Education for Abolition: A Prison Abolitionist Curriculum for a Youth After-School Program

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A dual Senior Project submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts in Education and Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

In this senior project, I develop a curriculum suited for an educational, social justice focused after-school program for high school students. This curriculum is centered on prison abolition, using the fertile subject of the prison industrial complex and anti-carceral movement to develop students’ skills in analyzing the construction (and potential for liberatory re-construction) of social constructs (namely criminality, safety, and justice). The course engages with a multi-modal critical literacy and problem-posing pedagogical approach. The curriculum is made up of: an overview of the course, an overview of each unit, and full lesson plans for one ‘session in focus’ per unit. Additional aspects of the senior project include: a literature review on prison abolition, pedagogy, curriculum design, designing leaning spaces, and teaching prison abolition, written reflections on the process of curriculum development, and appendices featuring the learning materials I designed for the sessions in focus.
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To all the people doing the work of abolition every day, and the people who built before our time, thank you for believing in and becoming the movement to liberate the world. For planting endless trees, not always knowing what fruit will come.

To all the youth experiencing incarceration, may you get to live in the world without cages that you deserve.
# Table of Contents

(A Brief) Introduction  
Literature Review  
Overview of the Curriculum  
Course Objectives  
Full Curriculum  
Unit One (Community)  
Unit Two (Criminality)  
Unit Three (Safety)  
Unit Four (Justice)  
Unit Five (Transformation)  
Lesson Plans  
Unit One, Session One  
Unit Two, Session Five  
Unit Three, Session Eight  
Unit Four, Session Thirteen  
Unit Five, Session Sixteen  
Written Reflections  
Appendices (Lesson Plan Materials)  
Works Cited  
Literature Review Bibliography  
Lesson Plans Bibliography
(A BRIEF) INTRODUCTION

For many, before this summer, familiarity with the word ‘abolition’ and ‘abolitionists’ may likely have been limited to historical conceptions of the abolition of chattel slavery in the United States. This changed for me ever so slightly when I was a teenager in Seattle, involved in queer youth community and organizing, and came across the No New Youth Jail Campaign. Then this changed for me swiftly; by the time I left my freshmen year of college, having now been engaged with formal and popular education on prisons and structural oppression, I had aligned myself with the contemporary abolitionist movement of prison abolition and would go on to study, discuss, and do work in this realm that I had not previously understood the existence of.

While my individual conception of abolition may have changed greatly in three years, this summer altered familiarity with and understanding of it on a massive scale. Prison, Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), and Police Abolition has exploded in mainstream conversations thanks to the organizers who stood up against police brutality and Anti-Black racism, strategically introducing the language, concept, and vision of abolition to a nation that I had never predicted would listen within this decade. This proliferation is incredibly exciting, and it also brought me to question whether or not it still made sense for me to make this curriculum. There are now considerable quantities of self-directed curriculums and guided reading lists (created by those far more knowledgeable than me in the intricacies of the prison industrial complex, the political landscape of the organizing and theorizing, and the expansiveness of abolitionist visioning) that have swept the internet. And yet, amongst these incredible and heavy and
thoughtful popular education resources, I believe the idea of a prison abolitionist
curriculum specifically designed for an extracurricular youth (high school age) program,
structured by communal discussion, activity oriented learning, and diverse materials has
an important place. I have no doubt many youths have been independently consuming,
digesting, and dreaming using the prison abolition literature and resources available on
the internet (given the ideology, many of the best abolitionists resources are thankfully
not hidden behind the ivory tower’s paywalls). And I also have no doubt than many
youth, such as myself at that age, would do best engaging with this in a space, program,
and community guiding this learning communally, and will learn and grow through
however this curriculum (hopefully) comes to fruition.
LITERATURE REVIEW

PART I: Defining Prison/PIC Abolition

As Mariame Kaba, a lead abolitionist organizer from Chicago, addressed in one of her most recent articles, although now a lot more people may know of prison abolition, it is often clouded by misconceptions. One of the main misunderstandings is that “people might think of abolition as primarily a negative project” where the political vision begins and ends with tearing down prison walls (Kaba, 2020). First of all, this overlooks that abolitionists aim to dismantle much more than just jails and prisons as solely physical structures, but what is often referred to as the “Prison Industrial Complex” (PIC). Critical Resistance, a national grassroots organization prominent in the abolitionist movement, identifies PIC as a term used to describe the “overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems” (n.d.). This reflects how Angela Davis, a civil rights organizer and abolitionist theorist, described in her seminal text “Are Prisons Obsolete?” that the PIC is “much more than the sum of all the jails and prisons in this country” but a set of “symbiotic relationships among correctional communities, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, guards' unions, and legislative and court agendas” that reflect the entrenchment of the prison system in the “economic, political and ideological life of the United States” (2003, pg 107).

Many organizers and theorists write on the deeper and wider implications of the PIC as structural oppression, with Davis specifically pointing to how the prison system functions ideologically as an “abstract site into which undesirables are deposited” thereby individualizing social and structural troubles and inequalities, and reliving us of the
responsibility to seriously engage with these looming issues (specifically racism and
global capitalism) (2003, pg 16). Joy James (2005), in the introduction to her anthology
“The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings,”
writes critically about the (oft discussed) continuity between the abolition of slavery and
the PIC:

In previous centuries… the modern antislavery movement marked a
significant awakening of the public moral conscience in the Western
world. In this century, antiprison movement offer the same possibilities, to
struggle by dismantling mechanisms of incarceration and dehumanization
(pg xxxv)

There is not only structural continuity between the institutions of slavery and the
PIC (with the petitionary, chain gang, and Black Codes as ‘intermediaries’)
(Davis, 2003; James, 2005), their abolition movement are in many ways the same
struggle for freedom, continued. Further, Morning Star Gali has spoken out for
years on “abolition as decolonization” (2020), connecting the current prison
system, within which Native peoples are disproportionately incarcerated, with
other carceral systems and institutions historically used against Native peoples
(such as boarding schools and reservations). She illuminates how the PIC and
carcerality, specifically the criminalization and incarceration/captivity of Native
peoples, function as tools of settler colonialism and genocide (Gali, 2020).

While it is essential to clarify what exactly must be abolished, that cannot truly
encapsulate the movement’s call for transformation. 8toAbolition, a resource guide
created and popularized by a working group of abolitionist organizers this summer,
writes: “We envision abolition as not only a matter of tearing down criminalizing systems
such as police and prisons that shorten the lives of Black, brown, and poor people, but
also a matter of building up life-sustaining systems that reduce, prevent, and better
address harm” (Mohaptra et al, 2020, pg 1). While many accuse abolitionists of being
idealists and dreamers (and, in fact, abolitionists value radical imagination and dreaming
as essential to building our future) those in the movement such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore
and James Kilgore assert that “abolition is a practical program of change rooted in how
people sustain and improve their lives, cobbling together insights and strategies from
disparate, connected struggles” and that “We know we won’t bulldoze prisons and jails
tomorrow, but as long as they continue to be advanced as the solution, all of the
inequalities displaced to crime and punishment will persist” (2019). Kaba describes PIC
abolition as a “political vision, a structural analysis of oppression, and a practical
organizing strategy” working towards a restructured of society where we all can have what
we need for “personal and community safety” (2020). Although centered on the PIC,
given that it is not an isolated system, abolition as a vision, analysis, and strategy is
extremely broad (Critical Resistance, n.d.). Davis writes that “Abolitionist approaches ask
us to enlarge our field of vision… rather than focusing myopically on the problematic
institution and asking what needs to be changed about that institution, we raise radical
questions about the organization of the larger society” (Davis, 2020). A radical, holistic,
and long-term perspective is necessary in the work- given that “from where we are now,
sometimes we can’t really imagine what abolition is going to look like” (Critical
Resistance, n.d.). The movement ask us to not just resist and dismantle but build, to be
constantly developing models and practical strategies that move us towards a different world (Critical Resistance, n.d.). Many of the models already exist, such as “Indigenous peoples’ practices of restorative and transformative justice” (Gali, 2020), or are being built as we speak, whether by abolitionist organizers or simply communities trying to survive by creating the world they need, the world that centers “freedom and justice instead of profit and punishment” (Gilmore and Kilgore, 2019).

PART II: Transformative Radical Pedagogy

In the introduction to the 88th issue of *Radical Teacher*, centered on teaching abolition of the prison industrial complex, the editors write that while deciding to have an issue centered on abolition education was controversial and difficult, the conversation leading up to it only revealed how urgently needed this resource was, because “Teaching our students to imagine this new world [without prisons] demands radical teaching at its best and most challenging” (Agid, 2010, pg. 4). Therefore, it is crucial I enter this project guided by the multitude of inspiring change makers and theorizers in the education world, as well as the abolitionist world, and their rich overlap.

One of my most crucial pedagogical guides is, of course, Paulo Friere. Re-reading his work since I settled on my topic, it is obvious to me how analogous his liberatory pedagogy is with the vision and values of abolition. One of Friere’s central tenants is on “educating as the practice of freedom” (1972, pg 64), just as abolition asks us to practice, model, and strategize freedom in our day to day life while we struggle towards it. In his introduction discussing the Frierean model of emancipatory literacy, Giroux writes that “Students need to be introduced to a language of empowerment and radical ethics that
permits them to think about how community life should be constructed around a project of possibility” (1987, pg 14). When I read this, I instantly thought about an abolitionist classroom’s potential for this, where pedagogical methods centering freedom, possibility, community, and radical empowerment can mirror the curriculum content and essential questions we are exploring. Friere also urges educators to think deeply on their role and what their behavior indicates about the nature and value of education itself (1972). He asks we understand our role not as one who ‘holds the knowledge’ as the ‘banking model’ of teaching demonstrates (essential, as I nor any singular abolitionist would ever claim to hold all the knowledge that could lead us to bringing an abolitionist vision to life) but instead embrace ‘problem-posing’ education, where the educator’s role is to facilitate a communal “emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (Friere, 1972, pg 64). To create a space for students and educators to critically read the world and explore possibility together is the Freirean model and, to me, a strategically abolitionist approach to teaching.

Friere and Giroux also point to a common mistake from radical educators that neglect the true pedagogical practice of liberatory education/emancipatory literacy that I value. Giroux comments on ways educators sometimes stray from actual radical pedagogy and best practice of listening and co-creating with students in their prioritization of disseminating radical theory, emphasizing the “ideological nature of knowledge” and privileging getting “ideologically correct content… across to students” (1987, pg 12). This plays into the dominant paradigm of knowledge becoming “abstracted from its own production” (Giroux, 1987, pg 12) and viewed as a product rather than a process. A central goal for my curriculum is, in fact, ‘disseminating’ the
ideology of prison abolition to young people. But as Friere’s work calls attention to, I want neither the educator nor the texts to take on an authoritative position of ‘transmission’ that undermines the co-creation of knowledge which truly facilitates a transformative classroom. Because curriculum development already has a semi-uncomfortable level of one-sidedness (while I have a specific type of setting in mind, I can’t necessarily interact with and develop the curriculum in sensitivity to and collaboration with the actual students or context), it’s particularly important to design it centering space for and attention towards a liberatory pedagogical encounter, where the students and educator(s) are producing meaning and discourse through engaging with the materials and the unique ways each will approach and relate to them.

Critical literacy is another pedagogical tool and approach that overlaps significantly with the Freirean model and abolitionist strategy. Elizabeth Bishop defines critical literacy as “an approach to teaching and learning committed to exploring how and why particular social and cultural groups of persons occupy unequal political positions of access to social structures” (2014, pg 53). This aligns with one of the main goals of my curriculum: understanding the role of the prison industrial complex in structuring inequality in the United States. Bishop’s definition of critical literacy (informed by Phelps (2010)) mirrors the problem-posing education approach, with curriculums centered on asking students to explore and question their world’s status quo and developing student’s skills in engaging with texts through critical questioning (ex: “what is the purpose of the text? How does the text try to position the reader? How does the text construct reality? Whose interests are or are not served by the ideas in the text? What worldviews are or are not represented?” (Bishop, 2014, pg 56)). So much of ‘learning’
abolition involves actually ‘unlearning’ or critically analyzing assumptions about ‘how the world works’ propagated across the texts of our lives, from culturally dominant logics to media representations to political mantras to statistical analysis that describe issues or inequities without questioning their roots. Combining a critical literacy pedagogy with a Freirean understanding of education as a communal conscientization and practice of freedom, and their overlapping educational goal of critical intervention in the oppressive status quo (Bishop, 2014; Friere, 1972; Giroux, 1987) is key to unlocking a pedagogy suited for teaching abolition.

Bishop also specifically discusses the need to “create and support out-of-school spaces for the development of critical literacy practices,” potentially situated within youth organizing communities and places (2014, pg 60), which is precisely what I envision for my curriculum, given that I conceptualize it as serving an extracurricular setting rather than within a traditional school/classroom environment. This would be, in my perspective, the most conducive setting for critical literacy to take the form of “transformative praxis” which “takes the radical potential of critical literacy into direct emancipatory action in the world” (Bishop, 2014, pg 53). While I do think radical work is possible within traditional classroom settings, as Bettina Love writes, abolitionist teaching within school is a constant, exhausting, and necessary struggle, existing within yet resisting the “education survival complex” (2019, pg 89). I believe for me to develop an abolitionist curriculum with a Freirean critical literacy pedagogy and transformative praxis, designing it for a community hosted space engaging in fugitive educational experience- where students may connect to themselves more distinctly as agents of change and co-creators of knowledge, and without the pressure of standards and grading
on neither students nor educators- gives me a chance to align my vision and values with the pedagogy and content.

Another aspect of abolitionist pedagogy that I want to center when approaching this project is thinking about what expression and freedom means in a classroom. Black Feminist theorists and educators have written extensively about the importance of emotions and self-expression in radical education, and how it resists the rigid and oppressive notions of what education and academia is or should be (hooks, 1994, pg 155). bell hook’s referenced Friere quote, “We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects” (as cited in 1994, pg 46) in relation to her discussion of the need for both educators and students to embrace the emotional aspect of learning captures the necessity of education as a practice of freedom to be humanizing, and thus embrace and hold space for emotionality. She, in fact, emphasizes that the first paradigm that shapes her educational pedagogy is the importance of “excitement,” both using your curriculum and teaching style to cultivate excitement and allowing flexibility for your agendas to be diverted to where the students’ excitement is drawing the class (hook, 1994, pg 7).

Along with emotional expression in the classroom as a practice of freedom and resistance, hooks brings in the importance of expression through language, stating that in her classes she encourages her students to speak in their first language or vernacular as a practice of freedom and bringing whole self, disrupting the hegemony of repressive and standardizing education (hooks, pg 172-173). I aim to design a curriculum and community guidelines where we express ourselves with language intentionally and authentically, using vernacular and language variation in both speech and writing to resist
the notion that the only ideas worth listening are those articulated in the confines of “Standard American English.” Along those lines, I want there to be a variety of ways students are encouraged to express understandings and ideas, specifically including art/visualizations. Variety of valid expression in a curriculum not only makes the course more accessible and interesting, but utilizing art can be particularly generative for creative resistance and imagination. Bettina Love writes that “Abolitionist teaching starts with freedom dreaming, dreams grounded in the critique of injustice” and that “Art is a vital part of abolitionist teaching because it is a freeing space for creativity, which is essential to abolishing injustice…. Art is freedom dreams turned into action” (2019, pg 100). In urging students to understand abolition not just as a negative project of tearing down oppressive institutions within the PIC, but as a generative project of radical visioning, building, and transformation, I think the best way to engage students is to ask them to participate in radical imagination, using art and freedom of expression as an essential mode to begin that work (and therefore, a crucial aspect of abolitionist pedagogy).

PART III: Curriculum Design

For guidance, theory, and tools to support the actual curriculum design portion of my project, I am supported by the book *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids* by Carol Tomlinson and Jay McTighe. In it, curriculum design is described as not merely the organization of instructional units or planning of lessons and learning outcomes, but “a process through which we plan to communicate to real human beings our belief in the power of knowledge and the potential of the individual to develop power through knowledge”
This book utilizes two major frameworks contemporary educators are engaging with: Understanding by Design (which includes Backward Design) and Differentiated Instruction (which includes/is related to Responsive Teaching) (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). It also takes care to remind readers that these are “ways of thinking” with toolkits to draw from, not programs or formulas to rely on (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, pg. 10).

Understanding by Design is suggested by Tomlinson and McTighe to fill educators’ need for “a model that acknowledges the centrality of standards but that also demonstrates how meaning and understanding can both emanate from and frame content standards so that young people develop powers of mind as well as accumulate an information base” (2006, pg. 1). It emphasizes the need to strategically design courses for not just maximum knowledge gained or even skills grown but understanding developed, deepened, and demonstrated. Tomlinson and McTighe, inspired by *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005), advocate that curriculums should be structured around conceptual lenses of “transferable ‘big ideas’ and essential questions” (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, pg. 27) and that “more specific facts, concepts, and skills… are then taught in the context of exploring and applying the larger ideas and processes” (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, pg. 26).

In order to execute this, UbD leans into a “three-stage backward design process for curriculum planning” (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, pg. 27). Stage One is “Identify Desired Result” where the educator/curriculum designer asks themselves “What should students know, understand, and be able to do? What content is worthy of understanding? What ‘enduring’ understandings are desired? What essential questions will be explored?”
This is the ‘backwards’ in backwards design; curriculum is theoretically most focused and efficient when the desired outcomes of it are planned first and foremost, and thus the entire curriculum design process can center cohesively planning how these can be best reached. Stage Two is “Determine Acceptable Evidence” where the educator/curriculum designer asks themselves “How will we know whether students have achieved the desired results?” and “What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?” (Tomlinson & Mctighe, 2006, pg. 28). Before planning how to teach to the desired understandings, one must conceptualize how students will be able to express/demonstrate understandings in a way that the educator can gauge. And finally, Stage Three is “Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction” where the educator/curriculum designer asks themselves “What enabling knowledge and skills will students need to perform effectively to achieve desired results?” and “What activities, sequence, and resources are best suited to accomplish our goals?” (Tomlinson & Mctighe, 2006, pg. 28). This is where the work of actually pulling together the material existence of curriculum occurs.

While I see an immense value in Understanding by Design as detailed by Integrating, I am discomforted by the centrality of “desired outcomes” and “thinking like an assessor” that the framework asks of educators. This is because all the language is connected to the Learning Outcomes Assessment Movement. As described by Bennet and Brady, this wide-reaching and deeply impactful movement in the education world derived from Taylorism and theories of scientific management in the turn of the 20th century (2012, pg. 35). It was a monumental influence in upholding education as a social status stratifier, where “curriculum was conceived of as a normalizing device and instrument of
social regulation, one that would help control the working class” (Bennet & Brady, 2012, pg. 36). This is due in large part to the outcomes, standards, and methods of assessment being controlled by those in power with little connections to classrooms, and the assessments were in large part used to stratify within schools (ex: tracking) and continue to stratify schools themselves (ex: funding based on performance). It is also because the ability to meet outcomes was placed on students and teachers as individuals rather than systems and structures, despite the fact that “what separates positive from negative learning outcomes has everything to do with access to support mechanisms inside and outside the classroom and with available resources” (Bennet & Brady, 2012, pg. 40).

And, on a more conceptual level, I worry that having specific desired learning outcomes would be to impose homogeneity (Bennet & Brady, 2012, pg. 41) rather than allow and even expect the course to have very different, situated impacts on students who each enter with unique intentions, backgrounds/experiences, and perspectives. It is deeply important to critically question to what extent theory and frameworks around curriculum development draw from this oppressive movement within education, and also important to navigate how learning outcomes can be helpful to designing a cohesive curriculum, particularly since, for my course, these ‘desired outcomes’ are not materially connected to external assessment or formal grading.

Part of how Tomlinson and Mctighe already counter any potential standardization/homogenization effect on the classroom is by not exclusively centering Understanding by Design but integrating it with Differentiated Instruction. The two incorporate well because while UbD focuses on “what” is being taught, with a primary goal of “delineating and guiding application of sound principles of curriculum design”
Differentiated Instruction overlaps and diverges, focusing on “whom we teach, where we teach, and how we teach” with a primary goal of “ensuring that teachers focus on processes and procedures that ensure effective learning for varied individuals” (Tomlinson & Mctighe, 2006, pg. 3). While the majority of DI is concerned with the direct teaching of students (i.e. responsive or differentiated teaching), Tomlinson and Mctighe assure that “quality curriculum should play a central role” in meeting the diverse and core needs for students (2006, pg. 16). The basic approaches of Differentiated Instruction that I feel can best apply to curriculum design are: “Find ways to get to know students more intentionally and regularly… Incorporate small-group teaching into daily or weekly teaching routines… Offer more ways to explore and express learning… Teach in multiple ways.” (Tomlinson & Mctighe, 2006, pg. 20-21). These are tools for crafting a course which centers the diversity of learners and ensuring all access to understanding and participation.

PART IV: Designing Attentive and Caring Educational Spaces

Something I want to consider in the development of this curriculum is that ‘best practices’ are not just limited to what is being taught and how, but how care and attentiveness for students as human beings are being prioritized in the curriculum design. This is crucial to any and all learning spaces, in my opinion, but particularly pertinent in abolitionist teaching. Abolitionist work teaches us that our social worlds generate profound trauma, via rampant structural and interpersonal violence, with our mainstream options to navigate such violence and conflict rooted in surveillance, punishment, and captivity, thus generating more trauma. Furthermore, while learning about the extreme and deeply historically/structurally rooted violence is essential to building a movement
towards a more just world, it is a very sensitive and troubling subject to explore.

Therefore, I wanted to integrate lessons from literature on the tenants and practices of trauma-informed classrooms and how courses can center self-care and collective coping.

Brian Cavanaugh’s article, “Trauma Informed Classrooms and School,” defines ‘trauma informed’ as an understanding of the widespread impacts of trauma (including ability to recognize signs and symptoms) and responding by “integrating knowledge of trauma into policies, procedures, practices” with the goal of resisting (re)traumatization (2016, pg 42) (drawing from the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC, 2015) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Support Administration (SAMHSA, 2014)). Trauma Informed Oregon (TIO)’s article on “Trauma Informed Care Practices” furthers this goal beyond simply resisting (re)traumatization to include restoring “a sense of safety, power, and self-worth” (2020). As developed by the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Support Administration), there are six principals to “trauma informed care”: 1) safety, 2) trustworthiness and transparency, 3) peer support and mutual self-help, 4) collaboration and mutuality, 5) empowerment and choice, and 6) (awareness of and response to) cultural, historical, and gender issues (TIO, 2020). Some specific practices classrooms can employ to embody these principals include: 1) consistent positive affirmation/interactions, including both “behavior specific praise and non-contingent praise” (Cavanaugh, 2016, pg. 42) in order to develop a sense of safety and trustworthiness in the learner to educator relationship, 2) a combination of consistent structure (Cavanaugh, 2016, pg. 42) and “collaborative planning” for as many aspects of the class as possible (Cavanaugh, 2016, pg. 44) for the sake of transparency and developing a class that is shaped by the learner’s voices (collaboration/mutuality and
empowerment/choice), and 3) learning activities and structures such as peer tutoring (Cavanaugh, 2016, pg 43) or jigsaw that create opportunities for peer support/mutual self-help, centering empowerment of student’s voices and a sense of collaboration/mutuality in the classroom. Cavanaugh expands upon practices beyond the scope of my curriculum, particularly ways that professional trauma responsive resources in schools can support struggling students through individualized support and interventions (2016, pg. 43-44), but overall, he emphasizes that providing a “safe, trusting environment where students feel successful” (Cavanaugh, 2016, pg. 44) is not just impactful, but essential.

In their article, Drolet, Sampson, Tancheck, Kreitzer, and Hilsen write about the importance of individual and collective coping, wellness, and care in social work courses (2017). Their articles explore what certain college courses are doing to create space for these practices in the classroom and as preparation for a career in social work (Drolet, 2017). The necessity for wellness-centered education is attributed to social work being a profession involving high-stakes, trauma ridden work of “human rights and social justice in support of marginalized populations” where people will encounter “both triumphs and tragedies on this journey” (Drolet, 2017, pg. 201). These sentiments that could easily be expressed of those involved in social justice movement work, such as abolition, as well. Additionally, in the social work courses, students are described as having “learning experiences that challenge their values, beliefs, and assumptions, which can create stress and dilemmas that may exceed their coping capacities” (Drolet, 2017, pg. 201-202) something that I believe is extremely relevant to abolition education, which brings to light a massive scale of invisiblized violence and challenges the very structure of the society we live in. Therefore, while the courses discussed in this article are very different
from my intended course in content and setting, the core reasons for centering individual and collective coping, wellness, and care are very alike and my curriculum would benefit from drawing from them.

The courses at University of Calgary integrate the need for students to “explore their well-being and construct a meaningful self-care practice” into the coursework, emphasizing not just the necessity to develop practices and routines that can sustain self and wellbeing, but the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection in all aspects of social work (Drolet, 2017, pg. 206-207). I particularly appreciated how, while independent introspection and working one on one with professors was essential to the formation of these care plans, they were also constructed via collective discussion, with the “dialogues that encompass self-care strategies” becoming “deeper, transformative conversations” (Drolet, 2017, pg. 209). These conversations and the willingness to dig into a deeper, more critical understanding of ‘wellness’ and ‘care’ create opportunities for student to explore their own responses to trauma, and the responses of others they are studying or may eventually be working with, as informed by personal history, structures, and a context of societal injustice (Drolet, 2017, pg. 210). While still emphasizing the importance to “foster self-care practices,” students were also able to think expansively on “collective ideas such as group grounding practices, vicarious resilience, collective ethics, and the building of solidarity teams” (Drolet, 2017, pg. 210), understanding that “we are not working alone and we alone do not need to bear the burden that trauma brings” (Drolet, 2017, pg. 209).

This provides excellent inspiration for my curriculum because it’s incredibly important for a prison abolition course with youth to be trauma-informed and integrating
coping and care strategies. Furthermore, these must be developed within the context of abolitionist praxis, invoking ‘self-care’ that engages collective care, resistance, and understandings of how trauma is structurally produced and criminalized, rather than solely relying on individualist/medicalized definitions that obscure what abolition works to uncover and (re)imagine.

PART V: Teaching Prison Abolition

In researching educators who have documented their experience teaching about the Prison Industrial Complex and Prison Abolition, the majority of what I have found is reflections on teaching college courses, which is part of why I am committed to designing a curriculum for high school age youth situated in a less formalized/traditional educational setting. However, specificities of setting aside, teaching prison abolition is an uncommon and complicated undertaking and all guidance from those who have developed strategies through experience is extremely valuable. Teaching prison abolition requires methods to best guide students’ learning and, maybe more difficult, unlearning of socially engrained dominant logics of the world. The three most important takeaways from my reading on teaching prison abolition to best facilitate deeper understanding and openness are 1) using historical and other ‘expanded’ perspectives to understand the prison industrial complex, 2) deconstructing/ re-conceptualizing of the notions of guilt, innocence, and safety, and our emotional investment in prisons, and 3) centering student empowerment and responsibility towards transformation.

Melisa Ooten’s article centered on her experience teaching two courses tackling the Prison Industrial Complex, and how challenges and obstructions in the first course led
her to drastically shifting her curricular strategies, resulting in a much deeper level of student engagement with and openness to exploring abolition in the second course (2010). These shifts were mainly centered on ‘situating’ prisons, which makes perfect sense when you consider the effectiveness of prisons as a largely unquestioned aspect of our society through its constructed ‘isolation’. Prisons as institutions and as a system rely on isolation: isolation of those incarcerated from those ‘outside’ and prisons existing conceptually in isolation from ‘the rest’ of society and social issues. Ooten emphasized that it was through a “historically-situated framework” of the prison industrial complex that she found the most success in “engaging students in the idea of abolition as the solution to the PIC” (Ooten, 2010, pg. 32). She specifically elaborates on how “tracing the development of modern surveillance and imprisonment practices allowed students to conceptualize the prison as a modern, created environment that has incorporated institutionalized racism as a dominating practice from its inception” including considering “the abolition of slavery and the abolition of the PIC on a continuum with overlapping similarities” (Ooten, 2010, pg. 36). This historically-situated re-conceptualization of prisons created an opening for students to explore how “abolishing a system built on injustice could create more viable institutions to address underlying issues of poverty and institutionalized inequities” (Ooten, 2010, pg. 36). This is a very familiar and essential strategy to me, as in my personal experience as a learner, I made the leap from considering reform to considering abolition once I was able to understand the history of mass incarceration as inseparable from the history of slavery and colonialism and the entrenchment of capitalism. In my experience as an educator, I witnessed incredible levels of critical thinking and openness to unlearning from my high
school scholars in the Exploring College program when I was assistant teaching their “History of Mass Incarceration” summer intensive course, which focused on the historical continuity between the constructions of slavery, contemporary racial hierarchy, and the prison system in the United States.

Ooten also discusses the importance of situating prisons in other respects. She speaks to the need to “situate prisons within communities” in order to humanize the issue (Ooten, 2010, pg. 34) and how leading with the impact of mass incarceration on communities of color (and, although Ooten does not explicitly mention it, queer, disabled, immigrant, and low-income communities) and connecting the PIC to more familiar social issues such as racism was an effective curricular shift from leading with a theoretical foundation (Ooten, 2010, pg. 35). This corresponds to some of the students’ testimonies on their experience in Peter Lai’s course exploring incarceration and prison abolition through literature, with one student reflecting that they found the argument for prison abolition most compelling when various authors connected abolition to other social issues such as “racism, gender discrimination, classism” (Corr et al, 2010, pg. 54). Ooten also points to the need to situate prisons via an economic perspective, specifically how critical it is to understand prisons “as a work site” and an institution where incarcerated labor is extracted (with little to no compensation) for someone’s profit (Ooten, 2010, pg. 39). This helps illustrate the inhumane treatment within prisons as well the system’s relationship with enslavement.

While discussing the need to situated prisons within history and systems of oppression, Ooten also mentions that “helping students interrogate how they define ‘safety’” (2010, pg. 35) is essential to these wider conversations. This is parallel to the
goals Jackson and Meiner named regarding their curriculum, with a large part of their article focusing on the need to go beyond traditional academic material in abolitionist education and make space for the emotional work of “rethinking innocence and guilt, or reframing good and bad people,” often a process that requires “engaging with deeply personal wounds and losses” (Jackson & Meiners, 2010, pg. 27). Almost every single article about teaching abolition mentioned that one of the ultimate barriers to students truly understanding the political worldview of abolition was the question hanging like a ghost in every classroom: what about the (truly) bad people? The question demonstrates the depth of the prisons systems’ impact on society and how we as individuals understand the world. As Jackson and Meiner point out, “Prisons and the prison industrial complex (PIC) continue to flourish because of our ongoing investments in bad people and the public and private practices of tying fears to bad people” (2010, pg. 24). While Jackson and Meiner critically articulate the need to shift the question of ‘what about bad people?’ towards ‘are prisons really a solution to harm/violence?’ and ‘what would we do about violence without prisons?’ (2010, pg. 25), they direct readers to not just reframe the conversation intellectually but also explore (rather than ignore) the emotions, fear specifically, attached to these questions (2010). These intense emotions often stem from lived traumas and very real threats to safety, as well as socially constructed (often binary) understandings of guilt/innocence and safety/danger. Understanding feelings as not just “a personal and individual matter” but also as “public and social, with political ramifications” is essential framing for dialogues exploring our emotional investment in prisons (Jackson & Meiners, 2010, pg. 25), made possible through the development of a sociological lens within abolitionist classrooms.
Similar to Ooten, Laura Barraclough’s article is primarily about how she shifted the curriculum of her prison abolition course in order to more effectively facilitate openness to the vision of prison abolition. While her first course’s priority was teaching students about prison’s role in structural inequality, her next course paired this with an “equally strong emphasis upon the ways in which students themselves are implicated in the production of mass incarceration and cultures of punishment, as well as the multiple ways in which they can create change” (Barraclough, 2010, pg. 43). The new duel pedagogical emphasis shifted the course’s goal from solely awareness of the prison industrial complex’s structurally oppressive nature to include an explicit call for social transformation, something that I aspire to replicate. This feels like a shift into what abolitionist pedagogy can be. One of the main functions of the ideology of prisons is not just the disappearing of people, but the disappearing of social problems: prison “relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism” (Davis, 2003, pg 16). To not just enhance students’ understanding of the world but to encourage them to reject a socially constructed lack of communal responsibility towards incarcerated peoples and the world is to render education and the call for transformation inseparable.

Barraclough and other educators attempt to achieve this goal in multiple ways. The untangling of students’ own emotional investments in prisons and the criminal/innocent binary, as Jackson and Meiner emphasized, is an important one, and shows how work within ourselves and our values is explicitly political. Students must address within themselves how they have been shaped by the system and that they have the power to either uphold/proliferate the project of mass incarceration or be part of the
“possibility of change” (Barraclough, 2010, pg. 46). Another strategy is to engage students with “historic and current examples of communities and organizations that are actively working to address violence and to reduce harm without animating the prison industrial complex” (Jackson & Meiners, 2010, pg. 29). In movement work, especially when facing an issue as monumental, horrific, and invisibilized as the prison industrial complex, it’s particularly essential to arm students in the fight against apathy as a coping response with the knowledge that “people do care, that people are actively working to create a different world, and that they are doing so now in the existing spaces and social institutions of their everyday lives” (Barraclough, 2010, pg. 50). Additionally, although the articles I read did not explicitly name this as such, engaging in visioning and radical imagination is essential to helping students not just see themselves as “potentially part of the solution” (Barraclough, 2010, pg. 46) but actually making them part of the solution right now. Pointing out that “prison offers a false answer to the question of violence, and actually shifts resources and energy from meaningful and sustainable anti-violence work” (Jackson & Meiners, 2010, pg. 25) can be continued by activing students to creatively think through what these resources be poured into instead in order create a world with no need for prisons.

There are many attractive yet unrealistic goals for my curriculum, including everyone becoming an abolitionist (while I desire to open students perspectives to understanding abolition, only they can decide what they will believe in) or everyone gaining a ‘complete’ or robust understanding of the PIC (impossible from a short and introductory course). But when Barraclough identified that the adjustments to her curriculum resulted in more students developing an “expanded sense of their own power,
as well as a genuine commitment to continue learning [about the PIC and abolition]”

(Barraclough, 2010, pg. 51) I realized exactly that would be an excellent, if ambitious,
goal for my curriculum.
OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Course Objectives:

Goals of the Course:
- Communally learn and unlearn about the prison industrial complex and its impact on our society from a liberatory and sociological lens
- Communally build a learning environment where students feel a sense of safety, power, and self-worth
- Students are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective
- Students are thinking critically about the social concepts of justice, safety, and criminality

Core Concepts:
- Prison industrial complex as structural inequity/oppression
- Prison abolition as a worldview and mission for liberation
- Relationships between individuals, institutions, structures, and society (sociological lens)
- Justice, safety, and criminality as social constructs, the dominant constructions of which uphold the prison industrial complex in society

Essential Questions of the Course:
- How does the prison industrial complex shape society?
- What are the consequences of the prison industrial complex?
- What is an abolitionist way of seeing the world?
- What is criminality and how is it historically constructed?
- What is safety and is our current system creating genuine safety?
- What is justice and is our current system creating genuine justice?
- What transformation are abolitionists working towards and what transformation will we imagine?
**FULL CURRICULUM**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>What transformation are abolitionists working towards and what transformation can we imagine?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Knowledge and skills:**

*Students will know/be able to...*

Discuss their perspective on the prison industrial complex using materials we have engaged with in the course (as well as using values/beliefs, personal experiences and emotions, outside knowledge/materials/evidence, etc).

Describe the goals and worldview of the prison abolition movement (through written, verbal, and/or visual expressions).

Produce materials (written, visual arts centered, multimedia, etc) clearly presenting ideas and information relating to the prison industrial complex.

Critically engage with the materials utilized in the course directly through discussion and annotation as well as by synthesizing, analyzing, and expanding upon them in conversations, projects, and activities.

Intake (via listening, reading, looking, etc) and respond to everyone in the learning community’s contributions in a thoughtful and respectful manner.
**UNIT ONE: COMMUNITY**

### OVERVIEW

**Established Goal(s):**

Communally build a learning environment where students feel a sense of safety, power, and self-worth.

Student are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective.

Assess where the learning community currently stands in our knowledge and conceptions of the prison industrial complex.

Understand the meaning of ‘prison industrial complex.’

Determine the guidelines of our learning community.

Explore what communities we belong to in order to begin to investigate how the prison industrial complex has impacted ourselves and our communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding(s):</th>
<th>Essential Question(s):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Students will understand that...</em></td>
<td>What do we know about prisons and where does this knowledge come from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They each come to the course with valuable knowledge and perspective about the prison industrial complex, and that in this course all of them will grow this knowledge and perspective.</td>
<td>What does ‘prison industrial complex’ refer to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They all belong to/come from communities impacted by the PIC.</td>
<td>What do we need in order to bring our best selves to this space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together are forming a new learning community, which we each have responsibility in building and upholding.</td>
<td>What can respect, learning, and community look like for us in this space?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘prison industrial complex’ is a critical and complicated term to describe the interlocking systems, institutions, and structures that profit from and proliferate the carceral system.</td>
<td>Who are our communities and how have our communities been impacted by the prison industrial complex?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session One: Are Prisons a Problem</strong>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start to get students thinking about what kind of information or impressions they have about the prison industrial complex and where it comes from. Come to a communal understanding and definition of PIC. Engage with potentially shocking information about the prison system to open student’s perspectives to the idea of the prison industrial complex as a harmful, unjust system.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session Two: Holding our Space</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider our needs from a learning community and create shared agreements on how we want to hold ourselves and each other in the space/program. Practice personal reflection and a communal grounding activity. Discuss how to create a learning space where all feel a sense of safety, power, and self-worth, that minimizes and attends to harm, while understanding the necessity for vulnerability and discomfort in learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session Three: Our Communities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore what communities we are a part of. Research and share with each other how the PIC impacts our communities in specific ways. Consider our own stake in studying the PIC. Revisit community agreements for any further additions or discussion before going around to individually consent to them.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: a bolded and asterisked session title indicates this session is “in focus” for the unit and has been developed into a full lesson plan.
UNIT TWO: CRIMINALITY

OVERVIEW

Established Goal(s):

Communally learn and unlearn about the prison industrial complex and its impact on our society from a liberatory and sociological lens.

Build a learning environment where students feel a sense of safety, power, and self-worth.

Student are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective.

Examine how criminality has been constructed through American history, specifically the institutions of slavery, the Black Codes, and the War on Drugs.

Analyze how concepts of criminality have been constructed by media and social messaging.

Consider who is being targeted by the concepts of criminality and what actions and/or identities are considered ‘criminal’.

Understanding(s):
Students will understand that...

Social constructions of criminality (and their depictions in media) connect to real life discrimination.

America’s historical conceptions of Black enslaved people and the Black Codes post-‘emancipation’ connect to present day concepts of ‘criminality’ and existence of the prison industrial complex.

The ‘War in Drugs’ constructed many contemporary concepts of criminality.

The current legal system both causes and criminalizes poverty.

Essential Question(s):

How has ‘criminality’ been constructed through present day media and social messaging?

How has criminality been constructed through American history?

What types of people and actions are considered criminal?

How does the current legal system both cause and criminalize poverty?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Plan</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session Four: Criminality, Enslavement, and the Black Codes</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explore the historical construction of criminality in the United Stated looking at the uniquely Anti-Black nature of its construction in connection to the institution of chattel slavery and the Black Codes.

**Session Five: Criminality, Media, and the War on Drugs*|

Explore contemporary constructions of criminality, specifically looking at the War on Drugs and how certain communities are criminalized and how crime and criminality are portrayed and sensationalized in media.

**Session Six: Criminalization and Causation of Poverty**

Explore how poverty itself is criminalized and how criminalization can lead to/perpetuate cycles of poverty. Examine the relationship between criminalization and poverty in the United States utilizing ‘the cycle of poverty’ and how identities such as race and disability impact communities’ experience with the prison industrial complex and with poverty. Create our own visualizations of criminalization and incarceration’s impact on the poverty cycle.

**Session Seven: Review and Reflections on Criminality**

Attend to topics, issues, or questions that arose though this unit (but that we didn’t have the time to address or explore more initially). Reflect (through writing, conversation/dialogue, meditation, and/or art) on what has been learned this unit, how students are feeling/processing the content, how it’s been impacting them to be learning/thinking/discussing these issues and ideas, etc.
## UNIT THREE: SAFETY

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are thinking critically about the concepts justice, safety, and criminality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confront safety as a socially constructed concept and feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing whether what the current criminal justice system is creating/upholding matches how we would like to define safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring how dichotomizing social constructs related to the criminal justice system render understandings of people as deserving or non-deserving of safety and what we believe about this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Understanding(s): |
| **Students will understand that…** |
| Safety is a socially constructed concept and feeling. |
| They have the power to define safety in ways beyond what is normatively constructed in our society and what is attended to by the criminal justice system. |
| The dangers within the prison systems as described by currently and formally incarcerated individuals. |
| The prison industrial complex uses criminalization to dichotomize people and construct safety as perpetually threatened by ‘dangerous people’ rather than unequal social conditions and violent systems. |

| Essential Question(s): |
| If prisons are meant to “keep us safe”, who is “us” and what is this “safety”? |
| What does safety and danger look for incarcerated people? |
| How will we define safety? |
| Who deserves safety? |
Learning Plan

**Session Eight: Does Prison Keep Us “Safe”?**

Analyze the social construction of prisons as existing to ‘keep us safe’ and what this definition of ‘us’ and ‘safety’ is. Engage with how abolitionists refute this idea. Re-define/re-imagine understandings of safety. Consider prison’s impact on public/collective safety.

**Session Nine: The Dangerous World of Incarceration**

Explore first-hand accounts and experiences of what life is like within prisons/jails and the criminal justice system though works by those who are or have been incarcerated. Engage with multiple modes of personal narrative and artistic expressions by system involved people in order to consider what danger and safety might be like for them.

**Session Ten: Who Deserves Safety?**

Consider the guilt/innocence, good/bad, deserving/non-deserving binary and how these binaries function in society to create different categories of people, inside and outside prison, in order to reify the PIC’s existence. Explore first-hand accounts of ‘boundary crossing’ aka how people end up going from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’ (incarcerated). Examples of boundary crossing may include: sentencing based on fines, recidivism based on parole violation, the inequitably of court system/legal representation, criminalization of self-protection and survivorship, etc. Do we believe that prison walls accurately separate us ‘outside’ from danger, and that people in prison are guilty, bad, therefore undeserving of human rights and safety?

**Session Eleven: Review and Reflections on Safety**

Attend to topics, issues, or questions that arose though this unit (but that we didn’t have the time to address or explore more initially). Reflect (through writing, conversation/dialogue, meditation, and/or art) on what has been learned this unit, how students are feeling/processing the content, how it’s been impacting them to be learning/thinking/discussing these issues and ideas, etc.
## UNIT FOUR: JUSTICE

### OVERVIEW

**Established Goal(s):**

Communally learn and unlearn about the prison industrial complex and its impact on our society from a liberatory and sociological lens.

Students are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective.

Students are thinking critically about the concepts justice, safety, and criminality.

Analyze the conception of justice used by our system (punitive and state/federal controlled ‘justice’).

Explore transformative and restorative justice philosophy, practices, and models.

Begin to redefine and re-conceptualize what we want justice to mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding(s):</th>
<th>Essential Question(s):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Students will understand that….</em></td>
<td>What definition of justice is currently being used in the ‘criminal justice’ system?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice is a socially, systemically, and institutionally constructed concept.</td>
<td>How might we define justice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meaning of ‘punitive justice’ and ‘justice’ controlled by the state and that neither of these are the singular inherent meaning of justice itself.</td>
<td>What is transformative and restorative justice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What some of the philosophy, practices, and models for transformative and restorative justice are.</td>
<td>How is transformative and restorative justice happening today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The meaning of guilty vs accountability and crime vs harm.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Learning Plan

*Session Twelve: What Justice is this?*
Analyze what definition of justice is being utilized in our current system and what we believe justice is, could be, or should be (re-define/re-imagine/re-conceptualize).

**Session Thirteen: Intro to Transformative and Restorative Justice**

Explore the concept of justices that uses accountability to address harm, rather than use punishment to address crime. Begin to learn about what restorative and transformative justice is, including how they are similar and different.

**Session Fourteen: Exploring Transformative and Restorative Justice**

Explore examples of how people are using (or have used) transformative and restorative justice, building up models, systems, and organizations of alternative justice. Particularly center examples led by or specifically centered on youth (TJ and RJ in schools or other youth centered spaces and youth who are leading, participating in, and fighting for TJ and RJ). Analyze these examples and to what extent they are able to employ and embody alternative justice while existing in a world dominated by punitive justice.

**Session Fifteen: Review and Reflection**

Attend to topics, issues, or questions that arose though this unit (but that we didn’t have the time to address or explore more initially). Reflect (through writing, conversation/dialogue, meditation, and/or art) on what has been learned this unit, how students are feeling/processing the content, how it’s been impacting them to be learning/thinking/discussing these issues and ideas, etc.
UNIT FIVE: TRANSFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Established Goal(s):

Communally learn and unlearn about the prison industrial complex and its impact on our society from a liberatory and sociological lens.

Students are open to understanding a prison abolitionist perspective.

Communally build a learning environment where students feel a sense of safety, power, and self-worth.

Explore what the prison abolitionist movement envisions and is currently doing to transform our world.

Develop our capacity and skill to radically imagine and envision transformation.

Reflect upon how we have been transformed by this course/learning community.

Understanding(s):

Students will understand that…. Prison abolitionists work is not just to abolish the prison industrial complex, but to transform the world.

They have the capacity to imagine and work towards transformation.

They have been impacted in some way, and had an impact on, this course and learning community.

Essential Question(s):

What vision of transformation do prisons abolitionists hold?

What work is being done right now by prison abolitionists to transform the world?

How can we unlock our imagination to enable transformation?

What actions do we want to take to transform our worlds?

How have we been transformed by this course/learning community?

Learning Plan

Session Sixteen: Prison Abolition Movement and Transformation*
Examine the social transformation the Prison Abolition Movement believes in/works towards based on a ‘gallery’ of materials created by abolitionists. Practicing mind-mapping as a visualization tool (with potential to be used individually or communally) in brainstorming and information processing.

**Session Seventeen: Radical Visioning**

Use art to engage in radical visioning/imagining what kind of transformation we want for our world. Students will create either group or individual art/visual representations of a world they want to live in and each give some verbal and written explanation to the class of what they created, what it means/represents, and what transformation towards this world might look like.

**Session Eighteen: Review and Reflection on Transformation and Final Appreciations**

Attend to topics, issues, or questions that arose though this unit (but that we didn’t have the time to address or explore more initially). Reflect (through writing, conversation/dialogue, meditation, and/or art) on what kind of transformation has occurred for them personally in this class (does not have to be ideological, can be in skills, relationships with the learning community/themselves, etc). Express appreciations to each other on how we enjoyed and/or benefited from people’s impact on the course and the learning community.
UNIT ONE (COMMUNITY), SESSION ONE

TITLE/TOPIC: Are Prisons a Problem?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:

- Are prisons a problem?
- What do we know about prisons and where does this knowledge come from?
- What does ‘prison industrial complex’ mean?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- Engage students in both recalling and starting to critically examine their current knowledge about, and associations with, the prison industrial complex
- Students will be able understand the meaning of the term ‘prison industrial complex (PIC)’ and generate a communal definition of the term for us to utilize as a learning community
- Students will begin to engage in information that may affect their perspective on whether or not the prison industrial complex is a harmful, unjust system and prisons are a social problem.

MATERIALS:

- Large whiteboard (could be substituted with easel size sticky note pad)
- Dry erase markers (regular markers, if paper substitute)
- White board eraser
- Projector/screen
- ‘Fact’ and ‘Fiction’ Signs
- Printed copies of ‘Defining Prison Industrial Complex Handout’ (Appendix #1) for whole class

PROCEDURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing? What will the teacher be doing?</th>
<th>Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:20</td>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong> with everyone sitting in a circle (or some formation where we can all see each other and are on the same plane), each person will share their name, what pronouns they are using if they</td>
<td>In order to begin any communal learning, we have to bring ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:20-3:50</td>
<td><strong>Intro Activity</strong>: what do we know about prisons (and crime, law, police, incarceration, etc) and where did we learn it from? We will make a communal T-chart of things we know and/or associations on one side and sources/where information and impressions came from on other side. The T-Chart will be up on the board and we will go over the activity together, educator offering some examples and writing down some volunteer examples from students to get it started. Then everyone will come up at once (or with however many markers we have) to add to the chart freely. After, we’ll talk about what’s on the chart, both students volunteering to talk about what they wrote or noticed and the educator pointing out things that may have been written multiple times or are particularly astute observations and asking if anyone who wrote it wants to speak on it.</td>
<td>This activity is to engage students in both recalling and starting to critically examine their current knowledge about and associations with the prison industrial complex. It also is to start setting the precedent that every person in the class holds relevant knowledge and will contribute to the communal learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:50-4:00</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td>Breaks are essential to sustaining the energy and focus to learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00-4:40</td>
<td><strong>Defining ‘prison industrial complex’</strong>: we will go over together (reading, defining words, clarifying complex phrasing) a couple different definitions from abolitionist organizers and theorists. Paper copies of short excerpts from Critical Resistance, Angela Davis “Are Prisons Obsolete?” pg 84-85, and CARA via Mariame Kaba’s Blog and this political cartoon by Chris Slane will be provided and we will use projector/screen to show digital/multimedia.</td>
<td>This activity will lead to students being able understand the meaning of the term ‘prison industrial complex (PIC)’ and generating a communal definition of the term for us to utilize as a learning community.</td>
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</table>
definitions from this short interview with Mary Hooks, this short interview with Maya Schenwar, explore this interactive map from Corrections Project.

In small groups, students will identify key parts of defining PIC, with a student who volunteers to scribe and another to share out to the class. During small group time, educator will check in with each group to clarify any confusion or assist in defining.

As a whole group, students will share out what the key parts to a definition of PIC are with the educator scribing and adding any missing elements, then as a class we will combine it into a working definition we can use.

| 4:40-5:00 | **Fact or Fiction Activity:** Educator will present slides, each with one statement about the PIC which the educator will read aloud. For each slide, all students will go stand on one side of the room or the other to demonstrate whether they think this statement is a fact or a fiction. After a minute, when all students picked a position, the answer (with sources and a brief explanation) will be provided on the next slide.

(Example statement: Prisoners in NY work for an average wage of 62 cents an hour [Fact, source: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/wage_policies.html])

After we go through about 6-10 rounds of this activity depending upon time remaining and observable energy levels/enthusiasm for the activity, we will have a short debrief conversation about it.

**Guiding Questions:** What was most surprising from this activity? How were you deciding which side of the room to stand on? Whether something is a fact or fiction may depend upon someone’s perspective on the way the information was obtained or

This activity is meant to both engage students in recalling any knowledge they already have about PIC and mostly use information that may be shocking to those who have not before considered the PIC as harmful to start to understand that perspective.

The guiding questions are meant help students process their thoughts and feelings in reaction to this information and activity, and to address that information and truth is subjective and that it is their place to carefully consider/question assertions and sources of information.
understood- were you questionable about any of the sources or fact vs fiction labels?

REFLECTION on EQUITY MEASURES:

Introduction: The educator will give a starting example and an explanation of pronouns so that everyone in the space knows how the introduction/check-in works and what pronouns are, not just those familiar with this structure/routine. The specificity on sitting formation is meant to open the class with a spatial set up that indicates we are all equal members of the learning community and attending to/learning from each other.

Intro Activity: This activity is designed so that every single person is contributing, but in a lower pressure way (independently writing rather than contributing aloud, participation that not necessarily identifiable to them or as ‘on the spot’).

Defining ‘Prison Industrial Complex’: We will go over definitions of various formats (written, auditory, visual, etc) attending to different ways students’ intake information best. In small groups, student can participate and take on leadership in different ways. Educator should ensure that subtitles are on and clear for the videos.

Fact or Fiction Activity: In registration for the course/program, there would be a form that includes asking students about access concerns regarding mobility, sensory specifications, and allergies and any other access concerns. Should there be any students in the class with access concerns regarding mobility, instead of the sides of the room being labeled, each student would get a sign with fact on one side and fiction on the other (or a piece of paper to make that sign) and we would all use that instead of walking around. The educator should do what they can to curate a fun, game-like atmosphere and remind students that the slides are meant to be surprising and/or tricky, so as to minimize any shame associated with getting the round ‘wrong.’
UNIT TWO (CRIMINALITY), SESSION FIVE

TITLE/TOpic: Criminality, Media, and the War on Drugs

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:

- How is criminality culturally constructed through contemporary media, particularly news media?
- What is the War on Drugs and how was it a part of the social construction of criminality?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- Students will analyze how media construct and perpetuate specific conceptions of criminality.
- Students will learn about the history of the War on Drugs and how it shaped contemporary conceptions of criminality.
- Student will be able to connect the social construction of concepts, specifically criminality, to individuals, institutions, and systems.

MATERIALS:

- Projector and screen
- Printed copies of the annotated Heitzeg article excerpt (Appendix #2) for whole class
- Journals

PROCEDURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing?</th>
<th>Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)</th>
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<tr>
<td>3:00-3:25</td>
<td><strong>Intro Activity:</strong> We will watch together a home security system commercial and read a couple news headlines and bylines. Students will get 5-10 minutes to reflect individually (through any means such as writing in journal, quiet discussion in pairs, etc) on how these sources are constructing or perpetuating a certain construction of criminality. Student will then discuss their reflections on how these sources are constructing a certain concept of criminality, guided by the educator.</td>
<td>This activity takes material that is likely familiar in order to begin to analyze media’s construction/perpetuation of specific concepts of criminality. It starts off with more individual processing for students to ease into analysis and reflect on where they are</td>
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<td>3:25-4:00</td>
<td><strong>Videos on the War on Drugs:</strong> After going over a quick overview of what kind of potentially unsettling content will be in the videos, together we will watch clips from the documentary 13th explaining the War on Drugs. We will then have brief turn and talk on thoughts/impressions and questions/confusions and a chance to briefly share and discuss as a whole class.</td>
<td>This activity will give us all a basis to understand what the War on Drugs is so we can consider how it constructed contemporary conceptions of criminality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00-4:15</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td>Breaks are essential to sustaining the energy and focus to learn</td>
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<td>4:15-4:40</td>
<td><strong>Independent Reading:</strong> read and annotate pgs. 4-13, sections “Media Construction of Crime and Criminals” and “The Rise of the Prison Industrial Complex” from Nancy Heitzeg’s article “Criminalizing Education.” Educator will be floating to assist people one on one who are struggling with the reading. The copies will be a version annotated by educator, with brief definitions and explanations in the margins of some of the words/phrases they don’t anticipate everyone knowing.</td>
<td>Student will be practicing interpedently reading social science critical analysis that will further their understanding of the relationships between media, the War on Drugs, constructions of criminality, and the rise of the prison industrial complex.</td>
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<td>4:40-5:00</td>
<td><strong>Small Group Discussion:</strong> Everyone will decide for themselves if they want to be in a discussion focused more on media’s relationship with criminalization and the PIC or more on the War on Drugs’ relationship with criminalization and the PIC. From there we will split into small groups of about 4-5 people and discuss the topic, using or jumping off from the guiding questions. As a group,</td>
<td>Students will get the chance to communally analyze the materials and topics from today as well as bring in their personal experiences and knowledge. They will be getting the choice which</td>
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</table>
they are also responsible for coming up with and writing on the board 2-3 questions they have for further exploration of the topic. The educator will be floating, joining in with groups briefly to hear what they are discussing and answer questions that arise, particularly asking if groups had lingering questions/confusions about the reading or what the War on Drugs is.

Discussion Questions (Media):
- What conception of criminality do you think you or your community has received from media?
- What were the specific medias and how did they communicate certain ideas about criminality, or have any media you have consumed offered alternative conceptions of criminality?
- How does media influence the material reality of the PIC and the real lives of people and communities?

Discussion Questions (War on Drugs):
- How does the War on Drugs show up in the present? What about in your life specifically?
- How has the War on Drugs shaped the concept of criminality and the material reality of the PIC?
- Why do you think drugs specifically are what’s used to criminalize people, and why do you think it ‘effective’ (as a way to criminalize and incarcerate targeted groups)?

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<tr>
<th>REFLECTION on EQUITY MEASURE:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intro Activity: Students may think best in different ways, so for this reflection I’m not requiring a specific medium but letting them reflect whatever way works best for them. For videos, educator should ensure subtitles are on and clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Videos on the War on Drugs: The documentary 13th presents a background on the War on Drugs in a very engaging and accessible manner (without requiring previous in-depth knowledge on the political era) but also contains visuals, sounds, and content that may be disturbing (specifically violence, Anti-Black racism, flashing lights and colors, etc) so it is important to prepare students in case it is material they are particularly sensitive to. Educator should ensure subtitles are on and clear.</td>
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</table>
Independent Reading: It is essential to engage with literature/texts to learn about the abolition theory and PIC history. I want students to practice, in a communal environment where they can be directly supported by an educator, reading a passage of critical analysis that may be at a higher level or written in a different style than they’re used to. But to make it more accessible, the sections are pre-annotated with brief explanations and definitions of essential words/concepts that not everyone may be familiar with, and they are reading independently so the educator can be available to answer questions or go over parts one on one with students.

Small Group: While verbal discussion and participation is required for this activity, the hope is that allowing students some flexibility to choose what topic they are discussing and joining in small groups rather than the full group will help students feel more comfortable. This also allows them to address questions and confusions together and the educator will be available to offer clarity and support to the discussions as well as monitor equity of voices in the groups. The small group’s responsibility to come up with questions is to encourage them to consider and explore their interests in these topics beyond the guiding questions and that, at this stage in particular, continued exploration is more essential that ‘right answers.’
UNIT THREE (SAFETY), SESSION EIGHT

TITLE/TOpic: Do Prisons Keep Us Safe?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:

• Do prisons keep us safe?
• Who is “us” and what is “safety”?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

• Interrogating the idea that ‘prisons keep us safe’ on multiple levels.
• Exploring the dominant social construction and potential re-conceptualization of ‘safety.’
• Understanding why abolitionists do not believe that ‘prisons keep us safe’.

MATERIALS:

• Large white board
• Dry erase markers
• Projector/ screen
• Paper
• Art/writing utensils
• Journals
• Printed copies of interview transcripts (Appendix #3) for the class

PROCEDURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing? What will the teacher be doing?</th>
<th>Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)</th>
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<tr>
<td>3:00-3:10</td>
<td><strong>Intro Reflective Journaling:</strong> What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel like your community is being kept safe? What people, spaces, sensory details (sight, sounds, smell), systems/procedures, words, actions, etc. make you feel safe?</td>
<td>This reflective journaling is meant to start students connecting their own personal experiences with (re)conceptualizations of safety and the concept that safety might be created by things besides the PIC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:10-3:25</td>
<td><strong>Who Is ‘Us’?:</strong> short class discussion connecting what we’ve learned in the criminality unit to answer the questions: if society tells us “prisons keep us safe then who is “us”? who do we think “us” is supposed to be, ideally? Based off what we discussed in the last unit, who do we think ‘us’ actually is, who is included and excluded? Are incarcerated people included in ‘us’? Educator will write these questions on the board and facilitate a group conversation, taking notes on the board on what people are saying. Educator should encourage students to lead the conversation (aka when done speaking they can call on another student who has a hand raised or people can just jump in if they aren’t talking over each other, students can address whatever question they want) facilitating mainly by posing follow up questions, drawing attention to certain parts of students’ additions, or adding in either small outside information or reminding students of something from the previous unit.</td>
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<td>3:25-4:10</td>
<td><strong>Do prisons keep us safe?:</strong> Student will engage with the abolitionists’ perspectives on the notion that “prisons keep us safe.” First, we will read aloud together pop-corn style (i.e. whoever is reading can continue or finish their turn at their own discretion before passing to the next person) a very short article about whether increased rates of incarceration correlate with recorded rates of violent crime. Educator will ask for students to volunteer to synthesize out loud what this article means and their impression of it (what is this article saying? is it surprising? how does it fit into or go against your understandings of the world or social messaging you receive about prisons and safety?) (10 mins)</td>
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This will begin students interrogating the idea that “prisons keep us safe” while connecting this unit (Safety) with the previous unit (Criminality). Students will interrogate the idea that prisons keep us safe while also listening and processing to understand why abolitionists disagree with premise.
Next, we will watch interviews where abolitionists directly address what they describe as the “myth” that prisons keep us safe. We’ll watch Victoria Law’s interview from 0:26-7:10 and the educator will pull on the screen another short written interview from her on the same topic, reading aloud the first paragraph (“1. Prisons don’t actually make us safe...”) and last paragraph (“And one more thing: If we think....”). Educator will then ask for clarifying questions or parts that were confusing, offer clarity, and move on to the next interview with Maya Schenwar from 0:00-7:33 again with time for short clarification after. (20 mins)

After listening, class will be split into small groups, half of which will synthesize Victoria Law’s points and half of which will synthesize Maya Schenwar’s points (the groups will be provided with the transcripts from the clips they are examining). Groups will share with the whole class after small group discussion time. Educator will check in with the groups and offer any clarity as needed. At the beginning, each group will nominate 2 people to take notes and 2 people to share out with the full group what they discussed. (15 mins)

| 4:10-4:20 | **Break** | Breaks are essential to sustaining the energy and focus to learn. |
| 4:20-4:45 | **(Re)conceptualizing safety:** As a class, we will come up with a communal understanding of what definition of safety is being used in the phrase “prisons keep us safe” and in the dominant discourse about safety being created by the prison industrial complex. Educator will again, encourage students to take ownership of the conversation and be speaking to each other rather than directing comments and responses to the educator. Educator will facilitate by asking prompting questions, take notes on |

Student will communally analyze the dominant conceptualization of safety and use discussion and visualization to imagine alternative conceptualizations of safety.
board, pulling attention to parts of responses or additional information as necessary. Educator will help the class reach a conclusion that includes some form of ‘safety’ as a supposed absence of (direct) violence and law breaking rather than presence of holistic safety, by providing a definition of direct violence and indirect/structural violence and by asking prompting questions if necessary like: what do we need to keep us safe? Are having our needs like housing, food, medical care, etc part of safety? Do prisons provide these?

After we come to some conclusions about what we think this dominant conceptualization of safety is, students will get back into their interview synthesis small groups and discuss as well as create some brief visualization (drawing, map/chart, abstract art, etc) of how they re-conceptualize what safety could mean, what they might want it to mean.

| 4:45-5:00 | Educator will project prompts and reminders so everyone can see them while educator reads them aloud. Students are free to make themselves comfortable while journaling in any ways that don’t detract from the comfort of others (sit where they want and how they want, listen to music with earbuds, journal with drawings as well as words, etc)

**Outro Reflective Journaling:** Does the idea of living in a world without prison make you feel more safe or less safe? Reflect on why: what personal experiences or social messaging might be informing your feelings, what identities do you hold that inform your sense of safety and danger, what feelings do you have about what safety is and how prisons work in society?

Reminders:
- In your journal, there is no right or wrong answers, only space for you and your honest thoughts.
- It is not shameful to feel unsafe or fear a lack of safety.

Student will reflect on safety as not just a social concept, but an embodied feeling informed by personal and social/political factors, interrogating the idea that prisons keep us safe on an extremely personal level of emotional, not just cognitive or conceptual, understanding.
• This can be a really difficult question- I encourage you to explore it and yourself bravely but take space from it/take care of yourself if the need arises.
• Feelings like fear are extremely real and important, and it is important to critically examine and process our feelings in order to make sure we’re seeing the world clearly and embodying our values.

**REFLECTION on EQUITY MEASURE:**

*Intro Reflective Journaling:* By starting off with personal journaling, students ease into the concept we’ll be exploring today while creating a foundation that the concepts we are focusing on in the session are connected to their own lives, experiences, and feelings.

*Who Is “Us”?:* Students will be encouraged to feel empowered over not just their participation in the discussion but in the discussion as a whole by the teacher taking a step back from being the center or leader of it. Educator will be taking notes on the board of the discussion for visual as well as auditory processing and so points can be recorded and returned to.

*Do prisons keep us safe?:* Educator should remember to make sure captions are on for the video clip viewing and to provide transcripts so that students don’t have to rely upon just auditory intake to understand the interviews. Roles within small groups encourage leadership that isn’t exclusively based on participating verbally or having the most ideas/strongest understanding.

*(Re)conceptualizing Safety:* Students are again encouraged to feel empowered over not just their participation in the discussion but in the discussion as a whole and educator is again taking notes for ease of processing what people are saying. In the small groups, we are expressing ideas through visualization and a hands-on process, and not just words and discussion which take focus for most of the session.

*Outro Reflective Journaling:* Students are encouraged to engage with this topic with their whole, personal self, and pushed to consider these ideas in their own lives, not just conceptually. They are given reminders that are meant to attend to feelings of shame that may emerge through exploring this questions within themselves.
UNIT FOUR (JUSTICE), SESSION THIRTEEN

TITLE/TOPIC: Intro to Transformative and Restorative Justice

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:

- How is ‘harm’ different from ‘crime’?
- What is accountability?
- What are the central ideas of Transformative and Restorative Justice?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- Students will understand the central concepts of justice that addresses harm through accountability rather than addresses crime through punishment
- Students will explore an introduction to Transformative and Restorative Justice

MATERIALS:

- Projector + screen
- Journals
- Writing materials
- White board
- Dry erase markers
- Printed copies of Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice Introductory Excerpts (Appendix #4)

PROCEDURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing? What will the teacher be doing?</th>
<th>Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:15</td>
<td>Reflective Journaling: Think of a time there was a conflict you were involved in, where someone (maybe you) experienced some form of harm due to peoples’ (maybe your) actions. Journal about what was done to work through that conflict and deal with that harm, and how you wish it had been worked through ideally.</td>
<td>This will bring in students’ experiential knowledge of forms of justice practices that aren’t the carceral system and start pushing them to consider what processes of dealing with harm they believe in for themselves.</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:40</td>
<td>Harm vs Crime:</td>
<td>Educator will ask for input from students and scribe on the whiteboard so that the class can communally define what the meaning of ‘crime’ versus the meaning of ‘harm’ is. Student will then be asked to get into small groups (3-4, with one person volunteering to take notes) to discuss what choosing to address harm versus choosing to address crime might mean about a society’s values and beliefs. One person from each small group will then share out what was discussed (with educator taking notes on the board) and then students can discuss any final thoughts or questions about what everyone came up with.</td>
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<td>In addressing the difference between harm and crime, students are building the foundation to conceptualize alternative understandings and practices of justice to our punitive justice system.</td>
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<td>3:40-</td>
<td>Accountability:</td>
<td>We will watch the videos about accountability and discuss.</td>
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<td>4:05</td>
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<td><strong>What is Accountability:</strong> 0:00-3:30</td>
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<td>First, we’ll watching the first clip of alternative justice organizers and practitioners defining accountability for themselves, pausing for questions. We’ll then take a minute for each person to take write in their journal to make their own definition for accountability, and then have a discussion for people to share out while educator takes notes on the board to start us off on generating a communal definition.</td>
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<td><strong>What Are Obstacles to Accountability:</strong> (Shame) 1:35-3:58, (Carceral Mentality) 6:32-8:35, (Failure vs Opportunity to Grow) 10:32-11:10</td>
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<td>We’ll then watch each of the three sections from the continuation of the interviews, discussing the obstacles to accountability with educator scribing on the board quick notes about students’ synthesis of and thoughts on the obstacles to accountability.</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>In addressing accountability, students are building the foundation to conceptualize alternative understandings and practices of justice to our punitive justice system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:05-4:20</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Breaks are essential to sustaining the energy and focus to learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:20-4:40</td>
<td>RJ and TJ Intro:</td>
<td><strong>RJ and TJ Intro:</strong> We will read aloud in a circle together pop-corn style (i.e. whoever is reading can continue or finish their turn at their own discretion before passing to the next person) the handout which compiles short excerpts from: the <em>intro to Restorative Justice</em> and <em>intro to Transformative Justice</em> from transformharm.org, Mia Mingus’s article “Transformative Justice: A Brief Description” and Generation 5’s”Towards Transformative Justice”, as well as from Facing Forward’s “What is Restorative Justice?” and Rethinking School’s “Restorative Justice: What it is and is not”. We’ll then watch a brief segment from “What is Transformative Justice” where adrienne marie brown quickly sums up punitive vs restorative vs transformative justice (0:00-2:07). Then, sitting in circle, everyone will go around and ask one question they have about RJ and TJ. If certain questions are easily answerable and common, the educator can offer clarification, but otherwise we will take the questions with us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:40-5:00</td>
<td>RJ and TJ Venn Diagram:</td>
<td><strong>RJ and TJ Venn Diagram:</strong> After the readings and video clips, students will have the choice to working independently or in small groups on a Venn Diagram of Restorative and Transformative Justice. If there’s time, there will be full group share out for people to volunteer what they put in their Venn Diagram sections in order to populated a communal version of the RJ/TJ Venn Diagram. Students will use the Venn Diagram activity to process their understandings of RJ and TJ on a deeper level, specifically by looking at their overlap and particularities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFLECTION on EQUITY MEASURE:

Reflective Journaling: By starting off with personal journaling, students ease into the concept we’ll be exploring today while creating a foundation for the lesson that the material we are focusing on in the session is connected to their own lives, experiences, and interests.

Harm vs Crime: By going from educator directed student participatory full group, to student directed small group, and then student directed full group, the students will occupy different levels of control over the discussion with educator getting the group started then stepping back within a set structure.

Accountability: For all videos we watch, educator should make sure the subtitles are on and clear. The videos will be watched in short clips with discussion and note taking in between in order to process the information that is quickly delivered in the videos.

RJ and TJ Intro: Reading together is meant to help us consume the material communally and at the same rate, as well as read the text carefully, while attending to those who process best through visual or auditory listening. The “pop-corn style” is meant to facilitate every person participating in reading together while each still has some autonomy over their participation. The question round offers the educator a chance to answer confusions that are easy to address and common, but the purpose is not to have answers but to encourage the students to cultivate deeper thinking and curiosity on the subject.

RJ and TJ Venn Diagram: The Venn Diagram Activity is catered students being able to be able to synthesize and organize all the information they have just learned in a visually digestible manner. It is optionally collaborative or independent so the students can choose which would work best for them in that moment, particularly given that we spend the large majority of the session working communally.
UNIT FIVE (TRANSFORMATION), SESSION SIXTEEN

TITLE/TOPIC: Prison Abolition Movement and Transformation

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:

- What social transformation does the prison abolition movement envision and work towards?
- What is a mind map?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- Students will examine the vision and goals of the prison abolition movement through various materials created by organizers.
- Students will communally articulate their understanding of the prison abolition movement.
- Student will be able to synthesize dominant social constructions of justice, safety, and criminality and how the prison abolition movement asks us to re-conceptualize or re-consider these constructs.
- Students will know what a mind map is and how to make one.

MATERIALS:

- Printed copies of the physical gallery walk pieces (see Appendices #6, #7, #8)
- Tablets or laptops to showcase the digital gallery walk pieces (see Appendices #5)
- Materials to hang the pieces to the walls
- Many post-its
- Large whiteboard
- Easel size sticky note pad
- Dry erase markers

PROCEDURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing? What will the teacher be doing?</th>
<th>Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Time
- Activity/Teacher actions: What will students be doing? What will the teacher be doing?
- Rationale (how is this activity connected with learning objectives?)
### 3:00-3:15

**Intro Activity: Transformation Mind Map.** In order to practice making a mind map and all be familiar with what that is, the educator will quickly show some examples of and explain what a mind map is and then facilitate the class making a quick mind map for the concept of transformation, by starting it off while narrating the process then asking students volunteer to continue the mind map, coming up with what to add and where.

This activity ensures student are familiar with what a mind map is and how to make one. It also ensures all students are considering the meaning of ‘transformation’ in order to be all be prepared to examine (based off the gallery walk materials) what vision of transformation the prison abolition movement envisions.

### 3:15-3:30

**First Piece + Turn and Talk:** Class will get to choose which piece of the gallery walk to engage in first altogether. We will all look at it/watch it/read it then students will do a turn and talk in small groups of 3-4 people about what kind of vision of transformation the abolition movement holds based off this piece.

Students will first practice engaging with a piece (in order to understand the prison abolition movement’s vision of transformation) together before they go on to do this individually.

### 3:30-4:10

**Gallery Walk:** Students will walk around and engage with the pieces of art, videos, texts, etc set up around the room. They will go at whatever pace works for them and taking notes in whatever fashion they choose to, with the understanding articulated by the educator that they will be trying to engage with many different pieces in order to develop an understanding of what transformation the prison abolition movement is pushing for and what visions of the future and goals of social change the politics of prison abolition lead people to.

**Gallery Walk Pieces:**

*Digital Article Excerpt “What Is and What Could Be: The Policies of Abolition”* (see Appendix #5)

Students will engage with a range of sources and pieces created by abolitionists in order to develop an understanding of the prison abolition movement.
Although this piece for the gallery walk is a text excerpt, it should remain digital and be displayed on one of the gallery laptops/tablets in order for students to engage with the hyperlinks.

**Comic “Who’s Left: Prison Abolition”** (See Appendix #6)

**Digital Exhibit “A World Without Prisons”**

Laptop/Tablet will display the digital exhibition from the “Picturing a World Without Prisons: and Inside/Outside Exhibition,” with students looking over the “About A World Without Prisons” homepage (which introduces the exhibition and its promotional poster) and clicking on the names of the “Outside: Artists” to see their photography and accompanying artist statements.

Abolitionist Illustrations #1 #2 #3 by Ashley Lukashevsky (See Appendix #7)

Zine Excerpt from “Police Abolition 101: Messages When Facing Doubts” (See Appendix #8)

Digital Interview Video “Reina Gossett + Dean Spade (Part 1): Prison Abolition + Prefiguring the World You Want to Live In”

Digital Illustrated Video *A Message from the Future II: The Years of Repair*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:10-4:20</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td>Breaks are essential to sustaining the energy and focus to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:20-4:40</td>
<td><strong>Communal Mind Map:</strong> Students will each be given at least 4 sticky notes, on each of which they will independently write a word or phrase that</td>
<td>In this activity, students will get the chance to independently reflect on and concisely articulate</td>
</tr>
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encapsulate their understandings of and associations with the prison abolition movement's vision of transformation based on the works they were engaging with on the gallery walk. When they're ready, they will come up and stick them on the communal mind map (easel sized post it with “abolition movement’s vision of transformation” written in the center) with the directions to look at the other people’s notes that are stuck up on there and if they see something the same or similar already there, put the note next to each other in clusters and branching off so we can easily see trends in peoples’ understandings/associations. After everyone had a chance to add their notes, we’ll look over it as a class and discuss what notes people saw that stood out, what common impression people had, if there were contrasting impressions, et.

| 4:40-5:00 | **Mind Map + T-chart:** Students will choose one of our social constructs in focus (criminality, safety, or justice) to make a mind map of. Once they've chosen, they’ll get into pairs or trios with people who chose the same construct to make the mind map together. Educator will pass out pieces of unlined paper and pens/markers. With either using different colors or splitting map in half (or whatever way to differentiate works for them) they will map the concept based on a dominant social conceptualization/perspective and on an abolitionist re-conceptualization/perspective. | In this activity, students will be using the mind mapping practice to synthesize what they have been learning in the last three units (as well as their lived experience with the dominant social conceptualizations) in order to show exactly how the prison abolition movement asks us to transform our understanding of these key social constructs. |

**REFLECTION on EQUITY MEASURE:**

*Intro Activity:* Students may or may not have had experience before with mind maps, so this activity will make sure everyone has a foundation. Also, some students may learn best by looking at examples, others may learn best hearing an explanation, others yet may learn best by practicing the process themselves, so we’ll be doing all three together.
First Piece + Turn and Talk: Everyone will get a chance to practice together (and the educator available to help) the skill of engaging with a text or piece of art in order to gain understanding from it about the overall vision of the prison abolition movement before being expected to do it independently.

Gallery Walk: There will be no required number of pieces they engage with or way to take notes so they can really just engage with the pieces at their own pace, following their own interests and taking notes/processing however works best for them. Since they will be moving through it independently, the educator will be available to offer guidance and support to anyone.

Communal Mind Map: Everyone will be expected to share their takeaways and contribution to the communal mind map, but without the ‘on the spot’ pressure of verbally sharing in front of everyone. Those who may not be as sure after the gallery walk about the vision of the prison abolition movement can still contribute with their takeaways or associations and gain understanding from the whole learning community.

Mind Map + T-Chart: This is a chance for everyone to refresh themselves on the concepts we have gone over in the course and a guided way to process the new information in relation to it, to deepen understandings of both. Students will get to choose which concept to focus on, so they can either choose one they feel more confident in their understanding of or one they want to push themselves to analyze deeper depending on where they are at. By both making the chart and discussing in the groups, hopefully both visual and auditory learning needs will be met to deepen their understandings of the conceptualizations.
WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

PART ONE: Pre-project Proposal/Development Stage

For my senior project, I plan to fully develop a curriculum set in an extracurricular program for high school age youth interested in social justice. The curriculum will be centered on prison and PIC (prison industrial complex) abolition, specifically exploring topics such as: the historical development of prisons (in connection to the exploitation, dehumanization, and criminalization of marginalized communities such as Black, poor, disabled, queer/trans, etc peoples), mass incarceration, how the PIC entrenches inequality and oppression, and abolition as a movement, worldview, and practice.

I want to do this project because I am very passionate about youth as current and future change makers and the need for community based political education, resources, and empowerment. I see prison abolition as one of the most crucial issues and movements for liberation of our time, as well as being a topic much less likely to be explored in traditional academic or even social justice focused spaces (although I am excited to see this changing thanks to the mass resistance and strategic work of abolitionist organizers in summer 2020). I see a potential future for myself in participating in liberatory education and thus am excited to practice curriculum development. I think it will be useful for me to be designing for a proposed setting (extracurricular high school age youth program) that I am very familiar with developing and facilitating programming for.

Unfortunately, due to the current public health crisis and the amount of time and energy I feel it would take to responsibly develop a curriculum I was proud of, my senior
project does not include the implementation of this course. However, it’s absolutely something I can see myself teaching in the future, and hopefully I will be able to make the curriculum publically accessible in some form so that other interested educators and youth programs can adapt it or draw inspiration from it.

Transformative social justice education has endless potential for impact. Ideally it will greatly impact the participating students and educators and thus, impact their communities and the wider world through how any transformation/conscientization facilitated by the course shapes their future actions. My curriculum aims to further the critical consciousness of the participants in the course, specifically regarding the prison industrial complex as an oppressive system, prisons as violent institutions that do not serve true justice nor safety, and abolition as a transformative vision, movement, and strategy. Its goal is also to more broadly support and strengthen participants’ ability to critically engage with the texts of their lives and feel empowered to take action towards however they dream of a more just world. I hope these goals can be achieved though the course’s critical engagement with various texts on the issue of the prison industrial complex and activities to develops students’ skills in ‘reading the word and the world’ with an emphasis on critical literacy and developing a sociological lens. I hope empowerment can be supported through exploring examples of current transformative movements and alterative models, treating all students as capable and valuable agents of change, and practicing radical envisioning within the curriculum.

While not every single student may become aligned with and go on dedicate energy to prison abolition, I do hope every single student will become more critical of incarceration and the prison industrial complex, and potentially consider the impact
of/relationship to the PIC within the social issues they focus on and within their own lives. I hope this will then lead to all participants positively impacting their community by making choices informed by their understandings of prison abolition and the PIC, and perhaps even engaging others in critical consciousness in this area.

Part Two: Mid-Point Development Reflection

Through every step of describing my senior project and the vision for my curriculum, I had stressed that I was not developing a curriculum for a typical K-12 classroom setting or a college course, but for an afterschool program that would take a Freirean approach to learning, with the central goal of critical consciousness and student empowerment as learners and agents of transformation. I stated that my insecurity about whether this project was worthwhile was the proliferation of incredible curriculums created by more knowledgeable scholars of abolition, but that I still believed there was a gap in holistic curriculums suited for younger people to engage in a structured multimodal learning community.

And yet, as I looked at what I had produced so far for my curriculum, I realized I had done everything that I said I wasn’t going to do. My curriculum outline looked like a college course syllabus because that is exactly how I was used to learning about prison abolition. It was focused upon how to best cover the content I found important and impactful, rather than how to best facilitate conscientization. It was being propelled along by the materials and topics rather than an actual, intentional design. It lacked enough free
flow space for students’ voices, overly structured by discussions and activities centered on my perspective and the perspectives of the authors I was excited to bring in. Furthermore, it lacked space to tackle the emotional complexity of learning and unlearning. Despite my belief that neither learning nor movement work is linear, I had fretted over making a curriculum where the topics felt close to a linear progression. And, of course, I had bit off more than I, nor any potential student, could chew in my sense of urgency that all the topics included in the curriculum outline draft were essential to cover immediately.

Therefore, despite any hard feelings or stress around what it means for my workload, I have decided to fully restructure the curriculum. My hope is that this redesign is much closer to my actual visions and intentions for the course. I am excited by structuring it conceptually rather than by content/topic, and with central questions driving the curriculum that I believe will facilitate a lasting impression on students’ worldview and critical literacy skills, rather than a potentially temporary increase in knowledge about a topic. I also believe this will open up more space in the curriculum for students to exhibit empowerment in their voice, actions, and education which I hope the courses’ learning community could foster. The restructuring is also meant to attend to something I knew to be true (from personal experiences and from the literature on teaching prison abolition that I reviewed) but hadn’t as fully executed in the original outline: that encouraging openness to understanding an abolitionist perspective involves not just critically examining the prison industrial complex, but taking the time to carefully interrogate the social constructs upholding carceral logics that we have deep emotional investments in, even when they are directly harmful to us and our communities.
In every course, you are not just developing students’ knowledge on a topic but developing students’ mastery of transferable skills. In the original version, I was intending to, within a course on prison abolition, develop students’ mastery of critical literacy through active engagement with texts and materials. But as I mentioned- I felt my course was far too content driven, being pushed along by the materials and information intake with the goal of critical literacy skills and increasing student knowledge about the prison abolition movement. Revisiting the true intentions at the heart of the course (as I wrote in my proposal, work plan, and literacy review) reminded me of what’s really essential to a redesign: conscientization and reading not just the word but the world. In this version I intend, within a course on prison abolition, to focus skill development on students’ mastery of recognizing, analyzing, and de/re-constructing social constructs- a specific aspect of critical literacy that is intimately connected to reading the world, conscientization, and development of a sociological lens. Furthermore, rather than starting from prison abolition and then attaching the development of a skill, I asked myself why I needed prison abolition specifically to teach critical literacy. For developing the skill of interrogating social constructs, a topic that is dependent upon a transformative worldview and willingness to (conceptually and materially) deconstruct and reimagine, is necessary and I believe prison abolition is the topic that best facilitates students’ development of this skill.

This restructuring of the curriculum includes paring down the scope of the course while still aiming to fulfill its goals. I hope this ensures I can put more careful attention into each aspect of the curriculum rather than focusing on coverage of all the areas I found “essential”. I hope this overhaul of my project represents gains towards the final
project and my practice of curriculum development rather than “loss” of planning put into the original outline and being behind from my work plan schedule. On a personal note— it’s been a really hard time and along with difficulties of how to possibly satisfactorily complete a senior project as a remote student working multiple jobs during a global pandemic, I had an immense mental block around working on my curriculum or showing anyone my work so far. I believe now that a large part of that block was me being conscious on some level that I was on the wrong path but unwilling to make the big necessary changes due to fear of not just falling farther behind, but not being able to complete anything. And while, truth be told, the work load and exhaustion only grows, my confidence in being able to approach my senior project work has immensely benefited from taking the time to really reevaluate what I am really doing with this curriculum rather than forging ahead with a misguided plan. That’s probably one of the lessons the senior work is meant to teach us, huh?

**Part Three: Post Creation of Curriculum and Lesson Plans**

In many ways, the curriculum feels far from complete. I believe all curriculum should be living documents, this one in particular needing to be constantly amended and updated to keep up with the landscape of the prison abolition movement, attend to the specific context in which its being taught, and adjusted to best suit the specific group of students within the iteration of the course. It also, of course, feels far from complete given that not every single session is fully expanded into a complete lesson plan. One session per unit is fleshed out in order to showcase both specifically and holistically what
the curriculum is. While it may have made sense to just make one complete unit, the nature of how I am able to conceptualize this curriculum and the process of teaching prison abolition was dependent on being able to generate a holistic view of the trajectory of the course and the ways it would build on itself.

By centering and organizing my curriculum around essential concepts (Community, Criminality, Safety, Justice, and Transformation) rather than ‘linear’ coverage of information and material, I think I was able to build in more space for students’ voices, self-exploration, and personal perspectives. I tried to delineate in each session segments when we are centering students’ perspectives and analysis and segments when an abolitionist perceptive specifically was being centered. I also tried to describe within the lesson plans how an educator might facilitate certain sections to encourage student empowerment within the learning, discussion, and activities (although there is still so much that one cannot really write into plans but would have to be applied in the actual teaching, attuned to the actual students). The essential questions guiding the organization of the course as a whole, as well as each unit and each session, are questions not exclusive to the information and materials in focus but that any student could speak on from their lived experience and worldview as well.

Furthermore, there is a continuous focus through the course on developing students’ skills in analyzing the construction of social concepts: both dominant and alternative. This is the critical literacy skill I wanted to center development of and I believe any students who takes this course would strengthen this ability, as well as gaining newfound understandings of the topic at hand. I also had the goal of making the course more multimodal, included materials and activities that range in mediums in order
to be functioning across multiple literacies and attending to diverse strengths in learning/processing.

It feels odd to reach a stopping point given that the curriculum is, of course, incredibly far from perfect. There was a fair bit of agonizing involved, including scrapping a fully completed lesson plan at the last minute and writing a completely new one for a different session to be in focus, or spending multiple hours going down a rabbit hole over exactly which one-paragraph except to include for a certain segment. While I did want to be as thoughtful as possible in the creation of my lesson plans, I also had to remind myself that there is no such thing as perfect in a project of this nature. In addition, it feels strange to have reached a pause without filling in the details for all the activities, discussions, segments, etc that I have been dreaming up all year but were not for the selection sessions in focus. But education by its nature is not a product but a process, so there is a certain rightness in knowing that is what my senior project is as well.
APPENDICES: LESSON PLAN MATERIALS

Appendix #1: Defining Prison Industrial Complex Hand Out (Unit 1, Session 1, *Defining Prison Industrial Complex*)

**Defining the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)**

In order to best start to get a sense of what ‘prison industrial complex (PIC)’ refers to, we will be engaging with various definitions from a variety of sources to better generate our own understanding and a definition for us to use as a learning community.

From CARA via Prison Culture blog
https://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/what-is-the-pic/

Prison Industrial Complex (PIC): CARA (Communities Against Rape and Abuse) defines it as “a massive multi-billion dollar industry that promotes the exponential expansion of prisons, jails, immigrant detention centers, and juvenile detention centers. The PIC is represented by corporations that profit from incarceration, politicians who target people of color so that they appear to be “tough on crime,” and the media that represents a slanted view of how crime looks in our communities. In order to survive, the PIC uses propaganda to convince the public how much we need prisons; uses public support to strengthen harmful law-and-order agendas such as the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Terrorism”; uses these agendas to justify imprisoning disenfranchised people of color, poor people, and people with disabilities; leverages the resulting increasing rate of incarceration for prison-related corporate investments (construction, maintenance, goods and services); pockets the profit; and uses profit to create more propaganda.” See also: criminalization, street-based economies, “quality of life” policing

From Critical Resistance
http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.

Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other privileges. There are many ways this power is collected and maintained through the PIC, including creating mass media images that keep alive stereotypes of people of color, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth, and other oppressed communities as criminal, delinquent, or deviant. This power is also maintained by earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces; helping earn political gains for “tough on crime” politicians; increasing the influence of prison guard and police unions; and eliminating social and political dissent by oppressed communities that make demands for self-determination and reorganization of power in the US.
From “Are Prison’s Obsolete?” by Angela Davis pg 84-85

The exploitation of prison labor by private corporations is one aspect among an array of relationships linking corporations, government, correctional communities, and media. These relationships constitute what we now call a prison industrial complex. The term "prison industrial complex" was introduced by activists and scholars to contest prevailing beliefs that increased levels of crime were the root cause of mounting prison populations. Instead, they argued, prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit. Social historian Mike Davis first used the term in relation to California’s penal system, which, he observed, already had begun in the 1990s to rival agribusiness and land development as a major economic and political force......

The notion of a prison industrial complex insists on understandings of the punishment process that take into account economic and political structures and ideologies, rather than focusing myopically on individual criminal conduct and efforts to "curb crime." The fact, for example, that many corporations with global markets now rely on prisons as an important source of profit helps us to understand the rapidity with which prisons began to proliferate precisely at a time when official studies indicated that the crime rate was falling. The notion of a prison industrial complex also insists that the racialization of prison populations—and this is not only true of the United States, but of Europe, South America, and Australia as well—is not an incidental feature. Thus, critiques of the prison industrial complex undertaken by abolitionist activists and scholars are very much linked to critiques of the global persistence of racism. Antiracist and other social justice movements are incomplete with attention to the politics of imprisonment.
From SLANE CARTOONS “Self-Fulfilling Sentencing Cycle” by Chris Slane
https://www.slane漫画.com/-galleries/political-cartoons/-/medias/f15b34a5-4286-43e1-ab16-e662a1269a0c-self-fulfilling-sentencing-cycle
Appendix #2: Heitzeg Article Excerpt Annotated Handout (Unit 2, Session Five, 
Independent Reading)

of education and into risk for incarceration? The answers in part can be found by a closer 
examination of the role of both media constructions and the on-going push towards prisonization.

Media Construction of Crime and Criminals

A substantial body of research documents the role of media - especially television – in constructing perceptions of crime, public images of the criminal, and subsequently shaping attitudes, everyday interactions and public policy. Television reaches almost every household, and the average American consumes over 4 hours TV viewing each day (Croteau and Hoynes 2001, 5). Television shapes what issues we think about and how we think about them. This is particularly true with regard to TV news coverage of crime: “the public depends on the media for its pictures of crime” (Dorfman and Schiraldi 2001, 3).

The TV world of crime and criminals, however, is an illusion. TV news does not accurately reflect reality, especially when it comes to reporting on crime. As Walker, Spolin, and Delone (2012, 25) observe,

“Our perceptions of crimes are shaped to a large extent by the highly publicized crimes featured on the nightly news and sensationalized in news papers. We read about young African American and Hispanic males who sexually assault, rob and murder whites, and we assume that these crimes are typical. We assume that the typical crime is a violent crime, that the typical victim is white, and that the typical offender is African American or Hispanic.”

These assumptions are false. TV news constructs a portrait of crime, criminals and victims that is not supported by any data. In general, the research indicates that violent crime and youth crime is dramatically over-represented, crime coverage has increased in spite of falling crime rates, African Americans and Latinos are over-represented as offenders and under-represented as
victims, and inter-racial crime, especially crimes involving white victims, is over-reported (Dorfman and Schiraldi 2001, 5).

Beyond over-representation as "criminals", African American offenders are depicted in a more negative way than their white counterparts. Blacks are mostly likely to be seen on TV news as criminals; they are four times more likely than whites to be seen in a mug shot; twice as likely to be shown in physical restraints; and 2 times less likely to be identified by name. Black suspects are also depicted as more poorly dressed and were much less likely to speak than white suspects, reinforcing the notion that they were indistinct from non-criminal blacks (Entman and Rojek 2000).

The media's general misrepresentation of crime and criminals certainly extends to youth; some estimates indicate that as much as two-thirds of violent crime coverage focused on youth under age 25 (Hancock 2001). The context for the current climate of repressive youth policies was set in the in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Media generated hysteria inextricably linked "teen super-predators", gang-violence and the crack cocaine "epidemic", and all were unmistakably characterized as issues of race. The coverage of the youth gangs, which focused almost exclusively on African American and Latino gangs, exaggerated the extent of gang membership and gang violence, contributing the creation of "moral panic" (McCorkle and Miethe 2000). Headlines screamed dire warnings about the legions of teen super-predators that would come of age by 2010, of course, they were urban, they were black and brown, and they were relentlessly violent (Templeton 1998). Given apparent legitimacy by conservative academics such as Wilson (1995) and DiLuio (1995) this super-predator script took off among both media and policy-makers. Violence, gangs, crack and youth of color became synonymous (Sheldon, Tracy and Brown, 2001; Walker, Spohn and DeLone 2012).
These media representations have real consequences. TV news coverage of crime reflects and reinforces what Glassner (1999) calls "the culture of fear". This is supported by decades of research. Study after study finds that heavy TV viewers (i.e. those who watch more than 4 hours a day) overestimate the crime rate, the likelihood of crime victimization, and the extent of stranger related violence. In general, heavy TV viewers are nearly twice as likely as light viewers to report crime as the most serious problem, believe crime rates are rising, and indicate personal fear of victimization (Gerber 1994; Braxton 1997; Farkas and Duffet 1998). They have adopted what Gerbner (1994) calls "the mean-world syndrome"; they are overly fearful and mistrustful of strangers.

And, according to TV news, these "strangers" are young black or Latino males. TV news coverage of crime creates and reinforces the stereotype of the young black male, in particular, as the criminal. As Perry (2001, 185) observes, "black males historically have been presented as the 'villain'... The race-crime nexus is inescapable in a culture that defines black males as predators." Several studies document the impact of TV news coverage of crime on public perceptions of black and Latinos. The images of black males as criminals are so deeply entrenched in the public's mind that 60% of people watching a newscast without an image of the offender falsely "remembered" seeing one. 70% of these viewers "remembered" the perpetrator as black (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). In one experimental study, brief exposures to mug shots of blacks and Hispanic males increased levels of fear among viewers, reinforced racial stereotypes, and led viewers to recommend harsh penalties (Gilliam and Iyengar 1998). Another study found that black suspects were more likely than whites to be viewed as guilty, more likely to commit violence in the future, and less likeable (Peffley et al 1996).
Widespread acceptance of this stereotype by the general public has implications for everyday interactions that youth of color have in public places, with employers, with teachers, with public officials, and with the police (Walker, Spohn and DeLone 2007). Certainly, TV-driven notions of blacks and Hispanics as "predators" provide whites and others with justification for pre-judgments and negative responses. Media-based preconceptions may play a role in the school to prison pipeline. Prejudice and stereotype acceptance can lead to miscommunications between black students and white teachers; this is a possible contributor to the racial disproportionality in suspension and expulsion. Some of the highest rates of racially disproportionate discipline are found in states with the lowest minority populations, where the disconnect between white teachers and black students is potentially the greatest (Witt 2007).

Widespread acceptance of the stereotype of youth of color as violent predators also has implications for public policy. The media script of youth of color as violent super-predators provided the backdrop for a series of policy changes as well. Juvenile justice systems across the nation were rapidly transformed in a more punitive direction with media accounts – rather than statistical evidence – driving the agenda.

"Underlying this assault on juvenile justice is the demonization of youth, particularly young people of color, who are stereotypically portrayed as roaming the streets and destroying the fabric of society. ...The media's imagery reflects confused reporting of crime statistics, at best, and forsakes the reality of crime rates in favor of sensationalized accounts of youthful offenders, at worst." (Stein 1997)

The policy shifts in juvenile justice are both consistent with and in furtherance of another significant phenomena related to the school to prison pipeline – mass incarceration and the emergence of the prison industrial complex.
The Rise of the Prison Industrial Complex

During the past 40 years there has been a dramatic escalation the U.S. prison population, a ten-fold increase since 1970. The increased rate of incarceration can be traced to the War on Drugs and the rise of lengthy mandatory minimum prison sentences for drug crimes and other felonies. These policies have proliferated, not in response to crime rates or any empirical data that indicates their effectiveness, but in response to the aforementioned media depictions of both crime and criminals and new found sources of profit for prisons (Davis 2003).

The United States currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Over 2.2 million persons are in state or federal prisons and jails - a rate of 751 out of every 100,000 (Jones and Mauer, 2013). Another 5 million are under some sort of correctional supervision such as probation or parole (PEW 2008).

These harsh policies - mandatory minimums for drug violations, "three strikes", increased use of imprisonment as a sentencing option, lengthy prison terms - disproportionately affect people of color. As Michelle Alexander (2010) observes in The New Jim Crow, these policies and their differential enforcement have, in effect, re-inscribed a racial caste system in the United States. A brief glimpse into the statistics immediately reveals both the magnitude of these policy changes as well as their racial dynamic. Despite no statistical differences in rates of offending, the poor, the under-educated, and people of color, particularly African Americans, are over-represented in these statistics at every phase of the criminal justice system. (Walker, Spohn & DeLone 2012)

While 1 in 35 adults is under correctional supervision and 1 in every 100 adults is in prison, 1 in every 36 Latino adults, one in every 15 black men, 1 in every 100 black women, and 1 in 9 black men ages 20 to 34 are incarceration (Pew 2008). Approximately 50% of all prisoners are
black, 30% are white and 1/6 Latino, with Blacks being imprisoned at more than 9 times the rate of whites. (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2012).

To complicate matters, punitive policies extend beyond prison time served. In addition to the direct impact of mass criminalization and incarceration, there is a plethora of what Mauer and Chesney-Lind (2002) refer to as "invisible punishments". These additional collateral consequences further decimate communities of color politically, economically and socially. The current expansion of criminalization and mass incarceration is accompanied by legislation that further limits the political and economic opportunities of convicted felons and former inmates. "Collateral consequences" are now attached to many felony convictions and include voter disenfranchisement, denial of Federal welfare, medical, housing or educational benefits, accelerated time-lines for loss of parental rights and exclusion from any number of employment opportunities. Collateral consequences are particularly harsh for drug felons who represent the bulk of the incarcerated. Drug felons are permanently barred from receiving public assistance such as TANF, Medicaid, food stamps or SSI, federal financial aid for education, and federal housing assistance. These policies dramatically reduce the successful re-integration of former inmates, increases the likelihood of recidivism and return to prison.

One of the most insidious aspects of this project in mass incarceration is its connection to the profit motive (Davis 2003). Once solely a burden on taxpayers, the so-called "prison-industrial complex" is now a source of corporate profit, governmental agency funding, cheap neo-slave labor, and employment for economically depressed regions. "The prison industrial complex is not a conspiracy, but a confluence of special interests that include politicians who exploit crime to win votes, private companies that make millions by running or supplying prisons..."
and small town officials who have turned to prisons as a method of economic development.”
(Silverstein 2003) This complex now includes over 3,300 jails, over 1,500 state prisons, and 100 Federal prisons in the US. Nearly 300 of these are private for-profit prisons (ACLU, 2011). Over 30 of these institutions are super-maximum facilities, not including the super-maximum units located in most other prisons.

As Brewer and Heitzeg (2008) observe: “the prison industrial complex is a self-perpetuating machine where the vast profits and perceived political benefits to policies that are additionally designed to insure an endless supply of ‘clients’ for the criminal justice system.” Profits are generated via corporate contracts for cheap inmate labor, private and public supply and construction contracts, job creation for criminal justice professionals, and continued media profits from exaggerated crime reporting and the use of crime/punishment as ratings grabbing news and entertainment. The perceived political benefits include reduced unemployment rates due to both job creation and imprisonment of the poor and unemployed, “get tough on crime” and public safety rhetoric, funding increases for police as well as criminal justice system agencies and professionals.

And these policies – enhanced police presence in poor neighborhoods and communities of color; racial profiling; mandatory minimum and “three-strikes” sentencing; draconian conditions of incarceration and a reduction of prison services that contribute to the likelihood of “recidivism”; and “collateral consequences” that nearly guarantee continued participation in “crime” and return to the prison industrial complex following initial release – have major implications for youth of color.
A similarly repressive trend has emerged in the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system shifted sharply from its' original rehabilitative, therapeutic and reform goals. While the initial Supreme Court rulings of the 1960s — *Kent, in re Gault* and *Winship* — sought to offer juveniles some legal protections in what was in fact a legal system, more recent changes have turned the juvenile justice system into a "second-class criminal court that provides youth with neither therapy or justice." (Feld 2007)

Throughout the 1990s, nearly all states and the federal government enacted a series of legislation that criminalized a host of "gang-related activities", made it easier (and in some cases mandatory) to try juveniles as adults, lowered the age at which juveniles could be referred to adult court, and widened the net of juvenile justice with blended sentencing options that included sentences in both the juvenile and adult systems (Griffin 2008; Heitzeg 2008; Podkopacz and Feld 2001; Walker, Spohn and DeLone 2007). The super-predator youth and rampant media coverage of youth violence provided the alleged justification for this legislation as well as for additional federal legislation such as Consequences for Juvenile Offenders Act of 2002 (first proposed in 1996) and The Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, which provides the impetus for zero tolerance policies in schools and the school to prison pipeline, the subject of later detailed discussion.

The racial disparities are even greater for youth. African Americans, while representing 17% of the youth population, account for 45% of all juvenile arrests. (NAACP 2005) Black youth are 2 times more likely than white youth to be arrested, to be referred to juvenile court, to be formally processed and adjudicated as delinquent or referred to the adult criminal justice system, and they are 3 times more likely than white youth to be sentenced to out-of-home residential placement (Panel on Justice 2001; Walker, Spohn and Delone 2012). Nationally, 1 in
3 Black and 1 in 6 Latino boys born in 2001 are at risk of imprisonment during their lifetime. While boys are five times as likely to be incarcerated as girls, girls are at increasing risk. This rate of incarceration is endangering children at younger and younger ages (Children’s Defense Fund 2007).

In addition, black youth at additional risk due to the high rates of imprisonment for African American adults. Black youth are increasingly likely to have a parent in prison -- among those born in 1990, one in four black children had a father in prison by age 14. Risk is concentrated among black children whose parents are high-school dropouts; 50% of those children had a father in prison (Wildeman 2009). African American youth are at increasing risk of out-of-home placement due the incarceration of parents. While young black children are about 17 percent of the nation's youth, they are now accounted for more than 50% of the children in foster care. This explosion in foster care has been fueled by the destabilization of families and the mass incarceration of Black men and women (Roberts 2004; Brewer 2007; Bernstein 2005; Wildeman 2009).

It is youth of color who are being tracked into the prison pipeline via media stereotyping, a punishment-oriented juvenile justice system, and educational practices such as zero-tolerance. All are designed, by intent or default, to insure an endless stream of future bodies into the prison industrial complex. As Denzinger (1996, 87) aptly notes,

"Companies that service the criminal justice system need sufficient quantities of raw materials to guarantee long term growth in the criminal justice field, the raw material is prisoners...The industry will do what it must to guarantee a steady supply. For the supply of prisoners to grow, criminal justice policies must insure a sufficient number of incarcerated Americans whether crime is rising or the incarceration is necessary."
While media coverage was instrumental in creating the climate of fear, the policy shifts that resulted were consistent with larger trends in criminal justice. Critics of these policy changes charge that this is no mere coincidence. The proliferation of mandatory minimum sentences, punitive measures in juvenile justice and attendant collateral consequences serve to incarcerate and re-incarcerate current generations, but it is the school to prison pipeline and related educational policies/practices that shapes the “client pool” for future generations of the incarcerated. While Advanced Placement and vocational tracks prepare students for their respective positions in the workforce, it is the “schoolhouse to jailhouse track” that prepares students for their futures as inmate neo-slave laborers in the political-economy of the prison industrial complex. The age of mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex calls for the continual replenishment of the ranks of the imprisoned, and it is youth of color that are most often selected to fill that onerous role.

The School to Prison Pipeline: Zero Tolerance and Policing in the Hallways

While media and the rise of the prison industrial complex create the context, shifts in educational policy provide the immediate impetus for the flow of children from school to legal systems. The school to prison pipeline is facilitated by several trends in education that most negatively impact students of color. These include growing poverty rates and declining school funding, re-segregation of schools by race and class, under-representation of students of color in advanced placement courses and over-presentation in special education tracks. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), high stakes testing, and rising drop-out/push-out rates (NAACP 2005; Hammond 2007). All these factors are correlated with the school to prison pipeline, and each is the subject of lengthy analysis elsewhere. The focus here is increased reliance on zero tolerance policies, which play an immediate and integral role in feeding the school to prison pipeline.
Appendix #3: Interview Transcripts: “Do Prisons Keep Us Safe?” Abolitionist Perspective Handout (Unit 3, Session Eight, Do Prisons Keep Us Safe?)

Interview Transcripts: “Do Prison Keep Us Safe” Abolitionist Perspective

Victoria Law Video Interview Excerpt Transcript:
“Do Prisons Keep Us Safe? Author Victoria Law Busts Myths About Mass Incarceration in New Book” by Democracy Now  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fB6yBIjHh0&t=320s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fB6yBIjHh0&t=320s)

Amy Goodman: Floyd’s death sparked a national discussion about defunding the police.

In the latest example of the backlash to this push, conservative Republican Senator Tom Cotton responded Tuesday to a CNN report on a rise in crime in 2020 by tweeting that the solution was to, quote, “lock them up,” and adding, quote, “We have a major under-incarceration problem in America. And it’s only getting worse,” Cotton said.

In fact, the United States has the world’s highest incarceration rate. It’s home to less than 5% of the global population, yet has nearly 25% of the world’s prisoners — more than 2 million people, a disproportionate number of them Black and Latinx. Over the past 40 years, the number of people behind bars in the United States has increased by 500%.

Much of this is addressed in a new book by journalist Victoria Law, published the same day as Senator Cotton’s misinformed tweet. Her book is called “Prisons Make Us Safer: And 20 Other Myths About [Mass] Incarceration. Through research and interviews with incarcerated people, she identifies myths such as “incarceration is necessary to keep our society safe.” Last year, she co-authored Prison by Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms.

Victoria, welcome back to Democracy Now! Congratulations on the release of your book. We were just talking about the Derek Chauvin murder trial. He was supposedly attempting to arrest George Floyd. Your book is such a critical book when looking at the whole defund the police...
and abolition movement. Can you lay out its thesis and apply it to what we're dealing with today?

VICTORIA LAW: Yes. We have the prevailing myth in the United States that we need prisons and mass incarceration to keep us safer. And after listening to the last segment, we should ask, “Why do we think prisons keep us safe?” I mean, obviously, Derek Chauvin wasn’t afraid of being arrested or imprisoned when he killed George Floyd. The officers around him were not afraid of prison when they did nothing. None of them thought that they would be held accountable, let alone imprisoned, because people do not think about imprisonment as a deterrent to crime or violence.

If we think about the ways in which we act on a daily basis, we don’t go around assaulting people, not because we are afraid of imprisonment, but because we don’t go around assaulting people. So, the book lays out myths about mass incarceration, the fact that they keep us safer, as Tom Cotton erroneously asserted, as well as some of the underlying myths about what causes mass incarceration and what the reality is behind bars.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: I’m wondering if you could talk about the mental health aspect of the mass incarceration issue. As the United States went into deinstitutionalization of mental health patients in the ’90s, there was a corresponding increase of the prison population and this trend toward treating people with a mental problem by imprisoning them.

VICTORIA LAW: Yes. Well, what we see is that there was a deinstitutionalization movement starting in the 1970s, much of it led by people who had been institutionalized at some point in their lives, because the institutions themselves were terrible and horrific and abusive. And at the same time as the deinstitutionalization movement, we also saw some cuts starting to happen under neoliberalism and Reagan. So, the supports and assistance that people need, regardless of
their mental health status, such as access to safe and affordable housing, medical care, mental healthcare, out in the communities, were also being viciously slashed.

And what we see instead is that criminalization takes its place. So people are arrested for criminalized behavior, which if you have mental illness and you are homeless, you are more likely to be arrested because you’re just out in public all the time. You are more likely to not get mental health services. And we have this idea that you get mental health treatment when you are inside jails or prisons, which is not the case. If there is mental health treatment, it is often in the form of medications. Mental health caseloads are overloaded. And people often cycle in and out of jails for petty offenses due to their mental illness and their poverty.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And, Victoria, the role of the mass media in creating the myth of the need for prisons and for law enforcement work? I mean, every other show on television, or even when you go to the Netflix or the other streaming services, are the glorification of police or former police or crime fighters. This is the staple of so much of American entertainment.

VICTORIA LAW: Yes. What we have is a glorification, but it’s also from very — from a young age, we are always told that police make us safer, prisons are necessary to lock away the bad guys. And there’s very little questioning of it, from the school seminars that you get in grade school and beyond of “If you are lost or you’re in danger, find a police officer,” to all of these shows that glorify police officers as the people who stop crime and stop harm and danger from happening.

But in reality, policing and imprisonment happens after something bad or something violent has happened. It usually doesn’t happen before. And as we see in the case of Derek Chauvin killing George Floyd, police officers can also bring and often do bring violence into the picture where previously there was none.
At the same time, we’re also bombarded by news segments that show crime every night, because this is what draws viewers in, is this lurid attraction to watching what looks like a human train wreck every night on the television news. And that adds to people’s fears about their personal safety and the fact that they want to feel safe. People want to feel safe, and the media feeds into that by showing them, time after time, attacks on people, shootings, killings and other types of violence.

AMY GOODMAN: Some call it “copaganda.”

Victoria Law Written Interview Except Transcript:

1. Prisons don’t actually make us safer.

We have to remember that arrest and imprisonment happen after harm or violence has occurred; it doesn’t prevent it from happening. People are not deterred from committing harm or committing violence because prisons exist. The United States has five percent of the world’s population, but it has between 20 to 25 percent of the world’s prison population. So if prisons made us safer, we would be the safest nation in the world, and that is not the case. According to the Department of Justice’s own statistics, over half of violent crimes go unreported. Of those that are reported, fewer than half actually lead to an arrest. So even then, prisons don’t necessarily address violence after it happens....

And one more thing: If we think prisons make us safer, we need to ask, safety for whom and from what?

Prisons are places that are violent and chaotic. For people who committed sexual violence, they’re not going to find any way to account for their harm in prison. Instead, they now
have even fewer resources and fewer people to hold them accountable because they've been snatched away from whatever support they had. At the same time, the person they harmed hasn’t necessarily been given any tools to help them cope.

We also have to remember that laws are very specific. People who are dealing drugs on the street are targeted by law enforcement, but we don’t target the Sackler family for the opioid crisis. That becomes a lawsuit about money and restitution, but it’s not seen as a crime. Flint not having drinkable water for its residents is not seen as a crime. Even if you imprisoned the players responsible for the Flint water disaster, it would not bring safe drinking water to that city. It would just drain more resources. **We need to be open to saying, even if we don’t know for sure if another system will definitely eradicate all harm, we can see that policing and prisons aren’t eradicating all harm and, in many cases, are adding to it.** We need to build up the resources in communities that we need to keep us safe, not just look to an outside institution.

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*Maya Schenwar Video Interview Excerpt Transcript:*

“DO PRISONS AND MASS INCARCERATION KEEP US SAFE? (1/2)” by The Real News Network [https://therealnews.com/mschenwar1222prisons](https://therealnews.com/mschenwar1222prisons)

EDDIE CONWAY, FMR. BLACK PANTHER, BALTIMORE CHAPTER: Welcome to The Real News Network. I’m Eddie Conway, coming to you from Baltimore.

Two-point-two million Americans are currently in the nation’s prisons and jails. According to research advocacy organization The Sentencing Project, this number represents a 500 percent increase over the past 30 years. Prisons are commonly thought to be necessary for the nation’s public well-being, but some believe they actually do more harm than good.
Joining us today to discuss this idea is Maya Schenwar. Maya is the editor-in-chief of Truthout. Maya is also the author of a new book, Locked Down, Locked Out: Why Prison Doesn’t Work and How We Can Do Better.

Thank you so much for joining us, Maya.

MAYA SCHENWAR, AUTHOR, LOCKED DOWN, LOCKED OUT: Thanks so much for having me, Eddie.

CONWAY: In your book, you unpack the idea that prisons keep the majority of the American, the U.S. population safe. You found that prisons are actually harmful not only to prisoners, but to their families, to the community also. Why is that?

SCHENWAR: Well, I think that what prison does is kind of the opposite of what you need to do to foster safety in a community. Research has continually shown that what builds safety in a community is connection, is getting to know your neighbors. It’s building community organizations, really fortifying the bonds between people.

What prison does is it uproots people very suddenly from their environment and from their families. So just in terms of a community structure, it breaks down bonds and it breaks down networks, and it does that in a very sudden way when people are [pulled up (?)] from their community by the state. And, of course, that predominantly affects poor communities of color.

I think that beyond just that community structure, though, it’s about family and it’s about loved ones.

And the thing about this philosophy of punishment that we have that we’ve kind of come to accept as normal is that it all centers around isolating a person, that, oh, they did something wrong, so, clearly, the thing that they need is to be isolated. And that’s
actually the opposite from what anything logical tells us about what motivates people to change. So plenty of people are incarcerated for crimes that didn’t actually harm anyone. Either they’re innocent or it’s a totally victimless crime, like drug possession or very small theft, that kind of thing. But even for people who are incarcerated for crimes that have actually harmed people, isolating and confining them is actually the thing that’s going to disconnect them from the implications of their action.

CONWAY: Are you saying that isolating the prisoners is actually dehumanizing them and making them more dangerous?

SCHENWAR: Yeah, I think that it does have have an effect of treating someone as less than human is traumatic and also cuts you off from a conception of being part of humanity, which is one of the motivating factors to change, right? Like, plugging someone into a human community, those connections are what motivate people to make amends for their action, to take a different course in life. All of those things are motivated by other people, and particularly by having strong relationships with other people.

And so I think it’s kind of right. It’s on both the level of what isolation does to a person, which is traumatizes them and reduces them in the eyes of the public and other people to this level of less than human, which should never be done to any human being. And then, also, you’re taking away the bonds with other people that would facilitate change in that person’s life.

CONWAY: And you’re also kind of, like, focusing your book on the fact that prisoners suffer, and the impact from the prison system after their release. What are some of the issues that they face?

SCHENWAR: Well, I think that that kind of ties back into this way of disconnecting people from society, that that disconnection doesn’t just stop once the person is released from prison; it continues on and on.
So, on the one level, coming out, obviously, if you have a record it’s going to be much, much more difficult, particularly for people of color, to find jobs, to find educational opportunities, to find housing. All of these very, very basic things that we need to connect to society, to make a contribution, and to survive, those things are being denied to many, many people who have a record. And in addition, many people coming out have lost connections with family and with community. And the lack of bonds there is a major challenge that people face coming out. And certainly the stigma that exists in society, as it relates to people coming out of prison, is no help in that kind of path toward reconnecting with your community of humans on the outside.

And I think another aspect of this thing of emerging from prison—I was thinking about this earlier, talking to someone who’s working on reentry programs. And the idea that prison is a correctional system is still really ingrained a lot of people, I think. So people who haven’t been to prisoner or haven’t had family in prison still retain this notion that you come out and you’ve experienced some sort of, like, rehabilitation or correction, and therefore are more equipped to be in society. But actually it’s really a process of adjustment that requires even more adjustment than you would have needed to make before you went in. And that’s due to just prison fostering an environment that’s the opposite of the kind of environment you need to connect with society and to get a job, get housing. All of those things are actually more difficult after you’ve been in prison. The kind of correctional mindset really needs to change. We need to stop using that language.
Appendix #4: Restorative and Transformative Justice Introductory Excerpts Handout
(Unit 4, Session 13, RJ and TJ Intro)

**Restorative and Transformative Justice: Introductory Excerpts**

In order to best start to get a sense of what Restorative Justice and Transformative Justice are, we will be readings excerpts from how various organization and individuals who are doing the work of alternative justice define them. By reading various excerpts, we are able to explore multiple perspectives on what these are, including potential for differing conceptions or definitions, to gain broader and deeper understanding for ourselves. Given many similarities between these two forms of justice, pay attention to what their overlap and their particularities are.

**Into to Restorative Justice**

*From Transform Harm “RESTORATIVE JUSTICE”*
https://transformharm.org/restorative-justice/

“Is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible.” -Howard Zehr, Zher Institute for Restorative Justice

**Three assumptions underlie Restorative Justice:**

- When people and relationships are harmed, needs are created
- The needs created by harms lead to obligations
- The obligations are to heal and “put right” the harms; this is a just response.

**Three principles of Restorative Justice reflect these assumptions:** A just response…

- Acknowledges and repairs the harm caused by, and revealed by, wrongdoing (restoration);
- Encourages appropriate responsibility for addressing needs and repairing the harm (accountability);
- Involves those impacted, including the community, in the resolution (engagement).

*From Facing Forward “What is Restorative Justice?”*
http://facingforward.ie/what-is-restorative-justice/

Restorative Justice focuses on the harm done to people when a crime has been committed rather than looking at what laws or rules have been broken as in traditional Criminal Justice Systems. Those who have been harmed and those who have done the harm are at the center of this process.

Braithwaite (2004) said “Restorative Justice is about the idea that because crime hurts, Justice should heal”. The aims of Restorative Justice are to better meet the needs of the people directly involved when a crime happens than is normally possible in traditional criminal justice systems. In the traditional system, legal professionals are the active decision makers and the people who have been harmed and those that have harmed are passive in their roles. Howard Zehr (2002) lists the three pillars of Restorative Justice as:

- **Harms and Needs**: Who was harmed, what was the harm? How can it be repaired?
- **Obligations**: Who is responsible and accountable and how can he/she repair the harm?
- **Engagement**: Victims and Offenders have active roles in the Justice process

Restorative Justice Processes work towards the restoration (in some way), and empowerment of victims/survivors, and asking those who have offended to accept responsibility for their actions and work towards healing the harm.

Restorative Justice is an umbrella term that covers quite a range of processes that can be used depending on the context and the need. What unites all the processes and places them under the RJ umbrella are the values and principles which necessarily underlies them. Below is an outline of some of these values as identified by Sawatsky (2002).

- Respect and support for each person;
- Recognition of our interconnectedness with each other;
- Recognition of our particularity;
- The possibility for transformation over denial of true justice;
- Orientation to the needs of participants particularly the victim/survivor and
- Orientation towards nonviolence.
From Rethinking Schools “Restorative Justice: What it is and is not”
https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/restorative-justice/

The concepts of restorative justice are based largely on indigenous approaches. The Navajo system is a good place to start, described by Robert Yazzie in “Life Comes from It: Navajo Justice Concepts”:

Navajo justice is a sophisticated system of egalitarian relationships, where group solidarity takes the place of force and coercion. In it, humans are not in ranks or status classifications from top to bottom. Instead, all humans are equals and make decisions as a group. . . .

There is no precise term for “guilty” in the Navajo language. The word “guilt” implies a moral fault that commands retribution. It is a nonsense word in Navajo law due to the focus on healing, integration with the group, and the end goal of nourishing ongoing relationship with the immediate and extended family, relatives, neighbors, and community.

There are a number of models of restorative practices, but they always start with building community. Then, when a problem arises, everyone involved is part of the process. As in Cedric’s healing circle, shared values are agreed on. Then questions like these are asked: What is the harm caused and to whom? What are the needs and obligations that have arisen? How can everyone present contribute to addressing the needs, repairing the harm, and restoring relationships? Additional questions can probe the roots of the conflict and make broader connections: What social circumstances promoted the harm? What similarities can we see with other incidents?

Into to Transformative Justice

From Transform Harm “Transformative Justice”
https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice/

According to Philly Stands Up!, Transformative Justice is a way of practicing alternative justice that acknowledges individual experiences and identities and works to actively resist the state’s criminal injustice system. Transformative Justice recognizes that oppression is at the root of all forms of harm, abuse and assault. As a practice, it therefore aims to address and confront those oppressions on all levels and treats this concept as an integral part to accountability and healing.
From Generation 5 “Toward Transformative Justice: 1.1 What do we mean by Transformative Justice?”

Transformative justice [is] a liberatory approach to violence...[which] seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or State or systemic violence, including incarceration or policing.

Three core beliefs:

- Individual justice and collective liberation are equally important, mutually supportive, and fundamentally intertwined—the achievement of one is impossible without the achievement of the other.
- The conditions that allow violence to occur must be transformed in order to achieve justice in individual instances of violence. Therefore, Transformative Justice is both a liberating politic and an approach for securing justice.
- State and systemic responses to violence, including the criminal legal system and child welfare agencies, not only fail to advance individual and collective justice but also condone and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Transformative Justice seeks to provide people who experience violence with immediate safety and long-term healing and reparations while holding people who commit violence accountable within and by their communities. This accountability includes stopping immediate abuse, making a commitment to not engage in future abuse, and offering reparations for past abuse. Such accountability requires on-going support and transformative healing for people who sexually abuse.

In addition, Transformative Justice also seeks to transform inequity and power abuses within communities. Through building the capacity of communities to increase justice internally, Transformative Justice seeks to support collective action toward addressing larger issues of injustice and oppression.

Four goals of Transformative Justice responses to violence:

- Survivor safety, healing and agency
- Accountability and transformation of those who abuse
- Community response and accountability
- Transformation of the community and social conditions that create and perpetuate violence, i.e. systems of oppression, exploitation, domination, and State violence
From Mia Mingus “Transformative Justice: A Brief Description”
https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice-a-brief-description/

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of “making things right,” getting in “right relation,” or creating justice together. Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state… 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved….

TJ was created by and for many of these communities (e.g. indigenous communities, black communities, immigrant communities of color, poor and low-income communities, communities of color, people with disabilities, sex workers, queer and trans communities). It is important to remember that many of these people and communities have been practicing TJ in big and small ways for generations—trying to create safety and reduce harm within the dangerous conditions they were and are forced to live in….

Violence does not happen in a vacuum and TJ works to connect incidences of violence to the conditions that create and perpetuate them… TJ recognizes that we must transform the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible. Often this includes transforming harmful oppressive dynamics, our relationships to each other, and our communities at large.

TJ invites us to not only respond to current incidences of violence, but to also prevent future violence from happening, thereby breaking (generational) cycles of violence. TJ works to respond to immediate needs in a way that moves us closer to what we ultimately long for. In other words, how can we respond to violence in ways that not only address the current incident of violence, but also help to transform the conditions that allowed for it to happen?
EXCERPT from “WHAT IS AND WHAT COULD BE: THE POLICIES OF ABOLITION” by DAN BERGEN AND DAVID STEIN

PUBLISHED WITHIN ‘ABOLITION FOR THE PEOPLE’ SERIES, THIS EXCERPT FROM THE ARTICLE REFERENCES MANY DIFFERENT EFFORTS, ISSUES, CAUSES, AND MOVEMENTS THAT ARE WITHIN THE VISION OF ABOLITION AND THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO NOT ONLY READ THE ARTICLE, BUT EXPLORE BY CLICKING THE HYPERLINKS AND LEARNING FURTHER.

California is instructive: From 1980 to 2000, the state witnessed a nearly 500% rise in its prison population, complete with a two-decade prison building spree that saw 23 new prisons open. At its height, the California prison system held 160,000 people — well over half the entire country's prison population in 1970. To stem that tide, organizations and coalitions like Critical Resistance, California Prison Moratorium Project, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Justice Now, Californians United for a Responsible Budget, and the Prison Activist Resource Center thwarted plans to open additional facilities in the state. More recently, these and other organizations have stopped jail expansion and pressured the governor to grant several large-scale clemencies. Together, these and other organizations comprising Californians United for a Responsible Budget have helped ensure that more than 140,000 new prison and jail beds were never built. As a result of this organizing, including the emergency clemency
campaigns in response to the pandemic, the state’s prison population has dropped below 100,000 people for the first time in 30 years.

The last six months of upheaval and crackdown prompts the question of the last half-century and earlier: What type of protest movements could be built if communities were freed from the violence of policing and incarceration? Contests over budget priorities are about what the state can be and should be. Many abolitionists root this work in W.E.B. Du Bois’ classic analysis of abolition democracy — the political struggle led by formerly enslaved people in the wake of the Civil War to construct new institutions while also eradicating violent ones. A similar fight is underway today, where currently and formerly incarcerated people and their allies work to change the world by abolishing the prison-industrial complex. Scholar-activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore has similarly stressed that “abolition is a theory of change, it’s a theory of social life. It’s about making things.”

Abolition is and has always been a slate of affirmative demands for the world we need. The struggles to defund the police and decarcerate prisons are wholly intertwined with other efforts to transform society. Medicare for All, a job guarantee, and a homes guarantee are battles for a humane and ecologically just budget, as are efforts to release aging people in prison and close detention centers. The Green New Deal is or could be an
abolitionist project; the Red New Deal certainly is. While many of those policy goals can only be fully achieved at the federal level, that spirit animates local and state battles, which is where most spending on police and prisons takes place. For example, while federal spending on prisons accounts for about 10% of all prison spending, only the federal government can thoroughly cushion against economic recessions and depressions.

But with the jackboots of local police off the necks of activists across the country, movements against austerity will have greater chances to flourish. Combating inequality will still be an uphill climb, particularly as municipalities try to co-opt or dilute abolitionist demands. By reducing the number of police and prisons, by eliminating the state’s capacity for repression, the defund struggles work to enlarge broader movement capacity. Abolitionists remain resolute on the larger goal of freedom.

From the civil rights movement to Occupy Wall Street, criminalization has been a key tactic to undermine protest and roll back the welfare state. Neoliberal austerity was imposed via a police officer’s pistol and the bars of prison cells. In response, abolitionists pursue what anthropologist Hannah Appel has called “reparative public goods” like housing, education, and health care for all. Entering the realm of public policy, abolition rejects the political obstinacy and technocratic fixes that have seen many major cities actually increase their
funding for police departments this year, and most states continue to use conviction status to deny voting rights to most currently and formerly incarcerated people. According to the Sentencing Project, one out of every 44 adults is disenfranchised by the carceral system — just one of many ways that policing and imprisonment constrain political participation.

Police and prisons uphold the world that is. Abolition fights for the world that should be. Abolition unites struggles across time and space. Abolitionist causes like ending cash bail, decarcerating and closing prisons, freeing elderly and vulnerable incarcerated people, providing humanitarian aid to migrants, decriminalizing sex work, halting evictions, supporting incarcerated survivors of domestic violence, blocking deportations, expanding health care — these reforms have revolutionary implications, which is why they have been resisted so bitterly. When united together, they form a comprehensive agenda. It is a platform to eliminate austerity and create what Ruth Wilson Gilmore and sociologist Paul Gilroy have discussed as a universal future for humanity. These practices are both the abolitionist horizon and its route.
Appendix #6: “Who’s Left: Prison Abolition” by Mariame Kaba and Flynn Nicholls
(Unit 5, Session 16, Gallery Walk)
SO WE HAVE TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT DECREASE THE DEMAND FOR POLICE AND SURVEILLANCE. YOU NEED JOBS, HEALTHCARE, HOUSING. PEOPLE NEED TO BE ABLE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES.

YOU NEED TO CREATE STRUCTURES TO ADDRESS HARM AND HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE. PEOPLE THINK ABOLITIONISTS MINIMIZE HARM BUT WE TAKE IT VERY SERIOUSLY.

SAFETY IS A COLLECTIVE ACTION.

A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK ABOLITIONISTS WANT TO CLOSE PRISONS TOMORROW WHEN WE DON'T GET THERE YESTERDAY. RUTHIE GILMORE SAYS, "ABOLITION IS ABOUT PRESENCE, NOT ABSENCE. IT'S ABOUT BUILDING LIFE, ABOLISHING INSTITUTIONS."

I AM THE DIRECTOR OF PROJECT NIA, AN ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON ENDING YOUTH INCARCERATION.

I ALSO WORK WITH SURVIVED + PUNISHED, A PROJECT DEDICATED TO THE RELEASE OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC + GENDERED VIOLENCE IMPRISONED FOR SURVIVAL ACTIONS.

FREE BRESHA

CAMPAIGN SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED TO KEEP BRESHA MEADOWS IN THE JUVENILE SYSTEM RATHER THAN BEING TRIED AND SENTENCED AS AN ADULT, AND TRANSFERS TO A MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY BEFORE FINALLY BEING RELEASED, AVOIDING A 25 TO LIFE SENTENCE.

BRESHA MEADOWS WAS ARRESTED AT 14 FOR FATALLY SHOOTING HER ABUSIVE FATHER IN SELF-DEFENSE.

SOME PEOPLE ASK HOW FEASIBLE ABOLITION IS.

SECURITY IS ABOUT PUTTING UP GATES AND WALLS AND WEAPONS BETWEEN YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE.

HOW FEASIBLE IS IT TO CONTINUE A VIOLENT SYSTEM FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE IN FEAR?
The prison system is a recent development and not as permanent as people think.

I don't know what a world without prison will look like.

But it will fundamentally transform our relationship with other people.
Appendix #7: Abolitionist Illustrations by Ashley Lukashevsky via @ashlukadraws [Instragram] (Unit 5, Session 16, *Gallery Walk*)

May 4th 2021
ABOLITION IS THE ONLY ANSWER

April 12th 2021
Appendix #8: Excerpt from “Police Abolition 101: Messages When Facing Doubts” Zine created by Noah Jodice, MPD 150, Interrupting Criminalization, and Project Nia (Unit 5, Session 16, Gallery Walk)
We’re not asking for kinder, gentler cops. We’re asking for the re-creation of the commons: shared resources, infrastructures, and knowledge to allow communities to self-govern and thrive. The goal is collective flourishing and the common acknowledgment of our shared humanity.

How does this translate into actionable demands? A certain social democratic “common sense” fits in this framing: a universal right to cradle-to-grave care (healthcare, education, child, and elder care) and a basic right to life (housing, a job or income, etc.). To make these common goods and not forms of social policy that police, they need to be universal and de-commodified. That is, we have to agree that housing and healthcare, for just two examples, are universal human rights—not commodities that the state will selectively subsidize or deny in order to control the so-called “dangerous classes” and force compliance with sexual, gender, and racial norms.
BUT THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING GREATER, A FAINT LIGHT ON THE HORIZON THAT ABOLITIONISTS HAVE LABORED TO DRAW FORTH AND THAT RECENT EVENTS HAVE NOW MADE VISIBLE TO MANY LONG LOST IN THE DARKNESS.
Recreating the commons means more than better social policy, e.g., free education and healthcare, but free access to things that make life worth living: de-commodified and collective means to access arts, culture, recreation, etc. It means more than access to things and services but new conceptions of community. What would our cities and towns be like if they were built to meet varied needs and address conflict in non-punitive, restorative ways?

Some of the examples listed under Existing Institutions that Help Create Real Safety in the full “What’s Next” report (available at: bit.ly/WhatsNextIC3) can serve as the building blocks of reinvented commons. At their best, they are community-based institutions and practices for harm reduction and redress. They are examples that point to a future where we can solve our own problems, even the most serious and scary ones.
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