

in many cities. It also drew on its coalition origins to form a “Building a Queer Left” alliance of progressive queer organizations across the country.

When funding problems forced QEJ to close its doors in 2014, it left behind a legacy of radical intersectional multi-issue activism. QEJ illustrated the effectiveness of multiracial, multiclassed organizing and challenged assumptions of what constitutes a “gay issue.”

1.A.15.

Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color against Violence

From “Gender Violence and the Prison-Industrial Complex” (2001)

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the United States had the world’s biggest prison system. Some of the policies that had bolstered support for mass incarceration originated in ostensibly feminist demands, such as the 1994 Violence against Women Act. In response, two high-profile prison abolitionist organizations that formed at the end of the millennium coauthored the following statement, which describes prison as a form of both state and interpersonal violence and demands a noncarceral approach to gender violence.

We call on social justice movements to develop strategies and analysis that address both state and interpersonal violence, particularly violence against women. Currently, activists/movements that address state violence (such as antiprison, anti-police brutality groups) often work in isolation from activists/movements that address domestic and sexual violence. The result is that women of color, who suffer disproportionately from both state and interpersonal violence, have become marginalized within these movements. It is critical that we develop responses to gender violence that do not depend on a sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic criminal justice system. It is also important that we develop strategies that challenge the criminal justice system and that also provide safety for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. To live violence-free lives, we must develop holistic strategies for addressing violence that speak to the intersection of all forms of oppression. The antiviolence movement has been critically important in breaking the silence around violence against women and providing much-needed services to survivors. However, the mainstream antiviolence movement has increasingly relied on the criminal justice system as the front-line approach toward ending violence against women of color. It is important to assess the impact of this strategy.

1. Law enforcement approaches to violence against women may deter some acts of violence in the short term. However, as an overall strategy for ending violence, criminalization has not worked. In fact, the overall impact of mandatory arrests laws for domestic violence has led to decreases in the number of battered women who kill their partners in self-defense, but they have not led to a decrease in the number of batterers who kill their partners. Thus, the law protects batterers more than it protects survivors.
2. The criminalization approach has also brought many women into conflict with the law, particularly women of color, poor women, lesbians, sex workers, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized women. For instance, under mandatory arrest laws, there have been numerous incidents where police officers called to domestic incidents have arrested the woman who is being battered. Many undocumented women have reported cases of sexual and domestic violence, only to find themselves deported. A tough law and order agenda also leads to long punitive sentences for women convicted of killing their batterers. Finally, when public funding is channeled into policing and prisons, budget cuts for social programs, including women's shelters, welfare and public housing are the inevitable side effect. These cutbacks leave women less able to escape violent relationships.
3. Prisons don't work. Despite an exponential increase in the number of men in prisons, women are not any safer, and the rates of sexual assault and domestic violence have not decreased. In calling for greater police responses to and harsher sentences for perpetrators of gender violence, the antiviolence movement has fueled the proliferation of prisons which now lock up more people per capita in the US than any other country. During the past fifteen years, the numbers of women, especially women of color, in prison has skyrocketed. Prisons also inflict violence on the growing numbers of women behind bars. Slashing, suicide, the proliferation of HIV, strip searches, medical neglect, and rape of prisoners has largely been ignored by antiviolence activists. The criminal justice system, an institution of violence, domination, and control, has increased the level of violence in society.
4. The reliance on state funding to support antiviolence programs has increased the professionalization of the antiviolence movement and alienated it from its community-organizing, social justice roots. Such reliance has isolated the antiviolence movement from other social justice movements that seek to eradicate state violence, such that it acts in conflict rather than in collaboration with these movements.
5. The reliance on the criminal justice system has taken power away from women's ability to organize collectively to stop violence and has invested this power within the state. The result is that women who seek redress in the criminal justice system feel disempowered and alienated. It has also promoted an individualistic approach toward ending violence such that the only way people think they can intervene in stopping violence is to

call the police. This reliance has shifted our focus from developing ways communities can collectively respond to violence.

... Because activists who seek to reverse the tide of mass incarceration and criminalization of poor communities and communities of color have not always centered gender and sexuality in their analysis or organizing, we have not always responded adequately to the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

1. Prison and police accountability activists have generally organized around and conceptualized men of color as the primary victims of state violence. Women prisoners and victims of police brutality have been made invisible by a focus on the war on our brothers and sons. . . .
2. The antiprison movement has not addressed strategies for addressing the rampant forms of violence women face in their everyday lives, including street harassment, sexual harassment at work, rape, and intimate partner abuse. . . .
3. The antiprison movement has failed to sufficiently organize around the forms of state violence faced by LGBTI communities. LGBTI street youth and trans people in general are particularly vulnerable to police brutality and criminalization. LGBTI prisoners are denied basic human rights such as family visits from same-sex partners, and same-sex consensual relationships in prison are policed and punished.
4. While prison abolitionists have correctly pointed out that rapists and serial murderers comprise a small number of the prison population, we have not answered the question of how these cases should be addressed. The inability to answer the question is interpreted by many antiviolence activists as a lack of concern for the safety of women.
5. The various alternatives to incarceration that have been developed by antiprison activists have generally failed to provide sufficient mechanisms for safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. These alternatives often rely on a romanticized notion of communities, which have yet to demonstrate their commitment and ability to keep women and children safe or seriously address the sexism and homophobia that is deeply embedded within them.

We call on social justice movements concerned with ending violence in all its forms to [do the following]:

1. Develop community-based responses to violence that do not rely on the criminal justice system and which have mechanisms that ensure safety and accountability for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Transformative practices emerging from local communities should be documented and disseminated to promote collective responses to violence.
2. Critically assess the impact of state funding on social justice organizations and develop alternative fundraising strategies to support these organizations. . . .

3. Make connections between interpersonal violence, the violence inflicted by domestic state institutions (such as prisons, detention centers, mental hospitals, and child protective services), and international violence (such as war, military base prostitution, and nuclear testing).
4. Develop an analysis and strategies to end violence that do not isolate individual acts of violence (either committed by the state or individuals) from their larger contexts. These strategies must address how entire communities of all genders are affected in multiple ways by both state violence and interpersonal gender violence. Battered women prisoners represent an intersection of state and interpersonal violence and as such provide an opportunity for both movements to build coalitions and joint struggles.
5. Put poor/working-class women of color in the center of their analysis, organizing practices, and leadership development. Recognize the role of economic oppression, welfare “reform,” and attacks on women workers’ rights in increasing women’s vulnerability to all forms of violence and locate antiviolence and antiprison activism alongside efforts to transform the capitalist economic system.
6. Center stories of state violence committed against women of color in our organizing efforts.
7. Oppose legislative change that promotes prison expansion, criminalization of poor communities, and [criminalization of] communities of color and thus state violence against women of color, even if these changes also incorporate measures to support victims of interpersonal gender violence.
8. Promote holistic political education at the everyday level within our communities, specifically how sexual violence helps reproduce the colonial, racist, capitalist, heterosexist, and patriarchal society we live in as well as how state violence produces interpersonal violence within communities.
9. Develop strategies for mobilizing against sexism and homophobia within our communities in order to keep women safe.
10. Challenge men of color and all men in social justice movements to take particular responsibility to address and organize around gender violence in their communities as a primary strategy for addressing violence and colonialism. We challenge men to address how their own histories of victimization have hindered their ability to establish gender justice in their communities.
11. Link struggles for personal transformation and healing with struggles for social justice.

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