

## INTERNATIONALISM

Internationalism—the politics and practice of shared affinities beyond national boundaries—has long been a hallmark of radical movements. From enslaved people fighting their way out of bondage to indentured servants and immigrant workers fending off exploitation to Indigenous peoples fighting to retain land and resources, internationalists have long had to contend with capitalism as a global system. Yet the problems of colonialism and conquest, debt and extraction bond the world in unequal ways. Leftwing movements have recognized the nation-state as an artificial boundary designed to promote antagonism. Internationalism is the practice of solidarity on a shared planet. It is a recognition of the global nature of oppression and the possibility of transformation in an unequal world. Internationalism recognizes that even in a global system the intensity of domination and resistance varies over time and space.

This unit addresses two concepts central to internationalism: Nation and State. As concepts, they are related. Both concepts name ways of creating unity, enforcing division, and expressing power. They might even be used together: “nation-state.” Yet, we seek to explore the productive tension between these two terms in defining what is at stake in an INTERNATIONAL orientation.

Nation can refer to a country, as well as the people who reside there. It can reference ethnic groups and other forms of social difference as well as nationalist projects concerned with determining who allegedly does and does not belong. Nationalism takes root through the distinct visions political constituencies create for themselves. These readings highlight Black and Indigenous nationalisms that have rejected the racism of US nationalism in favor of international solidarity.

State, meanwhile, represents institutions of governance: members of security forces as well as elected officials, and representatives from federal agencies all embody “the state.” Through terms like “state violence,” we seek to identify how forms of governance are used to detain, injure, and exploit people. These readings explore the state’s ability to make war and incarcerate, and the transnational coalitions that people form in the effort to defend themselves against state violence.

This study guide asks how we can use “nation” and “state” to clarify the stakes of governance, to identify forms of affinity and antagonism, and to help foster critical awareness about internationalism as an intellectual and political project.

## VII. NATION

We open with the idea of the Nation. The readings here explore nationhood and nationality as sources of unity as well as division. As you read, think about how you understand the concept of nation. What does it mean to (not) belong to a nation? What is the difference between nationalism identified with a state and those, like the Black and Indigenous nationalists here, often framed as outside of the state? What makes the concept of nationhood useful? How is it constricting? How do war, slavery, and migration shape concepts of nationality? Can nationalism lead to internationalism?

### **Readings:**

- Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* (pp. 176-186)
- Assata Shakur, *Assata* (pp. 173-194)
- Emma Goldman, “Patriotism: A Menace to Liberty” (1908) in *Voices* (pp. 269-272)
- Muhammad Ali, *Speaks Out Against the Vietnam War* (1966) in *Voices* (pp. 430-431)
- Rita Lasar, “To Avoid Another September 11, U.S. Must Join the World” (2002) in *Voices* (pp. 604-606)
- Dan Berger and Emily K. Hobson, *Remaking Radicalism*, “Borders and Maps”
- International Indian Treaty Council, “Decolonization, Liberation, and the International Community” (1977) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 239-242)
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Consciousness + Commitment = Change” (2003) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 309-312)
- Black Hills Alliance position paper (1980) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 369-370)
- Native American Rights Fund/National Indian Law Library, “Declaration of Indian Independence” (1975) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 443-445)
- Ashanti Alston, “Beyond Nationalism But Not Without It” (2001) in *Remaking Radicalism*
- Ida B. Wells, *Mob Rule in New Orleans* (1900) (pp. 443-445)
- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* zine
- Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates* zine
- June Jordan, “July 4, 1974”
- Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence” (pp. 1-62)

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Journalistic accounts sometimes refer to white supremacists as “nationalists.” US wars have often been waged in the alleged “defense of the nation.” From a rather different perspective, Malcolm X, Kwame Ture, and other freedom movement leaders are sometimes referred to as “Black nationalists” (Alston). Further complicating this question, Angela Davis and Black Panther leaders like Assata Shakur and George Jackson often identify as “internationalists” motivated by “revolutionary nationalism.” Given these differences, how might we define “nationalism”? What about “internationalism”?
- How do geography (Berger and Hobson) and legal standing (International Indian Treaty Council, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Black Hills Alliance position paper)—as well as the stated political orientations of leaders and thinkers, and the groups with which they identify—shape how we define them with regard to these terms? Use the texts mentioned here to craft your response.
- Drawing on the International Indian Treaty Council and the Native American Rights Fund, what is the connection between decolonization, internationalism, and independence? How do rituals and customs as well as notions of sanction shape how people decide who is authorized to represent them—for Indigenous peoples as well as their interlocutors?
- Based particularly on the readings by Kaba and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, identify some linkages between migration and internationalism.
- Ida B. Wells characterizes the kind of violence white supremacists wielded in the post-Emancipation US as mob rule. Mobs have been depicted as inchoate and unwieldy throughout history, yet Wells makes a more specific argument about how whiteness gets

bound up with policing. What is it? What makes mob rule different from the way protest movements mobilize and wield force? How does Emma Goldman help us make sense of this distinction between the “violence” of a riot or protest and what Wells calls “mob rule”?

- How does social difference shape who has access to capital and social mobility—as well as how people are governed—in any given nation? Reference Rita Lasar and Mariame Kaba in developing your response.

## VIII. STATE

Building on our discussions of Nation, we turn now to the State. Defining the state is a difficult challenge, but the readings focus particularly on the institutions of governance that are empowered to use violence—particularly through war. In reading, it will be helpful to think about your own experiences with the state. When and how have you been conscious of state power in action? Why is war such a central component of the American state? How does internationalism reimagine the power or purpose of the state?

### **Readings:**

- George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* (pp. 3-33, 251-266, 300-303) (read more)
- Smedley D. Butler, *War Is a Racket* (1935) in *Voices* (pp. 252-255)
- June Jordan Speaks Out Against the 1991 Gulf War (1991) in *Voices* (pp. 256-257)
- Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention, “Principles of Unity” (1983) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 262-265)
- Pledge of Resistance, “The Pledge of Resistance: A Growing Nonviolent Movement for Peace in Central America” (1986) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 274-275)
- African Liberation Day Coalition, “Fight Imperialism and National Oppression from the USA to the USA” (1977) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 279-281)
- Angela Davis, “Keynote Speech Delivered at CAAAV’s Fifteenth Anniversary Fundraiser in New York City” (2001) in *Remaking Radicalism* (pp. 331-334)
- Marilyn Buck, “Remembering a 15 Year Old Palestinian Woman”
- Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, “Anarchist Theory and Practice” (pp. 48-69)

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Scholars and activists frequently use the term “state violence” to depict persistent forms of political exploitation and widespread abuses of power. In this formulation, who or what is the “state,” and how do we decide? How is the state different from the nation?
- When is the use of force justified? How do we decide? Draw from readings by Davis and the African Liberation Day Coalition in proposing insights.
- Cite common stated rationales for war. How do Jackson, Butler, and Jordan help us situate these claims in the context of ongoing struggles over land and resources?
- Can we envision a world without war? What might that entail? Use “Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention” and “Pledge of Resistance” to make the case.

- Is war about a nation in conflict with outside adversaries or do domestic agencies and officials participate in war? Use at least three assigned readings from this list in formulating your response.

### **III. PROJECTS**

Collaborate with members of your reading group to translate the insights you have discussed into one more of the following genres:

- zines
- interview/podcast transcripts
- poetry
- first-person narratives
- memoir (ie. *Assata*)
- book chapters/articles
- song lyrics
- “solitary gardens”