

Q: I was talking with a friend recently about how open fascist organizing post-election has been surprisingly quiet. The re-ascendancy of Trump, and especially his granting of pardons, seems like it might have mobilized the athletic clubs and Proud Boys back into the streets. The disruption in Oregon of some of these networks by arrests could explain some but likely not all of this pre-storm quiet. This got us thinking about the fascists, and antifascists, in prison. Angel Davis has said that prisons render problems invisible and we started reflecting on how that may be true for antifascist action too. We certainly aren't going to mourn white supremacists no longer being able to kick the shit out of our local queer and homeless populations, but prisons are full of their own vulnerable populations. We may have, for now, run the fuck out of the streets in Eugene, Portland, and various other Oregon cities but do they become invisible to us once they are run off? When we demobilize these creeps to "keep us safe" who is included and excluded from the us? Antifascist, racialized, and queer prisoners who are targets of fascist animus aren't necessarily safer when these shithheads get locked up with them. "We go where they go" isn't a realistic strategy for continuing to demobilize fascists while they are incarcerated. Asking someone to volunteer for prison in order to carry on the fight is a bridge too far. How do we make sure abolitionists don't fall into the same trap of allowing prisons to make our problems invisible? And what can we do to continue demobilizing fascists while they are incarcerated?

A: Let me start by saying that we absolutely do not need martyrs inside. We gain nothing by having more of us stuck in those god damn cages. No one should ever volunteer to go inside. We should do absolutely everything to try and not get caught and try to get out as soon as possible.

I feel that abolitionist indeed allow prisons to be a burial ground for all of our problems. We ignore misogyny inside, homo/transphobia, sexual violence, but then absolutely lose

site of the fact that the people we consider our enemies are in absolute abundance.

It seems to me that there are multiple factors behind this. One of which is just out of sight out of mind. We have a thousand issues going on in the world and within our communities, it can be hard to remember that inside prison hatred is thriving, and that some day those chickens may come home to roost. Prisons are intentionally built in areas that bury them from public attention. They want us to not only forget what is happening to our people, but also to ignore all the other bullshit.

Further, we do not have hard conversations. When we focus on prisons it is always either talking about how bad it is for our people, how horrific and unjust it is. But these aren't the only realities of prison. Not every prison is a 'notorious' prison, not every restriction is repression just for us. When we focus on only our people inside, we lose focus on everything and everyone else. I feel this lack of conversation doesn't prepare radicals who are going inside for what they might realistically face. We do not prepare people for having to have social relationships with the people we hate. We are not prepared for how to live with and eat beside white supremacist. For the most part, we also don't ask the people inside how they are managing it. We forget that prison is a microcosm for society as a whole, and everything bad in society is magnified inside. I don't even know if this answers the question or not, but when we are able to get rid of the romanticization of prison as some revolutionary school of hardships, we can then see it for what it is, a breeding ground of economic inequality and intense racial hatred and resentment.

How do we demobilize fascist while they are inside. What are you willing to do? Same way on the streets, how far are you or anyone willing to take things? One thing I know for sure, you will not eradicate fascist from within prison. We will not

outfight them or out violence them. Something we can do though, is meet people where they are at. This is not the romantic or preferred answered, but a good way to neutralize fascist inside, is to talk with them.

One of the main things that contributes to the proliferation of fascism inside, is the isolation from the real world. When people do not have any friends or family supporting them or encouraging them to grow, it is easy to fall into that madness. The only people they are ever going to hear from are the people lifting them up, the racist. Abolitionist ethics cannot just apply to our people. We need EVERYONE to get free, and that means offering support or an open ear to the people we hate. Every time I have been able to break through with white gang members, it's been through conversation. It has been by listening, connecting, trying to see where the hatred comes from, acknowledging their anger or sadness or isolation, and finding ways to connect their feelings with other repressed people in the our society. When we practice mutual aid with those inside, we provide another outlet. It's hard to hate Antifa when Antifa is the only one writing you letters or helping you buy coffee.

This is hard, oftentimes thankless work. We don't want to put in that effort. It takes a lot of time and can be enraging in a thousand ways. But you cannot beat the hatred out of someone inside. We do not have enough people to make it unsafe for them to operate. Not only do we not have the numbers, they are also backed by the majority of staff. So if violence isn't the option, using the state to further repress them should never be the answer, so what is left? What's left is showing them how they are wrong on a very practical level. Show them that there is a community that will care about their feelings and what has happened to them. Give them a way out, give them something to lean into. But this conversation can never and will never happen if we don't put in that work. For every one nazi we get to open their eyes, that is countless people they could've recruited and now they wont.

Violence is the sexy option and in the streets it is often the only option. But if you can change someone's heart inside, then you can save trans prisoners, you can save queer prisoners, you can save future leftist inside. It's hard practicing our ethics with people we despise, but that's the only way we can move forward. The hard work can demobilize their hearts and brains, and I think that is worth it.