

9-2017

## Caption This: Police in Pussyhats, White Ladies, and Carceral Psychology Under Trump

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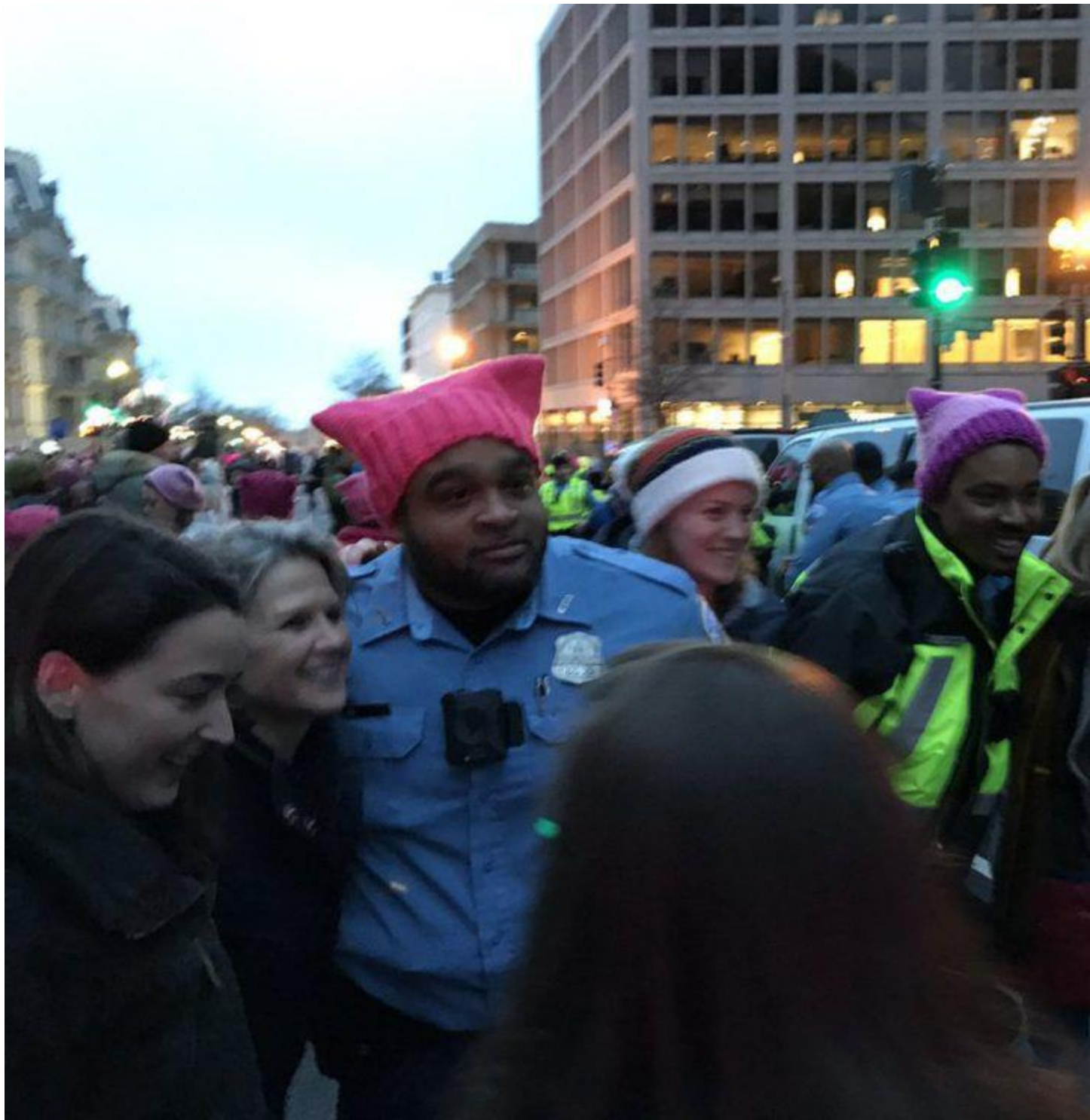
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### Original Publication Citation

Reed, A.R. (2017). Caption this: Police in pussyhats, white ladies, and carceral psychology under Trump. *Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics*, 2017(September), 1-21. <https://abolitionjournal.org/caption-this/>

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# Caption This: Police in Pussyhats, White Ladies, and Carceral Psychology Under Trump

September 24, 2017 by [abolitionjournal](#)

– By **Alison Reed** –

*If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.*

—Malcolm X

The post-inaugural Women's March on Washington demonstrated the power of organized resistance to a deep pulse of political terror embodied in the grotesque form of Trump. In Washington D.C. as well as in solidarity actions across the globe, the sheer number of folks assembled to march, chant, sing, and just be together served as a collective outcry. Visually, the marches mobilized a shared symbol of hot pink pussyhats. While celebrated for their bold rejoinder to Trump's misogyny, they have also been **critiqued** for their flirtation with a biologically essentialist cis white feminism.<sup>[1]</sup> Single-issue identity politics has a long history in this country, which is precisely why, despite the resounding voice of Angela Davis and other intersectional speakers and lead organizers of color that day, I felt both compelled by the amount of people and uneasy with how some

seemed to evoke carceral feminism (relying on policing and prisons to address women's rights). As I watched white women cheer on cops who also sported the pussyhat, it was clear Trump would be figured as just another "bad apple" in an otherwise innocuous police state, which maintains a monopoly on so-called legitimate violence.

While conservatives and liberals continue to agree with the dominant discourse of the security state, liberals attempt to situate themselves in opposition to the explicit bigotry of Trump's presidency. However, liberals remain deeply invested in maintaining the authority of the carceral regime, and ultimately lack a critique of the fundamental relationship between Trumpism and the prison industrial complex. People who might otherwise align themselves with social justice movements thus fall short on a critique of the police state and resist an abolitionist orientation. What I define as "carceral psychology" describes not merely a reliance on, but an *active psychic investment* in, cops and cages. That is to say, carceral psychology does not just depend on cops, but celebrates them as aligned with folks most targeted for state surveillance and violence (people of color and protestors, for example). This move attempts to resolve the cognitive dissonance of notions of safety premised on a foundational violence.<sup>[2]</sup> As scholars of modernity have shown,<sup>[3]</sup> the category of human coheres only in contrast to the production of a nonhuman, in this case, "criminal." The desire to justify the social warrant of policing and punishment is an explicitly liberal phenomenon insofar as it seeks to dissolve the tension of an "antiracist" humanism fundamentally tied to the construction of the nonhuman. Carceral psychology, then, invests in thoroughly racialized notions of safety and security even as it seeks to critique racism.

For instance, carceral psychology explains how in the same breath liberals can decry Trump's xenophobic racism and praise the law and order of the Women's March, in contradistinction to Black Lives Matter and anarchist mobilizations at the inauguration. Carceral psychology reflects how the psychic wages of aligning with dominant discourses can even compel people to act in ways that undermine their own best interests. In mobilizing against police brutality, the liberal rejection of an anti-police politics makes claims to an antiracist posture compatible with the carceral regime. Psychic investments in professedly anti-Trump, antiracist carcerality are toxic to collective consciousness, as people accept routinized violence as just and necessary. We all know a version of this story: *She draws her ID, registration. The cop sees a gun. A gun goes off. Her wallet, shot through with blood, gets surrendered to the state.* Carceral psychology accepts these acts of murder as mistakes of history. Calculated mistakes, then, remain the constitutive acts of modernity.

The reverberation across social media of uncritically celebrating police wearing pussyhats as symbolic of anti-Trump "unity" indicates this deep U.S. investment in carceral psychology, which silences abolitionist voices and resolves the cognitive dissonance of millions of people being held in cages with the sweeping gesture of protecting "public safety." Online, images of police in pussyhats abounded. **One reporter** noted how a "picture of **D.C. police wearing pink hats** to show support for everyone participating in the Women's March popped up on Twitter, and it's already going viral — most likely because it sends a really powerful message." That message is overwhelmingly clear: popular discourse on prisons and policing elides a **long U.S. history** of racialized social control rooted in settler colonialism, slavery, and the criminalization of dissent.

The comparison between movements for the abolition of slavery and the prison industrial complex isn't an ahistorical analogy. When Angela Davis describes the trajectory from the prison of slavery to the slavery of prison, she was not using prison in the former instance as metaphor—slave patrols policed space for fugitives fleeing terror.[4] Just as slavery attempted to enforce social death through the denial of humanity via the legal reduction of people to property,[5] the prison industrial complex operates effectively by way of the overdetermined concept of criminality. Plantation owners squared slavery with Southern moral codes through a settler colonialist Christianity that overtly racialized binary logics of good and evil, right and wrong, saint and sinner, human and nonhuman; today, covertly racialized notions of crime justify state-sanctioned punishment through those same binaries. This secularized crime and punishment model suggests that when the “good cops” get the “bad dudes,” peace and justice reign. A structural analysis of carceral racism proves that is anything but the case.[6]

Whether or not the cop is white, Black, or Brown, pointing a gun, or wearing a pussyhat, the system formed through gendered racial capitalism is deeply and irrevocably racist. Racism is, to quote Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”[7] For centuries policing has purposefully rendered criminal the lives of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people. Liberals do not want to acknowledge this institutional history, which tells us police and prisons are not an ahistorical fact or inevitable necessity. Yet, despite mountains of evidence that expose the inhumanity of a system designed to kill and cage “threats” and “superpredators” rather than

redress actual incidents of harm, carceral psychology remains obsessed with an overdetermined and irredeemable exception—the racialized figure of the violent criminal—who justifies everyday state violence.

Rather than reifying a false divide between conservative and liberal, the point is that so-called liberal actors who publically abhor the racist and sexist rhetoric of Trump use racist and sexist tactics more often aligned with the Right to protect their property and personhood. What seems like an opposition to violence in the transition of government is too easily aligned with the very violence liberals supposedly contest. The operation of carceral logics is thus most insidious with social actors invested in maintaining the carceral state under the formal guise of an antiracist progressive politics that favors reform over transformation. The liberal modality of reform rejects abolitionist demands and bolsters the state's monopoly on the exercise of violence. Liberal reformists desperately cling to the myth of good cops in order to avoid seeing themselves in the genocidal racial capitalism on which society is built. Consider the viral media sharing of [police playing basketball with Black youth](#), or [this NYPD officer's message](#) of solidarity with PrideFest attendees. Carceral psychology is invested in elevating and amplifying the "good cop" to distract from the brutality of racial capitalism. Liberals point to these examples to exonerate their own participation in the prison regime. So why should the cops get a cookie for not killing people of color?

## **Close Reading Carceral Culture**

Due to the grassroots efforts of abolitionist organizations such as Critical Resistance, by 2017 many people have heard of the prison



industrial complex, which Angela Davis famously elaborates as the “relationships linking corporations, government, correctional communities, and media.” [8] While the burgeoning field of critical prison studies centers research on social scientific excavation of the carceral state, less attention has been paid to why and how people *desire* mass incarceration. In other words, we are clear on how the death economies of the military and prison industrial complexes materially affect people’s daily lives and subjection to state violence, but we are less clear on how culture justifies brutal consequences through ostensibly liberal “antiracist” media. In the realm of culture, we can interrogate how popular understandings of crime produce critical impasses for receptivity to abolitionist frameworks.

Caption this: white ladies hugging Black cops in pussyhats. It goes deeper than the multiculturalist perfection of absorbing a racialized threat as justification for the continued exploitation of those deemed unassimilable. A Black man donning a uniform and a pussyhat at once obscures and reveals the historical relation of the symbols he now sports. This is what an analysis of heteropatriarchal white supremacy must account for, and what carceral psychology cannot. Literally embracing cops illustrates the ongoing investment in police as “benevolent” masters over an abstract notion of safety that criminalizes people of color. A system rooted in racialized social control cannot get an antiracist makeover through a few public dialogues between cops and community members. As Tariq Khan writes, “**Heartwarming Barbecues and Hugging Cops Ain’t the Solution.**” This obsession with individual acts of peace-making with cops is the liberal face of carceral psychology.



Carceral psychology attempts to quell constant cries for abolition; the pathological social media sharing of cops “in solidarity” with people targeted for cages reflects the fragility of the myth of a benevolent police state. The specter haunting viral videos of “good cops” is a collective consciousness that police officers kill with impunity. In other words, it is precisely in a moment where the Movement for Black Lives and other grassroots formations have amplified ongoing realities of policing as brutality that liberals seek to resolve the cognitive dissonance of their safety premised on state-sanctioned death. Carceral psychology, then, is simultaneously a sublimated recognition of violence and a desire to dissociate from that violence by not just relying on, but actively celebrating, cops.

The carceral logic of celebrating police in pussyhats was echoed in a recent Pepsi ad that got pulled after just one day due to **viral social media protest**. Passionate criticism and mockery of the ad’s **appropriation** of social movement imagery demonstrates the instability of hegemony, as power attempts to theft the terms through which people actively contest its brute force. Although scholars often conceive of resistance as reactionary, power is forced to react to resistance. Meanwhile, abolitionists strive to explore and create alternative forms of collective sociality that refuse hegemonic ways of organizing experience—bringing to the surface what exists but is stifled by heteropatriarchal racial capitalism. Thus, carceral psychology is both the reason for and expression of a defensive response to a legitimate critique of state violence.

The Pepsi ad turns on the same false notion of procuring justice by making peace with cops. The video opens with reality television star and international model Kendall Jenner posing at a high fashion

photo shoot. Inspired by the spirit of collectivity as she witnesses passing protestors, she dramatically tosses off her blond wig in the direction of an incredulous Black woman. In so doing, she sheds the violence of whiteness to recover an ambiguous multicultural identity (that at once depends on and disavows blackness). She then proceeds to enter a corporatized protest-party with sanitized peace slogan signs, grabs a Pepsi, and after bumping fists with a Black man—who inexplicably appears to be pointing her in the direction of the cops—approaches a line of police who are not wearing their usual riot gear. Finally, she hands one cop an ice cold Pepsi and, as he takes his first sip, the crowd erupts into celebration. Justice has been served, peace reigns, and a huge corporation attempts to capitalize on the defanging of social movements. To restate an earlier point, why should the cops get a cola for not killing people of color? Again, the stomach-turning cop-protester bond gets positioned as the ultimate sign of justice in the carceral psyche. Through a concerted effort to “soften” the image of cops, carceral psychology ensures liberals kill with kindness.

The unchallenged assumptions of carceral psychology allow justice-minded people to leave unchecked their core sense of safety premised on a never-named racist police state. In this way, carceral psychology aligns with the overt racism of Trump’s presidency. Trump has tapped into racist and xenophobic anxieties over Black and Brown presence, participation, and most notably protest in civil and social spheres. Trump extends the reach of a long history of criminalizing dissent and rebranding protestors as terrorists.[9] Trump’s campaign echoed Barry Goldwater’s law and order platform (later carried forward by the neoliberal carceral ascendancy of Nixon, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton), as a backlash to

the supposed threat of racial progress to white rule. Trump's administration often cites fallacious crime statistics to bolster notions of safety hell-bent on eradicating any form of protest, embodied in the White House website's language against "the rioter, the looter, or the violent disrupter." Liberals who see themselves as anti-Trump may be alarmed at how this rhetoric mirrors their own. Irrespective of antiracist *attitudes*, if you are standing with police, you are siding with not just Trump, but the foundational racism of this country on which the prison industrial complex has been built. The good cop/bad cop performance allows the systemic racism of carceral economies to go unchecked.

## Interrogating Our Love for the Devil

Carceral psychology buys into safety's seductive fictions to protect white interests and property while criminalizing people of color. Across racial lines the harder question to ask is why people participate in their own destruction—whether poor whites who accepted the racial bribe over a cross-racial working class populist labor movement after the Civil War, or Black folks who supported Clinton's tough on crime legislation that vowed community "safety" and delivered the violence of its promise, which manifests as the absence of blackness. These two courtships with the prison industrial complex—both white participation in anti-Black racism and the complexity of people of color's desire for safety within the same system that subjects them to routine violence—are distinct, but the sinister consequences of carceral psychology press us to interrogate how both guarantee a trap of security at a grave spiritual cost. In evoking the dangerously tenuous "us," I am neither conflating grossly disproportionate relationships to state violence, nor am I presuming an idealized or united resistance. White complicity cannot be

conflated with the complexity of people of color's negotiation of and survival within death regimes. Moreover, community organizers continually learn from intra- and inter-communal forms of harm. What I do want to emphasize, however, is that abolitionist networks of artistry, research, study, agitation, and action combat an active investment in carceral psychology. More specifically, I suggest that art offers a powerful platform for developing abolitionist futures, and there is no time to waste.

To apply Stuart Hall's metaphor of culture,<sup>[10]</sup> if the *house* we live in is one of carceral racism, it is the psychic investment in carcerality that makes this house a *home*. In *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin describes the violence of a society based on theft, subordination, and containment as a "burning house."<sup>[11]</sup> Rather than throwing more kindling onto the fire, Baldwin calls for transformation rooted in a foundational refusal of the soulless violence of heteropatriarchal racial capitalism and genocidal white supremacy, and the creation of new visions of collective social life. He mobilizes whiteness as a metaphor of soul sickness sutured to the "spiritual wasteland" of power and policing:

*I am very much concerned that American Negroes achieve their freedom here in the United States. But I am also concerned for their dignity, for the health of their souls, and must oppose any attempt that Negroes may make to do to others what has been done to them. I think I know—we see it around us every day—the spiritual wasteland to which that road leads. It is so simple a fact*

*and one that is so hard, apparently, to grasp: Whoever debases others is debasing himself. That is not a mystical statement but a most realistic one, which is proved by the eyes of any Alabama sheriff—and I would not like to see Negroes ever arrive at so wretched a condition.*[12]

Today, Black men and women in uniform bolster the logics that normalize carceral psychology just as white people behind bars justify myths of a “colorblind” criminal justice system. While Black police officers have worked in law enforcement since the late nineteenth century, in the twenty-first they represent the perfection of multiculturalist incorporation. “Diverse” and “inclusive” representations serve white supremacy by glossing over structural violence in favor of an abstract equality that does not fundamentally change institutions but allows selective access to their collective destruction. White people do not have to mediate the structural racism and violence that grates against a dense network of racialized life chances and constrained choices, so their decision to enter the force is not as complex as that of people of color.[13] Even so, Baldwin here cautions against falling prey to the trap of debasing others in the name of the state. He understands the mechanism for inclusion in the U.S. prison regime is a conception of selfhood rooted in dissociating from the category of “criminal.” Yet, beyond **the material reality** that Black and Brown people can still be subjected to state violence even as the agents of state violence, Baldwin warns of the psychic dangers of participating in a soulless system.

As antidote, Baldwin preaches a revolutionary concept of love premised on an active disinvestment from the state and recognition

of each other's complex humanity. Baldwin asserts people's agency to fundamentally reject the categories of "nonhuman" and "criminal." Yet, he acknowledges the complexity of mobilizing for a more livable world by refusing the seductions of the state, which requires an active ethical commitment to justice: "How can one, however, dream of power in any other terms than in the symbols of power?" [14] This remains central to our organizing work: making alternatives to investing in carceral psychology more seductive than dealing in the symbols of power. In so doing, we must look at the psychological effects of carceral racism on an institutional level, both the police and the policed (not mutually exclusive categories). We can approach cops with a consciousness of their complex participation in a brutal system only if we remain committed to disarming, disbanding, and defunding them. Otherwise we are, in fact, loving our oppressors while minimizing the grievances of millions of people whose lives and communities have been thefted by cops and cages.

Abolitionist frameworks ask us to recognize each other's messy and fallible humanity, and to create possibilities for reducing harm and dreaming new ways to be together, amidst pain. In the abolitionist imagination, *no one* is beyond care, even those who pose the greatest threat to society—people invested in white supremacy, toxic masculinity, ongoing war, and racial capitalism. As Fred Moten says, "I still haven't figured out a way to save the earth without saving them, too." [15] While being conscious of the psychic and physical effects of its labor, we can critique a system without condemning all individuals within it. But to combat a carceral society, we cannot align our protest of Trump's administration with the police. If we go gentle into that good night, we will all have blood on our hands.

Brutal realities of disenfranchisement, dispossession, and displacement demonstrate how Baldwin's burning house is hardly metaphor for many. For example, the **Black Panther Party Ten Point Program** understood the psychic wages of the military and prison industrial complexes. Their original set of demands included Black men's exemption from military service: "We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America." They also called for an immediate end to police brutality and freedom from an unjust system of incarceration. Today, the **Movement for Black Lives** is still fighting for these demands, also understanding how anti-Black violence uniquely targets Black queer, cis, and trans women. While continually learning from these and other social movements, we must push ourselves to question the soul-crushing weight of psychic investments in power. But what's on the other side?

Carceral psychology limits our collective imagination of justice, but community organizers and artists in the unending struggle continually reinvent the world. In "**Poetry is Not a Luxury**" Audre Lorde writes, "where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives." From the artwork of Emory Douglas in *The Black Panther* to #BlackArtsMatter, abolition movements understand the role of creative production in calling new worlds into existence. Generating new language remains vital to the struggle—acts of artistry, activist tactics, hidden alphabets that emerge nightly to decimate hate and dance moonlit dreams materializing on tongues every morning. These acts of transformative being together are subtle but startle us out of the soulless grip of heteropatriarchal racial capitalism and its radically constrained and conspiratorially



vicious vision of life. Meanwhile, “Fuck the Police” plays in the streets and visionaries make miracles out of concrete.

Pleas to the law and representational recognition are neither the beginning nor end of such miracles. From what Saidiya Hartman calls the “nonevent of emancipation” to the fight against the prison industrial complex,<sup>[16]</sup> the struggle is unending. Safety, security, law and order all provide seductive smokescreens for the ongoing operation of centuries of racialized social control. As was the case with slavery, abolition does not promise a falsely utopian ending but rather articulates a set of demands that envision a just social world. As abolitionists, we are the first to acknowledge that harm exists, embedded in larger systems of domination. Part of the reason we fight for a world without prisons and police is that we seek to address the harm that takes place in our communities—harm that the prison industrial complex not only fails to resolve and was never built to address, but actively reproduces. Vibrant communities are offering, and practicing, transformative justice alternatives. Abolition is a belief, compelled by committed action, that we can’t reform cages and cops to be more “humanitarian” or “benevolent.” Abolition is an active aspiration toward collective life-affirming social relations and away from systems of domination.

Art plays a vital role in the movement for abolition. As Robin D. G. Kelley writes, artistic interventions can provide a “space to imagine,”<sup>[17]</sup> to call into being abolitionist alternatives to cops, cages, and the carceral psychology that is fundamentally invested in them. Thus, I close with an excerpt from Danez Smith’s “summer, somewhere,” which imagines otherwise. The poem’s abolitionist aesthetics offer an antidote to toxic carceral psychology. With a new

language evacuated of the military-carceral state, sanctioned terrorism, and the violence of whiteness, the poem creates a world where communities of color are free from policing, the prison industrial complex, and surveillance:

*history is what it is. it knows what it did.*

*bad dog. bad blood. bad day to be a boy*

*color of a July well spent. but here, not earth  
not heaven, boys can't recall their white shirt*

*turned a ruby gown. here, there is no language  
for officer or law, no color to call white.*

*if snow fell, it'd fall black. please, don't call  
us dead, call us alive someplace better.*

*we say our own names when we pray.  
we go out for sweets & come back.*

Combatting the racialization of color within moral frameworks of virtue and vice, saint and sinner—whiteness in Smith’s provisional utopia (“not earth/ not heaven”) no longer holds its place in the naturalized order of things. Whiteness, in fact, as color as well as concept does not exist; even snow would “fall black,” the earth awash with beauty. From the “bonefleshed men in blue” communities reclaim lives thefted by racism with new names, a collective invocation as affirmation: “we say *congrats, you’re a boy again!* / we give him a durag, a bowl, a second chance... that boy was Trayvon, now called *RainKing.* / that man Sean named himself *I do, I do.*” This poem’s abolitionist imagination of a world of communal co-creation apart from the violence of white supremacy generates actionable analysis, a refusal of carceral psychology’s seductive fictions, and a space to dream amidst the dystopian realities of systemic brutality in the name of “public safety.” Recalling Baldwin’s burning house metaphor, “summer, somewhere” refuses to make peace with smoke. When the world is going up in flames, and those you thought stood for justice urge on the fire, we need each other more than ever.

**About the author.** Alison Reed is an assistant professor of English at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where she co-founded and co-directs Humanities Behind Bars, a prison education program committed to abolitionist praxis. She has published creative and critical work on social identities and power as well as performance cultures. For generative conversation and indispensable feedback on earlier drafts of this essay, the author would like to acknowledge Felice Blake, Jessica Lopez Lyman, Kristie Soares, M. Gardenia, Shannon Brennan, and Zachary Litweller. Many thanks, as well, to Mohamed Shehk for extraordinary insight as the work neared

completion. You can follow her on Twitter [@AlisonRoseReed](#) or visit [humanitiesbehindbars.org](http://humanitiesbehindbars.org).

## Notes

[1] For a vital critique of the pussyhat and call for the imperative praxis of intersectional feminism, see Banu Gökarıksel and Sara Smith, "Intersectional Feminism Beyond U.S. Flag Hijab and Pussy Hats in Trump's America," *Gender, Place & Culture* (2017): 1–18.

[2] Just as Charles Mills, in *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997), describes both active and passive forms of white ignorance at structural and social levels as a "cognitive tendency" or "doxastic disposition" (16), carceral psychology is a complex process of cognition that disallows, through the active desire for punitive modes of redress, more complex understandings of policing and punishment.

[3] See, for example, Toni Morrison, "Romancing the Shadow," *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 31–59; and Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *X—The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). See also Dylan Rodríguez, "'I Would Wish Death on You...': Race, Gender, and Immigration in the Globality of the U.S. Prison Regime," *The Scholar & Feminist Online* 6.3 (Summer 2008): 1–9; and *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[4] Angela Y. Davis, "From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick Douglass and the Convict Lease System," in *The*

*Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 74–96.

[5] In a landmark study of blackness as a condition of ontological impossibility, Orlando Patterson defined “social death” as slavery’s denial of legal rights to personhood for enslaved Africans and their descendants—reducing the figure of the slave to a “social nonperson” in the eyes of the state. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982), 8, 5.

[6] The history of police and prisons in the United States remains tied to slavery and its afterlives, from the Slave Patrol and the thirteenth amendment to Black Codes through Jim Crow and the Wars on Drugs and Terror that fuel the ongoing production of gendered racism. See, for example, Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[7] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

[8] Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 84. See also the work and writings of [Mariame Kaba](#).

[9] The state seeks to reinforce its authority to silence resistance and criminalize freedom dreams, but the [16 Black Panthers still behind bars](#) could tell you that. See also sweeping [anti-protest bills](#) that

enable cities to charge protestors for the cost of policing public demonstrations.

[10] I define culture in [Stuart Hall](#)'s sense of the repository for collective—sometimes shared and always contradictory and contested—values, meanings, ideas, feelings etc. that produce and regulate practices and identity investments.

[11] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage, 1993 [1963]), 94.

[12] *Ibid.*, 83.

[13] As blogger [Radical Faggot](#) writes: “The capitalist state first denies us resources and agency, teaches us we are without worth or power, then promises to return our agency to us if we become its violent representatives. Countless oppressed people in my family and community have fallen into this trap, and military and police recruiters know exactly how seductive the offer is.”

[14] Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 80.

[15] Fred Moten, speaker at [Profiles of Abolition: Abolition and the Radical Imagination](#), hosted by [Critical Resistance](#) and [Los Angeles Poverty Department](#). February 20, 2016. Los Angeles, CA.

[16] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 116.

[17] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 198.

Categories **Intervention** Tags **abolition, abolition-democracy, carcerality, culture, feminism, gender, police abolition, prison abolition, Trump, white supremacy**