

Abolition Study: Some Preliminary Reading

These resources are to support anyone who's interested in learning more about abolition. The texts vary, and there are many different viewpoints and approaches to theorizing and working toward abolition. Some of what is included doesn't mention abolition specifically but may offer some historical and political education. Use what you can. I'll keep updating this as I have time. -A.

Update 6/3/20: SA Smythe offered to co-develop this list. We've reorganized it based on themes and added more non-U.S. and gendered perspectives. If something interests you, gather with a few others to read/think collectively!

NB: Several of these are available for free at your local library or if you put "Title + PDF" in your search engines. Some are open access & linked below. If you would like to purchase any texts, please consider using [non-Amazon sources](#), supporting your local independent bookstores.

Introductory / Quick References

1. [Summer Heat](#) (Mariam Kaba, 2015)
2. ["What Abolitionists Do"](#) (Mariame Kaba, David Stein, Dan Berger, 2017)
3. [What Does Police Abolition Mean?](#) (Derecka Purnell, 2017)
4. [Is Prison Necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind](#) (NYT, 2019)
5. [Yes, We Literally Mean Abolish the Police](#) (Mariame Kaba, NYT, 2020)

Some Foundational Texts

1. Policing the Crisis: Mugging, The State and Law and Order (Stuart Hall, 1978)
2. [The Challenge of Prison Abolition: A Conversation](#) (Angela Y. Davis and Dylan Rodriguez, 2000)
3. Freedom Dreams (Robin D.G. Kelley, 2002)
4. Are Prisons Obsolete? (Angela Y. Davis, 2003)
5. Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California (Ruth Wilson Gilmore, 2007)

Comprehensive Histories of Prisons & the Prison Industrial Complex

1. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Michel Foucault, 1977)
2. Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from Civil War to World War II (Douglas Blackmon, 2008)
3. Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire (Robert Perkinson, 2010)
4. Understanding Mass Incarceration: A People's Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggle of Our Time (James Kilgore, 2015)
5. Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter (Jordan Camp & Christina Heatherton, 2016)
6. Rethinking the American Prison Movement (Dan Berger & Toussaint Losier, 2017)
7. Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power (Simon Balto, 2017)
8. ["Organized Disorder: The New York City Jail Rebellion of 1970"](#) (Orisanmi Burton, 2018)

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9. Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence (Kellie Carter Jackson, 2019)

Firsthand Accounts / Prison Writings

1. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African (Olaudah Equiano, 1789)
2. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Harriet Jacobs, 1861)
3. Prison Notebooks (Antonio Gramsci, 1929-1935)
4. Angela Davis: An Autobiography (Angela Y. Davis, 1974)
5. Assata: An Autobiography (Assata Shakur, 1987)
6. Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal (Mumia Abu-Jamal, 1980s-2015)
7. Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners V. The U.S.A (Mumia Abu-Jamal, 2009)
8. The New Abolitionists: (Neo)slave Narratives And Contemporary Prison Writings (Joy James ed., 2005)

On the Police

1. "The police are not here to protect you" (Alex Vitale, 2017)
2. Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD (Max Felker-Kantor, 2018)
3. "[No More Cop Unions](#)" (Kim Kelly, 2020)

Gender, Sexuality & Punishment

1. Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex (Eric Stanley & Nat Smith, 2011)
2. "Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got" (Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee and Dean Spade, 2011)
3. "[Feminism and the \(Trans\)gender Entrapment of Gender Nonconforming Prisoners](#)" (Julia Oparah, 2012)
4. Against Equality: Prisons will not Protect You (Ryan Conrad ed., 2012)
5. Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South (Talitha L. LeFlouria, 2015)
6. Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law (Dean Spade, 2015)
7. No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity (Sarah Haley, 2016)
8. Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color (Andrea Ritchie, 2017)
9. All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence (Emily Thuma 2019)
10. Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation (Beth Ritchie, 2012)

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Children, Juveniles & Policing

1. Carceral Capitalism (Jackie Wang, 2018)
2. Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools (Monique Morris, 2015)

Immigration, Colonialism & Global Policing

1. The Wretched of the Earth (Frantz Fanon, 1961)
2. The Groundings with My Brothers (Walter Rodney, 1969)
3. "Transatlantic Visions: Resisting the Globalization of Mass Incarceration" (Julia Sudbury, 2000)
4. American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons (Mark Dow, 2005)
5. "Amnesty or Abolition: Felons, Illegals, and the Case for a New Abolition Movement" (Kelly Lytle Hernández, 2011)
6. Undoing Border Imperialism (Harsha Walia, 2013)
7. New Racial Missions of Policing (Paul Amar, 2013)
8. Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal (Aviva Chomsky, 2014)
9. Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil (Christen Smith, 2016)
10. "'We Have to Act. This Is What Forms Collectivity': Black Solidarity Beyond Identity in Contemporary Paris" (Vanessa E. Thompson, 2017)
11. Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present (Robyn Maynard, 2017)
12. Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention (Kelly Oliver, 2017)
13. Our History Is the Future (Nick Estes, 2019)
14. Policing Life and Death: Race, Violence, and Resistance in Puerto Rico (Marisol Lebron, 2019)

Abolition Planning / Moves for Abolition Futures

Readings

1. [Abolition Now!](#) (Critical Resistance 10 Collective, 2008)
2. [The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study](#) (Fred Moten & Stefano Harney, 2013)
3. Futures of Black Radicalism (Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, 2017)
4. As Black as Resistance: Finding the Conditions for Liberation (William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi, 2018)
5. Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition (Katherine Franke, 2019)
6. [What do Abolitionists Really Want?](#) (Bill Keller, 2019)
7. [The Case for Abolition](#) (Gilmore & Kilgore, 2019, in response to the previous article)
8. Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code (Ruha Benjamin, 2019)
9. [A World Without Policing](#)

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U.S. Organizations & Collectives

1. Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective: <https://batjc.wordpress.com/>
2. Critical Resistance: <http://criticalresistance.org/>
3. Movement for Black Lives: <https://m4bl.org/about-us/>
4. Project Nia: <http://project-nia.org/>

Podcasts and Interviews

1. [Justice in America Episode 20: Mariam Kaba and Prison Abolition](#)
2. [Is Defunding Police Possible? A Conversation with Josie Duffy Rice and Derecka Purnell](#)
3. [The Fire This Time: The New Uprising Against Racism and Police Violence](#)

Films

1. [Visions of Abolition](#) (92" dir. Setsu Shigematsu)
2. [Geographies of Racial Capitalism w/ Ruth Wilson Gilmore](#) (16" dir. Kenton Card, 2020)

Blogs & Other Resources

1. The Abolitionist Toolkit - <http://criticalresistance.org/resources/the-abolitionist-toolkit/>
2. Abolition Beyond the Binary (2019) - <http://hoodcommunist.org/2019/12/05/abolition-beyond-the-binary/>
3. Alternatives to Policing - <http://www.alternativestopolicing.com/home-adversary#home>

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