

Abolition & the State

Responses Vol. 2

A VIEW FROM
THE GLOBAL SOUTH

BY
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“Abolition has to be ‘green.’ It has to take seriously the problem of environmental harm, environmental racism, and environmental degradation. To be ‘green’ it has to be ‘red.’ It has to figure out ways to generalize the resources needed for well-being for the most vulnerable people in our community, which then will extend to all people. And to do that, to be ‘green’ and ‘red,’ it has to be international. It has to stretch across borders so that we can consolidate our strength, our experience, and our vision for a better world.”

Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Cover Art By Emma Li
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This zine is in dialogue with Interrupting Criminalization's *Abolition and the State: A Discussion Guide* (available at bit.ly/ICDiscussionTool). You will find questions from the original discussion tool threaded through this one – questions which are sometimes met with musings, and sometimes with more questions.

Which definitions of the state resonate with you?

Reading through the definitions shared in the Abolition and the State discussion tool, I found myself gravitating towards Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore's definition in "Restating the Obvious," in *Abolition Geography: Essays Toward Liberation*:

"A state is a territorially bounded set of relatively specialized institutions that develop and change over time in the gaps and fissures of social conflict, compromise, and cooperation."

This definition resonated because I see states as neutral capacities and fields of contestation, and not an inexorably doomed, calcified BAD THING.

Truth be told, given half a chance, this zine would consist solely of illustrated Ruth Wilson Gilmore quotes and @rw-gilmoregirls memes from start to finish, but I was told that wouldn't fly.

So instead, I'll start with Gilmore's exhortation in an episode of Millennials are Killing Capitalism.

"Look at what's happening on the ground, in places where successful anti-capitalist state-building, and an economic development project has sustained itself like Kerala in India... Look at where people are doing land occupations and growing more organic rice than anywhere else in Latin America and that would be MST in Brazil....These things are happening and it is unfortunate in the context of especially the U.S. that people think that none of these things have been done before, or whatever was done before is not being done now, or what's being done now is somehow not relevant. Of course, it's relevant!"

As a lifelong student of abolition who also happens to be from Kerala, but somehow never quite thought about the two together, I was grateful for this invitation to revisit formative experiences, places, and practices – armed with this question: what examples of abolition in practice might I unearth?

When and how did I first learn about states? What did I learn about them?

The Abolition and the State discussion tool asks readers to reflect and journal around this question. As I journaled, it was evident that where I grew up (and didn't) and how I learned about states (usually by colliding with various iterations of them across space and time) have deeply shaped my belief in states beyond the U.S., Western, Global North carceral state.

I often describe myself as “multiply displaced,” having moved between countries, back and forth, back and forth, at the ages of 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 15, 17, 20, 22, and 24. My life has been broadly trisected (with some detours) between Kerala, the so-called Middle East, and the so-called U.S. Midwest. Some might use the term child refugee to describe me, but it's a word that I find obscures the violence and harm of what makes “refugees.” It often casts Aggressor as Benefactor, when refuge for many of us was the home we were driven from by U.S. guns, bombs, trade and foreign policy, and genocidal sanctions.

Each displacement, each new school textbook with its myth-making about different nation-states and its hagiog-

ographies of historical heroes, however, revealed useful contradictions, and wildly differing worldviews and accounts of history. They pushed different ideologies, different stories, and different histories – accounts of World War II, for example, are so unrecognizable from each other depending on whether I was learning about it from a Khaleeji textbook (which differed from Gulf state to state), a U.S. textbook (We saved the day! We weren't dragged into it unwillingly! For this exam, please make a list of bullet points on why atomic bombing was necessary. Soviet who?), Indian textbooks (depending on whether they followed Central or State board syllabi), or from reading various People's Histories.

In Indian textbooks, I learned a lot about the Non-Aligned Movement (this shaped my thinking on states, on other possible world orders where the Global South could create social, political, and economic systems outside the crushing grip of global hegemons). I also read accounts about how, just like Black soldiers were pushed to the frontlines and the riskiest theatres of war, contingents from the colonies were cannon fodder, too. There were innate solidarities there.

Years later, I remember feeling a resonance, and a quickening, when I read W.E.B. Du Bois's words advocating an alliance of the darker nations, and Hubert Harrison on the need to support struggles not just in Africa but in India, Ireland,

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Egypt, the Philippines, and other oppressed colonies under European domination, and Huey Newton on intercommunalism. I felt gratitude when I first read the Combahee River Collective statement and I committed to memory the lines, “The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon the lives of women, Third World, and working people.”

These texts influenced my ideas and understanding of transnational solidarities beyond narrow ideas of states, and to borrow Paul Gilroy’s words, “a different sense of justice, a different sense of citizenship, a different opportunity to belong, to signify belonging, a different demand for recognition as part of the life of a particular polity, all of these things.” A belonging that is not predicated on what Naomi Murakawa describes as a kind of death pact with the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), the hollow offer of punishment as a way of absorbing legitimately aggrieved populations into the U.S. nation-state by saying we will jail and kill people who harm you. My thoughts were shaped by these contrasting ideas of how states sought to establish legitimacy with people – either through solidarity and loyalties to “a morally just world” or through a politics of disposability that relies on, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore say, “harming individuals and communities in the name of safety.”

Attending middle and (part of) high school in Kerala also meant I was surrounded by the living experiment of a political project that sought to prioritize social well-being over GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and that deeply shaped my sense of what states could be when they prioritize people and their welfare over profit (abolition must be red) — a project that would not have been possible without the cultural movement that swept Comrade EMS Namboodiripad into power in the 1950s.



Above: Piicture of the Arts and Sports Club of the Calvathy Comrades, in Fort Kochi, Kerala. (photo credit: @tree_monks)



Right: Picture taken on my phone during a trip home.

There was a certain kind of education I got from art, theatre, iconography, stories, books, and murals that taught me how the African National Congress (ANC), Fidel Castro, and revolutionary Third World movements supported each other, materially. Whenever there were massacres in occupied Palestine, there would be extensive coverage in the Malayalam newspapers, and poetry and art made in solidarity, in grief and rage, in stark contrast to the monstrously distorted passive voice of New York Times correspondents.

Screenshot of the poster of the movie version of the KPAC's (Kerala People's Art Club) ground-breaking play, the subtly named "Ningalenne Communistakki" (You Made Me a Communist). Thoppil Bhasi wrote the play when he was underground, hiding from the government and with a bounty on his head.



The illustration accompanying the poem is of a severed hand raised in a plea to STOP. The words “Hate War” and “Down with your bloody weapons” are scrawled on the hand. The blood draining from the severed arm pools into the word “Gaza.”

“Ideology matters: the ways people think about the world, and understand themselves in it, define in large part what they do to endure or change the world.” – Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore, “Restating the Obvious,” in *Abolition Geography: Essays Toward Liberation*.

So back to Ruthie’s question about where we might see examples of abolition being rehearsed by states, and the Abolition and the State Discussion Tool’s question about other historical and contemporaneous state models we might be able to imagine/learn about.



Picture of a Malayalam poem of solidarity with the people of Gaza, published in a Kerala daily, during the 2014 "Operation Protective Edge" massacre.

ABOLITION MUST BE RED

Kerala:
State
infrastructure,
decentralized
implementation +
organized communities.

Examples that I imagine some readers have heard of in the context of Kerala would include things like manufacturing medical oxygen for other states during the COVID-19 pandemic (even as the central government continued to vilify our politics and starve us of resources). Others may have heard that 4.6 million of the 17 million women living in Kerala are members of the cooperative movement, Kudumbashree, that grew from our elected communist governments. When the pandemic hit, with just a light touch, everything was able to hum into action and Kudumbashree members were able to mass-produce masks, meals, and everything else that was needed to take care of the population. Without waiting for any government directive, the strong trade unions took the initiative to build handwashing stations next to bus stops. The superintendent of Thrissur Medical College describes how the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) showed up en masse to stitch Rexine covers onto beds, organize masks and other PPE, donate blood, and even help with moving deceased bodies at the height of the pandemic.

In other words, existing social infrastructures aided the pandemic response, and the state played a role in creating the conditions for the people to do what they did. The state (aka people and institutions) matters here – not on its own – but as a product of a wider movement that continues to make the state respond for the good of the people with its

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infrastructure and capacities. Simultaneously, the people are organized and connected, thanks to democratic decentralization, popular assemblies, and distributed skills and power, and do not wait for the state.

In this conception then, the state does not grandiosely “confer” rights onto the people (although the people can and must continue to make demands of the state as long as it is around), but rather the people build the power to live the lives they deserve, and they use parties, the state, their relationships with each other, and social movements to do so.

Conversely, while mutual aid efforts in the U.S. and elsewhere have been nothing short of miraculous, and saved many lives, they were launched in the face of organized abandonment by the state, not under conditions in which the state promoted and supported cooperation.

Let’s go to Ruthie again.

“Of course, then, we have to ask ourselves: What is a right anyway? Is it a thing, or is it a practice? If a right is a practice rather than a thing, then that requires that these little instances of social organization in which people work on behalf of themselves and others with a purpose in mind rather than a short-term interest that can be met through a little bit of lawmaking or other haggling changes the entire landscape of how we live.”

- RUTH WILSON GILMORE

Discussion Tool: Make a list of all the functions you can think of that states currently perform (i.e. water distribution, public transportation, education, law enforcement, incarceration, etc). Then, ask yourself:

Which of these functions do we want states to perform?

What do we get from the state that we cannot directly provide for ourselves and our people?

For the functions you want states to perform, can you imagine a way to perform them without policing of some kind?

And so, the question of how can we bolster institutions (which are part of the state) that perform functions that improve material conditions and distribute resources – like public schools, health care, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection, and corporate regulation – against efforts to dismantle them from the Right, while simultaneously eliminating their policing functions, feels especially resonant.

Some other questions I'm thinking about are:

What can we learn from examples of people's parties getting absorbed into the state apparatus and becoming less concerned with organizing for justice, and more concerned with maintaining power? We've seen examples, worldwide, of parties and projects being leached of their insurgency as they get incorporated into the state machine – how do we counter that?

What are the dangers of abandoning or conceding the struggle over state and public institutions like public schools, health care, housing, and environmental and corporate regulation?

Where do the greatest structural capacities for leftist organizing lie? Structural and relational organizing (through churches, neighborhood groups, workplaces, unions, etc.) remains key – what structures are weaker today and why (can they be strengthened?), and what new ones exist and are emerging that might help scaffold organizing?

Pravasi thirichu va (come home, migrant)

In a quote reproduced in the Abolition and the State Discussion Tool, Harsha Walia points us to how “Non-statist forms of governance are happening today, even within borders of nation-states!” sharing the example of members of the Wet’suwet’en Unist’ot’en Camp welcoming people in if they are not cops or bosses and can affirm their responsibilities to all.

During the pandemic, while the U.S. was hardening its borders by extending orders like under Title 42 (that purports to “stop the introduction of communicable diseases” through limiting the ability of migrants to seek asylum) and instituting racist travel bans using xenophobic pretexts that had no basis in the actual science of disease transmission, violence of a different kind was unfolding in India –

“towns and megacities began to extrude their working-class citizens – their migrant workers – like so much unwanted accrual. Many driven out by their employers and landlords,

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millions of impoverished, hungry, thirsty people, young and old, men, women, children, sick people, blind people, disabled people, with nowhere else to go, with no public transport in sight, began a long march home to their villages. They walked for days, towards Badaun, Agra, Azamgarh, Aligarh, Lucknow, Gorakhpur – hundreds of kilometres away. Some died on the way...As they walked, some were beaten brutally and humiliated by the police, who were charged with strictly enforcing the curfew...Outside the town of Bareilly, one group was herded together and hosed down with chemical spray. A few days later, worried that the fleeing population would spread the virus to villages, the government sealed state borders even for walkers. People who had been walking for days were stopped and forced to return to camps in the cities they had just been forced to leave.” – “The pandemic is a portal,” Arundhati Roy

But this is not the only story of how governments were putting “state capacities into motion,” and not all states were closing their borders. Kerala opened call centres to help workers from other Indian states navigate their return, providing them with packed meals for the train journeys home.

Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister of Kerala, also addressed the tens of thousands of pravasis, the overseas migrant workers, many of whom (like my parents many years ago) worked

in the Arabian Gulf and sent remittances back to Kerala.

Keenly aware of the massive operation it would require to safely welcome an influx of overseas migrant workers while staying committed to stopping the spread of disease, and knowing the costs of testing, quarantining, and home-delivered meal kits to allow sheltering in place for those newly returned, Vijayan's Left Front still refused to leave Kerala's pravasis stranded in Gulf states. Headlines proclaimed, and press conferences were held under the banner, "Pravasi, thirichu va" (traveler come home), letting migrants know they were welcome. It was an effort that echoed one of the largest civilian evacuations during the Gulf War, 30 years prior, which swept up hundreds of thousands of migrants from India to bring them home, my family among them – another effort that would not have happened without MPs from Kerala staging protests in front of Parliament House and regular folk helping organize mutual aid efforts to get migrant workers to safety.

I recognize the truth in Harsha Walia's words "the border is a prison," and in Ayesha Siddiqi's words "every border implies the violence of its maintenance." And I also know from my own experiences of being pushed and pulled across these imaginary colonial lines, that political actors, ideas, agitations, and struggle can be a force to dissipate borders, making

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them more porous, allowing more people and possibilities through.

The degree of permeability of borders leading into and out of states are also sites of contestation, and that seems like an organizing opening towards a world without borders too.

A Note On Translation

I've translated *pravasi* as "migrant," but it's a word that's weighted with an emotional and cultural resonance that escapes translation.

As fellow Gulf *pravasi*, Deepak Unnikrishnan puts it in his short story "Nalinakshi," from his book *Temporary People*: "Foreigner, outsider. Immigrant, worker. *Pravasi* means you've left your native place. *Pravasi* means you'll have regrets" – it means you'll miss important events, like births and deaths – "and by the time you've done the math in your head, everything you've missed, what's been gained, you'll come to realize what the word *pravasi* really means. Absence. That's what it means, absence."

Aathma Nirmal Dious, another Malayali *pravasi* "born as mangrove trees, with roots that will always float upon the sea between lands," writes about this feeling of always-present

absence, exile, of endless comings and goings in a piece I love: Vathil (come home, migrant).

Resources

On “counter-hegemonic world-making:” The Best Books on the Non-Aligned Movement, Paul Stubbs

The New Non-Aligned Movement: Multipolar and regional, Vijay Prashad

The New Black Internationalism, Dissent Magazine

Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination, Adom Getachew

Discussion Tool: How do the ways states are currently responding to climate crises with increasing securitization/militarization and decreasing care, emergency services, and disaster relief shape our understandings of what the state is now, and what potential we think it can have to be a force of care or support?

How should these understandings shape how we engage with state(s) as we prepare for and respond to emerging crises?

**ABOLITION
MUST BE
GREEN**

From
Chhattisgarh
to Bolivia.

From Flint
to Standing Rock
to Plachimada.

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In February 2023, as Michigan, where I now live, was hit by massive ice storms causing power outages leaving almost a million people in freezing temperatures, I called my father in Kerala. As I was describing how hospitals here were without power, and how dangerous it was for so many people already plunged into poverty by the pandemic and U.S. government inaction, we got to talking about public utilities. I told him about local agitations and organizing for public power, because the energy corporation DTE was always going to put shareholder profits over liveable futures and people's lives. Appa shared that in Thiruvanthapuram, not only did the Kerala government subsidize the installation of solar panels on our house, but any surplus power is fed back to the grid, and the government pays my parents for this! Think of what that means for poor and working-class people, and for the planet. Of course, DTE lobbies against and opposes this practice, called net metering, here.

Abolition must be red to be green and we actually need state capacities for energy transition at the scale required.

My friend Roshan Krishnan puts it this way:

"...Ecological crisis necessitates a strong socialist state response for a few reasons – the first is the level of international cooperation (and reparation) required. There needs

to be immense transfer of resources which would require incredible levels of coordination and planning.

The second is that ecological crisis can only be treated extremely holistically – how do we maximize the well-being of people while minimizing the harms on the planet? How do we decide which resources to use, how much, and where? Some amount of extraction, ecological disruption, etc. is necessary to maintain a society where everyone's needs are met. How do we minimize that to the greatest degree possible, and ensure that ecological harms are distributed as fairly as possible? I don't see a way other than holistic state planning.

A pertinent example is the energy system – every zero-carbon energy source, from solar to wind to hydro, involves some amount of mining, pollution, ecological disruption, and/or waste. Some energy sources are more suitable for some locations than others. Energy infrastructure siting is often contentious and raises questions of who benefits from such projects. Those questions will never disappear and we need robust participatory processes to navigate them...

When the capitalist state plans energy and industry – we see livelihoods tied to life-destroying processes, from extraction of coal to imprisonment of people. We see this predicament

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imposed upon energy worker unions now, who fight to keep fossil fuel infrastructure alive because they (very understandably) want to keep stable jobs – despite those jobs often having ill effects on not only the planet but the workers' own health! Another crucial role of the socialist state through any just transition would be to untie worker livelihoods from such destructive processes.”

Put differently, without a socialist state untying of worker livelihoods from destructive processes is unlikely/impossible because destruction is profitable to the ruling class.

No Such Thing As A Natural Disaster

$$\text{VULNERABILITY} + \text{HAZARD} = \text{DISASTER}$$

$$\text{CAPACITY}$$

(*formula from a disaster relief training I attended)

Environmental Justice activists, political ecologists, and others have been telling us, for centuries, that there is no such thing as a natural disaster.

Hazards (hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, etc.) are natural. But disasters are human-made and they are shaped by social and political processes.

Disasters happen when hazards collide with vulnerable communities who do not have the resources, the infrastructure, or the capacity to deal with them. To paraphrase – when a hazard meets vulnerability and it exceeds a community's

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capacity to respond, that is how disasters are made.

We can think about the state as either increasing or decreasing vulnerability, and increasing or decreasing the capacity for communities which will determine whether disasters are hastened, averted, and/or overcome.

We can forge other collective responses. We must.

***ABOLITION
MUST BE
INTER-
NATIONAL***

Identification
not identities
(alone).

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As I think about the possibilities of forms of governance beyond the U.S./Western/Global North carceral state, or other oppressive nation states, the words of Stuart Hall (“identification not identities” aka it matters what we’re actively practicing), Cedric Robinson (“My only loyalties are to the morally just world; and my happiest and most stunning opportunity for raising hell with corruption and deceit are with other Black people”), Ruth Wilson Gilmore (“Political Blackness should make a comeback”), Nick Estes (“Without emancipatory politics, identities will only be sites of injury”), and Derecka Purnell (“rooting for everybody resisting oppression”) feel important.

States built on religious, linguistic, or other identities have led to the horrors we see in India with laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), projects intended to denaturalize non-Hindus, especially Muslims, and corral them into detention centers and concentration camps, in service of India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi (aka the Butcher of Gujarat for his role in overseeing a pogrom that killed thousands of Muslims in his state) and his party’s vision for a Hindu Rashtra (meaning “Hindu Nation”).

As Bissau-Guinean poet, theorist, and revolutionary Amílcar Cabral teaches us, it isn’t about whether you speak the

language or whether you have lived in a place. According to Cabral, whether or not you “belong to a people” is really about how committed you are to their liberation.

Fascists across the world are deepening their alliances and spreading their reach, from Bannon and Spencer, to Bibi and Neftali, to Bolsanaro, Modi, and Shah – all feeding off each other, and exchanging technologies of repression and resources. Our struggles for liberation must be stronger and more connected.

In my mother tongue, Malayalam, unlike English, there are words distinguishing a We that includes the person being spoken to (nammal), and a We that excludes them (njan-gal). I draw hope from the nammal of Barbara Smith: “We were third world women...We saw ourselves in solidarity and struggle with all third world people around the globe.”

Building on the notion explored in *No More Police: A Case for Abolition* that safety is a relation, “developing meaningful and horizontal people-to-people, movement-to-movement linkages” across borders, will help us create some measure of safety and defense against Right-wing mobilizations against us.

Resources

Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings, Amílcar Cabral

Groundings Podcast: The Philosophy of Amílcar Cabral's Ac-
tions

Practicing Our Experiments

How do we mobilize our collective power to protect our abolitionist futures and the planet?

I believe in the “Within, Against and Beyond” strategies named in the Abolition and the State discussion tool.

I fear that if we don’t engage in some “within” strategies, the carceral state and its paramilitary forces will crush any insurgent movements because they have a gazillion armed cops and Right wing militia. I don’t quite see a way around the need for, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore puts it, “state as ally” to help create conditions where revolutions and liberatory experiments won’t be brutally repressed.

The fascists are organizing across borders and always have been. Stuart Schrader, in *Badges Without Borders*, details how the U.S. exported policing to repress insurgent left-ist movements all over the world, and to brutalize poor and marginalized populations in the Global South, while also suppressing uprisings domestically.

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“President Dwight D. Eisenhower also created the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), which worked with the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA to construct the 1290-d program which aimed to equip foreign police forces and to train them in surveillance, crime control, riot control, and anti-guerilla action. The ICA was just the first of many federal agencies founded to train foreign cops, including the Overseas Internal Security Program (OISP), the Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) (SGCI), the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Inter-American Police Academy (IAPA). The foreign police assistance program was eventually consolidated in the Office of Public Safety (OPS). Over the next decade, hundreds of OPS advisors trained local police in countries around the world, including Guatemala, Honduras, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam.

The massive resources allocated to both local police and the U.S. military create supply side pressures to find, if not create, enemies.” – “Policing the World,” A Review of Stuart Schrader’s *Badges Without Borders*, by Andrew Lanham in the *Boston Review*

We want a million experiments to help build more just and caring futures, but programs like GILEE (where US cops learn tactics of abuse and repression from Israeli police), and projects like Atlanta’s #CopCity are mass-scale efforts to

violently suppress the ongoing righteous dissent of those fighting for universal access to food, housing, health care, connection, and liveable futures in a burning world.

Right-wing and fascist capture of the state will inevitably make insurgencies exponentially harder and foreclose liberation struggles and possibilities for many years. I don't see how life-affirming experiments won't be crushed without some support from leftist governments. Everything that helps people and gives them some leverage to fight capitalism's stranglehold is threatening to the capitalist state – it's why Khaleel Seivwright was criminalized for building tiny shelters for the unhoused people in Toronto, and why the carceral state criminalizes protest and dissent, sharing water, food, shelter, harm reduction, self-managed care, and community care. Fascism's go-to move is to criminalize all experiments that give the people more life chances. It matters materially whether the state is supporting those who would crush us, or giving our experiments a fighting chance. States have the power to give besieged social movements a chance to revive themselves.

Holdouts matter. I think about the fact that the BJP has been largely unsuccessful in Kerala. I think about the ongoing U.S. hybrid wars in Cuba and Venezuela. Something is clearly happening when both U.S. political parties are passing de-

nunciations of socialism in Congress. And it's connected to the book banning and proposed laws against teenagers using social media, all of which hint at fears of a renewed – especially from gen-z – interest in socialist politics and solidarity (isn't that what "wokeness" is actually about?) and fighting for justice for all. This is a time of interregnum. Let's seize it.

Questions for Reflection

1. What stories of collective governance inspire you?
2. Do we often get to hear examples of people, states, and experiments rehearsing abolition, and if not, why not?
3. Who benefits from such stories being suppressed? Who benefits from such stories being shared?

Conclusion

“Political realities are maintained not fated.”

— Ayesha Siddiqi

“...There is the possibility and the intensity of being able to...rehearse the future, rehearse the social order coming into being, as against reciting the complaints.”

— Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Many people have written and talked about a politics of rupture, what can grow in the breaks between emerging worlds, and how these times give us radical opportunities to rehearse resistance and true opposition and actual otherwise world-building – what I’ve heard Robin D. G. Kelley refer to as “generative temporality,” what Asad Dandia calls “radical contingency,” and what Kelly Hayes describes as being “builders in an era of collapse.”

When I was younger there was an improv show called “Whose Line is it Anyway?” that I used to watch. One of the games they’d have the actors play was called “Props” where they’d fish out giant, weirdly shaped costume props and come up with creative ways to use them for something other than their original purpose.

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The game reminds me of what Ruthie says in her Millennials are Killing Capitalism interview on Abolition Geographies. She starts with the discussion of the Audre Lorde quote about the master's tools and calls attention to the significance of the apostrophe in the word "master's," saying that if we seize those tools we can use them— like in the game of Props – in ways that they haven't been used before, towards different ends and possibilities.

It also reminds me of how one of my closest friends, Snigdha Manickavel, out of desperation, once did a brief stint working for a credit card company in South India. In her time there, before they caught on to her and she was summarily fired, she "forgave" the application fees and the "credit card debt" of hundreds of people struggling to make ends meet. It was a miserable place to work, but how we laughed when she recounted the story of her boss calling her in for a review after a few months, sputtering in disbelief at her handiwork.

"Listen, I work for xyz bank. WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?" he thundered. Snigs didn't say out loud the answers playing in her head (The underdog! The people!), she just sat there trying her best to look demure, innocent, and confused. My point in sharing this story is that we can't afford to be too precious about some of the institutions we engage with and in, as we try to shape change.

As we work to prefigure and build an abolition that is red, green, and international, it strikes me that sometimes the path runs through the state, sometimes around it, and sometimes roughshod over it, and we're going to need lots of creativity and courage to practice new worlds.

Maya Angelou wrote: "Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage."

Another of my closest friends, Pavi Mehta, reminds me that the word "courage" has its roots in the old French, "couer." And ultimately, it is our hearts that make us brave.

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The section titles for this zine are inspired by a quote from Ruth Wilson Gilmore who is always reminding us that Abolition must be Red, Green and International. Finally, I am profoundly grateful for people of all ages practicing abolition everywhere, and for the storytellers, artists, and media makers who are sharing these stories, and inviting more people to find their place in this beautiful collective project of rehearsing the futures we yearn for.



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