# Abandon innocence and adopt abolition

to shut the whole genocidal system down

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1 The title "**Abandon Innocence and Adopt Abolition**" is inspired by the article **Organizing Against Abandonment** (Avery Review, n° 60), which explains the concept of organized abandonment developed by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, describing how states and capitalist structures choose to withdraw resources, neglect lives, and sacrifice communities in institutional silence. In this context, "**Abandon Innocence**" means refusing this silent consent to systemic abandonment, and "adopt abolition" means imagining forms of life, care, and relationships that no longer reproduce this violence.

2 By approaching violence through the **spatial scale**, we understand that interpersonal and global violence are not separate but co-produced. The logics of abandonment, segregation, and control that operate within bodies—through trauma, poverty, medicalization, or criminalization—reproduce the same structures observed at the level of states, borders, and global policies. The spatial scale thus allows us to connect intimate and collective, personal and planetary spaces, to show how domination circulates from the micro to the macro, from the relationship to the system, from everyday, often invisible micro-violence—a hurtful remark, a refusal to listen, a lie, abuse, hypocrisy, arrogance, an act of gossip, institutional negligence, and so on. — to the infrastructure, that is to say the materialization of these violences in the systems: laws, public policies, the police, administrative mechanisms, economic models.

The abolitionist movement is structured around three interdependent dimensions: **Defund** (defunding systems of punishment), **Dismantle**/**Abolish** (dismantling institutions of control and violence), and **Build** (building sustainable worlds free from structural violence). These texts fall within this last perspective, the most neglected, which explores how to collectively create spaces for care, collective responsibility, and social transformation outside of punitive frameworks. For easier reading, this text and the main brochure it presents are available for download at the bottom of the page. This text—like the previous ones—is situated within this latter perspective, because it is also the most neglected, the one that questions how to create spaces for care, collective responsibility, and social transformation together, outside of punitive frameworks. We must reconnect with the most oppressed communities so that they can guide us in the work of ending the violence around us, so that they can finally show us how to create the conditions conducive to deeper healing. An essential element of healing is that no one feels ignored, rejected, or rendered invisible.

This text is linked to a reflective exercise. To assist in its reading—in order to better understand certain terms, expressions, or references used—a glossary is available at this address: **www.globaldisabilityjustice.org/lexique/**

This text introduces the political and analytical groundwork necessary to understand why the intersection of disability and climate justice is so widely ignored. By exposing the structural violence, coloniality, ableism, and carceral logic that shape the living conditions of people with disabilities—particularly when they are racialized—this text shows how these same systems produce abandonment, environmental exclusion, and disproportionate exposure to climate crises. The main booklet, “Disability and Climate Justice: A Forgotten and Misunderstood Intersection, The Legal Issues and Barriers to Including the Voices of People with Disabilities in Climate Justice Policies,” is available at **www.globaldisabilityjustice.org**

This text seeks to contribute to the development of a policy of care and social justice that shifts power from institutions to communities, while recognizing and repairing the traumas caused by structural violence — this structural violence which operates both locally and globally, which stems from the structures, power imbalances, unequal and harmful norms or practices of the various institutions that govern society.

Individual racism remains the form of racism most easily recognizable to members of Western culture (**Pat Dudgeon et al.**, p. 16). This helps us understand how deeply structural violence can become entrenched in society. Its invisible nature, when it cannot be addressed or even brought to light, fosters an ideology of accepted status quo, where no alternative seems possible.[3] [4] [5] [6]

While direct violence is still relatively well understood, structural violence remains largely unknown. Countless movements still exist that fail to address the structural or systemic inequalities that underlie injustice. [7] For theorists of critical race theory[8], structural violence is also understood

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3 The term "structural violence," which dates back at least half a century in violence studies, refers to dominant institutions that impose systemic harm on vulnerable individuals. Structural violence is continuous because it is embedded in the organization of society (Winter and Leighton, 2001). Johan Galtung, who introduced the term in the 1960s, characterized structural violence as a form of harm that "kills slowly" due to its indirect nature, yet it is deeply embedded in societal structures (Farmer et al., 2006; Lee, 2019). Unlike physical violence, which is often visible and episodic, structural violence operates persistently, marginalizing individuals and groups by creating inequalities that limit their ability to achieve physical and mental well-being (Lee, 2019). Historical forces and cumulative processes subtly, and often imperceptibly, limit individual action, restricting access to the benefits of social progress for populations considered vulnerable (Browne et al., 2024). Furthermore, structural violence often exacerbates interpersonal violence, including emotional and psychological abuse, interpersonal racism, verbal abuse, gender-based violence, social exclusion, and physical violence inflicted by individuals on one another (Macpherson and Wathen, 2023). Often invisible, structural violence becomes normalized in everyday life due to its persistent and repetitive nature (Winter and Leighton, 2001). However, it is neither natural nor inevitable; rather, it is the product of institutional structures and policies that can be modified, prevented, or dismantled through deliberate action (Winter and Leighton, 2001).

4 Despite the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, tasked with evaluating the implementation of the CRPD, the still-dominant medical model in France fails to address structural violence. It views disability as a problem to be treated, rather than as a consequence of social and structural inequalities. As such, it does not constitute a human rights-based approach, because it denies the social, political, and structural dimensions of disability. It reduces individuals to their "incapacities" and maintains an implicit hierarchy between "full" and "impaired" lives. It is also necessary to use (or devise new) concrete tools to compensate (the right to compensation) not only for functional deficits, but also for exposure to structural, social, and institutional violence. The denial of structural violence is not neutral: it serves a political and economic agenda—the perpetuation of social and racial inequalities.

5 Institutional/structural forms of violence are often slow and invisible — resulting from processes rather than events (Galtung, 1990). They may not be perceived as violence by either the perpetrator or the victim, because the cultural contexts of both parties shape their perceptions of what constitutes violence.

6 "When we try to end violence with violence, we lose the possibility of freeing ourselves from violence." (Beth Richie)

7 Structural violence cannot be considered in isolation. Speaking only of systemic racism is insufficient. Structural or systemic violence must also be addressed from an intersectional perspective, taking into account the interdependence of structural and institutional ableism with other structural discriminations such as racism and sexism. [...] A central question we raise is how this political moment compels us to analyze and address the violence of anti-Blackness and systemic racism, which is compounded by intersectional discrimination, for example, due to structural ableism within cisgender, heterosexual, white, able-bodied, middle/upper-class society (Erevelles, 2011a, 2011b; Erevelles Hall, 2011; Afeworki Abay, 2019). (**Intersectional Colonialities**, p. 26)

8 Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to the perceived failure of the Civil Rights Movement to produce genuine equality. A body of work spanning four decades examines why anti-discrimination legislation not only fails to address structural racism but actually reinforces racial inequality (R. D. G. Kelley). It arose primarily in law schools, where Black, Latino, and Asian legal scholars began to critique the supposed neutrality of law, the abstract universalism of the Constitution, and the liberal use of law as a lever for progress without transforming the underlying racist structures. Several American legal scholars and thinkers have indeed demonstrated in their work that racial equality cannot be achieved solely through law—and this is one of the central starting points of Critical Race Theory (CRT). DisCrit (Disability and Critical Race Theory) constitutes a radical critique of law, racism, liberalism, and the supposed neutrality of institutions. Liberal law protects existing structures more than marginalized people. DisCrit is an essential extension of CRT, allowing us to consider race and disability together as co-constitutive systems of power, and to critique both ableism and structural racism in law, education, healthcare, and the prison system. Read more about

as the product of the refusal to decolonize and to articulate the interconnectedness of oppressions. Structural violence never operates in isolation: it rests on an architecture of race, gender, ability, class, and coloniality. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has indeed criticized the colonial structures that compartmentalize, fragment, and marginalize this knowledge. The refusal to recognize this interdependence[9] is now increasingly perceived as a form of social violence. Talking about sexism, sexism, sexism... then about racism, racism, racism... or ableism, ableism, ableism... and other systems of oppression separately erases lived experiences at their intersections and perpetuates the status quo. An intersectional analysis allows us to think about and explore much more complex social realities—centered on the needs of the most marginalized people—in order to move beyond and counter the one-dimensional, reductive, simplistic, and pervasive readings of oppression. The integration of intersectionality has been a significant advance in equality policy because it avoids the dominant, single-issue, gender-privileging approach (**Intersectionality**, p. 102). Such an analysis allows us to map and highlight the systems that perpetuate power imbalances. It enables us to engage in coalition-based and intersectional liberation practices. [10]

As long as we continue to let people think it's one or the other, we will continue to go around in circles and remain unable to identify the root cause of the problem, namely the simultaneous functioning of all these systems. [11] Cette citation illustre bien le piège des lectures binaires qui nous empêchent de penser la complexité des oppressions.[12] To break free from the cycle of reforms [13], systemic transformations require us to consider this complexity—the interconnectedness of different forms of violence and oppression, whether social, medical, racial, psychological, or historical—so that no one is left behind (**No Body Is Disposable**). s essential to building truly intersectional movements. It reminds us that struggles are inseparable, and that no social transformation can occur as long as some lives continue to be considered disposable. These structural problems rooted in institutions—which value conformity, productivity, and normalization; designed to control, punish, and erase—require structural solutions.

It is our inability to recognize the complexity of systems of oppression that ensures the maintenance of the status quo for the powerful. (**Melbourne School of Mental Health**, p. 14) The conflict between personal and systemic transformation must become a constant and dynamic tension, a living force that generates debate. Some argue that it is better to do something than nothing, but **reformist reform**s policies reinforce the power of carceral systems.

Neoliberalism, by valuing individual autonomy (independence) at the expense of collective solidarity and social protections (interdependence), institutionalizes structural violence by leaving certain populations—particularly the most vulnerable—to fend for themselves. Following these neoliberal discourses that individualize the collective and historical responsibility for structural dynamics, police institutions and political decision-makers tend to shift attention to the behavior of

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**Global Disability Justice**

9The profound interdependence of colonial systems of oppression based on disability, race, class, and gender is too often overlooked in hegemonic discourses. Transnational calls are being made for a long-awaited transformation of historical and systemic racist institutions (Afeworki Abay and Hutson, 2024; Schalk, 2018).

10 Engaging in coalition and intersectional liberation practices requires activist and community-based strategies that reject one-dimensional approaches to oppression. These strategies articulate the different systems of domination (racism, sexism, ableism, coloniality, capitalism, etc.) and are rooted in coalitions between movements, in order to build forms of liberation that place people living at the intersection of structural violence at the center and leave no community behind.

11 Samantha Cooms et Al., Intersectional theory and disadvantage : a tool for decolonisation. (**UQ eSpace**)

12 Transformative justice rejects simplistic aggressor/victim binaries (**No More Police**, p. 288) Rather than stubbornly assuming that there will never be violence or harm in society, everyone must have access to support and resources. The flourishing of each individual is linked to the liberation of each individual.

13 Reforms intended to improve the current system risk entrenching dangerous, violent, racist, classist, ableist, and oppressive institutions, making them even harder to eradicate. When captivity is perceived as milder and more lenient, it becomes more acceptable and less urgent to combat, even as it continues to destroy countless lives. (**Prison by Any Other Name**, p. 10)

individuals and monitored communities.[14] They thus obscure collective and systemic practices and responsibilities. This logic encourages the idea that everyone must "fend for themselves," even in the face of systemic injustices or deep-seated structural vulnerabilities. **Organised abaondonment**[15] becomes a form of structural violence: institutions gradually withdraw while demanding that individuals "optimize" themselves or adapt and become "resilient" in the face of this same violence. This shift in responsibility serves to render the violence of the system invisible and to naturalize its effects. This abandonment is a defining characteristic of neoliberalism.[16] Abolition aims to provide real solutions to the violence produced by this abandonment and structural violence (**No More Police, A Case for Abolition** ; p. 56).

Those who suffer most from structural violence are also the most marginalized, yet they hold the most valuable abolitionist visions for imagining other worlds. Academia, prisons, and the community itself[17] continue to dehumanize, exclude, and marginalize members with radical, revolutionary, and abolitionist ideological views (**Abolish Criminology**, p. 108)[18] [19] [20] [21] — revealing a profound lack of **sociological imagination** or **systemic analysis** regarding possible alternatives to the established order. The radical inclusion of disabled people, coupled with active solidarity with them in every movement, is therefore a fundamental condition for advancing this true intersectional justice.

Although fascism[22] is merely an intensification of existing structural violence, and despite certain accepted and visible developments elsewhere, in France it remains highly frowned upon to "break the mold," to "refuse to follow," or to not "conform to the norm.[23] [24] " Discussing structural violence is difficult because it invites us to name those responsible, not individuals, but because it requires making visible the positions of privilege that allow this violence to persist. The entire difficulty lies in highlighting the systemic mechanisms and identifying those who perpetuate them,

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14 These "angry" people are exposed to structural violence and then abandoned by reformist spaces. When a person doesn't fit into the boxes of productivity, emotional stability, or social conformity, they become "too complicated," "too fragile," "too intense," and are excluded.

15 Organized abandonment is a widely used but poorly defined term. Broadly speaking, it refers to the economic and social policies that emerged under the US-sponsored Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and were popularized under the Reagan administration (“Reaganomics”) in the United States and under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (“Thatcherism”) in the United Kingdom. These policies are imposed on nations of the Global South by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the form of “structural adjustment programs.” Neoliberalism “serves as a pretext for dismantling social welfare programs, privatizing public institutions and services, eliminating government regulation, and redistributing resources to corporations and wealthy elites, all in the name of ‘fiscal responsibility.’” (**No More Police**, p. 48)

16 **Policing The Planet**, p. 174

17 Communities have a central role to play in addressing and eliminating violence (Mimi Kim, Creative Intervention).

18 And yet, whatever the underlying factors, people with traumatic brain injuries are among the most vulnerable in society and the most incarcerated. (**Policing Vulnerability**, p. 37) Intersectionality only makes sense if it includes all marginalized realities: their unmet healthcare needs expose them to high rates of incarceration. To forget them is to betray the very spirit of intersectionality.

19 **Austin Duncan** reminds us that living with a traumatic brain injury means existing in a body that society doesn't know how to name. This body, at once neurological, social, and political, defies ordinary classifications—which is why it cannot be separated from the power relations that shape it. His text shows that traumatic brain injury is a profoundly intersectional experience: it reveals how ableist, racial, gendered, and economic oppressions intersect to determine who is entitled to recognition, care, or simply to be heard.

20 **Le handicap en chiffres** - édition 2024 clearly demonstrates a powerful structural vulnerability. It shows that discrimination rates are significantly higher among people with disabilities than in the general population. It reveals heightened vulnerability: increased difficulties in daily activities, reduced access to healthcare, lower income, and so on. These vulnerabilities foster discrimination and/or exclusion.

21 Economies en santé : toujours les mêmes lésés (**Collectif Handicaps**)

22 Abolition is the antidote to fascism. (**Critical Resistance**)

23 This inability of the “global North” to learn from the rest of the world stems from an invented white supremacy that has supported colonialism and imperialism (Santos 2014: 19). (**Africa Social Work**, p. 5) (→The end of the cognitive Empire)

24Around the world, there is a recognition of the exhaustion of the current academic model, whose origins lie in the universalism of the Enlightenment. (Achile Mbembe)

consciously or unconsciously. Because it eludes collective recognition, this lack of understanding makes accountability difficult, even unsettling, as it implies questioning deeply entrenched norms.

To obscure these acts of violence and avoid any collective and historical accountability, white supremacy[25] mobilizes a whole range of tools such as the biomedical model[26], **social**, **racial**, and **structural gaslighting**, including that of liberal white feminism **liberal white feminism**[27], le **social work**[28], **tokenism**, objectivity, organized desensitization, white tears[29], white innocence[30], the "ideal victim"[31], positivism, neutrality, individualism, republican universalism[32], meritocracy, paternalism, white supremacy culture[33], the **white savior industrial complex**, the coloniality of being/knowledge/power, modern eugenic practices... These mechanisms are tools that allow capitalism to function without having to resort to constant and visible direct violence. They aim to force individuals to monitor or manage themselves.

Healing is impossible within a system that conceals harm. The traumas inflicted by these structural forms of violence do not disappear on their own; it is essential to acknowledge, understand, and heal them. As T. L. Lewis writes, these policies stifle dissent and sow discord within communities, depriving us of the conditions necessary to support those who do not yet feel safe to bear witness and offer abolitionist perspectives—ideas and positions that are often

25The term "white supremacy" does not refer to "the blatant and extreme fascist posturing of small neo-Nazi groups, but rather to the systematic and systematic prioritization of white interests, taken for granted and ignored by the mainstream political current" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 2). White supremacy is the social structure that currently prevails in all predominantly white societies—and arguably also globally (as a consequence of European colonialism)—where white people benefit most from and dominate the dominant economic, political, and cultural practices. While the vast majority of white people in each country may find the beliefs and actions of these groups abhorrent and desire their defeat, these same white people can nevertheless benefit from the social structure of white supremacy.

26 The medical model of mental health attributes distress and suffering solely to internal and individual causes, such as chemical imbalances or differences in brain function. It neglects the relational, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors that underlie distress and trauma. This model focuses on the classification, diagnosis, and treatment of mental “illnesses” by experts who wield power over “patients.” This sometimes involves coercive treatment and incarceration.

27 To summarize structural gaslighting, privileged individuals often function like the state: they have the privilege of defining what constitutes violence. As long as the effects don't directly impact them, the violence remains invisible, minimized, or denied. This is precisely what the concept of structural gaslighting describes: a collective and institutionalized process by which the lived experiences of marginalized people are delegitimized, distorted, or presented as exaggerated. Thus, structural violence is systematically reclassified as "individual problems," "misperceptions," or "isolated incidents," when in fact it stems from an organized system. This mechanism allows dominant groups to maintain their comfort, authority, and values as the social norm, at the expense of the lived realities of oppressed people.

28 It is essential to examine the origins of social work as a Western psychological project, an active extension of coloniality. Coloniality is also called the colonial matrix of power, including control over history, knowledge, health, and justice. (Rhea V. Almeida et al., “Coloniality and Intersectionality”)

29 White tears are a powerful metaphor for the refusal of responsibility. They refer to the way in which privileged people — whether white or able-bodied — use emotion to neutralize criticism and preserve their comfort, rather than listening to the experiences of those who suffer structural violence — which has the effect of stifling the voices of those affected and diverting attention from the systemic problem.

30 "This is strongly linked to privilege, rights, and violence, which are deeply disavowed," Wekker states in her intersectional analysis of Dutch cultural archives.

31 A disabled woman who is a victim of institutional abuse is not seen as an “ideal victim” because her abuser is “the system,” not a single individual. The system, in turn, escapes all moral responsibility. The notion of the “ideal victim” (Christie, 1986) not only serves to define who deserves compassion, but also functions as a tool for rendering structural violence invisible. By reducing violence to individual acts and depoliticizing suffering, it prevents us from naming the institutional, economic, and colonial mechanisms that produce it.

32 Universalism, whether republican or liberal, denies interdependence and perpetuates white supremacy by claiming that neutrality is possible. Western universalism has been built on a hierarchy among human beings where some lives are deemed worthy of protection, and others are not. Many so-called "progressive" circles continue to rely on this universalism.

33 This dynamic is at the heart of white supremacy, which relies on the ability to create the illusion that inequalities are “natural,” “non-existent,” or “accidental.” By delegitimizing the voices of the oppressed, it perpetuates the ideology of the status quo and shifts collective responsibility onto individuals. Thus, structural violence is normalized, while any attempt to name it is presented as excessive, irrational, or dangerous.

uncomfortable and destabilizing for spaces that have not yet learned to listen. [34] There are still too many spaces where it is easier to talk about external threats than to acknowledge the impact we have on one another, with dignity and truth (**Liberated To The Bone**, p. 95). Being an abolitionist also means speaking the truth (**Abolition and Social Work**, p. 36).

For Ruth Wilson Gilmore (**Abolition Geography**, p. 348), abolition is a risky practice because it directly opposes the forces of death and the organized abandonment of institutions whose deep roots lie in systems of colonization. Abolition—inextricably linked to decolonization—is a movement aimed at ending the systemic or structural violence and vulnerabilities that maintain the status quo. She insists that the true alternative to carceral capitalism lies in solidarity, abolitionist collective care, and the refusal to hierarchize lives, opposing the optimal and flexible conditions for capital. These conditions are intentionally difficult to recognize because they are institutionalized, valued, and rendered invisible, making them all the more resistant to transformation.[35] For Nelson Maldonado-Torres, decoloniality is not merely opposition to forces that seek to dehumanize or destroy, but a profound desire to prevent the death and erasure of the other. He clarifies that “If we are not talking about abolition and reparations, we are not really talking about decolonization” (**Countering the Coloniality of Peace and Justice**).

Advancing our collective understanding beyond the “bad” police officer, toward an understanding of structural violence, is essential to building an abolitionist politics grounded in empathy and community (**J. Briond**).[36] [37] More radical organizations, such as INCITE! (Women, Non-Binary, and Transgender People of Color Against Violence), argue that institutionalized violence, in all its forms, must be addressed to end the violence suffered by groups experiencing multiple oppressions. (**Intersectionality**, p. 64) “Although it may seem paradoxical, gender-based violence cannot be ended by directly addressing the problem. It can only be ended by addressing the structural problems that foster it, and which are also at the root of all the abuses that affect the entire community” (Chang 2018).[38]

How can we confront this racist resistance that opposes healing from colonization and positions itself as the "liberator" of marginalized communities? This new episode explores what happens when movements supposedly working for social justice reproduce these structural violences or choose to ignore them—through their categorical refusal to name white supremacy or their failure to call for the decolonization of their spaces. It also demonstrates that there is nothing worse—for combating these structural violences—than focusing our analyses on the most privileged disabled people. This reinforces tokenism, which acts as a brake on profound and structural transformations, creating the illusion of change while maintaining oppressive structures intact. Tokenism encourages cosmetic reforms that "undermine the energy of radical visions." (**Charlotte Rosen**)

This text offers tools for reflecting on what contributes to obscuring the historical responsibility of colonialism, coloniality, white supremacy, and whiteness [39] in the global ecological

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34 Empowerment comes through decolonization, which requires two-eared listening.

35Dr. Martin Luther King said: "Of all the inequalities that exist, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane."

36 The most radical proposals therefore do not focus solely on the prison complex, but on combating the conditions of structural violence that give rise to crime, including the lack of housing, education, employment, culturally appropriate care and medical care.

37 What many people newly drawn to prison and policing work don't realize is that most activists working on transformative justice and community accountability for the past two decades are also rooted in harm reduction philosophy, using it to weave their policies and practices into concrete actions. This is partly because harm reduction is non-binary and helps us move beyond notions like "innocence" and "guilt," "good people" and "bad people," "clean" and "sober," and so on. Liberating ourselves from these concepts and the trappings of the pass/fail dichotomy is essential to our work for transformative justice. (**Abolition and Social Work**, p. 83).

38 Racialized women have long recognized that the possibility of not being a victim of sexual assault at work is inseparable from systemic barriers to access to fair wages, job protection, housing, education, access to food, health care, and immigration. (**White Feminist Gaslighting**)

39 Chabani Manganyi tells us that because of its narcissism, whiteness can only have pity for itself.

crisis. The omission of intersectionality is troubling in debates on climate change, where intersectional disadvantages are largely ignored. Within the European Union, victims of these intersectional disadvantages still cannot benefit from legal protection, in flagrant violation of **article 6** of the CRPD.[40] [41] By consistently associating individuals—through narratives and words—with hostile and stigmatizing experiences, we ultimately exclude them from (1) spaces meant to promote social justice, (2) the realm of empathy, and (3) social consideration.

To ensure the maintenance of structural oppressions, nation-states intentionally expose certain communities to precarity, stigmatization, violence, deprivation, and/or construct categories that encourage the endless repetition of subjugation, criminalization, and pathologization. To this end, ableism has always been central to the economic, political, legal, medical, and social anatomy of colonial states (**T. Lewis**). Nation-states thrive on the dehumanization they produce, exploit, institutionalize, and normalize. Abolition requires the end of dehumanization (**S.M. Rodriguez**) and consists of imagining a constellation of alternative strategies and institutions that support life[42], with the ultimate goal of eliminating the prison system, the police, and the hierarchical systems of inequality perpetuated by the systemic global capitalist regime. Many abolitionists are wary of simply abolishing a system without first rethinking what might replace it (**Genealogies of Resistance to Incarceration**, P. 217). In many instances, because many movements fail to recognize white supremacy and coloniality as active systems, state mechanisms are no longer even necessary, as activists embody the state in their actions, inactions, and interactions (ibid., p. 229), without altering the hierarchy of structures in which marginalized populations are placed (**The Tension Between Abolition and Reform**, p. 6). These "progressive" circles do not even seek to deconstruct the privileges inherited from white supremacy and systematically refuse to acknowledge this historical legacy. They mobilize a language of change while perpetuating the epistemic[43], cultural, and social hierarchies they claim to fight, including within environmental, anti-racist, feminist, and queer struggles, as well as in the many spaces within the disability rights movement that fail to see that disability does not eliminate white privilege. These spaces also perpetuate lateral violence (internalized colonialism).[44] [45] [46]

Many spaces remain structurally white because they refuse to acknowledge structural

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40 Convention of the Right of People with Disabilities (**CDPH**)

41 Concil of Europe, Intersectionality, (**Conseil de l'Europe**)

42 Abolition is a question of presence, not absence. It is about building institutions that affirm life. – Ruth Wilson Gilmore

43 Simply considering the closure of confinement/incarceration institutions is insufficient. What is needed is an epistemic shift. (Liat Ben Moshe, → **disepistemology**)

44 Lateral violence refers to harmful behaviors, such as mockery, defamation, backstabbing, intimidation, or, in extreme cases, physical violence, between members of an oppressed group or community. For this reason, it is often called "internalized colonialism." It is found in minority communities around the world, where control of resources and decision-making power belong almost exclusively to the dominant culture. (source: Healing Foundation) Without addressing our individual and interpersonal patterns of internalized oppression and lateral aggression, true freedom is impossible. (Sami Schalk; Black Disability Politics) Read more at **Global Disability Justice**

45 Many white, cisgender women survivors have struggled to perceive white supremacy or their own white privilege as a constraint. Primarily because they had been so victimized, it was difficult for them to perceive the structural power they held by virtue of being white. To do so, they needed education and dialogue. They needed a level of healing that would allow them to grasp this complexity emotionally and then act upon it. Without this, a person can experience profound personal healing while still perpetuating oppressive behaviors and maintaining harmful systems that disadvantage others. This is not healing (**The Politics of Trauma. Somatics, Healing, and Social Justice**, p. 62). This is the cycle of violence: those who have been hurt by violence, instead of giving themselves the means to heal, appropriate, as Audre Lorde said, the tools of the master and become those who do harm.

46 The hierarchy within the disability community and between different types of disabilities (visible and invisible) is very difficult to dismantle. A holistic approach tends to address the entirety of body and mind and does not focus primarily on physical disability, unlike dominant disability studies and disability rights activism. (Sami Schalk) The leadership of Black people with disabilities must also help develop a deeper understanding of the links and manifestations of ableism and racism.

whiteness. This is evident when whiteness[47] [48] "defends itself," even in so-called "radical" spaces. A left that refuses to dismantle white supremacy is not a critical left; it is a managerial, colonial, white, neoliberal left, insensitive to color, trauma, and structural vulnerability. Structural violence must be silenced to dissociate whiteness from coloniality. This silence allows white settlers to believe they live in a post-racial or postcolonial society, while these colonial structures remain intact.

Abolition requires us to go beyond mere resistance, to escape the deadly trap of "normality" (Andrea Ritchie). It necessitates stepping outside these sometimes traumatic spaces to imagine care and relationships where this structural violence no longer exists. The current state of **mental health** is directly attributable to this denial of social justice and calls for highlighting the effects of persistent structural violence on the quality of life of the most marginalized people. This underscores the urgency of recognizing and valuing their unique epistemologies and perspectives.[49] Yet, for nearly half a century, it has been officially recognized that health cannot be separated from social well-being. The 1978 **Alma-Ata** International Conference on Primary Health Care already affirmed that "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This definition should have led to a profound transformation of social and institutional structures; Instead, structural violence continues to shape the mental health and daily lives of the most marginalized groups. As Paul Farmer points out, "health inequalities reveal the power structures that organize the world" (Pathologies of Power, 2003).

In the West, most people, including, it must be said, most users of mental health services—including peer support workers—continue to understand madness and distress primarily as a "problem," an "illness," or a form of "disorder." This is not surprising. This concept is accepted in dominant public, political, media, cultural, and therapeutic conceptions. It is what we have been taught, and it remains the primary approach of most organizations working in this field. (**This Is Survivor Research**, p. 47) These designations participate in a process that transforms a social, structural, and political problem into individual psychopathology. Diagnoses are not neutral; they contribute to ranking behaviors, moralizing traumatic reactions, understanding suffering at the individual rather than structural level, legitimizing surveillance, control, or exclusion, and locking the understanding of the person into a biomedical narrative. We cannot combat stigmatization by simply shifting the stigma from one language to another while leaving the system unchanged. This only reinforces the stigma and also contributes to strengthening the social structure.

The debate on stigmatization remains trapped in the very language that generated it. For those supposedly working in mental health, this is worrying because stigmatization is considered a fundamental cause of health inequalities (**Hatzenbuehler et al.**), a barrier to recovery (**B G Link et al.**), and linked to the use of psychoactive substances (**Earnshaw**). Many people who have been victims of flagrant human rights violations oppose the use of this notion of "disorder," because their reactions are normal and understandable given the violence they have suffered. Stigmatization is used by certain groups to keep other individuals in a state of dependency, poverty, or exclusion, to achieve objectives of exploitation, management, control, or exclusion. This power of stigmatization cannot function without the implicit or explicit complicity of the most privileged groups, who benefit from the maintenance of social hierarchies and the exclusion of the most vulnerable.

It is now widely recognized that a lack of diversity harms well-being and collective experience (**Mugo et Puplampu**). The participation of the most marginalized people is particularly important if we are to address the intersectional inequalities highlighted by the pandemic, which

47 La blancheur empêche les Blanc.hes de se connecter à l'humanité (Ibram X. Kendi)

48 Les femmes blanches choisiront aussi d'utiliser leurs larmes comme une arme plutôt que d'envisager de s'engager dans une véritable responsabilité (Autumn Asher BlackDeer)

49 The predominant emphasis placed on class mechanisms in French research, relegating disability to an analytical blind spot (Célia Bouchet), illustrates precisely what Omi and Winant (1986) warn against: the tendency to subsume one type of oppression under another, as if all forms of domination stemmed exclusively from class structure.

continue to undermine health and justice. (**thebmj**)

This text draws on two robust critical frameworks: **DisCrit** (**Dis**ability & **Cri**tical Race Theory)[50] — a crucial and recent extension of Critical Race Theory that expands upon its foundations by incorporating an analysis of ableism—and **Disability Justice**. DisCrit develops an abolitionist critique of education[51], prisons, diagnosis, and the institutions of control that normalize, categorize, and organize exclusion and hatred. DisCrit exposes the co-constitutive nature of racism and ableism, which most movements, even "progressive" ones, continue to refuse to consider together. Disability Justice, for its part, highlights the importance of interdependence, the **leadership** of the most marginalized individuals, and community-based care practices.

Disrupting structural violence and healing communities requires a basic understanding and the implementation of theoretical frameworks for building responsible, sensitive, and trauma-resilient communities (e. g. : **TRC**, **TIC** et **TVIC**). **Leadership** from those most impacted is one of the most crucial factors in building a culture that is responsive, sensitive, and resilient to structural trauma. Acquiring both **cultural** and **structural** skills is closely linked to radical inclusion, care, community well-being, and disability justice. If structural violence and systemic ableism within relevant social institutions are not addressed, reform efforts will only lead to different problems. (**Jennifer Sarrett**)

It is also crucial to focus on one's positionality and power relations, to openly discuss the history of colonialism and its modern manifestations in order to center the narratives of historically oppressed people[52]. Being in solidarity with multi-marginalized people means recognizing the systemic oppressions they face, learning to recognize all forms of "hidden" violence and injustice. Structural violence creates the conditions that make interpersonal violence possible. It normalizes suffering, making it acceptable, ordinary, incomprehensible, and invisible. The first priority of a community is the safety of its most marginalized members. When the most marginalized members of a community feel safe, we are all safe.

It is precisely against this normalization of suffering that the **No Body Is Disposable** — movement is situated—a crucial political call that denounces the way in which structural violence produces the disposability of certain lives. The invisibility or marginalization of disabled bodies is a power strategy that maintains the illusion of a society founded on autonomy, performance, and productivity, by relegating to the margins those who destabilize its norms. Such movements challenge the idea that a person's life is less precious or less dignified when it is crushed by systems of oppression—often overlapping (Taylor, 2022). The abandonment of these individuals constitutes direct complicity with an imperative of excess profit, which drives a system that produces disability to eliminate any form of vulnerability as soon as it appears (**Crip Theory**, p. 204).

Together, these critical frameworks—grounded in an intersectional perspective (DisCrit and

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1. DisCrit focuses on how the forces of racism and ableism circulate interdependently, often in neutralized and invisible ways, to maintain notions of normality.
2. DisCrit values multidimensional identities and challenges singular notions of identity such as race, disability, class, gender, or sexuality, etc.
3. DisCrit emphasizes the social constructions of race and ability, while acknowledging the material and psychological impacts of labeling as racialized or disabled, which excludes people from Western cultural norms.
4. DisCrit prioritizes the voices of marginalized populations, traditionally ignored in research.
5. DisCrit examines the legal and historical aspects of disability and race, as well as how these two aspects have been used, separately and together, to deny the rights of certain citizens.
6. DisCrit recognizes whiteness and ability as assets and considers the gains for people labeled as disabled to be largely the result of the convergence of interests among white, middle-class citizens.
7. DisCrit calls for activism and supports all forms of resistance.

51 Education is where structural violence is most evident. France is no exception. See also the excellent and compelling, essential book: **Lessons in Liberation, An Abolitionist Toolkit for Educators**.

52 As politicians continue to scapegoat those with the least power in society, the conditions of structural violence that so often precede interpersonal violence persist. (**Abolitionist futures**) When society continues to scapegoat the most vulnerable, the mechanisms of structural violence, which fuel interpersonal violence, remain intact.

Disability Justice)—demand rigorous attention to the complexity of these experiences and the multiplicity of responses needed to understand and value them. They aim to make these multiple and intertwined realities intelligible and accessible, particularly for the most excluded, while also opening these concepts, both academic and community-based, to a wider audience.[53] These approaches offer critical tools for breaking with the structural paternalism that still largely dominates French society, as well as the professional field of disability, and which reproduces racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, and other such attitudes.

These perspectives are also essential for thinking critically about **jcritical climate justice** and imagining alternatives that do not perpetuate existing hierarchies. They pave the way for reflection on **community responsability** and the development of genuine survivor **leadership**, in order to transform and heal the conditions that foster violence in our communities.

Intersectionality has been misused to ignore oppressions we dare not name. Many institutions and groups now claim to be intersectional without ever confronting the most entrenched systems of domination—particularly white supremacy and **white supremacist heteropatriarchy**. This refusal to confront the fear of conflict inherent in **white supremacy culture**, where the comfort of the dominant class takes precedence over critical justice. This culture is expressed through a fear of anger and disorder, the avoidance of conflict as a moral value, and the search for the "right tone," for a "neutral" and "sanitized" politeness or language that reassures the dominant class.

Abolition is a hopeful vision that means every moment of harm is an opportunity to transform relationships and communities. (**Emptying cages : abolition, accountability and dialogue**, p. 7)

Intersectionality cannot be reduced to a tool for "diversity" or "inclusion" that fails to challenge power structures. Systemic oppressions are so normalized that they are not even named in spaces supposedly dedicated to critical discourse. Intersectionality emerged from radical feminist struggles, historically led by women of color, and it must remain a tool for dismantling oppressions, not simply for managing diversity. Repoliticizing intersectionality means not making it a mere neutral analytical framework, but using it to denounce systemic oppressions, especially when they are inconvenient or rendered invisible in academic, institutional, or activist spaces. There is very little accessible research on structural violence in France, and even less on the critique of law as a tool of domination or exclusion. The law, often presented as neutral or universal, nevertheless contributes to the reproduction of racial, social, and bodily hierarchies.

It is acknowledged that disabled people have long been working for abolition (**Critical Resistance**). It has never been more important to fully understand the connections between the various sites of segregation and incarceration of disabled people and to focus on how these systems affect all bodies and minds, disabled or not. For this reason, this text highlights the fundamental difference between:

- the Disability Justice Movement of People of Color[54], which—through a reinterpretation of the Ten Principles of Disability Justice—deliberately refocuses on the experiences of the most marginalized and seeks to transform the very structures that produce vulnerability, exclusion, and violence; and
- the failure of a dominant, rights-based, white framework that, by focusing on disability in isolation, "erases the complex experiences of marginalized people and fuels a revolving door of increasing inequality in disabled communities of color" (Nathalie M. Chin). This framework essentially aims to obtain protections or adjustments in a system which, for its part, remains intact — and therefore continues to produce the same violence.

53 Disability Justice deliberately defines itself as a community-based rather than an academic framework, in order to guarantee its accessibility to the most marginalized people.
54 See an **interprétation** of these ten principles

It is no longer simply a matter of “making room” for marginalized people, but of rethinking the world from our perspectives.

Indigenous communities understand that individuals are in a process of transformation, that we are surviving historical/intergenerational traumas and colonization. To seriously work on **mental health** and become aware of these traumas, it is necessary to allow ourselves to perceive the life experiences of others and to understand what these people, in turn, perceive and see. To do this work, it is necessary to build safe spaces.

In a society that values amnesia and individual responsibility, those who remember represent a threat to collective complicity. Complex traumas bear witness to the continuity of community, structural, and colonial violence. This recognition of harm—though often very difficult because trauma is invisible—is inseparable from any process of abolition. Abolition aims to repair and end harm.

The testimonies of trauma survivors are often difficult—both to tell and to hear—and require supervision and peer support to become aware of them and take action.[55] Faced with the collapse of empathy in society, having complex and invisible traumas recognized—beyond the “ideal” victim [56] [57] — becomes an essential political act. Speaking out openly, however, remains risky, for fear of not being heard, or of suffering reprisals or further rejection. Yet, this recognition allows for the creation of trauma-sensitive communities, sensitive to **stability** and **cultural** safety. It makes possible the emergence of collectives capable of understanding and recognizing the impact of structural and interpersonal violence, and of responding to it with abolitionist and culturally appropriate care practices, integrating **harm reduction** approaches and community empowerment in the face of this pervasive violence. It is widely accepted that peer supporters must share contextual characteristics and be capable of genuine empathy (Solomon, 2004). Peer support[58] is likely to be even more useful in the many resource-constrained contexts where empathy is not readily available (**Peer support in prison**, p. 26).

However, it is necessary to understand the functioning of structural violence, to know its roots, to recognize its omnipresence, its invisibility, its operation and to know which people participate in it the most - who are unaware of its operation - and those who are most impacted by it... those who are silenced, those voices that disturb and that could nevertheless raise awareness in spaces supposed to work towards social justice, **mental health** and **social and emotional well-being**.

This text invites us to understand why disability justice—and not simply the management of

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55 Avoiding feedback and reflection is also a characteristic of white supremacist culture, typical of perfectionist workplaces. (**La culture de la suprématie blanche dans nos organisations**)

56 The concept of the “ideal victim” was introduced by criminologist Nils Christie. (The ideal victim. In: From crime policy to victim policy: reorienting the justice system. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1986) People who do not meet certain criteria—for example, people of color, the poor, the disabled, drug users, sex workers, or those living with mental health conditions—are often denied recognition as victims. They are perceived as “ambivalent,” “unbelievable,” or “responsible” for what they endure. Nils Christie emphasizes that this moral hierarchy of victims serves to maintain social order: it reinforces the power of institutions (the justice system, the media, the police) to decide who deserves compassion and who deserves control. Traumatized, psychiatrically conditioned, or racialized people are often excluded from the status of credible victims—even when they experience systemic violence.

57 A vast landscape of trauma remains invisible because our current conceptual resources and societal ideals fail to grasp its nuances. This failure to recognize victimhood perpetuates a cycle where only those who conform to the "ideal victim," the "ideal trauma," and the "ideal response" are validated, while others are rendered invisible, thus reinforcing structural inequalities. (**BMJ Mental Health**)

58 It is colonial and eugenic institutions that have historically generated structural violence. This violence has created a need for peer support. The ultimate goal of peer support is social change, speaking truth to power. However, many peer support programs are completely depoliticized, institutionalize peer support, and strongly reinforce the medical model (as seen in recent discussions with Project LETS about decades of institutionalizing peer support). Conversely, abolitionist care cannot be institutionalized. Project LETS director Stephanie Lyn Kaufman-Mthimkhulu illustrates the practice of abolition by describing a combination of practices informed by disability justice and the liberation of madness.

people reduced to the label of “disability” or “disability status”—is a fundamental requirement for all forms of social justice, particularly racial justice. By linking climate justice, disability justice, and structural violence, it denounces the dead ends of liberal progressivism and invites us to think about liberation beyond dominant epistemological frameworks.

This text is for survivors of structural violence—for those essential people rendered invisible and vulnerable by the very structures they resist—for all those who are crushed in the name of normality, domination, and insatiable greed. It is also for all those who, often without acknowledging it, benefit from this violence, inviting them to participate in taking responsibility—which also involves this necessity, or at best the desire, to embrace shame. Survivors of structural violence often carry **complexes**[59], invisible traumas that keep them at a distance from reformist spaces. These traumas are linked to white supremacy and the colonial and racial destruction of healthcare systems. These reformist spaces, inaccessible to traumatized individuals, forget that vulnerability is an antidote to structural violence.[60] and that only by welcoming their truth, in truly safe spaces, can the path be paved for genuine collective transformation. This transformation manifests itself in reflections and small daily acts that defy erasure. Burnout is collective and structural; it is not individual.[61] Abolition does not understand violence individually, but as a collective and systemic responsibility. It requires us to shift our focus from personal blame to shared responsibility and the social structures that perpetuate violence.

This text adopts an abolitionist perspective that aims to radically rethink our legal, educational, healthcare, and environmental systems, breaking with colonial and normalizing logics. Far from advocating for greater inclusion within the existing system, it calls for structural transformation, the valuing of marginalized forms of knowledge, and the emergence of models of justice based on interdependence, epistemic plurality, and collective liberation. All of this is essential to creating the conditions conducive to profound healing. The most profound upheaval we can bring about in the face of a violent society is to create care, security, interdependence, and mutual support. There are marginalized individuals who confront intersectional struggles, who work on the front lines, who reflect on spaces of radical solidarity, and who refuse to conform to singular narratives. Disability should no longer be a category to be avoided—or to elicit fear, mistrust, contempt, or pity—but rather one with which an alliance must be built. Eco-social theory teaches us that the body is a living archive of inequalities. Complex trauma is one expression of this: it bears witness to the societal fear of truth, memory, and community responsibility. It exposes institutional manipulation, collective lies, and the fear of genuine care—the kind that transforms power relations rather than masking them. When marginalized in dominant discourses, this epistemic amnesia contributes, on a global scale, to the massive erasure of Black, queer, Indigenous, poor, gendered, disabled, and "mad" people.

While France appears to be the leading country in Europe for segregation [62], this new text allows us to look back at the past to understand how diversity and human potential have been—and still are, for the sake of profitability—systematically deactivated and devalued by logics of resource extraction, exploitation, and dispossession. To address the multiple crises, it is also crucial not to become too accustomed to living within the remnants of this colonial empire.

Although intersectional theory has garnered considerable interest, the issue of disability remains rarely addressed, particularly in France (**Célia Bouchet**, Abstract). Intersectional analysis, intentionally complex, becomes more accessible when approached through a concrete context such

59 Trauma is closely linked to social exclusion and systemic inequalities. These individuals are often described as hard to reach or "hidden" (**International Journal of Qualitative Methods**, Abstract). This requires an "embodied" and nuanced understanding of interpersonal and structural violence, moving beyond dominant and homogeneous groups. This allows us to challenge prevailing narratives that conflate personal failure with a response to systemic trauma.

60 Vulnerability is a superpower. Not using lived experience is a waste (**Peer support in mental health**, p. 227).

61 Care is a radical act of resistance against systems designed to isolate us. What we often call burnout is the predictable consequence of our efforts to survive within systems designed to exhaust us. (**Ly Xinzhèn M. Zhangsūn Brown**)

62 **Eurofund**, Paths towards independent living and social inclusion in Europe, 2024 ; page 60

as climate justice. This allows us to grasp its full scope and connect it to everyday abolitionist practices. The abolitionist perspectives of the most marginalized people are systematically erased from the dominant discourses and spaces of cisgender, heterosexual, white, able-bodied, and middle- or upper-class society—both in Europe and the United States. Their experiences remain largely ignored.

The silence of the privileged is never neutral. When people in positions of influence—in the media, institutions, universities, or activist circles—choose not to challenge structures of domination such as white supremacy or coloniality, they actively participate in their perpetuation. This refusal to take a stand is not a lack of commitment. It is a political choice that bears direct responsibility for maintaining the status quo. This is where the **white savior industria complex**, comes into play, a system where privileged figures present themselves as allies while reinforcing the hierarchies they claim to deconstruct.[63] By also not renouncing authoritarian stances, we condemn to silence the essential voices of disabled people, depriving us of abolitionist perspectives that include the wounded bodies and minds that the carceral system punishes through confinement and erasure. Authoritarianism thrives on the silence of liberals, their moral apathy, and their indifference to the suffering of others (Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores). The system of social and carceral control systematically punishes those who attempt to resist structural violence—that is, the sum of social, economic, racial, and institutional conditions that have marginalized and rendered them vulnerable. By repressing their resistance—anger, refusal, survival, self-defense, protest, or simply the inability to conform to institutional expectations—the penal apparatus directly contributes to strengthening the carceral state. In other words, prison corrects nothing and reproduces precisely the relations of domination that have plunged individuals into precarity, stigmatization, or pathologization. In the field of critical disability and mental health, the danger often comes from those—so-called "normal" people—who, failing to understand the workings of structural violence, even within spaces that have previously committed to anti-carceration stances, embrace the reflexes of the carceral state. They criminalize survival behaviors, reduce traumatic reactions to individual problems, pathologize anger, and moralize distress, all to render systemic causes invisible. By individualizing structural causes they do not understand, refusing to acknowledge their own responsibility, and failing to account for their privileges, these reformist spaces reinforce the carceral system. It is precisely this violence, through repetition and institutionalization, that has given rise to the global system of incarceration.

Let's not kid ourselves, a society that does not understand solidarity, attention, responsibility, or the necessary care for the most vulnerable — as the figures from the Defender of Rights have shown for many years — is a profoundly carceral society. We must pay attention to the failures of movements that deny the specificity of our lived experiences and actively contribute to the erasure and violence we endure. Having witnessed these experiences ourselves, we are also exhausted from constantly having to raise awareness among those around us about our invisible and complex vulnerabilities. The greatest paradox lies in this lack of knowledge about structural inequalities and social epidemiology within the very circles supposedly working towards the end of prisons, which reveals the extent to which these spaces also participate in the reproduction of a carceral logic.[64] Social and territorial health inequalities remain significant in France, with one of the highest levels in Europe (**Observatoire des inégalités**). Inequalities in access to healthcare are primarily a matter

63 White saviorism refers to a moral and political stance in which white individuals or institutions present themselves as benevolent or altruistic toward marginalized groups, while simultaneously reproducing the power relations stemming from white supremacy and structural violence. Under the guise of aid, solidarity, or humanitarianism, white saviorism recenters the white subject within histories and struggles that are not their own, erasing the voice, autonomy, and expertise of those directly affected. This behavior, which purports to be virtuous, actually reinforces dependency and the social structure, since it does not challenge the economic, political, and cultural structures that produce marginalization, but rather becomes complicit by reproducing them in forms "compatible" with the dominant morality. In other words, white saviorism perpetuates the same colonial and paternalistic logics it claims to combat—under the cover of kindness and humanism.

64 As this field is still relatively little known in France, read the recently published book: Social Epidemiology: Concepts, Methods and Examples of Application, Presses de **l'EHESP**

of identity. They are structured by hierarchies of race, ableism, gender, and sexuality, and not simply a matter of social class. Healthcare systems are historically built on coloniality and ableism to monitor racialized populations, control deviant bodies, pathologize those deemed “uncivilized,” manage “at-risk” populations, and decide who deserves to live.

Incarceration is a site for managing social and neurological suffering. The lack of a social epidemiological culture within communities and institutions contributes to punitive abuses. Neurodivergent individuals or those with different cognitive functioning are particularly vulnerable to this logic of "disposability." As long as the **social structure** remains intact—devoid of accountability and social justice, without decolonization—talking about abolition or care amounts to individualizing, incarcerating, and medicalizing collective suffering. It amounts to whitewashing abolition, emptying it of its radicalism to make it compatible with the very systems it claims to abolish. An essential part of the decolonization project consists of destabilizing the prejudices that have been used to delegitimize groups whose epistemologies have been denied, and of reconstructing identities free from the categories imposed by colonial power. Structures of domination spread throughout culture through institutional structures — which normalize violence — ideological beliefs and the daily actions of those affected, and these effects are passed down from generation to generation.

As a peer support worker and health mediator, I write about abolition because I find no satisfactory answers or sense of security within the anti-prison movement as it currently exists.[65] [66] Disability and mental illness are largely absent from analyses of incarceration and resistance to it (**Abolition. Feminism. Now.**, p. 61), even though the rights of people with disabilities are essential to human rights and therefore occupy a central place in social justice programs (Ibid., p. 61). My commitment is also shaped by the direct experience of complex trauma, the roots of which are inseparable from the structural violence I denounce. Although international research has recently demonstrated that trauma cannot be understood without recognizing its structural dimension[67], the anti-prison movement fails to acknowledge that prison itself is a source of structural violence and exclusion, and that it is a central tool of colonialism. These forms of violence do not merely punish; they produce and reproduce erasure and incarceration: “Structural violence determines who gets sick, who is incarcerated, and who is forgotten.” (Paul Farmer; 2003) This is why any genuine abolitionist approach must not only address structural violence, but also refocus on the survivors of the trauma it engenders—recognizing their knowledge, their lived experience, and their need for genuine safety. (2nd principle of **Disability Justice**)

Discussing structural violence—related to abolition, social exclusion, segregation, and incarceration—is necessary because those most directly affected also need to hear something other than the dominant academic discourse on penal abolitionism. This discourse, often produced from academic spaces far removed from these realities, continues to understand violence from the perspective of dominant groups. In ableist societies, those tasked with dismantling systems of oppression must first identify the most structurally marginalized, erased, and inaccessible populations, whose social position directly exposes them to violence and incarceration.

It is extremely difficult to endure relentless reprisals simply for trying to raise awareness of the need for collective, historical, and systemic accountability, and to make visible the scale and depth of structural violence and its persistent impact on the most vulnerable. This difficulty stems from the fact that structural violence is inextricably linked to the social structure itself and the unearned privileges that result from it. This link remains largely ignored, even in “progressive” circles, which struggle to recognize that, from the perspective of oppressed groups, the mechanisms

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65 Results confirm the high prevalence of traumatic brain injury (TBI) history in prison populations. These individuals are paradoxically absent from abolitionist theory — often perceived as “too confused”, “unstable” or “difficult to organize” politically — even though they are at the heart of prison reality. (E. Durand et al.)

66 Sources confirm that people with traumatic brain injuries are the most impacted by structural violence and complex trauma. 1, 2, 3, 4. Therapeutic uncertainty following traumatic brain injury is a documented reality. 5, 6, 7 ...

67 **https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/16094069251340906**

by which nation-states deprive, dehumanize, and render certain lives disposable are ubiquitous. (**Intersectionality**, p. 162)

Once we recognize the omnipresence of ableism as the organizing principle of policies of punishment, care, and control of bodies, we better understand the link between the creation of the modern carceral state and disability. **Carceral ableism**, for this reason, defines ableism as a mechanism of surveillance, endless punishment, and exclusion, even within activist, anti-carceral, and feminist circles. Intersectionality has no legitimacy in spaces insensitive to the language and necropolitical impulses of capitalist society, or if it continues to exclude lived experiences of disability, trauma, and invisible and complex neurological vulnerability.

As abolitionists, our work is to increase our capacity to build relationships and care structures. (**No More Police, A Case for Abolition**, p. 219)

We must both heal and organize for social justice. We must heal from deep wounds and violations and change the social and economic conditions that cause trauma to future generations [...] Healing aims to counteract and repair the traumatic impact of white supremacy. (**The Politics of Trauma** ; p. 67, 147)

If you read these words and share this view — that decolonization is the minimum condition for any real transformation, that these transformations only begin when silenced voices finally become audible — please feel free to contact me.

**A few reminders:**

A glossary is available on **Global Disability Justice** to help understand **mental health** et le **social and emotional well-being** from the perspective of the marginalized majority (**Global south**). Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is essential for reconciliation and strengthening relationships between the most marginalized people and the wider community. In this text, words highlighted in blue should be understood from this perspective of the Global South and marginalized communities.

**1 - Abolition rests on several fundamental principles:**

1. Listen to survivors of violence and respond to their real needs, outside of punitive frameworks.
2. Ground safety practices in support, freedom, and interdependence, rather than control.
3. Reject the tools of the master: justice cannot emerge from structures of injustice.
4. Recognize the intersectionality of violence and organize accordingly.
5. Make a sustained commitment to building worlds free from structural violence.

In this text, abolition is understood not as a simple elimination of oppressive institutions, but as a radical political and community practice, grounded in the principles of Black feminism and anti-violence movements. As Mariame Kaba, Andrea Ritchie, and Beth E. Richie remind us in *No More Police*[68], abolitionist feminism arose from the need to build alternatives to state and interpersonal violence, placing the needs and voices of those most affected at the center.

Abolition, in this perspective, is an invitation to imagine and build systems of care, justice, and security based on dignity, solidarity, and collective transformation—not on punishment, surveillance, or exclusion. Black feminism is a politics that addresses the root causes of our problems and harms, alleviates suffering, and eradicates violence. Black feminism calls on us to create new forms of accountability, governance, and sociality that build the world we want.

**2 - Indigenous Knowledge in the Face of Psychology's Racist Legacy**

While this statement is insufficient, the APA (the world's largest association of psychologists) has acknowledged that:

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68 **No More Police, A case for abolition, p42**

- "The science and practice of psychology have reflected and influenced dominant Western scientific values that have perpetuated and justified racism. The practice of psychology has been widely used to oppress, control, and assimilate minority groups. Historically, diagnoses of mental illness or mental health problems have been used to absolve dominant groups of responsibility and disadvantage those from marginalized groups."

The Australian government, in collaboration with the Torres Strait Islanders, had also previously stated that:

- "les psychologues et autres professionnels de la santé et des sciences sociales ont l'obligation absolue et le devoir de prendre part à ce processus de réparation". (**Working Together**, p. xvii)

while specifying that:

- "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples appeared to have a particularly effective understanding of mental health during the 40,000 years preceding contact with Europeans." (Working Together, p. xvii)". (**Ibid.**, p. 64)

**3 - Intersections between Race, Disability, and Incarceration**

- It is time to return to community security and move away from state security as the central element of justice [...] as long as we have prisoners, we will not be free; as long as we have prisons, we will not be postcolonial. (**Colonial System of Control**) "Criminology is a social science that has served colonialism more directly than many other social sciences" (**Agonizo** ; 2004)
- Despite some paradigm shifts in the discipline, criminology has remained a tool of imperialism (Agonizo, 2003; Cunneen & Tauri, 2016). If criminology is a tool for land grabbing and silencing marginalized people, then war is also brewing around the process of meaning-making within the discipline itself. [...] These groups, who have faced immeasurable obstacles due to structural racism, inequality, and political abandonment, have long been confronted with the need for white criminologists to uphold the art of white supremacy and retribution against marginalized people. (**Abolish Criminology**)
- Abolition requires us to understand the foundations of the carceral state. Laura I. Appleman and Liat Ben-Moshe reject the tendency and persistence to "underestimate the interconnections between the colonial construction of race and disability" and "the central role that the history of the institutionalization of people labeled as disabled [...] has played in the creation of the carceral state."[69] These oppressions have been constructed together over centuries. Abolition requires hard work in and with communities to provide caring and safe spaces and ensure equitable access to resources (Rule and Behrendt, 2021). Abolition also involves self-reflection, as the carceral logic shapes our thinking.

69 Sheila Wildeman, Critical Pathways to Disability Decarceration : Reading Liat Ben-Moshe and Linda Steele, 2023, page 4, Schulich Law Scholars