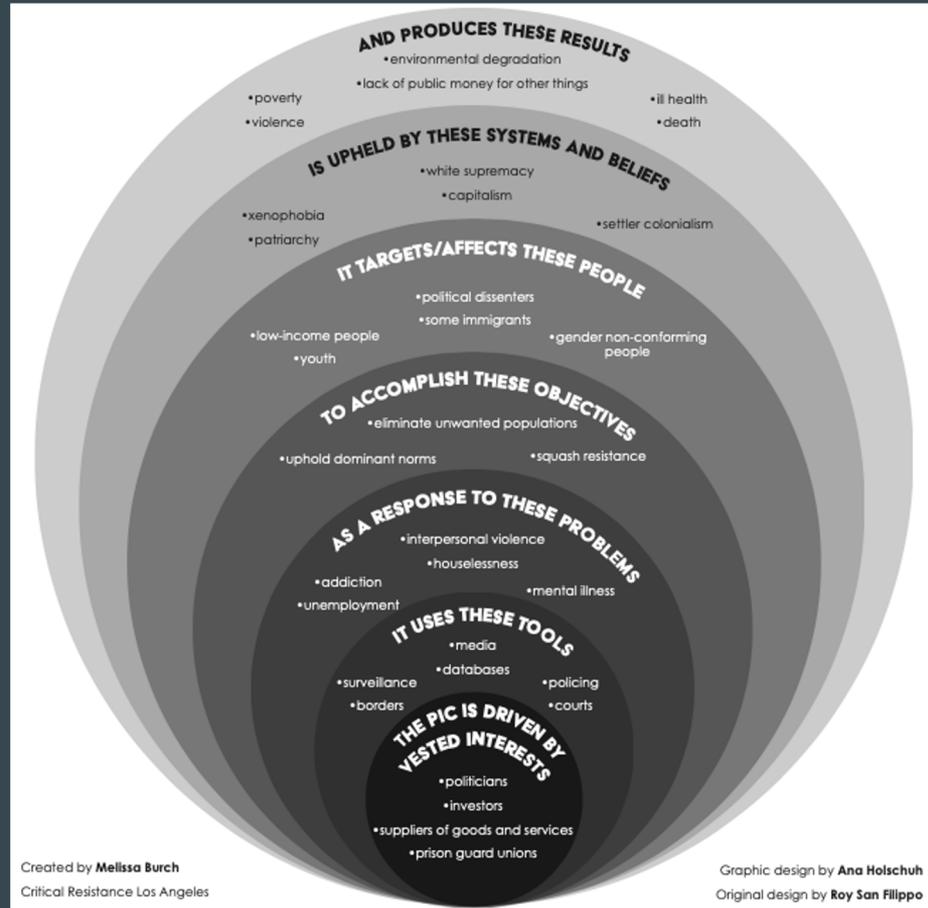


Nearing the Abolitionist Horizon Via Professionalized Social Change Work



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The Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC)



PIC Abolition's Roots in Du Bois' "Abolition Democracy"

“The abolition of slavery meant not simply abolition of legal ownership of the slave; it meant the uplift of slaves and their eventual incorporation into the body civil, politic, and social, of the United States.”
(Du Bois, W. E. B., 1998, p. 189)

Beyond a Politic of Recognition

“What is, so to speak, the object of abolition? Not so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons, that could have slavery, that could have the wage, and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society.”

(Harney, S., & Moten, F., 2013, p. 42)

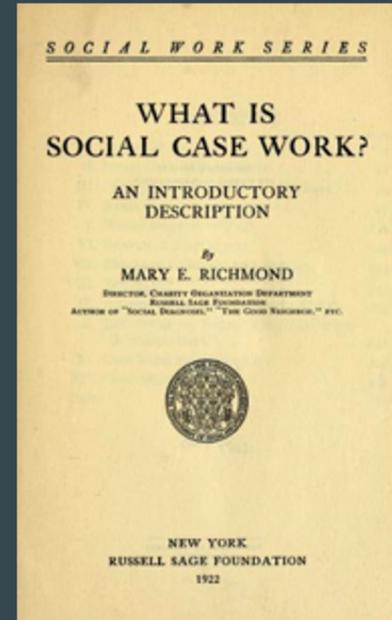
“At the end of the day, abolition has got to be green. But that means it also has to be red. And if it’s going to be red, that means it’s international by definition.”

(Gilmore, R. W., 2019)



White Professionalized Social Change Work

“Capitalism saving capitalism from capitalism.” (Gilmore, R. W., 2020)



Problematizing Our Social Work Values

Service: Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.



If we're not working against the structural drivers of need, social problems, and injustice (i.e., racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy), we're offering Band-Aids to people in a burning house.

Social Justice: Social workers challenge social injustice.



*We're in the burning house too!

Problematizing Our Social Work Values

Dignity and Worth of the Person:

Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.



If, as a field, we support policing, caging, the family regulation system, and the separation of families, we do not respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person, nor do we center human relationships.

Importance of Human

Relationships: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.



*We are not separate from the human connections we break through our work.

Problematizing Our Social Work Values

Competence: Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance our professional expertise.



Competency is insufficient; we must keep learning and unlearning, and embrace knowledge that challenges our personal understanding of and experience with the world.

*“Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly.”
(Freire, P., 2018, p. 60)



(Art by Molly Costello)

Reaching Within Ourselves for the Abolitionist Horizon

- ❑ “The very systems we are working to dismantle live inside of us.”
— Morgan Bassichis
- ❑ “What are you pretending not to know today?” — Toni Cade Bambara
- ❑ “The ultimate, hidden truth of the world, is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently.” — David Graeber

Reaching Within Our Contexts for the Abolitionist Horizon

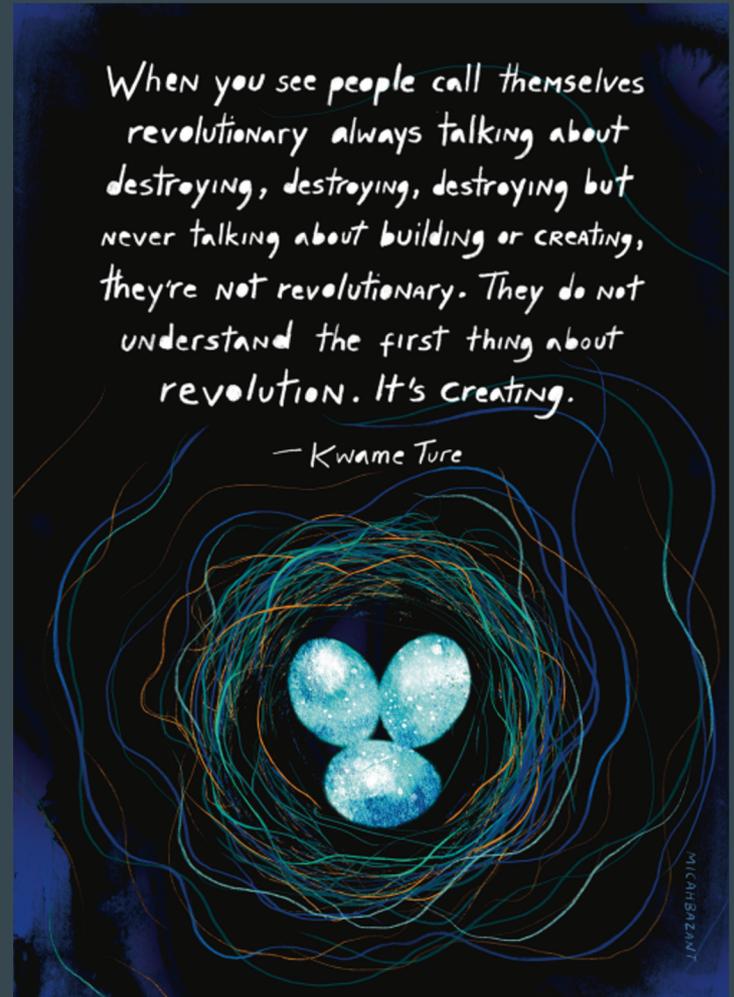
- ❑ Refusing norms and metrics that problematize people and cause harm, and working to change them
- ❑ Centering care, collaboration, and collectivity, not individualism, competition, and recognition
- ❑ Leveraging personal, institutional, and organizational resources (e.g., space, equipment, money, time, skills)
- ❑ Expanding what we think of as the “sites of struggle”
- ❑ Refusing the commodification of radicalism, and committing to “slow work in always urgent times”

“The purpose of the work is to gain liberation, not to guarantee the organization’s longevity.” — Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Thank you!

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(Art by Micah Bazant)



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