Libraries, Prisons, and Abolition

2020

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The following is a three part series I have written on prisons, libraries, and abolition in conclusion of my coursework. Each Tuesday for three weeks, a new piece will be published on the DLIS blog. The first piece is a guide for library workers who have limited experiences with the prison-industrial complex, providing an overview of prisons, jails, and detention centers in the U.S.; examining the intent and effects of increased incarceration rates; and defining some core tenets of/broad approaches to abolitionist thinking. The second piece focuses on the library as an institution that, produced under the forces of moralistic reformatory thinking, inevitably influenced the operations and procedures of the institution maneuvered under american racial capitalism. It aims to expand our creative thinking on repair work by looking towards how we can disrupt these systematic processes, such as smashing the professional tenet of neutrality and restructuring LIS pedagogy to be led by the most oppressed, as well as what decolonization and anti-violence strategies could look like for caring, sustainable futures of information institutions. The third piece will focus on practical applications of abolitionist, expansive initiatives you can undertake as someone trained in library work, both as an individual outside your job and as a worker within an institution, in order to work in coordination with incarcerated people in autonomous building and movement by facilitating access to information. It will examine the current pressing information crises specifically inside Indiana prisons exacerbated by the Digital Divide; offering programming and outreach ideas; and elaborating on or critiquing contemporary offered solutions/reforms in LIS like employing social workers in the library or divesting from police partnerships inside your library. I currently work as a part-time web services and reference librarian at a community college; because my work experience is primarily in public and academic libraries, these are the institutions which I will mainly focus on in the following pieces.

I want to preface these writings by saying that my viewpoint is based on my embodied experiences and as a result is axiomatically siloed. I am a nonbinary transgender person (they/them pronouns, I appreciate you asking) who has undoubtedly experienced the carceral connections between healthcare mistreatment and anti-queer bigotry among everyday social antagonisms. However, I have never been incarcerated or detained against my will. I am a euro-american/white person—a young, mostly-able-bodied adult raised with access to more financial, physical, educational resources than many americans and most of the globe. I do not wish to

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speak from the vantage point of Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC), who are targeted by the State by the very intent of its hostile design, nor to the experiences of those outside the U.S. who are undoubtedly targeted by this declining regime. I do not wish to contribute to a saturated commentary culture of white ogling at exhibitions of white supremacist violence against and murders of Black/New Afrikan peoples, nor to espouse my prison abolitionist vantage point as the One True Only Way Forward. I do not wish to weaponize my thinking as another way to torture and violate Black folks with white & educated abolitionist "empathic identification", thereby further perpetuating "the circulation of dead and tortured black people produces in nonblack people not disgust or raised consciousness, but pleasure" (Boko, 2020). From where I am positioned, inside LIS and in other social-spatial surroundings, I wish to demystify key functionings of the carceral state, in order to: introduce the field of LIS and other cultural institution/GLAM workers to the abundance of pressing information needs of the many people impacted and disappeared by the expansive prison-industrial complex; and to illustrate that we who manage information can *and must* play valuable roles in fighting for open access and information liberation, namely through an abolitionist, radical, generative framework of thinking, being, working, and interacting with one another.

Joshua Briond (2020) writes, the project of social categorization is a colonial, hierarchical one, one that renders us divided into binaries existing in antagonization. Through rigorous study of race, whiteness, movement, and liberation, we can make daily choices that "get to the root of the power, betray them, and build from there" (Briond, 2020). LIS is a glaringly white, predominantly gender-conforming field; after decades of institutional austerity and begging for funding scraps, the continued crises of professionalism implore library workers to not challenge the market-oriented wills of bosses and boards. As I speak to in the second piece, libraries repeat DEI verbiage while refusing to change an aggressive workplace culture, for example. This contributes to what Ervin describes as sustaining a Progressive Plantation, which fuels burnout for BIPOC library workers and library workers at the margins who are expected to push the field forward while carrying more than their fair share. Those of us who would be able to open up many more doors through our presence in these institutions cannot sustain this work without the ability to shape and change our organizations to prioritize care. This starts with, and is not limited to, guaranteeing *all* library workers living wages and healthcare, among other salient and overdue needs.

White hegemony in LIS is reinforced through LIS education, which by and large in pedagogy does not examine meaning in difference, just instructs a professional culture of non-critique against ALA and DEI initiatives outdated demands from library workers of the 1960s and 1970s, as I speak to in my subsequent writings. Information workers can be uniquely educated and empowered to think outside the box (ie Institution) to build open systems of access to information about, for, *and* by us, working towards an attainable vision of collective information literacy, empowerment through access. Through intra/interpersonal reflection; studying the past and the speculative; relying on one another; and committing to and sustaining projects that build, rather than shrink, our worlds. We can undertake these approaches to critical librarianship through collective support, foundational to transformative justice. Assessing our strengths, that are afforded to us through birth, class, presentation, choices, we can then work together for the

care needed after committing to the challenging answers found from asking: "how can this condition be redressed?" (Boko, 2020).

Mia Mingus (2016) writes, "community" is a word that we use all the time, but "many people don't know what it is or feel they have never experienced it" (Mingus, 2020). Sustainable community endeavors require solid relationships between people maintained through trust. Building and growing connections between people where they already exist or can exist can lay the groundwork for the conditions required to support people without these connections, those who are violently targeted by the state and moralistic charity and nonprofit initiatives. In our everyday lives, the nourishing choices we make, like to care for one another or commit to reflection and growth together, can expand the number of people who can "recognize, talk about, prevent and respond to violence" so that people "in need of support will find it in their daily lives" (Mingus, 2016). These small steps towards a larger transformation will "help us gradually move away from the structures that keep people isolated… [which is] not only useful for ourselves and the people in our immediate circles, but has the potential to… support anyone experiencing violence" (Mingus, 2016). I believe, like nina de jesus advocated for, that libraries are one of the few state institutions that offers *some* capacity for emancipatory potential. As information gatekeepers, we hold an immense power that any ALA pep speech can never address the nefarious, material underbelly of. Each one of our individual struggles is bound up in the larger fight for collective liberation from the forces of white patriarchal supremacy that plague this state, the U.S. at large, and fortify racial capitalism. This is not the mainstream approach in our field, yet critical librarianship continues opening up the doors for library workers and users alike. When ALA named Seattle Public Library as the recipient of the 2020 Library of the Year award this summer, trans library workers and advocates for us critiqued ALA for valorizing a library that continues allowing violent transphobes to take up meeting room space on the basis of being "taxpayers". Far too often, the safety, health, and continued wellbeing of library workers from the margins are ridiculed and neglected under the threat of white supremacist hegemony embedded deep within our workplaces. This is not new to the american public library, which, in its most basic form, is the raison d'être for the imperialist assimilatory project. The new information age, and how many people are being left behind in its wake, necessitates radical new approaches to our work.

Juliana Huxtable and American Artist recently said in a panel on abolitionist technologies and aesthetics that those of us who spent time or grew up on the mid-1990s—mid-2000s internet remember the gilded promises of a New Information Age: of empowerment, liberation, community despite physical distance, and all the goodness associated with your optimized, quantified self. In this era of the social media-induced Tertiary Information Age, a time of accelerated, genocidal global capitalism; demolished regulations of massive internet and telecommunications corporations; and the staggering scope of our stolen privacy or personal data as surveillance capitalism is weaponized and brutalized upon us, it is true that in many ways we are stifled from this oligarchy of information. Black/New Afrikan peoples, people with disabilities, trans and queer folks: those of us who lost out on the utopian hopes of the New Information Age were the most poised to gain from these new systems, and our loss was by design. One question now I aim to pose in these pieces is: how do we fight these racist

technology systems, ones that we are equipped to understand from our LIS background? Is it that we are stuck with these digital technologies, in which case what can we do with these systems that accommodate more of us rather than being terrible, violent experiences? I speak in my writing on intentionally *unfriendly* user design, from the SNAP application or writing to a loved one on carceral electronic communications systems like GTL or JPay. An ostracizing online experience that makes users throw up their hands in frustration is beneficial as a shadow purpose for these systems that profit from and enable social disappearance of our loved ones.

In LIS, a sizable portion of folks like myself grew up acculturated in the world of big data; and even more of us in LIS generally are equipped with the acuity to recognize, articulate, and deploy these tools. With the oft-cited Digital Divide widening deeper, how can we support people from all backgrounds to meaningfully understand and choose their relationships with these digital tools, that can lead to both pitfalls and self-determination? I offer this writing to newer and older-career library workers; students studying libraries and information maintenance, literacy, and empowerment. Abolition is about envisioning a world without cages; what more can we imagine after the premise of abolishing the institutional library in response to our current failings to *truly* instruct in information literacy and the transparency that our networks need? I believe we can approach library, archive, and information work in a radically new way, one that does not valorize the unattainable, violent notion of neutrality, and does not accept any repressive situation as fixed.

> A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that *situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation*. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which people feel themselves to be in control. If people, as historical beings necessarily engaged with other people in a movement of inquiry, did not control that movement, it would be (and is) a violation of their humanity. Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects.
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> *This movement of inquiry must be directed towards humanization—the people's historical vocation*. The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore, it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so. Attempting to be more human, individualistically, leads to having more, egotistically, a form of dehumanization. Not that it is not fundamental to have in order to be Human. Precisely because it is necessary, some people's having must not be allowed to constitute an obstacle to others having, must not consolidate the power of the former to crush the latter (Freire, 1970).

If you are interested in learning more or talking about: prison abolition; abolitionist frameworks within libraries/LIS/GLAM; critical histories of the unceded lands of the Miami and Lenape peoples known as Indiana; or dialectical, radical critiques of the library as an institution, please reach out to me! I would love to engage with you on this work, let's work together envisioning

the future of the information spaces we know we can build. Reach out by email at logra5@protonmail.ch. Lastly, here is a reading list outside of the works I cite in the pieces that outline some of the many roadmaps for abolitionist thinking and practice. Again, this list is by no means complete and is subject to my personal relationship with prison abolition. Beyond the superficial approaches of white folks who profit off DEI writings (Tim Wise, Robin DiAngelo) and reformist, profiteering mainstream liberal Black voices who co-opt radical Black theory; profit from continued state violence against Blackness; and implore us to support those politicians who will still ensnare us (DeRay McKesson, Shaun King), I encourage this list as a starting point to engage with the folks who are *most impacted* by the forces which they write about. Some sources are more academic in nature, and I try to include a variety of formats in this list:

Recommended Resources
Books:
- Dylan Rodríguez's recommended reading list (2016): "I suggest a deeper, collective, critical reading and discussion of those folks in the Hall of Fame: Audre Lorde, W.E.B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, Angela Davis, Paolo Freire, Haunani Kay Trask, Stuart Hall, the Combahee River Collective, Toni Morrison (recall the "Seven Days" organization from Song of Solomon), Ida B. Wells, the Civil Rights Congress (We Charge Genocide, 1951), Sonia Sanchez, Vine Deloria, and so many others. *The point is not merely to read and listen, it's to read and listen actively, collectively, and in conversation with other people*" (Rodríguez, 2016)
- All our trials : prisons, policing, and the feminist fight to end violence (Thuma, 2019)
- Are Prisons Obsolete (Davis, 2003)
- Assata: An Autobiography (Shakur, 1987)
- Beyond Survival (Dixon; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2020)
- Blood in My Eye (Jackson, 1971)
- Blood in the water : the Attica prison uprising of 1971 and its legacy (Thompson, 2016)
- Carceral Capitalism (Wang, 2018)
- Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology (Incite!, 2006)
- The End of Policing (Vitale, 2018)
- From the war on poverty to the war on crime : the making of mass incarceration in America (Hinton, 2016)
- Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California (Wilson Gilmore, 2nd ed 2018)
- Jailhouse lawyers : prisoners defending prisoners v. the USA (Abu-Jamal, 2009)
- Lumpen: the autobiography of Ed Mead (Mead, 2015)
- Love With Accountability (Shahidah Simmons, 2020)
- Prison by any other name : the harmful consequences of popular reforms (Schenwar & Law, 2020)
- The Revolution Starts at Home (Chen; Dulani; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2016)

Articles/reports:
- Airbrushing Revolution for the Sake of Abolition (James, 2020)

- [Being with the Land, Protects the Land – Leanne Betasamosake Simpson](#) (Simpson, 2020)
- [Erased – The Impact of FOSTA-SESTA and the Removal of Backpage 2020](#) (Hacking//Hustling, 2020)
- [In the Time of Trump: Housing, Whiteness, and Abolition](#) (Maharawal & McElroy, 2017)
- [Kamala Harris; Class Struggle and the Illusion of Identity in Capitalism](#) (Umi, 2020)
- [Understanding the Role of Police Towards Abolitionism: On Black Death as an American Necessity, Abolition, Non-Violence, and Whiteness](#) (Briond, 2020)
- [Sex Workers Are at the Forefront of the Fight Against Mass Surveillance and Big Tech](#) (Taylor, 2019)
- [White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS](#) (Hathcock, 2015)
- [Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families](#) (Ella Baker Center, 2015)
- [You're Gonna Screw Up](#) (Hathcock, 2016)

Videos:
- [Abolition 101](#) (Abolition MPLS, 2020)
- [Introduction to Mutual Aid - Mariame Kaba](#) (Project NIA & EFA Project Space, 2020)
- [Introduction to Restorative Justice](#) (Project NIA & EFA Project Space, 2020)
- [Moving at the Speed of Trust: Disability Justice and Transformative Justice](#) (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha & Fukui, 2020)
- [What is Accountability?](#) (Perez-Darby; Kelly; Maccani; Mingus; Shah; Todd, 2019)

Audio/podcasts:
- [Abolition Science](#) (n.d.)
- [Dylan Rodríguez, Part I: Abolition Is Our Obligation](#) (Beyond Prisons, 2020)
- [Dylan Rodríguez, Part II: Police Accountability Is Casualty Management](#) (Beyond Prisons, 2020)
- [Indigenous Space and Decolonizing Prison Abolition : The Final Straw : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming](#) (The Final Straw, 2019)
- [Readings & Media](#) (Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, n.d.)
- [You Can't Understand Capitalism Without Race](#) (Black Agenda Radio, 2020)

Visual guides/worksheets/posters:
- [Abolitionist De-Escalation and the Library](#) (Anastasi, 2020)
- [Medical Industrial Complex Visual](#) (Mingus, 2015)
- [Pods and Pod Mapping Worksheet](#) (Mingus, 2016)

Study guides/resource lists:
- [An Indigenous Abolitionist Study Guide](#) (Yellowhead Institute, 2020)
- [BAR Book Forum: "Black Study and Abolition"](#) (Boko, 2020)
- [Black & Pink Prison Abolition Syllabus - Prison Library Support Network](#) (Black & Pink, n.d.)
- [Criminalizing Survival Curricula](#) (Survived & Punished, 2018)
- [Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List](#) (Strand, 2020)

- [If You're New to Abolition: Study Group Guide](#) (Abolition Journal, 2020)
- [Mutual Aid Toolbox](#) (Big Door Brigade, n.d.)
- [Prison Abolition Syllabus 2.0](#) (Berger; Felber; Gross; Hinton; Love, 2018)
- [Resources](#) (The Kuwasi Balagoon Liberation School, n.d.)
- [Syllabus: A History of Anti-Black Racism in Medicine](#) (Johnson; Mitchell; Nuriddin, 2020)
- [We Here: Anti-Racism Resources](#) (We Here, 2020)

Part 1.

An introductory guide for library workers to the U.S. prison-industrial complex and prison abolition

Land Acknowledgement

This writing is coming from the ancestral, unceded lands of the Miami and Lenape Indians, and I wish to pay my respect to elders both past and present. The original peoples of Indiana have stewarded this land throughout the generations, and the state of Indiana specifically, with a name meaning "Land of the Indians" or "Indian Land", directly derives from this territorial history. In 1768, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy reserved around 5000 acres in present-day West Virginia and deeded this land to a Philadelphia trading company trading with natives of the Ohio River valley including the Shawnee. The company named their land claim in honor of this gift, calling it the Indiana; in 1798, the new U.S. Supreme Court extinguished the company's right to the name and land. Two years later, Congress applied the Indiana Land Company's name to the new territory that forms part of today's Indiana (Hodgin, 1903).

At the confluence of the Saint Joseph, Saint Marys and Maumee rivers, Kekionga was founded around 1704 as the capital of the Miami peoples in present day Fort Wayne. The Miami are a loose association of six independent nations include Atchakangouen (Atchatchakangouen, Miami Proper), Kilatika, Mengkonkia (Mengakonia), Pepikokia, Piankashaw, and Wea (Newcalenous, Ouiatenon); by 1796, the Pepikokia had been absorbed by Piankashaw, and the divisions after this time were: Eel River, Miami, Piankashaw, and Wea (Sultzman, 1999).
The land that makes up modern-day Indianapolis was maintained by the Miami. On the banks of Pleasant Run was the camp of the Lenape, or Delaware, peoples—originally from the Chesapeake Bay area and forced west by settlers to present-day Indianapolis. By the 1770s, the Lenape peoples stayed in this area with permission of the Miami.

Through the contentious Treaty of Fort Wayne (1809), William Henry Harrison acquired the U.S. government more than 250 million acres in what later became central Indiana. In 1811's Battle of Tippecanoe, Harrison's claimed-victory via outnumbering Tecumseh's confederacy opened up central Indiana to more settlers to travel farther north than the River valley. The land now known as Indianapolis was ceded by the Miami and Lenape Indians through Cession 99 and the Treaty of St. Mary's, signed in 1818. This ceded tract consisted of present-day Indiana between the Wabash River and the old boundary established by the Treaty of Fort Wayne, in addition to creating the Great Miami Reserve in present-day Howard and parts of Wabash, Miami, Cass, Clinton, Tipton, Madison, and Grant counties. Through additional treaties, the state acquired the Great Miami Reservation by 1840 and removed the Miami west of the Mississippi River.

Some Eastern Miamis managed to resist removal and remain in Indiana after several battles and a negotiated treaty, but their rights as Native Americans were terminated by the U.S. government in the late 1800s and have not been restored to this date. Unrecognized Miami and Shawnee peoples remaining in Indiana today include: the Miami Nation of Indiana, located in Peru, Indiana; the Upper Kispoko Band of the Shawnee Nation, of Kokomo, Indiana; and the Wea Indian Tribe, of Lafayette and Clinton, Indiana. The Miami Nation of Indiana currently

needs assistance preserving the historic building that is home to their archives, childcare, an emergency shelter, space for weddings and celebrations, and more resources: donate to their fundraiser [here](#).

A land acknowledgment is only a first step and does not stand in for relationships, study, reflection, and action, but it can begin to point especially the descendants of settlers (hereby referred to as "white people") towards deeper possibilities for what decolonizing relationships with people and place must look like. "Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land for more generations than can be counted. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference"; in speaking on the modern-day effects of prisons and incarceration in America, we must begin this effort by reviving the buried shames and honoring truth (US Department of Arts and Culture, 2016).

Learn more about ancestral lands of your location with the following visualizers:
[Native Land Digital](#)
[Invasion of America](#)
[Tribal Connections US Forest Service, Federal and Indian Lands and Land Cessions Viewer](#)

For more information, see:
[Library of Congress American Memory Indian Land Cessions in the United States, 1784-1894](#)

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Introduction

For the last two and a half months, streets once emptied by COVID-19 have been filled with protesters in over 700 U.S. cities and towns. People are demanding justice in the wake of recent racist violent and deadly police terror committed almost exclusively against Black people in America, in particular the murders of Rayshard Brooks, in Atlanta; Tony McDade, in Tallahassee; Sean Reed and McHale Rose in Indianapolis; Breonna Taylor, in Louisville; and George Floyd, in Minneapolis. Of course, this recalls recent racist state-sanctioned murders of Eric Garner, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Sandra Bland, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile. People showing support for Black lives and loved individuals are being teargassed, shot at with rubber bullets, losing their lives or limbs, their family members, and loved ones to continued cop terror. Of course, this is not a new moment for the U.S., not even in recent history, but is a surge in resistance against the violence that has dominated the post-Civil Rights era specifically and forms the foundation of the stolen lands on which the U.S. stands.

It's vital that mainstream America is beginning to more openly discuss racist police terror in terms that depict its true nature. Conversations on limiting police use of force, ending contracts with school resource officers (cops), or defunding the police altogether, are finally proliferating

into mainstream discourse in a way that hasn't experienced this level of visibility before. We must hold up those who lost their lives not as martyrs for a broken system but as loving reasons to act urgently and thoughtfully to create a world beyond these false systems. Our analysis of how unjust these killings of disproportionately Black, Indigenous, women, and transgender women specifically lost from our lives on the outside must extend to the people incarcerated, disappeared, punished, pushed to their deaths with limited access to necessary medication, health services, and social services living inside prisons, jails, and detention centers across the country.

The failures of this system stems far beyond Trump, though his administration has committed serious crimes against humanity through the expansion of ICE's detention centers, concentration camps for migrant poor people of the Global South. Prison reformists describe the American criminal justice system as being "broken", but, as wise advocates of prisoners' rights often described as prison abolitionists have noted, the system is built to neglect the populace deemed disposable by the prison's inherent design. During the colonization of the U.S., prison abolitionists Firehawk & Ben Turk (2017) write:

> The European colonizers' constructions of the indigenous as 'savage' and the African slave as a 'non-person' created a durable outsider status that has since been legally transmuted and imposed upon populations deemed undesirable, or in some cases, less than human (Fanon, 2008; Wynter, 2003). The residual echoes of the 'other' are felt from the initial colonial contact with indigenous Americans and Africans, through to the slave holds, plantations, 'Indian' removal policies and reservations, Jim Crow segregation policies, boarding schools, Japanese internment camps, conversion therapy, redlining, and the war on drugs (Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

Firehawk & Turk point to the fact that this is embedded into our architecture and other civil resources. Programs may at face-value appear to be useful for a community, like hiring school resource officers (cops) in schools to "assist" with student misconduct, but in function these cops criminalize youth and those experiencing emotional health crises or disabling conditions, all perpetuating the [school-to-prison pipeline](#). A recent victory for students in Madison, Wisconsin, Madison Metropolitan School District terminated their contract with the Madison Police Department, a testament to the four years of youth-led advocacy on this campaign for what "safer schools" really look like (Fowlkes & Walters, 2020). With many institutional solutions or reforms, proposed to ameliorate the problems caused by these same neglectful institutions, violence is often exacerbated when we look to the carceral state for answers to our local conflicts. I will speak more on this concept later while introducing abolition. As evident by racist police killings today that disproportionately but not exclusively profits from violence against Black or people of the African diaspora, from military-grade technology on local cop patrols, these systems of conquest extend beyond the original people targeted by settler colonialism and chattel slavery, applying a "foundational eliminatory logic" against anyone who is "unable or unwilling to conform to a white supremacist heteropatriarchal society, but especially indigenous and racialized communities, along with houseless, poor, and/or queer populations" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

Prison and policing abolitionist and scholar on genocide Dylan Rodríguez (2016) writes, in the face of Civil Rights gains throughout the last half century, the racist U.S. state has "metastasized" through the creation of "new infrastructures and protocols of civil and social death (the industrialized, militarized policing and criminalization complexes) as well as proto-genocidal methods of targeted, utterly normalized suffering, misery, and physiological vulnerability for peoples on the other side of White Being (the paradigm and methodology of human being that we have inherited as universal, unquestioned, and godlike" (Rodríguez, 2016). Rodríguez cites examples of targeted civil death infrastructures, including, "the levees in New Orleans' Ninth Ward, strategic ecological disruption of indigenous lifeways throughout the hemisphere and in Native Hawaii, redirection and isolation of toxic water to the poorest, Blackest, and Brownest of places, and the seemingly endless continuity of legalized police assassinations of ordinary (and asymmetrically poor, Black, and Brown) people that stretches back as far as modern policing has existed" (Rodríguez, 2016).

As this moment in history should demonstrate, capitalism quickly adjusts to current radical messages in order to diffuse them: a corporation announcing a change to racist packaging or a mayor or college president using "systematic racism" in an email, are essentially attempts to diffuse and neglecting our anger at this lack of institutionalized care for ourselves and our loved ones. Library and information workers, most of whom are affiliated with state institutions by the nature of their job, have a unique role to play in recognizing and combating state-sanctioned violence through standing up against prisons and policing in our libraries and localities. Our institutions are one of the better examples of a state institution at work for the people, like Alison Macrina (2020) of the Library Freedom project recently noted, libraries are "one of the most socialist institutions that we [still] have in the US in 2020" (Macrina, 2020). For example, "You can go into a library and you don't even have to use it for its explicit purpose of looking at books or magazines or computers. You can just go there and be, even if you're the kind of person that late capitalism has decided is not worthwhile. To the library, you are. And this is a radical idea" (Macrina, 2020).

If we break down what we institutionally treat as isolated issues of currently/formerly incarcerated people (or related and overlapping groups including people experiencing houselessness) into the information queries that comprise these needs, library workers can coordinate our skills with these folks' experiential knowledge to imagine what tools or access they may need to move beyond just surviving. This is a valuable opportunity for intervention in the prison-industrial complex to stop further decimation of neighborhoods, families, and communities and bring people together separated by pervasive, intentional myths about who the other peoples in their neighborhood or city are. Through these imaginative efforts at intervention in the prison-industrial complex, we can:
1. Make amends and material reparations for librarianship's reformatory/punitive history committed primarily against Black and Indigenous people; immigrants; working-class/poor people; and gender and sexual minorities broadly.
2. 2. Reenvision what library spaces for *and* by the people can flourish as without carceral bounds, this can include removing the library space itself from inside the institution.

I am a library student, worker, and have been an active participant in organizing for prison abolition for the last two years. I continue to learn about abolition, an liberatory framework spanning centuries and directly channeling the spirit of 19th-century slavery abolitionists Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, and just as with abolition of previous centuries, prison abolition of our time has been carried by those most impacted, primarily Black cis- and transgender women, in tandem with immigrants and people of the Global South. In addition to group and individual study, I participate in correspondence and visitation (pre-COVID-19, that is) with people incarcerated inside women's and men's facilities. My interest in this work was piqued not only by my family of origin's ties to the justice system and carceral psychiatric facilities (described by Mia Mingus as part of the medical-industrial complex), but also through an Inside-Out course I took at Monroe County Jail as an undergraduate in 2014. Inside-Out courses bring "traditional" (free) and "non-traditional" (incarcerated) students together to learn from one another and form transformational connections/relationships inside a jail or prison classroom. Courses like these are one important mode for intervention in the narrative of who is incarcerated and why. I will talk about institutional efforts like the Inside-Out program for a holistic education of people with limited knowledge on the justice system in my final part of this writing series on prison abolition and libraries.

Seven months into 2020, 21 transgender or gender non-conforming people have been murdered or lost their lives violently. As a trans nonbinary person, my experiences navigating ignorant library workplaces or archives that are hostile in organizational structure impact how I view my role in the library. Inclusion and representation of gender non-conforming and LGBTQ+ peoples is a priority for me, and I know the door won't be open for people like me until it is open for every of us. My whiteness or being misread as a masculine cisgender woman affords me in many ways even the capability to work in libraries, to have been accepted and made it through a MLIS program, or to feel mostly accepted in the many libraries spaces I've spent time in.

I've learned from my incarcerated friends who cannot access the information they need to survive with the broken information outlets available inside prisons or jails, alongside friends post-incarceration who must adapt to technological changes like the perils of college research using a discovery search after nearly two decades without internet access. Library and information workers must work critically, considerately, swiftly, and in tandem with people who are currently/formerly incarcerated to serve incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals in what can be broadly described as information needs, including anything from: completing schoolwork, finding companies that will rent to or hire people with felonies, answering legal reference questions via written mail, providing resources and boosting reports of facility concerns, and offering video visitation and targeted programming for families with locked up loved ones. Every single person disappeared behind a wall is a feeling human being who deserves compassion, respect, and the potential to grow through finding liberatory knowledge through information access.

I wish to stay cognizant of my role as a white/euro-american person with no previous incarceration through this writing project and as such, I attempt to avoid editorializing incarcerated people's experiences. I share the valuable conclusions I have only come to

through my relationships with people who are incarcerated. My vantage point in this writing approach will be necessarily limited. As S Lamble (2015) wrote, "The danger of using academic research is that it perpetuates the assumption that prisoners' knowledge is less valid or legitimate than institutional knowledge. As such, I want to emphasize that much of my own analysis would be impossible without the knowledge, experience, and analyses that prisoners have shared with me over the years" (Lamble, 2015). I encourage readers to not only to conduct further research more specific to your locale and situation, but also to engage in correspondence, as participating in inside-outside relationships has a personal value that words here cannot fully capture.

Through this project, I hope to emphasize that radical ideas on policing and punishment are through previous and continued efforts by many Black/New Afrikan folks specifically, I am grateful for their insights, energy, and labor, reached through lived experience over primarily an academic interest as mine in some capacities is. Abolitionists, as the name entails, have been at this work since the founding of this country. Long-haul abolitionist organizers like Mariame Kaba encourage us to think creatively to cooperatively build the care our networks require to move us to a more just world beyond prisons. There is still so much for me to learn about what abolition will look like, and I offer these writings as a way to encourage the growth of productive and materially focused thinking and conversations, morphed into sustained and supported actions, that we as librarians and information workers can undertake to meet people's needs in a more holistic and encompassing capacity than we are able to offer from our institutional roles.
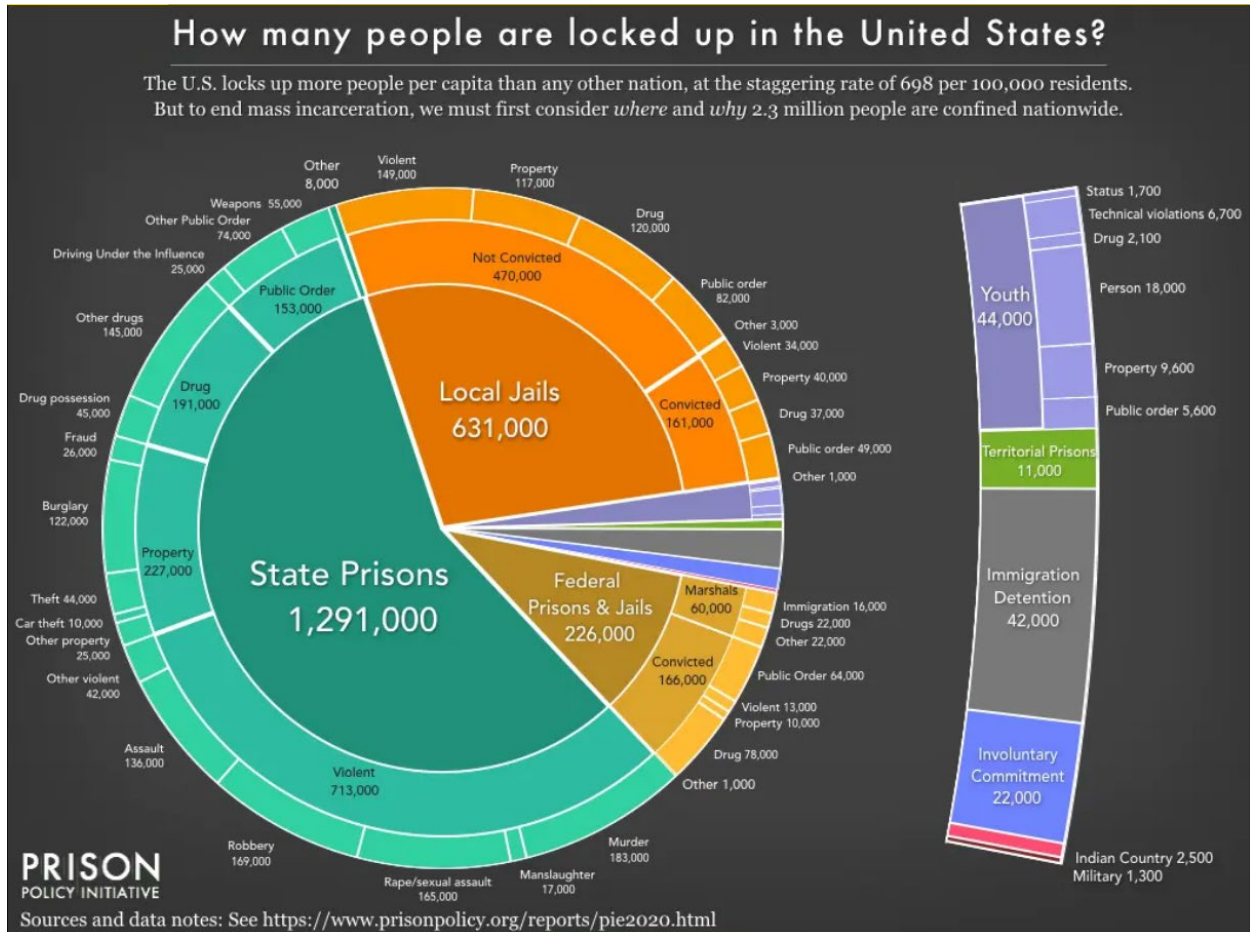
At this juncture in U.S. history, many "well-meaning white folks", notably those who work in these service/reformatory institutional positions like libraries and educational spaces, are looking at the violence around us, approaching the learned violence inside us, and wondering what we can do to fight this constant bombardment of state and interpersonal violence committed against primarily BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color). Malcolm X encouraged us over 50 years ago to use history as a mirror, reflecting these lessons using our courageous and necessary voices, and actively working within our "well-meaning white folk" networks to smash racism, the racist institutions that prop it up, and rebuilding anew following the lead of those most affected (Haley, 1965). In all of our temporally shifting ways of labeling ourselves, some more physically apparent than others, each one of us needs a unified front to survive what we're up against; my liberation as a transgender white/euro-american queer sick person is directly bound to the liberation of Black/New Afrikan, Latinx, Indigenous people; queer, gay, or straight; disabled or temporaily able-bodied. Times like the ones we find ourselves in offer us an often fleeting moment to experience the scope of the violence and love around us, once we take the first step of removing necessarily placed blinders.

As library workers, we have valuable training, not primarily via LIS pedagogy, but through our lived experiences and emotional knowledge in relation to how we approach organizing, presenting, and collecting information. We can approach this training as a way to build our new world equitably for all, or make the choice, as J Edgar Hoover did with his Library of Congress background, to turn this ability to classify knowledge against people. I hope we choose the former. These skills are vital for the new world we are tasked with building, today. Change is not

only inevitable but already here; avenues have opened up discursively, pedagogically, institutionally that offer us a new way of doing things. But there is a significant difference between trying to fix what's designed to be broken, like the #8cantwait agenda, compared to embracing "non-reformist reforms", as radical geographer and abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore speaks on, which I will return to later in this piece. This piece will provide a general overview of who is incarcerated in the U.S and why this is the case. By no means is this a comprehensive depiction of prisons globally, and there are vast differences between U.S. states. I will be speaking primarily of my experiences in the state of Indiana and issues affecting people held captive in the U.S., including migrants from the Global South; Black/New Afrikan people; women and criminalized survivors; and transgender people specifically. Then I will outline the intent and effects of incarceration, as well as providing further introduction to the ongoing struggles for the abolition of prisons and policing in the U.S., two integral components of what is described as the prison-industrial complex. We will briefly touch on why this information should matter to you as a library worker or someone who studies library and information science. Following pieces will explore the library as a product of the enlightenment, functioning as a reformatory/punitive institution plagued by embedded white supremacy, then I will explore what you as a library worker or student can do to assist folks who are currently/previously incarcerated in meaningfully addressing their informational queries or needs.

Who is incarcerated in the U.S.?

How many people are locked up in the United States?

The U.S. locks up more people per capita than any other nation, at the staggering rate of 698 per 100,000 residents. But to end mass incarceration, we must first consider *where* and *why* 2.3 million people are confined nationwide.

[Pie chart graphic from Prison Policy Initiative showing the number of people incarcerated in the United States is 2.3 million people in 2020. The chart breaks down where people are locked up, including the approximately 56 percent of people confined in U.S. state prisons. For image source and data notes, see: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html]

Currently, 2.3 million people of all ages and backgrounds are being detained by the U.S. in 1,833 state prisons, 110 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,134 local jails, 218 immigration detention facilities, and 80 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories. The U.S, significantly incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. Less than 9 percent of all incarcerated people are held in private prisons; the vast majority of incarcerated people are detained in publicly-owned prisons and jails (one common reformist pitfall, as I will speak on later) (Prison Policy Initiative, 2020).

Each year, over 600,000 people in the U.S. are sentenced to *prison*, and people go to *jail* 10.6 million times each year. 52,000 youth are detained in the United States, 1 in 10 of whom in adult facilities. Black people make up 13 percent of the U.S. population and over 40 percent of people behind bars. Women's incarceration rates have risen faster than men's consistently for decades, in part due to levels of poverty and inability to pay bail. There are 840,000 people on

parole, 3.6 million people on probation, and millions more people who have completed their sentence but are still marked with the stigmas of being labeled a criminal, which comes with barriers to employment and housing. In 2016, at least 168,000 people were incarcerated for "technical violations" of probation or parole, meaning not for a new crime. The median felony bail bond amount, $10,000, is the equivalent of 8 months' income for the typical detained defendant. As a consequence, poor or working-class people are disproportionately punished by pretrial detention (Prison Policy Initiative, 2020).

Community supervision programs promoted as alternatives to incarceration, namely probation, leads to ensnarement in cycles of incarceration. This will become further evident with the introduction of another reformist solution, the rise of Electronic Monitoring (EM), GPS-connected ankle bracelets that track people on probation, parole, pretrial release, and migrants seeking asylum. According to local advocates against EM, "Marion County charges a minimum of $14/day for EM. At that rate, people will spend $1.25k in less than 3 months, and more than $5k in a year" (Indiana Against E-Carceration, n.d.). Indiana counties specifically are some of the biggest users of EM in the U.S., tripling in use over the last decade. Furthermore, as library workers may be particularly prone to understanding, the reliability of these networked anklets is dubious. EM anklets are wont to falsely report an individual's location; will lose charge and die rapidly even after consistent charging; and frequently lose connection, even in areas well-served by GPS (Indiana Against E-Carceration, n.d.). Our digital systems replicate human bias, and the risk algorithms that courts use to decide bail and other pretrial supervision (like EM) are notoriously racist. "For example, they count how many times a person has had contact with the police. As long as black, brown and working-class neighborhoods are hyper-policed, algorithms based on police contact will increase the racism and class bias of the criminal justice system" (Indiana Against E-Carceration, n.d). Replacing bail with networked systems like EM is no improvement for those most targeted by incarceration. For more on algorithmic bias, see Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism (Noble, 2018).

Immigrant Detention

The last four years bore witness to the horrifically accelerating U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) detentions of migrants primarily from Central and South America which ramped up under the [Obama](#) Administration and rapidly expanded under Trump. ICE detentions punish people escaping subpar living conditions in the Global South exacerbated and created by the continued American imperialist project, including through deathly sanctions and coups of democratically elected socialist governments. For example, Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández was again recently linked to drug trafficking by U.S. prosecutors. Carasik (2020) writes, "Just as the charges against a former associate of Hernández were announced, the United States proclaimed its Asylum Cooperative Agreement with Honduras, allowing the United States to begin deporting non-Honduran asylum seekers there, even though the beleaguered country does not satisfy conditions to safely accept migrants, and some 76,000 Hondurans are seeking asylum elsewhere" (Carasik, 2020). Detention efforts and policies are directly linked to the larger geopolitical imperialist agenda of the U.S.

ICE is now the largest immigrant detention system in the world; Carasik notes that as of May 9, 2020, ICE was detaining "28,000 immigrants in detention in around 200 facilities across the country" (Carasik, 2020). 3,600 unaccompanied children are detained in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), awaiting placement with parents, family members, or friends; "while these children are not held for any criminal or delinquent offense, most are held in shelters or even juvenile placement facilities under detention-like conditions" (Prison Policy Initiative, 2020). A strong majority of these individuals are detained in for-profit facilities operated privately from the state. Back in 2017, giant for-profit prison corporations CoreCivic (formerly known as Corrections Corporation of America or CCA) and GEO Group held more than half the private detention contracts with ICE, profiting over $985 million from these contracts. A report from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2019 found obscene violations of minimal detention standards at many ICE facilities, and it was noted that ICE routinely fails to hold contractors accountable to its own performance standards (Carasik, 2020).

Just as in prisons and jails across the country, conditions in ICE facilities have worsened in the wake of COVID-19, leading to further labor exploitation and increased rates of infection. Carasik writes, "inflated prices for commissary goods 'motivate' detained migrants to work—often for as little as a dollar a day—so they can purchase items for basic hygiene critical to avoiding infections. It is a cruel irony that the same government banning others from hiring workers without authorization circumvents these restrictions itself, and employs more undocumented workers than anyone else" (Carasik, 2020). ICE is now notorious for systematic failures in providing adequate healthcare to people detained by the agency. Carasik writes that "pervasive and egregious preexisting flaws in the system" were exacerbated by the pandemic and related crises, including "understaffing and other cost-cutting measures, overcrowding, and lack of sanitary conditions" (Carasik, 2020). Some individuals being detained by ICE are engaging in hunger strikes and other modes of protest, in many cases being retaliated against for speaking out via officers' administration of mace and solitary confinement. Furthermore, "in an ominous reprise of its brutal family separation policies, lawyers say ICE is forcing parents to choose between indefinite detention with their children or being separated from them" (Carasik, 2020).

It is crucial to talk about ICE detention for the specific struggles these incarcerated peoples face. Distinguishing between incarceration of individuals detained within immigration detention centers compared to jails or local or federal prisons is important because these detention experiences can vary. As I previously mentioned, ICE facilities are almost exclusively run by for-profit corporations, whereas the vast majority of people detained in prisons and jails are in publicly run facilities. An overemphasis on the peril of private prisons can deteriorate concerns about the very real profiteering and violence faced by people detained in state-run/public facilities. I will speak more on prisons managed by individual states, as that is where most of my experience lies, but I include further resources for you to learn about the connections between ICE detention and other carceral facilities in my appendix.

Many people who are locked up were already experiencing the effects of systematic disenfranchisement before becoming detained, often the basis of the unfair detention itself; obstacles such as access to financial resources, work, or healthcare are further increased while

an individual is incarcerated. A prime example of this is an incarcerated person's earning capacities while detained. By and large, most prisons do not have labor positions for everyone, and people who are without work are referred to as idle. A working person incarcerated in New York in 2017 made between $0.10-$0.33 an hour for a non-corrections-industry job or $0.62 an hour for a state-owned business. Work in prison is compulsory with little regulation, oversight, or rights and protections for incarcerated workers (Prison Policy Initiative, 2017). Costs for medicine, [commissary](#) items such as tampons, toothpaste, or snacks, and newer communications technologies such as video visitation services are marked up even more than they are on the outside, which makes obtaining the bare necessities nearly impossible for people who are incarcerated.

As S Lamble (2015) writes, changes to and expansion of carceral punishment trends are "closely related to changes in the global political economy; as governments continue to slash welfare, education, housing, and health budgets on the one hand, they increase spending on prisons, police, military, and border controls on the other" (Lamble, 2015). Through this, we can see that the expansion of the prison and policing apparatuses disproportionately target particular groups of people, in specific BIPOC, "poor and working class people, youth, immigrants, women, people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, as well as queer, trans, and gender-non-conforming people, who are increasingly forced into greater cycles of poverty, criminalization, incarceration, and violence" (Lamble, 2015).

As library workers, we must look to the individuals caught at multiple points of the state's crossfire, or consider the perspectives of those most neglected by the state systems in our communities instead of solely choosing to implement larger professional-cultural trends or what board members, directors, or deans mandate. Through utilizing a library position, one that's inextricably rooted in its reformatory role as wing of the white supremacist project of the settling state (my next writing following this work will primarily address this claim), as a vessel to amplify community needs surrounding compounding structural violences, librarians can work towards the continuous goal of transforming our "silence into language and action", as Audre Lorde so famously wrote, through establishing your "function in that transformation and to recognize [your] role as vital within that transformation" (Lorde, 1977).

Educator and scholar Eve Ewing (2019) writes, "history is rife with examples of Black women whose tremendous legacies in the world of political organizing are accompanied by a relative absence in the dominant narratives we tell ourselves about the times in which they lived... One of the enduring gifts of the movement for Black lives is a renewed interest in another vision of leadership, starkly divergent from the one that prevailed in our elementary school history textbooks" (Ewing, 2019). In the spirit of this message, I aim to lift up these populations caught at the intersection of targeting by the prison-industrial complex, primarily Black women who have had to take the burden on of fighting to survive as they are the fastest growing rate of people incarcerated, facing the absence of many loved ones in their lives as Black men make up 1 of every 3 people incarcerated in men's prisons in this country. By no means am I able to cover the scope of racist and gender-based state persecution by police, prisons, jails, or linked projects such as the medical industrial complex. I will briefly speak of a few populations who are

at-risk for state targeting that I am most connected with the struggles of, but I encourage you to conduct further research, especially to hear primarily from those who are forced into participation in an inequitable criminal justice system, the cogs making up the prison-industrial complex.

Incarceration of Black/New Afrikan people

Many criticisms of the prison-industrial complex point to this system expanding after the political end of chattel slavery and in the wake of mid-20th-century rebellions. In *Soledad Brother: The Prison Writings of George Jackson* (1970), one such rebel, revolutionary Marxist-Leninist George L. Jackson, wrote:

> The chattel is property, one man exercising the property rights of his established economic order, the other man as that property. The owner can move that property or hold it in one square yard of the earth's surface; he can let it breed other slaves or make it breed other slaves; he can sell it, beat it, work it, maim it, fuck it, kill it. But if he wants to keep it and enjoy all of the benefits that property of this kind can render, he must feed it sometimes, he must clothe it against the elements; he must provide a modicum of shelter. Chattel slavery is an economic condition which manifests itself in the total loss or absence of self-determination.

> The new slavery, the modern variety of chattel slavery updated to disguise itself, places the victim in a factory or, in the case of most blacks, in support roles inside and around the factory system (service trades) working for a wage. However, if work cannot be found in or around the factory complex, today's neo-slavery does not even allow for a modicum of food and shelter. You are free – to starve. The sense and meaning of slavery comes through as a result of our ties to the wage. You must have it; without it you would starve or expose yourself to the elements. One's entire day centers around acquisition of the wage...

> If you don't make any more in wages than you need to live, then you are a neo-slave. You qualify if you can't afford to leave California for New York. If you cannot visit Zanzibar, Havana, [Beijing], or even Paris when you get the urge, you are a slave. If you're held in one spot on this earth because of your economic status, it is just the same as being held in one spot because you are the owner's property. Here in the black colony the pigs still beat and maim us. They murder us and call it justifiable homicide. A brother who had a smoking pipe in his belt was shot in the back of the head. Neo-slavery is an economic condition, a small knot of men exercising the property rights of the slave as if he were, in fact, property. Succinctly: an economic condition which manifests itself in the total loss or absence of self-determination. Only after this is understood and accepted can we go on to the dialectic that will help us in a remedy (Jackson, 1970).

Expanding this definition of neo-slavery, while following the praxis of Black/New Afrikan people who make up the targeted population of both chattel enslavement and prison enslavement alike, was a foundational contribution by Jackson in the height of the Prison Rebellion Years. New Afrikan Black Panther Party Minister of Defense Kevin "Rashid" Johnson (2020), currently

incarcerated in the state of Indiana, continues this connection to labor/wage slavery and incarceration, writing, "If the average Amerikan worker took the notion to refuse to participate in the wage slavery economic arrangement, he will be inevitably left and forced by the system to become a vagrant and resort to other 'criminal' acts in order to survive. And if a large number of workers elected to also abandon the wage system, they are subject to being forced by the government back to work under such laws as the Taft-Hartley Act (29 U.S. code sections 141 et seq.) under the penalty of imprisonment or fines should they refuse to obey" (Johnson, 2020). Hereby, our "choices" in work are significantly limited, most substantially seen for BIPOC living in urban areas; people with disabilities; and trans women and femmes who survive through criminalized sex work.

Johnson continues, "The worker has no discretion in the matter. Amerika's economic system rides upon the enslavement of over half the population, who've been conditioned by the corporate media, universal compulsory educational system, political mouthpieces, and the indoctrinated nuclear family from birth to believe that their slavery is freedom and that the erosion of their minds under divided labor is conducive to strength" (Johnson, 2020). Unpacking the eugenicist foundations of the colleges where we were educated, for example, will be incomplete work without continual interrogation and drawing necessary connections between our locales and institutions.

Divisions exist on the primary motivating factors accelerating the lecherous expansion of the prison industrial complex, but some say this development can be attributed to racial capitalism, a term contextualized in this manner through the works of Cedric Robinson, a Black Marxist scholar and former Director of the Center for Black Studies Research at University of California Santa Barbara. His student, Robin D.G. Kelley (2017), notes in paraphrasing Robinson's conception of racial capitalism:

> Capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide. Capitalism was "racial" not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western feudal society…

> Robinson suggested that racialization within Europe was very much a colonial process involving invasion, settlement, expropriation, and racial hierarchy. Insisting that modern European nationalism was completely bound up with racialist myths, he reminds us that the ideology of Herrenvolk (governance by an ethnic majority) that drove German colonization of central Europe and "Slavic" territories "explained the inevitability and the naturalness of the domination of some Europeans by other Europeans." To acknowledge this is not to diminish anti-black racism or African slavery, but rather to recognize that capitalism was not the great modernizer giving birth to the European proletariat as a universal subject, and the "tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus

> not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" (Kelley, 2017).

Thus, racial capitalism mobilized on existing racist myths, undoubtedly perpetuated by and at the gain of the state and industry in charge, in order to bolster the settler-punishment state. In essence, those in charge mobilize these manufactured divisions between us in order to extract further profit from each person at the margin. Recently, this feels most evident with liberal stereotypes about poor whites who support Trump as a brand; in the wake of important conversations on white privilege or systematic racism, poor white folks may interpret messaging associated with the Movement for Black Lives as a personal attack on their white, poor lives instead, since many of these individuals too are lumpenized, hardly surviving, and don't feel that this is acknowledged in broader liberal/progressive messaging. These white folks' conclusion, however, to still cling to false notions of American exceptionalism and the superiority of the constructed white racial identity by supporting his regime, is remarkably false and destructive.

Made evident through critical interventions in racial discourse through a book banned in many prisons, *The New Jim Crow* (2010, 2nd ed. released January 2020), Michelle Alexander's work directly points out that during the Civil Rights Movement, conservatives linked "civil disobedience to criminality and 'lawlessness', rather than to a defined political movement", such as the national liberation movements, like the Black Liberation Army and the American Indian Movement, vital efforts of what's described as the New Left. The state's disruption of the fight for national liberation movements set the stage for "a much larger campaign of mass incarceration through the ideological framework of 'colorblindness'", stating that progress was made because a person of *any* race or national background would do a proportional amount of time to another for breaking the law. "Under this façade, elitist political discourses marked the targets of carceral confinement as 'deserving' of its consequences rather than victims of institutionalized racial control. Criminalization represents a pinnacle of state repression, attempting to control unruliness and prevent disruptions to 'law and order' while maintaining status quo racial and class interests" (Alexander, as cited in Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

When abolitionists call for defunding local police departments, jails, detention centers, and prisons in the U.S., we are invoking much more than this contemporary crisis of racist state violence, which is murderous on a systematic level to be irrefutably sure. The conversations depicting this particular moment cannot be reduced to "police brutality" or even surface-level analyses of the asymmetrical structuring of who is incarcerated. As Dylan Rodríguez (2016) notes, this racist police terror of today is primarily derivative of gains won in the Civil Rights era, that is "inseparable from the emergence of post-1960s technologies of criminalization that resonate with—rather than offend—the (defrauded) dream of vindicated Civil Rights citizenship. After all, the racial/racist state is still being called upon to legislate, protect, and serve the Civil Rights Citizen, even as it is the subject of militant demands for reform that will align it with the Civil Rights versions of America and The Dream" (Rodríguez, 2016). This contradiction depicts the deep layers of "gendered racist statecraft in the post-optimist's Age of Obama" (Rodríguez, 2016).

women/criminalization of survivors

In "A Cyborg Manifesto", Donna Haraway (1991) notes that especially since feminism's second wave, there has been "Painful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line", which "has made the concept of woman elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's dominations of each other" (Haraway, 1991). This is most evident today in reactionary feminist (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists, or TERFs) claims against transgender women and transfeminine people's legitimate claims to womanhood. Haraway claims that the idea of the "common woman" was needingly struck down by the affirming work of feminists of color; on championing the term women of color, "this identity marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship. Unlike the 'woman' of some streams of the white women's movement in the United States, there is no naturalization of the matrix, or at least this is what Sandoval argues is uniquely available through the power of oppositional consciousness" (Haraway, 1991). Women are found in many bodies and forms, and I wish to prioritize space for this truth in this and the following sections on the criminalization of women and survivors of abuse, as well as for transgender women specifically.

In 2019, nearly half of all incarcerated women were detained in local jails; this is a far higher rate than jail rates for people classified as men. Though jail is often a place for pre-trial detention, a large proportion of the women in jail are held there after their conviction. Gullapalli (2019) notes, "Although this points to a higher incidence of shorter sentences, jail incarceration is also problematic for a number of reasons. Healthcare, including mental health care, is typically far worse in jail. Phone calls are often far more expensive. Some jails prohibit contact visits. And in some states, for some women, jails may be further away from their families" (Gullapalli, 2019). Furthermore, according to a 2016 report from the Vera Institute of Justice cited in Gullapalli (2019), 86 percent of women in jail have a history of surviving abuse, and 77 percent have a history of intimate partner violence. Compounding on top of everyday heteropatriarchal violence, these experiences of violence contribute to significant rates of PTSD among incarcerated/previously incarcerated women. "For too many women who survive abuse and violence, particularly women of color and women living in poverty, the support and the care needed to cope with and heal from pain and trauma is simply not available" (Gullapalli, 2019).

Violence against women and feminine people, including the criminalization of survivors of assault and violence, comprises one of the fastest growing demographics of people behind bars. As abolitionist group Survived + Punished (2016) writes: "Once incarcerated or detained, many women (including trans women) and trans & gender non-conforming people experience sexual violence from guards and others. Being controlled by police, prosecutors, judges, immigration enforcement, homeland security, detention centers, and prisons is often integrated with the experience of domestic violence and sexual assault" (Survived + Punished, 2016).

The group describes this context, noting that survivors are criminalized for "being Black, undocumented, poor, transgender, queer, disabled, women or girls of color, in the sex industry, or for having a past 'criminal record.' Their experience of violence is diminished, distorted, or

disappeared, and they are instead simply seen as criminals who should be punished. They face hostility from police, prosecutors and judges, and they are often denied the support 'good victims' receive from anti-violence advocates" (Survived + Punished, 2016). By "good victims", they mean the unrealistic construct of the survivor who does "everything right" through the eyes of the criminal justice system, such as early reporting of the assault. If you have experienced violent trauma at the hands of someone else, I hope you can empathize with how obscenely ludicrous, unfounded, and sexist this expectation is. The group continues, "These 'criminal' survivors are then particularly vulnerable when racist pro-criminalization policies (such as mandatory minimums, the war on drugs, 'Felons not Families' deportation enforcement, and increased police authority) are waged against our communities because those policies facilitate and reinforce domestic and sexual violence" (Survived + Punished, 2016).

At the conclusion of Survived + Punished's analysis of the prison-industrial complex and proposition of visions for a world safer for survivors, they write:

> Knowing that abuse and incarceration are both meant to isolate and diminish the person, we hope for more restorative resources and options for survivors. We must organize for a world in which survivors are always supported by their communities. We look forward to the day when survivors do not have to resort to calling 9-1-1, anonymous hotlines, restrictive shelters far from home, and broken legal systems in their attempts to find support. We reject false dichotomies of "good victim/prisoner/immigrant" and "bad victim/prisoner/immigrant" that individualize the problems of domestic and sexual violence, and choose to instead target the systemic issues that further facilitate abuse. We focus on survivors because we want to highlight the specific pipeline between surviving sexual and domestic violence and being arrested, locked up, and/or deported. We call for the anti-domestic violence and anti-rape movements to seriously contend with how their enmeshed relationships with prosecutors and police limits the ability to see criminalized victims as deserving of resources and advocacy, undermining their safety and well-being. We call for racial justice and migrant justice movements organizing against the violence of policing, immigration enforcement, and prisons to consistently highlight survivors of gender violence in political analysis and strategies. We call for your fearless support of survivors who live within the intersection of gender violence and criminalization. They need and deserve our solidarity (Survived + Punished, 2016).

The state and interpersonal violence against women as the basis for carceral captivity is the continuation of primitive accumulation, which is the labor extraction from women in supposedly traditional and seldomly compensated roles of homekeeping and child-rearing. In different form but similar to the extraction of labor from BIPOC, primitive accumulation is a foundational and necessary process to the expansion of capitalism as well as the empire itself. As Maria Mies (1986) writes, "Capitalism has to use, to strengthen, or *even to invent*, patriarchal men-women relations if it wants to maintain its accumulation model. If all women in the world had become 'free' wage-earners, 'free' subjects, the extraction of surplus would, to say the least, be severely hampered" (Mies, 1986, emphasis added). Mies continues, "As long as exploitation of one of these remains the precondition for the advance (development, evolution, progress,

humanization, etc.) of one section of people, feminists cannot speak of liberation or 'socialism'" (Mies, 1986).

Ingrained in the history of the women's reformatory facility itself is the forms of primitive accumulation and punishment of survivors as researchers with the Indiana Women's Prison History project have pointed out over years of continued research on the facility in which they are detained. I will speak with a formerly incarcerated friend on the difficulty of conducting this research without access to the Internet or many library resources in my final entry into this series. Now known today as the Indiana Women's Prison, the Indiana Reformatory for Women and Girls was the first facility created to detain incarcerated women in the country. Their research opens up the history as well on Magdalene Laundries, Homes for Friendless Women: all sites of extracting labor, detaining women for their "deviance" for life, and moral reformatory stuff in the wake of excessively burdensome patriarchal conditions at the turn of the century (Whitted & Williams, n.d.). The legacy of these facilities today, in which sexual assault by guards and inmates, as well as retaliation for speaking out against conditions, is significantly higher/different than at men's facilities (Survived + Punished, 2016).

For example, look to the non consensual experimentation on women's bodies that formed the basic knowledge for the modern day field of gynecology. As researcher Anastazia Schmid (2017) writes of this historic Indiana: "at the intersections of sex, gender ideology, religion, and punishment, orthodox medicine imposed its visions of social control. Historical documents reveal stunning connections among powerful men of science, doctors, politicians, and religious figures—at a moment when aspiring physicians often used the bodies of enslaved and institutionalized people for medical experimentation" (Schmid, 2017). Schmid notes that the state of Indiana was the first place internationally to begin forced sterilization of detained people legally in 1907. As such, Indiana earned notoriety as the birthplace of the modern Eugenics movement. Schmid writes, "Forced sterilization would become part of the 'Indiana Plan' for 'social hygiene'—systematic racial, social, intellectual/mental cleansing" (Schmid, 2017); the process was deemed unconstitutional and the law revised in 1927. However, state officials continued to "approve and authorize sterilization of the 'insane, feeble-minded, or epileptic persons' in custodial care", and the law remained on the books until 1974, after which nearly 2500 people were documented as legally sterilized by the state of Indiana (Kaelber, 2012). As Kaelber (2012) notes, an estimated 75 percent of people sterilized by the state of Indiana were provided through The Fort Wayne State School for Feeble Minded Youth, another carceral facility who, as the name suggests, was created for primarily detaining minors (Kaelber, 2012). For more on Eugenics and the Indiana Plan, see also Kaelber, 2012.

Schmid aptly connects this historic state violence to the foundations of the prison institution and the medical-industrial complex today, writing:

> State violence is enacted on vulnerable populations when reproductive freedom is targeted both chemically and surgically as a tool for social and bodily control. The excessive use of harmful chemical birth control and surgical procedures are routinely used on women leaving jails and prisons, women on federal assistance, women of color, and women with disabilities. Contraceptives like Depo-Provera and Norplant (proven to

be harmful, and to potentially cause sterility after experimental testing on Native women) are the most commonly given to these groups. In an analysis of the bodily conquest of Native American women, Andrea Smith reports that up to the late 1970's the U.S. Department of Health and Welfare (HEW) paid the majority of the cost to hospitals to perform voluntary sterilizations for Medicaid recipients in violation of federal guidelines by disregarding informed consent procedures for sterilizing women through 'elective hysterectomies.' Currently, just in case a woman is still able to reproduce, [Indiana Women's Prison] continues to freely offer the Depo-Provera shot to any woman leaving the institution. These clandestine forms of state control over reproductive freedom perpetuate eugenic ideologies against America's most vulnerable women (Schmid, 2017).

These non-consensual sterilizations were by no means limited to the state of Indiana. The Indiana Plan was exported across the country well throughout the 20th century, and one recent instance, the practice of nonconsensual tubal ligation procedures by California Department of Corrections between 1997 and 2010, in effect sterilized up to "250 women prisoners, most of them Black and Latina" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). As Firehawk & Turk note, not only does "this state control of reproductive systems strongly resemble eugenics programs that centered women as the bearers of societal 'contamination'", but also it "hearkens back to the institution of slavery in that it encompasses more than just slaveholders demanding forced labor; rather, the slave's body becomes subject to inhumane medical procedures and the slaveholders' own personal objectifications" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). Thus, we can work to demolish imperialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy by "recognizing that euro-imperialism is the highest form of patriarchy" and is not separate from gender inequities. Undertaking or supporting efforts that tackle "the invaluable work of supporting women, and all affected by gender-based violence", will fortify any calls for a larger unified class struggle (Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

Transgender people

Transgender people are often incarcerated in detention facilities that discriminate against in part based on an individual's assigned sex at birth. As with disabled and immunocompromised individuals, many transgender inmates cannot access necessary healthcare such as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Black & Pink is a prison abolition organization advocating for and supporting LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV/AIDS who are currently/formerly incarcerated. According to their 2015 national LGBTQ+ prisoner survey, over 23 percent of transgender, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit respondents were currently taking hormones in prison at the time of the survey, while over 44 percent reported being denied access to medically necessary hormone treatments; furthermore, only 21 percent of respondents were allowed access to underwear and cosmetic needs that align with their gender (Black & Pink, 2015). The outsourcing of healthcare in prisons to private healthcare over the last decades has led to increased costs for healthcare. In the same Black & Pink survey from 2015, fees prevented 43 percent of respondents from seeking medical care they needed. Over two thirds of

respondents reported a diagnosis of mental illness, and close to half of these individuals receive no therapy, also due in part to prohibitive costs.

Many transgender people face disproportionate levels of violence by guards and inmates alike on the basis of their gender identity and expression. Respondents were over 6 times more likely to have been sexually assaulted than the general prison population; prisoners were three times more likely to have committed sexual assaults against LGBTQ prisoners than prison staff, but, of those who reported having been sexually assaulted by a prisoner, over three fourths of respondents also reported that prison staff intentionally placed them in situations where they would be at high risk of sexually assault from another prisoner. Despite the intentions behind the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), every respondent reported experiencing sexual violence committed against them by prison staff. The vast majority of respondents experienced discrimination and verbal harassment by prison staff and more than a third were physically assaulted by prison staff (Black & Pink, 2015).

This constant violence committed against trans and gender non-conforming detainees is one reason that trans prisoners are at a greater risk of solitary confinement, a practice declared cruel, unusual, and inhumane punishment by many organizations. Prison guards and admin place transgender people inside solitary to avoid this violence, without acknowledgement of the real violence of solitary confinement. As Black & Pink notes, 85 percent of respondents were placed in solitary confinement at some point during their sentence; "approximately half have spent 2 or more years there. Altogether, respondents have spent a total of 5,110 years in solitary confinement" (Black & Pink, 2015). Transgender prisoners of color, specifically, "Black, Latin@/Hispanic, mixed-race, and Native American/American Indian respondents, were twice as likely to have been in solitary confinement, at the time of the survey, than white respondents" (Black & Pink, 2015). Additionally, respondents reporting a mental illness diagnosis were more likely to be in solitary confinement at the time of the survey and more likely to have ever been placed in solitary confinement than survey respondents without such a diagnosis" (Black & Pink, 2015). The solution for these many violences is not to build trans-inclusive prisons but to meet the needs of trans prisoners now while working to end prisons and policing in our future.

In June 2019 during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, Layleen Cubilette-Polanco, a 27-year-old Afro-Latina transgender woman, was found dead in solitary confinement at Rikers Island Jail in New York City. She was being detained in solitary confinement despite having a serious medical condition that caused life-threatening seizures. Cubilette-Polanco was being held on $500 bail from missing a "single court date" and not completing mandated services through diversion court (Decrim NY, via Lennard, 2019). Covering this case, Lennard (2019) writes that "police nationwide have made a habit of targeting trans women of color for prostitution arrests, stings, and bogus charges such as 'loitering for prostitution.' While some locales have instituted partial decriminalization and programs like diversion courts to avoid the appearance of draconian policies, cases like Cubilette-Polanco's give the lie to claims that these approaches do not punish sex workers" (Lennard, 2019). Sex worker advocacy organization Decrim NY wrote in 2019 upon her death, "Layleen's interactions with the criminal legal system

exemplify the ways in which our state sanctions violence against trans and gender non-conforming communities of color. Polanco's death was caused by an all-too-common overlap of three aspects of the criminal legal system: She was criminalized for sex work. She was held on $500 bail for misdemeanor charges. And she was placed in solitary confinement" (Decrim NY, via Lennard, 2019).

Firehawk & Turk note that "Segregation often involves steady harassment, surveillance, threats, and psychological torture until the prisoner is broken down into involuntary neurobiological responses. Prison authority aspires to have absolute control of captive bodies in a project of disappearance, liquidation, and rendering the target socially dead" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). A year later, June 2020 reports revealed the intentional inaction by guards in responding to Cubilette-Polanco's health crisis on the basis of transphobia. Rikers Island guards "delayed intervention even as Cubilette-Polanco was unresponsive," waiting "47 minutes to check on her, despite internal guidelines that require Rikers Island guards to check in on individuals in solitary confinement every 15 minutes" (Lang, 2020). Two of the guards on duty were recorded laughing at Cubilette-Polanco fighting for her life from outside her cell; a press release states that the footage shows "staff members repeatedly staring into her cell and calling others to look inside, which they did sporadically for well over an hour before anyone entered the cell" (Lang, 2020). Advocates are also highlighting Layleen's case, who received no justice, in this time of increased scrutiny of prisons and policing. Over 15,000 protesters took to the streets of Brooklyn, New York in June 2020 to call for justice for Cubilette-Polanco and other trans women of color who are the victims of violence at the hands of an inhumane system (Lang, 2020).

Many more populations are caught at intersecting violent points in the prison-industrial complex that I hope you will research and learn from more directly. This includes people detained in the U.S. who are Muslim, who are often denied religious reading materials on the basis of Islamophobia and xenophobia, and are forced to eat food that is against their religious beliefs. Another at-risk population is people living with physical, social, intellectual, or emotional disabilities. As abolitionist Mariame Kaba says, "the notion that we supposedly are not interdependent on each other can only exist in an ableist world. Because if you have any sort of disability, you desperately need a relationship with other people—you can't be on your own or you will die. You have to recognize the interdependence, or build interdependence" (Kaba, via Ewing, 2019). All of these groups specifically at risk/targeted by the prison-industrial complex are instructive cases, and they should make us reflect on stereotypes of who is (or who deserves to be) behind bars; how we view these individuals in mainstream society, and what types of language we use to label this rendered-invisible part of our population (hence my aversion to state terms such as "offender").

Intent/Effects of Incarceration

Another term that can be unhelpful in the struggle against prisons and policing is the commonly used "mass incarceration"; Dylan Rodríguez writes that this lends itself to impersonally addressing of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people as clients or impersonal constituencies, which can then be invoked in "rhetorics of state criminological reform"

(Rodríguez, 2016), such as well-known phrases like "nonviolent crime", "unarmed Black person", and "disparity". Rodríguez says,

> These rhetorics reproduce problems inherent to liberal-progressive political desires, including the fabrication of a vacillating definition of those worthy of decarceration, and those whose criminality requires their civil carceral death. *In none of this is there anything approaching a serious attempt to clarify, much less directly engage with, the unfolding half century infrastructure of gendered racial domestic warfare.* "Disparity" is a bullshit concept, when we already know that the inception of criminal justice is the de-criminalization of white people, particularly propertied white citizens and those willing to bear arms to defend the white world. "Mass Incarceration" is worse than meaningless, when it's not the "masses" who are being criminalized and locked up (Rodríguez, emphasis author's, 2016).

In the spirit of Rodríguez's claims, I have utilized the term Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC) to describe this extensive array of problems related to prisons and policing. Prison abolitionist and radical geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2009) notes writes that the "__ industrial complex" phrase, such as "prison-industrial complex" coined by Mike Davis and popularized in 1998, comes from Eisenhower's 1961 farewell address introduced the concept of the "military industrial complex"; in this speech, "he warned that the wide-scale and intricate connection between the military and the warfare industry would determine the course of economic development and political decision-making for the country, to the detriment of all other sectors and ideas" (Gilmore, 2009).

Gilmore notes that the pre-and post-WWII U.S. epoch saw the rapid expansion of production, delivery, and training for deploying weapons of mass destruction; this access to technology reconfigured the intellectual and material landscape of the U.S. through "the establishment of military bases, secure weapons research facilities, standing armed forces, military contractors, elected and appointed personnel, academic researchers (in science, languages, and area studies especially), pundits, massive infrastructural development (for example interstate highways)... Many taken-for-granted technologies, from the internet to Tang-brand powdered citrus drink, were developed under the aegis of national security" (Gilmore, 2009). Essentially, the permanent expansion and perfection of killing people on an industrial scale. This is clearly evident in the analogous shifts occurring in the discipline of librarianship, not only through embracing language of systems and networking but through the coinage of "information science" itself (Pawley, 1998).

Organizers employing "prison industrial complex", then, are speaking to the intricate connections that have reshaped the U.S. landscape just as similarly as "military industrial complex" suggested. Gilmore writes, "From 'tough on communism' to 'tough on crime,' the consistency between the two complexes lies in how broadly their reach has compromised all sorts of alternative futures. The main point here is not that a few corporations call the shots—they don't—rather an entire realm of social policy and social investment is hostage to the development and perfection of means of mass punishment—from prison to post–release conditions implicating a wide range of people and places" (Gilmore, 2009).

Functionally, the term "prison industrial complex" can more accurately capture the "devastating effect of industrialized punishment that has hidden, noneconomic as well as measurable dollar costs to governments and households" than describing this phenomenon only as mass incarceration (Gilmore, 2009). Furthermore, "prison-industrial complex" demonstrates how our social policies, based in coercion and endless punishment, destroy not only the communities where prisoners come from but also the communities where prisons are built. As Gilmore writes, when prison, policing, courts, and the military are legitimized, "normalization slips into naturalization, and people imagine that locking folks in cages or bombing civilians or sending generation after generation off to kill somebody else's children is all part of 'human nature.' But, like human nature, everything has a history" (Gilmore, 2009).

Gilmore notes current conservatives and liberals (neoconservatives and neoliberals, respectively) may diverge in specific political ideals, but overall these parties share certain convictions on narrowing the public sector utility in the everyday life welfare of the citizenry. For these political leaders, "the first line of defense is the market, which solves most problems efficiently, and because the market is unfettered, fairness results from universal access to the same ('perfect') information individuals, households, and firms use to make self-interested decisions. And where the market fails, the voluntary, non-profit sector can pick up any stray pieces because the extent to which extra economic values (such as kindness or generosity or decency) come into play is the extent to which abandonment produces its own socially strengthening rewards" (Gilmore, 2009). As Gilmore concludes, "That's their ideal: a frightening willingness to engage in human sacrifice while calling it something else" (Gilmore, 2009). This human sacrifice or social death, via incarcerating or killing off "surplus populations" and viewing Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people of color as expendable/property/surplus population, is the essence of American capitalism. The processes of anti-Black racism (individual xenophobia hand-in-hand with systemic violence against Black folks), is a continuation of Indigenous genocide in addition to orientalism which keeps the US at a constant state of war against an Othered enemy from the Global South/with a resource to take (see Andrea Smith, via nina de jesus, 2014). This point will be further discussed in my second post, on white supremacy in libraries as an institution.

The economic and profiteering dimensions of extracting labor from incarcerated people are undoubtedly important to recognize and challenge the prison-industrial complex. Particular prison abolitionist organizers argue that the prison's primary function is to "warehouse and disappear poor and working-class Black (and in many regions Brown and Indigenous) people. Its purpose is to immobilize and liquidate white America's 'undesirables' from society—to render Black and Brown people civilly and socially dead" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). This concept of social death has origins in the antebellum era. Dayan, as qtd. in Firehawk & Turk (2017) notes that these "'legal engines of dispossession,' enabled by white supremacy and mechanized by the criminal legal system, inflict this social death upon those deemed to be criminal, which is the 'loss of status so extreme that life ceases to be politically relevant'" (Dayan, as qtd. in Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

I spoke earlier of intentional terminology choices to label incarcerated people in a way to dehumanize them. Furthermore, in consideration of previous paragraphs on Eugenics, this state labeling can facilitate this process of social death. Firehawk & Turk write that official narratives frame "'criminals' as having poor moral character, being highly dangerous, and needing redemption and/or transformation legitimate the removal of criminalized peoples from the body politic in order to prevent 'contamination'. This social death process marks a denial of civil and political personhood for the prisoner—which, when viewed in the aggregate, results in the dispossession of racialized communities to their self-determining authority and sovereign claims to governance" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). As abolitionist Mariame Kaba notes, on a spiritual/emotional level, "it is deeply offensive and hurtful to me that we have prisons because they break relationships and people. That's how I feel about prisons—they are inherently made for isolation" (Kaba, as qtd. in Ewing, 2019).

Addressed in the following section specifically, prison abolitionist and community organizer Mariame Kaba's work and writings are especially useful in addressing many of the common arguments against abolition and why these alleged "gotchas" are nothing but pitfalls: this includes the current solution that we "heal" communities by locking away "violent people" in prisons. Prisons as an institution exist to intervene in isolated, contextless instances of violence by uprooting people from their communities, where transformative and restorative justice could actually happen, and placing people in substantially more violent situations, as any of the aforementioned descriptions on the conditions of detention in the U.S. can attest to. Through delegitimizing this system that appears so natural to people, by challenging everyday folks into newly considering what punishment is, who it is for, and when/how it should be administered, we can build a world that realizes that locking someone up will not right a wrong but create many other wrongs (growing up without a loved one; financial distress from not having a loved one around; losing a loved one to violence inside; etc).

Now that we can recognize the intent of prisons for profiteering, social death of surplus populations who are at higher risk of targeting by the prison-industrial complex, and relies on unchallenged, inoperable assumptions on what justice looks like, I will further discuss the abolition of prisons. The thinkers I have quoted in descriptions above are primarily self-identified prison abolitionists from a breadth of backgrounds and disciplines, showing that the tradition of prison abolition is not monolithic in the slightest.

Introduction to abolition & incorporating an abolitionist framework in the library:

The abolition of prisons and policing as part of the prison-industrial complex is coming into mainstream dialogue more than I could have anticipated upon starting this independent study in December 2019. The premise of abolition is not new in any capacity, as "struggles for black freedom have always had to contend with prisons and police as the enforcement arm of the racial capitalist state" (Felber, 2020). This particular moment for people living in the U.S. is a vital opportunity for people with limited understanding of the prison-industrial complex to explore community-led solutions that can actually meet an individual's needs in redressing harm. The

goal of prison abolition is moving beyond the judicial system, demonstrated to not be broken but operating by intentional design, into holistic visions and projects for a healthier world. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore notably says, "abolition is about presence, not absence." I have written this piece entirely in conversation with these lenses that open instead of closing my vantage point, all afforded through prison abolition. As pivotal prison abolition organization Critical Justice (2020) writes, "Abolition isn't just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It's also about undoing the society we live in because the PIC both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy" (Critical Resistance, 2020)

As Garrett Felber (2020) wrote last month in the wake of these new conversations on what it could mean to abolish police departments:

> A sprawling carceral landscape has bloated budgets and desiccated our imaginings of what is possible. The kneejerk question is often, What would we do without prisons or police? rather than, What could we do with $200 billion for our communities? Incarcerated abolitionist Stevie Wilson added that it "is not just about eliminating something (e.g., police and prisons); it is about creating what we need to live, love and thrive." At this moment, when abolition feels more possible than ever, we should not look elsewhere for "better" models of policing and prisons, but look deeper within our own history for better models of liberation (Felber, 2020)

Efforts to reframe kneejerk reactions to this monumental question are the basis of prison abolition visions. Read more specifically from Stevie, a Black and queer writer, activist, and student who is being held captive by the Pennsylvania DOC, in Dis-Organizing Prisons (2019) and Abolitionist Study with Stevie Wilson (2019).

Felber notes that the relationship between abolition (as the primary goal) and reform (as a means to an end) remains a lively debate within the broader context of the prison movement. Many folks endorse what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls "non-reformist reforms", or the reforms that "shrink the carceral system and continue to move us incrementally, in the words of abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba, 'toward the horizon of abolition'" (Felber, 2020). Examples of these non-reformist reforms include: "abolishing solitary confinement and capital punishment; moratoriums on prison construction or expansion; freeing survivors of physical and sexual violence, the elderly, infirm, juveniles, and all political prisoners; sentencing reform; ending cash bail; abolishing electronic monitoring, broken windows policing, and the criminalization of poverty; and a federal jobs and homes guarantee for the formerly incarcerated" (Felber, 2020), as well as some of the efforts I propose library workers undertake in the introduction to this writing to support incarcerated people, such as a law librarian answering legal reference queries by paper mail.

Mariame Kaba references one of the architects of the modern prison abolition movement, Angela Davis, in noting that knowledge is built through struggle; "it isn't just built through somebody theorizing an idea. But through the struggle of it together, we come up with new concepts and ideas: that's the best thinking (Kaba, Ewing interview 2019). She continues, "when we are in relationship with each other, we influence each other. What matters to me, as

the unit of interest, is relationships. The second thing that matters to me as a unit of impact is harm. I want to figure out how to transform harm in every possible context because I have been harmed, and I have harmed other people. My political commitments are to developing stronger relationships with people, and to transforming harm" (Kaba, via Ewing, 2019).

As Kaba emphasizes, repair and restorative justice are all about relationships and relationships in the context of harm. "When people talk about these things as though they are just abstract ideas, or things that are just theory-building without connection to actual people's lives, I can't recognize it" (Kaba, Ewing interview, 2019). I hope to emphasize that I can't provide the answers specific to prison abolition and redressing harm in your life, as these conclusions are reached through relationships with people, looking inward, as well as your specific location. One of the aspects I appreciate most about LIS is our endless use of annotated bibliographies. Thus, I offer a list of resources on some of the integral tools of prison abolition, such as transformative justice, accountability, and related theories, for your further examination. As library workers and students, many of whom existing in this position due to white, cis/straight or temporarily able-bodied backgrounds, a paramount effort for us is considering the functions and "horizons" (to borrow from Kaba) of our work in/outside information, archival, and cultural heritage institutions. The following resources can further solidify this radical idea of prison abolition as an accessible frame of reference as you build your toolkit in conversation with your communities, traumas, and collaborative efforts to rebuild anew:

[Creative Interventions Toolkit](#) (2012, updated 2018, new edition coming 2020)

> Resources and tools for everyday people to end violence, separated by thematic sections. Includes information on mapping allies and barriers; supporting survivors; and taking accountability.

[How to Support Harm Doers in Being Accountable](#)

> Part of the Building Accountable Communities video series and the Building Accountable Communities Project, which promotes non-punitive responses to harm by developing resources for transformative justice practitioners and organizing convenings and workshops that educate the public. In this video, people with years of experience facilitating processes between survivors of harm and people who have caused harmed talk about what it really takes for people to embrace accountability. Featuring adrienne maree brown, Stas Schmiedt, Lea Roth, Mimi Kim, RJ Maccani, Priya Rai, Mia Mingus, Martina Kartman, Elliott Fukui, Sonya Shah, Rachel Herzing, Shira Hassan, and Ann Russo. Find more in-depth discussions made available through this Project:
> > [What is Accountability?](#) (2019)
> > [Addressing Harm](#) (2019)

[Moving Toward Transformative Librarianship: Naming and Identifying Epistemic Supremacy -](#)
[Myrna Morales & Stacie Williams](#) (2020)

This presentation defines the concept of Epistemic Supremacy as information created by the ruling class to sustain white supremacy, racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy; and further offers a praxis (Transformative Librarianship) with examples, that relies on the ways of knowing and survival of working class and low-income communities of color combined with critical race theory in order to identify or subvert Epistemic Supremacy within the library profession. Presentation slides here. Presented at LibRev 2020.

TransformHarm: A Resource Hub about Ending Violence
Created by Mariame Kaba, six concepts organize the articles, media, and curricula found on the site:
- Transformative Justice, a liberatory approach to violence which seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or State or systemic violence, including incarceration or policing (definition via Generation 5).
- Community Accountability, a process in which a community works together to:
  - Commit to ongoing development of all members of the community and the community itself
  - Transform the political conditions that reinforce oppression and violence
  - Provide safety and support to community members who are violently targeted that respects their self-determination
  - Create and affirm values and practices that resist abuse and oppression and encourage safety, support, and accountability
  - Develop sustainable strategies to address community members' abusive behavior, creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior (definition via Incite! Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Trans People of Color Against Violence, 2012).
- Restorative Justice, a process to involve those who have a stake in a specific offense to the extent possible and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible.
  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) (definition via Zehr Institute for Reformative Justice)
- Abolition, "Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment... An abolitionist vision means that 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 and that

lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives. Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal" (definition via Critical Resistance)

- Healing Justice, means we all deserve to heal on our terms and we confront oppressive systems that get in our way. We honor the trauma and resilience of generations that came before us and use interactive, daily practices that anyone can do. Healing Justice is a reminder to social movements that the concept of action should be expanded to support the self-determination, interdependence, resilience & resistance of those most impacted by oppression. Healing Justice is revolutionary in confronting the capitalist, colonial, individualistic paradigms that tell us we are alone when we seek out healing (definition via Young Women's Empowerment Project and the Chicago Healing Justice Learning Circle)
- Carceral Feminisms, an approach that sees increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to violence against women. This stance does not acknowledge that police are often purveyors of violence and that prisons are always sites of violence. Carceral feminism ignores the ways in which race, class, gender identity, and immigration status leave certain women more vulnerable to violence and that greater criminalization often places these same women at risk of state violence (definition via Victoria Law)

In my following pieces on the IUPUI DLIS blog, I will talk about white supremacy as it forms the foundation of libraries as reformative institutions and how professional organizations such as the ALA pay vacant lip service to "diversity and inclusion efforts" meanwhile penning the policies that bolster our hostile workplaces, which has been accurately described (in the context of nonprofits and social justice organizations specifically) by Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin as Progressive Plantations. I will also explore what we can do within the profession to support abolitionist projects that prioritize individuals' and communities' autonomy and tackle the innumerable barriers to information access and humanity for folks who are currently incarcerated. This will include examining recruitment efforts of marginalized LIS workers, "multiculturalism" pedagogy in LIS education, and currently proposed "community solutions" that avoid involving cops in our libraries, such as hiring social workers for conflict de-escalation.

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Part 2.

Decolonizing the institutional library as an anti-violence strategy to build the caring information spaces we need

INTRO

Much of the contemporary American discourse affords institutional violence a frustratingly limited scope; for example, mainstream liberal and conservative reporting on continued organizing in the streets against state-sanctioned violence and terror describes civilians reacting to their oppression as violent, rather than depicting the scope of the violent conditions that we are rising up against, including and not limited to: narrowing avenues to survive and be sheltered in the wake of the pandemic-triggered economic recession; continued racist police terror which fuels white supremacist extrajudicial violence—as of the last week in July, there have been over 70 [instances](#) of cars attempting to run over protesters; continued expansion of state/corporate surveillance; and protesters fearing kidnapping by Homeland Security while Democratic mayors about-face against Trump on camera while draining taxpayer money on military tech-equipped cops and allowing DHS in their cities in the first place. Prison abolitionist and organizer Mariame Kaba (2018) writes that the "stranglehold of oppression cannot be loosened by a plea to the oppressor's conscience" (Kaba, 2018). Social progress against something as fundamental inside the American institution as racist oppression inevitably involves violence. Kaba continues, "you cannot have progress here without violence and upheaval, because it's a struggle for survival for one and a struggle for liberation for the other. Always the powers in command are ruthless and unmerciful in defending their position and their privileges. This is not an abstract rule to be meditated upon by Americans. This is a truth that was revealed at the birth of America, and has continued to be revealed many times in our history" (Kaba, 2018).

Inside LIS, forward thinkers in the discipline note that mainstream or ALA-led approaches to librarianship do not critique the historic truths of our institution but rather represent a "historical trajectory of evolving practices whose present status continue to embody an enterprise for race-based supremacy and white power" (Sierpe, 2019). These embedded practices are found in every facet of the library and reflect "the grim reality of de facto segregation in our communities, the enduring differences in educational achievement and opportunities, as well as in the structure and composition of the field itself" (Sierpe, 2019). The way that library buildings and interior spaces are designed, where these physical spaces exist and who can access them; how our collections are defined, built, managed, cataloged, organized, and communicated; how our buildings are staffed and if these demographics are representative of the communities attempted to be served; and in how we conduct reference services, programming and for whom, outreach and for whom are prime examples of the embedded institutional violence of the library.

In positing the library as an institution, we can examine how violence, oppression, and bias is systemically maintained. nina de jesus (2014) writes that libraries are implicated within institutional oppression "by having their genesis within the enlightenment ideology and by existing as a tool to perpetuate the state" (de jesus, 2014). In the following piece, I will speak in conversation with critical LIS thinkers on the religious and Enlightenment origins of the public

library specifically and how these festering moralistic values influenced not only the settler colonial project of the 19th/20th century American public library but also how this violence against marginalized patrons and library workers proliferates today. Then, I will discuss how we came to the professional-philosophical virtues of 21st century librarianship through examining federal and professional policies. Following this, I provide an introduction to how libraries can take culpability in their historic roles, including modern white librarians' culpability in decolonize the psyche in order to provide more caring service to those whom we wish to address their information quandaries; the necessary task of destroying myths of the library as a neutral space or institution; and finally, how we can decolonize our tools like classification schema alongside what necessary apprehension we should possess when deploying new service tools, technologies, and institutional formations. Following this will be a final piece in this three-part series, synthesizing theories from prison abolitionists to provide more caring, less violent services to people who are currently or formerly incarcerated, in order to meet their informational needs neglected by state institutions.

Institutional Logics

McCook & Bossaller (2017) note that support for public libraries as American institutions initially came from a desire to maintain social order and promote education for adults. Because the public library was seen as a tool for social control, librarians during, but not limited to the 19th and earlier 20th centuries, interpreted this duty as being bound up with censorship. "These public librarians "were to stock the shelves with books that were morally uplifting. Board oversight, too, encouraged 'safety' in selection" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). This may seem antithetical to virtues of intellectual freedom forming the backbone of librarianship today, which can lead to the temptation "to dismiss threats to intellectual freedom as coming from small-minded individuals in the community;" however, "in actuality threats come from within the profession, from boards of trustees, and even from the government" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017).

Moral reform & Enlightenment origins

Fobazi Ettarh (2018) writes in "Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves" that the library is like the prison and the state itself in that it is an institution. "Like other institutions, librarianship plays a role in creating and sustaining hegemonic values, as well as contributing to white supremacy culture" (Ettarh, 2018). The pervasive institutional ideologies of control and reform are inherent to the library's origins within Christian religious institutions during the Enlightenment period of the early 19th century. Just as religious leaders were expected to live a life of humble, selfless sacrifices, library workers today are expected to make similar sacrifices of fiscal security for the grand missions of the field (Ettarh, 2018).

Ettarh notes, "As with a spiritual 'calling,' the rewards for such service cannot be monetary compensation, but instead spiritual *absolution* through doing good works for communities and society" (Ettarh, 2018, emphasis added). Timely discourse on white shame and guilt demonstrates that the goal of spiritual absolution, or to wash away the sins of whiteness existing

before you came into this world, is not a healthy starting place when working to serve others; instead, this mentality ensures that your ego is still primarily being catered to, thereby placing the marginalized people you're attempting to assist, or be absolved by, secondarily. I will further explore these lingering moralistic values fortified by the library institution itself, and how, through decolonization of the internal and external white structures, we can destroy myths of neutrality and expand the horizons of the service-oriented information space.

Just as white supremacy culture creates and fortifies built-in disparities between and the oppression of marginalized communities, the moralistic values of librarianship such as freedom of access are inequitably distributed amongst the people we are serving. This is most evident in the limited library and information services available to people who are currently incarcerated in prisons, jails, and detention centers. I write about the severe, inhumane, anti-intellectual, antipathic restrictions on access to information inside prisons, jails, and detention centers in my first piece. It's not that libraries of the 21st century are failing to live up to their ideals and values, rather that these observable failings of meeting patrons' informational needs (and workers alike, as I discuss later) are "symptoms and evidence of this foundational and oppressive ideology" of the library (de jesus, 2014).

Inside the example of the prison as an institution, this is most clear: currently/formerly incarcerated scholars working with the History Project at Indiana Women's Prison note that creating a separate new institution to address the needs of specific captive populations, such as opening more women's prisons, does not address the conditions surrounding *why* women are being locked up but only expands the carceral grid and amplifies targeting of said population. In fact, in many ways due to these carceral feminist efforts, women's captivity has grown at a higher rate than many other marginalized populations (Law, 2014; Prison Policy Initiative, 2019). The first state-run women's prison in the U.S. opened in Indianapolis to "protect fallen women" from the violence experienced in mixed-gender incarceration; however, beyond extracting labor from these women, they effactually experienced greater levels of torture and medical experimentation under the auspice of the women's prison institution. For more on this, see Jones 2015 and 2016.

These state institutions were founded within the framework of the Enlightenment as beneficial for a common good or democratic society. de jesus is a paramount critical voice in LIS examining the contradictions of these Benevolent Institutions. "As we continue to grapple with the ideas of the enlightenment today, so do we grapple with the material conditions that both caused and are caused by the enlightenment (settler colonialism, white supremacy, etc)" (de jesus, 2014). Enlightenment ideals of the modern day will also be referred to as liberalism, as liberalism is the inevitable evolution of Enlightenment values applied to our modern capitalist context. Pervasive, unexamined notions of institutional liberalism and mainstream/white/carceral feminism rotted the available avenues for us to examine our past and instead encourage looking to reforms that prop up what is broken by design. Abolition and decolonization are two critical frameworks that enable us to see the abundance of creative approaches to these problems of punishment if we allow ourselves to think outside the box. Because, as de jesus writes, there is no contradiction between the "ideals of the enlightenment and the harsh reality of the ongoing

Indigenous genocides, rather the two are inextricably linked within settler states" (de jesus, 2014).

> Libraries do embody enlightenment values, but/and that enlightenment values are themselves steeped in and reinforce white supremacist settler state ideologies. To the extent that libraries do embody enlightenment values, they likewise contribute to ongoing colonization and are thus reasonably seen as sites of violence and oppression (de jesus, 2014).

This oppressive/corrective policing role in the American library was historically enforced by white women, since librarianship was one of the few professions white American women could partake in during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, when the role of women in librarianship today is brought up, necessary conversations proliferate on the emotional intimacy required of women or feminine people working the front desk. Of course, this is a real, serious burden for these library workers, some of whom then go home to their second undercompensated job as caretakers. However real this primitive accumulation is in today's library, this contemporary portrait of the woman library worker does not capture the historical scope of women's role as moral reformers and Americanizing agents of the state inside the library.

Schlesselman-Tarango (2016) notes that the early woman librarian functioned as the "'sponge or mediating agent between the subaltern and the colonial state... In fact, the work of white women in the colonies generally served to reinscribe the values and beliefs that underlie… colonialism" (Harper, qtd. in Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). Because the woman library worker occupied a "nonrevolutionary" role as she emerged into the professional public sphere, she was generally viewed as non-threatening to white male supremacy, and as a result, these feminine workers could be exploited for cheap labor. This idea predicates women's entrance into the field of librarianship. Schlesselman-Tarango notes that an early requirement for acceptance into a professional library education program included an evaluation of one's personality, including consideration of a library worker's breeding and background, their missionary spirit, cultural strength, gentleness, and sense of literary values" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016).

Requirements of white women to be pedigreed and virtuous undoubtedly point to the larger assimilatory project of the public library. As Honma (2005) importantly notes, late 19th/early 20th century U.S. public libraries participated in selective assimilation and Americanization programs for immigrants (folks once marked ethnic, enticed to especially the Industrial North for exploitative labor in the era of dismantling of chattel enslavement), projects "whose purpose was to inculcate European ethnics into whiteness... Those for whom citizenship was denied— including the colonized Indigenous, the enslaved of African descent, and... Asian immigrant labor, all denied incorporation into the country's citizenry and access to its accompanying rights and privileges" (Honma, 2005). For more on the Americanization of Euro immigrants once deemed non-white, see Sakai (1989).

This civilizing figure of the white woman librarian certainly exists as the product of multiple, often overlapping systems of power, primarily among them white supremacy and patriarchy, but this

role is not itself powerless. Quite the contrary, for "which subjects are Othered or worthy of being saved, the scope of her mission, what it means to educate, the composition of her femininity, who can inhabit or 'pass' [in the librarian role] are all socially and historically contingent" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). This is evident notably today in the gender and sexual conforming expectations of librarians, especially for those of us who work with children. Schlesselman-Tarango correctly concludes, "it would thus behoove us to remain diligent in our attempts to locate her, even in unlikely places" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). Another prime example is white women's legacy of calling the cops when creating a threat in their head; any of the recent [Karen](#) videos can provide clarification on this concept.

When library lobbying groups host events in which politicians and other professionals valorize the library's grand mission of freedom of access, critical library workers must come back with the question: for whom? Ettarh (2018), Honma (2005), and more note that millions of Black Americans were excluded from public libraries in the South during the Jim Crow era. Furthermore, de facto exclusion and neglect of Black and Othered immigrant populations was just as prevalent in the Industrial North (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). In the South, "while some libraries quietly and voluntarily integrated, other libraries enforced 'stand-up integration,' removing all of the tables and chairs from the building to minimize the interaction of the races in reading areas, or shut down the branch entirely" (Ettarh, 2018). This inhospitibility is not limited to the 20th century history of the institution of libraries. de jesus (2014) aptly writes, since its Enlightenment origins, the library's primary purpose was not educational but political. "Education within this ideological statement is only a means to an end: creating better citizens is neither 'value-neutral' nor 'apolitical'" (de jesus, 2014). In this context, "many of the current real-world examples about how libraries are 'failing' marginalized people become clearly not a 'failure' but intentional" (de jesus, 2014).

Extermination ideology/the internal cop

The foundation of the state institution is one of moral reformatorion of the Other, and in the context of the white supremacist settler colonialist state, this spells genocide. Walter Rodney writes in *The Groundings With My Brothers* (1990) that "the white world defines who is white and who is black", and across the world, "once you are not obviously white, then you are black and are excluded from power—power is kept pure milky white" (Rodney, 1990). Rodney continues:

> This division made capitalists dominant over workers and white people dominant over black. At that point, everywhere in the world white people held power in all its aspects — political, economic, military and even cultural… The essence of white power is that it is exercised over black peoples — whether or not they are minority or majority, whether it was a country belonging originally to whites or to blacks. It is exercised in such a way that black people have no share in that power and are, therefore, denied any say in their own destinies...

> By being made into colonials, black people lost the power which we previously had of governing our own affairs, and the aim of the white imperialism world is to see that we never regain this power... everywhere the black masses suffer from poverty. You can put

together in your own mind a picture of the whole world, with the white imperialist beast crouched over miserable blacks. And don't forget to label us poor. There is nothing with which poverty coincides so absolutely as the colour black—small or large population, hot or cold climates, rich or poor in natural resources—poverty cuts across all of these factors in order to find black people. That association of wealth with whites and poverty with blacks… is the nature of the imperialist relationship that enriches the metropolis at the expense of the colony (Rodney, 1990).

This violence persists because whiteness at its core function is an institution of supremacist control over those deemed non-white. Institutional histories, then, have necessarily buried stories of liberation and autonomy in order to quell these human desires for freedom from repression. However, Rodney writes about a key example of Black electoral empowerment in the U.S.:

For one brief period after the Civil War in the 1860s, blacks in the USA held power. In that period (from 1865 to 1875) slavery had just ended, and the blacks were entitled to the vote as free citizens. Being in the majority in several parts of the southern United States, they elected a majority of their own black representatives and helped to rebuild the South, introducing advanced ideas such as education for all (blacks as well as whites, rich and poor). The blacks did not rule the United States, but they were able to put forward their own viewpoints and to impose their will over the white, racist minority in several states. This is a concrete historical example of Black Power in the United States, but the whites changed all that, and they have seen to it that such progress was never again achieved by blacks. With massive white immigration, the blacks became a smaller minority within the United States as a whole, and even in the South (Rodney, 1990).

Implemented as a form of institutional control, Reconstruction in the South decimated this achieved Black empowerment in order to maintain hegemonic white supremacy for the white minority living in that area. From policing itself and the abysmal offerings in prison libraries, to underfunded and poorly staffed urban library systems, these state institutions are no longer in their 20th-century better-funded heyday. As a result, the settler colonialist white supremacist state ensures continual smothering of Black communities' autonomy, power, and progress, alongside the national empowerment of Indigenous peoples and immigrant/communities of color. Comprehending these historic realities is imperative for understanding how and why the library fails to meet people's informational needs today.

Described via de jesus (2014), Andrea Smith elaborates on three primary logics of white supremacy in the U.S.: (1) slaveability/anti-black racism, anchoring capitalism; (2) genocide, anchoring colonialism; and (3) orientalism, anchoring war (Smith, qtd. in de jesus, 2014). "The enslavability of Black people is a necessary and foundational part of capitalism, such that slavery is not the result of capitalism, but rather that capitalism itself is structured around this logic" (de jesus, 2014). Continuing in conversation with Andrea Smith, de jesus quotes (2014): "'Under the logic of the Atlantic slave trade, the market's arithmetic of accumulation was sutured to the flesh, inhabiting the bodies and lives it stripped down to the sum of their biological parts for sale within the freedom of the market… Liberal distinctions between the public and private, and the economic, political, and social were *fabrications* for the slave, illusions that depended

on their erasure from the realm of the human'" (Smith, qtd. in de jesus, 2014, emphasis added). Though valorized today for upholding tenets of intellectual freedom, "libraries, regardless of their making 'knowledge' or 'information' accessible for free, do not actually challenge or resist this logic [but exist as] another institution necessary for maintaining a system of intellectual property within a larger context of white supremacy that depends on the inherent enslaveability of Black people" (de jesus, 2014).

Anti-Black institutional violence is a critical component of the library. Furthermore, because Indigenous peoples of North America continue to exist on this unceded land, "the ideal of libraries as liberal institutions existing to make democracy 'better', thus stronger, is no less than an ideal wherein the genocide of Indigenous peoples is finally completed (putting democracy in its strongest possible position)" (de jesus, 2014). Settler states such as the United States and all Euro-colonial projects, in order to lay claim to their statehood, require continued genocidal violence and suppression of native populations. "Libraries in supporting a 'political system grounded in an informed citizenry' support the state and thus support genocide' (de jesus, 2014). I will speak on how the Tribal Library formed in this context in the wake of social change initiatives of the 1960s and 70s later in this piece.

Libraries firmly belong to the discursive space identified by Edward Said as "'a structured set of concepts, assumptions, and discursive practices that were used to produce, interpret, and evaluate knowledge about non-European peoples'. This knowledge informs the logic of orientalism and is what allows the U.S. to justify its ongoing wars" (de jesus, 2014). Demonstrated clearly by decolonization efforts of classification schema undertaken by Berman and Drabinski, among others, the way that information is organized constructs a specific reality "wherein whiteness is default, normal, civilized and everything else is Other. In doing so, libraries very much participate in a larger imperial project that justifies war" (de jesus, 2014). Libraries' direct tie to the war machine is evident in the fact that many librarians were actively involved in book burning at the end of World War I. "Librarians willingly...pulled any title that might raise suspicions of disloyalty. Some librarians burned these titles, many of which were classic works of German philosophy, books advocating American pacifism, and simple German language texts" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017).

The pervasive violent contradictions within liberalism was called for what it was even during the mid-century. Samek (2001) notes that during the late 1960s, "a number of American librarians argued that library collections lacked balance, that a purist moral stance on intellectual freedom was an example of hands-off liberalism, and that the library served mainstream social sectors, not the whole community" (Samek, 2001). Just as institutional histories intentionally disclude Black/New Afrikan stories of continued struggle for liberation throughout U.S. history, the premise of the library as perpetuated by mainstream institutional histories also discludes persistent critiques of the institution since its founding. Premise control is the process of controlling the production of and access to printed materials, thereby foundational for creating institutions. Pawley (1998) writes that modern "social and economic institutions developed during the nineteenth century as part of the infrastructure of the capitalist industrial state. Twentieth-century libraries emerged out of this process of nineteenth-century industrialization and class formation" (Pawley, 1998).

Thinking on how the mainstream en/disables discussion of institutional violence against marginalized people and their needs, specifically those most impacted by anti-Black racism, Indigenous genocides, and who is next Othered and targeted by the war machine, I conclude with Rodney:

> By what standard of morality can the violence used by a slave to break his chains be considered the same as the violence of a slave master? By what standards can we equate the violence of blacks who have been oppressed, suppressed, depressed, and repressed for four centuries with the violence of white fascists? Violence aimed at the recovery of human dignity and at equality cannot be judged by the same yardstick as violence aimed at maintenance of discrimination and oppression…

> Violence in the American situation is inescapable. White society is violent, white American society is particularly violent, and white American society is especially violent towards blacks. Slavery was founded and maintained by violence, and in the one hundred years since the 'emancipation' of slaves in the US, the society has continued to do black people violence by denying them any power or influence (except for the occasional individual). Their interests are therefore ignored, so that thousands of black babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter and medicine; while hundreds of thousands are destroyed emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination (Rodney, 1990).

How did the library as an institution come into being under these forces of white/settler American violence? How are these lingering violences perpetuated by white library workers and weaponized against marginalized patrons and library workers today? To explore these questions, I will examine 20th and 21st century library legislation, ALA policies, and practices in the field to depict a portion of the pervasive institutional violence plaguing this institution.

How we got to where we are now:

20th/21st century LIS policy & conversations

Led by Irene Dobbs Jackson, desegregation of the Atlanta Public Library took place in 1959, and at the time, there was little reporting of this historic precedent in contemporary library literature (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). As McCook & Bossaller describe, it was not until the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s that "the democratic public library was mandated to serve *all* the people of America regardless of race" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017, emphasis added). Before the 1960s, by and large, public librarianship specifically focused on establishing national standards compared to community-based analyses of needs. This emphasis on the library as a monolithic American institution inevitably necessitated many of the conditions for local disparities in public library services to fester and expand. Nearly a decade after increased national scrutiny on America's Racism Problem, the ALA Library Administration Division commissioned the 1963 Access Study. This study was the first national review of racial inequality in American public libraries and found "direct discrimination (complete exclusion) and indirect discrimination

practiced by branch libraries in northern cities that were so differentiated in terms of quantity and quality that one group was more limited in its access to the library resources of a community than another" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). Of these findings, Virginia Lacy Jones commented at the time, "'No one should have been surprised… all public institutions in the United States had discrimination against [Black folks] built into them. This fact is well known in the South; it is time the North woke up to it'" (Jones, qtd. in McCook & Bossaller, 2017).

The Access Study directly led to the passage of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), signed into law by President Johnson in 1964. LSCA provided the "financial and philosophical support for public libraries to address consistent discrimination in library services" identified through the Access Study. In the following years, library services to institutionalized and detained people and people with visual and physical disabilities were added to the scope of the LSCA. LSCA stimulated a "wide variety of innovative library development. States were given considerable flexibility to adapt to their own needs within federal priorities" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). Before LSCA, the field's prior focus was on bolstering national public library standards, which inevitably led to little local assessment of needs and fortified structural inequities; in the wake of continued cries for better social conditions, librarians saw the need to provide the same level of quality service at every branch in their system. By the turn of the 70s, effects of global fights for social change on American libraries were addressed in *Response to Change: American Libraries in the Seventies*, a report by Matthews and Lacy in 1970. This report identified two ways that libraries would be able to meet the challenges of the future: use of computers to automatic the library's acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, inventory, and statistical work; and by psychologically and physically reaching out into their communities and learning to operate "in ways meaningful to those they are trying to reach. Especially engaging was their assertion that libraries should 'serve as both the motivator and supplier of aspirations for the dispossessed and disorganized'" (Matthews & Lacy, via McCook & Bossaller, 2017).

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) issued a plan in 1975, *Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action*, which declared a "mandate to develop basic library services to meet the needs of all local communities"... NCLIS "formed a critical part of the policy framework for national public library planning for the last quarter of the twentieth century", though another writer Molz characterized the NCLIS National Program as the lineal descendant of the National Plan of 1934, which emphasized national standards (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). PLA's 1979 publication *The Public Library Mission Statement and Its imperatives for Service* urged that the future focus of libraries must be on the needs and services for people in communities, not for institutions. The *Mission Statement* identified factors in U.S. society that called for a radical shift in the public library's emphasis, including "runaway social change, the exponential increase in the human record, total egalitarianism, and depletion of natural resources"; and it identified necessary actions for public libraries in order "to be viable, seemingly anticipating the changes that the World Wide Web would bring to libraries" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). In 1981, PLA ended the development of national standards to support local community-based planning.

In preparation for the 1979 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services, 3,000 resolutions were passed at local and state pre-conferences. This time of proliferating discussions on how we can better libraries was characterized by a call for "more focus on literacy and serving ethnic groups" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). One way this happened was through the Indian White House Pre-Conference, sponsored by NCLIS in 1978; this pre-conference led to the rewriting of Title IV of LSCA. The group found that "the full range of library and information needs of Native Americans", including "effective access to specialized information resources that reflect the distinct cultural identities inherent in their heritage", was not being addressed by libraries. Through this, NCLIS provided a long-term action plan to assist Indigenous leaders and communities in developing and improving library services for their communities, including the development of what is known professionally as Tribal Libraries. See Lotsee Patterson's 2000 article, "History and Status of Native Americans in Librarianship" for a chronology of the foundation of Indigenous libraries and information spaces.

This accomplishment, as well as the laudable goals of expanding service for marginalized patrons, is endemic to larger social gains fought for during the 1960s and 70s. However, blind spots were of course in place as white folks grappled with diversity and marginalization while still clinging to vestiges of before. However, compare these goals to those of the second conference in 1991, and it's clear that professional conversations on empowerment and autonomy inevitably changed in the wake of 1980s austerity, focuses on professionalism, and accelerated global capitalism. The 1991 Conference had three themes: literacy, democracy, and productivity. This Conference's report identified two major goals: "improvement of access through technology and the educational empowerment of those who live outside the mainstream of quality library service". This led to the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in 1996, asserting the primary role of technology in providing equitable services to the public. LSTA focused on two key priorities for public libraries: information access through technology and increased information empowerment through special services. By locating federal support for libraries within the new institution of IMLS, McCook & Bossaller claim that "since 1996 the government has emphasized the community-based role of libraries" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). Though libraries gained advantages through IMLS, we know that new institutions can enable old problems when left unquestioned.

By 2015, the *National Policy Agenda for Libraries* was produced by the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP). This document called for "strengthened national digital infrastructure sharing among libraries of all types, as well as other community and cultural institutions, to increase economic and operational efficiencies over stand-alone systems… Technological advances enable a broad range of data and information production and distribution opportunities for libraries and their communities that extend beyond the confines of traditional models or silos" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). Notice here this shift back to a massive systems focus post the interconnectedness from the 1990s onward. How do we expand opportunities for international connections without compromising the needs of the grassroots? I will speak more on this in the Culpability & Decolonization section. The authors conclude, noting that "because libraries are ultimately funded locally, there are still gaps in service and equity" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). In attempts to fight for our informational needs of the future in the wake of a

rapidly expanding digital divide and destructive global capitalism, these contradictions must have room to breathe and be worked through.

Virtuous failings persist today

This is worth noting because I benefited so greatly from de jesus' writings; some may remember this but new to me—nina de jesus put truth to power and was subsequently disbelieved, sued for defamation when de jesus and Lisa Rabey (Team Harpy) spoke up about a white man librarian (Joe Murphy) known to sexually harass and assault folks at library conferences. As Barbara Fister wrote about the situation in 2014, "in speaking out, Team Harpy did what it was people ask for in any situation of sexual assault and/or harassment: they talked. Not only were they sued for doing so, a community turned against them… when de jesus and Rabey spoke up, they were spurned by a community — and those who did support them saw significant negative response for doing so — and they unfortunately served as an example of what happens when you speak out before it's popular to do so. de jesus and Rabey ultimately settled the lawsuit, posting apologies and statement retractions" (Fister, 2014).

The response by the LIS field towards nina de jesus and Lisa Rabey, who turned silence into action by showing solidarity with survivors, was particularly disgusting. Look to the comments section of Peet's 2015 *Library Journal* article for proof. No longer employed as a librarian, [Joe Murphy](#) continues to make his money as a "library futurist". Meanwhile, neither de jesus nor Rabey appear to be writing about nor employed in libraries as of 2020. This is a shameful legacy of the field of librarianship; not a surprising one, considering aforementioned institutional violence, but one that demonstrates de jesus' critical points: librarianship is an institution grounded in a legacy of genocidal violence, including that towards decimating women who dare to speak out on sexual violence. As de jesus said at the time on a now-deleted blog, "'One of the reasons why situations like this continue, despite the offender being known, is that, within our communities (both libraries and beyond), there is little-to-no support for victims and/or survivors" (de jesus, qtd. in Peet, 2015). When we actively recognize these limited care structures offered within librarianship, we can work to overturn them so that the many survivors who work in libraries can begin to feel safer, and those in the field who have demonstrated abusive tendencies can be instructed and supported in unlearning their predatory behaviors. This, too, is how we approach the healing work required of us as white/Euro-American folks after (even indirectly) profiting from centuries of genocidal, anti-Black violence.

By the nature of our acculturation in this flawed society, featuring inescapable images of who is violent and who deserves punishment plastered in our paperbacks, tv, and billboards, we are all raised with carceral logics inside of us. These orientations can then latch onto our other philosophies of processing marginalization, such as carceral feminism and trans-exclusionary feminism, thereby creating continued violent paths instead of prioritizing real healing from this warped logic. However, we are not fixed but evolving creatures. We can disrupt this process of internal colonization by prioritizing care and love for people no matter what they may do, over understandable desires for vengeance and judgment. These are difficult but necessary and rewarding lifelong practices. How historic Institutional Values are destructive today is further demonstrated in the following section on disrupting the Progressive Plantation and all of its antiquated, hollow diversity plans.

Disrupting the Progressive Plantation

Just as white supremacy is built into these state institutions like libraries, colonized peoples have been resisting settler/Enlightenment values since the start of the violence. Speaking primarily of nonprofit social justice-oriented organizations and activist formations, long-term revolutionary anarchist organizer Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (2011) writes that the tokenized hiring of people of color into institutions without enfranchising them to make decisions and lead the organization creates the environment of a Progressive Plantation, in which the "same kind of racist dynamic is in play" (as anti-Black racism that upheld chattel enslavement of Africans), in which:

> These progressive groups hire Black and other peoples of color, to use them as a foil against the Black/POC communities. They are hired as administrators or spokespersons for a majority white organization, and are to protect the master's interest at all time, even if it conflates with her/her own or their community's best interests. These people have no power within the organization, and are expected to be a complete puppet, just for sake of a paycheck or for recognition from white people (Ervin, 2011).

This is an accurate depiction of the conditions inside libraries today and directly contributes to low retention of BIPOC and marginalized people working in the field. The Progressive Plantation of the Library institution functions not only through dominant force but through cultural authority. Pawley (1998) describes Gramsci's ideas on hegemony as *consensual* rather than *primarily coercive*, noting that "a powerful group achieves hegemony when it gains control over a range of values and norms, to the extent that these are so embedded in society that they receive unquestioned acceptance" (Pawley, 1998). Evident in corporations like the Gates Foundation supplementing libraries' limited budgets "the state and 'private initiatives' of 'civil society'" work in tandem to "exercise ideological control" (Pawley, 1998).

Inside these service environments, Ervin continues, "it is literally hell for peoples of color to work at such institutions, along with other white social justice non-profit groups. They are literally enemies of the people, a do-gooder front, to carry out Liberal Left-wing politics for the governments and corporations. They are paid handsomely by capitalist social change foundations with rich peoples' money, the scraps they give to keep 'restless natives' under control" (Ervin, 2011). This is most demonstrated by ALA's professional rhetoric on multiculturalism, diversity, and equity standards? In the wake of these professional platitudes, an evergreen question to ask today and everyday: what does ALA really do for *us*?

Professional Diversity Discourse

ALA and equivalent state library associates campaign on improving and valuing diversity statistics yet refuse to address that minority identity members' entrance and retention inside the field is often accompanied by well-communicated expectations that someone from a persecuted background must consent to constant microaggressions and other harmful workplace conditions (Sierpe, 2019). This expected unquestioning obedience to exploitative workplace environments is required in order to maintain the librarian position that many of us spent tens of thousands of dollars plus interest trying to secure. "Any deviation from the expected disposition for routine

self-humiliation, servitude and acceptance of sexualized exploitation carries serious and guaranteed career-altering consequences few would be willing to entertain or accept" (Sierpe, 2019). In the wake of social changes of the 1960s and 70s, the focus on expanding services to marginalized populations were often radical, grassroots efforts by library workers fighting more blatantly white supremacist adminstrators and board members (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). Today, repeated sentiments on the importance of Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Inclusion are etched in policy and governing legislation, yet they fall flat in the face of continued discriminatory/violent library conditions. Expectations exist for both minority and majority members to extol the values of "'diversity, equality and inclusion' in professional service in addition to having the prerequisite enthusiastic smiles during photo ops for the production of institutional marketing materials" (Sierpe, 2019).

This is demonstrated most clearly in the ALA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Implementation Working Group (EDI-IWG)'s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Report (2019), in which, just like in most communications from the governing organization, "diversity" or "multiculturalism" is treated as an attainable asset above all else, similarly to the process of tokenizing a friend, family member, or lover of a marginalized identity in order to prove a false commitment to anti-bigotry behavior. This assertion of ownership over a type of individual calls to memory assertions of ownership over "othered" people in recent histories. In the EDI Plan under the "Courage" section, the EDI-IWG solicits the bare minimum from members when stating the need for ALA members to "accept and acknowledge our own implicit biases as well as those of others that can surface during exploration of EDI issues within our association" (EDI-IWG, 2019). In any inquiry into our socially-installed supremacist behaviors and beliefs, we must not merely "accept and acknowledge" these mindsets but *demolish* and *rebuild* our frameworks of viewing the world, lest we further alienate coworkers and patrons alike. Furthermore, the ALA writes that we must "honor and amplify the work of our *ethnic* affiliates and collaborate *when appropriate*" (EDI-IWG, 2019, emphasis added). These "*ethnic*" perspectives can be acknowledged only when convenient; however, ultimately, no power is being ceded by those from whom it is required.

Repeating sentiments on increasing diversity and minority representation through recruitment and retention initiatives do little except to "simply revalidate and strengthen the effectiveness of the existing framework of segregation and white supremacy" (Sierpe, 2019). Sierpe continues,

> Accepting that the solution to the problem of race in librarianship rests on a perpetually and suspiciously elusive perfect plan for the recruitment and retention of "colored" librarians requires a considerable degree of self-deception… The underrepresentation of minorities in librarianship is not a condition waiting to be solved by well-intentioned white liberals working on yet another distracting campaign, fashionable slogan on 'diversity, equity and inclusion' (DEI), or proposal for paternalistic action or meagre handout shrouding racism… The underrepresentation is simply a visible symptom of a much larger problem: librarianship as a system whose existential function is to preserve, manage, and defend a structure for informational, educational, cultural and political race-based domination (Sierpe, 2019).

Labor subsumed under racial capitalism (the crisis of librarianship)

Christine Pawley aptly wrote in 1998 that librarianship is a field "justly criticized for its primarily celebratory and descriptive nature" (Pawley, 1998). In order to fully address why librarianship cannot meaningfully recruit nor maintain librarians from marginalized backgrounds and identities, which inevitably leads to failing our patrons who are most in-need, the strengthening of historic and accelerated capitalist practices and behaviors into library operations must be addressed. In 2003, Buschman described the real threats to the availability of information for public discourse in a critique of librarianship deriding the increasing commercialization of information and the broad reach of authoritarian populism (Buschman, 2003). Today, stress and burnout are two common examples of threats to our field accelerated by capitalism; these conditions are amplified with marginalized identity membership and are the result of "the psychological and emotional effects of structures of domination, exploitation, and aggression" which can be described as "the crisis of librarianship" (Popowich, 2018). The material cause of the crisis of librarianship is the subsumption of our labor under capital. "This process—which is incomplete, uneven, and ongoing—changes the material nature of the work of libraries, destabilizing and devaluing the labour of library workers" (Popowich, 2018).

One way this functions is through vocational awe as Ettarh importantly notes. Vocational awe requires that we reconfigure our values and social mission by ignoring structures of domination and exploitation inside of our institutions, like students going in debt over their eyeballs to fund an undergraduate education that doesn't guarantee them a job or collection development policies that secure the maintenance of phrenologic texts, that allow the capitalist library and our parent institution (if applicable) to continue reproducing itself and profiting (Popowich, 2018). The closest we come to addressing the base, material considerations of our patrons is when we understand our part in "ensuring the university or municipality provides 'good value' to tuition-paying students or tax-paying citizens… library workers may like to think of themselves as engaged in a higher purpose than commodity production, but that is a classic example of ways in which capitalism obscures the real relations of society with a veil of mystification" (Popowich, 2018).

In order to truly change the nature of librarianship and the social relations in which we find ourselves, we must fundamentally alter how labor, production, and social life in and outside of our field are organized. Any act hailed as one of resistance or progress must be analyzed in consideration of if it draws us further into the network of commodified relationships, because "only by abolishing the commodity form itself can we free ourselves from the social relationships which maintain and reproduce the culture of crisis that afflicts not only libraries, but capitalist society itself" (Popowich, 2018).

LIS education

Popowich writes of the more recent historic process of bringing public institutions into the discipline of the market, spearheaded especially in the last four decades of accelerated capitalism and cuts to public spending. This process of subsuming library labor under capitalist relations of production provides a foundation for many of the common cries of professional crisis that have plagued the field in these decades:

Take, for example, the problem of credentialism and (de-)professionalization. On the librarian side, we have [the] fear of competition—from both new graduates and non-degree holders—competition which might drive down wages and benefits, but which also leads to a reduction of agency and an increase of alienation in our work. Our response is typically protectionism: calls to reduce the number of graduates, or to protect professional positions. But protectionism always fails against the inexorable process of capitalist rationalization and innovation (i.e. technological change and the real subsumption of labour). On the supply side, the inflation of the number of qualified graduates and the creation of alternative degrees within library schools attest to the schools' own subjection to market forces, commodification, and subsumption. The library degree becomes signifer of the value of professional labour, an indicator of the investment made by the student-entrepreneur in themselves, which is all the value the employer needs to recognize. Concerns within the profession around diversity, treatment of non-degree holders, gatekeeping, etc., stand for nothing against the power of the "cash nexus" which is all that now connects us both within the profession and in society at large (Popowich, 2018).

As clearly demonstrated over 15 years ago by Honma (2005), there is a noticeably stark focus on race and class in the field, which is certainly fortified through LIS pedagogy. Pawley wrote in 1998 that LIS researchers have almost entirely ignored class perspectives on libraries and library education. The two ideologically dominant strains of professional philosophies instructed in LIS education are pluralism and managerialism. Whereas pluralism focuses on the behavior of interacting individuals, managerialism emphasizes organizations treated as systems. These two modes of discourse, and the false binary between them, "express middle-class perspectives that today have become so widely used as to appear entirely natural—librarians and other professionals use them unthinkingly. The language of pluralism has its roots in classical political and economic theory; the language of managerialism, in theories of bureaucracy and organizations, with links to science and technology" (Pawley, 1998).

In utopian pluralist thinking on libraries, public institutions should adopt private sector methods to ensure "the most efficient distribution of resources in terms of individuals' maximization of utility". Utopian managerialist thinking on librarianship prioritizes rational decision making through informed objective research, and this perspective leans heavily on the language of science and engineering. Of course, in the wake of the continued Outcomes Based Planning & Evaluation era, managerialism is the dominant mode in LIS education, as the "major areas of the LIS curriculum that focus on these concepts include management and administration courses, information systems, database designs, research methods, and information storage and retrieval" (Pawley, 1998).

Because the middle class derives assets from its relationship to institutions, not only "physical assets but also skill, education, organization, and moral assets", so too inculcated is "the right to determine the moral agenda, to decide what counts as good character and ethical behavior" (Pawley, 1998). This is the necessity of what Pawley terms as a "relational class perspective", which argues that the LIS curriculum is "just one of a constellation of middle-class practices aimed at maintaining hegemonic control by the dominant class" (Pawley, 1998). Though there

has been a renewed focus on Marxist or class-oriented applications within LIS, by and large pluralist and managerialist perspectives reign. "Is this simply an oversight, yet another example of the tendency of LIS to focus inward and overlook the theoretical preoccupations of scholars in other fields? Or is it more than oversight, perhaps even a willingness to comply with a dominant, but unstated, value that favors the maintenance of inequality?" (Pawley, 1998). Looking at the corporate ties of LIS programs with big-bucks programs like medical, law, and business schools attests to this maintenance of dominant, utopian-capitalist values, as well as how information problems are defined, within the field LIS. Pawley asks, "Why, of all the groups in society, have schools of LIS focused particularly on those already so well endowed?" The answer is "precisely because of the power and status of law and medicine that LIS has responded in this way. The same can be said of the many links between LIS education and the resources for business. The relative lack of specialized information courses for survival to the under-privileged… is a detail and indicator of a flourishing class system in operation" (Pawley, 1998).

One can trace this LIS pedagogical trend back to the Williamson Report of 1923. The report examined library worker education programs and was funded by the Carnegie Corporation, which appointed and paid Charles C. Williamson to produce this report. Carnegie Corporation not only determined the parameters of the investigation but also provided models for Williamson to follow. The Williamson Report served as the basis for professionalization of LIS education, leading to the Master's degree requirement for librarianship. "At this pivotal point, LIS education was heavily influenced by a major capitalist force… This nexus illustrates one way in which capital established a hegemonic form of domination in the first part of the twentieth century" (Pawley, 1998).

If library school students and new librarians want to contribute to the efforts of improving "the crisis of librarianship", we are required to abandon all of our rosy illusions of the library as a place of "all American goodness (code for white)" and understand that this idealized historical purity is merely another function of Manifest Destiny/white exceptionalism ideologies. Though this position may initially prove challenging to stomach for "well-intentioned" white liberal librarians, undertaking this theoretical grounding actually provides us an exciting opportunity to creatively reexamine the true problems behind the lack of professional diversity from a meaningful, more structurally grounded standpoint, which can guide our personal inquiries to the complex, subordinated interactions between race and social class (Sierpe, 2019).

Furthermore, we must examine what all is lost in the expansion of focusing on networked information systems globally accessible. As Pawley notes, "funding a shift in emphasis from the old, visible, information institutions (libraries) to new, invisible, information networks… obscures yet further the very real and tangible controls exercised by corporate power over the production and distribution of information" (Pawley, 1998). From Clearview AI to Microsoft JEDI to Amazon's expansive surveillance apparatus, these words ring even more starkly in 2020. By forcefully rejecting illusions of "gradual or incremental liberal reforms actually delivering desirable democratic or socially responsible outcomes", we can direct our focus to the harm caused by liberal accommodations to, and suspicious coexistence with, white supremacist power, reinforcing the necessity of dismantle this current institutional formation beyond

professional trainings and service practices (Sierpe, 2019). Then, our librarian praxis can be consistent with the posture of "the social movements that have had or are confronting other forms of oppression", in essence "reconceptualizing our function and bringing it into alignment with the needs of social justice" (Sierpe, 2019).

Libraries' Culpability & Decolonization

As I touched on in my prior piece, an introduction to prison abolition for library workers, an eternal debate rages on between reform and revolution of any state-sanctioned institution. de jesus writes that the clear solution to remedying the violences enacted by the institutional library is decolonization, noting that "of course, this is a difficult prospect for many within the field since it precludes any solution that is reformist in nature; no reform is possible if we understand libraries as fundamentally white supremacist institutions" (de jesus, 2014). However, unlike the prison, there may be more room to explore how libraries function. "There is perhaps a worthwhile solution in decoupling libraries from their avowed goal in propping up and strengthening settler democracies… This would require *drastic* and *daring* changes to the overall structure and organization of libraries. Libraries, unlike other institutions of settler states (like the judicial system), have at least some emancipatory potential" (de jesus, 2014).

In order to realize the truly emancipatory potential of the library as an institution, it would "require breaking and disrupting the system of intellectual property and other aspects of capitalism… It would require disrupting the empire's mechanisms for creating 'knowledge' by being more than a repository for imperial knowledge products. It would require supporting Indigenous resistance to the settler state and working towards dismantling anti-Blackness" (de jesus, 2014). There are endless methods we can undertake as means of beginning and sustaining decolonization processes inside libraries and inside ourselves. Many more have said before me that the healing work inside yourself predicates and will be informed by your authentic healing relationship with communities. I speak in the following section on destroying the myth of libraries neutrality; taking culpability as a white librarian in your work to decolonize your internal spaces to provide more effectual service; and decolonizing our tools and systems, such as LCSH and contemporary technologies and tools, including the formation of new institutions.

Destroy the myth of neutrality

Libraries, along with fields like journalism and law and all state institutions from DCS to ICE, must reckon with why and how ideas of our work's neutrality are still so insisted upon by mainstream/institutional approaches. de jesus says that the proposition that libraries and library workers must be politically neutral is self-defeating; "claiming that libraries ought to be liberal institutions that take 'no substantive political position' is a political position in and of itself. And it is *not* a neutral one (if such a thing is even possible" (de jesus, 2014, emphasis author's). Library workers must examine and destroy pervasive claims of libraries' neutrality and instead understand that this is an impossible position for the institution and is not a departure point for emancipatory informational work. From this vantage point, Edward Said's demonstration that

"knowledge creation within the empire is *not* (and never has been) a neutral activity and so the knowledge *itself* cannot be neutral" becomes much clearer (de jesus, 2014, emphasis author's).

Back in 1938, Forrest Spaulding developed the Library Bill of Rights, directly inspired by Bernard Berelson's 1938 essay "The Myth of Library Impartiality"; this piece exposed the inadequacy of instructions to collect books "on both sides of a controversial issue" and directly led to the championing of intellectual freedom advocacy in libraries from this point forward (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). When we confront librarianship directly as constructed and maintained in the embedded image of white supremacy, then we can begin to meaningfully challenge "the doctrinal myth of a benevolent structure for public service with a few internal contradictions... moving past the stagnation of repetitive, unproductive and ever-evolving liberal illusions and apologies on workforce management as we see in the most current diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) formulations" (Sierpe, 2019).

The work required of majority librarians manifests in small and large projects and varies by locale, but this critical inquiry is necessary for people who hold immense power as gatekeepers of information. In all instances, we must argue against the concept of professional neutrality, "a central and potent theme in librarianship dogma", and treat this false construct of neutrality as a deceptive, ultimately harmful idea deliberately intended to obscure the professional position of white supremacy in the structure of our institutions. If you work in public libraries, this can look like refusing to allow white supremacists or trans-exclusionary groups (both hate groups, mind you) to meet inside your institution—even if they are taxpayers. If you are a school librarian, you can think about who you choose to write up for misbehavior and, once realizing your role in reinforcing the school-to-prison pipeline, reconfigure your policies surrounding punishment. Sierpe writes, "Challenging the dogma of neutrality would ultimately remove the protective shield used to deflect criticism and calls for accountability" (Sierpe, 2019). It takes both individual and collective labor on decolonization, of the psyche and the institution, to destroy the toxic myth of neutrality once and for all. Regardless of library workers' feelings on "the coherence of individual neutrality, many have taken it as axiomatic that libraries are neutral institutions and that any failure of libraries to be neutral is largely the fault of individuals failing to live up to the ideals of ethics of the profession, rather than understanding the library as institution as fundamentally non-neutral" (de jesus, 2014).

White librarians' culpability

Ervin notes that "white folks in America have been a good guard dog for the stolen wealth of American capitalism, so as long as they got their share" (Ervin, 2011). He continues, "history has proven that only when the slaves or the oppressed peoples themselves rebel, can the whites in sympathy support them, perhaps enough to turn the tide. The very ideas that they (whites and peoples of color) are coming together because they 'like each other' or the whites want to 'show they are not racist' is the most sophomoric liberalism" (Ervin, 2011). Consequently, in any equity-oriented work, including that of the library, "the needs of the oppressed people must be the most important consideration, because they want genuine support, not fakery or leftist rhetoric… Both act as true political allies and serve as a source of

material support, while still respecting (Black & POC folks') autonomy… Oppressed peoples have a right to self-determination" (Ervin, 2011).

As library workers housed inside flawed public, school, academic, and private institutions, we must attack white supremacy at its structural roots in order to dismantle the very threads of what holds racial capitalism and our bondage together. The title of information institution worker is a powerful position afforded to us, which is reflected back with a dominant professional culture of vanilla toothless liberalism claiming to know what's best for marginalized populations based on subjective data (as all data are) rather than continued collaborative relationships with librarians following the lead of BIPOC self-determining communities. "Without the mass white consensus to the rule of the American state and the system of white skin privilege, Capitalism could not continue to function without interruption… True anti-racist politics challenges the notion of whites doing anything less than putting their own lives and future on the line for a new society and dismantling a capitalist system which while it brutally oppresses peoples of color, and exploits all of us as working people" (Ervin, 2011).

Dylan Rodríguez (2016) writes that in any given time period or location, "peoples (in the most differentiated sense of the notion of 'peoples') have created forms of relationality, cultural reproduction, survival, revolt, and collective being under the eviscerating conditions of this Civilization… It's the underside of human being that the official scripts and dominant narratives of the modern world can never adequately rationalize or eliminate" (Rodríguez, 2016). He continues:

> Decisively displacing the universality of the White Being—and of any such universality altogether—is only a fraction of what is at stake. The fact is—and this is a long-running fact, at least half a millennium old—there are other ways of inhabiting "human being" that *are constituted by the violent vulnerabilities normalized by global white-supremacist power, in all of its misogynist, colonial, chattel, and sexual normative (including "homonormative") iterations.* This is just what the fuck it means to try to live under the Civilizational regime. And this work of living, of being, of figuring out ways to *thrive*, when and where possible, absolutely does not require trying to deform and self-mutilate into the "human" methodologies of the White Being. Peoples everywhere have proved this (Rodríguez, 2016, emphasis author's).

Palatable approaches of recent times propped up by ALA, such as the myopic works of well-paid white academics on race and racism (e.g. Robin DiAngelo and Tim Wise), by design lead to dead ends when it comes to action. I also implore you to stop supporting white thinkers who profit from continued institutional violence against Black folks. This is just as true for popular social media activists with documented legacies of letting down Black communities, such as Shaun King. As we move into the next decade, serious reckoning work is required for critically examining which voices to follow, rather than the flattening monolithic notion to listen to *all* Black people, or *all* trans people. By being afraid of appearing racist, white people are fumbling opportunities for building and sustaining transformative connections that account for and grow

from difference. Meanwhile, from this vantage point, the violence white folks seek to avoid is still committed against BIPOC coworkers, patrons, and loved ones.

Rodney writes that a form of coexistence with white people is "the desired goal of virtually all black leaders, but it must be a society which blacks have a hand in shaping, and blacks should have power commensurate with their numbers and contribution to US development" (Rodney, 1990). What would it look like to empower Black localities to steward their own cultural heritage resources, similarly to but moving beyond the Tribal Library model that bloomed from the 1979 Indian White House Pre-Conference? What would it look like if we recognized that prison libraries fail by design, because the contradiction between prioritizing security concerns of a fascist institution and the intellectual, informational needs of their patrons will always lead to the former winning—and we instead worked to meet the immediate breadth of informational needs of incarcerated people *in tandem with* working to open the prison gates to nurture people inside their communities? If information facilities were created for and led by Black library workers, informational self-determination of the most marginalized would irrefutably function more holistically.

Decolonization of the psyche (a lifelong process):

The first step in internal decolonization is an exploration of your ego, seeing that many messages of guilt and shame may be fueling your actions, and providing love to yourself so that you don't end up seeking marginalized folks' validation/valorization of your progress. As Ervin writes, "believing that because you are a pacifist 'radical', that you cannot practice or harbor racism in your movements/spaces/life… is the worst form of self-deception" (Ervin, 2011). We as white workers attempting to serve many non-white populations must swallow the illusion that built consciousness "as white social justice activists, around a white middle class agenda, is liberating for all; not accepting and examining your internalized racism, products of the forces of colonization and empire, leads merely to replicating the same social oppressions inside movement that the larger society does, "the only differences are to degree and form. Progressives make the worst kinds of racists because they want you to believe that every vile racist act they perform is a good service by 'good white people" (Ervin, 2011).

Part of understanding the needs of people outside yourself comes from examining the needs within your internal space, and how these needs have been met or gone unmet based on your embodied life experiences. An immensely valuable tool in this process of working with internal decolonization in attempts to dismantle these psychic shackles, at least for me personally, is adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017), which encourages "being in right relationship with the natural world, learning from the ways change and resilience happen throughout this entire interconnected complex system" (brown, 2017). Furthermore, this Goodreads user's list on Spiritual Care Reading contains many useful works for this holistic, grounded process.

Zoe Samudzi (2019) notes that as more literature "from the white left reproduces this lack of consideration for nonwhite existence, it grows more and more difficult to explain to those willfully omitting our existence from their canon that our lives do matter (even as they repeat the slogan)

and that, even without canonical recognition, our thought and social organizations are often the most subversive to the nation-states created on the basis of our subjugation… it is a confrontation with the reality of nonwhite life, thought, and struggle that will move us in the direction of leading more non-fascist lives" (Samudzi, 2019). Throughout this piece, I attempt to honor the struggles and comprehensiveness of Black thinkers on their lived experiences. However, "Black theorization of our own political expression is a synthesis of our lived experiences and interpretations of our material conditions. Glibly quoting thinkers from these traditions without deeply reckoning with them is a tokenization of nonwhite resistance. This gives rise to a harmful white custodianship and narrative gatekeeping of nonwhite struggle, as nonwhite political life is primarily interpreted and conveyed in accordance with white political sensibilities, 'radical' and otherwise" (Samudzi, 2019). Just as I encourage you to move away from gateway people like Tim Wise, I encourage you to move beyond this piece I offer from my limited scope as Euro-American into a deeper dive of the practical applications of decolonization as they pertain to your setting.

Decolonization of classification schema

In a more recent interview, legendary gadfly cataloger Sandy Berman notes that the field is overwhelmed by a "mindless adherence to standards that every entry has to look like every other entry because somehow that's the professional ideal" (Berman & Gross, 2017). By this, he means that standards like a subject heading system or a classification system are not the problem, since you must have a framework for what you are working on. Berman notes that today's professional abandonment of autonomous/local classification judgment and independence is "sickening", along with "a refusal to exert (or reassert) control over local authority files and bibliographic databases, a staggering lack of social responsibility toward catalog users, and a frankly numbing deference to distant authorities (like LC) and mindlessly imposed standardization (e.g., LCSH) that simply don't deserve such knee-jerk acceptance and embrace" (Berman & Gross, 2017).

Outside of these guiding systems, "deviations it seems to me are not only possible, but it has always seemed to me that they are absolutely essential if you are going to liberate a lot of your materials from the narrow access that they are confined to now, by virtue of too rigidly applying the present standards. And of course, you work to try to expand the standards and change general practice too" (Berman & Gross, 2017). Instead of wallowing in vain, waiting for the state (or in this specific case, Library of Congress) to ameliorate bias within its systems, library workers "can exert our own professional autonomy, expertise, social commitment, and initiative to do what is right and helpful even if LC itself can't or won't (or does so awkwardly and ineffectually)" (Berman & Gross, 2017).

Berman describes what this process of enhancing local classification looked like in his work:
> In addition to creating totally new descriptors (clearly denoted "HCL form" in the Authority File), we replaced many obsolete, biased, or awkward rubrics (e.g., Aged became Seniors, Intervertebral disk displacement morphed into Slipped Disc, Near East flipped to Middle East, Water closets was dropped in favor of Toilets, and Saame was substituted for Lapps. We added numerous cross-references and scope-notes and

deleted "see also" references that inaccurately and often pejoratively connected certain topics (like Gypsies--i.e., Romanies—with Rogues and vagabonds and Anarchism and anarchists with Terrorism). Whether such "forking" happens within a single system or "as a cooperative community effort" seems immaterial. What's key is that it happens, making local catalogs vibrant and responsive and relevant. It won't happen as long as systems and individual institutions remain inflexibly locked into "standards" and tools that too frequently prove unhelpful, actually obscuring or denying access to library resources (Berman & Gross, 2017).

I would be remiss to not conclude this section with Berman's own call to arms: "Catalogers, arise! Cast off your bondage and passivity! Say no to creativity-stifling conformity! Demand a role in decision-making! Prioritize professional integrity and unleashed imagination! And never forget who you really work for: library users and colleagues. Not bosses and bureaucrats!" (Berman & Gross, 2017).

New institutions and tools, same embedded practices

Finally, we must examine our institution's deployment of Big Data service tools in the wake of larger professional trends on community-based planning to see which of these supposedly Neutral tools in effect fortifies further violence and bias. The aura of social and political critiques throughout the 1960s and 70s undoubtedly affected the way public librarians thought about service; because of this, PLA realized that focusing on building up national standards was not useful (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). McCook & Bossaller note that the focus on "community-based planning moved public library discourse to acceptance of the innovation of local planning models that took place in the 1970s. This was a major transformation of the philosophy of public librarianship" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). With social media tools and valuable online communication efforts like LibRev, as well as staying open to and critiquing all our available tools, we can continue creating a "time of passionate discussion" like that which characterized LIS during the 1970s.

There is a contradictory, double-edge nature of decentralization efforts at the national level that were distinctly characteristic of the 1980s-90s rise of neoliberal and neoconservative austerity and other antagonistic values. Though this time did focus on local needs, without the federal funding structure more readily available prior to these decades, community-centered programming inevitably fell flat. By 2015, public libraries moved to an outcomes model, which IMLS requires for issuing grant funding. This is because "Outcome Based Evaluation demonstrates good stewardship of IMLS resources. This process validates program expansion and support for new programs" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). But by focusing on the "true impact" made by public libraries in order to "demonstrate the value of public librarians to residents and policy makers", these planning models are a direct result of decades of continued funding losses. Now, librarians must defend every situation or choice with Objective Data, which is not only disempowering to the spontaneity that makes great programs and is detrimental to our work, but is also objectifying to the marginalized communities we receive trickles of funding to serve.

McCook & Bossaller note that each marginalized community presents a set of "special service requirements if the public library is to provide equity of access… It becomes a task for librarians in different communities to identify the demographic composition of the population and develop responsive services" (McCook & Bossaller, 2017). However, we can look to the past for how sciences and models can be limited. Speaking of reifying old legacies through new forms, though the IMLS provides some lateral maneuverability in working with cultural heritage institutions, described as a "manifestation of technological possibilities" and "result of a new way of looking at learning and cultural participation", we need to make space for the contradictions in and failings of these institutional formations, especially with continued collaboration with big tech projects such as Wikipedia. Collaboration can inevitably lead to a loss of local autonomy, and can repeat problems of siloing information, or emboldening the problematic focus on encouraging entrepreneurship, even within less concerning contexts for innovation, creativity, education. Because the public library is endowed with a history of grassroots support for its development, in many ways it's not entirely untrue to say that this is one of the *most democratic* of all institutions, as McCook & Bossaller describe it (McCook & Bossaller, 2017, emphasis added). However, to face the future with "the charge of maintaining a sense of place, sustaining an open and active public sphere, and working with other cultural institutions while promoting social justice and human rights", library workers must move beyond mere critiques of the institution into challenges for building the autonomous, visionary information spaces we need today and that will secure our futures of tomorrow.

Conclusion/Library Horizons

Rodney wrote that "when decisions are taken in the normal day-to-day life of the USA, the interests of the blacks must be taken into account *out of respect for their power* — power that can be used destructively if it is not allowed to express itself constructively. This is what Black Power means in the particular conditions of the USA" (Rodney, 1990, emphasis author's). With this framework of accounting for folks from marginalized communities' needs *out of respect for their power*, we can move from a negative project (addressing gaps in service) to a positive project (building for sustaining life to come). To Kaba, this is what prison abolition is about, not just signaling the "absence of prisons or governments but the creation of different forms of sociality, governance, and accountability that are not statist and carceral" (Kaba, 2018).

Examining the library in all of its contradictory, violent roles as an institution, and planning for the information spaces required to sustain future life, is in many ways not a new project. As Kaba notes, "practices of anarcha-indigenism that differentiate inclusive models of indigenous nationhood based on inclusivity, horizontality, and interrelatedness from nation-states based on borders, exclusivity, domination, and control. Thus, the politics of abolition require us to see, as Angela Davis notes in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, that prisons cannot be abolished without a complete restructuring of society. Abolitionism is sometimes disassociated from the larger political vision from which it emerges" (Kaba, 2018). This examination of the library is but one component of a larger anti-violence project addressing all of the institutions in our sphere.

In conversation on institutions such as the library, we must move beyond the simple "critique prisons or the state" to imagining and building "alternative forms of governance that are life-giving" in order to stand up and confront the injustices of our past and present; remember our power to "collectively make transformative changes that will improve the lives of the many over the few"; and maintain revolutionary hope that "pierces the despair and fear of our current political moment" (Kaba, 2018). The following and final piece in this series will address library and information projects we can undertake today in order to challenge structural injustices perpetrated by library institutions and work towards building a world that moves beyond responding to fear and inequity to one that gives life back and sustains life to come for the disenfranchised, "dispossessed and disorganized" neglected by our libraries today.

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Part 3.

Practical applications of prison abolition in Library and Information Science

Introduction

Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture. If what characterizes the oppressed is their subordination to the consciousness of the master, *true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these "beings for another." The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labo*r—when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis. To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce…

Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men as oppressors and oppressed. The latter, whose task it is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle. One of obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness. Functionally, *oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.*

— Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

In my prior two pieces, I lay out the case for prison abolition as it pertains to libraries in dialogue with critical LIS thinkers who describe the library's institutional origins, imbued in every facet of our field today. In summary of my aforementioned analyses on the abundant openings offered through prison abolition as an analytic and practice, I include this quote from Lamble (2015) who writes that prison abolition is not a call to "suddenly fling open the prison doors without enacting alternatives. Nor is it an appeal to a utopian ideal. Abolition is a broad-based, practical vision for building models today that practice how we want to live in the future" (Lamble, 2015). In order to practice sustainable alternatives, we require different starting points, questions, and assumptions than those that propel the current system. For example, "the existing criminal justice model poses two main questions in the face of social harm: *Who did it? How can we punish them?* (And increasingly, *how can we make money from it?*)"; in order to create safe and healthy communities, we need a different set of questions: "*Who was harmed? How can we facilitate healing? How can we prevent such harm in the future?* Developing alternatives with these latter goals in mind prioritizes the needs of people who have been harmed; emphasizes more holistic, prevention-oriented responses to violence; reduces the need for prisons, and

works to strengthen communities by reducing oppression and building community capacity (Lamble, 2015, emphasis added).

Dylan Rodríguez (2016) notes that the scope of the prison-industrial complex, the weight of "institutionalized dehumanization (and that's what the carceral regime is, in its gendered-racial violence)" is simultaneously "mind-numbing, vast, and almost entirely incalculable" (Rodríguez, 2016). No statistic can comprehensively depict how specifically the last half-century of criminalization and human captivity, part and parcel with the continued legacy of chattel enslavement of African peoples have permanently affected many peoples' lives and livelihoods. In spite of this, Rodríguez continues, "people who are or have been incarcerated for any length of time spend a lot of energy—during and after their actual incarceration—trying to narrate and communicate this mind-numbing, vast, incalculable violence anyway. Consider it the voice of a human species that is illegible to White Being, and is largely illegible to those of us invited by or seduced into the ceremonies of White Being" (Rodríguez, 2016).

Thus, Rodríguez writes, if we intentionally and seriously approach these "analytics of fascism, updated for the contemporary condition, the differences across this hegemonic political-cultural spectrum tend to be a matter of degree, not of kind" (Rodríguez, 2016). One clear example is the ways that Trumpism installs "assumptively extremist positions and proposals into the public discourse in ways that catalyze and legitimate reactionary white (and overwhelmingly male) violence through symbolic, state, and physical forms. What a lot of us are in denial about, however, is how much this moment of reactionary white nationalism overlaps with the prior decade of multiculturalist white supremacy and the refabrication of US patriotism via 'postracialism'" (Rodríguez, 2016).

> The bottom line of this still-unfolding, historically specific policing and criminalization technology is, of course, the Civilizational formation of racial chattel and land-ecological conquest as the *permanent* (that is, *not* historically episodic) condition of *political discourse generally*. So what we are seeing now is a pretty fucked up situation in which some of us are actually surprised that people who look like us, and share genealogical blood with us, are fully in favor of Trump's Bozo the Clown burlesque act. We are indignant and shocked silent when we encounter other Black, Brown, Indigenous, and queer people outside of academic left and activist circles who tell us they might—or will—cast a worthless ballot for that dude. We should not be that surprised (Rodríguez, 2016, emphasis author's).

Though Trumpism may be the most recent iteration, this violence is as old as the country itself. In this country, one of the most American institutions, the prison, has changed in purpose and scope throughout the last two centuries of its existence. Joy James (2005) writes that "racism is best expressed in the violence of penal culture… Penal culture inverts conventional reality to link the presence of torture and abuse to the law-abiding civic body, 'civil' and 'civilized state'" (James, 2005). Furthermore, although reform and petinence were the "ideological and moral motivations for early penitentiary life, the mass introduction of the 'slave' body into prisons

following the legislative 'abolition' of slavery altered the 'reformatory' aspects of incarceration" (James, 2005).

By the 1960s, and directly in response to radical and progressive social movements of the time, the "'law and order' rhetoric and campaigns fed the contemporary imprisonment crisis fueled by resistance and backlash to the turbulent decades of protest against the prevailing order… Hoover's fear that the militancy of black emancipators would 'infect' white America was also shared by elected officials" (James, 2005). This continues to today, a time in which we have seen the diminishment of free acts, or "acts that can be engaged in without fear of surveillance or reprisal, which signals the "shrinkage of free democratic space. The penal state grows not because of the proliferation of prisons per se, but because 'free' space diminishes or disappears" (James, 2005). Astutely noting that this diminishment in part stems from legislation, we see that the "state shrinks, and alternatively can expand, democratic space through its criminal/civil codes… In America, as in its Athenian progenitor, there is no free space, as we know it, without penal or slave space, as we fear it" (James, 2005).

James notes that most abolitionist discourse historically, with the exception of discourse described as radical, "tends to avoid the debate over naming, and to focus on the rights of the incarcerated (or enslaved) [by emphasizing] the conditions of penalty and servitude (or slavery), not the ontological status of the servant (or slave). If the question of 'slave' status is a critical one and not merely an exercise in semantics, then it might be that some types of abolitionism, just like the master-state narratives that they counter, seek less than freedom—the agency of the captive individual or community to char their humanity through transforming and negating slavery and social death" (James, 2005). With this understanding of the continuation of slavery via the penal system, we can more accurately work in solidarity with those incarcerated and brutalized by the system.

> The state does not create legal categories in abstraction… Laws maintained the plantation and reservation as penal camps and fuel for labor in consumption for those designated as socially living and free. Democracy rooted in captivity and social parasitism meant that the civic body fed itself through the state's legal (criminal) apparatus and procurement and containment of racially fashioned bodies… The state fed the master race (constructed by racial supremacy and propertied 'free person' status) with the bodies and lands of its captives. The master race fed the state with the fruits of captive labor. Laws codified, regulated, and policed the exchange (James, 2005).

James describes conventional prison narratives, in which the state, "despite its abusive excesses, provides the possibility of emancipation and redemption. According to such narratives, the state cannot therefore be considered or constructed as inherently and completely corrupt; for the state enables and maintains the sites of freedom (open society), as well as those of enslavement (prison)" (James, 2005). Continuing, James writes "These narratives reassure (the sympathetic/allied reader) of reconciliation with prevailing power structures that allow for or provide emancipation and democratic culture. These structures then must be maintained if not

revered despite the 'dead zones' within which democracy is made incompatible with the life of specific subcultures" (James, 2005). These "dead zones" include the prison, the immigrant detention center, the military camp, the police station, the foreign prison in Cuba or Iraq or Afghanistan, which "all deny the possibility of 'new life' or rebirth. All are manifestations of institutional and rational and irrational violence; all are anti-democratic" (James, 2005).

Building these generative projects takes time, perhaps much more than we have in our lifetimes. Abolitionist Mariame Kaba says, "how much hubris must we have to think that us individual persons are going to have all the answers for generations worth of harm built by multi-millions of people? It's like, I'm on a 500-year clock right now. I'm right here knowing that we've got a hell of a long time before we're going to see the end. Right now, all we're doing is building the conditions that will allow the thing to happen" (Kaba, qtd. in Ewing, 2019). We must buckle in for continuous, sustained efforts; noticing and responding to our immediate conditions is imperative, but even when the last prison walls fall, our work will still be in its beginning stages.

As Firehawk & Turk (2017) note, outside assistance in prisoner-led activism is "essentially important, strategically effective, and easily generalizable. It does not require special talents or extraordinary risks, merely a willingness to engage authentically with the trauma of dire circumstances prisoners find themselves in, some straightforward writing, and attention to basic administrative, outreach, and communication tasks, all skills which are relatively easy to learn by doing" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). Library workers inside and outside their institutions can support prison-led organizing and engender programming opportunities for those most impacted by the prison-industrial complex. In this final piece in a three-part series, I will explore currently pressing information crises inside Indiana prisons specifically, including the double-edge of electronic resources; how we inside LIS can address issues around the fundamental violence of prisons and policing generatively and without capitulation; and what are examples of projects and ideas we can work towards building in our libraries and outside the institution with our skills forged through librarianship.

Actionable information crises

Gutting higher education

Spearheaded by Democrats attempting to appear Tough on Crime in the carceral 90s, 1994's Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act eliminated access to federal Pell Grants for people participating in postsecondary correctional education. At this point, most college-in-prison programs disappeared. As of this year, half of all U.S. states do not offer access to college programs for prisoners. Long-termer May (2020) notes that a few states including California and Indiana continue funding college programs inside prisons, while a number of others offer "limited non-degree-bearing programs. Other states have provided no funding but allowed nonprofit organizations and philanthropists to establish highly selective degree programs in prison, the most notable being New York's Bard Prison Initiative" (May, 2020). However, this number is relatively small, and only a handful of accredited universities offer correspondence courses to prisoners, regardless of sentence or custody level. These few

schools, such as Adams State University and Ohio University, are then left to fill the massive gap in higher educational services (May, 2020).

As May importantly notes, the end of funding Pell Grants for prisoners signaled "an internal shift in penal policy. Support for any rehabilitative programming grew inconsistent at best and nonexistent at worst. In some facilities, prison officials did not care if offenders wanted to improve themselves; they were to be punished and held for the duration of a sentence" (May, 2020). Furthermore, May writes, the beliefs in carcerality that ended Pell Grants in 1994:

> continue to obstruct higher education in prison today [and] are not based on evidence. Rather, they are vengeful, frenzied appeals toward draconian laws… These arguments-- that college is a privilege, prisoners are incapable of authentic rehabilitation, there are sufficient programs in prison, college is a re-entry tool only-- do not advance criminal justice nor make communities any safer. Like any emotional appeal that weaponizes misinformation and relies upon ignorance to win the day, such arguments are fallacious and ignore the facts. Contending that higher education should be reserved for certain groups of people is discriminatory, classist and ignorant of the many problems postsecondary correctional education can address (May, 2020).

The reason that higher education is able to reduce recidivism rates, largely keeping people from returning to prison, is because this training "effectively addresses criminality unlike any other program in prison. Students learn critical thinking, communication and social skills, ethics, time management, goal setting, perspective taking, organization, and accountability for one's actions or inaction" (May, 2020). Furthermore, in order to assist student researchers with their work and prepare students for the world outside prison (such as The Last Mile program attempts to do), these facilities need access to the Internet. There are more advantages of expanding access to the electronic resources available to traditional students through academic libraries. Security concerns are an inhumane distraction instead of addressing the needs for rehabilitation and other preparedness instruction for transitioning back to life in the outside world.

The History Project at IWP, founded in 2012 after cuts to education funding for incarcerated students, functioned as one important "step towards rehabilitation" that combined education with social context. Through this educational program, folks could make sense of their "own private emotional histories", since "people derive a strong sense of identity by understanding how what came before them shaped their geography, politics, and social interactions" (Finnell, 2018). In the early stages of the program, Kauffman "took note of the numerous historical documents about the prison at the Indiana State Archives", primary and secondary sources that, when combined with the students' experiential knowledge on structural predatorism at the hands of 'reformers', refuted existing hegemonic narratives on the history of the women's prison (Jones, 2015; Finnell, 2018).

After librarian Barbara Fister read Michelle Jones and Kelsey Kauffman's 2015 piece in *Perspectives on History* on the challenges of conducting archival and historical research inside Indiana Women's Prison, Fister organized the *Indiana Women's Prison Higher Education*

Program Far-Away Reference Desk in 2016, a "volunteer group of librarians willing to answer reference requests for archival material from [incarcerated people] enrolled in the college program" (Finnell, 2018). The program sought to remedy "the deficiencies of the prison's library holidays and reference services by crowdsourcing library expertise and collections across the country" (Finnell, 2018). Kauffman wrote to the American Historical Association on reference queries including the origins of the prison's founders; the history of Magdalene laundries (the Catholic-run predecessor to today's state-run women's prison); and female circumcision in the 1870s, among other queries (Finnell, 2018).

The first reference query handled by the Far-Away Reference Desk was locating all information known about the Magdalene laundries, specifically the House of the Good Shepherd, in every state; librarians from various institutions created a shared spreadsheet with historical newspaper clippings, registries, journal articles, and letters. Over fifty librarians and archivists were able to fill in gaps on historic information and resources using a shared Google Drive. On this project, Kauffman writes: "I realized that historians and I had been asking the wrong questions about the prison. My students, on the other hand, have consistently asked the right questions… ones that not only have exposed new information...but have challenged prevailing ideas about where, when, and by whom prisons for women were started, and, most importantly, why" (Kauffman, qtd. in Finnell, 2018).

At the time, Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) used JPay as the email system in all Indiana prisons, which Fister described at the time as cost-prohibitive. Today, GTL is the system IDOC has in place, another predatory e-communications system that is also equally cost-prohibitive and intentionally user-unfriendly. Finnell wrote of the Far-Away Reference Desk that "replicating this model in cities and states across the country could be an opportunity to build a sustainable network" of library and information workers who can improve access to information for incarcerated folks without one of our most valuable tools in a "world defined by the Internet" (Finnell, 2018).

What you can do today:
- Advocate for and ensure higher education access for incarcerated people and formerly incarcerated people in your state.
- Expand Inside-Out courses, which provide a valuable learning opportunity for students on both sides of the walls to connect, work through bias, and learn from one another.
- Connect with abolitionist and radical library workers to build and sustain a Far-Away Reference Desk for incarcerated students and patrons in your locality
- While there is no internet access for prison higher education, reference queries can be translated through a muddied game of telephone and not yield useful results for student-researchers. If you work in academic libraries, you can provide virtual reference services to students in these college-in-prison programs.
- Ensure if you collaborate with formerly incarcerated researchers and benefit from their expertise from lived experiences, that these researchers are compensated more than fairly. You are asking someone to undertake research directly in conversation with their

trauma. You must pay them; otherwise you are objectifying while still profiting off of their experiences (in essence, you become the prison itself).
- Advocate to ban the box for college applications. Students with felony charges are no more dangerous than any other student, and in the face of continued discrimination against people with charges and the stated values of the educational institution, higher education institutions should be the last place enabling this discrimination.

There is a concern for replacing one corrective institution with another. For more, see Anastazia Schmid's interview series on higher education access for currently/formerly incarcerated people in Indiana, broadcast on WFHB's Kite Line:
- [Kite Line- July 10, 2020: When Success is an Anomaly](#)
- [Kite Line- July 17, 2020: What's Going on is Nothing New- Prisoners on State Violence and the Rebellion](#)
- [Kite Line- July 24, 2020: For the Sake of Knowledge Alone](#)

Mail bans/reading restrictions

Inside jails, generally speaking, there is almost a complete lack of access to libraries and information resources; a notable exception to this is the partnership between Monroe County Public Library and Monroe County Jail in Bloomington, Indiana; this partnership has existed since 1986, and the jail library is visited by 2,000 patrons and circulates 1,000 books monthly and contains over 6,000 nonfiction and fiction titles in this collection (Monroe County Public Library, 2019). This is a unique collaboration that public libraries must take note of across the country. This lack of information access inside jails is also the case for detention facilities, the latter of which do not contain the informational and legal resources translated in the languages immigrants need to fight their cases.

Because prisons are designed for longer sentences, they are generally more covered by legal and recreational library access in theory. As the ALA notes in *Prisoners' Right to Read* (2019), "participation in a democratic society requires *unfettered* access to current social, political, legal, economic, cultural, scientific, and religious information" (ALA, 2019, emphasis added). Furthermore, "suppression of ideas does not prepare people of any age who are incarcerated for life in a free society. Even those individuals who are incarcerated for life require access to information, to literature, and to a window on the world" (ALA, 2019). However, ALA's grand values often fall flat in the face of requirements for carceral librarians to censor and build limited collections. I will speak more on this in the [Plight of Prison Librarianship](#) section.

NYPL Correctional Services librarian Emily Jacobson (2018) writes of the reference-by-mail program available to incarcerated people nationwide. "Prison emphasizes a lack of agency and choice. To pursue knowledge, entertainment, and skills is a powerful choice for someone who is in a system that is designed to narrow that world" (Jacobson, 2018). Censorship varies by state and local policies. When conducting reference in Kansas, NYPL librarian Jacobson (2018) writes, "our patrons are not allowed to send rules for role-playing games, such as Dungeons & Dragons. In Delaware, we have a group of writers who always request increasingly complex rules to Dungeons & Dragons" which is "seemingly not a violation" (Jacobson, 2018).

Jacobson writes of an important partnership between LIS students at Pratt Institute and NYPL's Correctional Services program, answering the most common queries received by the NYPL: "students are assigned three letters per semester. They gain experiential reference skills, as opposed to many introductory reference classes that offer experience by hunting for 'Easter eggs'—obscure facts in hard to find places" (Jacobson, 2018). Reference queries these LIS students are tasked to handle include reentry resources for places outside of New York City; organizations that will provide pro bono legal assistance; or assistance in writing business plans (Jacobson, 2018). Answering reference queries through handwritten mail is an advantageous practice for incoming library workers. Jacobson points out that this process teaches valuable lessons in formatting and prioritizing information; "the way that one chooses to lay out information on paper is "an important part of responding", for example removing hyperlinks when sending an encyclopedia article retrieved from the Internet (Jacobson, 2018).

Furthermore, it is a good way to introduce and normalize answering letters and writing to people who are incarcerated (Jacobson, 2018). The advantages for incarcerated people are abundant; people can build their own empowerment through information access; educational opportunities reduce recidivism rates; and "receiving letters during mail call can serve as… a protective shield against potential violence [because] it alerts guards that you've got contacts and advocates on the outside, so you're less likely to be mistreated'" (Black & Pink, qtd. in Jacobson, 2018). More public and academic libraries should undertake this valuable project or spearhead a collaboration with their nearby LIS program. At the time of writing, Jacobson notes that NYPL is aware of only one other system, San Francisco Public Library, that answers reference by mail. "There is an endless information void that could be addressed. To ignore it is to assume that some people's information needs are greater than others, and this is not the ideology of public libraries", keeping someone "willfully ignorant" is further unnecessary punishment" (Jacobson, 2018).

It's hard to know from the outside what exactly a collection consists of inside prisons. From reports of my friends incarcerated/formerly incarcerated in Indiana, the legal library resources are filled with either old reference works that certainly contain outdated laws or inaccessible electronic legal databases like LexisNexis. Generally, the most prevalent works available are: primarily Christian religious texts; popular fiction; and vocational reference works. With continued budget austerity along with the adverse, punitive conditions of this subset of librarianship, many prisons do not contain a prison librarian or a non-legal library.

Another very pressing information crisis in many jails and prisons throughout the country is increasingly strict policies surrounding acquisition, mailing, and possession of literary materials inside prisons. A banned books policy was overturned in New York after continued struggle by folks inside and outside, but these strict and unreasonable policies are sustained and without much public visibility in many states including Indiana. In Texas, over 10,000 titles are banned from being sent inside, from *Where's Waldo* and *Freakonomics* to *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. Meanwhile, titles that endorse and advocate for violent white supremacist ideology, such as titles by "ex"-Klan leader David Duke, pass through mail facilities without any problems or censorship (Zoukis, 2018). Finally, many

prison mail rooms will simply throw away any reading materials not in English for inability to decode and censor these materials. This should stand alone as highly xenophobic and endemic to the discriminatory, violent logics of the prison institution.

It should go without saying that these types of intellectually restrictive policies operate fundamentally not only against ALA policies outlined in the *Prisoner's Right to Read* interpretation but also violate Constitutionally-guaranteed tenets of freedom that are too often taken for granted by people on the outside or with little connection to the PIC. Before recent policies in Indiana, libraries could send in weeded books or organizers could send in donated books (notably through the Midwest Pages to Prisoners program); essentially, anyone was able to send in new or used books. Now, books sent inside Indiana prisons must be new and shipped directly from Amazon. Not only does this create further barriers to information access in aforementioned ways, but this also promotes the state's partnership with multinational tech conglomerates with excessive [documented](#) [human rights](#) [violations](#) like the goliathian Amazon.

As Firehawk & Turk note, "prisons are sites where any form of protest or organizing is considered illegitimate. Prison authorities have broad freedoms to monitor and censor communication via the mail, phone, and visitation. They can move prisoners into isolation and cancel education and religious programming with the creation of a potentially fabricated disciplinary report. Despite these restrictions, prisoners continue to organize and brazenly risk punishment to assert their political personhood and pursue their organizing efforts (Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

What you can do today:

- Expand outreach and collection development with your local jail. There is one or more than one jail in your community. Non-reformist-ly collaborate with them to expand the quality and breadth of reading materials available.
- Send stamps through GTL or whichever e-communications system your local prison, jail, or detention facility employs.
- Correspond with someone locally incarcerated in your area. What are their library situations like? Do these incarcerated folks have the access to the works they need? Work to remedy these gaps through collaborative reference-by-mail programs.
- Tune in to advocacy for the rights and humanity of people detained by ICE in your local area. What are the most pressing informational needs for folks detained in these facilities? Do they have access to reading and legal materials in the languages they need?
- Examine the laws and policies on mailing bans in your local prison. Advocate for intellectual freedom and freedom from censorship by publicizing banned book lists

Double Edge of E-Resources

LexisNexis in prison libraries

In the context of the historic role of the library as a morally reformatory institution discussed in my previous piece, we must be wary of electronic resources that parade as innovative solutions but effectively fortify the same old bias. Schlesselman-Tarango (2016) importantly asks: "what role might technology play in 'saving' patrons or users? Is the missionary spirit one that conceives of technology as a gift to bestow upon the Other, gift that will civilize?… Related questions might explore whether technology perhaps limits the ways in which she manifests, and if so, which logics or ideologies supplement her work or take its place" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). This is most evident in the legal database LexisNexis, employed inside and outside prison libraries alike.

Implementing electronic databases like LexisNexis in lieu of costly physical legal resources which inevitably become outdated initially seems like another effective cost-cutting measure; however, this move fails to consider the pitfalls of switching primarily to digital database subscriptions while purging physical collections. When these legal libraries are understaffed, there is no education of staff or incarcerated people on how to use electronic legal databases in order to fight for their freedom. This is the case in at least one facility in Indiana: for over a year, incarcerated people at the Westville Correctional Facility have not had access to the legal database LexisNexis. With physical legal resources being purged from the library's collection and digital legal resources being inaccessible indefinitely, this leaves people who are incarcerated at Westville entirely without access to legal resources. People cannot be expected to fully rehabilitate without access to legal resources, nor can they adequately research and argue their legal cases. In failing to provide access to legal materials, IDOC is in direct violation of federal and state policies in addition to violating American Correctional Association and American Library Association bylaws.

When correctional libraries fail to provide unfettered access to print or digital legal resources, or cannot do so because the librarian position remains unfilled, any rehabilitative goals cannot be actualized. Electronic databases are already so unreliable inside our libraries, this spells constant headache for prison libraries. Delaying action in either restoring access to LexisNexis or improving on the print legal resources directly contributes to ongoing rights and policy abuses at Westville Correctional Facility. Purging the physical legal collection furthers this problem of leaving people without access—if they are even equipped on how to navigate database resources like searching through LexisNexis. When libraries focus on expanding electronic services, this widens the digital divide for the many folks who cannot access these resources.

I spoke with John Helling, Executive Director of Public Services at the Indianapolis Public Library system, back in March 2020. Helling said that we need to professionally re-examine "the expectation to have an e-collection that is the same as the print collection" (Helling, 2020). Helling continues, "it's just not possible in my opinion anymore, it's getting even less possible. I think there's going to have to be a shift; the mathematics of it, the budget, is going to force people to reconsider, 'is our ebook collection supposed to look like our print collection and can we consider it a substitute?' Databases are a different thing than ebooks, and there are

distinctions, but I do think we've come to the end of the point in time in the profession where we can go as far down the electronic path as we want to because it will explode our budget. We just can't do it" (Helling, 2020).

Library database vendors can be almost as grossly profiteering as the prison communications technology companies themselves. Ettarh (2018) notes that Lexis-Nexis is directly participating in a project building "ICE's Extreme Vetting surveillance system. This system would most likely gather data from public use computers and webpages in public, academic, and private libraries across the nation, and determine and evaluate one's probability of becoming a positively contributing member of society, or whether they intend to commit criminal or terrorist acts after entering the United States" (Ettarh, 2018). This feels straight out of dystopian sci-fi media like Minority Report in its wholesale privacy and autonomy violations.

Cost-prohibitive e-communications systems

In line with its predecessor JPay, GTL is another extremely expensive communications system with an intentionally unfriendly user interface that creates further barriers in communication. By user-unfriendly, I mean: beyond the exorbitant costs, GTL disables keyboard characters to make an email more illegible; and don't try to draft a message in the outside-facing GTL text box because the system will refresh, log you out, and you will lose what you wrote. This is not limited to my personal experience but is the experience of family members and organizers I know who must use GTL to communicate with their loved ones. This substandard email experience is often preferable or more affordable for timely messages to loved ones: under the GTL contract, Indiana has the fifth-highest rate for phone calls in the country; it cost $3.84 for a 15-minute local call in 2018 (Prison Phone Justice, n.d.).

GTL is another massive carceral communications corporation that sells technology products to more than 1.8 million incarcerated people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. GTL also holds 32 state DOC contracts, including 8 of the largest 10 state DOC contracts. Tablets are provided to people incarcerated by IDOC for free, but folks on the inside say it's nothing more than a paperweight without the funds to utilize the tablet's features. In a November 2017 *Indy Star* article written on the at-the-time impending switch, Martin (2017) wrote that renting a movie costs $8; buying a music subscription costs $25 per month (compared to an average $10 per month for a Spotify subscription on the outside); podcasts, which are free to those on the outside, will cost $9 per month. GTL will also charge $9.95 for video visitations, and $0.27 per email (Martin, 2017). Speaking with a friend in 2020, these are still the same rates. Martin writes that GTL expects to generate $6.5 million annually through the tablets in Indiana alone; IDOC takes 10 percent from every purchase made on the tablets and expects to net $750,000 annually. IDOC declined to discuss how this tablet revenue will be spent during contract negotiations and still remains silent on this issue (Martin, 2017). Additionally, the selection of music demonstrates clear bias: all tracks are censored; a majority of the tracks available are country & western or worship music; and the only news apps available are big box corporate news that's already available to incarcerated folks through the TVs. This abysmal selection does not reflect the interests or needs of those who are incarcerated.

Beyond the immediate ethical concerns of prison profiteering, GTL is unique in its clearly unethical behavior. In 2017, GTL was indicted for its involvement in what's described as the "Mississippi Prison Phone Scam." According to a federal class action lawsuit filed on behalf of people incarcerated by the state of Mississippi, GTL allegedly funneled bribes and kickbacks to former Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner Christopher Epps, and GTL was allowed to maintain the calling contract without competitive bidding while also charging excessive calling fees that far exceeded market rates. GTL agreed to a $2.5 million settlement with the state of Mississippi in August of 2017 but still denies any wrongdoing (The Clarion-Ledger, 2017). These unethical corporations work within a state system that is not supposed to be profiting off of incarceration (unlike the design of private prisons) in order to profit off of state incarceration. GTL's costs are extremely prohibitive and gesture towards reforms that reinforce the control of the state and big tech.

E-tools expansion to isolate prisoners, social death

With tablets available to prisoners, this paves the way for greater attempts at severing incarcerated people's physical connections to the outside world. This grim fact is even more apparent in the wake of the national and local mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis, meaning that we have not been able to visit our locked-up loved ones for nearly five months. When there is less physical and emotional support for people inside, an incarcerated person has fewer avenues of solidarity and care in their struggle for state recognition of their humanity. Prison authorities continue to cut back on avenues for real human contact, whether it's telephone restrictions, bans on contact visits, or photocopying and censoring mail.

In place of real meaningful human contact, prisons point to technological fixes that don't have the same nourishing effect. Tablets are just one more mechanism to cut incarcerated people off from their outside support systems, and technology is used by the state as a flimsy band-aid over the real gaping wound, how prisons intentionally force disconnectedness, a form of social death. As Firehawk & Turk write, "social death process marks a denial of civil and political personhood for the prisoner—which, when viewed in the aggregate, results in the dispossession of racialized communities to their self-determining authority and sovereign claims to governance" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). This is another reason why social media platforms should be accessible for folks serving time, though this reform must be examined for pitfalls. If this were the case, based on GTL's pricing model, we could reasonably expect outrageous costs for services that are free outside of detention. However, access to a communication/sharing network would alleviate some of the immediate hardships associated with incarceration and missing out on outside life. For more on this valuable argument, see Bozelko (2017).

Information security & surveillance capitalism

John Helling (2020) says on this work in Indianapolis Public Library specifically, "If I had to generalize across a city of 900,000, which is a big generalization, there are a lot of people who still have never had an email account. So we're working with people on that level, so they can get an email account so they can apply for a job" (Helling, 2020). Because patrons applying for fast food work now are required to navigate this online system with a lot of steps, like uploading a resume, while "their technology literacy is pretty low,", Helling says that "there's a long way to

go before we get to the Internet of Things and these advanced topics. There are certainly people out there who are ready for that, a large percent of them have the internet at their house, and so we don't see the need presented at the library as much as we do for people with basic needs" (Helling, 2020).

At any stage of assisting someone with less knowledge on a given issue than you, it is imperative to meet them where they are at then provide the equipment like definitions and explanations to assist and clarify as they move to the next level of understanding. Nowhere does this feel more important than in explaining the complicated expanse of all that is enabled through the Internet. Even in picking up groceries from Kroger, if someone is coming home today after 20 years of incarceration, they would not know to look for networked cameras collecting personal data in the parking lot or while browsing the aisles.

Alison Macrina of the Library Freedom Institute (2020) notes in a recent interview that public libraries in particular are in a strong position to instruct and provide a "community response to surveillance" (Macrina, 2020). This is how the Library Freedom Institute began, an initiative that trains public librarians on privacy and information security. Macrina says, "I really wanted to build a community of practice that could meet that challenge, so I started thinking about what that could look like. I developed a blueprint for a six-month-long train-the-trainers workshop where librarians located in different places could get together online every week and learn about this stuff" (Macrina, 2020). This program encourages folks from rural and Southern libraries "since those libraries tend to be under-resourced and far from in-person training opportunities. We also prioritize public librarians because they tend to interact with the public more… and also because public librarians generally don't have the professional development funding to make something like LFI happen on their own" (Macrina, 2020).

Macrina notes that "because most people, whether they're the librarians who we're training for the first time or the patrons who our graduates go on to train, come into a privacy-focused educational setting feeling hopelessness and resignation", LFI tends to focus on relationships rather than the structure itself of the Internet (Macrina, 2020). Many times a LFI participant may be dealing with a problem that is happening to them right now, "like stalkerware or having had their identity stolen. They're already freaked out. Most people think they don't have a good sense of how technology works. They already feel stupid asking questions about it" (Macrina, 2020). This program offers a valuable opportunity for public librarians to diffuse their own anxieties surrounding increased tracking and violations of security in order to assist patrons in that same process.

Furthermore, LFI vitally links these security concerns with the broader sociopolitical context in which they are constructed. Macrina says that LFI works with "a trainer named Mallory Hanora, who comes from the world of prison abolition and teaches us how to create transformative workshops. Their framework is about incorporating the experiences of the people in the room, being as nonhierarchical as possible, meeting people where they are—all these sorts of things to create an environment that people can actually learn in" (Macrina, 2020). This is a highly meaningful project because people care about their privacy, and those equipped to do so have

already taken steps to mitigate or manage what is revealed about them online. However, many of these folks haven't developed a "nuanced threat model for their own unique situation, but most people are already doing something. In those moments, LFI librarians have the information and facilitation tools to help patrons build on what they already know" (Macrina, 2020).

By equipping public librarians in the basics of information security, we can meaningfully contribute to educating a greater portion of the population on the many dangers posed by these tools. "Seven of the top ten companies by market capitalization are tech companies. Seven out of ten are using data that they take from us, without our consent, to create their products. That is part of our labor power: those products are made with our emotional labor, our mental labor. Privacy is a way to reclaim our labor power. I want people to think about those relationships" (Macrina, 2020). You can find LFI's Course Materials on their [Wiki](#).

Prison abolition inside LIS

Lamble aptly says that abolishing the prison industrial complex is "not only about getting rid of prisons; it is about integrating abolitionist analysis and practice into broader social, economic, and racial justice struggles" (Lamble, 2015). In the context of LIS, I will explore how we can reconfigure LIS pedagogy; examine recruitment, retention, and restructuring of the field; reimagine programming and outreach opportunities; examining contemporary solutions; as well look at the plight of prison librarianship critically, all in order to incorporate transformative abolitionist praxis into the field.

Altering LIS pedagogy

I discuss the topic of institutional LIS pedagogy at greater length in my second piece. In this piece on what we can do, I specifically aim to highlight that, as Pawley (1998) writes, the "failure of LIS education to confront societal questions is itself a sign of the power of the dominant class to exercise hegemony… One result is a politically naive profession" (Pawley, 1998). This is because "LIS education is trapped in [repeating dilemmas] by its adherence not only to the middle-class strategy of professional protectionism but also to two other middle-class strategies: a striving for scientific status and an attachment to universities" (Pawley, 1998).

When LIS programs approach issues related to equity, they may start including the terms "institutional" or "structural"; however, this by no means addresses hegemonic power and the role of the institution or provides for the student the scope of this issue or the critical inquiry practices to dismantle this bias. This furthers our politically naive profession. Instead, the easier, milquetoast approach of Celebrating Diversity and Multiculturalism outdated from the 1960s is employed in LIS instruction. Over twenty years ago, Pawley wrote that LIS curriculum should include social theory as a tool for rigorous, theoretical, and empowering analysis of current far-ranging societal changes… Educational institutions are of central importance in the transmission of an effective dominant culture" (Pawley, 1998).

To reform our broken LIS pedagogy, this involves more than adding an elective class on information and power or carving small spaces for community information in the curriculum.

Pawley writes that LIS faculty must follow and participate in current interdisciplinary debates and philosophical trends. "With additional preparation in social theory, LIS students and practitioners would be better equipped to investigate underexplored avenues of research" (Pawley, 1998). The tools for undertaking a "rigorous, theoretical, and empowering analysis of current far-ranging societal changes" are available and abundant for LIS faculty. It is instructors' responsibility to seek out and disseminate these tools to "the next generation of information professionals, thus providing them with the intellectual capacity to make an informed choice about how they will practice their profession on a daily basis" (Pawley, 1998).

Because LIS education provides us with the opportunity to resist the "continuing influence of Lady Bountiful", the (virtual) classroom can be treated not only as a site in which "this archetype can be challenged but also one in which alternatives can be explored" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016). Furthermore, in thinking on how LIS educators might expose and challenge this fundamental notion of good-hearted benevolence embodied in Lady Bountiful, "we must keep in mind that she is a figure whose benevolence has for so long been fundamental to what libraries do and how they do it. To actively distance ourselves from the fundamental Lady Bountiful will require creativity and boldness… When they choose to engage in this task, LIS educators must do so knowing the unrelenting fixation on the Other that is prevalent in multicultural education models does the work of keeping invisible white supremacy" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016).

Questions to consider for LIS instructors:
- How does your instruction approach issues of diversity and equity? Do you adhere to ALA-style discussions of difference and power?
- Are students encouraged to seek innovative, creative approaches to librarianship outside of the institution of libraries?
- If you are instructing on inclusion, how is that represented in your syllabus? Do you include multidisciplinary resources to ensure your students have a broader scope than what's offered through LIS? When is the last time you updated your syllabus on these emerging, changing topics?
- Do you talk about, normalize, and encourage reference queries for "non-traditional" patrons, including incarcerated people? If not, why? How do your personal implicit biases harm the ways you instruct students or format your course?
- From Pawley's writings:
  - What is the nature of the information infrastructure? Who decides what and how information should be produced and for whom? Who benefits? Who does not?
  - Does the LIS curriculum participate in this debate [on the deepening division of society between information haves and have-nots], or does it rather contribute to the information apparatus's aim of avoiding social criticism? Where are the courses on information politics? On the production and distribution of information? On the ownership of information? On the stratification of information? (Pawley, 1998)

Recruitment, retention, restructuring by the most marginalized of us

Ettarh (2018) writes that library workers who face marginalization can often "more clearly see the disparities between the espoused values and the reality of library work" (Ettarh, 2018). When the problem of minimal representation and retention of library workers who are not white, cisgender, or (temporarily) able-bodied is given space to breathe in mainstream professional dialogue, this criticism is filtered through the "apologetic and complicit lens of white liberalism", taking an appropriate comment, distorting and minimizing it, then representing this watered-down concern deceitfully (Sierpe, 2019). Sierpe (2019) writes that this "carefully crafted image of librarianship as a fundamentally noble enterprise" reinforces the prevailing premise that it's not due to white supremacy in the "conceptualization, structure and practice of librarianship or the profession's service to white power, but one limited to adjustments toward evolving cultural trends and norms favoring 'multiculturalism' and 'diversity'. However, the use of these undefined concepts reinforces the "dominant power structure and its cyclical reformulations" (Sierpe, 2019).

This leads to a larger burden of expectation on the most marginalized to restructure LIS single handedly. Speaking of the larger society instead of LIS specifically, Dylan Rodríguez (2016) writes:

> There are specific ways, in this moment of compulsory diversity and institutionalized multiculturalism, where the post-apartheid United States is actually doubling down on gendered-racist state violence by fostering delimited avenues of social mobility (i.e. affirmative action and its aftermath) and ideologies of "empowerment." These are usually affixed to spectacles of dark-skinned peoples' exceptional achievements, talents, and rarified "opportunities" that work, always and incessantly, to ideologically crowd out the everyday social truths of systemic degradation and evisceration. This is just a glimpse of the mess that the ascendancy of White Being creates in its *extra-supremacist* moments, when it thrives on gestures of seduction, invitation, and inclusion that accompany the sturdy apparatuses of warfare, policing, and incarceration (Rodríguez, 2016, emphasis author's).

Schlesselman-Tarango gestures towards this inside the field: if the ideal library worker, understood as Lady Bountiful, is not "simply white, female, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle or upper class, but also subscribes to a specific type of benevolence, what sort of role does she play in regulating the types of people who desire to enter the library workforce today? Does she inform our ideas surrounding what constitutes 'fitness for the position'? Does she stunt our ability to imagine a new type of subject or new types of ideologies in LIS, and does she perhaps limit the possibilities of what a librarian or library could be?" (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016).

One incredibly beneficial initiative to sustain support and community specifically for BIPOC library and archive workers is we here. Through online continuing education programs, "'diversity' classes that seem to gloss over systemic racism & oppression; not enough folks from Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) communities teaching or featured on syllabi; no

cost options, particularly for people paying out of pocket"; we here writes their mission is to "provide a learning community with opportunities for personal and professional development based in anti-racist pedagogy, as well as recognizing and acknowledging systemic racism and oppression" (we here, 2020). Learn more at: wehere.space/school. I encourage you to seek out BIPOC critical perspectives on more of the restructuring work needed inside LIS.

Programming & outreach

Important to highlight before continuing is the effects of prison gerrymandering and your local library. According to the Prison Policy Initiative (n.d.), the Census Bureau counts incarcerated people as residents of the towns where they are confined, "though they are barred from voting in 48 states and return to their homes after being released. The practice also defies most state constitutions and statutes, which explicitly state that incarceration does not change a residence" (Prison Policy Initiative, n.d.). Because Census data are used for redistricting at all levels of government, as well as determining a great deal of the scope of public library's work, the specific location of populations is "critical"; continuing to count people incarcerated in prison in the wrong place undermines the Supreme Court's requirement that "political power be apportioned on the basis of population. The process of drawing fair and equal districts fails when the underlying data are flawed" (Prison Policy Initiative, n.d.). With this in mind, it is irrefutably your responsibility as a public library that has a prison or jail in its district to provide outreach services, regardless of where said people are "from". The differences between people working and people incarcerated in prisons are further exacerbated by prison gerrymandering. As James (2005) writes on the state of New York:

> The majority of prisons located in rural upstate New York house a considerable number of men and women shipped in from downstate or urban areas such as New York City; the state employs largely white prison guards and administrators to police largely black and brown bodies; largely conservative, white congressional representatives are elected in rural districts augmented by [re]apportionment expanded by the incarcerated who cannot vote while in the urban congressional representation in prisoners' home districts in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx shrinks with their enforced absence and appropriation or theft of their electoral value (James, 2005)

Firehawk & Turk note that developing relationships with prisoners establishes "an infrastructure and network of resistance across prison fences" (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). Many existing programs can use human capital and financial support. Such efforts include "books or zines to prisoners, pen pal programs, prisoner publications, classes inside prisons focusing on political education or radical trauma work, and workshop or discussion meetups in the community", among others (Firehawk & Turk, 2017). These support efforts help incarcerated people "organize themselves, spread their knowledge of the horrors of the carceral regime, assert their political agency, bring attention to their particular cases, and importantly, connect with 'free-world' abolitionist projects and scholarship. Actively organizing with our captive comrades to refuse the carceral regime is an essential part of crafting a society that rejects white supremacy and colonialism (Firehawk & Turk, 2017).

Using the advantages afforded to those of us with librarian positions, we can shine a spotlight on the myriad violences I can (euphemistically) term as information crises. Endless programming opportunities exist within library spaces as well as outside of them: teen librarians or media specialists can teach students about civic participation and turning sympathy for marginalized communities into solidarity through letter-writing events to local elected officials or people locked up in nearby facilities. Academic librarians can host a panel on free speech for Banned Books Week on campus (or via video conference until we can go back to campus). Creative thinking will illuminate the abundance of programming opportunities depending on which institution you work in. Libraries tend to focus on more palatable, Board-justifiable programs such as working to serve families through undoubtedly integral parenting literacy programs. This is great work, and we need to work further to increase the connections between community members beyond the walls beyond family structures. Other in-house programs, such as free library-based video visitation, are vital because they directly work to break down barriers that function as the cogs operating the prison-industrial machine.

As John Helling notes, outreach trips can often "be frustrating for people because you're operating in an environment that you have no control over; you have to ask to be let in, you have to ask to do all this stuff. Obviously, we understand the rules are in place over there for a reason, but it's so different from what we're used to providing which is access to anything you want" (Helling, 2020). Public library workers conducting in-person outreach have to consider material restrictions in the eyes of the facility; "there's also sometimes restrictions on content that, as public librarians, we feel strongly that this should not be the case, but we have to ask ourselves 'is it better to provide limited library service or stand on principle and provide no library service?'" (Helling, 2020).

I acknowledge that all of this outreach is in an ideal world in which libraries have the funding necessary to undertake these endeavors. Helling discusses outreach decisions by asking "'should we spend those where we can have a big impact? Or where we're going to have to work a lot harder to have maybe a smaller impact?' It's hard, it's a Sophie's choice question, and we struggle with it. There are people who feel very strongly that yes, our numbers may be lower if we spend time in this way, but it's more important because these people are at a greater disadvantage" (Helling, 2020). Ultimately, "when we're demonstrating our value to, for example, the City Council, it's harder to explain to them on a detail level what we're doing, so we have to rely on numbers and outcomes, and things like that, to demonstrate our impact and ask for more resources" (Helling, 2020). However, this is not to endorse relying on data-driven decision making. Data contain human bias. As Helling says, "data is a starting point, but unless you are folding in lived experience and narrative and history, your thinking is incomplete. In my opinion, it's about using both when you can. Data without a narrative is meaningless. You have to create a narrative around data otherwise it's just numbers. It doesn't tell you anything" (Helling, 2020).

Furthermore, all libraries' partnerships must be drawn into consideration. Just as students have encouraged their colleges to divest from environmentally destructive industries, libraries can be called on to reconsider their institutional ties, and library workers can use their institutionally-afforded privileges to speak with your Board, upper management. Speaking specifically on a local example involving schools, Plainfield Community School Corporation in

nearby Plainfield, Indiana, receives over $8,000 in annual scholarship funds through the notorious for-profit prison corporation GEO Group. This money does not come without strings; graduating seniors accepting GEO's blood money are undoubtedly not prepared for what this work entails, which is predatory for poor/working-class kids especially. Whether you work in the urban core or the rural expanses, the prison-industrial complex affects all of us. Aligning our practices with our values is a necessary part of this work when it's done meaningfully.

Examining Solutions

Helling describes the conflicts between those more and less involved in the social-justice-oriented strains of public librarianship: "Some people think we're outside our mission when we talk about social services. Some people think this is our mission; in my opinion, the people who don't want to go down that road, they're not necessarily cold-hearted, they just want to focus on what they do best in terms of capacity. How do I want to spend my time? Some people signed up to be quasi-social workers, and some people did not" (Helling, 2020).

Helling continues, "some people, in order to solve those 'not our problem' needs, like drug use and violence, want to draw a line that would be less welcoming to certain populations. But my personal position is, as a public library, until you break the rule, you're welcome in here, right? By definition, that means there are rules that are going to be broken and that's when we act. We can't be as proactive as some people want us to be because we're not going to try to predict who is going to mess up and not, because that requires us to be judgmental, make pre-decisions about populations, and that's not a road we're willing to go down. We have thought it through and said to ourselves that this is part of the bargain. If we are going to be this kind of organization, there is going to be a certain percentage of this, and we will respond to it when we can and how we can" (Helling, 2020). With that being said, let's examine a handful of currently popular ideas for improving library spaces, including hiring social workers and divesting from cops; ICE and ICE-supporting vendors; and the non-profit industrial complex.

Social workers in the library

In response to calls for decarceration and ending policing in libraries, some public libraries have been hiring social workers and employing de-escalation tactics. De-escalation tactics and systems of coworker accountability are vital, as internal bias is often a motivator for why people become scared while responding to a situation. On the Indianapolis Public Library system's approach to this idea, Helling said that Central Library was planning on hiring a social worker in the spring, saying "we have been partnering with the IUPUI School of Social Work for the last couple of years; we had a Master's level social worker and two practicum students providing social service work in Central Library. We used that as proof of concept to demonstrate to people who were doubtful that we can do it, and we can do it well, and it wouldn't turn Central Library into a day shelter" (Helling, 2020). Helling continues, "in the last couple years, we did add an off-duty police officer to the police force here. Because honestly, we wanted to create multiple pathways, and if we can solve it with a social worker, great; if we can't, we need something else in place too, because there are some situations that are just outside the scope of the social worker. There are people who are just not interested in engaging with the social

worker. We've added both of those avenues to our approach. We've also worked with our staff, I would say we could do better to get our frontline staff training on unconscious bias and restorative justice models, things like that. That's a conversation we're constantly having as a system" (Helling, 2020).

Considering the historic legacy of whiteness in this profession as well as white women reacting outside of work and calling the police, we should be wary of how Lady Bountiful can spring up in the social work setting. Social workers are also agents of social control, including those working on the frontlines of child safety, probation, and parole. Social and family custody workers are prone to the same white supremacist institutional origins that plague libraries. The state's goal is compliance compared to healthy families. This is evident most notably in the generations of Indigenous kids removed from their families for Boarding Schools and extends to the hyper-surveillance of BIPOC families and people with mental illness as well. Collaborating with social workers can be a meaningful endeavor if structures for critical reflection and accountability exist within an organization. Folks who have had their families torn apart by other arms of the system, including DCS, are wary of the seemingly apparent solution to increase the presence of social workers as behavior moderators. Instead of "replacing" all cops with social workers, we must look to generating a space of communal care for patrons and workers alike. In this regard, social workers can have a valuable place in the library but must be accountable to marginalized communities, which means hiring people from these communities and sustaining the landscape for these social workers to meaningfully assist patrons and do their jobs without microaggressive behavior from management and coworkers.

Divest from the police

From the inspiring folks at the Library Freedom Institute (2020): "Below is a list of divestment ideas built from the demands of Black leaders in the abolitionist movement — like 8ToAbolition, Critical Resistance, and the work of Mariame Kaba — and from existing divestment strategies at work in libraries across the country.

Choosing divestment (Library Freedom Institute, 2020)
- Assess how police have power in your library. Are they stationed in the building? Do they make rounds? Do you share surveillance camera feeds or footage with police? Do you share other info with them without warrants? Do you have private security? Is private security contracted through the police? Do private security guards carry weapons? Do police or security guards communicate or collaborate with library staff, or do they make decisions and enact policy without input?
- Assess why there are police or private security officers in your library. Are you mandated to have police by city or county, or was it a choice made by the board? What specific issues or challenges is your library trying to address or get assistance with?
- Divestment should achieve abolitionist reforms, which reduce police power, rather than reformist reforms, which continue or expand the reach of policing.
- The ideal is no police in the library. Compromises should only take power from the police, rather than giving them new powers. For example, one compromise is disallowing

their weapons in the library. Consider that this approach to policing is already the norm in many majority-white library communities.
- Divestment means reallocating resources to better serve the community. For instance, funds spent on police presence in libraries could be better used to hire social workers or invest directly in community partnerships.

Staff training and alternatives to police
- Police intervention in libraries often stems from a patron in need. Rather than criminalizing the behaviors of these people, the library should help connect them to resources.
- Libraries with inadequate staffing are more likely to struggle with patron problems; divesting from police should reinvest in staff.
- Libraries should form partnerships with community organizations that specialize in restorative justice, public health, and support for marginalized communities. These organizations can assist with staff training and policy-making, and may be able to help provide the resources and services our patrons need. Many libraries have already invested in their own in-house social workers, however, it is important to note that social workers have often reproduced systemic injustices, so hiring social workers with a racial justice lens is key.
- Libraries should consider hiring peer navigator staff. Peers have lived experience with some of the challenges faced by many library patrons. They are available to connect with patrons to provide support and resources.
- Staff training on deescalation strategies is key to safely handling emergency situations. Other necessary trainings include restorative/transformative justice, anti-racist/implicit bias, mental health first aid, and using the overdose prevention remedy Narcan/Naloxone.
- Staff should also be trained on the impacts of policing so they may recognize how calling the police causes harm. Staff may view police as their only option for connecting a patron to resources or keeping staff safe; however, typically involving police simply connects that individual to punishment.
- These trainings should be delivered by organizations that are led by members of the most impacted communities. These trainings should never be delivered by law enforcement.
- These trainings must result in library directors and boards creating new policies and procedures.

Policies and technology
- Libraries must have a clear policy for how and when police are called, with de-escalation strategies being the preferred first steps. If police are called, library staff must be trained on how to communicate with them in order to protect patron rights.
- Libraries should dismantle appropriate use and conduct policies that specifically target teen library users for scrutiny and racial profiling. Teens accessing library spaces are often subject to additional scrutiny that reflects larger social pressures which work to criminalize youth culture and behaviors, specifically that of Black, Indigenous, and

People of Color (BIPOC) teens. Invest staff and resources in developing non-punitive support systems in the library and outreach to marginalized and vulnerable teens.

- Do not allow police technology in library buildings or properties. This includes CCTV, Shotspotter devices, and other surveillance technologies.
- Libraries should not use their own surveillance technologies, like CCTV. If this is not possible, then libraries must have clear policy on who has access to the data, how it is secured, when it is deleted, and that law enforcement can only access it with a legal warrant.

Programs

- Host community conversations highlighting the demands of local Black Lives Matter groups or of similar Black-led community organizations.
- A lack of police presence reinforces a welcoming environment for programming targeted at immigrants, such as language services, consulate visits, and immigration attorney Q&As.
- Do not host programs like "Coffee with a Cop", police officer storytime, or any programming that has the effect of minimizing the violence inherent in policing" (via Library Freedom Institute, 2020).

See Robinson's "No Holds Barred: Policing and Security in the Public Library, Robinson" (2019) for more on how hegemonic professional literature encourages library staff to develop close relationships with local police and security guards without considering the negative effects this closeness can have on BIPOC patrons, patrons experiencing mental illness, and patrons from other marginalized communities. Read one Chicago Public School teacher's call to remove school resource officers (cops) from CPS schools.

Divest from ICE-supporting vendors

Recognize that LexisNexis is not the only expensive vendor we contract with who props up the expansion of surveillance networked capitalism and exploitation. For more on the working relationship between LexisNexis and ICE, see Lamdan's "Librarianship at the Crossroads of ICE Surveillance" (2019).

Divest from the non-profit industrial complex

I quote at length here from Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2009):

> As a "third sector" (neither state nor business), non-profits have existed in what's now the US since the mid-17th century, when colonial Harvard College was incorporated. Today there are nearly 2 million non-profits in the US, including, along with educational institutions, hospitals, schools, museums, operas, think tanks, foundations, and, at the bottom, some grassroots organizations. While the role of some of these organizations has not changed significantly, we have seen increased responsibility on the part of non-profits to deliver direct services to those in need of them. What also distinguishes the expansion of social-service non-profits is that increasingly their role is to take

responsibility for persons who are in the throes of abandonment rather than responsibility for persons progressing toward full incorporation into the body politic...

Legislatures and executive branches transformed bureaucracies basically into policing bodies, whose role became to oversee service provision rather than to provide it themselves. This abandonment provoked a response among organizations that advocated on behalf of certain categories of state clients: the elderly, mothers, children, and so forth. It also encouraged the formation of new groups that, lacking an advocacy past, were designed solely to get contracts and the jobs that came with them. To do business with the state, the organizations had to be formally incorporated, so they became non-profits. Thus, for different reasons, non-profits stepped up to fill a service void...

[Non-profits] providing direct services have become highly professionalized by their relationship with the state. *They have had to conform to public rules governing public money, and have found that being fiduciary agents in some ways trumps their principal desire to comfort and assist those abandoned to their care.* They do not want to lose the contracts to provide services because they truly care about clients who otherwise would have nowhere to go; thus they have been sucked into the world of non-profit providers, which, like all worlds, has its own jargon, limits (determined by bid and budget cycles, and legislative trends), and both formal as well as informal hierarchies. And, generally, the issues they are paid to address have been narrowed to program-specific categories and remedies which *make staff–who often have a great understanding of the scale and scope of both individual clients' and the needs of society at large–become in their everyday practice technocrats through imposed specialization*…

What's wrong is not simply the economic dependencies fostered by this peculiar set of relationships and interests. More important, if forms do indeed shape norms, then *what's wrong is that the work people set out to accomplish is vulnerable to becoming mission impossible under the sternly specific funding rubrics and structural prohibitions* that situate grassroots groups both in the third sector's entanglements and in the shadow of the shadow state. In particular, the modest amount of money that goes to grassroots groups is mostly restricted to projects rather than core operations…

In other words, although we live in revolutionary times, in which the entire landscape of social justice is, or will shortly become, like post-Katrina New Orleans because it has been subject to the same long-term abandonment of infrastructure and other public goods, *funders require grassroots organizations to act like secure suburbanites who have one last corner of the yard to plant* (Gilmore, 2009, emphasis added).

Gilmore depicts the problems that disrupt our work inside LIS, notably burnout, vocational awe, and the crisis of librarianship, through this developmental history of non-profits. Because of these inoperable circumstances, many prison abolitionists also call for the abolishment of the

non-profit industrial complex. For more on this idea, see INCITE!'s [Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex](#).

Plight of prison librarianship

Carceral librarians Danielle Ball and Hannah Lee present myopic and flawed arguments for prison librarianship in their article "Reference Behind Bars: Information Needs, Rights, and Empowerment of Inmates" (2018). I refrain from using the dehumanizing, institutional term "inmate" in my personal writing but will reproduce their use of the problematic term to gesture towards this expected dehumanization, leading inevitably to narrow-mindedness in what Empowerment is in the confining and rigid context of the correctional library.

Ball & Lee (2018) write that *Lewis v. Casey* (1996) found that while incarcerated people have a constitutionally-granted right to access the courts, these same citizens do not possess an "abstract, freestanding right to a law library or legal assistance" and must demonstrate that they have been "injured" and unable to pursue a viable legal claim due to the failings of a facility's law library (Ball & Lee, 2018). The authors note that this ruling led states to adopt the "more affordable and space-saving option of delivering legal material via electronic databases" for incarcerated people conducting legal research. This is a grave shortsightedness not only for prison libraries but also on the part of these carceral librarians specifically. As I discussed previously, quoting public librarian John Helling specifically, e-collections, including distinct databases, can never compensate for a print collection: "it's just not possible in my opinion anymore, it's getting even less possible… We've come to the end of the point in time in the profession where we can go far down the electronic path… it will explode our budget. We just can't do it" (Helling, 2020). Though Ball & Lee do mention that print is still king by noting that prison libraries remain "dependent on authoritative print materials, such as directories, dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, almanacs, and gazetteers", by and large there is no acknowledgement of the costs associated when electronic resource systems inevitably fail (Ball & Lee, 2018). For their abundant references to staffing shortages inside prison libraries and the prison itself, these authors do not acknowledge the realities of what happens when there is no person with an MLS to instruct folks on how to use these complicated, user-unfriendly databases, as seen at Westville Correctional Facility in Indiana.

Another discriminatory belief held by the authors is how they depict incarcerated people's curiosity about the Internet. At any prison, a good amount of people serving time have been incarcerated during the continued exponential growth of web-based communications. Ball & Lee write that their "unbridled curiosity" must be:

> *tempered* by library staff; the demand for Internet searches far outweighs the capability of staff due to staffing shortages and time constraints. Perhaps *more importantly*, prison safety and security can be compromised when librarians disseminate Internet-sourced information which has not been first vetted by institutional administrators. Librarians who use the Internet as a resource for inmates need to have common sense and discretion, safeguards against inmate manipulation, and a strong knowledge of the rules and

regulations regarding inmate access to certain types of information (Ball & Lee, 2018, emphasis added).

In many contexts, I think about how my expected outcome of an event can will that expectation into existence. Through employment by the carceral institution itself (as compared to volunteering librarian skills through a Far-Away Reference Desk, for example), correctional librarians come in with the implicit biased expectation that incarcerated people are 1. going to manipulate the innocent librarian in order to get what they want and 2. are untrustworthy of understanding Internet-based research and tools. These beliefs are embarrassingly stark, grotesque, violent, and all gesture towards the truly reactionary, non-empowering role of the institutionally-employed prison librarian.

Finally, and perhaps *most concerningly*, these librarians' views on censorship of information and resources is problematic at best, and most realistically contributing to the dehumanization, suffering, and violence committed against incarcerated people by staff who believe in their false morally-reformatory role. Ball & Lee write that prison "library reference services involve a balance between upholding inmates' legal and intellectual rights and complying with the objectives of prison authorities" (Ball & Lee, 2018). They continue:

> Censorship becomes a common practice that prison librarians must employ despite the profession's advocacy for intellectual freedom. *Security is the priority in all areas of the prison, including the library*, and sometimes seemingly benign information can be detrimental to the safety of staff and inmates alike. While ALA asserts that only material presenting 'an actual compelling and imminent risk to safety and security should be restricted,' this proclamation is infrequently realized in the real-life setting of prison. Prison authorities with regressive opinions on inmate rights *may* exploit the safety-first mandate to justify unreasonable restrictions placed on inmate access to information (Ball & Lee, 2018, emphasis added).

The contradiction here is quite clear: carceral librarian employing "safety-first" censorship models that comply with institutional regulations cannot rectify that these same "safety first" regulations are forged in the crucible of white supremacy, cisheteropatriachy, and all of the endless extermination ideologies that lay the foundation for the prison as an institution. The authors haphazardly brush up against this contradiction writing that historically, "prison regulations allowed prison authorities to censor almost anything they desired without inventions by the courts… Unfortunately, censorship is a reality of the correctional environment which prison librarians should not expect to *escape*. Library reference should not be used as a method of circumventing the regulations which limit inmate access to information" (Ball & Lee, 2018, emphasis added).

"By recognizing the need to limit some types of information, prison librarians can focus their efforts to advocate for other material that might frequently be challenged, such as nudity in art books, novels with erotic scenes, or medical texts with anatomical drawings. These types of content do not pose a threat to institutional safety and security, yet may frequently be viewed as

obscene using strict interpretations of prison regulations" (Ball & Lee, 2018). Furthermore, rather than providing access to prejudicially banned valuable information resources, "prison librarians should consider advocacy and collaboration with correctional authorities to design collection development and reference policies that both serve inmates and align with the prison's regulations" (Ball & Lee, 2018). You don't have to work for a carceral institution to advocate for more comprehensive collections or the autonomy and right to thrive of incarcerated persons.

I want to briefly point out a sentence found in the last paragraph of their conclusion. "Just as their patrons are marginalized, prison librarians experience the stigma of serving those who are incarcerated" (Ball & Lee, 2018). I hope that I don't need to expound much on how this statement cries wolf and diverts attention from those who are truly being harmed. For more on this, read any basic depictions of unpacking and mobilizing your privilege. Their false conclusion is that individual librarians' awareness "can be transitioned into action with the consideration of working as a prison librarian, serving an information-starved community in desperate need of the traditional reference services found in libraries" diverts another generation of library workers towards the failing, underfunded, discriminatory, and violent institutional prison library and away from critical, generative reference interactions with incarcerated people (Ball & Lee, 2018). As I hope this piece demonstrates throughout each section, there are an abundance of creative approaches to assisting incarcerated patrons without capitulating to the will of the genocidal state.

More considerations of prison librarianship:
- How do we talk about providing services to currently or formerly incarcerated people within LIS? Is the only mention through prison librarianship?
- Can abolitionist folks actually make an impactful difference in this role (e.g. a "good" correctional officer, or one who stands firm to their values?)
- The high turnover rate of this sector of librarianship gestures towards limited support and perhaps utility of this role: how can we rethink the role of the prison librarian in the face of trends towards decarceration?
- How do we talk about formerly incarcerated populations inside LIS? How do we tie our pedagogy to the liberation of people with records, or people we've found some disciplinary reason to ban from working in or visiting our institutions?
- Working inside a system that you are trying to destroy can be a valuable goal if approached intentionally and humanely. Questions to consider if you undertake this approach to the work:
  - How much of your patrons' humanity and autonomy is sacrificed through your official pay coming from this system?
  - Where do you draw a hard line in disciplinary practices? What restrictions do you let encroach upon your library space by administration? Who do these restrictions most disproportionately target?
  - How do you tie in the utility/expense of electronic resources and cost-cutting initiatives for collection management with the rehabilitative, imperative learning

enabled by Internet access? Can you advocate for Internet access for your incarcerated patrons?

A broad, incomplete list of more Things You Can Do:

See Fay Knopp's 1976 *Instead of Prisons* handbook, from which this list draws inspiration. Ideas for abolitionist projects in the context of LIS include:

- **Starve the system**: preventing the building of new prisons, jails, ICE centers, carceral mental facilities, or other identity-specific carceral facilities (like trans prisons, which will surely be floated as an idea at some point); fighting new laws that aim to increase prison time or create new criminal offenses. This includes hate crime bills which, on the surface, may appear to protect marginalized populations, but often contain wording that benefits cops primarily and are by definition anti-queer (Lamble, 2015).
- **Don't let reactions to violence spur new punitive laws**: James (2005) writes that in a time of national heightened sense of fear and uncertainty following the killings of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., Congress passed the "Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act," which lead to the establishment of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and created SWAT teams; this set the stage for Nixon's "law and order campaigns" and the genocidal War on Drugs. In the 1990s, prisons saw an exponential growth in incarceration, largely from drug sale and consumption. During Clinton's administration, the 1996 "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" broadened the use of the death penalty and diminished federal habeas corpus; the 1996 "immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act" abolished due process for undocumented persons. Both laws were passed the year after the Oklahoma City Bombing" (James, 2005).
- **Stop using cages**: "prisons are just one of the many cages that harm our communities. Racism, colonialism, capitalism, and ableism are other kinds of cages, which both sustain the prison system and give it force"; by undertaking this broad approach of reducing cages in our everyday lives, we can more critically develop abolitionist alternatives, since some ideas such as electronic tagging or surveillance cameras simply "replace old cages with new ones" (Lamble, 2015).
- **Develop responsive, flexible alternatives**: creating abolitionist alternatives means "encouraging non-punitive responses to harm, enacting community-based mechanisms of social accountability, and prioritizing prevention". Such alternatives include "restorative/transformative justice initiatives, community-based restitution projects, social and economic support networks, affordable housing programs, community education projects, youth-led recreational programs, free accessible healthcare services, empowerment-based mental health, addiction and harm reduction programs, quality employment opportunities, anti-poverty measures, and support for self-determination struggles" (Lamble, 2015).
- **Practice everyday abolition**: changing the ways we interact with others on an ongoing basis and changing harmful patterns in our daily lives; questioning punitive impulses in our intimate relationships; rethinking the ways we deal with personal conflicts; and reducing harms that occur in our homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and schools (Lamble, 2015)

On an individual level:

- **Write letters**, emails, or engage in correspondence with someone who is currently incarcerated. Be consistent in your replies and honest about your availability to commit time and care to this endeavor.
    - Find a list of political prisoners here: [Data Explorer -- Prisoner Solidarity](#)
    - Become a penpal to an LGBTQI prisoner through [Black & Pink](#)
- When COVID-19 allows it, apply for **face-to-face visitation**. In Indiana, you can only visit one person who is a non-relative. If your facility allows it, enroll in video visitation. Be honest about the time you can commit and follow through on these commitments.
- Research the lack of high-quality (or non-religious) resources related to **[reentry](#)** in your community. Collaborate in building re-entry spaces that do not require shared religious or moral values but welcome everyone as they come home and transition back into society.
- Find existing **coalitions** in your area (even in more remote states, there are people undertaking abolitionist projects). Educate yourself in community, and translate your valuable librarian skills into organizing, community building, and **librarianship as praxis**.
- **Stand firmly against the stigmatization of formerly or currently incarcerated people** in your everyday life. Turn off the many problematic mediated depictions of people in prison that are written and profited off of by non-incarcerated individuals. Understand how these media contribute to a larger hegemonic narrative of who deserves to be locked up.
- **Support the healthcare struggles of people who are incarcerated**. From transgender people who are denied access to necessary medical care, to older and immunocompromised folks, a great deal of incarcerated people's risks living in already-substandard living conditions increased in the wake of the coronavirus. Many political prisoners who spearheaded the revolutionary changes of the latter part of last century are elderly and must be released to prevent further COVID-19 catastrophes. These folks have been locked up for decades and are only continually detained because they are revolutionaries. Look specifically into the cases of:
    - [Jalil Muntaqim](#)
    - [Mumia Abu-Jamal](#)
    - [Sundiata Acoli](#)

If you are looking for local political prisoners or people who became politicized during their incarceration to reach out to and learn from, for security reasons I do not include these names; however, my inbox is always open for this and all abolitionist collaborative ideas.

In an institutional role:

- **Advocate for alternatives to involving police, DCS, and ICE in your library**.
- **Expand library resources and outreach for people who are post-incarceration**.
- **Ban the box** on your library employment applications. **Hire people who served time** at your library. Hire people who were charged with felonies at your library. Recognize the catastrophic social and institutional stigmas of a felony charge. People with felony charges are no more dangerous or a threat than people without criminal records.

- **Add more books and resources to your collection for people who are navigating life post-incarceration**. Add more books to your collection that honestly depict experiences for kids who have one or more incarcerated loved ones. I would recommend all libraries invest in *Missing Daddy* by Mariame Kaba. Avoid works that people most affected say are harmful representations of themselves and their loved ones.
- **Build a local resource guide** for your area such as the annual Connections guide from NYPL.
- **Invite people with records into your library in a non-tokenizing capacity**. This means following their lead. Ask them how you can work together to better serve their individual and community needs. Follow their lead on imagining what this can look like. Host events specifically assisting populations targeted by the prison-industrial complex.

This list is necessarily incomplete. Stretch some of these ideas out to fit in your context. And most importantly, find community that will encourage and enable you to undertake projects and partnerships of insurgent librarianship.

Conclusion

Ruthie Gilmore writes that in the 20th century, under similarly tight circumstances, "people put their minds and hands to solving the problems without abandoning themselves. Thus the problems were not absolute impediments" (Gilmore, 2009). Gilmore writes of this time that folks figured out how to foster their general activism from any resources they could find, and "they were too afraid of the consequences of stopping to cease what they'd started. They combined flexibility with opportunity in the best sense, working the ever-changing combination toward radical goals. And they did not fool themselves or others into pretending that winning a loss–sticking a plant on a mound of putrid earth in a poisoned and flooded field–was the moral or material equivalent to winning a win" (Gilmore, 2009).

Without access to the Internet or an abundance of reading resources, incarcerated folks have taught us learning on the outside to combine flexibility with opportunity for revolutionary education and action. Gilmore writes, "if people living under the most severe constraints, such as prisoners, can form study groups to learn about the world, then free-world activists have no excuse for ignorance, nor should they rely on funder-designed workshops and training sessions to do what revolutionaries in all times have done on their own" (Gilmore, 2009). This is the harvest of the abolitionist framework in full bloom, focusing not on punishment in recompense for a lost eye but on the lived relations and imaginative possibilities emanating from our relationships; it is about making pathways and places rather than searching endlessly for the perfect method and mode" of building these life-bringing care systems in our lives. Essentially, from LIS to pod-based work, the purpose of our endeavors must be "to gain liberation, not to guarantee the organization's longevity... When it comes to building social movements, organizations are only as good as the united fronts they bring into being" (Gilmore, 2009).

Dylan Rodríguez describes how we "experience and condone banal liberal calls to unity (which are often depressingly nationalist or patriotic) so incessantly that they are inescapable… critical gestures have to somehow participate in *creating possibilities for collective exercises of radical, creative, political-cultural genius that demystify White Being and embolden (or even productively weaponize) other insurgent practices and methodologies of human life*. This is difficult, scary, and beautiful work. And if more people don't attempt to engage in it, we know who will be the first to disappear" (Rodríguez, 2016, emphasis author's). These banal calls to unity neglect the violence surrounding us, the institutional violence which forms the pillars of the library. We can combat this history by reconciling that it's the truth. Information work is one of the only institutions with perhaps emancipatory potential. But combatting the crisis of librarianship requires head-on inquiry informed by critical race and anti-capitalist modes of thought starting in LIS education and on-the-job training.

Ettarh says, "Libraries are just buildings. It is the people who do the work. And we need to treat these people well" (Ettarh, 2018). In the same token, people who are incarcerated matter and need to be treated well. This involves expanding access to necessary information resources; building up connections with people inside; providing comprehensive outreach services to people in detention facilities as well as programming for their loved ones; examining which relationships in our lives encourage the punishment of people over the care for them; and advocating for non-reformist reforms that will improve people's lives today while we build for our coming world free of the violence of prisons and policing. As Rodríguez says, "there are so many exemplary forms of radical work that *are also radical in their intellectual-theoretical contributions to the historical record of revolt against Civilization*. This fact should enable us to engage in our creative, experimental practices in a manner that is both humbled and deeply emboldened" (Rodríguez, 2016, emphasis author's). If each one of us felt loved, cared for, and heard, imagine the endless possibilities for connectedness.

Finally, I want to end with Mariame Kaba who opened my world personally to all that abolition can offer us: "I know that human beings, with all of our foibles and all the things that are failing, have the capacity to do amazingly beautiful things, too. That gives me the hope to feel like we will, when necessary, do what we need to do… one of the important things is identifying where the issues are—and I don't think hiding from that, and pretending like everything is possible, everything is good—but to be rigorous, and to be clear-eyed. 'This is fucked up, *and* what can we be doing?' It's not the individuals. I would be very depressed if it only was up to me to solve every problem in the world, but it's not. Or you. I look at the evidence, I see the fucked-up-ness

of it, and I always stick to the possibilities that exist, still, for us to have more freedom, to get toward that thing, the horizon that we're all trying to work for" (Kaba, qtd. in Ewing, 2019).

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