GENOCIDE AND "US"* DOMINATION ≠ LIBERATION, ONLY WE CAN LIBERATE OURSELVES

TOWARD AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST ABOLITION FEMINISM**

Clarissa Rojas and Nadine Naber

We seek to build movements that not only end violence, but that create a society based on radical freedom, mutual accountability, and passionate reciprocity. In this society, safety and security will not be premised on violence or the threat of violence; it will be based on a collective commitment to guaranteeing the survival and care of all peoples.

—Critical Resistance-INCITE! Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex

I want to emphasize the importance of approaching both our theoretical explorations and our movement activism in ways that enlarge and expand and complicate and deepen our theories and practices of freedom.

—Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*

[W]e must dream in this moment about what can grow in the absence of empire.

—Nick Estes and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "Examining the Wreckage"

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* The literary device of placing quotation marks surrounding the "US" references a long tradition of Indigenous decolonial resistance that questions the legitimacy of the "US" nation-state. Since this writing focuses on the "US" empire, we use quotation marks, but we could extend that interrogation to question the colonial afterlife formations of other nation-states or the nation-state itself.

** The title combines language from INCITE!'s anti-war poster campaigns made possible with the visionary artistic leadership of artists Favianna Rodriguez and Cristy C. Road, whose coalitional praxis was key to INCITE!'s anti-imperialist movement.

In August and September of 2001, just before 9/11, tens of thousands of people of color gathered at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in postapartheid South Africa. It was there that our paths first crossed, as did those of the feminist of color movements with which we walked.* We came from the Bay Area to join a global convergence of freedom movements against empire, racism, and heteropatriarchal violence, and to uplift and learn from the South African struggle against apartheid. In the air were the sounds of sufferers' truth telling alongside the beats of indefatigable resistance and cultural roots unwilling to yield. We joined Brazil's landless people's movements in the streets of Durban, galvanized for migrant and refugee justice for the millions displaced from ancestral lands, and mobilized movements to end militarized borders. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence was there to build on a global scale with Indigenous, Black, and people of color movements around the world.

We worked on what would eventually be adopted as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, participated in global movements for Black reparations and migrant justice, and joined the global struggle for Palestinian self-determination.** We were there to join organizers across the world, building conjoined transnational movements against all forms of racist state violence.[1] The "United States" refused to participate in the WCAR, citing the discussion of slavery/reparations and a refusal to allow the Palestinian perspective to be heard. The "US" made it clear that both the struggle for Black reparations and the struggle of Indigenous peoples, in this case Palestinians, were a threat to its imperial power. At WCAR, INCITE! practiced organizing at the interstice of inherently conjoined movements for liberation. Both the movements for Palestinian liberation and Black reparations emerge, in part, in contestation to the violence

* Clarissa Rojas attended the conference with INCITE! and Committee on Women, Population, and the Environment; and Nadine Naber, who joined INCITE!'s mothership leadership in 2002, went with the Women of Color Resource Center's delegation.

** INCITE! joined the global Palestinian struggle to define Zionism as a form of racism and the international launch of the "Divestment from Israel" campaign on the streets of Durban.

of the "US" state. Yet the "US" empire works hard to separate inherently conjoined struggles that, when considered together, reveal the different, intertwined strands of its imperial project, for it understands the threat to the "US" empire catapults when these movements converge. The empire benefits when our social movements reify imperial distinctions such as "domestic" versus "global" that both stem from and further the logic that nation-states are natural, bounded entities; or that struggles like Palestinian liberation are about Indigenous people far away, entirely disconnected from the struggles for justice we take up in places like Oakland or Chicago. The "US" issued two seemingly disparate reasons for its refusal to participate, but the global peoples' movements on the ground at WCAR were galvanized at the *convergence* of these movements. We understood that living out our full destinies on this earth, in dignity with, and in honor of, land and life, necessitates conjoined movements that will free us *all* from empire.

INCITE!, the movement of radical feminists of color dedicated to ending state and intimate violence against women of color and our communities, had just formed the prior year. INCITE!'s work was centrally informed by a long arc of Indigenous, Black, and women of color's resistance to colonial and imperial invasions. Since its inception, INCITE!'s analysis posited that any solution to end state violence against our communities must tackle the violent nature of the "US" colonialist state and commit to a politics of decolonization and anti-imperialism that structure and inform all forms of heteropatriarchal "US" state violence—from slavery to the prison industrial complex to anti-immigrant violence, support for the Israeli colonization of Palestine, and war. The founding vision illustrating INCITE!'s global approach to ending violence against women of color states, "Through the efforts of INCITE!, women of color, and our communities will move closer to global peace, justice, and liberation!"

The gathering of movements we attended in Durban took place just days before 9/11 and exposed the global networks of imperialist, colonial, and neoliberal capitalist violence at the turn of the twenty-first century. We did not yet know that we were preparing ourselves on the global stage of the peoples' movements, to commit our energies to

fending off the intensified violence the "war *of* terror"* would deploy in the decades that followed. As the "US" expanded its imperial reach, INCITE! pressed on, forging a women of color, queer and trans people of color movement rooted in the praxis of collective coalitional multi-issue decolonial/anti-imperialist/anti-racist feminist of color organizing.

As we write in 2020, the forever war of terror has expanded the architecture of violence the world over. The earth continues to burn as communities targeted by state violence across the globe face even harsher realities from the proliferation of police violence and killings, an ever-expanding military-industrial complex, violent repression of social movements, catastrophic climate crisis alongside continued environmental degradation, unprecedented numbers of peoples displaced from ancestral lands, a global pandemic and the massive siphoning of wealth at the expense of economically devastating the masses. Yet in the "US," social movement coalitions connecting these phenomena, as we saw in the years following 9/11, have dwindled. We see fewer political formations organized by and for radical feminists of color that, for example, connect the struggle against police violence in the "US" to struggles against "US" military invasions around the world and their mutually constitutive capitalist, colonial underpinnings.

We are writing in the politically transformative abolitionist year of 2021, twenty-one years after INCITE!'s founding, on our own movement experiences as coleaders of INCITE!'s anti-war strategy between 2000 and 2005. We write to uplift the theories and methods that emerged out of INCITE!'s formative praxis of coalitional feminist of color organizing to render lessons we learned about the inseparability of abolitionist and anti-imperialist struggles. We write as Arab/Arab-American and Méxican/Xicanx sisters in struggle. Our Indigenous roots emerge in diaspora from lands that are presently known by western epistemology as "Jordan" and "México." Our relations to kin/land inform how we approach our activist scholarship. Our lives

* We called it the "war *of* terror" instead of the "War on Terror" to focus our attention on the global scale of violence it deployed and to center the perspectives and experiences of the many peoples who would become its target.

and ancestors' lives are deeply shaped by the ravages of colonial and imperial wars, by policing, border-making, carcerality, and neoliberal economic restructuring. As migrants and the children and grandchildren of migrants, we have lived through and witnessed the fending off of Border Patrol harassment when crossing the "US"-México border, (militarized) policing attacks on protesters, "US"-made automatic rifles at Israeli checkpoints, the criminalization of our communities, colonialist illness, and impossible bail hikes; and we learned that the predicaments we face in the "US," just as in our lands of origin, are organized on a global scale. Our consciousness and commitments deepened through our participation in the many local and global struggles that informed our organizing with INCITE! then and our scholarly reflection on INCITE!'s work in the pages that follow. The embodied knowledges that emerge through movement participation and generational lessons of survivance are never individualized. We wield a collectively held pen as we walk and write in the company of those we struggle(d) and learn(ed) alongside, with the legacies of the many ancestral kinship networks that continue to teach us.*

In this essay we trace a particular set of pertinent genealogies to what Black and women of color feminists are urgently naming and theorizing as abolition feminism. We reflect on INCITE!'s anti-war and anti-militarist campaigns alongside some of the early roots of what is now known as transformative justice and community accountability strategies aimed at generating practices to counter the carceral and colonial heteropatriarchal patterns of violence playing out within and against our relations and communities. INCITE!'s organizing aimed to end the imperial reach of the "US" carceral state *with* its attendant colonial and militarized police violence within "US"-based Indigenous communities and communities of color. As we reflect on lessons gleaned from INCITE!'s coalitional organizing, we seek to uplift the possibilities of an anti-imperialist abolition feminism that recognizes

* We lift up the countless contributions that forged INCITE!'s movement including many generations of mothership leadership, chapter and affiliate members, and the efforts of the thousands of movement makers who participated in campaigns, events, activist institutes, and conferences.

that our visions for abolition will be as capacious and potent as our framework for understanding the scope of the violence we set out to abolish.

INCITE!'s praxis of what we call a "coalitional feminist of color movement of many movements" articulated a politics that conceptualized the "US"-led prison industrial complex and "US"-led militarism as mutually constitutive. This coalitional approach was not simply theoretical; it emerged out of shared lived and ancestral memories of survivance and struggle. INCITE! forged a collective of feminist of color–embodied knowledges whereby activists embedded in struggles for immigration justice, decolonization of Indigenous lands, Palestinian liberation, anti-war movements, movements seeking to end sexual and intimate violence, and the prison industrial complex conjoined in one organizing space.

INCITE!'s praxis of building a "movement of many movements" also engendered coalitional convergence in joint struggle with other movement formations. Because INCITE! self-identified more as a movement than an organization, its more boundless ends made for frequent coalitional partnering with relevant movements and organizations like Critical Resistance and organizations like the Women of Color Resource Center (WCRC) and the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, San Francisco Chapter (AWSA SF), and many more. Some became formal INCITE! affiliates, such as Sista II Sista in Brooklyn, AWSA SF, and Young Women United in Albuquerque. Up to thirteen local INCITE! chapters across the "US" added to this network of affiliates and partners, fomenting myriad local struggles and catalyzing the politics and strategies of INCITE! as a coalitional "movement of many movements." INCITE!'s movement of many movements brought about an organic convergence between, or a conjoined struggle constituted by, feminist struggles for prison abolition and anti-imperialist feminisms. These convergences led to a shared understanding that "US"-based prisons and policing *and* "US"-led militarism mutually constitute each other through domestic *and* international structures of power. Therefore, INCITE!'s strategy for dismantling prisons, policing, and militarism necessitated a transnational coalitional approach.

As we argue in this essay, by bridging movements that many of us had been forging separately throughout the 1990s (e.g., women of color organizing against prisons on the one hand and against war on the other) within a shared collective movement space at the turn of the twenty-first century, INCITE! was articulating a theory and practice of "anti-imperialist abolition feminism." While INCITE! activists did not formally articulate our "anti-militarism" and "anti-prison" work in these terms, when analyzed together more than a decade later, the INCITE! movement offers an archive for theorizing prison abolition through a transnational feminist, anti-imperialist, and decolonial lens. INCITE!'s political framework and set of movement methodologies have urgent implications today.

INCITE!'s feminist activism to end the prison industrial complex *and* to end militarism and war were driven by an overall anti-imperialist vision and struggle. INCITE! activists understood that while the violence of *prisons and police* on the one hand and *militarism* on the other impact different communities in specific ways, the structures that sustain them—such as global economic neoliberalism, the development of policing technologies, and war—are intertwined. Moreover, while both gravely constrain, violate, and entrap the lives of working-class people of color living in the "US," the structures that sustain them extend from the "US" to the rest of the world and operate through power structures that are global in scope.

In this essay, we frame anti-imperialism as the political vision and struggle seeking to end "US" colonialism and expansion that sets out to dominate the global political economy by controlling land, resources, and labor through military force and/or political, economic, and cultural control. European and "US" imperialism have structure(d) racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy through colonialism and slavery which employed both militarism and carceral strategies. Throughout this essay, our decolonial and freedom seeking aspirations lean on anti-imperialism as a framework and strategy to capaciously hold the convergence of the complexity and variance of colonial and racial capitalist conditions through which Indigenous peoples and people of color have historically been, and still are, targeted by a deluge

of state violence—from land, wealth and wage theft to containment, expulsion, illness and genocide. In particular, our commitment to the critical inquiry and activist undertaking of dismantling empire seeks to expose the structural technologies of military and carceral strategies (inclusive of the gamut of policing, prisons, and the detention and deportation regime) that co-constitute the always incomplete project of "US" dominance through the decimation, containment, separation, and disappearance of peoples.[2]

We draw inspiration and guidance from the work of Black feminist abolitionist visionaries such as Angela Davis and Julia C. Oparah as they interrogate the structural and technological symbiotic relationship between the prison industrial complex and the military-industrial complex.[3] They posit that this symbiosis can be understood as productive of the "US" political economy, and we argue it is productive of the "US" settler colonial and imperial state. We situate our analysis of INCITE!'s twenty-first-century approach within histories of anti-imperialist abolitionist visions in the Black radical imagination which together compel an anti-imperialist, abolition feminism. We walk, and write, with deep commitments to ending anti-Black racism, which must necessarily undergird the goal of ending racial capitalism by mapping and analyzing the global structures that sustain it through prisons, policing, border enforcement and detainment, and the "US" war machine.[4] Our contribution joins the growing conversation on abolition in the current era by uplifting the integrity of Black anti-imperialist, abolitionist, and radical Black feminist visions for liberation as we both build on and further illustrate the significance of ending war and militarism to abolitionist politics.

We posit that engaging in the work of undoing carcerality necessarily beckons the work of undoing a social landscape productive of empire, for carcerality is derivative of and co-constituted by empire. This analysis has the potential to grow possibilities of coalitional abolition feminisms that defy the disarticulation of abolition feminisms/struggles from anti-colonial feminisms/struggles, and leading us toward methods, movements, and visionary practices that build a present and future where prisons/policing and militarism are *incomprehensible*. The turn

toward coalitional consciousness and praxis, or conjoined struggles, is distinct from the practice of solidarity politics. The latter can hinge on, and reify, ideological frameworks based on separate structures of violence, which enables the bifurcation of social movements that counter structural violence and limits the potential of our political contestation and survival. The coalitional praxis of movements of many movements is the terrain on which we believe the practice and social organization of violence free futures rests.[5]

TU LUCHA ES MI LUCHA/YOUR STRUGGLE IS MY STRUGGLE: LEGACIES OF RESISTANCE ANIMATING THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST ABOLITION FEMINIST IMAGINATION

> *My ancestors knew something more; they knew, tasted, smelled, and felt the edges of multiple deaths. They knew more than just their own death. To share the hemisphere with Indigenous people also experiencing the day-to-day terror of conquest molds the form of your own experience with conquest as slavery . . . I do not believe that genocide and slavery can be contained. Neither has edges, yet each is distinct. Each form of violence has its own way of contaminating, haunting, touching, caressing, and whispering to the other. Their force is particular yet like liquid, as they can spill and seep into the spaces that we carve out as bound off and untouched by the other.*
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> —Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals*

> *Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process . . . it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.*
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> —Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

The condition for the existence of the "US" nation-state is colonialism, empire building, war making, and slavery. To quote INCITE! sister Sora Han, "[T]he 'US' is not at war, it is war." Its character is expansionist—obsessively concerned with the extractivist accumulation of land, resources, cultures, and peoples it commodifies into power and capital. It devours the life of Indigenous peoples and people

of color and the lands on which it feeds through the structural violence of heteropatriarchal racial capitalism on which it relies and which in turn imbues its colonial imaginary.* Our peoples have always known this. We come from a long line of ancestors who understood this and wielded a continuous and powerful resistance.

Our framing of anti-imperialist abolition feminism emerges from our conjoined ancestral genealogies, which inform our epistemological commitments to mobilize insurgent anti-colonial knowledges. We continually learn and walk in the footsteps of our ancestors who taught us how to understand, enliven, and sustain the struggle against empire. Nadine's ancestors fought against British colonizers from their land in Al Salt, Jordan, land currently entrapped by "US"-led imperial domination. Partnerships between the "US" and countries like Jordan and Egypt helped normalize the Israeli colonization of Palestine across the Arab region as well as "US"-led wars of counterinsurgency that repress resistance through militarized policing and its sexualized violence, emergency law, incarceration of activists, and the sexualized torture of prisoners. Today, leftist activism across the Arab region, including those that culminated in 2011's Arab Spring, approaches these imperial collaborations by resisting both the authoritarian policing of working-class people and/or activists and various Arab regimes' investments in the global prison and military-industrial complex.

Clarissa's ancestors resisted the continuous deployment of the "US" and México nation-building projects following the Spanish colonial invasions of Yoeme/Yaqui homelands in what, in the colonial vernacular, is known as the states of Sonora and Arizona in the "US"/México borderlands. The first Spanish settlers to arrive in these lands were trained to capture North African Muslims for enslavement during and after la Reconquista. In Sonora, they sought to capture Indigenous peoples for chattel. The Spanish missions and later "US" military forts that followed were institutional structures of captivity built for the practices of torture and disappearing Indians. The policing and containment practices of the Spanish empire since the sixteenth century

* José Martí, the anti-imperialist Cuban liberator, and Harriet Tubman both used the same metaphor to name "US" empire and slavery: "the beast."

and the "US" empire since the nineteenth century, which included "US" military and extralegal vigilante violence, targeted Indians in these lands in the period leading up to and following the "US" imperial invasion of México. The institutional inheritance of vigilante settlers and a genealogy of colonial violence formalized into "la migra": the Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Detention and Deportation Regime.[6] The Texas Rangers, which hails itself as the oldest law enforcement group in the "US," is la migra's predecessor. According to Kelly Lytle Hernández's historical account, the Texas Rangers's principal strategy "in defense of the colonists" was to chase and capture people escaping slavery (sometimes to México), to terrorize Méxicans, and to kill Indians. In her place-based perspective of the rise of carcerality in Los Angeles, Hernandez references the Méxican-American War as the historic shift from early incarceration during the Spanish empire to the "boom" that grew incarceration into a "thick pillar in the structure of US conquest."[7] Formal institutions of containment emerge historically in periods of land settlement that condition imperial tactics of nation-building, thereby engendering empire by "securing the nation."[8] This is why policing and the militarization of the border, for example, emerge and escalate with every declaration of war. Punishment and containment/disappearance on the one hand, and invasion and expansion on the other, are two sides of the same coin. They are conjoined and inseparable strategies of empire building that are structured and made material through the technologies of policing and militarization. Indigenous peoples and their descendants are still waging a constant and unrelenting struggle against the violence of policing and militarization on the bordered lands of the "US"-México border. As always they fight to protect Indigenous lands and life.

In *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality*, Luana Ross testifies that since European contact, Indigenous peoples in the Americas have always been imprisoned; they have been "confined to forts, boarding schools, orphanages, jails and prisons, and on reservations."[9] She says, growing up, "I imagined that all families had relatives who went away." Policing and containing

difference was, since inception, a tactic of European, "US," and the Spanish empire. In the Americas, we can trace the colonial histories of policing and punishment to the earliest points of contact with Indigenous peoples in the early 1500s. In *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*, Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock argue that systematic policing and punishment of gender and sexual variance were integral to colonization in the Americas.[10] This text alongside INCITE! Binghamton chapter member and philosopher María Lugones's analysis helps to decipher this colonial strategy not as a separate colonial feature targeting the queered subject, but rather colonialism targets the spectrum of Indigeneity, the complex of Indigenous cosmologies.

It is through the violence, through punishment, containment, murder, and disappearance that the categorical dichotomization of gender and sexuality is made material, corporalized; it is through violence that the binaries are made. The punishment industry as a strategy of (corporal) colonial control is integral to and productive of not just the bifurcating technologies of colonial gender and sexuality, but of colonialism itself.[11] In her pivotal essay, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Lugones counters what is falsely understood in reductive terms as the cultural imposition of European heteropatriarchal values upon a variance of Indigenous sexual and gender ontologies by arguing that structured heteropatriarchy in the Americas is the result of the violent practices of colonization and war. Heteropatriarchy, she posits, is made through the colonial practices of policing, punishment, and attempts at the extermination of Indigenous subjectivities.[12]

The colonial/slavery methods of policing, capture, punishment, containment, and extermination are integral to the ontological ordering of the human, the nonhuman, and the anti-human. The global phenomenon of the transatlantic slavery system emerges amidst colonial conditions; systematic slavery makes the ongoing life of colonialism possible. The technologies of warcraft—innovation in navigation systems and routes, devices for slaughter and torture, structures of confinement, the machinations of heteropatriarchal and racial

epistemologies—order the ontological dismemberment of (the continuity of) life disavowing the human from the human, the nonhuman from the human. This separation is the root of the violence through which the colonial/slavery projects forge a capitalist, anti-Black racial cartography of humanness.[13]

The conjoined colonial/slavery analytic frame invokes the many ways these twin projects emerge in tandem and considers their afterlife as the imprint on the terrain of our struggles in the present.[14] Without discounting the particular features and histories, this analysis privileges their convergence so as to highlight their deep entanglements in order to incite joint struggle to eviscerate the aftermath, the conditions of violence in the present. This analytical framing recalls and invokes the coalitional liberation consciousness that led to the first abolition of slavery in the Americas in the early 1500s in then named Hispaniola (Dominican Republic/Haití) in response to the many Indigenous/African joint revolts, among them Enriquillo's Revolt.[15]

Maroon abolitionist struggles continued to be forged throughout the Americas thereafter. Maroon societies consisted of Africans who escaped slavery and gained freedom, often living and struggling in concert with Indigenous peoples. Victorious struggles against colonizers were gained by conjoining African and Indigenous epistemological understandings of the land that facilitated, for example, out-maneuvering colonizers in mountainous regions. Using this strategy in Veracruz, México, in the early seventeenth century, Gaspar Yanga, known as "the first liberator of the Americas," secured the freedom of a maroon society in the town now known as Yanga. Oparah relates that in the twenty-first century maroon abolitionists are connected to earlier manifestations by a "survival imperative" whereby the prison industrial complex is understood by gender-oppressed, anti-prison activists as the colonial war waged against Black people. Oparah argues that the activists' analysis destroys the logic of (prison) reform because in a state of war akin to slavery, only the end of the war, or slavery, will guarantee freedom.[16]

In the nineteenth century's smaller version of the "US," radical abolitionists understood and acted in response to the deep entanglements

of colonialism/slavery. For them, abolition was imagined as a multi-issue struggle that engaged in the transnational fight for liberation from slavery, from colonialism, and from the rise of global capitalism. Perhaps recognizing that it is impossible to disentangle colonialism from racial capitalism, radical abolitionists demanded and joined struggles for the humane treatment of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and the ousting of the British empire in India.[17] They conspired with the Haitian revolution and anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolutionary struggles in Africa, the Caribbean, and throughout Latin America. Frederick Douglass lambasted the "US" colonial invasion of México in the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*:

> Our nation seems resolved to rush on in her wicked career, though the road be ditched with human blood, and paved with human skulls . . . We beseech our countrymen to leave off this horrid conflict, abandon their murderous plans, and forsake the way of blood . . . Let the press, the pulpit, the church, the people at large, unite at once; and let petitions flood the halls of Congress by the million, asking for the instant recall of our forces from Mexico. This may not save us, but it is our only hope.[18]

Douglass understood that the abolitionist struggle and the anti-colonial struggle against the "US" occupation of México were conjoined because the projects of empire and slavery were conjoined. México had already abolished slavery, and southern slave owners set out to colonize México in part to expand slavery while the abolition of slavery was predicated on the constriction rather than the expansion of slave-owning states.[19] This is an example of the many ways slavery and colonialism are co-constituted. And so, the abolitionist fight for the freedom of people enslaved joined the fight for México's freedom from colonial invasion.

The anti-imperialist abolitionist imagination and movement in the twenty-first century is rooted in nineteenth-century abolitionist struggles and the praxis of the Black radical anti-imperialist imagination and Black radical anti-imperialist feminisms. W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America* takes on the failure to create an "abolition democracy" as the condition for the possibility of the aftermath

of slavery and its concomitant capitalist exploitation of Black workers alongside "yellow" and "brown" workers. Du Bois's abolition democracy calls for the social, political, and economic transformation necessary to realize the yet to be realized potential of emancipation. An emancipation he imagined as necessarily anti-imperialist and internationalist as he understood the conditions that produce capital organization and the degradation of workers are global and imperial.[20]

Angela Davis and Assata Shakur are foundational visionaries of abolition feminism and Black feminisms. Both political prisoners, they remind us that prison abolition is rooted in the consciousness and struggle of people who are or have been imprisoned. They also conceptualize abolition in these terms, as part of the strategic move to accomplish the unfinished work of emancipation.

> We proposed the notion of a prison-industrial-complex to reflect the extent to which the prison is deeply structured in economic, social, and political conditions that themselves will also have to be dismantled . . . Prison abolitionist strategies reflect an understanding of the connections between institutions that we usually think about as disparate and disconnected.[21]

Davis's *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* builds on Du Bois's abolition democracy to further what she initially invokes in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*—the idea that social transformation is necessary for liberation, or what she envisions as a society without prisons—"the obsolescence of imprisonment." For Davis, the twenty-first century struggle for (prison) abolition is also an anti-imperialist struggle that reckons with the vast web of what she calls the "economy of violence" that is the "United States."[22] Davis contextualizes torture in the war *of* terror, and the specifically sexual violence at Abu Ghraib, as inherent to prison practices. Rather than the imaginary that posits sexual violence and torture as incoherent to "US" democracy, she argues that torture is far from an aberration but an outgrowth of what she terms "the circuits of violence" very much present in the continuum of institutionalized "regimes of punishment" in the "US." Sexual violence and torture, Davis posits, "emanate from the techniques of punishment deeply embedded in the history of the institution of prison."[23] She

points out that one of the torturers was appointed by the military to the prison in Abu Ghraib precisely because of his prior experience as a "US" prison guard. Davis asserts that it is precisely the task of radical feminist analysis to "think about disparate categories together, to think across categorical divisions, disciplinary borders."[24] By implication, we affirm that abolition feminism beckons us to think across the fabricated divisions that separate social movements.[25]

Throughout her writing and speeches, Davis explicitly addresses abolition in feminist terms and as necessarily anti-imperialist. The term "feminist abolition" first appears in 2013 in her lecture "Feminism and Abolition: Theories and Practices for the Twenty-First Century."[26] In *Abolition Democracy*, Davis frames imperialism as fundamental to the development of capitalism and prisons: "Linked to the abolition of prisons is the abolition of the instruments of war, the abolition of racism, and of course, the abolition of the social circumstances that lead poor men and women to look toward the military as their only avenue of escape from poverty."[27]

This essay also builds on the expansive foundations of Black radical anti-imperialist thought and movement praxis as is documented in *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* which traces the Black Panthers' anti-imperialism to the long lineage of Black anti-colonialist imagination all the way back to Du Bois.[28] The text relates how the Black Panthers collaborated with revolutionary movements around the world as well as with Los Siete in San Francisco and the Young Lords in Chicago and New York, movements that practiced anti-colonial anti-imperialist politics. Robin D. G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* also documents the Black radical anti-imperialist imagination. His approach anchors the Black radical imagination in mass social movement praxis as "a collective imagination engaged in an actual movement for liberation . . . [it is] a product of struggle, of victories and losses, crises and openings, and endless conversations."[29] This framing helps us to consider the intervention we seek to uplift by calling for an anti-imperialist abolition feminism that grows out of radical feminist of color visions to see struggles relationally within the contexts of the many interconnected

historical and political conditions out of which they emerge. In this sense, we ground INCITE!'s work within histories of struggles that are rooted in anti-imperialist, decolonial, and Black feminist insurgency toward the potential of social transformation; we invoke a feminist of color anti-imperialist abolition feminism that builds on historic and ancestral legacies as it shifts to address contemporaneous conditions.

Shakur frames revolutionary struggle as necessarily anti-imperialist *and* anti-capitalist, anti-racist, *and* anti-sexist.[30] She historicizes the end of slavery as emergent through northern capitalist investments in saving industrial capitalism by weakening the political and economic power of the plantation economy. Emancipation was never the goal; the goal for a "US" state of permanent war is the persistent ploy to save racial capitalism from its impending obsolescence and untenable fantasy. This is why Reconstruction failed and fails again and again and why, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore attests, "the state-sanctioned exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" via prisons and war and labor conditions and everything in between prevails.[31]

Anti-imperialist scholars note the shift in the 1970s to a new "US" imperial role that strategically populated the world with military bases to protect an ever expansive global commodity line and to threaten the global south into compliance while securing profit-driven, racial capitalism's forever need for unfree labor.[32] And as the world map was dotted with military bases, the prison nation was built, dotting the landscape of California, the "US," and the world over with container structures to imprison and detain unfree labor. Beth Richie understands the political apparatus that builds a prison nation as one that relies on an imaginary of enemies and scapegoats to create fear; this strategy is used to legitimate prisons and policing and is also used as rationale to deploy war and establish military bases.[33]

The "US" empire unleashed an explosion of not just "US" military bases in other countries but also a coordinated expansion of supposed-sovereign nations' military and carcerality structures throughout the world. In the Americas, for example, Plan Colombia, Plan México (also known as the Mérida Initiative), and the Caribbean Basin Security

Initiative mapped and financed the expansion of the criminal justice system, prisons, and policing under the guise of the War on Drugs.[34] This twenty-first century neocolonial imperial strategy weakens sovereign state infrastructure by binding states to a "US" imperial form with deep investments in carcerality. The "US" empire exports criminality as an expression of racial capitalism. The expansion in criminality also emerges through a framework that criminalizes migration on a global level. In the most recent era of the "US" empire's war on migrants, the "US" has contracted, financed, trained, and overseen the expanded securitization/militarization of Latin American national borders, leading to massive rates of detention and incarceration of migrants throughout the Americas.

ROOT WORK KINSHIP/WE ARE RELATIVES IMPLICATED IN EACH OTHER'S SURVIVAL: RADICAL POLITICS IN COALITIONAL FEMINIST OF COLOR ORGANIZING

There are women locked in my joints
for refusing to speak to the police
My red blood full of those
arrested, in flight, shot

...

In the scars of my knees you can see children torn from their families
bludgeoned into government school

...

we are prisoners of a long war

...

My knee is wounded
see
How I Am Still Walking

—Chrystos, "I walk in the history of my people"

There was a deep love energy present at the first Color of Violence conference. It was the birth one, and somehow that vibrational exchange among the more than two thousand people gathered made INCITE! possible. Something about seeing in each other's faces the past of so

many lives lived, eyes lit up ready for what was being served, ears wide open, and mouths about to tell all of it. In that willing presence was the deepest honoring and lifting up of each other. The collective sentiment that we were there for each other filled the rooms. We were not the same, lived not the same, yet all our hearts beat to Taiko drums and Maori songs reminding us that our roots, like those of trees, grew interdependently, capable of feeding each other the elements of survival: earth, sun, wind, and water. We were, and had always been, deeply connected. In each other, we recognized the plight of times enduring hardship and droughts, and we gathered that day with the strongest sense that sweet as nectar was our destiny. Two-spirit Menominee poet Chrystos went to the front of the room and read the poem "I walk in the history of my people."[35] The reading was an invitation to dig deep enough to touch the roots of ancestral memories, the generations of suffering endured, and to lift up the wisdom and rebellion and joy embodied in our survival. The conference marked the spirit birthing of INCITE! at the confluence of visionaries, movements, and everyday lesbians of color living their best life in struggle.

Just as when Chrystos spoke, in a room of masses you could hear a pin drop when Davis delivered the conference's keynote. She deplored the continuum of state violence against women of color. She denounced the "militarized violence" of the police and addressed the military and the prison as "agencies of violence" tasked with delivering violence. She remarked that centering Indigenous women within women of color formations posited an analytic that exposed and disavowed "the persisting colonial domination of Indigenous nations and national formations within and outside the presumed territorial boundaries of the 'U.S.'"[36] Haunani-Kay Trask's memorable closing keynote lifted up the indefatigable spirit of resistance of Indigenous peoples across the globe in a mesmerizing poetic cadence that condemned the genocidal violence the "US" empire unleashed in its ongoing attempts to colonize Hawaii, the Pacific, and the world over.[37] Margo Okazawa Rey, Elham Bayour, and Lourdes Lugo denounced the gamut of settler colonialism and militarism on a global scale and the particulars of neocolonial occupations in East Asia, Palestine, Puerto Rico, and Latin America.

Loretta Ross addressed the deleterious effects of "US" interventions in women of color birthing and mothering both domestically and internationally. Luana Ross and Ruth Wilson Gilmore described the prison as violence, calling forth powerful testimonies of incarceration. Immigration justice movement lawyer and organizer Renee Saucedo denounced the carceral violence of immigration surveillance, harassment, jailing, and detention that targeted migrant women and youth. The conference and the scope of the many presentations, their combined voices, stories, and strategies was the inaugural moment through and in response to which, INCITE! came into consciousness.

The initial Color of Violence conference took place on the heels of the Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex conference held at UC Berkeley in 1998. Many INCITE! leaders participated in the growing prison abolition movement of the period and organized and attended the Critical Resistance conference. INCITE!'s initial formation in 2000 included folks who organized on multiple fronts. While the founding leadership was principally grounded in movements responding to gender-based intimate violence, folks shared organizing backgrounds in anti-prison, anti-police, anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, queer, and feminist of color movements as well as immigrant justice work. Accordingly, INCITE!'s founding principles of unity named colonialism and the "US" nation-state—and by default "US" imperialism across the globe—as central organizers of violence against women of color and our communities. INCITE! moved forward with a radical solidarity politic of transnational, coalitional, feminist of color organizing understanding that a new space had been forged where our combined stories of struggle, survival, and resistance to "US" empire formed a potent movement antidote to counter, dismantle, and transform the violence that plagued us.

Underlying INCITE!'s coalitional feminist approach was the idea that the various structures that maintained "US" empire and the "US" nation-state (colonization of Native land, the prison industrial complex, militarism/war, and border control/targeting of immigrants) were interconnected and mutually constitutive. Our survivance of these very structures both convened us and galvanized deep kinship.

In other words, INCITE! worked from the idea that if any of us really wanted freedom and liberation, we were going to need to address our seemingly "separate" struggles together.

Rather than naming a fixed politics that INCITE! fostered, we affirm that INCITE! nurtured a politics in motion—dynamic, changing, living, at once local and global, and transnational—that emerged out of specific historical and political conditions, from particular genealogies, and a concert of antecedent imagination and struggles. The idea that struggle is disparate, social movements are separate, and actors are individual and fixed in time and space fails to comprehend the dynamic and ongoing life of resistance. Contestation and resistance to the ongoing violence of colonialism, in all its shades, is in continual iteration, mutation, and transformation, birth and rebirth, growth and regrowth. It is a movement to protect, honor, and dignify life, and as such, is endemic to the movement of natural life. It is steeped in innovation and transformation, as generations and experience teach and remember ongoing strategies for survival, offering the mapscapes of potential futurities. The ongoing life of resistance is never separate, but carries with it the struggles all around, and certainly the struggles of the past. INCITE!'s embeddedness in a constellation of social movements and struggles, its deep-seated coalitional methodology, manifested an anti-imperialist abolitionist praxis that we assess, invoke, and learn from in these pages to think through and urge the most effective strategies to get free from violence.

We focus specifically on INCITE!'s anti-militarism campaigns as a strand of INCITE!'s organizing in the legacy of anti-colonial/women of color/third world feminisms. INCITE!'s goal with the anti-war campaigns was to ignite a Indigenous and women of color–centered and –led joint struggle against the intensification of violence that the war of terror unleashed on all of our communities in 2001. Our analysis shows how INCITE!'s work challenges imperialist notions of the "domestic" and "international" and reveals how the "US" operates on a continuum of settler-colonial and imperial wars waged on a global scale that are localized in the intimacies of our lived dailyness and particular geospatial geographies across intersecting lands and diasporas.

We developed these campaigns based on a shared analysis of "US" imperial policies pre- and post-9/11.

INCITE!'s integration of the conjoined politics of anti-colonialism, anti-militarism, and prison abolition, while specific to the post-9/11 moment, drew upon earlier feminist of color movements, especially those of the 1960s and 1970s—from the work on gender justice among Black women in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Women's Liberation Committee (BWLC) to the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA). This organizing, while centering the intersections of race, class, and gender, had a simultaneous/integrated internationalist analysis influenced by "struggles against colonialism and neo-colonialism in what was then called the Third World that shaped [the] critique of capitalism [and] is rarely recognized in 'US' feminist studies.* This internationalist analysis became more and more central as the BWA transitioned to Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA)."[38]

Anti-war momentum and consciousness had grown in the days of the Vietnam War, which moved "US"-based activism in the latter half of the twentieth century toward a decolonial and anti-imperialist framework. In the 1980s, this strand of feminist of color organizing defined women's liberation in terms of ending Reagan's wars in Central America, apartheid South Africa, and beyond, inspiring international delegations and coalitions across the globe as well as connections with the Union of Palestinian Women's Association. In the 1990s, some strands of radical women of color organizing were making connections between growing global economic neoliberalism (e.g., privatization) and militarism (e.g., the war on drugs) as key forces that connect "US" domestic struggles and international struggles.

* A common assumption in the field of feminist studies is that transnational feminism was born in the 1990s because this is the period "transnational feminism" was adopted in academia, much like the way the term "intersectionality" was adopted nearly a decade after intersectional feminism was named and practiced on the ground in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. See Linda Burnham, *The Wellspring of Black Feminist Theory*, Working Paper Series 1 (Oakland, CA: Women of Color Resource Center, 2001), https://solidarity us.org/pdfs/cadreschool/fws.burnham.pdf; and Nadine Naber, "Arab and Black Feminisms: Joint Struggle and Transnational Anti-imperialist Activism," *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 5, no. 3 (2016): 116–25.

Based on the shared understanding that our struggles are intertwined, and a shared commitment to collapsing the space-time distinctions between "US" empire "abroad" and "domestic" "US" state violence, INCITE! strategically became a coalitional movement of many movements seeking to end violence against women and people of color. Our approach placed women of color at the center of analysis about gender violence, revealing that when those most impacted by a confluence of systemic violence become the center of analysis, the actions and interventions imagined can yield a much more effective outcome because the entirety of the systemic structures of violence need to be challenged.

In order to end the barrage of violence perpetuated against women of color, INCITE! committed to multidimensional cooperative formations. In other words, INCITE!'s approach was that the very prospect of organizing against sexual and intimate violence against women of color necessitated an understanding of the multiple and interconnected sets of conditions that made the violence possible, such that, for example, we recognized sexual violence as a tool of war and empire delivered at the hands of the military, the police, the border patrol, prison guards, and schools. We understood sexual violence as an outgrowth and expression of a network of violence that is constitutive of the heteropatriarchal and racial capitalist "US" state and its global aspirations. This understanding called for a coalitional and a multi-issue approach to organizing that sought to build interconnected struggles and movements to generate social transformation toward an end to all forms of violence.

EARLY MOMENTS IN INCITE!'S ANTI-IMPERIALIST ABOLITION FEMINISM IN PRAXIS

> *We call on social justice movements concerned with ending violence in all its forms to . . . [m]ake connections between interpersonal violence, the violence inflicted by domestic state institutions (such as prisons, detention*

centers, mental hospitals, and child protective services), and international violence (such as war, military base prostitution, and nuclear testing).

—Critical Resistance-INCITE! Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex

INCITE! maintained the position that we cannot end gender violence against women and gender nonconforming people of color unless we end state violence and we cannot end one form of "US" state violence (e.g., prisons/police) without ending them all. As INCITE! puts it, "[We] need to adopt anti-violence strategies that are mindful of the larger structures of violence that shape the world we live in."[39] The conjoined movement praxis between INCITE! and Critical Resistance, which began before the birth of either group, reflects a coalitional approach that led to the "CR/INCITE! Joint Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex." The CR/INCITE! statement, an early document in the archive of abolition feminisms, articulates INCITE!'s abolition feminisms in anti-imperialist terms, calling on social movements to make the connections between intimate violence and the prison industrial complex, detention centers, and the "international violence" of war.

The CR/INCITE! statement challenges the ways carceral feminisms obscure the structural dimensions of violence by legitimating the individualizing logic of the prison industrial complex.[40] It also situates women of color's life experiences at the center of analysis, revealing a continuum of interconnected forms of sexual and intimate violence imposed upon those enduring military occupation, police violence, and migration.

Much of INCITE!'s first year of work focused on building infrastructure and strategy. We built the movement by connecting to local communities through a series of activist institutes aimed at continuing the Color of Violence conference's politicization of anti-violence movement work while brainstorming and developing strategies and imagination for alternative interventions to system-based responses to intervening in intimate and state violence. Building intracommunity responses to intracommunity violence was a strategy to increase survivor of color safety. Many of us worked directly with or were

survivors of color who had experienced carceral revictimization by the police, medical institutions, child protective services, jails, and the courts. Survivors of color were often incarcerated, deported, or separated from their children when they reached out for system-based support with intimate violence. We addressed police violence and imagined interventions, solutions, and possible models for intracommunity practices to intervene in, support, and ultimately end intimate gender-based violence.

INCITE!'s abolitionist strategy aimed to expose the prison industrial complex as a structure of state violence principally targeting women of color and our communities, naming how it is connected to other structures of violence (police, western medicine, militarism, immigration, and border enforcement); delegitimate the carceral logic that the prison industrial complex keeps anyone and certainly survivors of violence safe, and exposing it instead as a site of revictimization for survivors; create alternatives to keep survivors from getting caught up in the system; develop practices for increasing survivor safety and violence intervention; and foster alternative processes of accountability that do not rely on the state and aim instead to end violence by transforming the sets of conditions and relations that make violence possible. This strategy emerged in praxis through on the ground organizing and in coalition. What became INCITE!'s abolitionist strategy emerged organically in concert and coalition with various movement formations. INCITE!'s methods for abolitionist organizing included centering the voices of survivors of incarceration, law, immigration, and enforcement violence as well as survivor advocates. Methods also included moving as a movement of many movements in coalitional form with relevant movements, INCITE! chapters, and affiliates. It also looked like organizing! organizing! organizing! through local activist institutes and a task force dedicated to community accountability/alternatives to responding and intervening in violence.

One of our first activist institutes was held in New Orleans in the spring of 2001. It marked the first time we brought into conversation Indigenous practitioners of restorative justice and local community members interested in ending gender violence. INCITE! cofounder

Janelle White led the local organizing, and the institute marked the first time we organized a large-scale conversation about the practice of alternative interventions in violence and about alternative structures of accountability rooted in the knowledges and practices of Indigenous and Black feminist approaches to addressing gender- and child sexual abuse. While Beth Richie and Barbara Smith addressed the dangers of the carceral response to gender violence and shared historic examples of women of color organizing against state and sexual violence, Tina Beads and Fay Blaney from the Aboriginal Women's Action Network (AWAN) of Vancouver and Barbara Major from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond shared models of community organizing and accountability to address and intervene in violence. Participants engaged in facilitated small-group discussions to assess models and consider how those models might be useful in their communities.

Prior to 9/11, INCITE! had organized an activist institute in Bushwick, Brooklyn, in partnership with Sista II Sista, a collective of young Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina women. An ominous military/police presence surrounded New York at the time of the institute in early October. Sista II Sista's urgency to organize to address sexual violence and harassment in their communities and at the hands of the police intensified. Davis also joined this important early gathering, which proved to be foundational on many counts, but for the purposes of this essay, we highlight the following: the conjunction of a post-9/11 moment congealed a weaponized military/police heightened surveillance/repression and attack on "suspect" and "targeted" communities of color alongside war-mongering, racial, and heteropatriarchal rhetoric and violence; the creative imagination of the youth present at the activist institute catapulted the realm of what we had previously thought possible in mapping alternatives to violence interventions as young Latina and Afro-Latina activists, inspired by Zapatismo, began imagining turning their communities into liberation zones for women; a strong long-term coalitional movement embrace emerged between Sista II Sista and INCITE! that would deeply shape the terrain of INCITE!'s movement work; and the activist institute became a

key moment that strengthened INCITE!'s abolition feminism by deepening its connections and commitments to anti-imperialism.

The roots of INCITE!'s vision and praxis were decolonial and anti-imperialist from its origins. Yet the aftermath of 9/11 combined with our direct participation in the global struggle at WCAR deepened an anti-imperialist abolition feminism in the making that included conjoining the struggles of decolonization and anti-imperialism with struggles against the prison industrial complex with a focus on their heteropatriarchal implications and disproportionate impacts on women of color, and especially queer and transgender people; and focusing on alternatives to the prison industrial complex in connection to colonialism and capitalism as essential to ending violence against our communities and building the world we want beyond the structures of imprisonment, containment, and punishment.

INCITE!'S ANTI-IMPERIALIST FEMINISM IN PRAXIS

> *Once you understand something about the history of a people, their heroes, their hardships and their sacrifices, it's easier to struggle with them, to support their struggle. For a lot of people in this country, people who live in other places have no faces. And this is the way the U.S. government wants it to be.*
>
> —Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography*

After our return from WCAR in South Africa, days after 9/11, and prompted by the urgency of impending catastrophe, INCITE! mapped out our initial anti-war organizing strategy consisting of a statement that addressed the long history of colonial attacks against Indigenous women and women of color while deploring further colonial invasions and expressing solidarity with the people and women of Afghanistan and the Arab/Muslim regions more generally; an anti-war packet coalescing organizing ideas and feminist of color analysis of colonial invasions and the war of terror; anti-war flyers and posters countering representations of women of color and "Muslim women" as "the enemy" and centering women of color voices against the war; cultural arts organizing; collaboration with anti-war formations; and solidarity

with communities targeted by the war of terror. Our anti-war statement, marking the beginning of a protracted anti-war strategy stated: "We refute racism against Arab peoples and West Asians within the United States and throughout the world and support all colonized and occupied peoples in their struggle for liberation, including Palestinians."

Prior to 9/11, INCITE!'s commitment to local–global coalitional work emerged, in part, out of INCITE!'s commitment to decolonization and anti-imperialism. Most INCITE! cofounders were themselves either direct survivors or descended from survivors of "US" colonial invasion. They shared histories of organizing against "US" imperial invasions in the "US" and throughout the world. The convergence of feminist anti-colonial commitments fostered a growing connection between INCITE! and anti-imperialist Arab feminist movement organized through formations like AWSA SF. In the late 1990s, AWSA SF was addressing the gendered and sexual effects of the "US" war on Iraq and the "US"-backed Israeli colonization of Palestine. Although Palestinian feminists were connected with third world women's organizing in the "US" during the 1970s and 1980s, by 2001, they had been generally isolated from Indigenous and women of color movement spaces.[41]

INCITE!'s return from South Africa, where we heard testimony of the global impact of "US" empire, brought the significance of "US" imperialism to the fore of our work. The military invasions of Afghanistan began, and Iraq was to follow. Israeli colonialist violence and land confiscation escalated, and Arab and Muslim immigrants in the "US" became hyper-visible targets of the "US" war machine through surveillance, immigrant raids, detentions, and deportations. INCITE!'s analysis affirmed that the "US"' war in the South West Asian and North African (SWANA) region and against SWANA diasporas in the "US" were part of the same material apparatus of "US" empire.

Drawing upon our feminist of color methodology, while INCITE!'s founding leadership included SWANA representation, INCITE! was in the midst of expanding its Palestinian and Arab leadership when 9/11 happened. Consistent with INCITE!'s survivor-centered methodology, an approach where those most impacted should be central to

forming analysis and strategy, INCITE! moved to increase Palestinian and Arab leadership. The political moment surrounding 9/11 called for Indigenous and women of color organizing to intentionally commit to resisting "US" imperialism in the SWANA region and to work in solidarity with Palestinian liberation and connect anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggles within and outside the United States.

The title of this essay, "Genocide and 'US' Domination ≠ Liberation, Only We Can Liberate Ourselves," reflects the combined text of INCITE!'s anti-war poster campaigns and its anti-war consciousness. The first posters emerged in coalitional praxis with artist Favianna Rodriguez, and they announced anti-war slogans that were decided through consensus over INCITE! conference calls. The poster of martyred Afghan feminist visionary Meena Alexander read "Genocide ≠ Justice, We are Not the Enemy." The poster led to INCITE!'s National and Bay Area chapter meeting with the Revolutionary Afghan Women's Association (RAWA) based upon our commitment to stand behind the self-determination goals of women in the region facing invasion[42] and center their analyses and organizing. RAWA members implored us to continue our anti-war organizing, sharing their realities of surviving the "US" war machine.

Fig. 1. Favianna Rodriguez, poster, "Genocide ≠ Justice, We Are Not the Enemy."

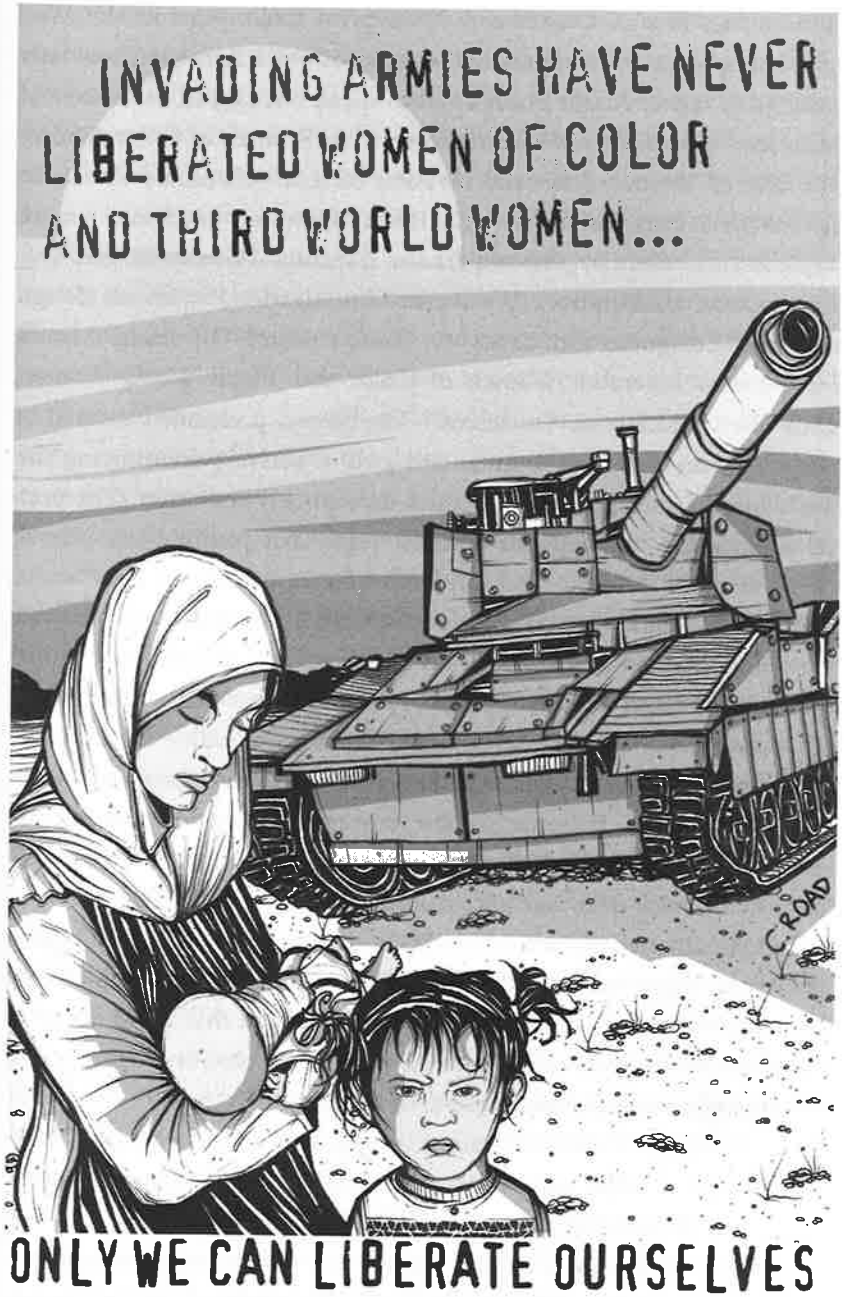

Fig 2. Cristy C. Road, poster, "Only We Can Liberate Ourselves."

The initial "Not in Our Name: Women of Color Against the War" poster urging an anti-imperialist women of color feminism was later adapted to depict Audre Lorde's call to speak out against violence and injustice, "Our Silence Will Not Protect Us: Women of Color Against the War of Terror." After the invasion of Iraq—alongside threats to invade Syria, Iran, and others—the INCITE! posters developed a more explicit anti-colonial, anti-imperialist framing: "Genocide and U.S. Domination ≠ Liberation, We Resist Colonization," with art design also by Rodriguez, and Cristy C. Road's poster "Invading Armies Have Never Liberated Women of Color and Third World Women, Only We Can Liberate Ourselves." The posters positioned women of color, Afghan and Iraqi women and girls as actively denouncing the war while setting the terms for a self-determined liberation. The posters interrupted the imperial feminist logic that justified the war of terror through the genocidal imperialist feminist rhetoric that "white men heroes would save Muslim women from Muslim men." Instead, the posters named and affirmed an anti-war, anti-colonial women of color, Afghan and Arab feminist–led discourse that came to circulate across the "US." On the streets, under freeways, in office corridors, in university halls, and anywhere and everywhere these posters were seen, they consolidated a feminist of color stance against the war and Afghan and Iraqi feminist led self-determination while fostering a coalitional feminist of color anti-war/anti-colonial consciousness. The anti-war leaflets also decried the war of terror's entrenchment of the rigid binary gender paradigm and the exporting of the "US" long-standing violent colonial practices of white heteropatriarchy abroad that wield devastating effects on the lives of Indigenous, women of color, and queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people of color.[43]

INCITE!'s 2001 anti-war packet frames state violence against "US"-based people of color and people of the global south as ongoing forms of warfare, devastating entire families and communities. It states, "the goal of our campaign is to stop the war on women of color and our communities within and outside the 'U.S.' borders." In the packet, INCITE! affirmed that the "US" was founded on and grows its power through the tactic of genocide including the colonization of Indigenous

peoples and lands, slavery, exploitation of migrants, mass incarceration, increasing police violence, economic warfare, and forced/coerced sterilization; and uses the bodies of Indigenous women, immigrant women, and women of color to justify, rationalize, and legitimize itself. Overall, INCITE!'s position was that anti-Arab/anti-Muslim (imperialist) racism that justifies the war of terror through concepts of Arab/Muslim misogyny and homophobia is co-constituted with US anti-Black racism and settler-colonialism that relies upon discourses about savage Black and/or Native masculinity and sexual deviance to justify mass incarceration and genocide. Further, sexual assault is essential to "US" militarism, in the "US" and abroad, and is productive of heteropatriarchy as it is coupled with the destruction of the social and economic resources women and people of color need to survive. INCITE! committed explicitly to solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, focusing on how "US"-backed support for Israeli colonization is an extension and reinforcement of "US" settler-colonialism and how Israeli colonization, like "US" settler-colonialism, relies on sexualized violence, including the repression and incarceration of Palestinian women activists. In 2003 INCITE! leadership visited Palestine and, upon return, INCITE! deepened its position of solidarity as is detailed in INCITE!'s "Palestinian Points of Unity."

INCITE!'s collaboration with the Women of Color Resource Center's (WCRC) Women Raise Our Voices Collective led to the creation of "Ten Reasons Why Women Should Oppose the War" postcards and an article published in the anti-war newspaper *War Times*. The article, "War Hits Home for U.S. Women," like the postcards, deplored the many ways war produces violence against women. In particular, the article documented early spikes in domestic violence–related murders of women married to military men upon their return from invading Afghanistan.

The queer-led Bay Area INCITE! chapter was especially active in anti-war organizing, like many other INCITE! chapters and affiliates, participating in street protests, direct actions, organizing an activist institute, and more. The Bay Area INCITE! chapter created an outdoor art gallery exhibit memorializing "The Dead of All Times;"

detailed histories of "US" invasions and their impact on peoples around the world were posted along the columns at Oakland's Lake Merritt. Poets, artists, and activists told stories of survival and invigorated anti-war movement fervor. Shortly after 9/11, the Bay Area chapter joined AWSA SF to create the herstoric coalitional convergence Sister Rise Up!, a weekly local and transnational public education, art, and culture grassroots anti-war music, performance, dance, and fundraising event held at El Río in San Francisco's Mission District.* Sister Rise Up! Went on to inspire INCITE!'s National Sisterfire Tour, which continued INCITE! national's anti-war strategy.

INCITE! activists were also conjoining struggles for immigrant, racial justice, and anti-colonialism while opposing the Bush administration's use of the "war of terror" to target immigrants and people of color in the "US"—whether through intensified immigration control and border enforcement, recruitment of more working-class people of color to the military, including migrants, or overall growth of "US" militarized policing and prisons. In 2002 INCITE! joined forces with Latinos Contra la Guerra, a San Francisco–based initiative coled by Betita Martinez to foster Latinx leadership to both address and resist the war of terror's impact on Latinxs and the long history of military invasions throughout Latin America. Indigenous movements in the "US" and elsewhere recognized that this was a moment that entailed the strengthening of the "US" nation-state with devastating implications on Indigenous peoples and sovereignty. Activists connected to INCITE! were already engaged in homeland struggles in the diaspora—such as México, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Palestine liberation movements as anti-imperialist and anti-policing/prison movements coalesced across the "US" through formations like Racial Justice 09/11. INCITE! was there, integrating a feminist and queer politics into efforts seeking to make connections exposing the

* In the days following 9/11, the siphoning of state, corporate, and foundation funds to pay for military expansion and invasion depleted social movement organizations of funding, and many turned to grassroots fundraising such as the Sister Rise Up! strategy, which featured and fundraised for a specific local organization every week in light of the growing realization that the "Revolution Will Not Be Funded."

continuum of the violence of war in places enduring direct and indirect "US" invasion as well as in the "US."

INCITE!'s anti-militarist work was based upon the idea that immigrant, Indigenous, and people of color–based communities in the "US" have been devastated by "US" war abroad, inspiring a commitment to uniting around the ways police, military officers, *and* border patrol *already* unite us by relying upon not only similar but also shared systems of surveillance, containment, and sexual violence to maintain and sustain the power of the "US" nation-state (in different places and to different degrees). We protested the invention of the Department of Homeland Security, ICE, and CBP as an expansion in systematic policing, and we developed a coalition approach to accounting for the complexity of the violence along with the economic and health injustices produced by the war, (e.g., lack of access to clean water and health care, increasing the realities of starvation, cancer, and disabilities) in countries under attack and in the "US," leaving women and caretakers without resources to protect and care for their loved ones and communities.

INCITE! launched an anti-military recruitment campaign as a praxis of transnational coalitional anti-imperial feminist abolition. This campaign addressed the impact of intensified militarism/heightened masculinity on increasing rates of rape and sexual assault in the military, in the communities surviving invasion, and in our communities. The campaign also addressed increased recruitment of people of color to be used as fodder for the war despite the false promises made by military recruiters. This included expanded recruitment to low-income and youth of color through schools and neighborhoods and to migrant communities. By signaling the continuum of suffering produced by "US" empire, we refused the imperialist analytic tendency to spatially and geographically separate the impact of "US"-led empire from the realities of life in the "US." Resisting "US" empire in its local and global forms necessitated reframing time and space—it all happens together—even if in different locations. Those of us living in the "US" are indeed still the subjects of imperial war, but differently so. INCITE!'s anti-militarism campaign was driven by the idea that

military violence (e.g., bombs, bulldozers, etc.) and what takes place within the geographic boundaries of the "US" (e.g., the criminalization of migrants, detentions, etc.) magnify each other and are moving parts of the same imperial present.

INCITE!'s work repeatedly focused on creating alternatives, not only resisting state violence. The military recruitment campaign offered a vision of a world where working-class people of color would not have to rely on the military to secure tuition, jobs, immigration status, or resources. We offered a vision of alternatives to joining the military so that working-class immigrants and people of color would not have to die or face the high risk of sexualized violence in the military.

BUILDING COALITIONAL ANTI-IMPERIALIST ABOLITION FEMINISMS

If there are any people on earth who understand how new york is
feeling right now, they are in the west bank and the gaza strip

....

there is no poetry in this

...

there is death here, and there are promises of more.
there is life here

...

if there is any light to come, it will
shine from the eyes of those who look for peace and justice after the
rubble and rhetoric are cleared and the phoenix has risen.

—Suheir Hammad, "First Writing Since"

Consciousness emerges through liberatory praxis in struggle.

—Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Informed by the legacy of INCITE!'s movement, how do we move coalitional anti-imperialist feminisms forward? We are living a moment when the violence of global war, imperialism, and its policing elements is intensified; we write to invigorate the resurgence of anti-imperialist struggle. The reproductive injustice and act of war that took place in Oakland, California, in January 2020 when the

Alameda County Sheriff's department used military-grade tanks and weapons to raid and evict homeless mothers and babies from the home where they were staying urges us to take seriously the ways the prison- and military-industrial complexes have not only expanded but are also more intertwined than ever before.[44] The militarized criminalization of resistance has also intensified, as evidenced by the trumped-up charges, protracted legal battles, and the conflation of resistance to state violence with terrorism that activists from uprisings in Ferguson, North Dakota, and in response to George Floyd's death are facing. The collaboration between immigration control, "US" prisons, and the war of terror, evidenced by the case of Palestinian American Rasmea Odeh, reinforces the urgency of joint struggle. Incarcerated by the Israeli state in 1967 based on a confession achieved through sexualized torture and later displaced from her land to the "US," 2017 brought about the "US'" targeting of Odeh through deportation. Arrested for "immigration fraud" vis-à-vis a "US" prosecutor who portrayed her as a "terrorist" to the jury using Israeli-produced and fabricated documents, Odeh was incarcerated in a "US" women's prison in Detroit before her deportation to Jordan and continues to be denied access to her homeland, Palestine.

Like generations before us, we are facing the ongoing life of colonialism with a determined commitment to eschew its derivatives and mobilize the end of "US" domination. Freedom is a practice that necessitates anti-imperialism. As INCITE!'s anti-war posters testified, Genocide ≠ Justice: Only We Can Liberate Ourselves. Here, we outline a decolonial and anti-imperialist abolition feminism emergent from the collective theories and practices of INCITE! and its conjoined organizing with many interconnected movements.

1. **Abolishing prisons, detention, and policing requires decolonization.** Foregrounding a critique of the "US" nation-state reveals that the ongoing life of "US" empire depends on the colonial strategy to capture and confine both land and people, in part, to extract the resources of unfree land and labor. The prison industrial complex, the "US"-México border, ICE, CBP, and war are functions of this colonial strategy.

2. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, detention, and policing requires a return to Indigenous stewardship of the land.** Movements like LandBack call for the return of (public), lands to decolonizing Indigenous stewardship. Rematriation calls for the return of women's sacred responsibilities to the land, for the return of sacred healing practices and ceremonies, and for the return of right relations with all Indigenous peoples, land, and life. Prisons, detention, policing, and the environmentally catastrophic development of border walls take place on unceded territories.
3. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, detention, and policing requires abolishing racial capitalism.** Capitalism and its endemic racial hierarchical structure is the integral logic and imperative that fuels settler-colonial claims of ownership and the accumulation of land and labor in/and during the pursuit of dominance. Prisons, policing, war, and borders both produce and depend on the technologies of racism and white supremacy.
4. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, and racial capitalism requires abolishing heteropatriarchy.** Heteropatriarchy is a colonial racial strategy that produces gender/sex(ual) binary hierarchies through violence. Policing, detention, prisons, and war produce and depend on heteropatriarchal racial-sexual violence. Methods of sexualized torture and degradation are shared between "US" prisons, the "US" military, border patrol, and policing, reinforcing the heteropatriarchal "war culture" that permeates "US" law enforcement, schools, hospitals, and civil society.[45]
5. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, racial capitalism, and heteropatriarchy requires abolishing the military.**[46] Militarism and policing are inseparable material forces enacting the colonial strategy to confiscate land and life. They produce genocide. They populate prisons and detention centers. They are the force behind the colonial and racial capitalist idea of land and people as property.[47] As Sangeetha Ravichandran explains, with every war "the US empire's surveillance, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency [are] imported from the global war into policing practices

domestically and have always had an import/export approach to their carceral strategies."*

6. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, detention, policing, racial capitalism, and heteropatriarchy requires an end to imperialist war.** Through imperialist wars, the "US" operates as the global police,[48] strengthening the power of the "US" domestically and globally while expanding its settler-colonial project and exporting its practices of enslavement and elimination. "US" imperial wars target countries directly through bombing and invasion or indirectly through support of dictators, supplying military infrastructure, or economic warfare like sanctions and neoliberal restructuring.** In Israel, the "US" supports settler colonialism to expand "US" empire and "US" law enforcement are trained by Israeli soldiers in tactics for combatting activists using military force,[49] reinforcing heteropatriarchal "US" systems of policing/prisons. ***

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* Ravichandran explains that this is evident through the ways in which DNA gets used as a bio-surveillance tool in the global war and is now becoming a mass-surveillance tool domestically. She says: "The US government has also expanded its forms of surveillance, fusing different units of policing and surveillance such as local police officers, ICE/homeland security and FBI . . . Through my research with the Policing in Chicago Research Group (PCRG) at UIC, we learned that Suspicious Activity Reports undergo a process once they are collected that ties these records to FBI databases." Her work with the Arab American Action Network shows that as a response to 9/11, the "US" established over fifty fusion centers all over the country as deposit points for information exchange across units for targeted surveillance of Black and Brown people, imprisonment through terrorism or racketeering (RICO) charges, and deportation.

** "US"-led global policing entails transferring the incarceration of prisoners to secret prisons (for example, in Guantánamo, Somalia, and Egypt) and funding authoritarian regimes who incarcerate activists resisting "US"-led wars. See Adam Hudson, "Beyond Homan Square: U.S. History is steeped in Torture," in *Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect: Police Violence and Resistance in the United States*, ed. Maya Schenwar, Joe Macaré, and Alana Yu-lan Price (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 47–56, which covers how this also plays out in the "US" with black sites like Homan Square in Chicago.

*** The Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine describes the training accurately: "Israel's widespread use of detention and imprisonment against Palestinians evokes the mass incarceration of Black people in the U.S., including the political imprisonment of our own revolutionaries. Soldiers, police, and courts justify lethal force against us and our children who pose no

7. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, the military, and imperialist war requires abolishing borders, including border walls, ICE, CBP, border patrol, and citizenship hierarchies.**[50] Borders and border wars and walls, sustained through sexual violence, such as the rape and forced hysterectomies of detained migrants, divide Indigenous lands and peoples, and returning the lands to Indigenous stewardship requires bringing down the border walls. Policing and militarism depend on the racial and colonial strategy of citizenship hierarchies. Citizenship hierarchies populate prisons and detention centers, separate children from caretakers, fragment kin structures, and turn survivors of "US" imperial invasions into unfree labor.

8. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, the military, imperialist war, and borders requires abolishing the very idea of a crime and a criminal.** Criminalization is the process whereby "US" empire's white supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy converge to turn people's everyday living (e.g., cultural practices, ways of being, and surviving in the world) into a crime. What gets called a crime and who gets framed as a criminal is a function of racial and heteropatriarchal colonial strategies to surveil, police, and confine Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian peoples, cultures, and resistance through, for example, the technologies of citizenship and gender/sexual hierarchies.

9. **Decolonization and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, the military, imperialist war, and borders invites embracing, defending, and uplifting resistance movements.** The "US" state has been repressing resistance through racial and heteropatriachal militarized policing, detention, the incarceration of political prisoners, and the conflation of activists with war criminals, terrorists, or

imminent threat. And while the U.S. and Israel would continue to oppress us without collaborating with each other, we have witnessed police and soldiers from the two countries train side-by-side." See "2010 Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine," Black for Palestine, accessed March 2, 2021, http://www.blackforpalestine.com/read-the-statement.html.

enemies of the nation. "US"-backed global policing, as we saw when the "US" backed authoritarian regime in Egypt used virginity testing and denuding of women protesters to shame the women of the Arab Spring revolutions into silence, relies on sexualized violence to contain activists, journalists, lawyers, human rights advocates, and anyone challenging "US" empire.

10. **Decolonization, and the abolition of prisons, policing, detention, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, the military, imperialist war, and borders invites building collective consciousness and social organization, nurturing the capacity for creativity, empathy, care, and intimacy.** Colonialism, racial capitalism, and heteropatriarchy rely on systems of policing, prisons, war, and detention to debilitate and incapacitate the masses by separating, individualizing, and killing. They disrupt kin relations and intimacies between people, animals, and the land. Collective social organization and consciousness in defense of our sacred relationships to life, land, the matrilineal, and creative spirit can return balance.

"We are practicing emergent strategies

...

How can we, future ancestors, align ourselves with the most resilient practices of emergence as a species?

...

We embody. We learn. We release the idea of failure because it's all data. But first we imagine.
We are in an imagination battle

...

What are the ideas that will liberate all of us?"

—adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*

The abolition of state violence is potentiated through the building of alternative sets of relations and socialities in the process of dismantling the ways of being the carceral state requires and imagines. For example, relational practices within the praxis of community accountability and transformative justice that guide what can be done instead of calling the police into neighborhoods and apartment buildings have always

existed and continue to emerge.[51] Through relationships with women and gender nonconforming health-care workers in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and our partnership with Sista II Sista in Brooklyn, INCITE! activists learned how to create violence-free zones and health centers led by women and gender nonconforming people of color. Abolitionist analyses and visions that INCITE! fostered continue today through practices whereby feminist of color organizers are building alternative (not system-based) neighborhoods, communities, health-care centers, schools, and social movement structures.

In the 2020s, we find these discussions in the praxis of building feminist abolitionist futures through community accountability, transformative justice, harm reduction, and mutual aid. The labor and visions of Black feminist abolitionists cited throughout this essay have especially potentiated a set of social conditions where prisons are unfathomable.[52] Here, we are positing that the potential for those same social conditions and practices that make prisons unfathomable also make war, empire, and colonial occupation no longer relevant or even imaginable. Indeed, undoing the work of carcerality in the broadest sense necessitates undoing the work the carceral "US" state does to stitch together structures that strengthen the "US" nation-state and its global heteropatriarchal, racial, capitalist, and colonialist expansion.

Abolition feminism that strives for undoing the colonial-imperial underpinnings of carcerality might, for instance, insist on dismantling militaristic practices that constrain our daily life, socialities, and intimacies, and in doing so, work toward unraveling the inner workings of empire with its attendant divisions and extractivist accumulation, violence, and torture. It might also insist on animating socialities, relationalities, and intimacies that converge countercarceral, decolonial, and anti-imperialist ways of being in the world, beginning with, for example, a refusal to organize movements through an imperial nation-based or a "domestic" versus "global" paradigm; crafting sensibilities that bring symbiotic balance to our relationships with each other and with the land; demanding an end to borders, accountability to Indigenous peoples, and defunding the police and the military. The police, prisons, and detention do not keep us safe nor protect

us; neither does the "US" nation-state and its imperialist wars and policing of the border.

Against the capitalist product-oriented approach "Presto! You made an abolitionist society!" INCITE! taught us that movement work is constantly becoming, that we build on legacies and lessons learned through practice. We ask in the most generative sense, what decolonial and anti-imperialist practices can we wield on the daily in our movements, socialities, and intimacies to undo imperialist carcerality and carceral imperialism? What other colonial institutions and techniques of violence grow in irrelevance as we invoke the decolonial and abolitionist imagination and corresponding liberatory practices? Decolonial abolition feminism is so much more than a liberated utopic world without police, prisons, or war; it is a heart struggle and process where over time, we learn/remember the skills for living better, in better and increasingly in right relation with one another and all life, on the path to growing the irrelevance of coloniality and carcerality and ending violence.

In this essay, rather than tracing INCITE!'s history, we posit that INCITE!'s method and praxis (and the many movements through which it emerged) offer up a decolonial, abolitionist feminist vision. Mapping and analyzing this vision necessitated unearthing the histories of the ways policing and prisons are bound to systems of colonization and militarism/imperialism against which INCITE!'s work rose up. Our reflection affirms a decolonial coalitional feminist abolition, including the core belief that if we want to abolish prisons, we must set into motion the dismantling of systems that cage and punish while also interrogating and dismantling the "US" nation-state's systems of genocide and war, displacement, and dispossession. We are going to need to make prisons, policing, and war unfathomable. We write then, to affirm and feed conjoined dreams of reaching the deepest freedoms imaginable and those presently unimaginable. The confluence of anti-imperialist, decolonial feminisms and abolition feminisms coalesce the visionary impulses of generations of struggles against slavery, displacement, genocide, feminicide, carcerality, and imperial invasions. Out of the convergence of shared struggles for liberation,

the confluence of anti-imperialist feminisms and abolition feminisms enliven the potentiating ancestor-inspired dreams and practices of nurturing feminist of color socialities of care and healing relations with the land and each other through the wielding of cultural wisdom practices and a commitment to self-determination. And if we were to abolish courts and prisons and cops, border patrol, and ICE and empire, with what would we be left? Everything.

NOTES

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