

***Abolition. Feminism. Now. (2022)***

Davis, Dent, Meiners, Richie

**READING PROJECT****Reading Project Questions by Chapters**

*The following discussion questions reference sexual and gender-based violence, racialized oppression, and systemic abuse. This content follows the book's political and theoretical trajectories while developing some of its stances.*

**Preface and Introduction**

- a. What is the importance of tracing political lineages, and why is the term “ecosystem” used here (xiii)?
- b. The preface challenges the notion of linearity, recognizing that histories are overlapping, multiple, and simultaneous. How is this political framing helpful in grasping abolition and feminism as deeply intertwined?
- c. The term *abolition feminism* “incorporates a dialectic, a relationality, and a form of interruption” (2); it is political work that embraces in its praxis a “both/and” perspective. How are the authors dealing with unavoidable challenges and contradictions while striving to dismantle the carceral state? Moreover: why shouldn’t activism ever let go of the visionary (16)?
- d. The first pages of the book briefly lay out the question of uncompensated labor, which overwhelmingly sustains the abolition feminist ecosystem. Discuss the implications of this fact, paying particular attention to how gendered care work remains mostly unpaid across the globe. How is it possible to resist this unacceptable status quo?

**Chapter I: Abolition**

- a. In this chapter, the authors offer a series of generative examples of abolitionist struggles. Discuss them at length, paying particular attention to the 1998 Critical Resistance conference. How

did that gathering enact an “antiracist, anticapitalist feminist practice” (45)?

- b. Is abolition solely focusing on the dismantling of prisons? In order to discuss this question, consider the following quote: “Abolition, as a tradition, a philosophy, and a theory of change, moves away from a myopic focus on the distinct institution of the prison toward a more expansive vision of the social, political, and economic processes that defined the context within which imprisonment came to be viewed as the legitimate hand of justice.” (50).
- c. What are W.E.B. Du Bois’ main contributions to the work of contemporary abolitionists? How does *Black Reconstruction* connect abolition to the struggle against capitalism?
- d. Davis, Dent, Meiners, and Richie rightly complicate the notion that mass incarceration is a continuation of racial slavery. While analogies could be helpful, they often erase “the imperative to do the analytical work that might be more effectively accomplished by establishing a genealogical relation between the institution of slavery and the institution of the prison.” (60) Why is it crucial to invoke and disrupt heteropatriarchal and capitalist systems when performing abolitionist work? How does the state perpetuate violence and reproduce poverty, white supremacy, and misogyny?

**Chapter II: Feminism**

- a. “Feminist goals are not possible without abolition.” (77). How do you understand this statement, especially in relation to the carceral orientation that some forms of white feminism have embraced in the last few years? What can we learn from Black and Indigenous feminists regarding the connection between abolition and feminism?

- b. How does abolition feminism think and deal with sexual and gender-based violence? How does the analysis of structural oppression contribute to an understanding of the interrelatedness between state violence and individualized sexual violence? Consider this quote while thinking about this complex matter: “Currently and formerly incarcerated women pointed out that physical and sexual abuse by partners and other individuals did not feel any different from abuse behind walls.” (114) What are the knots, resistances, and potentialities of this claim? How do you relate to it?
- c. Discuss the foundational (and sometimes complicated, see 91) work of the group ‘INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence’. What is the enduring legacy of this collective, especially in relation to its internationalist reach?

### Chapter III: Now

- a. How does the pandemic accelerate the sense of urgency towards decarceration? As the authors remind us, “people were always already dying too early in prisons.” (126). Discuss, through your program’s lens, how the COVID-19 crisis intersects with abolitionist stances.
- b. The uprisings in the summer of 2020 (re)centered the need to abolish the police. With the current US Democratic administration encouraging states to use federal money to fund the police (despite its blatant inability to protect citizens from harm, as we painfully witnessed during the Uvalde shooting), how can we resist the pervasiveness of police violence?
- c. How are “grassroots feminist ecosystem[s]” building safety and accountability “outside law and order” (145)?
- d. Discuss the following quote and its rich political implications: “[...] the dominant and mainstream understanding of history, of the ecology of social and political change, is intentionally narrowed, whitewashed and straightened, and always in search of individuals and not collectives, policy/legal/legislative wins and not processes, actions, and certainly not political education or cultures that create new capaciousness for radical political consciousness.” (162) Do you agree with this critique of the rampant culture of neoliberal individualism proposed by the authors?

### Epilogue and Appendices

- a. The epilogue offers the authors the possibility of briefly reflecting upon collective writing, and the difficult task of drawing “a line when the work is unfolding and unfinished [.]” (167) What are your thoughts about the writing method used by Davis, Dent, Meiners, and Richie? What can we learn from it, as a feminist praxis?
- b. The surge of the virtual as a mode of connectivity, unfolded during the pandemic, energized the authors’ labor (see 170). Can this be applied to higher education in prison? What are the limits and potentialities of online forms of communication, and who can access them?
- c. Among its appendices, Abolition. Feminism. Now. includes the seminal “INCITE!-Critical Resistance Statement on Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex” (175-181). Discuss its “holistic” strategies to fight gender violence inside prisons and within outside communities.