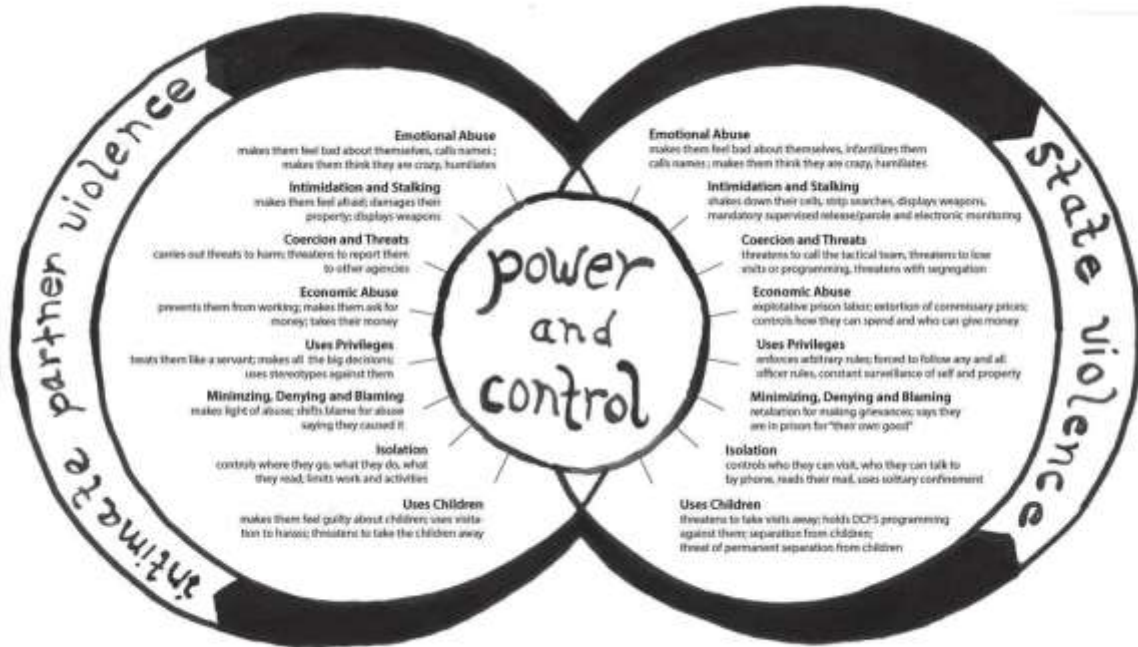


Abolition. Feminism. Now.

“An ability to look both inward and outward, to meet both immediate demands and confront broad systems of injustice, and to think in complicated and layered ways about abolition represents a feminism approach to change.”



“Intimate Partner Violence and State Violence Power and Control Wheel,” by Monica Cosby. Graphic by Sarah Ross (113 and 174).

Preface and Introduction:

What arguments do the authors make for why abolition must be feminist and why feminism must be abolitionist?

The authors frame the book as a “critical genealogy rather than a manifesto” (xiii). What is the difference between the two (in form, message, and the work they seek to perform)?

Apply Mari Matsuda’s “ask the other question” formulation (3) to other readings or discussions in your group. Perhaps consider using this as a prompt when discussions become too uniform and everyone agrees on something. For example, you might come up with a set of seemingly obvious relationships of domination and “ask the other

question.” For example, Mississippi Prison Industries exploits workers. Where is the ableism, ageism, racism, heterosexism, patriarchy, ecocide, etc?

In addition to embracing contradictions and asking the other question, the authors stress collectivism as a key practice of abolitionist feminism (15). What do they mean by collectivism? How does this differ from other structures and relationships promoted in capitalist societies? How does the prison deter/prohibit collectivism? How does it incentivize/sanction individualism?

The authors write that “vision and practice are not contradictory but are rather inseparable, the insistent prefiguration of the world we know we need.” They explain further than the “productive tension of holding onto a radical, real, and deep vision while engaging in the messy daily practice *is* the feminist praxis: the work of everyday people to try, to build, to make. And this requires collectivity. Always.” (15-16).

- a. Find examples in your own work of daily, practical building alongside utopian visions. What is the connection between these two things?

Chapter 1: Abolition

What is the genealogy of abolition that these authors outline? Chart the key events, groups, ideas, and strategies that shape their genealogy.

Two of the key concepts introduced and refined by Critical Resistance were: “prison industrial complex” and “abolition.” How did CR define these terms? How might you add to, or adjust, these definitions?

The authors spend time distinguishing between a strictly analogical analysis of slavery and imprisonment and a genealogical connection or relationship between the two institutions. Why do you think they make this distinction? What is gained or lost through such parsing?

Chapter 2: Feminism

What is the genealogy of feminism that these authors outline? Try charting the key events, groups, ideas, and strategies that shape that genealogy. Does it depart from any of your previous notions of feminism and its foundations? If so, how?

The authors write that “the struggle to defend Black men from fraudulent rape charges was directly linked to the defense of Black women who were targets of rape like Recy Taylor: rape and racist manipulation of the rape charge were fundamentally connected” (96). Unpack this sentence with your group. What do they mean that these two were fundamentally connected? How does this relate to the chapter’s emphasis on the interconnection between gender violence and state violence? What are the systems of oppression that connect these?

What is “carceral feminism”? What examples do the authors give to illustrate carceral feminism? Are there examples of carceral feminist responses to experiences in your life? How might you apply an abolition feminist lens to those same experiences? What would the response be to those same instances?

Monica Cosby, a Chicago-based abolitionist feminist, argues that prison itself is a form of gender violence. Explore the “Intimate Partner Violence and State Violence Power and Control Wheel” at the top of this sheet (and reproduced on 113 and 174) as a group. Are there examples that resonate with you? Are there others you would add?

Chapter 3:

The authors note that “normative evaluative logics of success—a win is passing legislation, creating a policy or a large and permanent organization, something tangible or deliverable—are internalized, and sometimes produce shame.” But, they argue that these dominant and binary understandings of success/failure are “intentionally whitewashed and straightened, and always in search of individuals and not collectives, policy/legal/legislative wins and processes, actions, and certainly not political education or cultures that create new capaciousness for radical political consciousness” (161-162).

- a. Building on this reevaluation of metrics for our movements, experiment with drawing two columns and collectively noting what are typically seen as success and failure on the left (ie. winning or losing an election) and other ways of viewing progress on the right (ie. changing the national conversation from why cops should wear body cameras—therefore giving *more* money to police—to defunding the police).

What sorts of work is your group doing that would not be legible by mainstream understandings of success and failure? What are some ways you can acknowledge and celebrate this important work?

In closing, the authors return to their original “provocation—*abolition is unthinkable without feminism and our feminism unimaginable without abolition*” (168). How has your thinking about the relationship between abolition and feminism, or what either of those terms mean independent of one another, developed through engaging with this book?