

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 SOCIAL 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 HETEROSEX-IST 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 POLICECAR 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-LEGALLY 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 HETERO-PATRIARCHY, AND RACIAL CAPITALISM, ALL OF THE '7 AND A HALF MINUTES' INSTEAD OF '8 AND A HALF,' ALL OF THE 'NEAR DEATHS' 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

EXPLOITATION OF GROUP DIFFERENTIATED VULNERABILITIES TO PREMATURE (SOCIAL, CIVIL AND/OR CORPOREAL) DEATH.” TO FIGHT AGAINST CORPOREAL DEATH, WE MUST ALSO FIGHT SOCIAL AND CIVIL DEATH, HOWEVER INCONSPICUOUS THEY MIGHT NORMALLY APPEAR.

AS A POSITIVE POLITICAL PROJECT, ABOLITION AIMS TO CREATE INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS THAT FOSTER SOLIDARITY, COMMUNALITY, AND THE FLOURISHING OF LIFE.

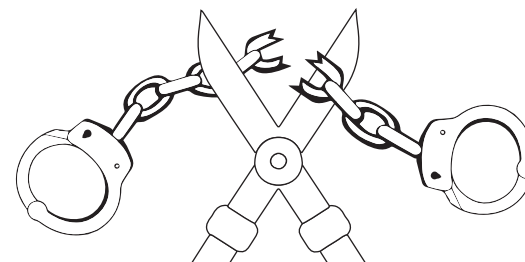
BUT THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT SHOULD NOT BE ONE-SIDEDLY UNDERSTOOD AS THE DISMANTLING OF OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS GROUNDED IN RACISM, SEXISM, AND CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION, BECAUSE IT EQUALLY REQUIRES THE DISMANTLING OF RACIST, SEXIST, AND CAPITALIST SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS THAT EXTEND MUCH FURTHER AND DEEPER THAN INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS. EQUALLY, THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT MUST NOT BE UNDERSTOOD ONE-SIDEDLY AS MERELY THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE INSTITUTIONS AND RELATIONS, BECAUSE IT FURTHER DEMANDS, THROUGH THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE VIOLENT INSTITUTIONS, THE CREATION OF INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS THAT PLACE INTERDEPENDENCY, SOLIDARITY, AND CARE AT THE FORE. W.E.B. DU BOIS TERMED SUCH AN APPROACH “ABOLITION DEMOCRACY” IN ORDER TO LOCATE HOW THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR LIBERATION IF THE CONDITIONS THAT MADE SLAVERY POSSIBLE WERE NOT DESTROYED AND NEW SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WERE NOT CREATED; FOR, WITHOUT THEM, SLAVERY WOULD AND DID AND STILL DOES CONTINUE IN OTHER FORMS. THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT, THEREFORE, CALLS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONS THAT PROMOTE THE LIFE OF BIPOC, POOR AND WORKING CLASS PEOPLE, AND ALL OF THOSE WHO FACE THE VIOLENCE OF THOSE WHO SERVE AND PROTECT OPPRESSIVE AND EXPLOITATIVE SOCIAL STRUCTURES.

WE MUST SITUATE INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE WITHIN THE VIOLENT STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS THAT MAKE THEM POSSIBLE AND SUSTAIN THEM. THE WORLD THAT WE ENVISION AND STRIVE TOWARDS IS ALSO OUR AWARENESS THAT THIS WORLD IS UNJUST, THAT THIS WORLD STANDS AGAINST LIFE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FLOURISHING. WE STRIVE FURTHER TO REALIZE OUR DEMANDS FOR ABOLITION AS A CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE, A STRUGGLE SITUATED BETWEEN THE DISMANTLING OF THE OLD AND THE CREATION OF THE NEW. IT IS IN THIS THAT THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT BECOMES AN EMINENTLY PRACTICAL TASK. WE WILL LEARN HOW TO BE OTHERWISE ONLY IN STRUGGLING TO BRING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY TO BE OTHERWISE. WE WILL LEARN HOW TO BE TOGETHER ONLY IN STRUGGLING AGAINST THE WORLD THAT ENFORCES ISOLATION, DEATH, AND DESPAIR. **WE WILL ABOLISH THE POLICE!** (AND NOT ONLY THE POLICE.)

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE!

REFORM IS NOT ENOUGH!

WE DEMAND ABOLITION!



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