Abolition aims to immediately end all forms of direct police and state-sanctioned violence. However, abolition also aims to abolish the less visible forms of violence that create conditions of societal death - poverty, social disconnection and alienation, lack of access to healthcare and housing, exploitation and abuse in the workplace, the relegation of surplus populations, especially BIPOC, to prisons and jails, segregation, the naturalization of heterosexual oppression, and environmental racism.

**What Does "Abolition" Actually Mean?**

Abolitionists Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Angela Davis understand that the meaning of abolition - as both a political and social struggle and as a critical framework for grasping the world - is intimately connected to the radical (Latin: radicalis, of or pertaining to the root) struggle against the root of violence. Let us grasp this violence at the root and do away with it. Has it not gone on long enough?

We live now in the midst of mass uprisings against the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal murder of Black men, women, gender-nonconforming and trans people, and children. Movements demanding the abolition of the police, prisons, and the racist violence they uphold. This historical moment is timely for challenging liberal-reformist approaches to the prison-industrial complex, the capitalist state, and the agents of racist violence that uphold these: the police. These are the only approaches to change that most of us know, but the current uprisings and the ceaseless intensification of police violence all around us have shown that reform only serves to reproduce and legitimize oppressive structures. Reform implies that we can modify oppressive institutions, that we can make them "better" without fundamentally changing the world: this is not only dangerous but historically false. The abolitionist project that we must now all join in struggle rejects this logic and asks us to radically reimagine a world that would have no need for prisons, state-sanctioned racist violence, an economic system that prioritizes profits over human needs, and imperialist expansionism in the form of perpetual wars.

As a negative political project, abolition seeks to destroy both individual acts of racist, sexist, and capitalist forms of violence, but also their underlying conditions: violent social, political, and economic relations that produce and profit on "social death."

Thus, an abolitionist project is an invitation to think and act in a more expansive way, for it brings to the fore the intersections, interrelations, and connections between both oppressive structures and also interlinks the liberatory struggles against them. Think, for instance, about the life that sparked this latest instance of revolt: George Floyd. There are uprisings because he died, but are we fighting for a world in which he lives only to be arrested? Where the killer cop kneels on his neck for only 7 and a half minutes instead of 8 and a half minutes? Where he is thrown into a police car to be prosecuted for an alleged counterfeit 20 dollar bill? Is this justice? For him to be near death and then to be incarcerated into a larger system of social death? Is this the future we’re fighting for? This is the difference between abolition and reform but also the difference between fighting against the agent of violence and the condition of violence. To abolish police violence is not enough to fight for the life of George Floyd. To abolish prisons is not enough to fight for the life of George Floyd, although this fight we must fight. Abolition requires us above all to recognize how perceivedly different forms of oppressive forms of violence are interconnected at a structural level in their exploitative stance against some lives for the sake of others. Abolition requires us to fight the root of such violence.

The murder of George Floyd, the murder of Breonna Taylor, the murder of Eric Garner, the murder of Tamir Rice, the murder of Trayvon Martin, the murder of Tete Gulley, the murder of Oluwatoyin Salau... The murder of... The murder of... Are not anomalies amidst a normally harmonious world and we cannot let them be so. As brutal, horrific, disgusting, and undignified as these executions are and have been, for a cop to extra-legal murder with impunity and the sanction of the state is in the first place only possible in a world that is structured by the slower, less tangible, less visible, less extraordinary production of social death through prisons, poverty, debt, environmental racism, and all of the other less conspicuous forms of social domination that uphold private property, the heterosexual, and racial capitalism. All of the ‘7 and a half minutes’ instead of ‘8 and a half,’ all of the ‘near death’ instead of murder. Abolition forces us to reckon with not just individual acts of violence but the social conditions of these acts, conditions that are themselves violent in their very nature and which, therefore, must be dismantled along with the institutions they uphold. Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as, not merely but including individual acts of violence, “The state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and
Reform is not enough!

We demand abolition!

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