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The Pacific Sentinel.

JANUARY 2023



CONTENTS:

5

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

by Dan Chilton

6

JEFFREY GIBSON AT THE PORTLAND ART MUSEUM

by Ashley Leap

8

DAKOTA MODERN

EXHIBIT
by Ashley Leap

10

DEFINING ABOLITION WITH WALIDAH IMARISHA

by Jeremiah Hayden

14

WE KEEP US SAFE

by Alex Aldridge

16

PSILOCYBIN SOLUTION

by Daniel Bloomfield

18

THE CASE FOR ACAB

by Dan Chilton

20

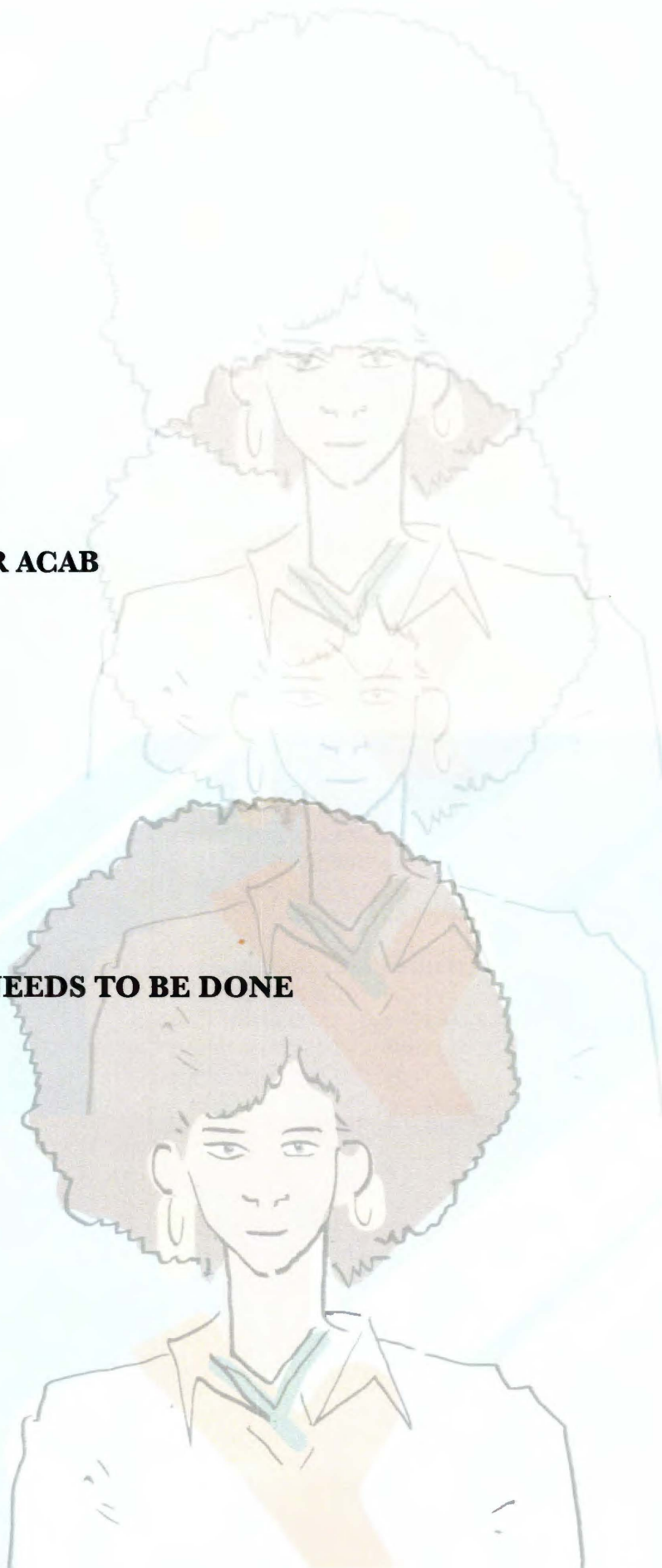
SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE

by Lucas Kopp

22

COMIC

by Camden Benesh



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EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dan Chilton

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Jeremiah Hayden

ARTS AND CULTURE

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OPINIONS EDITOR

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WHO ARE WE

The Pacific Sentinel is a student-run magazine that seeks to uplift the diverse cast of voices here at Portland State. We offer a space for writers and artists of all skill levels to hone their craft, gain professional experience, and express themselves. We are inspired by publications such as The New Yorker and The Atlantic. We advocate for the underrepresented and the marginalized.

We are always looking for new students to join our contributor team as we can't do it without your help. If you're interested in working with us, visit our website at pacsentinel.com or contact our Executive Editor at editor@pacsentinel.com.

FEATURED THIS ISSUE

Alex Aldridge is from the desert of Tucson, Arizona. He is an activist and writer with the hopes of using writing as a tool for radical change. He also loves his dog and reading books.

Camden Benesh is a creative from Scottsdale Arizona. He is pursuing creative writing at Portland State University. When he's not in school, he's thinking of new places to travel to and biking around town.

Daniel Bloomfield hails from John Hughes country, the suburbs of Chicago. He is a senior at Portland State Majoring in English with a Minor in Writing, focusing on fiction and screenwriting.

Dan Chilton was born and raised in Portland, Oregon where he now studies English and Creative Writing at Portland State University. He's a poet, essayist, and fiction writer.

Jeremiah Hayden is an activist-writer and drummer living in Portland, Oregon. He typically writes about art, politics, social justice and climate change.

Matthew Hull grew up in the Chesapeake Bay area where he joined the U.S. Coast guard as an aviation mechanic. He received a BBA from Northern Arizona University and is currently working on a MS in Finance. He has a passion for reading, watching movies, and all things finance.

Lucas Kopp, 23, History Major at Portland State University.

Ashley Leap is a Portland native and just graduated fall term of 2022 with an English degree. When she's not writing, she enjoys browsing Powell's and visiting her favorite coffee shop NEVER coffee.

Astrid Luong is currently a junior majoring in Graphic Design. Fun fact: She can speak three languages.

Dylan O'Harra is a writer, musician and actor originally from Anchorage, Alaska. He is pursuing Creative Writing and Classic Studies at Portland State University.

After many years of traveling, playing music, and hiking mountains all over the world—**Sarah Samms**, our Arts & Culture Editor, has returned to school in pursuit of proliferating her creative writing career. When Sarah's not writing or at school, she's foraging medicinal herbs, painting, playing music, or hanging out with her pet kids. Check out her other works at www.sarahsamms.com and her online magazine, www.travelinwithbones.com

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Merrriam-Webster online defines abolition as:

Abolition (noun): (1) The act of officially ending or stopping something; the act of abolishing something, (2) the act of officially ending slavery.

This simple dictionary definition cannot possibly cover the nuanced and complex importance of the word, nor can it begin to scratch the surface of the endless historical fight for a better world. Of all the figures throughout history that have committed to the lifelong resistance against seemingly insurmountable systems of power. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Michelle Alexander, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and so many others spanning from the early American colonies all the way up to our own lives. Such a simple definition cannot begin to elaborate on a cultural and worldwide struggle that has encompassed the lives of every person to exist under the assumed power of another. Yet, we must start somewhere.

Abolition. A word that brings images of a worse America when chattel slavery was sanctioned by law and upheld by a twisted form of religious morality that enforced racial superiority; an America when Indigenous rights were nonexistent and the rightful people of this land were systematically and violently cleansed in holocaustal horror; an America where women had little place to exist outside of the confines of traditional and silenced gender roles; a place where there was no room for any individual who did not fit the homogenous nature of white male supremacy. Abolition. A word that many ignore as an idea of the past when racially fueled violence was more transparent than today's concealed systems of oppression. While this country has come a long ways from the days of chattel slavery and witch burning, thanks to those many countless sacrifices by those written into history, we are in need of abolition just as much as ever.

In this edition of the Sentinel, we seek to offer our explicit solidarity for systemic liberation while unpacking some of these concealed forms of oppression. From Alex Aldridge's dive into deep chasms of the prison industrial complex, to experiencing the power of contemporary indigenous art by Ashley Leap, to a powerful interview between our Associate Editor and Portland State's own Walidah Imarisha on the complex meanings of abolition, and other powerful essays centered around liberation and our place in it, we hope to contribute to the most important fight of all: the fight for equality, equity, and justice.

Yet, it appears that there is a deep-seated irony throughout Portland, Portland State, and the Pacific Sentinel itself. In considering our place in this fight and the last few years of civil unrest, it's difficult to ignore the staggering demographic of Portland's 75% white population; PSU's student demographic itself is over 50% white. And while the color of your skin is not the only indicator of privilege or oppression, racial lines in this country run wide and cut deep. While we seek to do our part in deconstructing and unveiling systems of oppression, it's important that we also recognize our place within the paradigm of white America. We are in this fight, but we are not its leaders. Rather, the leaders we should be looking to are those communities and individuals who have been fighting this fight for far longer than most white folks, especially those living in our historically exclusionary state, where lashing laws were a form of lawful racial violence to maintain Oregon's whiteness until very recently. We must do the work to deconstruct, abolish, and rebuild systems both physical and mental. And in all this we must remember our place in the fight for abolition.

Thank you for your support of our magazine and we hope that something here motivates you to continue the work for a better world.

With respect,

Dan Chilton
Executive Editor
The Pacific Sentinel



JEFFREY GIBSON AT THE PORTLAND ART MUSEUM

COMMUNITY, EMPOWERMENT, AND VISIBILITY

ASHLEY LEAP

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

Born in Colorado in 1972, Jeffrey Gibson has ignited an artistic movement honoring Portland's Indigenous community. A descendant of the Cherokee nation, Gibson proudly reinvents the artistic community's definition of Indian art. Displayed alongside the *Dakota Modern* by Oscar Howe, Jeffrey Gibson's *They Come from Fire* and *To Name An Other* multimedia and visual artwork is showcased at the Portland Art Museum, exploring how Indigenous communities have been erased and barreled over even in modern times.

Arriving at the museum, brightly colored boxes line the outside of the brick building. In each of these boxes a year is given preceded by an historical event. Examples of this include *1847 The Cayuse War, an armed conflict taking place in the Northwestern United States begins in 1847 and continues through 1855*. Another example: *June 24, 2022, U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe V Wade. A more uplifting historical reference: August 13, 1954, President Eisenhower approves Public Law 588 ending federal supervision over the trust and property of Indigenous tribes in Western Oregon*.

However, even in these more "uplifting" episodes of history messaged on the side of a predominantly-white city's art museum, one cannot feel anything but remorse. Had the Indigenous population's rights not been stripped from their communities, a box acknowledging the rights be given back to the natives seems more harrowing than positive. Placed alongside the more violent, dismal epochs depicted, the brightly colored boxes surrounding these texts feel almost satirical, protesting the dark and bleak nature of these events.

As one enters the art museum, large, colorful, and transparent rectangular shapes dangle from the ceiling and illuminate the space. Here we see bright, vivid, and electrifying colors with a curly, lacey font that reads: "They rewrite their story. Speak to your ancestors. They choose love." These affirmations further exemplify the need for restorative exposure that Indigenous and underrepresented communities deserve.

In white text against a black colored wall, a quote from Jeffrey Gibson, reads: "I want the overall work to point to narratives that may not be popularly known outside of these local communities and to celebrate the photographed individuals as leaders and innovators in the world today."

This exhibit allows the viewers to feel the artist's voice penetrate the motive of this showcase. His words, placed against the blackened wall, authentically capturing the honesty behind his work. Where brightly colored texts, backgrounds, and images protrude through the darkened history, this quote stands absolute, acknowledging the erased history that continues to define the Native community.

Traversing to the second floor, another black wall with pink lettering *To Name An Other*, appears. It reads: "Community, empowerment, and visibility are the heart of the ongoing performance work, *To Name An Other*, by multimedia artist Jeffrey Gibson, who is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and Cherokee descendent."

The text goes on to say "the fifty pairs of matching tunics and drums in this installation are emblazoned with phrases that challenge limiting ways we identify ourselves and each other, and surface how these ideas interface with expectations surrounding race and gender." The sound of drums and chanting can be heard from behind this wall, amplifying their messages. The pacing of the drumbeats is calm, yet loud. Viewers, seemingly entranced, are pulled to the next room.

Planted between two large halls displaying traditional European white based paintings, Gibson's display of dozens of flashy tunics uniformly sprawls across the space. The tunics each interface powerful statements printed on the fabric. *She protects the land. His prayers heal us. She plays with fire*. One may not consider using colors like lime green or hot pink to anoint important works of art, but Gibson successfully uses these colors to slap back the brooding history that keeps the underrepresented constrained. They cannot

be constrained. Here they are. Brighter than that which tries to bind their existence.

Mingling with Jeffrey Gibson's art, it seems as if the Portland Art Museum has its own message to conjunct alongside Gibson's. Museumgoers are then pulled into the rooms on either side of Gibson's loud multimedia display, and into a world of European portraits. Paintings with use of the colors brown, cream, navy blue, and gray; depicting a past where white male dominance overshadowed the "others" residing in the background. A lone black figure is shaded behind white characters in one painting. A portrait of cross-dressing men in another. Women, nearly all represented with naked children, look away to the side of these portraits. These figures were painted by mainly white men hundreds of years ago. Gibson names these figures.

To Name An Other will be displayed at the Portland Art Museum from November 4, 2022 to February 26, 2023. *They Come from Fire* will be displayed from October 15, 2022 to February 26, 2023. Important, necessary, impactful and to be seen.



THE DAKOTA MODERN

ASHLEY LEAP

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

Confined inside Portland's Art Museum, The Dakota Modern exhibit displays the work of artist Oscar Howe. As a Native American, Howe established his career through his imaginative stance on Native American culture, and by breaking the boundaries tied to the art industry's expectations of what a non-white artist should be creating.

Curated by Kathleen Ash-Milby, the exhibit twists and turns through the museum, as colors, shapes, and figures encourage the viewer to step closer. Historical prints, commentaries, and newspaper clippings accompany the artwork, giving visitors a more in-depth understanding of the artist, Oscar Howe, and the boundaries he had to break.

Graduating from Santa Fe Indian School in 1938, Howe pursued the arts, leading the way for other Native Americans to immerse into the field. His career spanned over 40 years, leaving an impact on the art community and inspiring artists in present times.

The exhibit begins with passive pieces that consist of vivid shapes and figures that echo Native American culture—scattered with other livelier paintings depicting surreal conceptions of cultural ideologies. One piece in particular, *Dakota Medicine Man*, painted in 1968, orients a lone figure in-between webbed lines and darker colors. Another piece, *War Dancer*, also painted in 1968, scatters solid shapes and lines into a free flowing, yet sharp swirl.

While the majority of his work consists of identifiable shapes and figures, his more abstract pieces of art are what garnished a push back from the overarching artistic community. In 1958, Howe was rejected from the Indian Annual Painting Exhibition, because his work was not considered "Indian" enough. Howe protested back in a public letter, rejecting the organization's definition of what constituted as "Indian," an micro-aggressive declaration of Native American identity.

In his response to the rejection, Howe writes, "whoever said that my paintings are not the traditional Indian style, has poor knowledge of

Indian Art indeed. There is much more to Indian Art, than pretty, stylized pictures." He goes on to say, "I only hope the Art World will not be one more contributor to holding us in chains."

As more Native Americans heard about Oscar Howe's rejection, they themselves pushed to break out of the claustrophobic constraints traditional American art societies boxed them into. This

**"I ONLY HOPE
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served as ignition for more Native Americans to revolt against the artistic community through their works.

Turning around one corner to the next, Howe's artwork goes from neutral, passive, and cohesive, to sharp, violent, and activated. One painting, *Wounded Knee Massacre*, painted in 1960, displays colonizers holding weapons pointed at Native American men beneath the earth. While most of the portrait flows with neutral colors, the dark red exhibition of blood, interconnected with the stripes of the American flag in the background, strikes a harrowing tone.

A colonizer holds a pistol to the forehead of a Native American woman sitting on her knees with a baby strapped to her back. Another colonizer stabs a child to death. Children lie face down on

the dirt. Bright red paint smears across the blue and beige tones, jolting viewers.

Works like these challenged the status quo of what was expected of a non-white artist. While the "Art World," as Howe originally put it, expected to see flowy, less abrasive commentaries on Native American culture, Howe would not tolerate a confined, gaslighting filled, existence.

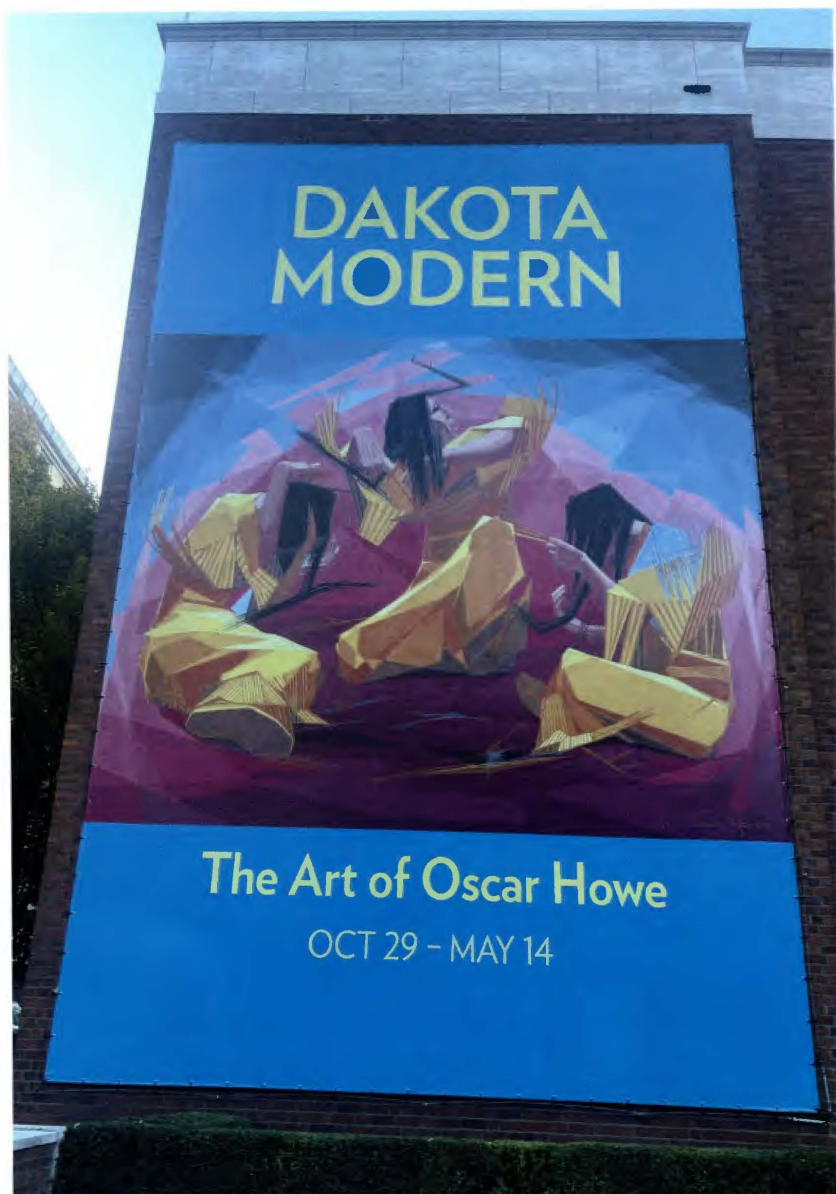
Although his career teetered into the abstract realm, most of his artwork depicted figures. Sometimes it's easy to determine what these figures are, and other times it's not; left up to the viewer to discern. However, one thing his cannon communicates to onlookers is the importance of space, and the ways in which Howe uses this space to capture meaning.

Divide and fill the space he said, the poem lingers on the wall next to another Howe painting. Written by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith in 1980, the words exquisitely capture the teachings of Howe. A line in the poem reads, "What he is saying is that the space itself is the important part of the painting. The actual drawing and coloring divides and fills the space."

The poem ends on, "This is the Howe method of teaching."

Stepping around the final corner, newspaper clippings neatly row alongside each other. Articles about his impact on the art community and photographs of him working in his studio, time capsules the entirety of his career. Lastly, there is a lone picture of a young boy standing next to an elderly Oscar Howe. They're positioned in front of the Oscar Howe Elementary School erected in his honor.

Oscar Howe still contributes to disseminating white based artistic trends and propelling the future of non-white artists; encouraging those to break from the confines of their assumed identities. The Dakota Modern Exhibit profoundly honors Oscar Howe's work, encapsulating an artistic protest against the status quo and furthering his influence.



DEFINING ABOLITION WITH WALIDAH IMARISHA

WHAT IS ABOLITION?

JEREMIAH HAYDEN
ILLUSTRATION BY CAMDEN BENESH



Abolition, as defined by Critical Resistance: “Prison Industrial Complex abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. From where we are now, sometimes we can’t really imagine what abolition is going to look like. Abolition isn’t just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It’s also about undoing the society we live in because the PIC both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives. Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.”

A few months ago, when our staff first started forming our thoughts about a themed issue on abolition, I knew we needed to include the perspective of visionary scholar Walidah Imarisha. A multifaceted artist, she has published works of poetry, essays and fiction, and has edited multiple projects in magazine and book form. In collaboration with adrienne maree brown, she co-edited the short story collection of visionary fiction *Octavia’s Brood*, and her most recent book *Angels with Dirty Faces* was a finalist for the 2017 Oregon Book Award.

Imarisha was gracious in speaking with me for an hour during finals week at Portland State University, where she is an Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Black Studies. What emerged was an inspiring conversation about the past, present, and future, and how we can root out the weeds of oppression to cultivate a more just society for everyone.

What stood out to me was Imarisha’s consistent, conscious inclusion of the people who have been involved in social justice work for as long as the United States has maintained a racialized system of control—from chattel slavery to the contemporary prison industrial complex.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Jeremiah Hayden : I’m curious to hear a quick sort of overview from you on the history of abolition. Where does this start?

Walidah Imarisha : I think that modern day abolitionists call the movement to end police and prisons an abolition movement, specifically showing the connections to slavery—recognizing that the policing system and the prison system are direct results from the systems of slavery—linking those together and saying that the work of abolishing slavery is not finished as long as we have these oppressive systems. W.E.B. Dubois talked about abolition democracy, and he was very clear that ending slavery is not enough for there to be abolition; that abolition requires the

presence of justice, it requires the presence of the ability for communities that have been so brutally oppressed to have the resources they need to be able to achieve self-determination, and, you know, live. I think that framing is incredibly important for the current abolitionist movement. This is not just about saying, *all we want is to end policing*, *all we want is to shut every prison down*. What we want is the institution of justice for everyone. Those institutions stand in the way of that, but they are not the end goal. The end goal is to create a society where everyone has what they need, and everyone who has been historically oppressed and disadvantaged actually has the resources individually and collectively to determine their own destinies.

JH : How do you think about conversations around reform versus abolition? Can this operate within a state system?

WI : I don’t think that there is necessarily an organized response from the abolitionist movement. I can speak from my position, and I think that can be different from other people’s. The modern prison abolitionist movement isn’t new—the Black Panther Party called for abolition in their updated 1972, ten point platform. There is a book in 1976, *Instead of Prisons*, that lays out a plan to ending the criminal legal system in a ten year time frame. I very much root in the idea of the Black Panther Party. Their free breakfast program, which led to the federal lunch programs, their free health care clinics—they actually had over 70 different programs, that they called “Survival Pending Revolution.” We have free and reduced lunch and breakfast programs in schools from the federal government, because the Panthers fed tens of thousands of children of every color, every day, for years, because the federal government wasn’t doing it. And they shamed the federal government into doing this—which is not good. The food is atrocious and is completely devoid of nutrition, whereas the Panthers continually

served a balanced, nutritious, healthy breakfast.

I think that's the framework. There's often this idea that, you know, there's reform and there's abolition and those things have to be completely separate. And with abolition, either we get everything or it's reform. And I think that denies the way actual change happens. But I also think it becomes a very privileged position because it says until we can achieve everything at once, we will allow these systems to continue to incarcerate, exploit, brutalized and murder those that it is targeting. I don't think that's an option.

Systems of oppression, especially within the U.S., have proven themselves incredibly adept at transformation and responding. The reason we have the prison industrial complex is because enslaved Black folks led a global movement to end slavery as an institution, and they were successful, and then the system morphed into the prison industrial complex. I think we have to be clear that this system is not going to allow this control to be taken from it.

JH: You mentioned that the system has proven itself really adept at adjusting and adapting to these scenarios and it makes me think of the profit aspect of this—things like house arrest with ankle bracelets, where, if you don't have to rent a prison anymore, that comes off of your overhead for profit. Which is kind of the point here for the system of power, right, the profit of it. Is that how you view it?

WI: It's a twin point, and I think Ruth Wilson Gilmore's work (*The Golden Gulag*) is really important here. Her point is that if it was just about money, if that was the only motivation, this would not make sense. It absolutely generates profit, but it does not generate enough profit to justify the entire systemic apparatus. We have to understand this is about control. This was about controlling potentially rebellious communities—specifically Black communities after the end of slavery. *How do we ensure that we are able to exploit people's labor for free or as cheap as possible, and how are we able to maintain physical and metaphoric control over these communities so that they will not be able to move and organize freely, to overthrow us?* That was built into slavery. I mean, it's the foundation of modern capitalism, obviously, it is fundamentally about economics, but there was no way that could have happened without the continual enforcement and control. Because the minute that Black folks in Africa knew what was happening, they resisted, and there was never a moment of not resisting. Enslaved uprisings were the biggest fear—that and obviously, Indigenous communities—and truly the biggest fear was

those groups joining together in solidarity. I think that has to be understood that prisons are not just about profit, and I think that messaging has become a problem, because it denies the way that prisons fundamentally are racialized, and are fundamentally about control.

JH: I'm curious to hear you talk a little bit about the 18th century construction of race as a way to separate people—not to be class reductionist or something—but like, the (19th century) white yeomanry in the Antebellum South, and that fear of solidarity. Can you talk about that a little bit?

WI: I think continually, the system has had to create these hierarchies that give concrete and tangible privilege to working class and poor white people; to invest them in a racist system of oppression and hierarchy—in essence, turning them against their own class interests. And that was a very conscious construction. A lot of folks who focus solely on class talk about the idea that enslaved Black folks and indentured white folks were the same, and they were never the same, right? There was never a moment when they were the same. But they were certainly closer in experience at a certain point than later, and laws were passed protecting white men, primarily laborers, minimally, to separate them out from enslaved Black folks to make that difference feel much larger—specifically to working class and poor white people—so they would recognize, *oh, I am white, so I am better than someone else*, focusing their attention downward, rather than focusing their attention upward.

JH: I was inspired by the imagination of new futures, and how abolition can be taught as a construction of something new and not so much as the destruction of something that is currently ongoing. Your introduction in Octavia's Brood—I really liked the idea because it's sort of a misnomer for a lot of people who hear like, "defund the police." They go, that's abolition; that just means take all the money away from the police and stop there. That hits a really interesting nerve with a lot of people, and there's been a lot of discussion about the framing of that. I'm curious about how our language affects our perception of the world, and how changing our language to talk about the future in new ways can have the kind of effect that we're talking about with abolition. Did I ask a question?

WI: Yes, you asked an important question. I guess I would say first and foremost that one of the failings of sort of leftist radical movements

is the idea that just presenting concrete facts and real history, and real information will be enough to sway people.

If we want to fundamentally change people, we have to shift frames. This notion of how to appeal to a broad base, the idea that we have to use a language that can reach everyone—most often people are not conscious of the frames that they're using on a day-to-day basis. That is part of why I do work around visionary fiction and radical sci-fi. Because, especially for things like abolition, it feels so alien because we've all grown up in the system that has given us the frame that there is no ability to be safe or be a functional society without police and prisons. Even though there are examples around the world now, even though these constructions are incredibly new, and we have millennia upon millennia of human existence without them—none of that matters. Because we have all grown up in a society that says this.

The other thing around the notion of language being too radical or not: **all real substantive movements for social change have been incredibly unpopular in the mainstream.** Most often when people are talking about reaching the mainstream, they're talking about reaching a certain segment of white people. I think it's important to recognize that looking back on the things that now seem like, *well, of course, everyone agreed that slavery should have been abolished; of course, everyone agreed that women should have the right to vote; of course, you know, on and on.* There was no, *of course.* The majority of white people, the majority of folks with dominant power, in every single one of those instances, were fine with that system continuing forever.

"What if abolition isn't a shattering thing, not a crashing thing, not a wrecking ball event? What if abolition is something that sprouts out of the wet places in our eyes, the broken places in our skin... What if abolition is something that grows?"

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "Growing Freedom Seeds"

(Gumbs is) an amazing, Black feminist scholar, visionary, thinker, abolitionist poet. This notion of growing is a really powerful one, and a framing that all abolitionists should be using. She expands on it in the piece and talks about when you pull weeds, it's not just so you don't have weeds. You pull weeds so that you have the space to grow something that can sustain your body, that can be beautiful, that can help the environment, that can bring bees, that can create oxygen. You are pulling those weeds for the point of creating something new when you make a garden. You don't just say *okay, well, the weeds are gone, my garden is done.* That is just the first step, and it's not the most

important step. The most important step is what will I plant, and how will I nurture it so that it grows well, and strong?

What are we going to plan? What are the systems of accountability we are going to create? And how are we going to nurture and grow those in a way that helps us all be healthy and whole? It's easier to say let's just smash all the prisons. But when we're standing in the rubble, what are we going to do when someone harms someone?

It is very helpful that the progenitors of the current prison abolitionist movement called it abolition—because it continually says, *we have experienced this before, we know what it means to oppose a system that people could not imagine life without.* White people could not imagine an America without slavery. Slavery existed in this country for longer than prisons have. Again, the majority of white folks were fine with it continuing forever. Many of them who did not own slaves did not have an economic stake in this. They supported slavery. Another reason we cannot wait until the middle moves; because the middle is quite comfortable, and it doesn't want to move

JH : The point is to let the middle be comfortable. You're talking about The Work. There's not a utopia, where it's all finished, and it all goes well—which is one of the arguments that people have. Oh, do you think you're just going to create this utopia? That's not gonna happen. That's not really part of anyone's conversation, right?

WI : Because humans are beautiful and we're complex and we're messy, and we can't read each other's minds. So, we do harm, and whether that harm seems to be small or large, every one of us has harmed someone. We've all had a variety of responses, often not wanting to take responsibility, because we don't want to see ourselves like that. What does community accountability look like? Community accountability, and saying, *what do we do when someone harms another person* is not about a future where there are no prisons—we have to do that now. Because prisons and police are not about harm, right? Prisons and police are about social control. They're not about making any of us safer. They're not about punishing people who have done things wrong. They're not about preventing future harm. Crime is a political, social control construction.

It's so hard to separate those pieces out because society works from the minute we get here to say these are intertwined. *If you go to prison, it's because you did something wrong. Prisons are there*



to protect us; police are there to protect us. A lot of the reform rhetoric accepts that as a given, that police—it may be a deeply flawed system, it may need deep restructuring, but the point of police is to protect. That is not the foundational point. Police grew from slave patrols. Their foundational point is to control, contain, and exploit potentially rebellious communities for the sake of a white supremacist capitalism.

JH : To protect capital.

WI : They do it quite well. The same with prison. The statistics speak to this. The vast majority of sexual violence will never see a courtroom. Like two percent of crimes actually get addressed in the legal system.

JH : In any other field, that would be a bad investment.

Angela Davis, in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* talks about, *what is the number one abolitionist strategy?* Well, it's to address the inequalities in society; it's to make sure people have housing and food and all of the basics. That is the number one abolitionist strategy. Abolition can't just be about police and prisons—that is, it has to be about police and prisons, because that is literally and figuratively the stick that is used against us.

JH : They're actually policing the things that we're not investing in. They're just policing the fallout of not investing in these other things.

WI : They are the shock troops for the system that allows its continual functioning, and they sort of draw the eye of the conversation of violence to them in a way that normalizes the violence that is inherent in the everyday functioning of the system. The healthcare system is fundamentally violent. You know, any system that denies you the basic things you need to live because you don't have the money, that is a violent system; but we never talk about it in that way in mainstream conversations. We say *that's unfortunate; we say, it'd be nice if that wasn't the way; but we never say this is the same.* This is a violence on the level of putting a gun to someone's head and pulling a trigger, but it is happening in the millions, in the tens of millions every day in every aspect of society. That's an important role that the police in the criminal legal system play as well. They say *this is what violence looks like, and if you are not being beaten with a billy club, if you are not being shot in the back, if you are not literally being locked in a cell, then it may not be nice, but it's not violence.*

JH : It's spectacular violence versus slow violence. Is there anything that you wish I'd asked you here that you'd like to throw at me?

WI : One of the fundamental pieces of abolition is that it centers the leadership and the vision of folks who live at the intersections of identity and oppression, because that makes our entire community safer and more whole. There's no real abolition without centering queer and trans folks, women, cis women, folks with disabilities, young folks, immigrant folks, and obviously, all of those folks of color and everyone who sits at the intersections of all of those. People say that in this sort of, *ally way*—like this is the right thing to do. But it is actually the society that will create space for all of us.

JH : Because building the thing is the point.

WI : Building the thing and recognizing that oppressed, folks, when we build, we build for justice.

Recommended Reading List:

Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex

- Edited by Nat Smith and Eric Stanley

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice

- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha

We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice

- Mariame Kaba

Octavia's Brood - Edited by adrienne maree brown, Walidah Imarisha

No More Police: A Case for Abolition

- Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie

The Golden Gulag

- Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Instead of Prisons

- Prison Research Education Action Project

Are Prisons Obsolete? - Angela Davis

Freedom Seeds - Alexis Pauline Gumbs

Abolition Now!: Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex



WE KEEP US SAFE

DISMANTLING THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IN WORKING TOWARDS ABOLITION

ALEX ALDRIDGE

ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTEN WOODRUFF



When hearing the word abolition, people may first think of slavery abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, John Brown, or the countless others who fought for the abolition of slavery. While the term itself is defined broadly as a movement to end something such as slavery, the conversation of police abolition recently surfaced into the mainstream discourse after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd on May 25, 2020, sparking nationwide protests that called for the defunding of police.

As an initial step in the right direction towards abolition, defunding the police is only

part of the broader movement to abolish the prison-industrial complex. In her book, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, Mariame Kaba writes that “prison-industrial complex abolition is a political vision, a structural analysis of oppression, and a practical organizing strategy,” and that “prison-industrial complex abolition is a vision of a restructured society in a world where we have everything we need: food, shelter, education, health, art, beauty, clean water, and more things that are foundational to our personal and community safety.”

A central component of the abolition movement is that policing, and the prison-industrial complex at large, not only fail to keep us safe, they are active tools of oppression used by the state that cause us harm. For those who marched after the police murdered George Floyd in 2020, there was a sense of hope that police funding may finally get slashed. But like any radical movement that gains momentum in the mainstream, it was ultimately co-opted and pacified, then used as a tool to control the narrative surrounding policing.

The support that many Democrats and progressives in government had for the calls to defund the police predictably crumbled when pressed by then President Trump and others who pushed the narrative of rising crime. This co-opting of a movement before inevitably distancing themselves from the same movement is par for the course for the Democratic Party that relies more on symbolic gestures of allyship rather than tangible actions that would create meaningful progress.

While many in the Republican Party, mainstream media, and the law-enforcement-friendly Democratic Party itself have blamed rising crime on the widespread defunding of police budgets, facts state otherwise. ABC

examined police budgets in 109 cities and counties across the nation and found that 83 percent spent at least two percent more on police in 2022 compared to 2019, and 49 had actually increased their budgets by more than ten percent. The reality is that only eight agencies of the 109 in their study had cut police budgets by more than two percent. This data reflects that not only were budget cuts few and far between, but the public outcry over widespread budget cuts is an example of how effective “copaganda” sways public opinion.

The Portland chapter of the national grassroots abolitionist organization Critical Resistance successfully pushed the City of Portland to reduce the 2020–2021 Portland Police Bureau (PPB) budget by \$15M with their Care Not Cops campaign. Additionally, the final budget included the disbanding of PPB’s Gun Violence Reduction Team and a reallocation of funding towards other community programs such as the \$4.8M for the Portland Street Response.

Many of the cities that had reallocated funding from police budgets to community programs have already had those decisions reversed, including here in Portland. The reversals here are shown through the approved PPB budget for 2022–2023, which totals \$12M more than their \$249M budget in 2019–2020. That budget will also create the Focused Intervention Team (FIT), which has a similar mission to that of the disbanded GVRT.

These narratives state that crime is rising at a rapid rate and that the only thing that prevents crime is more policing, leading to both political parties competing for the title of the “law and order” party. What is lost in the shuffle is that while politicians and mainstream media push the rising crime narrative, the data being used is murky at best and manipulated at worst in an

effort to push false narratives.

When it comes to copaganda, Civil Rights lawyer Alec Karakatsanis states that its three functions are to narrow our understanding of safety, to manufacture crime surges as a crisis and to manipulate our perceptions of what solutions should be pursued to keep us safe. This copaganda is pushed by police, politicians, and the media—over 50 percent of all broadcast TV shows in 2020 were cop shows.

One of these perceptions is that more police will lead to more safety, yet with over \$115B spent on policing per year in this country and over \$81B annually on mass incarceration, these rising crime narratives should be nonexistent. Spending more on policing and the entire prison-industrial complex as a solution to crime seems quite wasteful, considering we already spend an enormous amount of money on policing and incarceration.

Prisons and punishment in general are also insufficient in providing safety or even rehabilitation, and are themselves the cause of many forms of violence. Nearly two million people are locked up in prisons in the U.S., including half a million who are held in jails awaiting trial despite not being convicted of a crime, primarily due to an inability to pay the amount required for bail. Sometimes they are held for months or even years before seeing a trial, unless they die awaiting trial while presumed innocent. With the median bail amount of ten thousand dollars, this is nothing other than punishment for the crime of being poor.

When it comes to violent crime, some will say that we need more police and harsher punishment, yet according to the Vera Institute of Justice, less than five percent of the ten million arrests made each year are for violent crimes. Police often arrive well after the harm has been committed and only solve less than a quarter of those cases. While convoluted to begin with, crime stats also fail to include the crimes that are much more violent and harmful to a greater number of people.

What gets defined as a crime—including violent crimes—gets further complicated by the word itself. The word crime itself is a social construct that describes the current legal status of a behavior or those who participate in it. The description itself is fluid as states can criminalize certain behaviors while ignoring others. Evictions, wage theft, camp sweeps of those experiencing homelessness, structural and environmental violence and all the violence caused by policing are left out

of crime statistics—or are not even defined as criminal—all while causing an enormous amount of violence on a much larger scale.

While local news organizations in Portland and throughout the country have been pushing the surge in retail theft narrative, both the police and these same news organizations fail to address the estimated \$50B in wage theft that is taken from mostly low-wage workers annually, an amount that is five times higher than the cost in shoplifting. Additionally, the estimated cost of tax fraud committed by the wealthy and corporations is now at trillion dollars a year. Crime and criminalization are used to punish the poor, while police protect the elite and wealthy businesses that cause a disproportionate amount of harm and violence.

SO WHAT DOES AN ABOLITIONIST FUTURE LOOK LIKE? WHAT STEPS ARE NEEDED TO MOVE IN A DIRECTION THAT SEES THE END OF THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX?

When thinking of solutions outside of funding policing and incarceration, money would be wiser spent by being invested into communities. Affordable housing, universal access to healthcare, investments in education, youth programs, community-based intervention teams and investing in the community would all be more viable solutions than the money spent on policing. Transformative and restorative justice will help us shift from punishment to accountability, as the punishment that is implemented by our carceral system not only fails to keep us safe, but also causes great harm.

The Black Panthers Ten Point Program represents an example of a historical movement with a community driven focus, where members of the party were to actively live by the stated guidelines in their daily lives to center the Black Community against the numerous injustices that still exist nearly 60 years later. Since the Black Panthers created the Ten Point Program in 1966, many abolitionists have advanced the ball in new ways that shifts away from the use of a court system while building off the foundation of the Ten Point Program and its envisioning of a future where abolition has come into fruition.

In *No More Police*, Mariame Kaba writes that “our ultimate goal must be abolition of all

forms of surveillance, policing, and punishment and the systems that require them if we are to achieve true public safety.” Abolishing police unions, disarming police, divesting from police budgets and reinvesting in the community, ending cash bail and creating community-based intervention teams—like the Portland Street Response and Eugene’s CAHOOTS—are just some of the many different steps that can be taken when moving towards a future without prisons.

To believe we can fix the problems of the prison-industrial complex with reforms such as body cameras, better training, or police accountability, is to ignore the fact that not only do police already receive all of these resources, they continue to cause great harm to the communities they control. Reformist policies that give police more money, power or technology should never be pursued, as they not only legitimize the carceral system and the dominant narratives surrounding policing, they simply don’t work.

When thinking of reformist policies, I am reminded of the title of an essay by Audre Lorde, titled “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” Although those who push for reformist policies are likely not doing so with the goal of dismantling the prison-industrial complex, to believe that these policies will fix policing is a belief based in naivety.

To try and cover prison abolition in such a short article would be impossible—and in some ways disrespectful—as many abolitionists have spent years fighting for a future without police and prisons and have an enormous body of work to show for it. BIPOC abolitionists such as Mariame Kaba, Angela Davis, Andrea Ritchie, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Kelly Hayes and Derecka Purnell are just some of the many activists who possess an extensive amount of knowledge and experience that should be looked to for inspiration as we work towards a future without prisons and police.

The road towards abolition is one that requires ongoing struggle, experimentation and organizing. Andrea Ritchie and Mariame Kaba, co-authors of *No More Police*, write “there is no fixed roadmap to abolition; instead we must spend time imagining, strategizing, and practicing other futures. There is, however, a clear case for why policing can play no role in that future.” While the goal of abolition seems daunting, it is a collective struggle that we must envision and work for on a daily basis as we dismantle the institutions that cause harm while building a better future today.

A PSILOCYBIN SOLUTION



HOW AN EXPERIMENTAL NEW THERAPY COULD TACKLE TWO ROOT CAUSES OF HOUSELESSNESS

DANIEL BLOOMFIELD

ILLUSTRATION BY CAMDEN BENESH

The unhoused persons epidemic in Portland appears to stem from three underlying issues: drug addiction, mental illness, and housing affordability. The latter two tendencies are referred to as disabling conditions, and one study showed that about 70% of those living on the streets, and in shelters, report being afflicted by one or both. When a person suffers from both drug addiction and mental illness, they are what is called “dually diagnosed”, and have a harder time seeking treatment for and recovering from either, since most facilities and counselors are ill-equipped to assist them. It often seems hopeless, that there is no solution to this growing problem, but recently there was introduced a new possible solution: psilocybin assisted therapies.

Passed in November 2020, Oregon Ballot Measure 109—legislation driven by an unprecedented wave of petition signatures—has made the research for psilocybin’s efficacy in treating both mental health and addiction possible. Psilocybin is a psychoactive chemical naturally occurring in several species of mushroom. It has shown great promise in studies conducted by organizations such as Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS).

The Oregon Psilocybin Services, a department of the Oregon Health Authority, will implement a trailblazing program where trained facilitators will guide people suffering from the disease of addiction on a brand-new path to recovery, one that is spiritually focused, and that targets the spiritual roots of the disease. Applications to become a program facilitator will open on January 2, 2023.

During the past few weeks, a developing story surrounding the Shroom House storefront dominated Portland area news headlines. Since opening on October 24, the business, which offered customers a place to purchase a variety of psilocybin containing mushrooms, gained

popularity. It became so popular that at the height of the media hype, there were lines around the block of people hoping to buy their product in a retail setting for the first time within the borders of the United States.

This is just one indicator of people’s interest in attaining psilocybin containing mushrooms. A skeptic would suggest that if crystal meth were suddenly being sold in a retail shop, we would also see scores of people waiting in line, but it would be safe to assume that such clientele would have a very different energy. Shroom House has since been raided and shut down by police, but who’s to say that this isn’t just the first of many calculated legal chess-moves in a long game leading to an end to psilocybin prohibition?

During this last election cycle, gubernatorial candidate Christine Drazan’s running platform included reversing the legislation which decriminalized possession of many illicit substances. While Drazan lost the race, we saw all but eleven Oregon counties ban psilocybin outright. Both of these hot button issues likely reflect the people of Oregon’s attitudes about the causes of the growing number of unhoused people in the state.

In October of 2020, I contracted the Alpha variant of COVID-19. I had all the symptoms, one by one: fever, then fatigue, then chills, then finally, loss of taste and smell. Even after all other symptoms faded, I was still unable to taste or smell anything except salt, mustard, and cinnamon. I had heard stories of people who, after six months, had still not regained those senses, and I was becoming concerned that I might not either.

As Thanksgiving approached, I lamented over the possibility of never tasting mashed potatoes and stuffing, or smelling turkey cooking, ever again. Though compared to societal issues with which we’d been struggling at large, my personal loss of sense was trivial, COVID’s impact on my

life weighed heavy on my mind. Then one day, I decided to take a threshold dose of psilocybin mushrooms—about one gram. When the effects of the psilocybin took hold, I realized how much psychic energy I’d been spending on the coronavirus since its arrival into the zeitgeist. I decided then, to stop thinking about it so much; I felt a wave of relief, and a deep gratitude to the psilocybin.

In the past, I have struggled with addiction, and was afforded a similar freedom from drug use by way of psilocybin. In that moment, days before Thanksgiving, I began to ponder the impacts of the recent decriminalization of addictive substances. I envisioned a mass migration of addicts to Oregon, seeking refuge from the law in a sanctuary where they could use without threat of incarceration. I envisioned them hitting their spiritual rock-bottoms and reaching out for help, where they will be welcomed into the new experimental psilocybin-assisted recovery therapies. I envisioned those therapies working on unprecedented levels, creating stronger spiritual foundations for recovering addicts. I saw recovered addicts reintegrating into society with a powerful new resolve. Oregon might foster a new renaissance of recovery, paving the way for the rest of the United States. I saw hope for the future.

I regained my senses of taste and smell the next day.

You can stay updated on all things related to the program at Oregon.gov’s page on Psilocybin Services.

THE CASE FOR ACAB

DAN CHILTON

ILLUSTRATION BY PEYTER WOODRUFF

All Cops Are Bastards.

A phrase that had entered the public lexicon in 1920s England, amplified in the 1940s by working class strikes, and again in 1970, apparently brandished on a Daily Mirror headline, has once more been amplified into common usage—spray painted on walls, stitched into jackets, and even tattooed on one's body. And the responses since have varied nearly as much as people's interpretations of the meaning behind it. From dogmatic reverence to public outrage, one's relationship with America's policing institutions will often be the primary determiner of any single person's response.

Yet, I can't help but notice a common misunderstanding of the phrase—curated by an amalgam of outside forces, cultural competency, media representation, and personal stakes. The gritted teeth of America's working and middle class white knuckling their thin-blue-line flags and thinking that ACAB is claiming that the cops throughout their familial line are all bad people. The common responses of not all cops and just some bad apples in the bunch.

But that's not what the phrase is saying. The phrase isn't "All Cops Are Bad People" but rather "All Cops Are Bastards." Something that hints at a much larger cultural issue that requires a bit more digging than mass media channels and right wing talk show hosts can (or will) offer. It requires a look into our country's troubled history as well as the history of policing institutions and subcultures.

In an article published by the NAACP on the history of police as slave patrollers, they include a sworn oath made by slave patrollers in the Carolinas which reads: "I [patroller's name], do swear, that I will as searcher for guns, swords, and other weapons among the slaves in my district,

faithfully, and as privately as I can, discharge the trust reposed in me as the law directs, to the best of my power. So help me, God." This sworn oath is a particularly disturbing cultural artifact when considering the implications of assumed providence and the history of our country's justice system.

They go on to explain that these slave patrollers existed until the passage of the 13th Amendment, at which time they morphed into "militia-style" groups which enforced segregation practices well into the Jim Crow era of the 1870s. And by the 1900s, police departments began to spring up as a perceived need for the enforcement of these Jim Crow laws.

This dark era of Jim Crow technically ended in 1965 following a bloody civil rights movement when law enforcement officers brutalized, maimed, and murdered Black protestors and leaders all over the country in an attempt to silence their voices. Yet, even at the precipice of civil and social change, enforced by the federal government and codified into law, the policing institution would not go down easily.

In Michelle Alexander's seminal book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, she documents the subsequent reformation of policing in America from the era of public lynchings to the modern era of mass incarceration and privatized prisons. Presenting the "War on Drugs" as the catalyst for this new era of Black and poor oppression, America's policing institutions were once more at the center stage. Strategically, and often invisibly, police disproportionately enforced laws against Black men in order to fill for-profit prisons in need of slave labor, subsequently brandishing them as felons in order to maintain the racial caste systems that America was founded on.

This is as brief a history that can be offered;

a snapshot into centuries of complex and painful subject matter. But addressing the misinterpretation of the phrase ACAB makes this history both of dire importance and all the more difficult to address outside of the meticulous deconstruction and relearning done in classrooms and universities that, put quite simply, cannot happen in the real world of offices and kitchen jobs.

But what of the here and now? What of the so-called good cop that enters into the policing institution with his virtue intact, set on changing the system from within?

In a powerful essay titled "Behind the Blue Wall of Silence," Thomas Nolan, an ex-Boston Police Bureau Lieutenant of 27 years, deconstructs the deeply ingrained subculture and "cult of masculinity" that policing bureaus enforce and work within. A subculture that he says is "steeped in a deep and historically ritualized set of behaviors and representations intended to set their members and the mechanizations of their inner working as apart from those of the rest of society." These sets of behaviors, he goes on to explain, are hyper-masculine, hyper-sexualized, homophobic, misogynistic, faux-heroic and warrior-like, and steeped in secrecy under the faux-loyalty of the "brotherhood."

He offers examples of brutality and ostracization against fellow officers who were perceived as untrustworthy—a trust set in the immoral behaviors of taking bribes and vows of silence. Women and gay men are especially susceptible to this inner-violence upheld by the patriarchal hierarchy, from street cops near the bottom to high ranking officers at the top.

Within this rigid and unchanging paradigm, the good cop as a bastion of higher values and morals, seeking to reform the system from within, simply cannot exist. Those speaking out are, at best,



ON POLICING AS INHERENTLY CORRUPT

clerical work—something Nolan says is deemed as more feminine and thus degraded by fellow officers—and, at worst, brutalized to the point of severe organ damage and near blindness, as in the disturbing case of Michael Cox.

This hierarchy of hyper-masculine, militant policing cannot be changed from within and those who enter it are doomed to fall victim to its inner trappings. You cannot change the system; the system is built to withstand. The system changes you.

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What makes this such a difficult topic to broach with others who have surely heard the phrase ACAB a million times on every media channel and long-ago made up their minds as to its meaning, is the fact that this subculture of policing and the so-called blue wall of silence

has long ago leaked into much of the public's perception of America's policing institutions; a perception constructed by police themselves and their faux image of heroics and selflessness.

It's not just cops waving thin blue line flags now, but construction workers, mechanics, landscapers, painters, welders, and other first responders. All manner of white laborers who think that the attack on the policing institution is an attack on white people themselves and thus white America. In many ways, it is, when you consider the history of whiteness. A people who live paycheck to paycheck perceiving that their way of life is being threatened by holding cops accountable for their actions and misdeeds—by demanding reform and abolition.

The blue wall of silence where behind covers a historically violent and discriminatory institution extends well beyond the precinct's walls and into

public domain. It stretches far and wide, upheld by right wing media, funded by corporations for private gain, and fed by the neverending conveyor belt that runs from poverty-stricken neighborhoods to federal prisons. It stretches all the way to your grandma's living room where her father or uncle or grandad was a cop, and, she insists, he wasn't a bad man.

ACAB. So short a phrase that can't possibly encompass what abolitionists mean when they employ it; the history of racially and sexually fueled violence and the deeply ingrained and problematic culture of police bureaus all throughout the world. But if we're to have radical reform in this country, the blue wall of silence must be torn down brick by metaphorical brick.

Not all cops are bad people. But all cops perpetuate and uphold a bad system.

SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE

LENTS NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP SAFEGUARDS THE STATUS QUO

LUCAS KOPP

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

The Lents Neighborhood Livability Association (LNLA) conducts its monthly meetings at the New Hope Church, next door to an AA meeting. These meetings started as an offshoot of the organization's stated primary goal of helping elderly and disadvantaged community members, according to David Potts, who shares an LNLA leadership role with Char Pennie. Instead, these meetings are centered on understanding a perceived rise in homelessness and crime in Portland. The group hosts many guest speakers, including members of the Portland Police Bureau, nonprofits and former Oregon gubernatorial candidate Betsy Johnson.

The group has garnered a controversial image, which prompted what Pennie described as "attacks," from the Portland Mercury and the Willamette Week. This may be related to the image the group has cultivated on Facebook. Posts to the group's page are typically made in all caps, for example, "MORE NONSENSE!!" above a Fox News story about Portland's "soft" heroin laws and "MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM OUR GOVERNOR," in reference to an article claiming to detail violent crimes "dismissed" by Governor Kate Brown. These posts are both from David Potts. However, this is not how he or Char came across to me, and in person they seemed to be ordinary and polite people.

Disagreements made in online spaces seemed to weigh heavier on Char than David. She recounted a story where, during the George Floyd protests, a survey conducted by the LNLA caught the attention of the wider community in Portland. The survey garnered six thousand responses, per Pennie, which is far more than she had anticipated. I've included two excerpts from the survey:

LNLA: "What do you think of our District Attorney's office not prosecuting the criminal behavior we are currently seeing in our streets and in our campsites?"

Anonymous Response: "I don't think there is anything to prosecute."

LNLA: "Do you think the city should require urban campers to keep their own campsites clean?"

Anonymous Response: "Who decides what is clean enough? Who enforces cleanliness? How clean is your home? Who enforces your cleanliness?"

Pennie described the survey as a turning point for her, and felt it was indicative of the broader community's impulse to make snap judgements. She asked that those looking to understand what her group is about talk to her before making judgements.

I attended their monthly meeting on November 10, 2022. The guest speakers were two members of the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) and Janie Gullickson, director of the Mental Health and Addiction Association of Oregon. All three speakers fielded questions from the group's members and listened to their grievances. There was more of the latter. There was a clear sense of anger directed at Portland's civic leadership. However, PPB was given a round of applause upon the conclusion of their talk. I asked Char and Potts why the police seemed to escape criticism from their group.

"I think they've escaped it," she said, "because they've been put in a position—they can't do anything anymore. So it's hard to blame people if they're not allowed to do their job. And really, this started, I think, with what you call protests downtown, because basically, they were told to

stand back, don't get involved...[the police] can't use these tools that [they] have, which are called inhumane."

Sergeant Greg Anderson of the PPB opened his remarks by acknowledging that most questions would be about homelessness, then noted "I've noticed the RVs are not here," to a round of cheers and applause. A lengthy exchange followed, when one of the members brought up a "pocket" homeless camp that was "resistant," to sweeps. Officer Jordan Zaits explained that there was "no accountability, essentially, for what happens after [the sweep] is done." Anderson explained that "they will leave" but that it's possible they will return the next day. Zaits identified this as a problem in Portland's management of homelessness. "That's the part where we need to find something different to make it work," she said. "Because that is the struggle, some of those people are so just in that area, they'll leave for a day, sometimes they're back that night."

The officers used relatively detached language and seemed uncomfortable with the subject matter. What they described, however, was an ineffective system of moving homeless people from one camp zone to another. Zaits said that they had to "find something different," but what exactly that "something" is was left to the audience to interpret. The audience was dissatisfied with this answer and one member complained that the current system of sweeps left the "problem" with "community members."

Zaits explained that there is potential in this arrangement, citing her experience helping a similar community group on 122nd and Burnside, who she claimed had cleaned up the area. She attributes their success in doing this to the group's



patrols, which she said they conduct three times a day. During the patrols, the group cleans up garbage and they stop anyone from “landing there.” Zaits explained, “we’re so short, that we need you guys.” She suggested that the LNLA conduct similar patrols.

I think it should be noted that this quasi-vigilantism suggested by Zaits was not directed to a group in the mold of the Proud Boys, Patriot Prayer or the Three-Percenters. The LNLA’s membership is composed of ordinary people who skew older. In fact, Zait’s suggestion was not taken entirely well by the group, who seemed to expect the police to handle these issues for them. It seemed that Zaits and members of the LNLA viewed themselves as besieged and both expected the other to lend some relief.

Zaits likened her experience in “cleaning” the camps to “whack-a-mole,” and one member responded, “so we should let these people be part of our community and just accept that?” Zaitz suggested that they should not accept it, adding that the perceived problem is “just ridiculous.”

“We’re making their lives easy,” one member complained.

“Well, there’s no incentive to do otherwise,” officer Zaits responded. This exchange is indicative of the belief, shared by Pennie, that Portland’s current policy on houselessness is one that “encourages” what it ostensibly aims to solve. I asked Pennie and Potts what exactly they would like to see in a rehabilitation program.

“Most of the drug treatment facilities charge,” Potts said. “They’re private, and if you don’t have insurance, if you don’t have family to pay, you’re on

the street.” Pennie explained that, to her, treatment that allowed for drug use was not treatment. When I asked them how treatment facilities should respond to potential relapses among their patients, they did not answer directly.

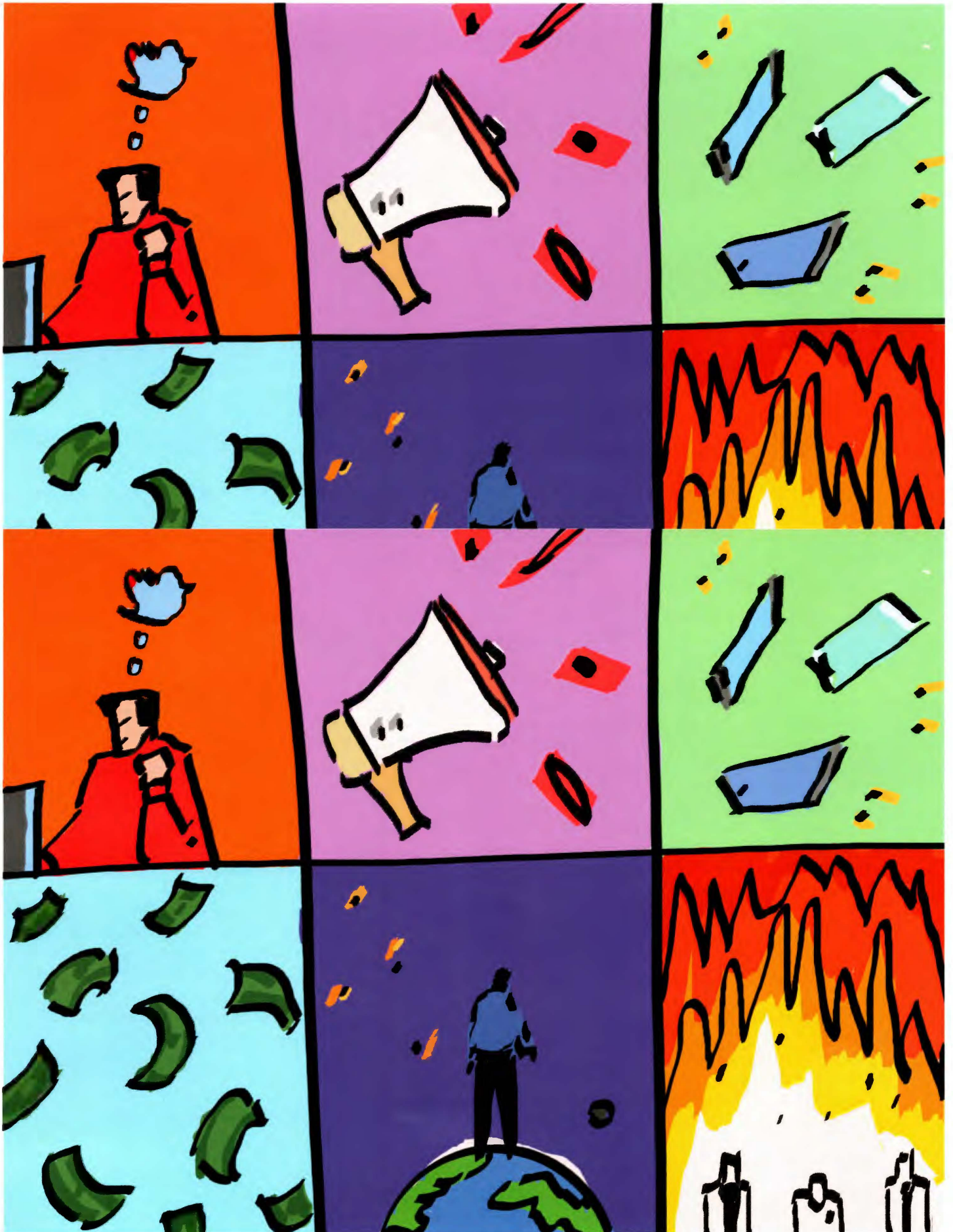
I felt a disconnect between the bursts of anger and despair I observed during the meeting, the organization’s online persona, and what Pennie and Potts claim to represent. They told me that the primary focus of the group is to assist seniors and disadvantaged members of their community, but that is not what I observed. Not a word was given to such issues during the meeting and the primary concerns of the membership were clearly crime, houselessness and drug use.

No specific political policy or agenda was mentioned during the meeting. Though there were broader calls to do “something,” to provide better treatment, there were no specific goals or plans attached to such calls. I found one member’s quote instructive. He complained that, while the people of Lents were obviously the victims, they had been made to look like the “bad guys.” It is worth acknowledging an article written about the group in the Willamette Week, titled “A Poem for the Anti-Homeless NIMBYs of Lents,” published in December 2017. The column was a response to a poem ostensibly written by a member of the LNLA—a play on “Twelve Days of Christmas,” with verses such as “four piles of feces,” and “three midnight gunshots”—you get the picture. The poem was sent to former mayoral candidate Sarah Innarone. The author of the Willamette Week piece identified the LNLA poem as “mean-spirited,” and identified the LNLA as hateful

NIMBYs.

I found something tedious about both the column and the claims of victimhood I heard from the police and members of the LNLA. It seems that discourse regarding the problem of approximately five-thousand people living on the streets of Portland alone is mired in debates regarding how each side views the other, how people feel about the issue. It seems we are stuck in circular discussions about NIMBYs and YIMBYs—how those who have houses and apartments, are personally affected by observing misery. It seems, the LNLA and Portland’s civic leadership have no vision for the future, and are playing a never ending game of hot potato—waiting for someone to step in and do “something.” Among the groups I’ve mentioned so far, the only group to reluctantly embrace that role are the police, which should reassure no one. The picture presented to me by officers Anderson and Zaitz, was one of a department with no clear vision of how to “solve” houselessness. Instead, they are stuck playing “whack-a-mole,” where, according to Zaitz, camps are given designated threat levels and cleared accordingly.

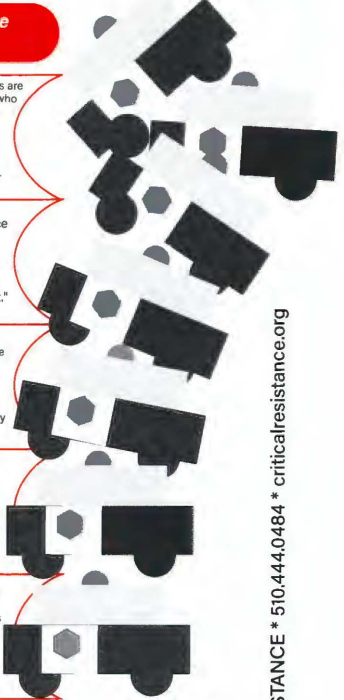
“Who shows up to talk to you?” said Sgt. Anderson. “We end up being the face of the city.”



Reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps in policing

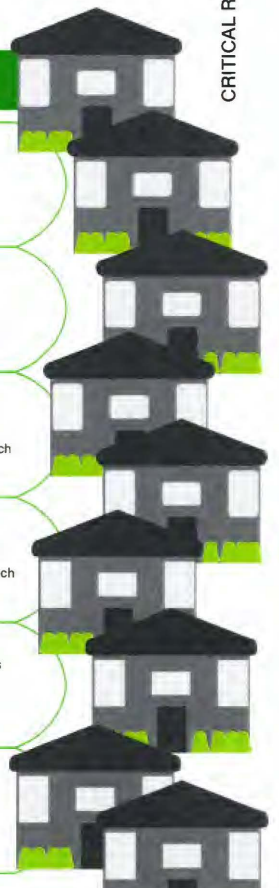
These charts break down the difference between reformist reforms which continue or expand the reach of policing, and abolitionist steps that work to chip away and reduce its overall impact. As we struggle to decrease the power of policing there are also positive and pro-active investments we can make in community health and well-being.

DOES THIS...	reduce funding to police?	challenge the notion that police increase safety?	reduce tools / tactics / technology police have at their disposal?	reduce the scale of policing?
BODY CAMERAS	INCREASES. Equipping police officers with body cameras will require more money going toward police budgets.	NO. Body cameras are pitched as making police more accountable, increasing the idea that policing, done "right," makes people safe.	INCREASES. Body cameras provide the police with another tool, increasing surveillance and increasing police budgets to acquire more gadgets.	INCREASES. Body cameras are based on the idea that police who do not use "excessive force" are less threatening. But police can turn off body cameras and, when used, footage often doesn't have the impact that community members want, or is used for surveillance.
COMMUNITY POLICING	NO. Advocates of community policing argue that departments will have to hire more cops to be in neighborhoods and in the community.	NO. This is based on the belief that policing is focused on keeping people safe, and the violence of policing is caused by a "breakdown of trust" with the community.	INCREASES. Cops are trained in additional tactics and approaches.	NO. More community police means that the scale of policing will increase, particularly in Black, Brown, poor neighborhoods, where there is perceived "mistrust."
MORE TRAINING	NO. More training will require more funding and resources going to police to develop and run trainings.	NO. This furthers the belief that better training would ensure that we can rely on police for safety, and that instances of police harm and violence occur because of lack of training.	INCREASES all of these.	NO. This will increase the scope of policing, given the type of training. For instance, some advocate for police to be trained on how to respond to mental health crises, furthering the idea that police are the go to for every kind of problem.
CIVILIAN REVIEW / OVERSIGHT BOARDS	NO. In some cases, there would be an increase in funding, whereas in other cases, there would be no change.	NO. Overseeing the police through a board presumes that cases of excessive force, killing, lying, planting false information, etc. are exceptional occurrences rather than part of the daily violence of policing.	NO. Some argue for Civilian Review Boards "with teeth," the power to make decisions and take away policing tools and tactics. However, a board with that level of power has never existed despite 50+ years of organizing for them.	NO. This further entrenches policing as a legitimate, reformable system, with a "community" mandate. Some boards, tasked with overseeing them, become structurally invested in their existence.
"NAIL KILLER COPS": PROSECUTE POLICE WHO HAVE KILLED AND ABUSED CIVILIANS.	NO. Prosecuting police does not lead to changes in funding or resourcing police.	NO. Individualizing police violence creates a false distinction between "good police" (who keep us safe), and "bad police" (who are unusual cases), rather than challenging the assumption that policing creates safety or examining policing as systemic violence.	NO. Often, media attention in high profile cases leads to more resources and technology, including body cameras and "training."	NO. This reinforces the prison industrial complex by portraying killer/ corrupt cops as "bad apples" rather than part of a regular system of violence, and reinforces the idea that prosecution and prison serve real justice.



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DOES THIS...	reduce funding to police?	challenge the notion that police increase safety?	reduce tools / tactics / technology police have at their disposal?	reduce the scale of policing?
SUSPEND THE USE OF PAID ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR COPS UNDER INVESTIGATION	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets as municipalities no longer pay for policing's harm against community members.	YES. It challenges the notion that policing violence, and the administrative costs it incurs, are essential risks of creating "safety."	YES. Access to paid administrative leave lessens the consequences of use of force, and presumes the right of police to use violence at all.	YES. The less financial support for police undergoing investigation for killing and excessive use of force, the less support for policing.
WITHHOLD PENSIONS AND DON'T REHIRE COPS INVOLVED IN EXCESSIVE FORCE	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets as municipalities no longer pay for policing's harm against community members.	YES. It challenges the notion that killings and excessive force are exceptions, rather than the rule.	YES. It reduces the ability of police forces to move around or re-engage cops known for their use of violence.	YES.
CAP OVERTIME ACCRUAL + OT PAY FOR MILITARY EXERCISES	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets since we won't have to pay for cops learning how to better make war on our communities.	YES. It challenges the notion that we need police to be trained for "counterterrorism" and other military-style action and surveillance in the guise of increasing "safety."	YES. Weapons trainings and expos are used to scale up policing infrastructure and shape goals for future tools, tactics, technology.	YES. This stops police from increasing their legitimacy, capacity, and skills as "the blue line" in order to expand their reach over our daily lives and community spaces.
WITHDRAW PARTICIPATION IN POLICE MILITARIZATION PROGRAMS	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets since we won't have to pay for cops learning how to better make war on our communities.	YES. It challenges the notion that we need police to be trained for "counterterrorism" and other military-style action and surveillance in the guise of increasing "safety."	YES. Weapons trainings and expos are used to scale up policing infrastructure and shape goals for future tools, tactics, technology.	YES. This stops police from increasing their legitimacy, capacity, and skills as "the blue line" in order to expand their reach over our daily lives and community spaces.
PRIORITIZE SPENDING ON COMMUNITY HEALTH, EDUCATION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease its resources.	YES. Prioritizing funding resources also creates space to imagine, learn about, and make resources that actually create well-being.	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease the expansion of tools and technology.	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease the size, scope and capacity of systems of policing.
REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE POLICE FORCE	YES.	YES.	YES.	YES.



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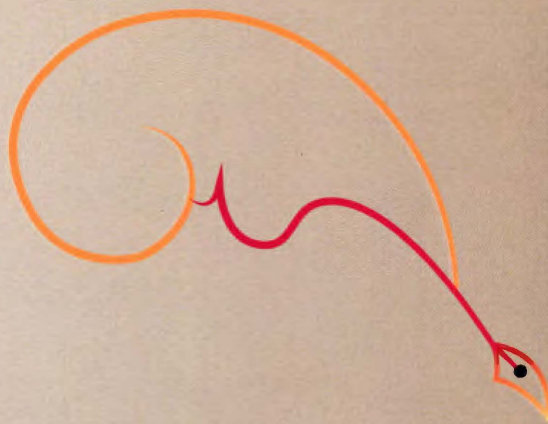
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