

# READING #1 FOR ABOLITION TEACH IN

## **From Abolition of Slavery to Abolition of Private Property: African American History and the Liberation of Us All**

(EXCERPT FROM RALLY COMRADES JOURNAL  
RALLYCOMRADES.ORG)

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### **Growth of Abolitionist Class**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows six million manufacturing jobs lost since 1970. Since the more recent African American migrants from the South tended to be most recently hired and in the most easily automated jobs, they were among the first fired as the electronic revolution progressed.

In this way, history put the descendants of African American slaves at the core of a new class of workers of all colors being created by labor-replacing technology. The new economy proliferated part-time, temporary, and minimum wage jobs. Poverty, housing insecurity, and health problems have been the results.

Yet, this class's position outside the economy is its power. The new class must fight politically for its right to survive. Its political program is the abolition of the system of private property and the distribution of goods according to need. The new class is an abolitionist class.

The growth of an abolitionist class threatens the ruling class's hold on private property. They cannot allow the new class to have a say in society's direction, instead resorting to increasingly violent social control. A militarized police force beats and murders the new class, tears families apart, deports, imprisons, and moves against the protestors. Central to the historical fight, Black workers are targeted by these developments and are leaders in the response.

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PIC (Prison Industrial Complex) abolitionists recognize the need for a new society, as when organizer and educator Mariame Kaba said in an April 10, 2019 interview with Chris Hayes on MSNBC: “For me, capitalism has to go. It has to be abolished. We live within a system that’s got all these other isms, and we’re gonna have to uproot those. So, we’re doing work every single day to set the conditions for the possibility of that alternate vision of a world without prisons, policing, and surveillance.” Abolitionist scholar and activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore told The Intercept that abolition must distribute “the resources needed for well-being for the most vulnerable people in our community, which then will extend to all people.”

The motions to defund and abolish the police demand the government take care of the people abandoned and abused by a system that prioritizes private property over human lives. With movements to cancel rent and student debt and provide healthcare to all, this new abolitionist class demands a government that works for them. Fighting against police violence, they fight a State force that maintains the private property system. Winning will require the abolition of this system.

To liberate today’s wage slaves, the new abolitionist class is best positioned to lead us to a cooperative society, where the collective wealth is shared, and all of humanity and the earth can thrive. From those who once were private property to those of all colors whose lives have been destroyed by the private property system, today’s abolitionist class is fighting to transform society. **RC**

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## ***READING #2 FOR ABOLITION TEACH IN GOLDEN GULAG***

*Ruthie Gilmore’s 2007 book, “Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California” analyzes the prison building boom of the 80’s and 90’s, when 23 prisons were built, one each year, to incarcerate poor and working class people,*

*predominantly people of color, who no longer were “necessary” to the system, given the loss of industrial work due to automation and globalization.*

*In these paragraphs, she describes how the organization “Reclaiming Our Children” (ROC) organized against prisons as mothers and activists. She discusses how a sense of identity developed on the basis of commonality of gender, race, and class, and how study and understanding widened the basis of solidarity among these fighters.*

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By enlivening African American practices of social mothering, the ROCers engaged a broadening community in their concern for the circumstances and fate of prisoners. That social opening provided avenues for all kinds of mothers (and others) to join in the work, because the enormous labor confronting each mother tended to encourage all of them both to accept and extend help.

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In other words, techniques developed over generations on behalf of Black children and families within terror-demarcated, racially defined enclaves provided contemporary means to choreograph interracial political solidarity among all kinds of caregivers losing their loved ones into the prison system.

These mothers and others identified one another in the tight public spaces between their socially segregated residential living places and the unitized carceral quarters in which their loved ones are caged. Some were shy about jumping into the process, while others came to the ROC for help on their individual cases only; but all who persisted practiced the “each one teach one” approach.<sup>20</sup>

The process of integrating different kinds of mothers and others into the ROC involved extensive outreach designed to permeate the social organization of space. These projects also caught

people in the “betweens” of segregated lives: at work, for example, or on the bus. Like the Justice for Janitors Los Angeles crusade, however, this approach raised a more general problem of identification. The ROCers easily recognized one another in the spaces of the criminal justice system. Outside those areas, how do people resemble each other? If we are not all Black, and if all activists are not mothers, and if all prisoners are not (minor) children, then who are we? Poor people who work. As a community of purpose, Mothers ROC acted on the basis of a simple inversion: we are not poor because our loved ones are in prison; rather, our loved ones are in prison because we are poor.

It followed that outreach should target working poor people and their youth. Class, then, while the context for this analysis and action, cannot displace or subsume the changing role and definitions of race: poor people of color have the most loved ones in prison. As a matter of fact, the primacy of class is thoroughly gendered: women who work to support their families and to free their loved ones encounter one another as laborers with similar triple workdays—job, home, justice. Moreover, mothers who reject the disposal of their children and ask why they themselves should not be compensated for struggling against the state raise a challenge to both their children’s and their own devaluations from the vantage of the declining welfare state and the perils of reproductive labor (Dalla Costa and James 1972; Fortunati 1995; Quick 1992).<sup>21</sup>

The communist organizational and analytical influences in the ROC kept these complicated interrelated issues in the foreground of activism. In the context of shared opposition, the activists “discovered” (Kaplan 1982)—which is to say, created—shared values; in turn, that collective work produced community solidarity, or political integration, enabling further action.

Solidarity increased with increased knowledge about the complexity of how power blocs have built the new state by building prisons. Thus an individual police precinct house no longer loomed as the total presence of the state, shrinking back toward its real position—the neighborhood outpost of what both

the ROCers and FACTS (Families to Amend California's 3-Strikes) characterized as a military occupation.<sup>22</sup> If it takes a village to raise a child, it certainly takes a movement to undo an occupation.

As Mothers ROC went deep and FACTS went broad, both sought to immerse themselves in other communities of activism, reaching out nationally and internationally to similar organizations.<sup>23</sup> Such motion then and now heightens the potential for connections between women struggling against prison expansion and women throughout the global workforce who struggle daily against the actual processes and effects of worldwide structural adjustments.<sup>24</sup> Mothers ROC critically used the ideological power of motherhood to challenge the legitimacy of the changing state. All prisoners are somebody's children, and children are not alienable (see Cornell 1995).