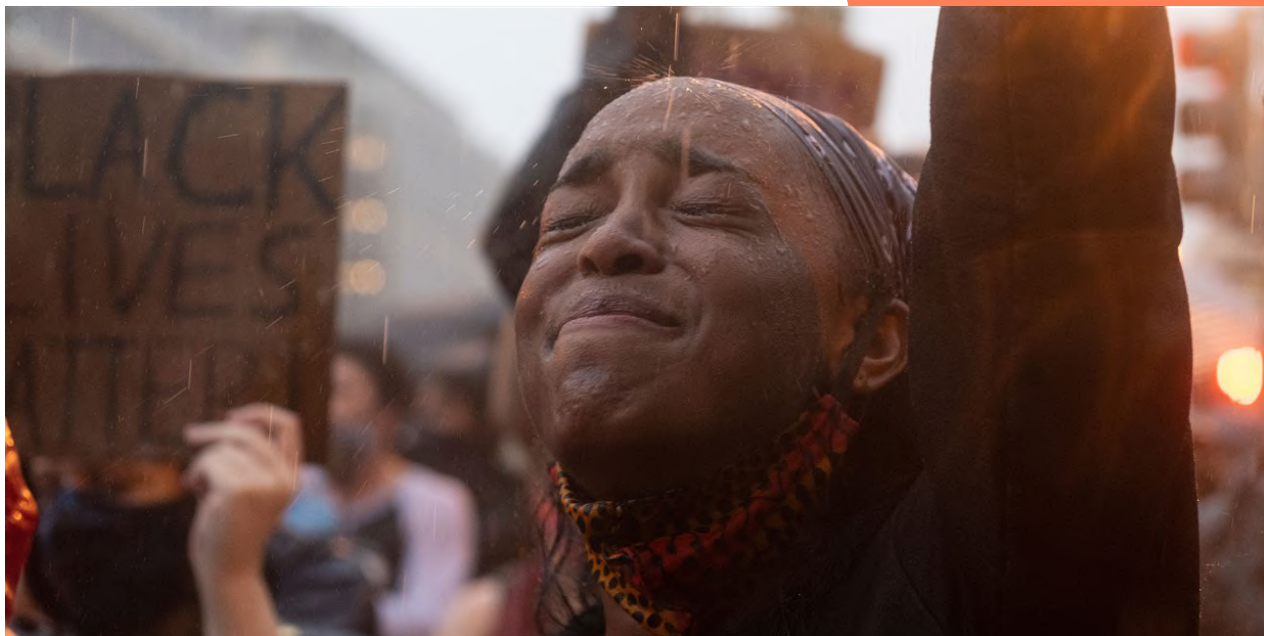
# ***WHAT IS ABOLITION?: CREATING A COMMUNITY OF HOPE AND CARE***



Abolition in a sense is a restructuring of a society to support all inhabitants. It focuses on building a community that fosters care and accountability. Accountability to others not just to ones self. It is important that when you are thinking of abolition you consider all communities that are effected by state, interpersonal, and international violence. Abolition strongly considers how intersections of identities such as class, race, gender, etc. are linked to violence and harm. Abolition does not look upon harms as transgressions between individuals. Abolition pushes communities to acknowledge why that harm occurred in the first place in order to prevent it from happening again. Abolition does not see crime through the eyes of good vs. evil. It provides a framework that humanizes both the perpetrator and the victim.

**We need to cultivate a society that encourages community and fosters love for our communities. Abolition means community. Abolition does not isolate individuals. Abolition invites people in. Abolition repairs the friction caused by necessary separation. Abolition acknowledges enabling and provides tools to prevent this behavior. Abolition does not choose sides." (Patrisse Cullors 2019)**

# TRANSFORMING JUSTICE: COMMUNITY BASED RESPONSE TO HARM



Acknowledging that there is not one perfect alternative is important when discussing transforming justice. Transformative justice acknowledges that harms are not one dimensional. There can be many nuances to situations. That's why abolition is focused on community in rectifying situations in which a harm is done. So now the question becomes: What does transformative justice look like? In her work "Abolition and Reparations: Histories of Resistance, Transformative Justice, and Accountability", Patrisse Cullors, cofounder of the BLM movement, talks about her life experience and how she connects it to her own life experiences. She provides countless examples, but one that stuck out to me the most is how she responded when she had been sexually assaulted by a partner. Following the incident she reached out to the person who had assaulted her and used help from friends of the Black queer community in her healing process. Although the person who had assaulted her was defensive initially, Cullors was able to meet with them and collectively process and talk out the harm that took place. This is just one example. It is important to remember that this is not a one size fits all type of view. Transformative justice focuses on providing community response and collaboration between people and communities affected by harm. Harm is not none dimensional, so the response shouldn't be either.

**We need to be committed to building a culture that is rooted in care, dignity, and accountability"**  
- (Patrisse Cullors 2019)



# **FOCUS ON ENDING VIOLENCE IN ALL IT'S FORMS IN ORDER TO:**

## **From INCITE! critical resistance statement**

- "Develop community-based responses to violence that do not rely on the criminal justice system AND which have mechanisms that ensure safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence."
- "Critically assess the impact of state funding on social justice organizations and develop alternative fundraising strategies to support these organizations."
- Make connections between interpersonal violence, state violence (prisons, police, CPS, etc.), and international violence.
- Connect acts of violence to the larger context. For example how battered women who are imprisoned fall victim to both state and interpersonal violence
- Center poor/working class women in all aspects of anti-prison and anti-violence movements. Recognize the connections between economic oppression and how it increases vulnerability to violence.
- Center stories of state violence committed against women of color in our organizing efforts.
- Oppose any legislative change that will expand the prison system
- "Promote holistic political education at the everyday level within our communities, specifically how sexual violence helps reproduce the colonial, racist, capitalist, heterosexist, and patriarchal society we live in as well as how state violence produces interpersonal violence within communities."
- Develop strategy to combat homophobia and sexism within our communities
- Challenge men of color and men within social justice movements to take responsibility to address gender violence
- Link personal healing to struggles for social justice.



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