
ABOLITION AND REPARATIONS:
HISTORIES OF RESISTANCE, TRANSFORMATIVE
JUSTICE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

*Patrisse Cullors**

The historical context of abolition is minimally understood, either in today's social movements or in U.S. society more broadly. For our political strategies and struggles against racism, patriarchy, and capitalism to be effective, we must deeply ground ourselves in an abolitionist vision and praxis.¹ The combination of theory and practice takes consistent and committed work to upend the systems that make prisons, policing, and domestic and international warfare possible. These phenomena spell displacement, despair, diasporas,² trauma, and death for our families and communities in the United States and globally. In this Essay, I will reference different movements to frame my theoretical understanding of abolition, its history, and its potential political power. We organizers and freedom fighters believe that an abolitionist framework and strategy is necessary to challenge the conditions faced by Black communities in this country, and that only through an abolitionist struggle will we repair our communities and undermine the systems of oppression we know have facilitated devastation, from the transatlantic slave trade through the prison industrial complex. I will shed light on cases where social justice workers have come up against and learned from moments and movements filled with opportunities where an abolitionist praxis might have emerged. Some of these opportunities were taken, and some were missed. In this narrative, I intend to provide organizers, scholars, and communities with a history of abolition, as well as the tools and the principles for how to assess, define, and incorporate an abolitionist praxis in all aspects of our work and lives.

* Cofounder, Black Lives Matter; Adjunct Professor, Prescott College; M.F.A. Candidate, University of Southern California.

¹ PAULO FREIRE, *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* 51 (Myra Bergman Ramos trans., Continuum 30th Anniversary ed. 2005) (1970) ("Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.").

² The African diaspora is a term that refers to the dispersal of African peoples to form a distinct, transnational community. It is most often used to refer to Africans and their descendants living outside the continent, but diasporas have formed within the continent as well. See PAUL GILROY, *THE BLACK ATLANTIC: MODERNITY AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS* 15 (1993).

I. ABOLITION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The United States, the world's largest jailer,³ is also the world's greatest perpetrator of war and the most extensive purveyor of human rights atrocities at home and abroad, laying claim to over 800 military bases around the world.⁴ It is no surprise that tear gas was sprayed both on Black women and children demanding justice in the wake of the fatal officer shooting of young Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri,⁵ and on the streets of Buenaventura, Colombia, contaminating the lungs of Afro-Colombians fighting for reparations and for an end to U.S.-backed, state-sanctioned violence.⁶ Military training, equipment, and strategies used by militarized police forces in the United States have been found for decades in countries around the world.⁷ Therefore, whatever political change we advocate for, it must address and settle this dilemma of global U.S. state violence, injustice, and devastation. We define abolition as a praxis that roots itself in the following principles: people's power; love, healing, and transformative justice; Black liberation; internationalism; anti-imperialism; dismantling structures; and practice, practice, practice. Our work is guided by political movement traditions against slavery and racism dating back to the African and Indigenous Maroons⁸ of the Americas who dared to imagine their lives without shackles like those of their contemporary brethren currently incarcerated.

We draw upon the theoretical work of many before us. Professor Angela Y. Davis — philosopher, Marxist, and former Black Panther whose work on prisons, abolition, and Black struggle has proven relevant over time — has informed our movements and communities for decades. Her political theories and reflections on anticapitalist movements around the world have sought not only to transform U.S. society

³ See INST. FOR CRIMINAL POLICY RESEARCH, *Highest to Lowest – Prison Population Total*, http://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field_region_taxonomy_tid=All [<https://perma.cc/7ADJ-G4LD>].

⁴ Alice Slater, *The U.S. Has Military Bases in 80 Countries. All of Them Must Close.*, THE NATION (Jan. 24, 2018), <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-us-has-military-bases-in-172-countries-all-of-them-must-close/> [<https://perma.cc/G6CK-Y45N>].

⁵ Justin Carissimo, *Michael Brown's Death Inspires New State Laws Across 24 States*, THE INDEPENDENT (Aug. 3, 2015, 5:16 PM), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/michael-browns-death-inspires-40-new-state-laws-across-24-states-10435927.html> [<https://perma.cc/LJ4L-HN3H>].

⁶ See Black Alliance for Peace, *Victory for the Black Struggle in Buenaventura, Colombia*, BLACK AGENDA REP. (June 14, 2017), https://blackagendareport.com/victory_buenaventura_colombia_strike [<https://perma.cc/W7Q5-H28D>]; Jonathan Watts, *Battle for the Mother Land: Indigenous People of Colombia Fighting for Their Lands*, THE GUARDIAN (Oct. 28, 2017, 7:05 PM), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/28/nasa-colombia-cauca-valley-battle-motherland> [<https://perma.cc/S2DP-FXJY>].

⁷ *Solidarity with Honduras*, SCH. OF THE AMS. WATCH, www.soaw.org/advocacy/solidarity-with-honduras/ [<https://perma.cc/X99N-6F6L>].

⁸ See generally QUINCY SAUL ET AL., MAROON COMIX: ORIGINS AND DESTINIES (2018).

by challenging white supremacy in U.S. laws, institutions, and relationships, but also to act as a catalyst toward building a broader antiracist and antiwar movement internationally.⁹ Another significant theorist is Frantz Fanon, a psychologist and political theorist from Martinique whose work on colonial violence in Algeria and across the Third World makes timely connections necessary to understanding the current global context for Black individuals on the African continent and in our multiple diasporas.¹⁰ And finally, the poet and theorist on interlocking identities Audre Lorde embodies this abolitionist praxis in her moving testimonies and observations through a Black, queer, feminist lens.

II. REPARATIONS: ABOLITION IN ACTION

Abolition calls on us not only to destabilize, deconstruct, and demolish oppressive systems, institutions, and practices, but also to repair histories of harm across the board. Our task is not only to abolish prisons, policing, and militarization, which are wielded in the name of “public safety” and “national security.” We must also demand reparations and incorporate reparative justice into our vision for society and community building in the twenty-first century. Reparations campaigns encompass a wide array of demands. Most commonly, reparations in our contemporary movements are justified by the historical pains and damage caused by European settler colonialism and are proposed in the form of demands for financial restitution, land redistribution, political self-determination, culturally relevant education programs, language recuperation, and the right to return (or repatriation).¹¹

Reparations have a long history in the United States and in other nations for both Black and Indigenous peoples.¹² Caribbean and Latin American nations have launched a political and grassroots campaign for reparations.¹³ The organization Caribbean Community (CARICOM) presently leads a multi-state initiative against European powers.¹⁴ The organization was formed after Haiti, the first Black republic of the

⁹ See Angela Davis, *Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves*, 3 BLACK SCHOLAR, Nov.–Dec. 1981, at 2 (1971).

¹⁰ See generally FRANTZ FANON, *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH* (Constance Farrington trans., Grove Press, First Evergreen ed. 1966) (1961).

¹¹ See, e.g., *Reparations*, MOVEMENT FOR BLACK LIVES, <https://policy.m4bl.org/reparations/> [<https://perma.cc/G6KU-GKC5>].

¹² See, e.g., H.R. 40, 115th Cong. (2017) (affirming the relationship between the history of the formation of the United States and the “fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity” inherent in the institution of slavery).

¹³ Jeanette Charles, Opinion, *Belize: Africans, Asians and Indigenous Peoples Demand Reparations*, TELESUR (Oct. 27, 2015), www.telesurenglish.net/opinion/Belize-Africans-Asians-and-Indigenous-Peoples-Demand-Reparations-20170206-0003.html [<https://perma.cc/GFE2-QWQY>].

¹⁴ *About Us*, CARICOM REPARATIONS COMMISSION, <http://caricomreparations.org/about-us/> [<https://perma.cc/WZ3C-YRZR>].

Western Hemisphere, launched a reparations campaign against France for the equivalent of over twenty-two billion dollars in 2004, the year of Haiti's bicentennial.¹⁵

Reparations in our U.S.-based movements may take on a variety of forms, including alignment with reparations struggles in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa. In addition, reparations should include restoring a balance from within our communities and carrying our autonomous healing and reparatory work through the arts, culture, language, and emotional and mental health services. Reparations must also include pressure on state accountability as well as community-driven and -centered responses.

The political and grassroots movements most demonized by the U.S. state, and most pressured by the U.S. apparatus within and outside its fabricated borders, are promising testaments to the possibilities of an abolitionist future. In our social justice work, we are often confronted with moments that test our emotional, political, and personal bounds. The aforementioned framework and histories bring our analysis back to the basics and the everyday praxis in our homes, with our families, in our communities, and with our organizations. As cofounder of Black Lives Matter and long-time organizer against U.S. state-sanctioned violence, I am reminding folks in a series of personal vignettes what abolition is and which principles we should reference in our own abolitionist work.

My abolitionist journey embodies the following twelve principles: (1) have courageous conversations; (2) commit to response versus reaction; (3) experiment: nothing is fixed; (4) say yes to one's imagination; (5) forgive actively versus passively; (6) allow oneself to feel; (7) commit to not harming or abusing others; (8) practice accountability for harm caused; (9) embrace non-reformist reforms; (10) build community; (11) value interpersonal relationships; (12) fight the U.S. state and do not make it stronger. I ask that you sit with these vignettes, reflect on your own experiences, and begin to sketch your own abolitionist praxes and testimonies.¹⁶

III. WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST: THE LACK OF TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE ALTERNATIVES

From 2005 to 2006, I worked as a high school youth counselor. Students visited my office to talk about any number of things: teachers, homework, and family issues, among other topics. They confided in me, and our conversations took on deep issues daily.

¹⁵ Westenley Alcenat, *The Case for Haitian Reparations*, JACOBIN (Jan. 14, 2017), <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/01/haiti-reparations-france-slavery-colonialism-debt/> [https://perma.cc/V2XZ-ZW5S].

¹⁶ All names in the following stories have been changed.

One day, a student, Marisol, shared with me that her teacher, Mr. Franklin, was flirting with one of her friends. Mr. Franklin was a former teacher and mentor of mine; I was overcome with emotion upon learning it was him. I looked up to him, and most of all, I had trusted him over the years. When Marisol spoke with me, I reminded her that I was a mandatory reporter.¹⁷ We discussed the implications of my reporting and how it would affect all of us. As required, I reported the situation to the Department of Children and Family Services and the school district.

Upon filing Mr. Franklin's case, we found that this was not the first time this type of abuse had occurred during his tenure. Many of us were devastated to learn of other instances of child abuse on campus. I faced complicated feelings, as the abolitionist practice I believed in did not find itself reflected in the consequences for either Mr. Franklin or the young student. I reached out to my community and facilitated healing circles with the student. We held space for collective reflection and breathing, and we reminded ourselves of everyone's humanity. I reached out to Mr. Franklin as well upon disclosing my identity as the reporter. However, he did not respond to my attempts to communicate with him. I experienced bouts of post-traumatic stress disorder and, at that time, felt unequipped to ask for the support I needed. I cried. I felt betrayed. I was confused. I talked and processed with as many people in my community as would listen.

When I look back at this episode, I remember the anger I felt in my young adult life at the first institutional response being punitive and defaulting to criminalization. There was nothing restorative in place for anyone. The system punished and left more disaster in its wake. This instance furthered my commitment to abolition because my experience showed me how little the state and its services were truly reparatory in nature. At twenty-two years old, I tried. But Marisol's friend needed more. I needed more. Even Mr. Franklin needed more.

Abolition is taking a stand against sexual violence and abuse. Abolition seeks out restorative practices for all, even when that implies working with the perpetrator of said violence. Abolition finds new ways to operate within a society that considers its members disposable. Abolition means being there for our youth, especially young women of color. Abolition is education in practice.

¹⁷ A mandatory reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities. CHILD WELFARE INFO. GATEWAY, MANDATORY REPORTERS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT 1-2 (2016), <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/manda.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/7NEH-8CP2>].

Two years before that experience, my brother was released from prison. While incarcerated, he was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and was released in the midst of his first manic episode.¹⁸ The authorities did not provide my family with the information necessary to understand his mental health condition. By the second day after his release, it was clear to us that my brother wasn't well. No one in my family — not my sister, mother, father, stepfather, nor I — was prepared for the level of chaos awaiting us. On the third day, my brother was visibly deteriorating. He hadn't slept. He was hallucinating. He was slowly losing clarity about his surroundings — and we were terrified.

My mother and I tried to figure out what was happening. We contacted people in our community and reached out to my brother's probation officer. She had no idea that he had a history of mental illness. When she came to visit, his condition alarmed her, but she had no insight or actionable advice on what we should do. I reached out to my former high school teachers, who advised me to get my brother to a hospital. Finally, we called the Psychiatric Emergency Team (PET), and when the ambulance arrived, the paramedics instructed us to call the police. They told us that the PET did not pick up people recently released from prison.

Out of desperation, I called 911. I spoke with the dispatch desk of the Los Angeles Police Department and provided a detailed description of my brother's condition, sharing with the police that he had just been released from prison. I assumed they would express sympathy for my brother and our family. Afterward, I stood outside my apartment so I could explain the situation in person and ask them questions. When they arrived, I asked, "What will you do to de-escalate the situation if my brother becomes afraid of you? How will you get my brother to the hospital? What are your protocols for people with mental illness? Can I follow you to the hospital?"

The officers were scared out of their wits as I described my brother — a dark-skinned Black man, 6'2" tall, and nearly 300 pounds. One officer replied, "I'll tase him if he escalates." I responded with shock and outrage. But the police were our only option at that moment, and I knew our family needed to act. I escorted the officers into the apartment. The moment they stepped into the house, I realized that I had made a terrible mistake. My brother instantly dropped to his knees, hands in the air, and pleaded with the officers for his life. I ran over to my brother, held him, told him that he was safe, and asked the officers to leave.

¹⁸ Schizoaffective disorder is, like schizophrenia, a psychotic disorder. It includes psychotic elements and significant mood symptoms. See *Schizoaffective Disorder*, NAT'L ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS, <https://www.nami.org/learn-more/mental-health-conditions/schizoaffective-disorder> [<https://perma.cc/48DS-RWSZ>].

By the fourth day, my brother didn't recognize any of us. My mother woke up that morning overcome by violent tears I had never before witnessed. My stepfather decided he would get my brother help and, to our great surprise, my brother trusted him and went to the hospital.

My brother should have never been imprisoned. He should have received the medical support he needed to lead a healthy life. My family should have been informed. We should have received proper services and resources: caseworkers, therapists, and family counseling. The police should not have been the primary option for our family. There should have been first responders trained in restorative justice, healing, and antiracist practices. My brother and our family were left out on our own in one of our most challenging moments.

Abolition authentically serves and protects our loved ones. Abolition fights to ensure that all families have access to adequate and quality health services. Abolition means not having the police as first responders to mental and emotional health crises. Abolition advocates against imprisonment and policing.

Felipe, the brother of one of my closest friends, was a coyote: he was part of an underground business bringing undocumented people into the United States at the border near San Diego.¹⁹ One evening during his late-night transports, Border Patrol started to tail his car. Felipe had four people in his car, including a pregnant woman. Border Patrol's pursuit resulted in a high-speed chase. As a result, Felipe crashed his minivan into a semi-trailer truck. He awoke in a hospital with his hands cuffed to the bed. Everyone else in the van died in the crash. Felipe's sister, Daniela, immediately called me when the news reached her and her family. Felipe would be charged with a crime that, if he were convicted, carried a life sentence. On the San Diego local news he was criminalized, repeatedly called a murderer. Felipe had just turned eighteen years old and was to be tried as an adult.

Daniela and I gathered our community. We raised funds for an attorney. We fought for Felipe's life. We confronted hard questions: How do you move your community to fight for someone like Felipe, who was painted as a monster in the media? What could we say in response to questions about the harm coyotes have caused, or the fact that doctors found drugs in Felipe's system? We didn't have the answers. But we knew to our very cores that life in an iron cage would do no one any good. So we campaigned. We asked people we knew for money for Felipe's case. We pushed folks to see and remind themselves of Felipe's humanity. We facilitated hard conversations. We held each other. We also did work around the harm the accident caused the other families who lost their loved ones. We prayed for those families. Felipe cried. He apologized to those families.

¹⁹ See generally DAVID SPENER, *CLANDESTINE CROSSINGS: MIGRANTS AND COYOTES ON THE TEXAS-MEXICO BORDER* (2009).

The state failed Felipe and his community. The state failed all of those families. Felipe needed access to a recovery program for his drug use. Felipe needed stable employment with a living wage. Felipe's family needed support when they immigrated to the United States, forced out of their homeland because of the United States' role inciting wars across Central America, and in El Salvador specifically, in the 1970s and 1980s.²⁰ To understand what happened to Felipe and those families that night, we must draw the preceding connections. We must also ask: Why are people leaving their homelands to come to the United States? What violence have U.S. foreign policy, U.S. transnational corporations, and U.S. militarization perpetrated around the world?

In the end, we hired a lawyer and Felipe's sentence was reduced to twenty-eight years with a date to return home. For us, that represented a victory. Felipe would not spend his entire life in prison. His family went home to grapple with their new reality: a son, a brother, in prison for nearly three decades. Birthdays, anniversaries, family gatherings, and other remarkable life moments separated by barbed wire, iron bars, and security guards. No process, no support; just gavels and cages.

Abolition means no borders. Abolition means no Border Patrol. Abolition means no Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Abolition means an end to U.S. wars at home and abroad. Abolition centers families, communities, and healing. Abolition asks the hard questions. Abolition looks for solutions.

IV. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CRIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CULTURE

At twenty-three years old, my best friend Star became an avid drug user and sex worker. We grew up together and had known each other since we were twelve years old. Immediately, I responded with deep criticism. I thought my words, reminding Star of her power and how she could do "more" with her life, would benefit her. Instead, I pathologized her. I judged her. Eventually, my pedestal pushed her away.

Star stopped talking to me. Now, I understand why. She felt scrutinized. Over the years, I had absorbed all the myths about drug users, addicts, and sex workers. I thought they needed to be saved. Despite all my best intentions, I failed my best friend. I did not apply my abolitionist practice. I let down this Black woman, my best friend. For this, I am deeply sorry.

If she told me now, I would behave differently. Today, I would hold space for her decisions and find resources for her. I would be more

²⁰ See, e.g., Cole Kazdin, *The Violence Central American Migrants Are Fleeing Was Stoked by the U.S.*, VICE (June 28, 2018, 12:00 AM), https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/qvnyzq/central-america-atrocities-caused-immigration-crisis [<https://perma.cc/5SDY-RQGA>].

graceful, loving, kind, and gentle, and a better listener. I would not let puritanism overcome me and condemn her worth as a person.

Abolition does not tell people how to live their lives. Abolition is not about righteousness. Abolition does not put ourselves above our people and those we love.

I spent ten years in a toxic relationship with a trans man. They were kind and charming, but they were also a rageaholic. They were possessive. They wanted all of my time. They were incredibly controlling. One night, they went into a fit of rage and tried to fight someone else. I used my body as a barrier. We went home in silence.

Their rage continued. For a long time I never told anyone. No one in my close circle of friends knew how much my partner at the time was a rageaholic. I started walking on eggshells. I stopped bringing things up. I shrank. I avoided their constant irritability. I realized that I had no capacity for this relationship. I wanted out. Needed out.

Without my friends' support, I developed an exit from this relationship. I had enabled my partner and their devastating default to rage. When I left the relationship, it created a wave of friction in our community. Our friends lent me support but left my former partner with little to nothing. My former partner became isolated. I came to realize that they had relied on me for everything. They didn't have a strong circle of friends or a support system. The few friends they had, our mutual friends, took sides.

We need a culture that does not epitomize, isolate, and center romantic relationships. We need to cultivate a society that encourages community and fosters love for our communities.

Abolition means community. Abolition does not isolate individuals. Abolition invites people in. Abolition repairs the friction caused by necessary separation. Abolition acknowledges enabling and provides tools to prevent this behavior. Abolition does not choose sides.

V. SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

I helped raise my nephew. I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't spank him. When other family members tried to hit my nephew, he'd come running to me. When my nephew turned eleven years old, his parents lost all parental rights and my mother became his legal guardian. This forced my family to develop new strategies for child raising, development, and accountability. We had new conversations with my nephew. We asked him to voice his needs and communicate when he was upset. Instead of lashing out with force, my nephew used his voice, and we responded with appropriate actions.

I remember moments in my childhood where there were no conversations, just a belt and a deep sting of humiliation. My nephew experienced a different type of environment. I witnessed firsthand the impact

of a nonspanking home. My nephew developed into a more thoughtful, communicative, and sensitive person. He felt empowered to name his feelings. He did not exhibit the same type of fear I witnessed in so many other Black children.

Raising my nephew wasn't easy. I do not want to sugarcoat or misrepresent the labor that went into this practice. So many times we all took time-outs from him. And so many times my mother called me while at her wits' end. But we didn't hit him, and we learned to collectively build better practices.

Abolition is about respecting children, particularly and especially Black children, who are disciplined at school most frequently.²¹ Abolition is teaching our children about how to hold space for their emotions instead of bottling them up for fear of being punished. Abolition is teaching our children accountability. Abolition is reminding our children that they are free.

This one is hard. A few years ago, I started seeing someone, Jordan. One weekend they came over and we became sexually intimate. This person crossed my boundaries. I felt uncomfortable, weird, and vulnerable while it happened. But, I couldn't name it. I didn't stop it while it was happening. I set boundaries and said "no." I repeated that two-letter word. This other person did not respect my "no."

After that weekend, they went home. Once they left, I slowly came to realize what happened and that things weren't right. I called friends and processed with them what took place. Eventually, I asked one of my friends to accompany me as I confronted the person whom I had shared intimate space with — who had harmed me. Both the person in question and my friend were masculine of center. I thought this would make holding them accountable easier to do. They knew each other, and my friend had experience in transformative justice facilitation and support. I confided in my friend and detailed exactly what I needed, what I wanted:

1. Tell Jordan that I was harmed.
2. Tell Jordan that I wanted space from them.
3. Help Jordan secure help and realize where they caused harm.

After the meeting, Jordan became defensive. Again, they refused to respect my boundaries. And they began to spiral. They left me constant voicemails, text messages, and letters. I asked my friend to remind Jordan that I needed space. They stopped sending letters and making calls. I had room to feel, to sit with my grief, and to come to terms with what happened to me.

²¹ See U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, K-12 EDUCATION: DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES FOR BLACK STUDENTS, BOYS, AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES 14 fig.2 (2018), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/690828.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/TC5M-6C23>].

The following year, I contacted Jordan. I asked if they were open to meeting with me. Jordan agreed. We processed what happened over dinner. It was challenging, heart-wrenching, and awkward. But most of all, our meeting was healing. Incredibly healing.

What made this experience so hard was that the harm and healing took place within the Black queer community. This incident forced me to practice what I preach by embracing accountability and abolition fully. It pushed me to clarify my needs, give myself permission to take the space and time I needed, and process healing as an individual and as a member of a community. I am grateful to my friend who lent their support, and who from that initial moment and throughout that year provided me with the tools I needed to repair the damage.

Abolition means setting, communicating, and respecting boundaries. Abolition means reinforcing those boundaries when they are not heard. Abolition means transformative justice. Abolition allows one time to heal. Abolition seeks to repair the damage done to a person or a people. Abolition holds space for the person or people who have perpetrated violence, harm, and damage. Abolition makes the impossible possible.

I have sat in, facilitated, and participated in many healing circles with people I've harmed and who have harmed me. Defensiveness, anger, self-righteousness, self-realization, serenity, and other emotions have come over me and through me in those moments. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had to apologize and learn from my mistakes. I am appreciative of the times I have forgiven and moved beyond the harm, toward transformation.

I am forever indebted to the community of friends, family, and loved ones I have created over the years to hold one another and call ourselves into our own collective humanity. I value this community, the people that I call my team.

CONCLUSION

Abolition must be a cultural intervention. It must produce a new way of being even in the most challenging and difficult moments. We have not collectively practiced abolition so it's hard for us to understand its significance. But, if we implement a new practice that is centered in care and dignity, we might find a practice that challenges our instinct to "cancel" each other. Abolition is about how we treat each other. It is about how we show up in relationships. Abolition is about how we respond to harm caused and how we respond when we cause harm. It is differentiating between large-scale systems that have been built to perpetuate our harm, and individual harm caused against one another. I don't believe abolition is about bullying, but I do believe abolition is about standing up for yourself. We need to be committed to building a culture that is rooted in care, dignity, and accountability. Let's never forget the consequences of a draconian and antiquated system.