



Conversations About the Carceral State Pt. 2

An Understanding of Carceral Mentalities: A Study Group



Anna Nelson & Ria Dhingra
Professor Ingrid Diran
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2022 English 699 Independent Research Study

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Introduction

Project Summary, Context, and Research Focus



A Timeline of Work Thus Far

A Progression of Research:

Summer 2021- “An Ecological Approach to Abolition: A Holistic Analysis of Discrimination Systems” (Thanks to the Sophomore Honors Apprenticeship Grant at UW-Madison)



Fall 2021- “Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Individualized Carceral Mentalities” (English 699 Research Credit Class)



Spring 2022- “Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Individualized Carceral Mentalities Pt.2” (English 699 Research Credit Class)

Key Findings:

- There are a series of carceral dimensions: perspectives, practices, and policies that uphold and perpetuate the carceral state across all social institutions
- Often, these carceral dimensions are not explicit, resulting in lack of public awareness towards said systems of harm
- Recognition of abolitionist exigence is often a product of experience/education, making the implicit become explicit
- Studying abolition is practicing abolition, as it promotes changes in perspective and resultant practices at the individual level
 - Coalitions of abolitionist praxis serve as foundations for transformative community change

Key Argument: In order to produce sustainable abolitionist efforts, one must engage with the status quo (or learn about it) in a way that sparks consciousness regarding the purposely designed mechanisms of injustice and its resulting harm.

Coming Into Spring 2022:

- Enrollment in English 699, an independent research credit course to continue work from the fall
- Plan to:
 - Conduct a reading group and then use our discussions/practices as a foundation for a larger community outreach program the following fall
 - Apply for summer and fall research grants to support growth of project

What We Did This Spring:

Overall, this spring served as a transition space for collective brainstorming and discussion as we began working towards the next chapter of our project. During this time, we were able to formalize the discussions we had practiced in the fall while also exploring new positions of leadership and teaching under the guidance of professor Diran and envisioning what those new skills could become in future fellowships.

Project Summary & Logistics for Spring 2022: Plans, Goals, Methods

By: Anna Nelson and Ria Dhingra

Spring 2022 was spent by Professor Ingrid Diran and students Ria Dhingra and Anna Nelson working on a project entitled “Conversations about the Carceral State Pt. 2” This project is a study that examines how abolitionist study can spark consciousness that permeates perspective in all aspects of life, extending beyond the classroom. Coming into Spring, we aimed to conduct a reading group that would allow us to practice abolitionist theory as both students and facilitators. Our hope with this group was to allow further expansion of our own abolitionist understanding, challenging carceral mentalities, whilst practicing how to develop lesson plans and structure findings in a community-oriented practice. Simultaneously, we worked to document our own reading reflections and theories in hopes of returning to our notes to formulate pedagogical tools.

Plan/ Goals:

- Enroll in 699 for the Spring Semester
- Test and create an abolitionist curriculum through participating in a reading group for Spring 2022
 - Anna and Ria will take turns “teaching” the reading from each week and structuring reading summaries as lesson plans rather than essays
 - Develop educational materials/templates
- Write multiple of mini-essays/reading summaries
 - Translate discussion/meeting notes into organized, succinct essays regarding abolition
 - Approach a wide variety of topics from an abolitionist lens
 - Apply analysis to movies, books, conversations, structures, etc.
- Apply for Grants and Funding for Summer 2022 and Fall 2022
 - Synthesize and summarize work in a way that—when presented—is clear to a larger audience who is not directly involved with the work
 - Outline a formal plan (in writing) for aims, objectives, and findings of our work
- Develop a community project for Fall 2022 that incorporates the study group

What work is left to do (moving forward):

- Dual approach to praxis: expansion of study group and a new concrete outcome of our findings in the form of a magazine
- Exploration of the role of narrative
- Testing of curriculum within study guide

As of now:

The following document is a collection/working journal of all the research that took place between the timeframe of January 15th, 2022 and May 16th, 2022. The proceeding mini-essays explain methodology, contain reading summaries of all the texts we studied, and include analysis in a chronological fashion. The intent of the following document is not to serve as a final paper or to present overall findings. Instead, this document is a toolkit of background theory that can be used by us and others as a starting point to begin having complex conversations about the

abolition of the carceral state; therefore, the following collection is also not completely comprehensive. Instead, the summariness pre-existing text from a systems framework and builds upon itself for analysis.

Ultimately, the proceeding series of papers documents our work and thinking thus far in a chronological fashion. It closely details our initial ideas, through processes, changes in direction, analysis on reading materials, and synthesis of theory. This collection serves not as a conclusion, but as a starting place for further research.



Section 1: Reading Group

Reading Summaries, Template Lesson Plans, and Initial Reactions



An Introduction to Our Reading Group

By: Anna Nelson

In the Fall of 2021, we conducted a series of conversations with students, faculty, friends and family exploring how those in the Madison community interact with and understand abolition. For the following spring semester, we built off of this introductory step in discussion building to create and test lesson plans and discussion guides. The following booklet consists of a curation of these lesson plans, along with our personal reflections, notes, and questions regarding various texts. The texts included are a collection of speeches, short essays, and a nonfiction book chosen by Ingrid. Some texts were chosen from pre-existing class syllabi while others, such as *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*, were chosen due to their current relevancy or release. Each text, however, embodies a new perspective on what abolition looks like in practice within a community or across a nation.

The class operated in a tutorial style structure. Ingrid assigned different readings, and Ria and Anna took turns transforming their analysis into a lesson plan with key quotes and throughlines, a reflection, content objectives, learning outcomes and discussion questions. Additionally, Anna and Ria each led their corresponding discussion, practicing both the structuring and facilitation of a class. Our goal of this semester was to begin a collection of lesson plans to both use for our following chapter of this project *and* to publish for other community abolitionists.

Our Reading List:

1. Black Power Mixtape Documentary
2. Locking Up Black Dissidents and Punishing the Poor: The Roots of Mass Incarceration in the US by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Johanna Fernandez
3. Kenneth V. Cockrel Speech, and Black Editor: An Interview by John Watson
4. Grassroots Models of a Just Future: Learning from Black Radicalism in Detroit by Scott Kurashige
5. Black Study, Black Struggle by Robin D. G. Kelley
6. From Repression to Revolution Speech by Kenneth V. Cockrel
7. *Abolition.Feminism.Now.* by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners and Beth Richie

What are the templates and lesson plans?: *Our intentions, their purpose, and usage*

The lesson plans and discussion questions are the product of our spring semester work. Instead of producing essay style reflections and analysis as we did in the summer of 2021, we created reflections that *asked* more than *told*. In taking this approach, we can then keep the plans as living documents to be used, reevaluated, and edited in our upcoming study group or by other educators in their classrooms, book clubs, or groups.

A TEMPLATE READING SUMMARY “WORKSHEET” FOR EDUCATIONAL USE:

Week __:

By: Author

Sources:

- “Title” by author’s name

Key Quotes:

- “Quote”

Key takeaways from each reading:

Overall Throughlines:

My Reflection:

If one were to “teach” this week’s material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

- 1.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1.

Extension:

Other Questions (Personal):

If one were to publish this week’s material...

Week One Reading Group Reflection Document

By: Anna Nelson

Sources:

BPM = Black Power Mixtape Documentary

LUBD = Locking Up Black Dissidents and Punishing the Poor: The Roots of Mass Incarceration in the US (by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Johanna Fernandez)

KVC = Kenneth V. Cockrel Speech

BE = Black Editor: An Interview (by John Watson)

Key Quotations:

- “America is a young, dumb country. A puppy with big eyes and teeth that bite” (4:40 BPM)
- “Historically, when the state is incapable of meeting the basic needs of its citizens, it responds by asserting its authority with force” (pg. 10? LUBD)
- Mass incarceration is not an incarceration of the mass, but a targeting (pg. 10 LUBD)
- Shift from “punishment and control to the rebuilding of vibrant communities (pg. 13 LUBD)
- “Marxism is a particular Method and ... it is a newer and more inherently revolutionary method of gaining Black freedom” (BE)
- *My Favorite*: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it” (LUBD)

Combined Historical Timeline

Post slavery through early 20th century: incarceration was meant to “conceal and render invisible vast social problems that were a direct consequence of the economic changes of those eras” (LUBD)

1960s: incarceration expanded to include nonviolent crimes, or crimes without victims. Led to more people being blocked from reintegration into society (LUBD)

1967: ½ million soldiers in Vietnam

1968: creation of rioting laws, Safe Streets and Crime Control Act (wiretapping without warrant, etc.), on the spot search and seizure (LUBD)

1970s-90s: law and order. Used reconstruction era propaganda about protecting white women. Moral panic created the foundation for modern mass incarceration. Prisons were built for social control (LUBD)

- Crime and incarceration moved to serve ideological purposes like maintaining class hierarchies (black = criminal = beneath)

2008 economic crisis

2010 New Jim Crow

2011 Occupy Movement

2011 Release of Mumia Abu-Jamal

2012 Death of Trayvon Martin

- (These all led to a shift in consciousness (LUBD))

2014 Ferguson Missouri riots: refusal to back down (LUBD)

Throughlines

Stokely Carmichael//Brief Bio:

- Born: 1941 From: Port of Spain, Trinidad, moved to New York at age 11
- Learned about black radicals and communism in high school, as well as sit ins and nonviolence acts.
- Chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- Challenged nonviolence, called for “Black Power.” View on violence relates to that of Angela Davis from her interview in jail: the violence is from white oppressors to Black people, and they must refute it.

Mentions in Sources:

- Says the U.S. has no conscience (BPM 7:00).
- Power was missing with MLK, Stokely brought that power. MLK died after being first to stand up to war. Was shot for going after wealthy and “dismantling the economic construct” (BPM)
- Opposition to Stokely and his thoughts that communism and socialism are not for Black People (BE)

My Reflection:

- When he says the US has no conscience, I disagree and I think this is dangerous logic. It seems to dehumanize or degrade those who are complicit, or ignorant. While neither of these are an excuse for causing harm, or not stopping harm, can they be handled differently?
- Can we expand on why Stokely did not think socialism and communism were meant for Black people? What was his philosophy? (In relation to BE article)

How to Create a Successful Revolution (compilation of sources' ideas)

- BPP grew by educating community to fight and create welfare for themselves (BPM)
- Goal: (Stokely's?) to create a provisional government like South Korea (BPM)
- Join those in struggle and those in other organizations (KVC). this would stop the conspiracy arrests that were common at the time
- Aim to produce something! (KVC) the oppressed need to start running things and take power
- Organize workers to hit the infrastructure's most vulnerable spot: Economic Production (KVC).
- You cannot ask others; you must do it yourself
- Must create a political machine (KVC)
- A rise in consciousness leads to a rise in instability. There are too many groups and too many ideologies, and not enough organizational continuity. (BE)
- Revolutionaries do something, not just talk. (BE)
- Make it day to day work. Grow close with coworkers. Make financial worries the worst of worries. (BE)

Reflection: What can we add to this list? What is the most effective way to connect with others? We want to work with others, without delegating the responsibility or waiting for others. We want to raise consciousness and numbers, but not dilute the meaning of the movement.

- In Black Editor then, he said that “we cannot unify with everybody”
-

Other Questions:

- Black Power Mixtape discussed “Creating a political trial” and how Davis’s trial was “politicized”. We’ve discussed this before, and related it to the analogy, politicize is to “gravitize.” Everything is already affected by gravity and politics. In Cockrel’s speech, he discusses the need for a “political machine.” What does he mean by this, and what role do politics then play in a revolution? (Are they almost synonymous? How do we show others the role politics play and the fact that they cannot be removed?)
- Also in Black Power Mixtape, the Nation of Islam blames America for the wrongs. Who is America if America is hurting the people? (1:19:00 BPM)

Week Two: Black Struggle, Activism, and forms of Revolutionary Praxis

By: Ria Dhingra

Sources:

- “Grassroots Models of a Just Future: Learning from Black Radicalism in Detroit” by Scott Kurashige **(GMF)**
- “Black Study, Black Struggle” - Robin D. G. Kelley **(BS)**
- “From Repression to Revolution” - Speech by Kenneth V. Cockrel **(RR)**

Key Quotations:

- “The American Dream that had lifted millions of white workers into the Middle Class would not be attainable for most African Americans, especially the younger generations comprising a “street force” that would fuel the militant Black Power movement.” **(GMF)**
- “Combined effects of African American organizing and white flight set the stage for a new era of Black political power and “community control” in Detroit” **(GMF)**
- “African American women and nonbinary activists have been pivotal to “creating more participatory, empowering, and horizontal kinds of leadership.” **(GMF)**
- “a three-pronged approach” they call “defense, offense, and dreaming.” **(GMF)**
- **Favorite Quote:** “People exercising their creativity in the midst of devastation is one of the great historical contributions of humankind.” **(GMF)**
- “I want to draw attention to the contradictory impulses within the movement: the tension between reform and revolution, between desiring to belong and rejecting the university as a cog in the neoliberal order.” **(BS)**
- “The fully racialized social and epistemological architecture upon which the modern university is built cannot be radically transformed by “simply” adding darker faces, safer spaces, better training, and a curriculum that acknowledges historical and contemporary oppressions. This is a bit like asking for more black police officers as a strategy to curb state violence.” **(BS)**
- “Winning is not always the point. Unveiling the university’s exploitative practices and its deeply embedded structures of racism, sexism, and class inequality can be profound acts of demystification on their own.” **(BS)**
- “urged radical black scholars to become “guerrilla intellectuals.”” **(BS)**
- “It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment.” **(BS)**
- “The Personal Is Not Always Political” **(BS)**
- “The triumph of liberal multiculturalism also meant a shift from a radical anti-capitalist critique to a politics of recognition... At the same time, contemporary calls for cultural competence and tolerance reflect neoliberal logic by emphasizing individual responsibility and suffering, shifting race from the public sphere to the psyche.” **(BS)**
- “Black study and resistance must begin with love.” **(BS)**
- “They are in the university but not of the university.” **(BS)**
- “One means whereby a repression can be ended - and that is that the source of the repression (namely the oppressor) be destroyed” **(RR)**
- “The primary responsibility of revolutionaries is to be about the business of doing revolutionary work. And that means that your first responsibility is to do everything in your power to avoid becoming a defense organization” **(RR)**
- “But the primary thing that can be done to prevent the occurrence of repression is for those of us of the oppressed classes to take over, to take power, to run every goddamn thing in this country, to run everything, this world - and certainly to start out by running everything in this city” **(RR)**

- “Black students understand very clearly that the instruction they get is designed to produce fodder or fuel for the maintenance and the ongoing operation of this economic machine.” (RR)

Key takeaways from each reading:

(GMF)

- The “solution” to historical racial disenfranchisement cannot be pouring money and resources into new institutions, corporations, or establishments. Real radicalism is not “top-down,” but “bottom up”: community solutions that invest in de-commodifying the land and labor of people. Note: Re-development and reform still relies upon structure, structure upholds the root causes of inequality.
- Radicalism is not synonymous with violence or tumultuous upheavals of institutions, it can instead be building new connections, new communities. Ex: Detroit Gardens-> solidarity economics. **(Love, care, community, and education free from institutions are all forms of radicalism).**
- Looking at the history of radicalism in Detroit, one can use it as an example to learn from, spreading radical vision in the form of establishment free efforts to aid a community.

(BS)

- Long history of activism and protest on college campuses. Tension in movement, a desire to reform the colleges and create a safe space versus a revolutionary critique of existing universities and a demand for something new.
- Universities aim for inclusivity. But assimilating people into an institution does not negate it's outward harm. Diversification of a curriculum and “safe spaces,” while important, are inherently not revolutionary.
- Individualized trauma and suffering are purposely given attention because it shifts racism to be a matter of personal psychology and interpersonal interactions rather than an institutionalized system. Universities aim for diversity and safe inclusion in order to avoid confronting systemic issues and their own participation in it.
- Guerilla education, being in college but forming study groups and finding external material is needed for holistic critique of a system. Love and dedication to external (non-traditional) forms of education are needed to enact revolutionary change. Activism is not separate from education. **Make education a form of activism.**

(RR)

- Challenging injustice close to home should be of the utmost importance for radical Black leaders. To do so one must not waste time in electoral politics or debate of what is reformist or not. Time should not be spent creating martyrs or heroes or faces in jail. All revolutionaries should be actively involved in community efforts and grassroots organizing.
- Developing a Political Machine, where all is run by those who have been repressed. Rely on one another, substitute institutions for community efforts, have these efforts grow and replace institutions.
- Try to avoid hyper-fixation of defamation and attack, it draws media and personal attention away from the root causes of revolution.

Overall Throughlines:

- All 3 of this week's reading focus on grassroots organizing, non-traditional means of education (political), and the importance of not losing focus on the primary causes of revolution.
- What is a radical revolution: denouncing institutions and stepping away from them, forming community efforts, and de-commodifying labor, land, and people (work).
- The role of students and universities in activism was brought to attention.

A Reflection:

I found the contrasting definitions in this week's readings to be extremely interesting. Contradictory aims and tensions within a movement can work to undermine its main efforts and many present-day activists may not be aware of these efforts either. Moving past trauma, outrage, and calls for diversity, the readings this week described radicalism in terms of love, care, and grassroots organization. This approach to revolution is one not often depicted in the media or initially considered by students wishing to engage in revolution (the next generation of leaders).

Revolution in the form of care and action makes it suddenly seem more "feasible." Personally, I was filled with a lot of hope upon completing this week's reading. These forms of revolution worked to build communities up, not just tear establishments down (although that is still a simultaneous option). However, I also recognize that a lot of grassroots efforts require marginalized and oppressed people to work "extra" in order to compensate for the institutions that failed them. **Is this extra burden of forming alternative groups that replace established institutions further individualizing responsibility for those who experience repression?** Additionally, many people simply do not have the time or means to dedicate themselves to alternative or additional community efforts due to having to **divest all time in making ends meet** and supporting themselves and their families. Yes, our system is broken and flawed, but it is still the status quo. For people to survive in the status quo many have to work in exploitative jobs/poor conditions. Do we expect these individuals to additionally participate in grassroots activism as well? Or forgo their security and dedicate themselves to a movement (while important) that may not result in money or security?

If one were to "teach" this week's material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

1. Be able to define the terms "radical," "education," "revolution," and "political machine."
2. Recognize intentions, harms, and effects of re-development efforts in exploited communities.
3. List forms and practices of grassroots activism.
4. Recognize the role of universities as a place of refuge, but not of enlightenment. Consider the role of scholars and activists.
5. Question/List the ways in which the media, general public, and even activist movements lose sight of radical goals.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Question our current definition of "revolution" and describe alternative forms of radicalism.
2. Move from an individual perspective of repression/trauma to a community-based understanding.
3. View education as a tool for radical change and be able to explain forms and practices of radical education.
4. Extend from the readings and brainstorm ways to further promote radicalism and question what grassroots organizers aim to do next.

Extension:

- What are the "steps" to a successful revolution?

Other Questions (Personal):

- As students in a university, can we fully engage in “guerilla education?” While we are lucky enough to engage in outside research (choose our own content), we have been funded by the university and English 182 and 548 were UW-Madison classes. Even Kelly teaches at UCLA. Should students in school rely upon an institution and its resources before critiquing it? Will this initial reliance undermine their critique? Is the ethos of political education determined by its level of independence from institutions?
- Kelly warns us to focus on larger issues of systemic racism and not individual cases of trauma. While this makes sense, how do we approach those experiencing trauma without minimizing their concerns or lumping their experience into a group? It’s one thing for us to say all this and another to talk to victims or witnesses of extreme brutality.
- Kelly also warns against individualizing responsibility by avoiding multiculturalism and shows of diversity in higher social positions. While this is a salient point, should oppressed populations deny opportunities that would give them larger social standing or footing to enact change if that growth is capitalistic? Until grassroots organizations are comparable to/replace present institutions should we have no diversity (voice) of the oppressed in power at all? Thoughts on tokenism?
- Looking at grassroots activism in Detroit, there have been amazing examples of strength and community solidarity. Still, inequality, exploitation, and violence persist. In theory, can current practices be improved to soften conditions of repression?
- Is resistance primarily rooted in suffering? Can one resist a system without experiencing suffering? In what ways?
- What does “radical” mean? To the general public, to activists, to a larger society? Is there such a thing as a “good radical?” Would the weighing mechanism for that be those radicals who lead to the most social change?
- Spending the week learning about grassroots activism and non-traditional education, how can we better structure our research findings as a curriculum? Is the very structure of a curriculum too restrictive?

Week Three: An Introduction to Abolition Feminism

By: Anna Nelson

Sources:

- “Abolition. Feminism. Now” (Preface and Introduction) by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners and Beth Richie (AFN)

Key Quotes:

- “How does abolition feminism take up the political questions that are germane but often obscured in the rendering of both concepts” (AFN 2)
- “A *now* practice, abolition feminism refuses to let go of the visionary—that which does not exist yet—and the radicalness of the imaginary as a space for what is yet unthinkable, at the edge of the possible” (AFN 16)
- “Ideological connections between state violence, street violence and interpersonal violence, a conjunction at the heart of all of the work of abolition feminism

Key takeaways from each reading:

- We need to start practicing to find the homophobia and racism when we see misogyny and the misogyny in racism and homophobia (AFN 3)
- We must do multiple things at the same time! We cannot shy away from contradictions. (AFN 4)
 - This makes me think of the debate Ria and I had at NAAPE last fall about college in prisons. While Ria loved the idea, I was getting frustrated that people were then approving of the system and changing within it, not doing abolition work. We discussed and saw each other's sides. We concluded that retroactive, current and preventative strategies must happen at the same time. (fun fact, that guy is on a CEE podcast in the works)
- Call for artists! “Anti carceral aesthetics” reminds me of the UMich online art gallery for carceral state
- They began working on the book before the pandemic. They zoomed before the pandemic as well!
- Movements should not be directed towards a utopian goal (AFN 15)
- Specific examples of Cece McDonald and Sarah Reed (p.19) and Marielle Franco (p.22).

Overall Throughlines/Reflection:

- We must recognize that with activism, time is important. While we must always continue steadily putting in the effort and laying the groundwork for change, the public and government’s reactions may occur as sudden changes, moving from slow change to quick change rapidly. For example, the spring and summer of 2022 served as a “catch up” period where the public quickly and suddenly became aware of the abolitionist work and need for work around them. The same goes for the 1960s. We can compare these “catch up” periods with the late 1970s that still consisted of feminist movements and activism, but lacked the major public awareness and change.
- There is a duality between vision and practice or history. Abolitionist practice is the recognition that things need to systematically change. We might not have the vision or understanding right now of what that might look like, but as we slowly start integrating this recognition and acting within the capacity that we can, those answers will come. Then, we can adjust the vision and adjust the practice to match it.
- Adjacently, we must act with multiplicity. There needs to be a balance between visionary work/theorizing what those answers could look like and integrating those answers into what is possible *now*, while also balancing doing retroactive work to help those harmed by the system and doing preventative work to stop the harm before it happens.

- This requires collectivism and collaboration! Always!

If one were to “teach” this week’s material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

(Why Abolition Feminism. Why us. Why now. Why collectivism.)

1. Define Abolition feminism, Feminist abolition, Abolition and Feminism as distinct. Identify the differences and purpose of punctuation.
2. Identify the intentions of the authors and their purpose for writing the book and writing it the way they do (through a critical genealogy of collective movements).
3. Understand the importance of “now” and the context and timeliness of this piece.
4. Build a reasoning for ecological practices and collectivism

Learning Outcomes:

1. Practice dialogues and conversation! How do we move ideas from one place to another?
2. Practice moving from taking in information, to brainstorming connections, to setting goals with purpose.

Discussion Questions:

- **Generations:** There was a note on page 11 about the age difference between the authors:

“For Beth, Gina, and Angela, these exchanges began in the late 1990s, with Erica, the youngest in our collaborative effort, joining ten years later” (AFN 11).

How has the difference of ten years in practice differed the experience of abolitionists? We spend a lot of time learning about the roots and waves of abolition, but I’m curious more as to what the grassroots movements of the 90s and 2000s looked like. Also, there is an age gap of I believe more than twenty years here (Davis is 78 and Meiners is ~53). How do you think age helped bring differing opinions in the co-authoring?

- **Prevent and Response:** On page 14, the authors discuss how the network of collective resistance “remind us that abolition will not end all harm or interpersonal violence: we must do the work to both prevent and reduce harm, while we practice and grow transformative ways to respond when harm does happen” (AFN 14). Relating back to my point about multiplicity, how do we balance retroactive, current, and preventative work? How do we change that balance? Should we?
- **Pandemic:** How did the pandemics and uprisings shift the trajectory of the book? How has the recent mass media of abolition affected the works of already practicing abolitionists?
- **Technology:** The authors mentioned on page 11 that they began this project over zoom before zoom became the norm. How has technology changed our approach to abolition? I’m thinking about instant connectivity, live streaming, phone calls, face meetings, posting, sharing, etc. How does this affect the “now” premise of the book? How can we utilize this?

Week Four: Abolition--Asking Why and Dreaming of More

How abolitionist praxis is rooted in feminist action, collectivism, procedural change, and hope.

By: Ria Dhingra

Sources:

- “Abolition. Feminism. Now” (Chapter 1) by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners and Beth Richie (AFN)

Chapter One: “Offers a critical partial genealogy of abolition with feminist inflections” (pg. 26)

“Traces feminist throughlines propelling abolitionist practice” (pg. 34)

Key Quotes:

Note: Some quotes are from the introduction for the sake of throughlines

- “Space between necessary response to immediate needs and collective and radical demands for structural and ultimately revolutionary change.” (pg. 5)
- “Meet both the immediate demands and confront broad systems of injustice.” (pg. 4)
- “Language has always been a central dimension of radical political movements” (pg. 43)
- “Abolition is reorientation as a philosophical activist tradition” (pg. 43)
- “Women have always been major supporters of those in prison not only as organizers, but also as anchors of families and kinship networks deeply affected by incarceration practice. This is especially true of women of color. These feminist insights were directly incorporated...” (pg. 45)
- “B/c the PIC was conceptualized as a set of relations beyond the process of incarceration...it propelled activists to recognize that the educational system as well as child and family services and other social services as domains of deeply gendered, ableist, and racialized punishment.” (pg. 44)
- “Abolition as a tradition, a philosophy, and a theory of change moves away from myopic focus on the distinct institution of the prison toward a more expansive vision of social, political, and economic processes that defined the context within which imprisonment came to be viewed as the legitimate hand of justice.” (pg. 50)
- “Non-reformist reform...that makes sustainable and material differences in the lives of people living under the control of oppressive systems.” (pg.51)
- Narrow interpretations ... narrowly focus on negation of absence... what abolition aims to remove or dismantle... abolition has always been...building and experimenting...” (pg. 51)
- Abolition feminism has always required a practice... preventative community based responses that can be implemented to both reduce the incidence of gender and sexual violence and address harm when it does happen...” (pg. 52)
- *PAGE 55: 4 Contemporary abolition approaches*
- “Incarceration on the continuum of racial slavery.” (pg. 58)
- “To render prisons obsolete, we must also build movements demanding that society be reshaped with the goal of eliminating gender and sexual violence and their enabling of racist and heteropatriarchal structures.” (pg. 59)
- “Strategy: Care not Cops” (pg. 65)

Key takeaways/overall throughlines:

- Abolition is a practice rooted in feminist ideology and mechanized in feminist collective action, NOT an end goal with a drawn-out plan.
- One does not demand abolition; rather, one works to actively practice it and integrate it as a lifestyle. This means abolition can be visionary, dream-like, whilst not being labeled as idealist or

not pragmatic. Abolition is not a vision of a perfect world, but a procedural bettering of the current world.

- Immediate short-term practices addressing current harms in the status quo are needed simultaneously alongside long term demands for changing what the status quo looks like. Framing abolition as a practice has room for both approaches, not having to pick one or the other. Short term care is urgent and immediate, cultivating long term change. (Ex: Lawyers getting people off death row whilst also demanding for the abolition of the death penalty. Lobbying for abolishing prisons while supporting education of incarcerated people.)
- Contradiction exists not between short term care and long-term revolution, but when short term interventions end up limiting long term care or goals. (Ex: Lobbying to ban death penalty on pretext of “those on death row deserve to suffer, death is too easy rhetoric.” In this case, while the immediate short-term harm of death penalty is mitigated, long term perspective shifts are harmed by viewing incarceration as a solution to the death penalty. The need for short term change is there, but the method/intention must be done in an abolitionist way). “Non-reformist reform”
- Feminism is unique approach to abolition as their histories are often tied as feminist practices work towards an abolitionist vision. Feminism has always been rooted in notions of cultivating care and has an existing “infrastructure” of relying on community as the justice system does not serve those who have experience gender and sexual violence, forcing them to form community support networks.

My Reflection:

This chapter left me feeling a lot of hope. It directly addressed the three questions/doubts I had all throughout this research while further promoting the necessity of abolition—especially today. First, the introduction directly defined abolition and addressed notions of it being too “dreamlike” or not pragmatic. By making abolition a process, not an end goal—the need to provide people with a “blueprint” suddenly vanished. Second, the first chapter addressed the question of pragmatism: How abolition in theory can be practiced in a way that challenges and transforms the status quo while also initially working within the limitations provided by it. Abolition isn’t just calling out, but it’s working with a flawed world—a pragmatic reality—and then systematically dismantling it. Pragmatism needs to be acknowledged in order to be openly contested.

Additionally, Anna and I had a really interesting conversation about “what about until then?” back in October when we went to a philosophy conference. We had witnessed a speaker talk about college education in prisons, causing us to question if his efforts (while admirable) still upheld the status quo: a world where we still needed prisons. Later in November, when talking to a friend about his law school aspirations, I questioned if agents (asides from police) in the Criminal Justice system (profit off of) and also worked to uphold how the status quo currently functions. This chapter mentions abolitionist lawyers, agents of the criminal justice system who practiced in ways that assessed and mitigated immediate suffering whilst also not making it harder for abolitionists to dismantle institutions. These “immediate” and “short-term” practices to suffering can either aid abolitionist causes or work to not get in the way of them. Regardless, there is a space for short term action—lawyers and college education in prisons— within abolitionist movements. There should not be ONLY short-term movements, but—maybe— there is no need for abolitionists to condemn them or call these movements out for not being “enough.” Rather, maybe, abolition as a whole, collaborative, movement can encompass both short term mitigations of harm (needed b/c people are suffering right now) and long-term visions—recognizing the need of and respective limitations of both.

Reconciling the “what about until then” question or at least integrating that question into abolitionist practice filled me with a lot of hope. Additionally, a lot of these practices are directly led by women of color—as these communities have had to compensate for lack of care by addressing harm

themselves: by starting prison education programs, by forming bail-out groups, by organizing to call out the system while helping the people inside of it.

If one were to “teach” this week’s material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

1. Be able to map out and draw relations between the overlapping the origins of abolitionist rhetoric, feminist practice, and the rise of the prison industrial complex.
2. Argue and explain why women, women of color, and non-binary identifying individuals are in a unique position in their communities and better spokespeople for critical critiques of the carceral state.
3. Recognize how abolition is perceived in mainstream media and how this is either contradicted or supported by the history of abolitionist movements.
4. Identify: need for abolition, practices of abolition, goals of abolition, and methods of abolition.
5. Question: What popular activist movements are reformist, non-reformist, long-term, or short term in the context of abolition?

Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop definitions for abolition and feminism. Be able to articulate the relation between the terms.
2. Identify and contest modern critiques of abolition.
3. *Extend analysis of this reading into the field of activism today, recognize primarily goals of popular movements. How are these goals reflected in practice? How do these practices conflict? What movements pair well together? How can we unite movements from a systems approach?*
 0. Table/List of activist movements/practices/how they contribute to abolitionist ideals/practices

Extension:

- What are current “short term” practices that immediately address harm that (in practice) also promote practice/perspective change that cultivates in long term care?

Other Questions (Personal):

- If slavery morphed into the carceral state, was it ever really abolished? Or rather, was it transfigured? If that’s the case, how do we continue to transfigure the carceral state into something else entirely? If the institutional form has changed but the function remains (of slavery) is this procedural transformation of the carceral state even possible if current society “depends” of the function of slavery/carceral state? Must something be torn down in order to focus on building up? (A rotten foundation-> can you renovate and make an entirely new house if the roots are not replaced? Or will the new house still have the same faults but better masked?)
- In the Angela Davis texts we read in English 182 and 548, she argues of the important role Black women played as heads of the domestic sphere in slave communities. It was feminine dominance over this sphere whilst also being subjected to masculine labor exploitation (labor outside the home) that did not recognize the body by gender that inadvertently provided Black women with

institutional education—allowing them to “play the system” and turn means of oppression into means of resistance. Extending this argument to the quote from page 45, how can intersectionality play a role in resistance today? Is resistance primarily rooted in suffering? Can one resist a system without experiencing suffering? In what ways? Is this extra burden further individualizing responsibility for those who experience the most amount of repression?

- After this week’s reading, I feel more confident defining abolition. However, defining feminism was not as explicit—creating confusion in terms of what to label it as. In 2022, what is feminism? What are its insights? Limitations? Flaws?
- In terms of divesting time, resources, money, and care. How does an aspiring activist choose between short term mitigation of harm and long term demands for change? While both are possible, addressing immediate suffering often contradicts long term objectives and requires a higher degree of urgency. What are ways to continue treating people as people and not pawns in a political minefield—how can one reconcile concurrent desires to address immediate harms and suffering while also working to eliminate the conditions that cause it?

Week Five: Feminism and Gender Violence

By: Anna Nelson

Sources:

- “Abolition. Feminism. Now” (Chapter 2) by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners and Beth Richie (AFN)

Key Quotes:

- “Rape and the racist manipulation of the rape charge were fundamentally connected” (96)
- “Carceral Creep” of 1990s - Mimi Kim (105)
- “Carceral feminism refers to an overreliance on carceral approaches to solve the problem of gender violence, despite research that clearly establishes that the carceral regime harms Black and other people of color and other marginalized groups” (107)

Key takeaways:

- Color of Violence Conference limited entrance & participation of non-women of color, but did not exclude (87)
- The genealogy must recognize the contributions of individual women of color before N.O.W. (92)
- Claudia Jones connected dangers faced by domestic workers to “dangers that Black women had experiences *during* slavery” aka super exploitation or triple jeopardy of racism, sexism, imperialism (97)
- Held a public hearing *in* a maximum-security prison (How?) (100)
- State uses same tactic as people that cause domestic harm: “arbitrary authority, attribution of blame to justify punishment and expulsion of those who are objectionable, threatening or obsolete” (111)
- Power and control wheel!! Looks just like the double cycle Ria always made in 182 and 548 (113)

Sections

1. INCITE!
2. Racial Beginnings, Again
3. Carceral Cooptation and Carceral Feminism
4. Critical Interventions
5. Ongoing movements, familiar tensions

Overall Throughlines:

- The approach to gendered violence *must* account for the effects of increased policing, as state violence disproportionately harms POC as well as victims and those most vulnerable to gendered violence.

My Reflection:

I am looking forward to hearing everyone else’s thoughts on the reading this week, as I struggled to understand a deeper analysis of this section. The main idea of the section was that feminist movements addressing gendered violence must also address carceral feminism. I feel like this message has been addressed by other pieces we have read and discussed, so I want to understand what new information or nuance they are adding to the topic. Here are a few ways in which I want to find that:

1. Why was the only topic of this section gendered violence? If their goal is to connect abolition to feminism, there are many other movements that they could connect that don't have the attention gendered violence does. (for example, let's talk about the connections between abolition and birth control, the wage gap, global lack of female education, workplace harassment, etc.) I understand that the authors can only write about so much, but I want to ask why they chose this topic specifically.
2. In philosophy, we just finished a unit on political education and indoctrination. Both philosophers we read proposed "academization" where the professor addresses the topic from a non-partisan view, removes the debate from the political/outside world and teaches critical analysis from multiple perspectives. Without getting too far into that specific debate, I realized that I personally was not approaching these topics with enough of a critical lens. I want to spend more time addressing the literature we read as arguments and understanding who they are trying to persuade. What are some counterarguments to theirs (whether they stand or not)? I think this will better prepare us for turning these ideas into practice.
3. Look further into topics briefly mentioned:
 - Abolish ICE + abolish prisons connections (88)
 - Letter to the anti-rape movement (94) *let's talk about how this might differ from interpersonal violence
 - Appendix of INCITE statement of Gender violence (102)

If one were to "teach" this week's material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of abolition in the feminist movement against gender violence, and the dialectic importance of feminism in the abolition movement.
2. Define "carceral feminism" and identify the harms of the practice.
3. Describe the common attributes of intimate partner violence and state violence.
4. Imagine better practices to address gendered violence and intimate partner violence that *also* incorporate practices to address state violence.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Clearly understand the *argument* the authors put forth and the evidence/reasoning used to explicate it.
2. Recognize the necessity for argument.
3. Critically analyze the possible gaps or faults behind the chapter.
4. (Prep for *using* this material, whether it be in day-to-day discussion, future papers/research, debate, policy analysis, or publication)

Other Questions (Personal):

- What does cooptation mean?... It was just used in a GWS class of mine and I didn't quite grasp the idea. How is this idea connected to this section of the book?

If one were to publish this week's material...

As Text in Magazine:

There is so much to cover in this topic that I think it would be interesting to have a whole issue dedicated to different connections of abolition and feminism. With the magazine, this could look like analyses of how a specific feminist novel misses the abolitionist aspects of gender violence and misunderstands justice, or how the carceral state affects our education system and its favoring of men in STEM over women.

As Artwork:

These could be posters around campus for non-criminal-justice-system programs for care, or infographics to teach people how to aid friends who are subject to gender violence. This could also be fact-of-the-day infographics that are short, poignant and redirect people to larger works.

As a Lesson:

There could be a game-scenario with the goal of identifying what type of harm occurs in each practice. Ex. (from power and control wheel) find the common thread between this intrapersonal violence scenario with a date-rape and this arrest of Eisha Love who escaped a brutal attack.

Week Six: Precursor—Notes and Analysis on Bill Nye Talk

By: Ria Dhingra

Questions for Bill Nye the Science Guy//Notes & Takeaways→Importance of Narrative Arguments?

NOTES from talk//tie to research//thoughts

- “You should always present good information over and over.” -Bill Nye
 - *If it doesn't work, maybe you should change your strategy?* (Narrative arguments) Note: The NARRATIVE behind policy and the NARRATIVE to change policy. Narrative arguments, sell a story can change people's minds. **Are people's minds worth convincing/changing?** Bill Nye seems to say no. The naysayers/“stupid people are aging out” and they will get outnumbered, get over it, or with time they will get on board.
 - *It's not just aging out. Old politicians are influencing young people our age to still believe this stuff//radical stuff. If “nothing” will change people's mind, shouldn't we make them care about something? “Stick to science”//Shouldn't we insert care?*

Takeaways:

- He is a pragmatic scientist/activist. A celebrity who gets people excited about climate change, but he himself isn't really qualified to speak on it/about it alone. A team of writers writes his show. He doesn't seem to address externalities of effects and solutions to speak on any of this. Work with the status quo. “Do more with less.” Pro-capitalist environmentalist?
- ^top down, not bottom-up solutions. Which is good because it does not individualize responsibility... But in a pro-capitalist way?
- One of his solutions was increasing gas prices as an incentive to be better. He said people are willing to pay it right now with Ukraine b/c of the need (demand) to travel. If you increase the charge of the supply the people with demand will switch to sustainable transportation. But accessibility? Effect on marginalized groups? Areas without public transit infrastructure? People who cannot afford electricity?
- Can teaching climate change be viewed as political indoctrination? (Future Educator question) tie into convo about political education and partisanship of values being bad.
- Systems approach (pro that) which is cool! Urge passion and hope. Which is awesome.
- Wish this talk was on pedagogy, he is a great educator.

Main Takeaway:

- A super innovative guy. For the 90's. He is a revolutionary educator, but his approach needs to change to match the urgent needs of now. Big collective action guys//work together. Also, an incredibly well meaning, but super-pragmatist. Very pro-rules and regulation. But the rules and regulations also uphold a system that perpetuates problems. He probably knows that. He is a smart guy. But people aren't as rational and smart as him and he assumes they are.
- Bill Nye is a great spokesperson for education, but not for science. He is an excellent teacher but he doesn't know enough about policy, laws, regulations to be a lobbyist for climate change. He is great at getting people/ kids to care, but not qualified enough to explain how to care. I wish the topic of this talk was about pedagogy and teaching and not climate change.

Final Question:

We “all share the air,” but not a lot of people care. And if “presenting good information takes ten years to convince people,” what other strategies can we take to urge people to push for change

Week Six: Art, Analysis, and Abolition:

How Imaginative Thinking (and Action!) Requires Artistic Practices and Perspectives

By: Ria Dhingra

Sources:

- “*Abolition. Feminism. Now*” (Chapter 3 and Epilogue) by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners and Beth Richie (AFN)

Key Point: “The *Now* in the title of the book connotes our feeling of urgency and is meant to encourage thoughtful and principled action: it is not meant to suggest that there is an answer within reach at this moment. We mean to ask: different questions *now*; consider alternative courses of action *now*; engage with more people *now*; complicate the analysis *now*; change our minds, apologize, recalibrate and try again *now*.” (pg. 168)

Key Quotes:

- **Examine:** *ALL of page 142, 144-145, 167-169*
- “Incarceration itself has always been a pandemic” (pg. 127)
- “Continue to build a daily response a wide range of harms while working to challenge systemic and structural forms of state violence...Abolition feminism is a mechanism” (pg. 129)
- “We need critical debate and discussion about how to build a world we know we need” (pg. 154)
- “Tethering short term campaign goals to long term struggles for paradigm shifts while ensuring that campaign participants understand the connections...staying intersectional is the best way to protect ourselves from reformist improvements.” (pg. 155)

Mentions of Art/Wording/Narrative:

- “Imagining a different world...ability to dream audaciously” (pg. 128)
- “Driven by necessity, practice, and reflection” (pg. 131) “Defining and Creating Safety” (pg. 133)
- “Social media documents amplify...” (pg. 134)
- “Their zines, spoken word events, street auctions, and popular education workshops...” (pg 137)
- “Do-it-yourself” (pg. 141)
- “No one hires poets and artists, yet resources are seemingly always available for surveillance cameras and school police.” (pg. 150)
- “Indie documentary screenings... campus groups that erupt or disrupt...” (pg. 164)
- “We recognize this desire... poet and educator... ‘we are our road map’” (pg. 166)
- “How to draw the line between the work that is unfolding and unfinished?” (pg. 167)

Words used a LOT: define, transform, creative, envision, imagine, challenge, create, dream, visibility, memorial, analysis, experimentation, narrative, languages, translations, question(s), consciousness, vision, and beauty.

My Reflection//A Note on Wording, Art, and Narrative:

As I was reading this week, I could not help but find myself circling words with artistic connotations and words tied to the artistic process. It hit me then that art/art education, the skills of practicing humanities are the very prerequisites of abolitionist thinking. As a collective, we choose to define *abolition* as “asking ‘why?’ and then dreaming of more” and to subsequently define *feminism* as a modality/lens with which to practice abolition, as it “examines and challenges conditions of inequality from the perspective of gender relations.” To “dream,” to “challenge” boundaries/conventions, to

“analyze/examine” are all disciplines in themselves: forms of complex thinking, speaking, arguing, perceiving, and creating.

In order to establish and advocate for a visionary future, we must work to train ourselves in visionary thinking: a discipline that is missing from traditional educational institutions. Art alone then fosters the sort of creativity, passion, and dedication needed to precede a revolutionary movement. It makes sense that our collective—that the three of us just happen to be: a current educator and Abolitionist scholar, an aspiring English educator/creative writer, and a Philosophy major/artist—are working on this project. And it makes sense that this research is done through the English Department—it *has* to be. The study of English, the study of: language and literature, human interactions within text, history captured in story, emotions and passion, and art, imparts skills of holistic analysis, rhetoric, and creativity. Studying English is studying the human condition, the words that are worth writing.

Aside from fostering artistic, abolitionist perspectives, studying English is a study of *narrative*. This is critical to note because in order to foster a transformation of social order, one cannot simply demand for reform or policy. While the intention of those lobbying for political action is aligned with abolitionist ideals, this sort of “top-down” action is rendered ineffective in leading to real change. Already, people openly contest/ignore laws and policies they dislike. For change to be sustainable, it must be “bottom up,” it must begin in the mind. Perspectives shape people and people promote policy. While abolitionists and feminists alike work in communities to address immediate harms and envision/build a better world without harm, they simultaneously work to unveil the hidden narrative of the carceral state. A narrative that permeates our education, healthcare, labor markets, housing, practices, and our own perspective. For an abolitionist future, we need abolitionist thinkers, we must think artistically, share stories, and argue narratively. We must humanize statistics and graphics about harm, introduce complexity to objective/“neutral” discussion of policy, we must cultivate care. To do so, we must rely on stories, on history, on humanities: on narratives. Narratives, our stories, not only bring our communities together, but work as powerful rhetorical strategies to challenge the “established” logic of the status quo—logic that is punitive, individualistic, and myopic to the consciousness of others and to the interconnectedness of our world.

It is art that captures and then imparts humanity. Art that gets us to feel, to care. Founding our research in the arts and expanding the empirical then allows us to practice abolition as we study it. Moving forward, running the MJCL magazine is a practice and artistic anthology that aims to not only compile and share narratives, but a form of artistic (and therefore political) education. Structuring our research as curricula and presenting it as art is the methodology that our subject demands. The transformative medium and capacity of art/art education is the best possible way for us to continue conducting our work.

Note: All revolution starts in elementary school classrooms. It’s fostering curiosity and care. Painting classes, book club, allowing kids to play the “why game” past second grade, teaching kids to learn for understanding and not to attain a solution are all ways we can encourage artists and abolitionists. None of these acts are inherently political or even need to directly mention anything about abolition and the carceral state (though they can). Instead, these sorts of community, art, and education-based efforts help pave the road for an abolitionist future.

Key takeaways/overall throughlines:

- This chapter focuses on the concept of *urgency* and how prior abolitionist activism set-up serves as a precursor to movements and expansion in 2020. By referring to the carceral state and prisons as the pandemic, the authors allude to how the pandemic itself served as a catalyst that made people conscious of carceral ills. And once you are conscious of the carceral, you cannot turn off that consciousness.
- This chapter also detailed the history of activist groups, movements, and abolitionist efforts in Chicago. In detailing this genealogy, the authors revealed how ‘successful’ movements are not

measured in metrics of policy changes, but in terms of reducing harm and moving forward (perspective wise and action wise) towards an abolitionist future.

- This chapter also took time to detail how established institutions often absorb abolitionist rhetoric/language in order to continue practices that uphold the status quo or villainize the movement. The causes of this problem are often unfortunately rooted in taking abolitionist concerns and reducing the complexity to phrases such as “defund the police.” Three problems emerge: First, the anger and outrage of activists is weaponized against them, protests are framed with riots and anti-institutionalism is framed as anarchy and chaos. Second, actually activist movements like feminism, environmentalism, and education efforts (due to a lack of holistic complexity) end up promoting action that is inherently carceral or tied to the carceral state. Ex: feminist concerns to have more cops for domestic violence, educators vying for new and better schools rather than fixing the public school system, and environmental action relying on building more “cleaner” machines that ravage resources from land that is impacted most by climate change. Third, the carceral state itself uses abolitionist rhetoric to promote itself. This means more funding for “kinder cops” and more prisons for “safety” and a “reduction of harm.”

If one were to publish this week’s material... (see a reflection on art)

As Text in Magazine/As Artwork/As a Lesson: A MIND MAP!!

As a non-artistic person (in a visual sense) but as a “word person” and visual learner, I am a big believer of melding words with images, then using these pieces as lesson tools. After all, Abolitionist thinking is creative building, and building artwork that is intersectional in medium and form (poetry interlaced over graphs//spoken word with visual background//short fiction with illustrations) can challenge creatives to not only have abolitionist intentions and practices, but abolitionist products.

For this week’s content, I think a mind map with text about Abolitionist movements in Chicago would be incredibly interesting. It could be a timeline that traces movements and a systems web that displays their interconnectedness. Mapping this mind map as an hourglass could be cool! This could illustrate how broad movements narrow down to a single mission and how single phrases cannot be representative of an entire movement. By melding concepts of a historical timeline, art (the hourglass), and analysis, this sort of graphic could be a spread that takes up two pages.

Additionally, sand moves through an hourglass. This symbol can be used to symbolize urgency, people moving through abolitionist movements, and how ideas move and change. Both sides of the hourglass can also serve as different perspectives, how one views abolition and how it can transform into something else when viewing it from a different position. The hourglass itself can represent urgency and the two glass bulbs could represent a dialectic. The middle “pivot point” could be representative of transformative change.



If one were to “teach” this week’s material...

Lesson Plan/Objectives:

Content Objectives:

1. Define Abolition, Feminism, and Abolition Feminism. Be able to explain the relationship between the terms.
2. Illustrate how activist history in Chicago is reflective of practices of Abolition Feminism.
3. Explain how the urgency of “now” is more prevalent than ever. Identify “turning points and factors” (social media, pandemic) that serve as catalysts for abolitionist rhetoric.
4. Think (creatively!) of practices that can build off of urgency and plan out some of these efforts. (Note: How does your identity and education influence these practices? What can you bring to the table towards reducing harm?)
5. Identify contradictions within groups that identify with abolition.
6. Question how abolitionist rhetoric gets contorted both by institutions and by activist movements themselves. Identify key “points” of contortion.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Recognizing abolition is more than a policy/structural change, but a way of thinking and living.
2. Be able to question internalized punitive practices and challenge the origin of said beliefs.
3. Build off of personal experience and education to think as abolitionist individuals in any practice or discipline.

Extension:

- Foster abolitionist thinking outside this lesson. Via practices, conversations, readings, and individual engagement with the subject.
- Creative efforts and Education tied to community curiosity.

Other Questions (Personal):

- The question of anger: In debate, I was always taught to place an emphasis on decorum. To be the most composed, to be the best dressed, to appear the most rational, to speak slowly and clearly—to smile. This sort of pacifying (playing to the system/constraints of debate—eliminating all excuses to dismiss me) allows debaters to present arguments in a way that people would listen, they could not dismiss anybody for being too loud, having an accent, or tone or way of dressing. And if they did so, that would be a reflection on them, make them look worse—like a bad listener. This sort of education is what compelled me to suggest the “constraint-based argument” of discharging emotion around abolition and then actually being able to discuss it without partisanship—to hopefully reintroduce complexity. However, I now recognize the problems with this approach of debate education, despite its usual efficacy. It’s elitist, rooted in racism and gender biases, and it forces the outraged to be responsible for their decorum (an extra burden). Lawyers do this, politicians do this. But to be successful in these practices is to be void of visible outrage and to repress urgency. Emphasis on decorum seems like a centrist and public politics sort of thing. Maybe, I now think, the complexity around abolition is in the fact that it’s emotionally charged, and recognizing these emotions is what makes us care. Simultaneously,

expressing emotion in certain ways leads to villainization of the movement. Ex: page 149 and shouting “Fuck the police.”

How should victims of harm and abolitionists emotionally charge their efforts in a way that leads to progress and change? Is this method fair? Is it pacifying? Is it necessary? Must they be rational and composed? Or visibly angry and outraged? Should they cater to an audience? Who? Why? How? Can narrative/art be used as a way to transfigure emotions of anger and outrage into emotive displays that are better “digested” by a larger audience—getting the point across without “turning people off”? Why is “digestibility” even a question? Is it a valid question? Is this transfiguration necessary or fair? Is it easy? A burden? A change?

^^Should abolition focus on building up communities who believe in the mission or getting others to challenge their mindsets and believe too? I think, and I think the authors think, it should be both and that different methodologies are required for both (including respective forms of political education—same method, different content). Our work cannot encompass every goal of abolition. **Moving forward: what should we focus on with our involvement with MJLC and our research?** To me, it feels like our work this far (and based on our own identities) relates closer to the second goal.

^Political and artistic education to the mass general public (with a focus on children) that works to foster abolitionist thinking/practices/questioning. As we work to develop tools to educate both ourselves and the masses, these tools and conscious individuals can then be components of abolitionist action/change.

Perspective->People (Us?)
People->Policy/Action



Section 2: Grant Applications



Grant Applications

For the next chapter of our project, we intend to expand our book club to the UW Madison community to practice and reevaluate the lesson plans before a larger audience. Additionally, this book club will provide a space for a curation of abolitionist writing in a magazine reflecting on these readings and their main ideas. To do this, we will be operating under two different scholarships. First, in the summer of 2022, we will work with the UW Madison Honors Summer Sophomore scholarship; during this time, we will begin administrative tasks to structure and promote the book club and its publication as well as create the magazine template, prompts, and editor's writing. Second, in fall of 2022, we will begin practice of said group with sponsorship from the Sophomore Research Fellowship Grant

Our purpose in expanding our project to the community lies in the need to connect current activists to the collective abolitionist movement. While our initial rationale for a three-person research team was to base a community focused project on collaborative methods, it is now time to broaden that community and begin applying our work. Both pedagogical change and dismantling of punitive mindsets require a collective effort of interactive discussion and reflection. We intend to provide a space for that effort in Madison.

In drafting these grant applications, we have spent time this semester carefully summarizing what we find to be most salient about our work whilst also taking time to properly discuss and plan what we aim to do moving forward. We would like to include some select grant applications here to demonstrate that thought process.

Grant Applications Included:

1. **Sophomore Summer Honors Apprenticeship:** This apprenticeship supports incoming or outcoming sophomores in the UW Madison Honors Program interested in working closely with professors to develop research skills. Students are responsible for finding a professor practicing research who is interested in mentoring and adding the student to their team. This grant is funded by the Kemper Knapp Bequest Committee and the Brittingham Foundation. (Awarded)
2. **Sophomore Research Fellowship:** This fellowship also supports incoming and outcoming sophomores at UW Madison. Students are given the opportunity to create their own research project with a faculty mentor, allowing them to build on their foundational research skills while under the supervision of an experienced project advisor. Grant winners are chosen based on the quality of their proposal, degree of collaboration, and practicality of achievement goals. Grant winners must present their findings at the Undergraduate Symposium the following spring. This grant is funded by the Brittingham Wisconsin Trust and the Kemper K. Knapp Bequest. (Awarded)
3. **Undergraduate Library Research Grant:** This research grant offers support for students doing library-based research. Projects are selected based on their creative use of library resources. Grant winners are required to participate in a series of collaborative meetings and check-ins with library advisors. (Declined)

Sophomore Honors Apprenticeship: *For Summer 2022*

“Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Carceral Mentalities”

By: Ingrid Diran, Anna Nelson, & Ria Dhingra

Abstract:

From its emergence in the 18th century as a moral stance against slavery to contemporary arguments against the prison-industrial complex, abolitionist discourse has, rightfully, been organized around removing, replacing and transforming unjust institutions. Such discourse tends to understate links which bind the carceral system to other social systems such as education, housing, and healthcare. The current research project has reframed the aim of abolition in relation to these other systems that are inevitably warped by the carceral state but not directly associated with it. In adopting a holistic, ecological perspective on the social effects of the carceral system, this project examined policing and prisons as a symptom rather than the cause of larger, social problems. After one year of work, we now aim to move from theory to praxis by establishing an abolitionist study group and applying our ecological stance towards analysis of texts in a curricular setting. In this group, we will bring together abolitionist stakeholders in the broader community to learn the role they play in dismantling the carceral state.

***Background:**

In Summer of 2021, we completed part one of our project, “An Ecological Approach to Abolition: A Holistic Analysis of Discrimination Systems.” This project developed out of ENGLISH 182: Doing Time: Race, Labor, and Incarceration, and honors seminar taught in fall of 2020, and ENGLISH 548: Racial Capitalism, an upper-level seminar taught in spring of 2021. In this project, we drew upon Barbara Reskin’s sociological analysis of the race discrimination system, in which she argues that the disparities that exist within every subsystem—criminal justice, education, housing, residential/school segregation, labor/mortgage markets, credit/consumption markets, and health services—create a complex “web of discrimination” (Reskin 23). We applied this web to the subsystems of the carceral state using historical texts and abolitionist rhetoric to identify the relations and common practices amongst them.

Our work examined the existing carceral state from a systems perspective, aiming to uncover patterns and practices that led to its establishment in the status quo. Upon looking at connections the carceral state had with other social systems such as healthcare, housing, education, and labor we were surprised to discover that the carceral state is not a concrete institution; rather, a dynamic system upheld and perpetrated by a series of practices at both the individual and societal level. Summer of 2021 was then spent mapping these practices, patterns we labeled as “carceral dimensions,” a series of shifts in both policy and perception that took place between 1964-1997. We recognized that there occurred a shift from public, explicitly racist policies to authorizing private agents to maintain implicit racism under the guise of legal equality. This shift occurred across every social system we studied and is upheld by the aforementioned carceral dimensions: colorblind universalism, public/private partnerships, predatory inclusion, individualization of blame/risk, reliance on pervasive racial myths, increase of state sponsored violence, and ingraining a punitive mindset in the general population. These dimensions, not the carceral state itself, are a part of the status quo, serving as justifications of the 1980’s prison boom and rationale for the carceral state today. Therefore, active abolition would and should aim to dismantle these widespread carceral dimensions—spreading across all social spheres, simultaneously—in order to bring down the carceral state.

Project Objective:

Our new project, entitled “Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Individualized Carceral Mentalities” aims to introduce a general public to these carceral dimensions and challenge punitive notions within individuals. By forming an abolitionist study group that examines texts from the perspective of our summer findings, we shall attempt to move from theory to an active praxis of

abolition. The very methodology of having conversations with people about their carceral mentalities whilst engaging in forms of political education is a form of both research and revolution.

In order to initiate abolition, one must not just be **aware** of a problem, but **conscious** of injustice. By focusing on structuring our work as a curriculum for a practice discussion group, then engaging in said discussion, we hope to alter carceral mentalities before—collectively—challenging a carceral society.

Methods:

In the Summer of 2022, we plan to complete part two of this project, and apply our framework of abolition to a test study group. In this study group, we will use a community-based approach to study the conditions that reinforce the carceral state within our community of Madison. Our goal is to provide a framework for abolition that includes social reform that is already in motion and that can be coordinated across multiple organizations that may not otherwise frame their struggles as interdependent. This goal necessitates collaboration. Indeed, the pedagogical rationale for a three-person team is to base a community-focused project in collaborative methods. The manner in which we undertake this project reflects its intentions of collectivized and “applied” abolition. Thus the proposed undertaking is itself meant to be prefigurative of larger-scale abolitionist praxis.

Overall, we aim to take the theory we have constructed in our research so far and use it to enact pedagogical change. By forming an abolitionist study group, we aim to dismantle punitive mindsets and challenge carceral mentalities. We want members to notice connections between their individual activism and occupations and become conscious of their relationships with abolition.

1. Test reading texts and searching for carceral dimensions
0. Have bi-weekly meetings and compose write ups on each of the texts
2. Discuss texts in relation to the Madison community
3. Examine what carceral mentalities are most pervasive within us and members
0. Structure findings as a curriculum/lesson plan
4. Write/Organize findings as an Abolitionist Curriculum for use in the Fall 2022 semester
0. Expand study group to be an abolitionist coalition in Madison

Timeline:

Stage 1: For the remainder of the 2022 Spring Semester, we will continue conducting research as students enrolled in ENGLISH 699. We shall finalize a series of reading lists and sample lesson plan outlines to use in our study group. We are currently testing different abolitionists texts, the questions they elicit, and the best pedagogical strategies to approach them in a tutorial style research class.

Stage 2 (Summer Project): Summer will be spent testing our material, reading all the chosen texts, and writing complimentary lesson plans. A continuation of the groundwork being conducted in this semester, Summer will be spent composing an abolitionist teaching guide: a handbook of all our findings, a reading list, abolitionist lesson plans, connections between texts to a greater Madison community, and a loose “class structure.” Towards the end of the Summer, we will advertise and invite peers, social justice organizations and various community members to participate in our study group.

Stage 2: By the start of the 2022 Fall semester, we will have a finalized lesson plan and coalition member list. Over the course of that fall, we will put those lesson plans into practice. While leading the coalition, we will take note of what readings, questions, and teaching practices elicit best conversation.

Stage 3: After the study group and semester is completed, we will reflect on the lesson plan, make necessary edits, and conclude with a summary paper. We plan to continue to keep in touch with participants, present our findings, and continue to improve the political education opportunities within the Madison community.

A Note on Duties of the Sophomore Apprentice:

While this application calls for students working under a professor who is facilitating their research, we have taken a slightly different approach. For this project, all three parties (two students and one professor) came up with this research idea collectively during discussion and co-wrote this research

proposal. In coming up with the project idea and writing the proposal together, all parties are equally invested and passionate about our work. Here, we are not just participating in research, but we are fostering development of the research itself. This unique opportunity allows us as students to not only involve ourselves in research, but work towards becoming researchers ourselves.

Therefore, this idea will be initiated by all three parties and responsibility will subsequently be equally distributed. The goal of this project is to coalesce numerous perspectives towards active practices of abolition. This necessitates collaboration and equal partnership rather than a fellowship structure.

In working on this project thus far, we have already improved upon and learned skills of textual analysis, applicative study, interdisciplinary perspectives, scientific writing, and collaboration. By engaging in our work further, we hope to not only engage with abolition, but obtain skills in text selection, group organization, coalition participation, and applicative study.

Conclusion:

Regarding the future of this project, we would like to expand our network of activists. The ultimate goal of this research is to form a coalition and change the way our society perceives punishment and carceral systems of organized violence. Within this coalition, we hope to implement our findings towards creating community solutions that collaboratively work towards abolition.

Additionally, we want to focus on the importance of political education. As the act of learning, becoming conscious of injustice in our system, is political expression in itself. Teaching empowers people to understand the complexities of our social relations and provides the tools to engage with that environment. By writing a curriculum that uses education as a means of exposing systemic injustice, we hope to form a baseline for abolitionist conversations.

Above all, we want to explore how our society as a whole formed an environment that fosters our perceptual reliance on “law and order,” and how that environment can be reimagined. The intention of this work is to remedy harm in our communities by dissecting how our society relies upon and cultivates conditions under which people are more likely to commit harm.

Personal Statement:

As a liberal arts student, my education has always relied upon interdisciplinary perspectives and emphasized the importance of applicative study. Additionally, as someone who plans to pursue a career in education, I have always made an effort to involve myself in community efforts that focus on progress, collaboration, and fostering/engaging with activism. However, despite these efforts, there seemed to be a gap in my learning about change and my working towards obtaining change.

My interest in activism peaked in 2018 as a junior in high school. I had recently begun an internship helping teach in an eight-grade classroom. It was here, where I first noticed the stark disparities in my suburban community. My students came from different backgrounds, had extenuating circumstances, and lacked social support to compensate for their baseline needs. Yet, as an educator, we were expected to treat them all the same in the classroom. Of course, disparities were retained and reinforced. It became clear to me then that activism is not just about advocating to “fix” effects of inequality, but examining—systemically—what caused inequality in the first place. Yet, as a student, I felt limited in my power to act upon these revelations.

UW-Madison allows students the opportunity to be activists and influencers all whilst being students. This research allows me the opportunity to directly apply my education towards examining the conditions that cause harm. I am now provided the opportunity to learn about the conditions that produce suffering and be able to articulate clearly why there is a need to change in the first place. As students, we hold the potential and the opportunity to foster and lead change. Participating in this research finally provides me an outlet to do so all whilst growing as a student and researcher in an academic setting.

So far, having conducted research as an English major over the past year, I feel incredibly grateful. I never would have imagined being someone who participated in research given my interest in humanities. I would love to be allowed the opportunity to continue this work over the summer.

*** Additional Background Context of Project: A Brief Overview of Abolition and the Carceral State**

The American carceral state—a nationwide system of prison complexes and policing—is derived from another regime of unfreedom: the institution of slavery. The 13th amendment’s formal abolition of slavery preserved a loophole permitting the reinstatement of servitude as a “punishment for crime” (US Const. amend. XIII, sec. 1). Consequently, abolition in the post-slavery era has been organized around the study and contestation of evolving strategies and motives behind criminalizing communities of color (“Abolitionist Movement”). In an interview with Jeremy Scahill, abolitionist-geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore identifies a key piece of carceral logic: an etching on an eighteenth-century Trenton prison reads, “That those who are feared for crime may learn fear of the law and be *useful*.” Stated clearly here is both sanction for the ruling classes to continuously extract “use”—that is, labor—out of those in prison, and the incentive to secure a steady stream of prisoners (Kumanyika, 2020, 00:22:30).

As modes of “useful” unfreedom evolved from slavery into convict leasing, Jim Crow segregation, and mass incarceration, the logic of incarceration has also shifted from the extraction of labor to the management, extraction, and monetization of *surplus* (of land, people, and time). Since the 1990s, accelerating levels of incarceration witnessed during the California Prison boom and War on Crime have led abolitionists to critique the disproportionate targeting of Black and Brown communities through extralegal, racist practices originating in a neoliberal regime that Gilmore dubs “organized abandonment.” In this respect, contemporary abolition completes and radicalizes the abolitionist cause of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. While the latter, as historian Robin D.G. Kelley puts it, “was an effort to expand social democracy” it was based on a false presumption that the “basis of our system was sound” (Scahill, 2020, 00:24:05); in contrast, the current abolitionist movement—exemplified in calls to “defund the police”—questions the very soundness of the government’s foundation, its social structures and their relation to prisons. Abolition today is no longer a means of altering current law or reforming the system; it is a mass movement to change and rebuild the foundation of American social life. It disrupts the naturalization of prisons and policing, and seeks to eradicate the anchoring myth of Black criminality in the American psyche.

The agenda of contemporary abolition, while mainstreamed due to mass protests in the summer of 2020, can be traced back to the organizing of “Critical Resistance” in the late 1990s. Since then, abolitionists have fundamentally opposed incarceration as a mode of social control and propose dismantling the prison industrial complex as a whole (“CR Structure & Background”). For more than a century and a half, we have been living in the afterlife of slavery—race-based exploitation that still continues to perpetuate itself through carceral practices. As the carceral state stakes itself entirely upon the suffering and forced idleness of targeted “surplus” populations, abolition assumes a radical and unprecedented scope: coordinated opposition to all systems that perpetuate suffering and oppression.

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Sophomore Research Fellowship Application: *For Fall 2022 School Year*

“Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Carceral Mentalities”

By: Ingrid Diran, Anna Nelson, & Ria Dhingra

Abstract:

From its emergence in the 18th century as a moral stance against slavery to contemporary arguments against the prison-industrial complex, abolitionist discourse has, rightfully, been organized around removing, replacing and transforming unjust institutions. Such discourse tends to understate links which bind the carceral system to other social systems such as education, housing, and healthcare. The current research project has reframed the aim of abolition in relation to these other systems that are inevitably warped by the carceral state but not directly associated with it. Adopting a holistic, ecological perspective on the social effects of the carceral system, this project examined policing and prisons as a symptom rather than the cause of larger, social problems. After one year of work, we now aim to move from theory to praxis in the form of establishing an abolitionist study group and applying our ecological stance towards analysis of texts in a curricular setting. In this group, we will bring together abolitionist stakeholders in the broader community to learn the role they play in dismantling the carceral state.

Literature Review: A Brief Overview of Abolition and the Carceral State

The American carceral state—a nationwide system of prison complexes and policing—is derived from another regime of unfreedom: the institution of slavery. The 13th amendment’s formal abolition of slavery preserved a loophole permitting the reinstatement of servitude as a “punishment for crime” (US Const. amend. XIII, sec. 1). Consequently, abolition in the post-slavery era has been organized around the study and contestation of evolving strategies and motives behind criminalizing communities of color (“Abolitionist Movement”). In an interview with Jeremy Scahill, abolitionist-geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore identifies a key piece of carceral logic: an etching on an eighteenth-century Trenton prison reads, “That those who are feared for crime may learn fear of the law and be useful.” Stated clearly here is both sanction for the ruling classes to continuously extract “use”—that is, labor—out of those in prison, and the incentive to secure a steady stream of prisoners (Kumanyika, 2020, 00:22:30).

As modes of “useful” unfreedom evolved from slavery into convict leasing, Jim Crow segregation, and mass incarceration, the logic of incarceration has also shifted from the extraction of labor to the management, extraction, and monetization of surplus (of land, people, and time). Since the 1990s, accelerating levels of incarceration witnessed during the California Prison boom and War on Crime have led abolitionists to critique the disproportionate targeting of Black and Brown communities through

extralegal, racist practices originating in a neoliberal regime that Gilmore dubs “organized abandonment.” In this respect, contemporary abolition completes and radicalizes the abolitionist cause of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. While the latter, as historian Robin D.G. Kelley puts it, “was an effort to expand social democracy” it was based on a false presumption that the “basis of our system was sound” (Scahill, 2020, 00:24:05); in contrast, the current abolitionist movement—exemplified in calls to “defund the police”—questions the very soundness of the government’s foundation, its social structures and their relation to prisons. Abolition today is no longer a means of altering current law or reforming the system; it is a mass movement to change and rebuild the foundation of American social life. It disrupts the naturalization of prisons and policing, and seeks to eradicate the anchoring myth of Black criminality in the American psyche.

The agenda of contemporary abolition, while mainstreamed due to mass protests in the summer of 2020, can be traced back to the organizing of “Critical Resistance” in the late 1990s. Since then, abolitionists have fundamentally opposed incarceration as a mode of social control and propose dismantling the prison industrial complex as a whole (“CR Structure & Background”). For more than a century and a half, we have been living in the afterlife of slavery—race-based exploitation that still continues to perpetuate itself through carceral practices. As the carceral state stakes itself entirely upon the suffering and forced idleness of targeted “surplus” populations, abolition assumes a radical and unprecedented scope: coordinated opposition to all systems that perpetuate suffering and oppression.

Background of Research:

In Summer of 2021, we completed part one of our project, “An Ecological Approach to Abolition: A Holistic Analysis of Discrimination Systems.” This project developed out of ENGLISH 182: Doing Time: Race, Labor, and Incarceration, and honors seminar taught in fall of 2020, and ENGLISH 548: Racial Capitalism, an upper-level seminar taught in spring of 2021. In this project, we drew upon Barbara Reskin’s sociological analysis of the race discrimination system, in which she argues that the disparities that exist within every social subsystem to create a complex “web of discrimination” (Reskin 23). Upon looking at connections the carceral state had with other social subsystems such as healthcare,

housing, education, and labor we applied this web to the subsystems of the carceral state using historical texts and abolitionist rhetoric to identify the relations and common practices amongst them. We were surprised to discover that the carceral state is not a concrete institution; rather, a dynamic system upheld and perpetrated by a series of practices at both the individual and societal level. Summer of 2021 was then spent mapping these practices as patterns we labeled “carceral dimensions:” a series of shifts in both policy and perception that took place between 1964-1997.

Project Objective:

Our current project, entitled “Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Individualized Carceral Mentalities” aims to introduce a general public to these carceral dimensions and challenge punitive notions within individuals. By forming an abolitionist study group that examines texts from the perspective of our summer findings, we shall attempt to move from theory to an active praxis of abolition. The very methodology of having conversations with people about their carceral mentalities whilst engaging in forms of political education is a form of both research and revolution.

In order to initiate abolition, one must not just be aware of a problem, but conscious of injustice. By focusing on structuring our work as a curriculum for a practice discussion group, then engaging in said discussion, we hope to alter carceral mentalities before collectively challenging a carceral society.

Methods:

In the Fall of 2022, we plan to complete part two of this project: apply our framework of abolition to a study group. In this study group, we will use a community-based approach to study the conditions that reinforce the carceral state within our community of Madison. We aim to dismantle punitive mindsets and challenge carceral mentalities. This goal necessitates collaboration. Indeed, the pedagogical rationale for a three-person team is to base a community-focused project in collaborative methods. The manner in which we undertake this project reflects its intentions of collectivized and “applied” abolition. Overall, we aim to take the theory we have constructed in our research so far and use it to enact pedagogical change. By forming an abolitionist study group, we aim to dismantle punitive mindsets and challenge carceral

mentalities. We want members to notice connections between their individual activism and occupations and become conscious of their relationships with abolition.

Timeline:

Stage 1: For the remainder of the 2022 Spring Semester and this upcoming Summer, we will finalize a series of lesson plans to use in the study group. We are currently testing different abolitionists texts, the questions they elicit, and the best pedagogical strategies to approach them, in a tutorial style research class. Towards the end of the summer, we will advertise and invite peers, social justice organizations, and various community members to participate in our study group.

Stage 2: By the start of the 2022 Fall semester, we will have a finalized lesson plan and coalition member list. Over the course of that fall, we will put those lesson plans into practice. While leading the coalition, we will take note of what readings, questions, and teaching practices elicit best conversation.

Stage 3: After the study group and semester is completed, we will reflect on the lesson plan, make necessary edits, and conclude with a summary paper. We plan to continue to keep in touch with participants, present our findings, and continue to improve the political education opportunities within the Madison community.

Conclusion:

Regarding the future of this project, we would like to expand our network of activists. The ultimate goal of this research and study group is to serve as the basis of a coalition and change the way our society perceives punishment and carceral systems of organized violence. Within this coalition, we hope to implement our findings towards creating community solutions that collaboratively work towards abolition. Additionally, we want to focus on the importance of political education. As the act of learning, becoming conscious of injustice in our system, is political expression in itself. By writing a curriculum that uses education as a means of exposing systemic injustice, we hope to form a baseline starting point for abolitionist conversations. Above all, we want to explore how our society as a whole formed an environment that fosters our perceptual reliance on “law and order,” and how that environment can be

reimagined. The intention of this work is to remedy harm in our communities by dissecting how our society relies upon and cultivates conditions under which people are more likely to commit harm.

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Undergraduate Library Research Grant : For Fall 2022 School Year

Brief Summary of Project (250-word limit)

From its emergence in the 18th century as a moral stance against slavery to contemporary arguments against the prison-industrial complex, abolitionist discourse has, rightfully, been organized around transforming unjust institutions. Such discourse tends to understate links which bind the carceral system to other social systems such as education, housing, and healthcare. The current research project has reframed the aim of abolition in relation to these other systems that are not directly associated with it. In adopting an ecological perspective, this project examined policing and prisons as a symptom rather than the cause of larger, social problems. We now aim to move from theory to praxis by establishing an abolitionist study group. In this group, we will bring together students in Madison to learn the role they play in dismantling the carceral state.

Our new project, entitled “Conversations about the Carceral State: An Understanding of Individualized Carceral Mentalities” aims to introduce a general public to the carceral dimensions and challenge punitive notions within individuals. The very methodology of having conversations with people about their carceral mentalities whilst engaging in forms of political education is a form of both research and revolution.

In order to initiate abolition, one must not just be **aware** of a problem, but **conscious** of injustice. By focusing on structuring our work as a curriculum for a practice discussion group, then engaging in said discussion, we hope to alter carceral mentalities before—collectively—challenging a carceral society.

How will this project make intensive and creative use of the library resources? (150 words)

By forming an abolitionist study group, we aim to challenge carceral mentalities. We want members to notice connections between their individual activism and abolition. We, however, are not teachers. We are undergraduates who are not yet familiar with the canon, and would like to make use of the library’s resources in two ways. Facilitation of this group requires first, the library’s physical book resources to distribute books to each member of the coalition for a semester, and second, the librarian’s knowledge of literary works on social justice. We would like to work with librarians to introduce us to new texts, understand their effect on social justice, and help us create a lesson plan for teaching the texts as well.

Additionally, we want to focus on the importance of political education. As the act of learning, becoming conscious of injustice in our system, is political expression in itself.

List two to five ways that meeting the award requirements will improve your research

1. Introduce us to the publishing pathways and further research opportunities for literature-based research.
2. Guide us to relevant literature and new sources.
3. Help us understand how to organize humanities research and “data.”
4. Rely upon library resources as a way to provide texts to members of the study group.
5. Establish active relationships with UW library staff as their knowledge and holistic perspectives to synthesis can help the project.



Conclusion

Findings and Moving Forward



Project Summary: A Conclusion

Findings, Questions, and a Consideration of Future Directions

By: Anna Nelson

After taking the 2021 fall semester to explore various paths for our research project, we decided to spend the spring semester of 2022 creating and leading discussions on new abolitionist literature.

Project:

The goal of this chapter of our project was to provide a chance for exploration and practice in the application of abolitionist theory. While the first chapter of our project operated solely within our three-person group, we quickly realized it was time to bring the theory we had been studying into the community. While this foundational theory is necessary, we recognize the importance of education and awareness, which is integral to the promotion of abolition. Abolition at its core is an act of collective thinking and imagination. This requires expansion. Before bringing our ideas to others, however, we took this semester as an opportunity to practice guiding collective thinking within a controlled environment under an experienced advisor.

Summary of Work:

We began the spring semester by outlining the tutorial style operation of our work. Each week, Ingrid would assign a list or section of reading, and Anna and Ria would each write a reflection and discussion guide on opposing weeks as well as lead those discussions. The reading assignments began with collections of smaller pieces about Black power and radicalism and ended with a book entitled *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* Simultaneously creating the discussion guides and leading the discussions allowed us to test the flow of various groups of questions and the degree to which they provoke meaningful responses. In having these discussions with a professor, we were able to receive individual feedback from an experienced discussion leader and gain knowledge of the skills and techniques that meaningful discussion requires.

The purpose of this semester was to shift our roles from discussion participants to leaders. We had both the chance to rediscover new ideas about pieces we had previously read and explore new and current pieces as well. In doing so, we advanced our understanding of abolition, enabling us to envision the project for the upcoming semester and apply for new opportunities to advance our project. Most importantly, this semester served as a transition from theory to practice and the beginning of a concrete creation we can share with the community.

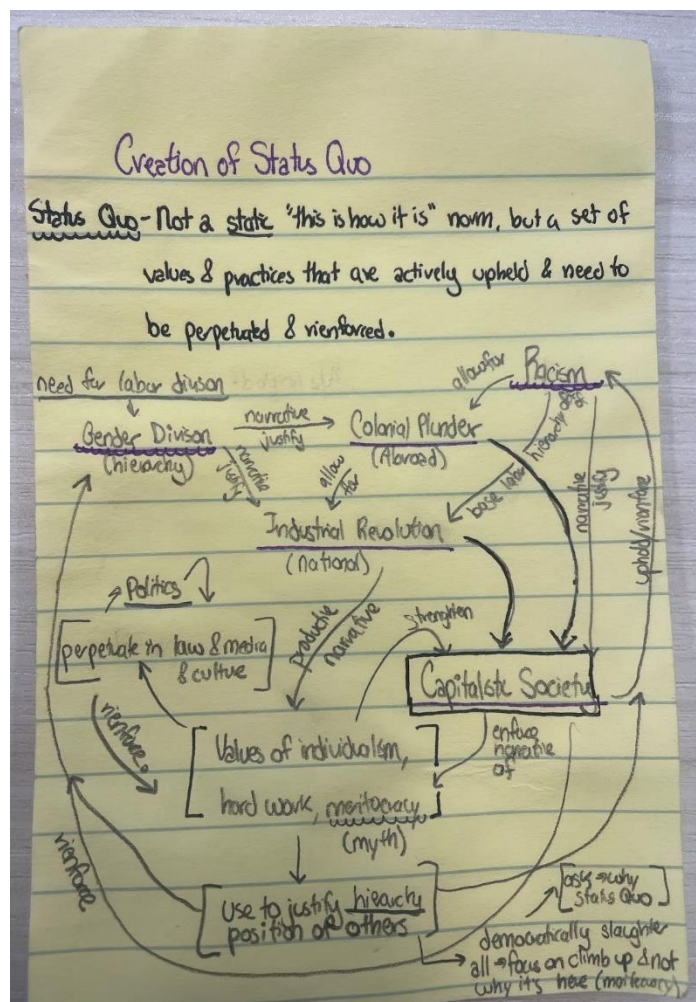
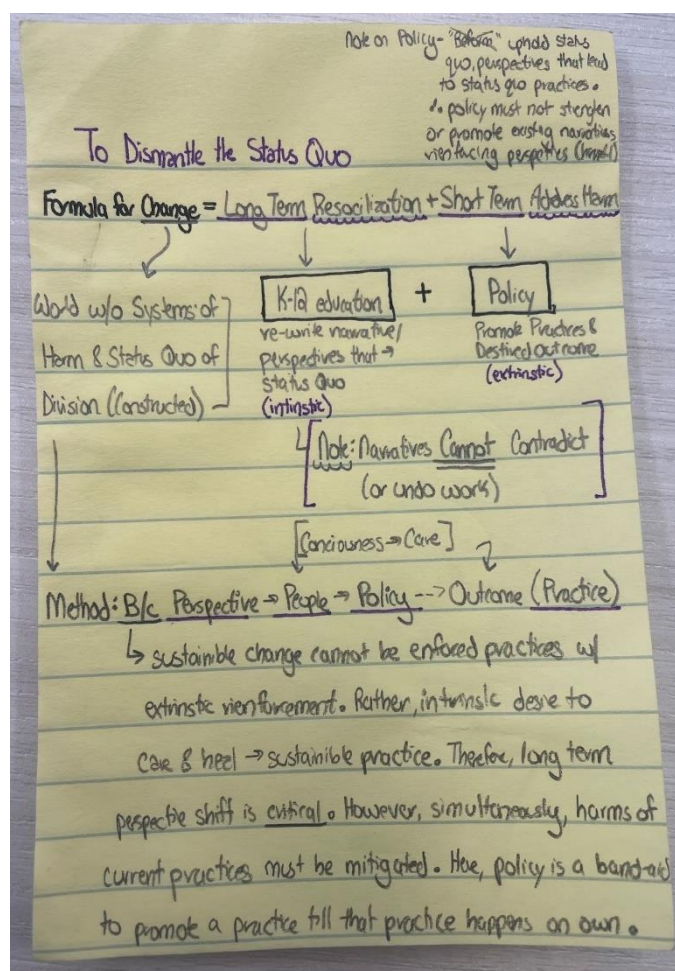
Key Findings

By: Ria Dhingra

The conclusion of Spring 2022 left us with a series of revelations of how to move forward with our work and provided us clarity on the role we ourselves play in abolitionist praxis. Moving into Summer, for the first time, we have a clear direction of how to continue our work in a way that utilizes our capacities best. As humanities major, we recognize that narrative analysis extends far beyond an English class. Narrative literary translates into media literacy, into political literacy. Expanding this narrative literacy helps young people navigate modern politics, abolitionist discourse, and forms of activism. Simultaneously, our focus on narrative theory (a long term, preventative, goal) must be accompanied with immediate action that addresses current harms. There is no one way to “do abolition” best, but abolition requires a multitude of simultaneous methodologies in order to exist as is.

Our definition of abolition: Is first asking why? And then dreaming of more.

Other Key Findings:



A Note on Activism and Policy:

Ultimately, perception (belief/idea/intrinsic motivation) is what strongly inspires practice (outcome) while policy/activist movements (extrinsic motivator/restriction) can regulate and prompt the same practice (or demand it) either simultaneously with perspective or act as an “until then” mechanism.

What I mean is that all and any changes in policy will be ineffective if the majority of citizens do not believe in that policy. Policy, on its own, is short term—regulating behavior, not perspectives. In order to enact real changes on the status quo, one must not only enact policy, but shift perspective. Therefore, all valid attempts at restorative change must rely on policy to address immediate harm while simultaneously focusing on education initiatives/modeling that led to long term changes in perspective. In this model, policy acts as a temporary band-aid to social dilemmas, promoting behavior until it happens on its own. It is critical then, that current policies cannot rely upon or promote narratives and subsequent perspectives that directly contradict resocialization efforts. If policy is indirectly promoting the flawed perceptions of the status quo, it will not lead to real change in the future. While policies cannot promote values, they can inadvertently promote narratives and incentives. Therefore, the only effective policy to address any social issue is one that does not reinforce flawed narratives.

Moving Forward: Abolition and Art. Policy and Perspective

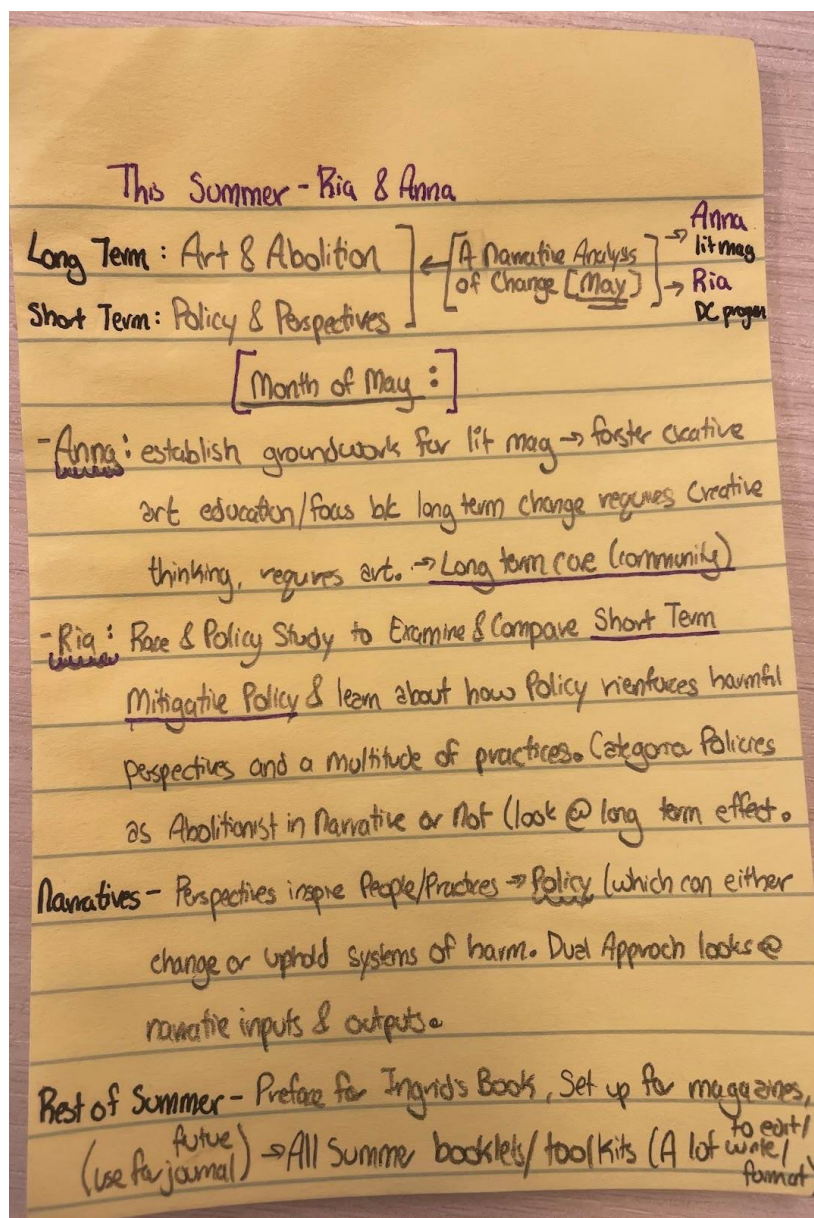
By: Anna Nelson

From this past semester of work, we have learned both leadership and discussion skills as well as collected a series of lesson templates to structure the next step of our project. In the Summer of 2022, we will take these skills and templates and transform them into the structure of our study group. The study group will begin in the fall and consist of two components: a discussion based collective and a written, tangible work to be published each semester. As for the first component, the findings we gathered from this spring will guide us in choosing new readings that are current and follow along with weekly news and events, while also serving as direct templates for readings like *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* The written tangible work we produce will be in the form of a magazine. In March of 2022, we met with a former editor at the Madison Journal of Literary Criticism to discuss new leadership of the group. After experiencing drawbacks from the pandemic and losing many senior members after graduation, the MJLC was in need of new members and a new direction. Ria and I volunteered to revive the magazine, allowing us to start a written work closely aligned with literary criticism, while also receiving the structure and foundation of an already established and renowned magazine.

What once was a journal for literary criticism will soon be a space for critique of the status quo. Inherently, art and writing has always been used for activism. Now, we will not only be critiquing and analyzing texts, but we will use those skills as a lens to critique and analyze the social structures around us. By combining both the magazine and the study group, we can both have an in-depth and intimate study on what abolition means both between and to each community member within Madison, while also sharing our findings and thoughts with the larger community and beyond. We are looking forward to finally putting our small group work on theory into community-based practice and action.

Moving Forward: What Now?: {NOTES} PLAN FOR SUMMER AND FALL 2022

Summer 2022: A Dual Approach



Game Plan for Summer:

Anna shall spend time working on immediate responses to harm by devoting time to administrative task to set up a study group/mutual aid coalition. We hope to establish a literary arts magazine in order to inspire narrative literacy within our own community whilst also bringing together activist stakeholders and students. Simultaneously, Ria shall spend a month in DC learning about long term change in terms of political policy and work to understand the role an abolitionist can play in political discourse in order to lead to transformative change. Upon returning from DC, Ria will work to curate and create lesson plans and study materials for the

collective. Both Ria and Anna will serve as co-editors in chiefs for said magazine and share creative responsibilities.

Upcoming Tasks:

- Create these “booklets” of all research thus far
- Write mini-papers to showcase thought process of summer and expand abolitionist perspective
- Set up foundation for a study group: lesson plans, meeting agendas, register as an RSO, start a submittable
- Present summer work to donors and publication committees on campus
- Begin study group
 - Develop abolitionist curriculum
- Update website
 - Collect Submissions of Abolitionist Artwork
 - Prompt narrative analysis in the form of staff written pieces
- Take intensive notes (Ria works to continue making booklets)
- Work to release a digital publication

An acknowledgment of limitations:

Abolition is far more complicated and community oriented than our sole project. We invite others to deepen this study, critique our work, and take this project in numerous other directions. As two undergraduate students working under a professor, we acknowledge there is still so much we have to learn, and so much we could convey in a more nuanced/sensitive matter. We try and continue to try to acknowledge our own bias, not take up space with this project when the space is not intended for us, or act as educators to others—as we, ourselves, do not feel fully qualified.

We are not the most qualified to be spokespeople for this work. However, as students we are in the position to ask questions and to explore. This research is exactly that, an attempt to find answers to our question of how to address harm and explore possible solutions.



Conversations about the Carceral State

