

Opinion

Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police

Because reform won't happen.

By Mariame Kaba

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Illustration by Nicholas Konrad; photograph by Getty Images





Abolition Meditation:

When you close your eyes and think about the world you want for yourself and those you hold dear, what do you see?

When you imagine this ideal world, who is there? Who isn't?

Who have you included and who have you left out? Why?

Source: *Relax, Relate, Release: Meditations for the Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Revolution* by Jana Smith

“We Find Safety In Each Other”, Kah Yangni, 2020

What comes to mind when you hear abolition?



Renoir Gaither, "Street Art, Graffiti", Minneapolis, George Floyd Protests 2020

People like me who want to abolish prisons and police, however, have a vision of a different society, built on cooperation instead of individualism, on mutual aid instead of self-preservation. What would the country look like if it had billions of extra dollars to spend on housing, food and education for all? This change in society wouldn't happen immediately, but the protests show that many people are ready to embrace a different vision of safety and justice.

Abolition

PIC abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating prisons, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. Abolition *isn't* just about getting rid of cages.

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.
Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.

DOES THIS...	reduce funding to police?	challenge the notion that police increase safety?	reduce tools / tactics / technology police have at their disposal?	reduce the scale of policing?
SUSPEND THE USE OF PAID ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR COPS UNDER INVESTIGATION	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets as municipalities no longer pay for policing's harm against community members.	YES. It challenges the notion that policing violence, and the administrative costs it incurs, are essential risks of creating "safety."	YES. Access to paid administrative leave lessens the consequences of use of force, and presumes the right of police to use violence at all.	YES. The less financial support for police undergoing investigation for killing and excessive use of force, the less support for policing.
WITHHOLD PENSIONS AND DON'T REHIRE COPS INVOLVED IN EXCESSIVE FORCE	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets as municipalities no longer pay for policing's harm against community members.	YES. It challenges the notion that killings and excessive force are exceptions, rather than the rule.	YES. It reduces the ability of police forces to move around or re-engage cops known for their use of violence.	YES.
REQUIRE COPS TO BE LIABLE FOR MISCONDUCT SETTLEMENTS	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets as municipalities no longer pay for policing's harm against community members.	YES. It challenges the notion that policing and all its costs are essential components of safety. Community members should not pay for its inevitable violence.	YES. It creates pressure for police to account for their actions, at least financially, and limits legitimacy of policing violence as inevitable.	YES.
CAP OVERTIME ACCRUAL + OT PAY FOR MILITARY EXERCISES	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets since we won't have to pay for cops learning how to better make war on our communities.	YES. It challenges the notion that we need police to be trained for "counterterrorism" and other military-style action and surveillance in the guise of increasing "safety."	YES. Weapons trainings and expos are used to scale up policing infrastructure and shape goals for future tools, tactics, technology.	YES. This stops police from increasing their legitimacy, capacity, and skills as "the blue line" in order to expand their reach over our daily lives and community spaces.
WITHDRAW PARTICIPATION IN POLICE MILITARIZATION PROGRAMS	YES. This can INCREASE community-based budgets since we won't have to pay for cops learning how to better make war on our communities.	YES. It challenges the notion that we need police to be trained for "counterterrorism" and other military-style action and surveillance in the guise of increasing "safety."	YES. Weapons trainings and expos are used to scale up policing infrastructure and shape goals for future tools, tactics, technology.	YES. This stops police from increasing their legitimacy, capacity, and skills as "the blue line" in order to expand their reach over our daily lives and community spaces.
PRIORITIZE SPENDING ON COMMUNITY HEALTH, EDUCATION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease its resources.	YES. Prioritizing funding resources also creates space to imagine, learn about, and make resources that actually create well-being.	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease the expansion of tools and technology.	YES. If we decrease funding for policing, this will decrease the size, scope and capacity of systems of policing.
REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE POLICE FORCE	YES.	YES.	YES.	YES.



CRITICAL RESISTANCE

Graphic by Critical Resistance

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Additional Qs for consideration

Prompt from Starfruit Project's Briyana D. Clarel, "Writing prompts for radical healing & brilliant growth":

- **What do you need to feel safe right now?**

Prompt from *Relax, Relate, Release: Meditations for the Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Revolution* by Jana Smith:

- **What gives you hope? What are your hopes for the future? Why is it important to imagine a better world?**
- **Can you imagine a world without police/prisons? What makes imagining this difficult?**