

carceral state, we must continue to study the history that came before us and build on these lessons in the present-tense. Our strategy and tactics must **also** adapt. We need to continue supporting prisoner **self-activity** in ways that defend and embolden the revolutionary ethos of abolition, not the activist mentality of the abolitionist reformer.

Abolition, Counteryinsurgency, and Praxis

Thread on the decade of prisoner insurgency between 2010 and 2018, its relation to anti-policing revolt during this same period, and the important of studying how the state is adapting to our resistance quicker than movements appear to be.

In 2010, a new phase of abolitionist prisoner insurgency took shape, ignited by the Georgia prison strikes. The Georgia prison strike, marks a visible moment of rupture w/in a much longer protracted process of agitation & organizing that sought to rebuild the prisoner movement, following the expansion of the U.S. prison regime and acceleration of genocidal, antiBlack domestic warfare. This strike built on momentum from agitation and organizing in the decade prior, a constellation of movement initiated a trajectory of *autonomous* prisoner organizing & outside support work, that spans from the 2011 California hunger strikes to nationwide strikes of 2016 & 2018. This historical turn was characterized by the activation of novel “inside-outside” prisoner solidarity networks that organize on the basis of resourcing and strengthening the *self- activity* of imprisoned activists and their own self-organized collectives.

"Since 2010, the prison system has been beset with a return of politically conscious and coordinated protest movements, as well as a resurgence of spontaneous uprisings and rebellions." (Hackett & Turk 2021) Between December 2010 - 2021 there were more than "270 distinct events including two nationally coordinated prisoner protests, in 2016 and 2018, and 101 uprisings" since the Georgia strike." Hackett & Turk note how a defining feature of this trajectory was the adaptation of technology by prisoners for "liberatory purposes; contraband cell phones, social media communication, & podcasts" all used to "overcome the isolation of prison & communicate across walls."

Others importantly note the relation between this historic whirlwind of carceral revolt & the waves of popular uprising that characterize the last decade of resistance to antiBlack carceral- police warfare, situating both trajectories as *co-constitutive*. Understanding this co-constituting dynamic & the conjuncture that 2010-2020 represents is important for

Pairing this analysis w/ the imperative of decolonization & Native land defense (#LandBack), more questions arise, and lead to another undertheorized dimension of autonomist and insurrectional abolitionism: What of the politics of "land," "place," and "territory"? Furthermore if you achieve the removal of pigs from the territory, without waiting for the magical stroke of a legislature, how does one defend the land once it is liberated? These are questions that eventually need to be addressed by the many organizers, theorists, and care workers who are, importantly, struggling daily to protect and sustain Black/Indigenous/Queer/otherwise oppressed lifeways in spite of (and against) this World. People who, in their million tiny experiments, continue to demonstrate a capacity to imagine what beyond this horizon looks like. Who are actively involved in prefiguring relations between 'us' in the NOW.

More important than identifying the rapid creep of reformism in the abolition movement, is how the 1990s-2000s and 2010-2018 periods of abolitionist agitation (two distinct conjunctures) were never the work of any one milieu or party of "thinkers" and "organizers" at all. (It is safe to say that many people in the CR milieu, whose ideas are valorized & cemented as programmatic doctrine, would actually agree with this point. In fact, they consistently repeat this fact publicly despite peoples' habits of deference & icon-making.) One way to do this is to sit with the histories of an emergent abolitionism during the late-90s to present not from any one source, but as a highly *decentralized* proliferation of affinities that are neither unitary nor homogenous at all.

The abolitionist revolutionary wages a relentless fight to not allow their collective or initiatives to replicate the logic of reformism; a logic reflected in the gravitation of collective struggle away from insurgency & desires for more immediate change.

Which brings us back to an analysis of the place of the 2010-2018 waves of mass strike in prisons, jail, and detention centers. A protracted wave whose spirit is present in many of the more recent large-scale strikes and cases of collective action that have erupted since 2018. In the face of relentless co-optation & repression, and against an always-adapting

A key difference distinguishing the insurrectional vs. procedural flavors of abolition is not the use of violence, or even necessarily illegality -- although we know full well revolution is illegal in the U.S.A.

“Conflictuality” simply means not ceding any ground to the logic of policing or reformism.

Permanent conflictuality (w/ the state, capital, & civil society) is what establishes the insurrectional flavor of abolitionism from the procedural, because it refuses forms of mediation by institutions that don't share the *class* interests of the criminalized-survivalist class.

In this regard, "conflictuality" is the feature of insurrectionary abolition praxis that establishes its defense against assimilation into the state, capital, and civil society's structures of perpetual crisis management.

However, what does appear to be an assimilable aspect of the insurrectional flavor is when a revolutionary rupture or a protracted phase of uprising dissipates (the dreaded "lull"), and then the image/memory of this rupture becomes incorporated into the commodity spectacle.

Therefore we must also further conceptualize what autonomist abolition praxis has looked like over the last twenty something years.

We might ask, what are the forms of praxis that have refused mediation and specialization but do not necessarily prioritize the logic of attack?

This is where the coupling of "militancy and care" care come in, like Anarkata's have consistently argued. And another framing can be the pairing of unmediated attack with an openness to collectivist sociality (or processes of communization).

Pl interested in studying how the "autonomist" flavor of abolition praxis relates to the "insurrectional" will need to ask more questions re: formal vs. informal organization. But that is a set of questions which first demands an analysis of the goals of a specific struggle.

our work in the present. Because during this decade the counterinsurgency against insurrectional & autonomist abolition praxis has been adapting quicker than our movements.

Following this decade of insurgency, one of the major strategies of repression in the prison movement has been increased digitization of communications services and regulation of shared information between prisoners and the outside world. This is another imperative (among a million other reasons) why we must continue to directly oppose increased censorship, digitization, and all these technological services. Digitization & shifts to tech from paper coms are framed as for the "good" & "well being" of families & prisoners. But they are largely an ADAPTATION in reaction to a decade of revolt & coordination inside between facilities and w/ the outside world.

Since 2020, a lot of theory has come out on the different flavors of abolition praxis. These flavors can compliment or stand in tension/contradiction with one another - in many instances they are actually relationally antagonistic. As RAR notes: Abolition seems to "oscillate through three different flavors as it moves through vast geographies and calendars (as the Zapatista compass say)... The three flavors of Abolition we have encountered are as follows: (1) autonomist (2) insurrectionary (3) and procedural..." The flavors of abolition praxis are also not all entirely discrete articulations. But abstractions used to study the form and content of a multiplicity of contemporary abolitionist articulations, also described as the "plurality of abolitionism."

We can better understand the repression that has followed this decade of organic anti-policing and anti-prison uprisings using a three-fold approach to analyzing the facts at hand

- 1) use of terror & state power to bludgeon emergent insurgency;
- 2) co-optation of movements that undermine power & challenge structural antagonisms;

3) control of a movement internally by blocs that are compatible w/ the social order

When we theorize the relation between different "forms" of abolition praxis, understanding the dynamics of each flavor in relation to repression/co-optation/compatibility is helpful for demystifying wishful thinking about their content.

There are certain groups that get most of the credit as the "catalyst" or "center" of an abolitionist "movement" trajectory, however that is more a matter of who has access to capital, visibility, & the retroactive curation of archives.

Most abolitionists know about the history of Critical Resistance quite extensively, a group that importantly shaped the conditions for a particular form of abolition praxis (PIC abolition) to make popular headway for over 20 years. CR's notion of abolition praxis is *importantly* a "political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment...we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real & that lead us all to believe that things really could be different." (CR circa 2003)

CR's vision of "prison-industrial complex abolition" was an important opening for abolition to shift the terms of public debate from one of "criminal justice" reform to that of abolitionist "reforms." CR's approach originally entailed dimensions of the autonomous flavor of abolition, but their contradictory relationship to the NPIC/Academic/Media regime funneled much of its energy into a singularly procedural approach & replicated a logic of reformism.

Recall that "procedural abolition" entails "winning and defending 'non-reformist reforms' enshrined in policies that diminish the reach of the carceral state while simultaneously redirecting collective capacities

"Autonomist Abolition entails a strategy of fugitivity or constant refusal of the instruments of capture & their "catch all solutions" while building hyperlocal (though dispersed in undetectable networks) infrastructures for sustaining bodies (collectives, swarms) in resistance."

"Insurrectionary Abolition entails a direct confrontation and antagonizing of the 'big P' Police and its constant attempts to maintain order, while simultaneously attempting to liberate occupied territories."

One might also consider sabotage of the prison industrial complex's physical infrastructure and logistical systems as a component of insurrectionary abolition praxis as well.

Insurrectional abolition praxis provides a way to understand our ideas/beliefs in relation to praxis, and the structural constraints that typically co-opt, defuse, and redirect righteous anger and insurgent political desire into non conflictual paradigms of action. We might begin to further deepen our theorization of insurrectional abolitionist tendency by looking at a common definition of insurrectionary anarchism:

"Insurrectional anarchism emerges as a perspective within the class struggle. This perspective can be expressed in three key principles: (i) Permanent conflictuality: the struggle should never turn into mediation, bargaining or compromise; (ii) Autonomy and self-activity: the struggle should be carried out without representatives and 'specialists'; (iii) Organization as attack: the organization should be used as a tool in the attack against state and capital, and not treated as a goal in and of itself. What this means, in its most essential and concrete way, is this: to seize and keep the initiative.

Here "conflictuality" needs to be better unpacked theoretically (and publicly) so people can grasp what's at stake when you privilege an historical narrative of the procedural flavor of abolition and make claims of the impracticality of the autonomist and insurrectionary positions.

What happens is segments of our movement become enfolded back into reformist engagement with the state. A process that delimits revolutionary potential of such ruptures.

As Dylan Rodriguez recently writes:

“something that worries me after being part of #abolitionist collective projects for over 25 years: how (what abolitionists call) "non-reformist reforms" get infiltrated by a liberal counterinsurgency machine and turned into "procedure" based technologies of pacification:

What those who center the procedural at all costs desire to achieve (which still very well may be a transformed & liberated society) never fully ends up becoming realized, because a demand for concessions is what you fight for primarily when contradictions *aren't* as heightened.

This is not to say we never *engage the state.* On many levels is impossible not to do when supporting imprisoned people. Most people who don't work with people in prison don't understand this fully and it is a point of tension to embrace. The level of abandonment of people who are captive in USA prison, jail, and detention is not intelligible to many in civil society who is not in consistent relation with an imprisoned person. And academic abolitionists should do well to consider the reality of the material conditions of prisoner support, and work from that place instead of jumping to a "ruthless criticism" of all that exists.

However there is something to be said about the limits of the proceduralist method, its privileging in the public discourse and among activists (because of its non-conflictuality), and the place of CR in the history of universalizing this as the most “realistic” approach to praxis.

This is where a deer theory of Insurrectionary and Autonomist abolition praxis is needed to compliment the supers of theory we have to justify the procedural.

Recall:

towards social infrastructures that do not reinstate carceral instruments of capture and control.”

We bring all this up because there are certain dynamics related to Critical Resistance's definition of abolition praxis that between 2010-2020 have increasingly stood at odds with a revolutionary abolitionist trajectory.

The overrepresentation of the "procedural" flavor of abolition is symptomatic of its non- conflictual character, and its ascendancy in the public discourse after the summer of 2020 in particular is likely because it is the least threatening to capital.

Some say it doesn't make sense to call someone an abolitionist reformer. They think abolitionism is default the opposite of reformism. This misses how "reformism" also refers to the mode of praxis & a political logic that differentiates norms of "realistic" from “impractical." Groups in the CR milieu have chained their path to "activism" and "gradualism", and in turn disciplined many who over the last 10 years have come to embrace "immediatism" and "insurgency" as *realistic* points of departure.

Gradualism is a conception of political struggle and praxis that presumes the destruction or transformation of an existing social order can only occur slowly over time. Hence the root word “gradual.”

For some, the lure of a measurable "win" (a contract, a new law, a set of funds, an office space) seems more tangible and less likely to piss people off than demanding everything.

So there is the politics of temporality to take into account, but also the politics of spatialization, as an article i read on "insurgency vs. activism" article points out:

"Activism constructs a symbolic terrain of engagement in a conceptual space, one defined by a politics of complaint fused with an injunction to act against problems defined in a completely despatialized way."

“To overcome the impasse is not a question of moving past complaint into other forms of symbolic action against despatialized enemies, but of defining the enemy in an immediate and material sense.”

"The reattachment of action to the immediate and material separates the question of strategy/ fighting from the question of why we fight, from the terrain understood conceptually.”

"Insurgency is not something that can be defined in itself, except as an immediate and material engagement of hostility toward the immediate enemy within a context of warfare."

"This realignment is the move from activism to insurgency.”

"Activism" thus is a mode of opposition to state power that is despatialized, and "gradualism" is temporality of abolition praxis that defers conflictuality to a later date.

Not only has the gradualist stood at increasing odds w/ the desires of the immediatist over the 2010-20 period of anti-police uprisings & mass prison strikes. But the former's obsolete perspective is symptom of a serious political difference: that of “activism” vs. “insurgency.”

The contradiction between 'gradualism' and 'immediatism' is further complicated by the insertion of "specialists" & representatives, whose initially earnest efforts were increasingly co-opted by the NPIC/academic/neoradical-media regime between 2014-2020.

We need to better understand the practical implications of privileging an historical narrative of the "abolitionist reformer" who is misrepresented as "abolitionist revolutionary," and the effects of this in the actual economies of the U.S. prison regime.

One might even say that “activism” is to the abolitionist reformer as "insurgency" is to the abolitionist

If "abolition," in its most basic sense, means the destruction of a condition defined by antiBlack genocide/domestic warfare, then insurgency must be a primary frame of reference for conceptualizing its terms of engagement.

This begs the question, What if the things one calls "insurgency" is just activism, and the forms of abolition we are uplifting are part of the counterinsurgency as such?

What we might find is that a lot of what gets theorized and elevated into the commodity spectacle as "insurgency", is really in actuality just activism (and or even worse reformism).

Between the years 2010-2020, you can see some abolitionist activists never switch up and/or diverge from a "politics of complaint fused with an injunction to act against problems defined in a completely despatialized way."

Yet throughout this decade of revolt, you also see new forms of abolitionist praxis "move beyond hatred or rejection into a posture of hostility, or an immediate antagonism, in this case hostility in relation to policing."

For abolitionist insurgency there is processes of advancement and revolutionary rupture that occur during the 2010-2020 decade, and there is a simultaneous struggle *against* the scramble for co- optation and liberal counterinsurgency.

I want to push back on peoples' centering of the "procedural", because, as 2020 taught, in moments of heightened revolutionary contradictions the tension must be leaned into more - as opposed to eschewed for a premature policy concession.

What happens is that the abolition movement, in such cases, abandons people who are fighting in the streets and default subsumes a revolutionary situation - with an *unpredictable* outcome - back into the fold of liberal statecraft. That's the reformist counterinsurgency at work.