

Embodied Abolition: A care-centered approach to changing systems

by
Snjezana Pruginic

Supervised by
Jin Haritaworn

A Major Project Report
submitted to the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master's
in Environmental Studies
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

July 2022

Abstract

This paper is a reflection on my master's research project event *Embodied Abolition*, which was held virtually on April 9th, 2022, in Toronto. The research project was a full day event which brought together Canada-based artists, activists and healers working within abolition frameworks, as well as individuals with lived experience of incarceration and/or the criminal justice system. My research was guided and summarized by the following question: how do we build care-centered justice systems through a process of embodied abolition?

Through community based participatory research, the event, and this paper, was informed by theories of transformative justice, community accountability, radical imagination (Kelley, 2003), pleasure activism (Brown, 2019), ethical relationality (Donaldson, 2016) and the practice of somatics and Somatic Abolition (Menakem, 2020). In addition, it engaged with a rich genealogy and epistemology of abolition and community centered care-making led by queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and People of colour across North America. What the *Embodied Abolition* event offered was a uniquely Canadian lens to abolition organizing by highlighting the works of panelists working within Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The panelists offered perspectives on abolition which intersected with land back movements, decolonization, disability justice, Indigenous teachings, and trans and Black experience of the Canadian justice system. The event findings highlighted a few key themes as crucial in the praxis of abolition and building of a care-based justice system. These themes were: self-determined healing, radical and loving reciprocity and relations which invite all into the conversation, and centering of voices of those with lived experience of the criminal justice system. This paper further explores these themes and connects them to the broader body of work and experiences within abolition.

Foreword

This paper fulfills the requirements of the MES Degree by demonstrating Graduate Degree level depth of knowledge and a deep level of comprehension of the context and origins of the criminal justice system, current day harms, as well as diverse movements of resistance and abolition. It highlights the ways in which the prison industrial complex enacts harm to queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) along with the resistant knowledges that have emerged from QTBIPOC communities. The methods employed in the creation of the MES project *Embodied Abolition*, which was an online event that took place in Toronto on April 9, 2022, were selected with a view towards transferring the knowledge produced into real-life community. The paper further demonstrates Graduate Degree competence in the development and support of a sustained argument in written form, as well as originality in the application of knowledge. It applies a critical analysis of an existing body of knowledge in abolition through a literature review and produces original thought with a view towards enabling continued development in abolition theories and practice.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	5
“Embodied Abolition” : Introduction to the one-day virtual symposium	5
Panellists’ Bios	6
Aim Of This Paper	10
Chapter 2	11
Context for the event	11
What is Care Anyway?	11
The Local Perspective	13
The Panels	14
Chapter 3	20
Methodology	20
My Positionality in the Event	20
Chapter 4	22
Taking Leadership from Those in the Field: Literature Review	22
Embodying Abolition Begins with the Understanding of the Current System	23
Inviting the Complex Personhood	24
Meeting Each Other in Radical Relationships	25
Chapter 5	27
The Voices from the Panel: Research Knowledge Sharing	27
On Harms of the Current System	27
Meeting the Future Via Love and Imagination	28
The Body as a Weapon, the Body as a Revolution, Unlearning Supremacy	29
Chapter 6	32
An Invite to Healing	32
An Intention for Healing	33
A Meditation	33
Chapter 7	35
Conclusion: Dreaming of an Abolitionist Future Here in the Present.	35
Bibliography	38

Chapter 1

“Embodied Abolition”: Introduction to the one-day virtual symposium

I have never felt free, until I found freedom in my own body.
(Anonymous, workshop participant, Thunder Woman Healing Lodge,
April 2022, Toronto)

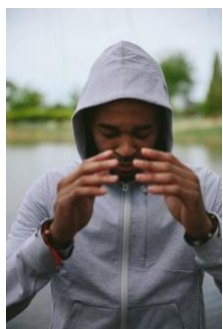
In April 2022, shortly after I organized the MES project event *Embodied Abolition*, which explored abolition and care-making with QTBIPOC activists and community members, I led a body-based workshop at *Thunder Women’s Healing Lodge*, a “community-driven initiative working on breaking the cycle of Indigenous women’s over representation in Canada’s prisons” (Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society, 2021). During the workshop, as we were exploring the questions of what it means to embody abolition, I shared some of my reflections on the *Embodied Abolition* event. During that conversation, one of the participants (a self-identified Indigenous woman with lived experience of incarceration) shared the sentiment quoted above. Though this quote did not originate during the event, I wish to open my reflection paper with her quote, as it perfectly sums up the experience of a somatic (body-centered) abolition practice. A practice, which I explore in the paper, and which framed my master’s project, *Embodied Abolition*, which was held online on April 9th, 2022.

To further explore the connection between somatic, body-centered experience and abolition in building justice systems based on care, conversations at the event were anchored in the following research questions:

1. What is the role of embodiment in healing from harms caused by punitive and carceral systems?
2. What role does embodiment play in creating a shift towards building forms of relating that are grounded in healing and care rather than punishment?
3. How would the creation of embodied care-centered relations within our justice system support individual and community well-being?

Over 450 people registered for the event, out of which 300 attended throughout the day. We gathered for a full day of panel conversations between powerful community healers, activists, artists, and individuals with lived experience of incarceration. Syrus Marcus Ware, Ravyn Wngz, Naty Tremblay, Brandon Dawson-Jarvis, Cathy Walker, Ahmed Adan, Ji-Youn Kim, Zya Brown, Frank Dorsey, and Joey Twins were the invited panelists. In my discussion below, I will aim to convey the powerful impact of having the above-mentioned individuals, whom many readers may recognize as important contemporaries. The wide scope of their work, the history of doing this work for many years, their personal lived experiences, and the diverse ways through which they explore the questions and themes of abolition are just some of the reasons why I choose these panelists. Further information on my direct relationships to their work can be found in Chapter 2 of this paper.

Panellists' Bios



Brandon Dawson-Jarvis, a Montreal based yoga instructor, discovered the benefits of yoga after it drastically improved his bout with depression. Brandon has set out to share these benefits with others. Mindfulness, intention setting, and breath awareness are the cornerstones of his practices. He incorporates many variations in his practice to make it accessible to everyone. You can expect to be challenged but reminded to go at your own pace, as you become aware of the body, mind, and breath connection. Brandon brings his lived experience with the justice system to his work and through yoga

uplifts others.



Ji-Youn Kim (she/they) is a justice-oriented therapist and Korean settler, residing in what is colonially known as Vancouver, Canada, on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. With collective liberation as her vision, she aims to disrupt oppressive practices of the mental health industry and its complicities, and envision new ways of mental health care rooted in community and collective healing. Their work is informed by Black & Indigenous feminist scholars, abolitionists, and organizers, and their own lived experiences as an immigrant, woman of colour, therapist, and psych

survivor.



Cathy Zhong Deh Kwe (Strong Hearted Woman), colonially named Cathy Walker, is a trailblazing Ojibwe community herbalist and proud mother of Three Autistic Boys. She has devoted years to Indigenous community building, knowledge sharing, and movement organizing. She is formerly a Personal Support Worker, and recently completed her first year as a Community Health Worker at Anishinaabe Health Toronto + George Brown College. Cathy was fundamental in creating the Allan Gardens Food & Clothing Share, Nine years ago she co-

created a grassroots native led Street Patrol and from that was born Giwaabamin Street Patrol and Herbal Clinic. Through Giwaabamin, Cathy brings western and traditional medicine to the street, free to access, under a client-centred, harm reduction lens. She offers front line emergency response including wound care, medical assessments, medication checks, daily/weekly aftercare, in addition to herbal support, medicinal preparations, and hot traditional meals. A roaming free dispensary is crucial for the health and care of people who are marginalized in our society, people who fall through the cracks too often, people who may have been harmed by institutional systems of

medicine. Cathy is a fierce advocate for those without the luxury of health and medicine sovereignty, and her visionary work has inspired and taught many others. Recently Giwaabamin moved to a commercial space on Bloor West and now hosts traditional healing circles for street involved men and women and hopes to get funding for a 2-spirit circle also. These circles are inclusive to those that are actively using with the understanding that medicine and culture are a much-needed component to harm reduction in the native community.



Naty Tremblay is Multi-Media Artist, Facilitator & Community Organizer for Healing Justice who believes deeply in the radical & transformative power of the arts leveraged for community rooted education, organizing, healing, and visioning. Naty's experiences as an identical twin, a poor white bodied muskrat french-metis farmer, a rambler, and a gender-queer feminist have greatly shaped their creative social change practices. Naty has co-created a broad body of interactive multi-media stories, performances & workshops, gatherings & community-engaged artworks exploring identity & power, regenerative reciprocity, healing justice & magics of the natural world. Naty has a BA of Integrated Media for Social Change from OCADU.

They co-founded the Xspace artist-run center & The People Project, an organization doing creative activism LGBTQ youth. Naty has coordinated media, community arts & transformative justice programs at Sketch Working Arts for 8+ years, building creative leadership capacity with poor young people. Naty is the Executive Director of Rittenhouse: A New Vision, Canada's oldest abolitionist organization, supporting Transformative Justice capacity building with communities impacted by violence & criminalization.

They are a proud member of the Drawing with Knives shadow puppetry troupe, The Switch Collective - creating political multi-media street performance, and the Trans Healing Arts Collective – visioning spaces that center the healing & creativity of Trans* peoples.



Syrus Marcus Ware is an Assistant Professor at the School of the Arts at McMaster University. A scholar, visual artist, activist, curator and educator, Syrus uses painting, installation, and performance to explore social justice frameworks and black activist culture, His work has been shown widely across Canada in solo and group shows, and his performance works have been part of local and international festivals. He is part of the Performance Disability Art Collective and a core-team member of Black Lives Matter – Toronto. Syrus is curator of the That's So Gay show and a

co-curator of Blackness Yes!/Blockorama. In addition to penning a variety of journals and articles, Syrus is the co-editor of the best-selling *Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada* (URP, 2020).



Ravyn Wngz “The Black Widow of Burlesque” is a Tanzanian, Bermudian, Mohawk, 2Spirit, Queer and Transcendent empowerment storyteller. Ravyn is an abolitionist and co-founder of ILL NANA/DiverseCity Dance Company. She is a co-founder of Black Lives Matter Canada, A co-founder of the Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism, A Canadian Best-Selling Author, Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada recipient of 2021, Ravyn is committed to eradicating all forms of anti-Black racism, settler colonialism systems of oppression while nurturing Black and Indigenous healing in communities.



Zya Brown is the founder of Think Twice International, a non-profit organization that provides culturally relevant initiatives and programming to individuals who are incarcerated as well as communities who are impacted by gun and gang violence. Advocate, Script Writer, Theatre Director and up and coming Film Maker, Ms Brown a community leader with lived experience, unified former inmates, gang members, youth, and community leaders to combat the rising gun violence that was plaguing many neighborhoods in the City of Toronto. This collaboration birthed the ‘Think Twice’ organization. Four years after its inception, In 2009, Ms. Brown began developing and facilitating programming and theatre productions for Black inmates. By 2014, Think Twice otherwise known as ‘ Zya and the Think Twice Theatre Group’ expanded to a total of 8 federal institutions providing a variety of initiatives including theatre programming to the Black inmates.



Joey Twins whose name is Red Stone Woman who Walks With Fire. Two spirits PLAINS CREE TREATY SIX MASKWACIS ALBERTA . A Motivational speaker, Hand drummer and singer, Land Defender, Water Protector, Prison ABOLITIONIST. Received Ed Mcissac Human Rights in Corrections Award. All Childs Matter. Advocate

Frank Dorsey is currently serving an indeterminate sentence, labeled as “dangerous offender”. Frank have been in prison for 23 years straight and has spent 36 years out of the last 38 years in a federal institution. Frank has now developed a program for “offenders” or “possible offender” called The Being Frank, Saving Lives Program that deals with prevention and rehabilitation. It addresses Black and Ethno Cultural offenders risk factors associated with their culture. He has identified at least 20 risk factors that no program in CSC or in the Community address. (Frank joined the symposium from a federal institution and due to corrections and confidentiality no photo was shared.)



Ahmed Adan (Hope & Hustle Heights) - who goes by the stage name wordsof1der. Ahmed is a Muslim, Somali poet who uses his platform to uplift the youth and motivate others to strive to be better every day. He is also the founder of a youth organization called Hope & Hustle Heights where he facilitates arts-based events, sports events and workshops for youth in order to promote healthy living.

Moderating the conversation was the powerfully creative and kind Kafia Abdulkader, whom I first met in one of my classes as a fellow master’s in environmental studies student.



Kafia Abdulkader is a fat Black Femme, artist, storyteller, and community organizer focused on reimagining Blackness, fatness, and digital landscapes. Kafia’s work utilizes Black Feminist methodology to critique pop culture tropes and social media as a neocolonial tool that perpetuates dangerous ideas around racism, fatphobia, heterosexism, and ableism. Kafia has a background in Women & Gender Studies and Professional Writing at the University of Toronto. Currently, Kafia is pursuing a master’s degree in Environmental and Urban Change, specializing in digital culture, food justice and the racialization of space

A space of collective care

There were three sessions throughout the day which were moderated with much tenderness and care by Abdulkader. Questions and answers around trauma, harm, hope, dreams, and love were explored in a caring environment. Themes of radical community care, reciprocity, sitting with the hard and messy stuff, providing care for those who caused harm, abolitionist futures, and more, formed containers for the captivating conversation which took place.

When planning the event, it was my intention to invite every person in that virtual space, from the audience to the panelists, moderator, ASL interpreters, myself and all others supporting on the back end, to enter into the possibility of what this process of dismantling and repairing harm, while building care, can feel like in our own individual bodies, as well as the collective which we shared. Held in virtual space where we could not be physically together, the intention with which we entered this conversation, the way we held space for others in that conversation, and our commitment to mutual benefit and reciprocity, allowed for the space to feel welcoming, inclusive, and familial. As I skimmed through the chat during the event, I was struck by how many participants felt as if they were part of a conversation with friends.

Aim Of This Paper

The aim of this reflection paper is to share the magic which happened that day, magic that stayed in our bodies, hearts, minds, souls, and dreams. I am certain that this magic will continue to guide our actions on the path of abolition.

May we journey together on the path of abolition, which is being shaped by, and is deeply indebted to, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC), community activists, scholars, and community members. As people who have experienced systemic harm and violence, QTBIPOC communities have, and continue to form in resistance to, and as an alternative to the punitive carcel systems, multiple community-based levels of support, mutual aid, community accountability and healing. Within these communities, individuals have, and continue to, give their time and their hearts to do the work of abolition every day, in the streets, inside institutions, in the community, or at home during those 2:00 AM crisis calls. It is imperative that when talking about abolition, we take leadership from QTBIPOC communities as they are the ones most impacted by the harms of the current criminal justice system and those who have continuously been fighting for its dismantlement. As such, this paper aims to share as much of the conversation from the QTBIPOC panel present on April 9th, while supporting it with a literature review of well-known abolitionists, scholars, and activists.

Chapter 2

Context for the event

What is Care Anyway?

When one person in our community experiences harm, all of us are harmed.
(Kaba, 2021. p. 158)

As someone who grew up in the ethnically tense, and conflict laden region of the Balkans, I read Kaba's above sentence, and I instantly feel it deep inside my body and bones. I have seen and felt generations of my ancestors and those of my neighbours and community witnessing, experiencing, and doing harm. This harm still lingers in our collective bodies and shapes so greatly how we relate to each other, contributing negatively to any possibility of lasting peace in the region. When I started working in the criminal justice system, I saw the same patterns of structured, institutional, and deliberately implemented harm practiced as the kind that I was used to because of multiple generations of war. I saw it in the over policing, overincarceration, and overreliance on use of solitary confinement and harsh sentences of Black, Indigenous and trans people, as well as people who experience mental health concerns, homelessness, addictions, and sex work. It is the physical legacy and the present-day reality of harm which we experience in our bodies (whether we are conscious of it or not), that has long fascinated me and informed my research and my career.

By exploring the harms, I am led to explore care. In this exploration, I can't help but ask: How do we get to a state of mutual and self-determined care? What would this look like, feel like, smell like, taste like, sound like? How would our bodies know they are cared for, loved, supported, and allowed to show up as their whole selves?

After several years of doing body-based therapy with individuals who have experienced deep personal, institutional, and systemic harms, I knew that the answer lay in transforming the very systems which cause harm. It lay in building systems of relating from care. The aim of my master's research and of my event, therefore, was to collectively explore how such a system transformation could happen, and how we embody it, so that abolition may become a reality.

It is for this reason that I engage with the theories of transformative justice (TJ). TJ is a framework that is inherently abolitionist in nature, as it looks to transform the very systems which cause harm, while also preventing further harm. It is a framework that has been practiced informally and formally for many generations by the people most impacted by harm: the working class, poor people, sex workers, queer, trans, Black, and Indigenous women, people of colour, and people who are marginalized by the system due to mental health, experiences of homelessness, addictions, and various

visible and invisible disabilities. One of my favourite definitions of Transformative Justice (TJ) is provided by Mariame Kaba on her website:

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm, and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of “making things right,” getting in “right relation,” or creating justice together. Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved. (Transformharm, 2020)

I teach a workshop called *Embodied Care-Making*, in which I try to bring this essence of transformative justice into how we relate to each other, rooting care in a relational experience of TJ values. The premise of the workshop is that everything in our life is built on relations. Relations with oneself. Relations with others. Relations with our ideas, thoughts, beliefs, values. Relations with our experiences. Relations with our identities. Relations with our past, present, and future. Relations with living and non-living. All the systems that we currently have are made by people and a result of how we relate to one another. Do we meet each other in mutual care, in a caring relationship where everyone has the right to decide what they need, and how, for their well-being? Or do we meet each other in control, punishment, shame, intentional and unintentional harm created by the carceral values of good versus bad?

The aim of the *Embodied Abolition* event was to delve deeper into the above-mentioned carceral binary of good versus bad. A binary which has its stronghold on how we perceive care and persuades us to believe that harsh sentences and imprisonment are meant to provide care for our society. However, when we listen to the stories of those on the front line and those impacted by the current justice system, we come to learn that the current criminal justice system only perpetuates further harm. This will be outlined further in this paper when I discuss the conversations that were held at the event.

Pulling from my ongoing engagement with the rich and ongoing work of TJ and abolition, and complemented with conversations on the panel, as well as in my literature review, I propose the following definition of embodied care-making. It is a process which collaboratively shapes what care means, looks like, feels like, smells like, tastes like, and sounds like. While rooting in the love-based practice of repairing harm, preventing harm and transforming the systems which cause harm, and always by taking leadership from those most harmed by the current system.

The event created space for this above mentioned definition of embodied care-making to come to life by inviting us to come together in a tender space of care and dialogue, to join in conversation with each other, to support a mutual un-learning of white, cis-

gender, heteronormative body superiority which marks the justice system and our society. While also supporting grieving, reflecting, imagining, and dreaming of what self-directed and sovereign care looks like, all were invited to step into their own critical reflection on care as well as their individual role and responsibility towards a collective liberation. At the same time, we sought to honour the deep lineage of care that is already present in many queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (QTBIPOC) communities.

The Local Perspective

When we talk about abolition, we are often guided to the rich and long history of activism in the United States. However, as an abolitionist living in so-called Canada, who is also conscious of the fact that most of my understanding of abolition comes from a USA context, I wanted to create an event which would highlight Canadian voices and speak to Canadian realities. Since August 10, 1975, the date of the prisoner-led hunger strike at Millhaven Maximum Security Prison in Bath (Ontario) to mourn the suicide of Edward Nalon, there has been more focus on prisoners' justice and the overall harms of the criminal justice system within the Canadian context (SMAAC, 2020).

At the forefront of this have always been those who are overrepresented in the Canadian criminal justice system, such as Black and Indigenous men, Black and Indigenous women, Black and Indigenous trans, queer and 2spirit people. Just one example of an organizing group that has been working for decades on abolition is the "Black Women's Collective, in Toronto, bringing visibility to the realities faced by Black women at the hands of the police" (Maynard, 2022).

The Indigenous resistance to the prison and carceral system has been present in communities across so-called Canada ever since the arrival of colonialism and the creation of residential schools, which were a direct contributor to the creation of the Canadian Royal Mounted Police as a state mechanism of abuse and violence. Indigenous communities have been at the forefront of demanding change, closely linking the abolition struggle to land back and land sovereignty activism, which are intrinsically connected. Organizations like *Idle No More*, which were formed by four Indigenous women from Saskatchewan, were born directly out of this resistance (Caven, 2013).

There are many more Canadian based organizations, scholars, and activists not mentioned here, whose work I engage with more and more each day. However, for the purpose of this event and this reflection paper, I purposefully choose to center activism from the streets, from the healing circles, from the art projects, and from persons currently incarcerated within the institutions themselves, as highlighted by the panelists introduced in the introduction.

The Panels

In this section, I describe the panels and my relationship to their work in order of conversation on the day of the event.

PANEL 1: Somatic Practice and Embodied Abolition with Brandon Dawson-Jarvis, Ji-Youn Kim and Cathy Walker. 10:00 am – 12:00 am

The panelists invited to this panel were individuals with whom I have previously engaged with and whose work I deeply respected. Brandon Dawson-Jarvis is someone I had the pleasure of working with via the *Forgiveness Project* and through my work with men experiencing incarceration. Dawson-Jarvis brings a somatic lens as a yoga practitioner and working with the body as entry point into healing and care, while identifying as someone who came to yoga through his experience of incarceration. Ji-Youn Kim's work has fascinated me for a long time. Ji-Youn Kim is a mental health professional and survivor bringing a critical and decolonizing approach to mental health and healing, through honoring ancestral healing, intergenerational rage, joy and more. Watching their work on social media, from their posts to their webinars, on the unceded territory of present-day Vancouver, I was honoured to have Kim be part of the panel. Cathy Walker is a fellow harm reduction worker with whom I have worked in a grief and wellness program at *Breakaway Community Services* for individuals affected by the opioid crisis. She is a powerful Indigenous healer working with plant medicines and extending the idea of body to include land and non-human kin (such as plants) to support communities through a harm reduction lens, something which not often talked about, but is a key element of transformative justice values. I invited her knowing that the medicine she would bring needed to be part of this conversation.

I had started off the event with this panel rooted in healing and body-based practices due to my belief that one of the first steps in embodying an abolition process is entering into a space of healing. What this healing looks like is unique to each individual and as diverse as one's each person's experience of care. To capture the diversity of access points towards care, I chose to have three people on this panel who approach healing and somatic works through different lenses.

The distinct and diverse approaches of somatic work by each of the panelists when combined, brought forth a beautiful exploration of the role of being embodied and working with our bodies. A way of living and breathing abolition frameworks and processes. Echoing what Hilary L. McBride, author of *The Wisdom of the Body*, so well describes as "the experience of being a body in a social context" (2021, p. 12). We experience the world through our physical self, and in turn create identities through which that self resonates and engages with the world, reminding us that who we are, our whole personhood, our whole sense of self, can never be separated from our physical experience of ourselves. Rooting in this understanding, the event opened with a conversation about the physical experience of harm, care and abolition, experiences which the different panelists spoke to beautifully when talking about their lived experiences.

Examples for this include when Dawson-Jarvis talked about his experience with incarceration as a Black man, or when Walker shared her personal experience of homelessness in conjunction with her legacies of colonization and family incarceration. Kim shared a first-hand experience of the harms of the medical mental health institutions, as so-called care systems that are reminiscent of carceral thinking and the criminal justice system.

All the questions for all three panels were developed by me and through a consultation process via email, chat and phone calls with fellow peers from my MES program, fellow workers in the community justice field and current clients experiencing incarceration.

Questions for the first panel

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your work, how you got into the healing and somatic space, and what a somatic practice means to you?
2. Let's chat a bit more about the role of somatic practices and healing in abolition. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, as quoted in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Davis et al. 2022), defines abolition as "about presence, not absence, it's about building life-affirming institutions" (p.51). What do you think a life-affirming institution could look like, and what role do you feel somatic practices and healing based practices have in contributing to, shaping, or influencing this?
3. As defined by Resmaa Menakem (2020), a leader and author in *Somatic Abolition*, "White-body supremacy [and gender binary are] built around a single simple falsehood: that the white [cis-gendered, heteronormative] body is the supreme standard against which all other bodies are measured and judged, both structurally and philosophically" (Menakem, 2020. para.6). This falsehood creates a systemic standard which has far reaching and harmful implications for anyone who does not match it. How do you think society can repair these harms while changing the very structure on which our system is built to embody authentic care?

In addition, I prepared the following questions for specific panelists, based on my knowledge of their work.

Brandon Dawson-Jarvis

From your experience, what do you think is needed to support care for individuals and their communities who have been harmed by the justice system? What could this look like?

Ji-Youn Kim

From your experience as someone working within the mental health field, why do you think it is important to look beyond the justice system when looking at abolition?

Cathy Walker

What role does harm reduction play in abolition and building of care and what are some ways you would like to see this become the norm?

PANEL 2: Art-making as Embodied Abolition with Syrus Marcus-Ware, Ravyn Wngz, Naty Tremblay. 12:30 – 2:30 pm

The second panel was made up of visionaries and artists whose work I have admired for a long time. Syrus Marcus-Ware's work around disability justice has been a great source of learning for me in my own abolition journey. His use of arts for exploring abolition futures and Afrofuturism, bringing us into the idea that this dream of abolition can be a reality in the present, is something which always spoke viscerally to me. Ravyn Wngz is someone whom I have always admired within the Toronto community due to her work for trans justice and her centering of the long history of Black trans women and femmes at the centre of the dialogue about change. I am also inspired by her methods, which focus on the body, dance, and the experience of creating pleasure, joy, and radical Black love. Naty Tremblay is a long-standing community artist and activist with whom I have had the privilege of working more than once through the *Toronto Transformative Justice Collective* and others. They have been a pillar in Toronto's trans, queer, and 2spirit communities, contributing especially through their art and activism. Their constant commitment to what they call regenerative reciprocity (something which I expand on further in this paper) is a deep inspiration for me in my work and in how I live my life. There cannot be a conversation about abolition without regenerative reciprocity.

Questions for the second panel

1. Can you tell us a bit more about you and about what art and art-making means to you?
2. Let's chat a bit more about the role of arts and art-making in abolition. I'd like to draw, on this panel, too, to the definition provided by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, as quoted in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Davis et al. 2022), who defines abolition as "about presence, not absence, it's about building life-affirming institutions" (p.51). What is your belief about the role of art and art- practices in contributing to, shaping, influencing, and building life-affirming institutions?
3. Let's talk about hope for a bit. Mariame Kaba (2001), a well-known abolitionist, often refers to hope as a practice. Another well-known author, scholar, and historian, Robin D. Kelly, in his 2003 book *Freedom Dreams, the Black Radical Imagination*, proposes the idea that the true catalyst for any social and political change is hope. When we look at art and art-making as processes, what role do hope and radical dreaming play in the process of abolition, and how do we ensure hope is always present in the diverse ways that art is used to support, imagine and create change?

In addition, I also prepared the following questions for specific panelists, based on my knowledge of their work.

Syrus Marcus-Ware

When we look at embodying a practice, or the desire to embody a practice, we must explore the current ways that colonialism, white supremacy, binarism and heteronormative values have contributed to and caused a disabling of self-determined care, which for the purpose of our conversation today refers to a care in which each person has the sovereignty and control over how they access care, create care, experience care and well-being. From your point of view and as an artist working within disability justice, what are the ways in which arts can contribute to this process, conversation and change making?

Ravyn Wngz

From your experience and your work projects such as the creation of Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism which “is a multidisciplinary community space that serves to nurture radical Black experimentation and creation” (Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism, 2022), what is the role of arts in creating spaces of healing? How can society shift towards that point where the two are intrinsically linked? How do we begin to define collective vs individual responsibility in ensuring that these healing spaces become embodied ways of relating, being and existing?

Naty Tremblay

A lot of your work is focused on regenerative reciprocity. Can you expand on this for us a bit more? What are the ways in which art allows us to embody this as a way of moving towards and existing within abolition processes?

PANEL 3: Embodied Abolition and Care-Making Within the Current System with Zya Brown, Frank Dorsey (calling in from a Federal institution), Joey Twins and Ahmed Adan

I spent several years working inside Ontario jails as part of *The Forgiveness Project*. In that time, I got to do a lot of one-on-one and group work with individuals who were experiencing incarceration and learned about their stories in a deep and profoundly connected way. From that experience, I have always felt that my accountability in the work of abolition is directly connected to every single one of these people, who shared their personal, and often very painful, stories with me. One way of honouring this is to ensure that the voices of those who experience incarceration, or are impacted by it, are always at the forefront. This panel was made up of individuals I know through my work in jails and in the community, and who themselves have experienced incarceration, or have been impacted by it in their families and communities.

Joey Twins, who served 30 years for a crime she did not commit, and Frank Dorsey, who is still serving a long sentence and joined the video call from prison, each brought a long history of experience in their conversation. Both Twins and Dorsey have been active advocates in changing how the system works. Twins spearheads powerful work

against Corrections Canada and elevates the voices of Indigenous women. Dorsey centres his experience as a Black male to support other Black men and youth in prevention of crime related behaviours. They were joined on the panel by Zya Brown and Ahmed Adan, who are both powerful community leaders in Toronto. They tirelessly do the work of supporting young folks, men and communities affected by gun violence, and of ending gun violence. I consider Brown a mentor due to her real *on the ground* work of being there when no one else wants to. She has supported countless men to reclaim what was taken away from them through incarceration by sharing their stories through her theatre-based work inside and outside of the institutions. Adan's organization *Hope and Hustle Heights* is one that I greatly admire because it elevates the voices of young folks, especially racialized youth, who are often the targets of over policing. He works with youth in the Lawrence Heights community, supporting youth to use arts and exploring mental health. Lawrence Heights is near and dear to my heart from years of working there as a youth worker.

Questions for the third panel

1. Can you please introduce yourself and tell us a bit more about you and your work and/ or what brings you to advocating for change within the justice system?
2. Let's chat a bit more about the idea of care and the justice system. What has been your experience of care within the justice system? For the purpose of this conversation, care-making is the active process of supporting each person's sovereign right to have access to and experience of care that is unique and reflective of their own needs, otherwise referred to as self-determined care. What do you think a self-determined care can look like within the system as it exists now, if it can?
3. Returning to the definition of abolition by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, as quoted in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Davis et al. 2022) "abolition is about presence, not absence, it's about building life-affirming institutions" (p.51):
 - a. What do you think this means for the current justice system and all the people currently impacted by it, both those experiencing incarceration, those who previously have experienced incarceration, and the communities impacted by incarceration?
 - b. If for a moment we let ourselves dream, do you think it is possible to have a justice system which involves life-affirming institutions? How do we get to this place of realizing this dream?

In addition, I also prepared the following questions for specific panelists, based on my knowledge of their work.

Ahmed Adan

From your point of view, what role do you think youth have in shaping the way care can exist within the justice system? What supports do young people need, and what advice would you give to young folks who may be struggling with the harm caused by the justice system?

Joey Twins

As someone who has a lot of experience supporting and organizing communities in abolition, land back and human rights movements, what is one thing that you would love to see more of to support real on the ground care and prevent further harm?

Frank Dorsey

From your experience, can you tell us more why a culturally relevant approach to care within the justice system is required, and what are some ways that this can look like?

Zya Brown

Oftentimes in talks of abolition, it is easy to focus on a future we want to build, which is important, but I would like to ask you about the present. As someone that does a lot of work with individuals currently experiencing violence and gun violence, what are some things that are needed in the present to prevent further harm? What would support real care within communities?

I sit in deep gratitude for the ways that the moderator Kafia Abudlkader held all the above questions and ensured that care was not just something we talked about, but something that we embodied.

The way that care became present at the event reminded me of the principle of ethical relationality proposed by the Cree scholar Dwayne Donald's (2016):

The life-giving energy that is generated when people face each other as relatives and build trusting relationships by connecting with others in respectful ways. In doing so, we demonstrate that we recognize one another as fellow human beings and work hard to put respect and love at the forefront of our interactions (Donald 2016, p. 10).

Embodied abolition is an ongoing process into which everyone must invite themselves as well as those around them. It means rooting in a love that is non-judgmental, without a desire to fix or change. This allows for full presence with what is, including survival, pain, trauma, and discomfort. Here exists the possibility of change and transformation. A possibility to reduce harm and prevent further harm, ultimately building systems which are founded on care. This is not a utopian dream; it is an imagined reality, and one which we learn to come back to repeatedly. It is not a permanent state, but one that we move through together, co-create, and build in the same way that the conversations on April 9th built from each other and together.

Chapter 3

Methodology

My planning, designing, and enacting of the *Embodied Abolition* conference were grounded in the practice of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR), a method which invites both lived experiences of community and social theory into the same space of knowledge exploration and creation. In their book *Indigenous Research Methods, a Systematic Review*, Dawson et al. (2017) define this as a method which “recognizes community as a unity of identity and builds on strengths and resources of the community. It integrates knowledge and action and promotes co-learning involving a cyclical and iterative process” (pp. 6-7). Within the spirit of CBPR, the event became a place of embodied research generation. We sat with questions, dreamed up the answers together, shared powerful lived experiences, and co-created embodied knowledges. Audience participation and the almost familial feeling of comfort between different panelists, enabled in part by years of friendship and collaboration in shared queer-of-colour-led abolitionist circles, and Black and Indigenous communities in Toronto, invited a space reminiscent of kitchen table conversations with your closest friends. We were brought together into a mutual space of healing, love and dreaming of imagined realities. These themes became the containers for the research, knowledge sharing and collective exploration. They also form the main themes of my reflection paper.

The pre-existing and co-created sense of familiarity between participants enabled a greater ease for the panel questions. The conversations consisted of using structured pre-determined questions (as outlined earlier in this paper) and unstructured, yet moderated dialogue between panelists, and between panelists and participants. This carried with it the intention of tapping into what Brinkman (2018) describes as the connection between the everyday exchanges between people and the greater contexts of society and structures.

My Positionality in the Event

I come to this work as a body-based therapist, community justice worker, artist, and healer with over 20 years of working with individual and collective traumas due to multiple forms of systemic violence (incarceration, wars, colonialism, criminalization, and more). I also come to this work as someone who has personally lived through the experience of state and war violence, resulting in a deep commitment of building communities which place care and love over hate and otherness.

As this event was part of a research project, I situated myself both as an active participant and as a researcher, or, as I like to refer to it, holder of the nurturing and caring container for the conversations to unfold. As a white skinned, immigrant settler, cisgender female, coming from a culture and ethnicity in the Balkans which has experienced state violence and oppression, I enter this research with the acknowledgement of the white and heteronormative privileges (and historic and

present-day harm to QTBIPOC individuals created by those privileges) that parts of my social identity carry. I enter this work with a commitment to de-center those privileges and repair the harm by holding caring spaces. Equally important, I anchor into what Peltier (2018) calls the researcher's responsibility, by consciously holding present to whom am I accountable in this work. As I do the work of reflecting on the *Embodied Abolition* event, I attempt to practice accountability towards every person with whom I have had the honor of working in a healing or community capacity, including, but not limited to, every person on the panel and in the audience on April 9th. My accountability extends to all individuals and communities currently being harmed by the justice system due to incarceration, militarized policing, criminalization of sex work, drug use and so much more. I am accountable to the works of all other abolitionists, past, present, and future, who continue to place their whole selves into the dream of imagining a better world. Several of these I will engage with in more detail below, in the literature review, including Mariame Kaba, Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Angela Davis. I anchor my work in what I propose we refer to as mutually liberatory relationships, or ways of relating to each other where we all hold a place and a role in the creation of liberation for all.

In the development of this event, I was guided by the words expressed in the *Truth and Reconciliation Report* (2015), an Indigenous-led report which was born out of years of Indigenous demands for documenting the stories and truths of survivors and those impacted by the residential schools, which the Canadian government used as a tool of cultural and violent genocide of Indigenous peoples in the so-called Canada. In the section entitled 'What We Have Learned', the authors state, "reconciliation is a process of healing relationships, and all Canadians as Treaty Peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships" (pp.4-5).

Through countless conversations with friends and collaborators from my informal networks of currently or formerly incarcerated people, as well as with peers working in abolition, academia, and social justice, I took leadership from those most affected and harmed by the carceral and punitive system. I stand rooted within my own ancestral and land-based healing and care-making practices as a way of showing up in the space from a place of a whole self. The next chapter, which contains the literature review and discussion of the themes which guide my work as an abolitionist, discusses these influences further.

Chapter 4

Taking Leadership from Those in the Field: Literature Review

Embodied abolition calls us to heal and mend from a place of love, while also creating from a place of joy and respect. It dreams of a world where prisons are not necessary (Gilmore, 2007). My event engaged and rooted itself inside the following living and active frameworks: firstly, pleasure activism (Brown, 2019) and the idea that we are not just our pain, but also our joy; and secondly, the radical imagination (Kelley, 2003), which is a reclamation of hope and imagining beyond what is currently possible as discussed. In the preface to his influential book, *Freedom Dreams, the Black Radical Imagination*, Kelley writes:

To write another book that either drones on about how oppressed we are or merely chronicles the crimes of radical movements doesn't seem very useful. I conceived *Freedom Dreams* as a preliminary effort to recover ideas—visions fashioned mainly by those marginalized black activists who proposed a different way out of our constrictions (xii).

In addition, the event was committed to examining abolition from a relational approach. For this, I found inspiration in Donald's (2016) concept of ethical relationality, a way of relating to one another from a place of deep love and respect for the multiple ways we are all interconnected. This resonates with Hwang's (2019) thoughts on QTBIPOC radical relationalism, a process of "anti-hierarchical" care and "consensual interactions" (p.546). Importantly, the notion of care that Hwang assumes is "not inhibited by a telos of help, diagnosis, or curing" (p.569). For me this is what we want to keep in mind when distinguishing between embodied care-making, a care making rooted in abolitionist values, and the current day so-called carceral care. Carceral care can be defined as anything that the carceral system provides as services of care, such as rehabilitation programs, which are oftentimes sold to the public as caring practices. When, and as we will further learn when we read more from the panelists is actually not the case.

To deepen the understanding of what embodied abolition could look like in practice, the event aimed to invite an unlearning of the power structures of colonization, white supremacy, and gender binaries, which the current justice system is built on. "White-body supremacy [and gender binary] is built around a single simple falsehood: that the white [cis-gendered, heteronormative] body is the supreme standard against which all other bodies are measured and judged, both structurally and philosophically" (Menakmen, 2020. para.6). As defined in Menakmen's (2020) seminal book *My Grandmother's Hands, Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, the exploration of Somatic Abolition is one which encompasses an anti-oppressive process of fully living into values of mutual care and joy, while being centered in relationships of respect and love. Relationships that form the way we as human beings relate to one another, which through the lens of Somatic Abolition would be called as the experience of how bodies relate to one another.

In addition to the above, this event engaged with authors such as Mariame Kaba

(2001), Angela Davis (1999), Cedric Robinson (1980), Katherine McKittrick (2011), Eve Tuck (2012), Robyn Maynard (2017), Eric Stanley, (2017), Marquis Bey (2017), Jesse A. Goldberg (2015) and others. I engaged with the work of these authors to understand the current roots of the carceral thinking and its connections to racial capitalism, which are the generators of harm within the criminal justice system today, while deepening our understanding of carceral epistemologies and ways of knowing. Furthermore, the works I engaged with explore binary gender constructs as one of the biggest challenges to abolitionist futures and presents, which I explain in more depth in further in this paper. It was important for me to engage with these works to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the very constructs and ideologies which build the current systems of harm within the justice system. It is out of this engagement with authors mentioned above, that I intentionally chose to have queer, trans, Black and Indigenous people as the panelists. As mentioned earlier in my paper, it is important to ensure that the experiences of those most harmed (QTBIPOC) by the system are at the center and forefront of the conversation on abolition.

Embodying Abolition Begins with the Understanding of the Current System

When engaging with works of other abolitionists, authors, scholars, activists, healers, and artists, I was guided by the definition of abolition provided by Ruth Wilson Gilmore, as quoted in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Davis et al. 2022). Here, “abolition is about presence, not absence, it’s about building life-affirming institutions” (p.51).

The current criminal justice system is an institution built on a legacy of colonialism and slavery, embedded within with the carceral, punitive and supremacist values which are rooted in a binary of good and bad. This value system involves the harmful creation of *an other* whom to blame, criminalize, and punish. When talking about abolition, we need to ask ourselves; how can we demolish these systems of harm, while simultaneously building new systems of care?

To be able to properly respond to these questions, it is crucial that we truly understand the breadth and depth of the harm created by the current system, including the prison industrial complex and the wider system of racial capitalism that it is a part of.

Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) describes the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems. It was coined as a term by Angela Davis (1999). To understand its origin, and current-day impact, one must examine the systems of colonialism and racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983) on which it was founded. With the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, a social narrative was constructed which placed the Black person as a threat to the dominant power of whiteness. The practice of maintaining this narrative and upholding the white power is something that Katherine McKittrick (2013) calls plantation logic. Within the PIC, this plantation logic is still alive in the multiple ways that Black (and other racialized) people are seen as sources of value

from which capital can be extracted. As Xenakis and Cheliotis (2018), drawing on Rusche and Kirchheimer, remind us:

The mode and degree of state punitiveness in a society is largely determined, not by crime trends, but by economic and fiscal forces and, for this reason, trends in state punishment tend to reflect the internal relationships of a society's dominant system of production (pg.2).

The neoliberal system of production relies on a free market and large-scale realization of that market. Prisons have played an important role in this, especially North America, where the capitalization of the prison sector has created a private prison sector industry within the state sector, contributing to the Prison Industrial Complex. This practice of placing value on (racialized) people is racial capitalism in action, which Cedric Robinson described, back in 1983, as a system which extracts economic value from racialized people.

The origin of the PIC is thus as an extension of racial capitalism, which is heavily entangled with slavery. As part of this history, there is a narrative of positioning the Black person as someone who is seen as underdeveloped, poor, and dangerous, in a way that directly weaponizes the black body as the major threat to whiteness. The current day manifestation of this is clearly seen in the overincarceration and over policing of Black people in North America. My event expands on this work, by speaking to the traumas of racial capitalism and the PIC not only in Black bodies, but all bodies which are othered from the assumed and accepted image of power. In this image, the white, cis-gender, heteronormative, male identifying body is the standard against which all others are measured and consequently harmed.

Inviting the Complex Personhood

In her highly influential article critiquing of dominant models of research in primarily Indigenous and urban communities, called "Suspending Damage, a Letter to Communities" Eve Tuck (2009) calls for individuals, researchers, and institutions to suspend "damage-centered research". She defines this as a type of research which primarily focuses on documenting people's pain and "brokenness". She states:

[Damage-centered research] looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which oppression singularly defines a community. (p.413)

In my event, I aimed to centre desire-based research, which Tuck invites us into, as a theoretical framework for work that could be defined as abolitionist (even if she does not explicitly do so in her article). As described by Tuck, "desire-based research frameworks are concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination

of lived lives” (p.416). The nurturing of self-determination to which she speaks was one of the principal aims of my event.

Desire-based research reminds us that desire encompasses both pain and joy and exists in a “ghostly, remnant quality, its existence not contained to the body but still derived of the body... [It is] integral to our humanness” (Tuck, 2009, p.417). Embodied abolition research exists within this tender space of the body’s (and thus the individual’s) full personhood and humanity, the complexity of pain and joy, and the various ways in which we relate to each other through these experiences.

This process of othering and harm causes systemic trauma by creating a state of dispossession of self, where what Tuck (2009) calls one’s complex personhood is stripped away. My event is in direct resistance to this harm and firmly rooted in the belief that to heal the harms of the system we must move towards a state of body reclamation. Menakem (2020) calls this a state of Somatic Abolition, where healing of internal processes, belief systems and traumas becomes possible through a space of tenderness and mutual care. This type of care is rooted in a community-supported process of reclaiming self-determination in how one wants to be cared for, in how one takes accountability, and in how one chooses to live.

Meeting Each Other in Radical Relationships

Abolition work is deeply indebted to the activism and work of Black activists and scholars such as Kelley, who continuously reminds us that to find hope and kindle change, we must root into radical imagination. In a recent interview, he calls us to remember the power of this imagination. Reflecting on the end of slavery and reconstruction in the United States, he examines “what happens when enslaved people have this vision of what society ought to look like: what the public sphere should look like, how to govern, how to reconstruct social lives...the right to vote, reconstructing families” (Holtzman, 2008). My event engages with Kelley’s thoughts on the need for radical imagination in social justice movements and his insight that people are drawn to change because it awakens in them a dream for something different.

Building upon this framework of the radical imagination (Kelley, 2003), my event further drew on Adrienne Maree Brown’s (2019) work on pleasure activism. In her seminal book *Pleasure Activism, the Politics of Feeling Good*, Brown defines pleasure activism as reclaiming our “whole, happy, satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions and limitations of oppression and / or supremacy” (2009, p. 13). Drawing parallels between desire and pleasure, Brown states, “desire and pleasure are two ways that we assert that there is something worth living for...the more we remind ourselves of that together, the more we generate together.” (p.51)

When I look through the archives and present-day movements of abolition, I am guided by and take leadership from the works of those most affected and harmed by the system: queer, trans, 2Spirit, Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Eric Stanley, a

white trans scholar and abolitionist, reminds us that “among the most volatile points of contact between state violence and one’s body is the domain of gender” (2015 p. 4). In the introduction to their 2022 special issue of GLQ, *Queer as Abolition Now*, Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg remind us that “[p]rison abolition is a project of queer liberation and queer liberation is an abolitionist project. No ifs, ands, or buts” (p.165). They remind us that not only does the carceral system negatively and disproportionately impact queer and trans people, but the very notion of the gender binary is a carceral form of thought. The criminal justice system is built on gender; thus abolishing prisons requires abolishing the very existence of the gender binary and the harm that such binaries create within the current system.

This process of interrupting the power structures of the justice system is deeply dependent on a care-building process, which should embody the knowledge that as individuals we are deeply interconnected. The capitalistic and colonial structures of power and oppression are designed to promote a sense of individualization where one places oneself above another. As discussed above, my event puts Hwang’s concept of radical relationism in conversation with another concept, of community accountability (CA), which is born out of leadership of Black, queer, and trans of colour femmes in addressing violence in their communities in the United States. This is best described by Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo, Alisa Bierria, and Mimi Kim (2010-2011), the editors of the special *Social Justice* issue “Community Accountability: Emerging Movements to Transform Violence”:

Community accountability and community-based approaches challenge us to seriously address violence and intimate harms without reproducing the technologies of individualization, pathology, penalty, protection under the authority of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy, and criminalization, all of which continually deny and subvert our notions of safety and justice. We are asked to consider, recover, and build the potential of community while recognizing and disengaging from strategies that undermine the possibility of community formation. (Editors Introduction)

Greatly shaped by INCITE, “a network of radical feminists of color organizing to end state violence and violence in our homes and communities” (INCITE, n.d.), community accountability invites a process of coming together in mutual reciprocal, radical (Hwang) and right (Donald) relations to address harm caused within the community in ways that are outside of the carceral binaries of good vs bad, or victim vs offender. Instead, CA offers the capacity for self-determination that is grounded in the creation of care, healing, and accountability, all while holding each other in a space of tenderness and the possibility of the transformation of the very system at the root of the harm.

As the *Embodied Abolition* event was taking place, concepts such as community accountability, right, reciprocal, and radical relations, pleasure, hope and imagination, full personhood and self-determination all came to life in the conversations by, and in between the panelists. The following chapter will demonstrate this further.

Chapter 5

The Voices from the Panel: Research Knowledge Sharing

On Harms of the Current System

One of the things our conversation at the *Embodied Abolition* touched upon were the harms done by the PIC and racial capitalism, which were well highlighted by one of the panelists on the first panel. Brandon Dawson-Jarvis is a yoga instructor and social entrepreneur who identifies as a Black male with lived experience of incarceration. He talked about CORCAN, an agency of Correction Services of Canada which makes money through partnerships with public and private sectors that specialize in making office furniture, bedding and more, and in building pieces for Habitat for Humanity, all on the backs of the Canadian prison population. The items manufactured are sold to the private sector under the idea of “aiding the safe reintegration of offenders into Canadian society by providing employment and training opportunities” (CORCAN website, 2022). However, what most people don’t know is that an inmate is paid a maximum daily rate of \$6.90. Out of this \$6.90, 25% is deducted to reimburse any debt to the crown, from trials and other proceedings. Another 22% is deducted for food and accommodation (in addition to the money for food and accommodation which is taken out of public taxpayer dollars). 8% is deducted for telephone administration fees, 15% for the inmate welfare fund, and 10% goes towards mandatory savings (Chan et al, 2017). In addition to low pay, due to the government’s strict legal criminal record laws, an inmate may spend years working and learning a trade under the CORCAN program. However, upon release it becomes difficult, if not nearly impossible, to get a well-paying job within that sector due to their criminal record.

Reflecting further on the ways in which the PIC capitalizes on the cheap labour of incarcerated individuals, and places them at risk, Dawson-Jarvis shared on the panel a story about his experience while in prison. He clearly illustrated the lack of value placed on the lives of the people who are incarcerated by giving an example of someone getting hit by a baseball during the baseball programming, resulting in the banning of baseball, an activity that many inside saw as supportive of their health. He went on to explain how the only thing which has never been banned is the CORCAN program itself. On the panel he talked about how during his time in prison, he witnessed inmates who were making furniture through CORCAN, including working with metal, shaping the metal into weapons for self-defence. No matter how many violent or deadly acts were committed with these weapons, CORCAN was never suspended, even though the weapon was created during their participation in CORCAN. What this demonstrates is how the use of inmates for production is more important than their own well-being, as demonstrated by the previously given baseball example. As Dawson-Jarvis summarized, “we are not worthy, our safety is not worthy” (Dawson-Jarvis, 2022).

What these and other stories shared at *Embodied Abolition* show is that a system built on racial capitalism such as the criminal justice system and the prison industrial

complex (which CORCAN is part of) does not place value and worth on individual's lives, especially when those lives are of racialized, queer, trans or disabled people. Instead, it only sees them as bodies to control, produce and capitalize from. The next section explores how we can imagine a different reality, one that replaces control with radical care and love.

Meeting the Future Via Love and Imagination

As I sit with the challenging question of how we create abolitionist worlds, I am reminded of the second conversation on art-making and abolition at the *Embodied Abolition* event. The panel explored the role art can play in the creation of these worlds. Syrus Marcus Ware, an activist, artist, and scholar, proposed that “if we had a world where Black people's lives are inherently valuable, we would be living in abolition.” (Ware, 2022). This was echoed by Ravyn Wngz, the artist and activist who amongst many other things, is well known for her Black Lives Matter speech in front of Toronto Police Headquarters where she said, “it is in the technology of Blackness that we find abolition; it is in the technology of Black women [cis and trans] that we find radical love and intersectionality” (Wngz, 2020).

The conversation on this panel with Syrus Marcus Ware, Ravyn Wngz and Naty Tremblay highlighted creative imagining as an access point for exploring the creation of these other worlds. This was well captured by Syrus Marcus Ware when he said that “art-making is the radical potential for freedom and liberatory struggle to be successfully told through a creative method” (Ware, 2022). It was echoed amongst the panelists that a creative art-centered method is needed to cultivate a space within which an individual may express what they cannot through the controlling and punitive structure of the carceral system. I would like to propose that these spaces of creation, of dreaming, of imagining are spaces filled with tenderness and love. Tremblay, reflecting on their work of using arts to vision spaces that center the healing and creativity of trans peoples, captured this well when they said that [these] “tender spaces are desire filled and become the hope which wind catches and lands on people” (Tremblay, 2022).

To be in a tender space means to sit with the full self of a person, the complexity of pain and joy, and the various ways in which we relate to each other through these experiences, or as Tremblay stated on the panel, of “sitting with the messy stuff” (Tremblay, 2022).

It is in the *messy stuff* that we find love. The kind of love that asks of us to sit equally with those who have caused harm, and those who have been harmed, and that says, “I see you and that you are hurting, and I am down to walk with you” (Tremblay, 2022). The kind of love that invites us to repair the harms that have been caused, both by, and to the person experiencing harm. It is a radical love which asks us to come into right relation with each other and step away from punishment and the institutional policing of carceral values. It asks us to enter what Tremblay, who draws a lot on Indigenous teachings in their own life, referred to as “radical reciprocity” (Tremblay, 2022). Through

this radical reciprocity we begin to embody what Ravyn Wngz, an activist who centers Black trans love in her practice and work, called a “love practice” (Wngz, 2022), which she defined as a practice full of trust, vulnerability, conversation, and most of all hope. Wngz reminded us that “hope is a memory and stories that live in the body” (Wngz, 2022)

Rooting this embodied hope and love into a critical theory that is grounded in an analysis of power becomes incredibly uplifting. This brings me back to the above-cited work of Robin D. Kelley. In his concept of the Black radical imagination, he invites in the notion that hope. In the social justice movements that I examine in this project, hope and critical theory can meet each other, precisely because hope awakens in people drawn to change a dream for something different. The next section explores how we can access these dreams through a process of individual and community healing.

The Body as a Weapon, the Body as a Revolution, Unlearning Supremacy

One of the reasons I became interested in exploring the role of the body in abolition was from my personal experience of working within a jail where I got to see how bodies exist within a social context that is placed on them. During this time, I witnessed how individuals who are trans, Black, Indigenous or People of Colour were treated by what I like to call the carceral collective body consisting of guards, police, judges, and all other individuals which make up the carceral system. Within the carceral system the treatment of QTBIPOC individuals is reduced merely to a physical body, void of individual dignity, self-determination, culture and what Tuck (2009) calls complex personhood. They get targeted with harm, punishment, and control in overwhelmingly larger numbers than their fellow incarcerated individuals who live within a white identified body, even if they were serving a very similar sentence. In the literature review, I explored Resman Menakem’s (2020) concept of Somatic Abolition, which describes the process of unlearning colonial and white supremacy from our bodies. At the event, this important argument was echoed by Cathy Walker, the Indigenous women healer who spoke on the first panel. Similar to Menakem, she called to dismantle and abolish these systems within our own “colonial mindset” (Walker, 2022). It is this colonial mindset that we find existing within what I call the carceral collective body, where no matter whether the individuals (guards, police etc), themselves are white or a person of colour, their adapted value systems, and as such their behaviours, are those reflective of punitive, controlling and othering. Behaviours and values born out of white supremacy and colonial mindsets.

Also on the first panel, Dawson-Jarvis, a Black man, spoke directly to this unlearning when he said, “white people need to be more open to invite the conversation, to listen to what those who continue to be harmed have to say” (Dawson-Jarvis, 2022). Ware echoed this on the second panel, in his statement on the importance of needing “to uproot white supremacy from abolition work by centering the voices of Black, Brown, Queer, disabled and mad individuals” (Ware, 2022).

This again resonates with the work of the editors of the special issue in *Gays and Lesbians Quarterly* on “Queer as Abolition Now”, who aim to:

push analyses of queer liberation and abolition past the observations that prisons disproportionately or especially harm queer people toward seriously, rigorously imagining and working toward liberatory futures without prisons, police, or the tyranny of colonial gender systems. (Bey et al. 2022)

I am further reminded of the words of Ware at the panel event, when he argued that part of the aim of abolition is to “have a future where disabled, trans people have a space to thrive, live long enough to become elders” (Ware, 2022).

These sentiments recall to mind words by Miss Major, a “black, formerly incarcerated, male to female, trans gender elder” (Donahue, 2011. pg.268). In her interview with Donahue in the book *Captive Genders* edited by Eric Stanley (2011), she informs us that the people experiencing the highest number of these harms, from mental health, to suicide, to lack of medical care and much more are trans woman of colour. As such we must take our leadership from them and those most harmed by the criminal justice system.

During our *Embodied Abolition* conversations on April 9th, we were joined by Frank Dorsey, a self-identified Black man currently serving a long sentence. He spoke candidly about his life and his involvement in what he called the “pimping game” (Dorsey, 2022). While clearly naming the violence of the prison, it was here that he got to work with Zya Brown and her project Think T2twice (also a panelist at the event). He openly reflected on how this was a pivotal point in his self-reflection and self-love journey, one that he credits for enabling him to “leave that life behind” (Dorsey, 2022). He further shared that “if it wasn’t for prison, I wouldn’t be here”. This highlights the multi-layered and complex realities within the current criminal system that we must be aware of in our conversations of abolition. Dorsey’s statement could be seen by many abolitionists as controversial or even anti-abolitionist, due to its seeming reliance on the prison system to affect this change. However, I believe that if we are to meet in the spirit of radical reciprocity and mutual, yet self-determined care, we must create space for a full spectrum of conversations and ensure that our approach to abolition does not become binary and fixed in its understanding of what a world without carceral-based systems could look like. Rather, it ought to be reflective of the dreams of the world we wish to see while being responsive to the realities and long-lasting legacies of harm that the current system leaves.

People like Frank Dorsey and Joey Twins, who have been in the system for 20-30 years, are crucial in the conversation of dreaming up a world where prisons are not necessary. We must be willing to sit in conversations and experiences that are diverse and might be different from our own views. As Zya Brown said on the third panel, “voices like Joey and Frank need to be continuously heard, they need to be involved” (Brown, 2022). It is by including the voices of those most harmed that one can begin to understand the greater reach of the traumas created by prison industrial complex,

racism, colonialism, the legacy of slavery, racial capitalism, and the racial poverty which it creates. These are the mechanisms that break an individual's sense of inherent wholeness, cultural identity, and community. As well stated by Brown:

We need to build with folks who have experience with the criminal justice system in every single level. We need to remember this system was started on the street, with systemic oppression in the community. That it puts money into people's pockets. In order for this to be dismantled, everything needs to be dismantled. (2022)

This statement resonates with the argument by Davis, Dent, Meiners and Richie in their book *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (2022), that we need to cultivate the "ability to look both inward and outward, to meet both immediate demands and confront broad system of injustice, and to think in complicated and layered ways about abolition" (p.4).

To have a community which is rooted in healing means that we must do the hard work of ensuring that *all* people are part of this healing process. Within the context of abolition, this must also include those who have caused harm. This is what Kim, who spoke on the first panel, called "unconditional care" (Kim, 2022). A care that Wngz referred to as the process of "putting down our weapons" (Wngz., 2022), and as sitting with those with whom we may disagree, or have been thought to hate. A care that calls us to step into a circle of accountability with "people that hold me to the principles I want to embody" (Wngz, 2022).

Healing the colonial and carceral paradigms within our bodies, psyches, souls, cultures, and relations is going to require of us to be willing to enter, cultivate and nourish a space where we can support those most harmed, while critically understanding that harm is a wide-reaching concept, not limited to the binary thinking of *criminal* and *victim*.

As Walker reminded us, this ability is an ever-changing process. Much like healing, it is "not a linear thing" (Walker 2022). It requires the work of critical and tender self-awareness while simultaneously holding each other accountable with care and mutual commitment to a self-determined healing journey. There is no end point in a healing journey, only transformation. Healing is something that we do together, each one of us taking our own space in the collective healing journey. The next chapter serves as an invite for each reader to explore this further.

Chapter 6

An Invite to Healing

In the end, everyone wants to heal
(Dawson-Jarvis, 2022)

The Embodied Abolition event on April 9th was filled with rich moments of healing. Our many conversations circled around what healing means within the carceral system; the magic and juiciness of creative spaces and community; communal processing, witnessing, and holding of grief; trauma, tears and hopes. We cried together, we laughed together, we sat with difficult questions; we witnessed, and held space for, other people's release; we experienced moments of ease where breaths are relaxed, and our bodies felt lighter. We journeyed through the embodied process of healing, the ups and downs, the joys and sadness. The beautiful conversations at the *Embodied Abolition* event weaved through both the pain and the joy, always keeping present the importance of this sense of complex personhood and defining self-sovereignty as the embodied space where one can fully show up with all aspects of oneself.

As Cathy Walker reminded us, a self-determined life extends beyond how one shows up in a space, or is able to show up in a space. Rather, it also means access to one's medicines, one's culture and one's land. Joey Twins echoed this when she came to the panel with her eagle feather, honouring that she always brings her feather as a way of reclaiming her culture, the land which has been stolen, and of healing through embodying her traditions in every conversation. Frank Dorsey talked about how crucial it is to do this work with [young] folks who are trying to establish connections to their own cultural traditions, as a way of preventing involvement in the criminal justice system, as well as supporting a way out of it.

These conversations about healing encapsulated the idea that abolition cannot just mean the closing of prisons, the changing policies, or only defunding the police. Abolition must demolish the values of control, policing and punishment so interwoven into our entire society and into individuals themselves. It involves the hard work of healing intergenerational trauma. The hard work of forgiveness. The hard work of looking beyond ourselves and our immediate interests. This work is hard precisely because from the time we are born into this world, we are taught to not forgive, to seek revenge, to see ourselves as better than a particular group, to believe that our sense of well-being is the only one that matters. These are the values that capitalism and colonialism have deeply embedded in our psyches, nervous systems, and bodies. This is where abolition (and healing) must start.

Out of my commitment to transmute the magic of these healing conversations, I want to offer an intention for healing written by me below. In addition, I would like to invite you, the reader, to find a way back to your body, and back to your full self, through a guided meditation that I recorded and share below. We can write books on books on what it would mean to embody abolition. We can have endless stimulating conversations. However, it is not until we *become* the practice that we begin to embody abolition. I wish

to for a moment move beyond cerebral reflection and let our physical selves regulate and align with the dreams we are trying to create, so that slowly we can become them, and they can become us.

An Intention for Healing

*Burn your medicines.
Let the smoke whisper to your soul
and your ancestors,
as they walk alongside you.
In the rocks, the land, the sun, the air, the wind.
Reminding you to turn inwards with deep love,
so that we may turn towards each other with
reciprocal tenderness and care.
See each other's pain.
Encourage each other's joy.
Unlearn together, within ourselves, the self-punishment
of this carceral system.
Releasing shame.
Letting the poison of otherness bleed out of us.
Feeling lighter in the whole body.
Reclaiming the space that colonialism took, through renewed
ceremonies of love,
of mutually beneficial community,
of healing rooted in self-determined sovereignty.
Reclaiming lands stolen outside and inside the bodies of
Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Color,
and un-learning the punitive and harmful power structures within the bodies
of white, heteronormative, cisgendered and able-bodied individuals.
So we can meet each other in a ceremony of an imagined reality.*

A Meditation

Below is a recording of a guided meditation (followed by the written transcript). Take a moment right now to find a space where you can be comfortable, where you can feel safe to close your eyes, and come journey with me by pressing play.

[AUDIO MEDITATION](#)

Meditation transcript

*Let's begin by taking a few deep breaths, just as we typically would.
Allowing our body to settle into that which sustains us even when we are not paying
attention to it. Our breath.
Just notice how it feels coming into your body, how it feels going out.*

Perhaps you want to observe it at the tip of your nostrils, or perhaps you can feel it in your chest, or your belly. Wherever it is, I want you to just notice it, observe it, don't try and change it. I want you to hear the breath in your body, feel it, touch different aspects of your body, notice how it makes your body feel warm or perhaps cool. Notice its rhythm so reminiscent of waves on the beach, coming in, pausing, going out, pausing, and so on.

Keep observing it until you feel as if you start to only be your breath, you and the breath are not separate, you have the shared rhythm, shared flow, you become each other. Now, I want you to take a moment and give it thanks, place words of gratitude and deep appreciation on its inhales and exhales, for sustaining you, for keeping you alive, for keeping you safe, for keeping you protected, for keeping you growing. Imagine your breath as an altar to which you give thanks, or as a sacred space in which you come to connect .

Repeat to yourself:

I invite my breath to release within me all patterns of shame, guilt, and self-punishment which have been brought into my body through various systems of oppression, control, power and colonialism.

I release on my breath the learnings of white supremacy, superiority of able-bodied and binary identities placed upon my, no matter what my current identities may be.

I release the patterns of punitive thinking towards myself and others born out of these systems.

I am not these systems.

As I inhale I invite the medicine of the land, I invite the medicines of my ancestors, I invite the medicines of those who have come before me, related to me or not, who continue to build a world of love and care.

As I inhale I let the breath reach the furthest part of my body, of my heart, my soul and my imagination. I see myself in a world where I am safe, where I can show up as myself fully, where we all are safe, where we all can show up as ourselves fully, and where we relate to each other from mutual regenerative reciprocity and care.

Give yourself a moment and imagine this world.

This state of being.

What do you see here? What do you hear, what do you smell here? What does your body feel like? What do you taste, what can you touch?

Explore with a tender and critical curiosity.

Let this space become you. As you inhale letting it come in, as you exhale releasing anything that gets in the way.

Slowly, when ready, come back into your breath, notice its rhythm, grounding you into your body in the here and now, feeling your feet touching the ground, your hands against your body, wiggle them a bit, wake the body up, and as you do this repeat to yourself:

I commit to bring into the present the embodied experience of care.

Slowly, when ready, open your eyes.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Dreaming of an Abolitionist Future Here in the Present.

In his critically acclaimed art installation *Antarctica*, Syrus Marcus-Ware takes us into a world of abolitionist futures:

Ware imagines a world where racialized people have survived the “black death spectacle” writ large on the nightly news; survived the catastrophic impact of the Anthropocene; and survived the crushing effects of white supremacy. Drawing on the shared language of speculative fiction and political activism, Ware creates a portal that takes us to eleven characters in the summer of 2030, each with birthright citizenship to the only habitable place on earth: Antarctica. Their task? To begin terraforming for the new colony (Website of *Syrus Marcus Ware*, 2021).

What would it take to create a world where the harms of colonial and racial capitalism, binary values and otherness were not the values on which we built our justice system? What would it look like to bring the imagined realities of abolition into the creation of a justice system built on care?

These were the questions tackled by the project discussed in this paper, the *Embodied Abolition* conference. They were well summarized in the first panel, by Kim, who asked us all to reflect on how “we do it [the process of dismantling, repairing harm and building alternatives] in an embodied way, feel it, process it, and un-learn the self-punishment” (Kim, 2022) so embedded into our beings, bodies, and selves by the current carceral system of thinking and acting. The conversations we subsequently had built on generations of thinkers, from the early abolitionists who fought against slavery, to radical thinkers such as Kelley (ref), Tuck (ref) and Brown (ref).

As discussed above, my project sought to contribute a somatic angle to the question of abolition. It was particularly inspired by Resmaa Menakem (2020) argument that “the practices of Somatic Abolitionism are not strategies, tactics, tools, or weapons...they are bodily experiences” (para. 2). Further engaging with this idea, I proposed that to embody abolition, we must start by relating to how our bodies experience care and relate to each other through that care, as full complex individuals, existing within a social context. Deep within our own cells, psyches, value systems, and ways of relating to ourselves and each other is a new way forward. This is also suggested by Adrienne Maree Brown (2019), who names somatics as an important modality influencing her own view and practices of transformation:

I believe somatics...is one of the most effective ways to get a group of complex, contradictory, humans into alignment with a liberated collective future. Seeing, feeling ourselves, as we are, with agency to shape the future..that’s the miracle. (p. 278)

To see ourselves, feel ourselves and relate to each other as what Tuck (2009) refers to as fully complex individuals with agency and self-determination requires us to return to

ourselves with a deep tenderness, releasing shame and guilt (mechanisms of carceral thought), and as so many of our panelists reminded us, return to our bodies, our hearts, our minds, our cultures, our various, complex, and ever shifting identities, our nervous systems, our struggles, our joys, our pains and our dreams with a deep sense of love. When we can root our whole self in this relationship of love, to ourselves and each other, our bodies and nervous systems begin to slowly feel safe. In the process, we create environments of safety, which invite others to fully show up as themselves, to know that they can embody their safety and all aspects of themselves in each moment and space of their life. It is here that we enter radical, regenerative, reciprocal, and right relationality with each other, echoing the words of Donaldson (2016), Hwang (2019) and the spirit of community accountability. It is here that we begin to embody abolition, a process of simultaneously dismantling and repairing harm, while building care.

As shone through the conversations at the *Embodied Abolition* conference, the process of abolition is not a distant dream, it is not a someday future for which we must strive. Rather, it is the embodiment of all our dreams here in the now. This is best described by Davis et al. (2022. pp. 168-69) when they talk about the use of the word “Now” in the title of their book *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*

Ask different questions now; consider alternative courses of action now; engage with more people now; complicate the analysis now; change our minds, apologize, recalibrate, and try again now. Now is the time for mutual aid and self-care. Now is the time for righteous anger and settling into the painful reality of the carnage that prisons, policing, detention – all forced confinement – have created for us. (pp.168-169)

The *Embodied Abolition* event aimed to do just that. It was designed to invite us into a space of recognizing alternative ways of caring for each other, dreaming together, of bringing all of ourselves into the process of abolition. It prioritized the voices of those most harmed and impacted by the justice system, primarily queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Color, and provided an expansive, non-binary view of understanding. A view that goes beyond *good vs. bad, criminal vs. victim*. A view that challenged our internal carceral thought and invited those with privilege, such as white-bodied, able-bodied, cis-gendered, heteronormative folks to enter into the circle of collective liberation, listen, un-learn, dismantle the supremacist, individualist carceral logic. While taking leadership in development of a world built on abolition, by those who have been doing it for decades; queer, trans, 2spirit, Black, Indigenous, People of color, femmes, sex workers, and folks not existing within the social construct of able-bodied.

Through the voices of the panelists, and the honest conversations full of experiences, emotions and impact, the event highlighted that as a collective we must heal together, love in a radically reciprocal way that is self-determined and mutually generative, and never forget to dream the future of abolition into the present. We embarked on this process through a loving experience of our own full self. We ensured we walked in right relation to the full selves of all of those around us. We learned that abolition can only and truly be fully embodied by returning to a full self-sovereign personhood existing

within a fully complex body free of colonial, supremacist, and individualist values, tendencies and behaviours. We must dismantle internally, so that we can build abolition externally.

In conclusion, I want us to remember that every system, including the criminal justice system, is built by people. You and me, and everyone else around us, are all a part of this system which inflicts harm on the lives of people it deems less valuable, unworthy of life or full personhood, and marks as *the other*. As a person holding various privileges, I know that my responsibility lies in bringing these words off this paper and into every community, interaction, petition, demand, and action I take within the system. Am I willing to stand up and acknowledge that the legacy of colonialism is as real within my body, as within the bodies of those directly harmed by it? Am I willing to continually dismantle what Walker called “the colonial mindset” (Walker, 2022), in how I relate to myself and others in everyday interactions? Am I willing to collectively contribute to the already existing building of a care-based system in which care is defined by each person standing in their full sovereign personhood? My answer to this is an obvious yes, and I hope it will be for all others who carry any kind of privilege as they navigate how their body exists within our social contexts and environments, and most importantly, how it shapes these environments for others. This is our collective responsibility. This is embodied abolition.

Bibliography

Bey, M. and Goldberg, J. A.; Queer as in Abolition Now!. *GLQ* 1 April 2022; 28 (2): 159–163. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-9608091>

Brown, A. (2019). *Pleasure Activism, The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chicago, Edinburgh: AK Press

Caven, F. (2013). Behind Idle No More, the Women Behind the Movement. *Cultural Survival Quarterly (March)*, 37(1). Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/being-idle-no-more-women-behind-movement>

Chan, J., Chuen, L., & McLeod, M. (2017, July 20). Everything You Were Never Taught About Canada's Prison Systems. *Intersectional Analyst*. <http://www.intersectionalanalyst.com/intersectional-analyst/2017/7/20/everything-you-were-never-taught-about-canadas-prison-systems>

Correctional Service of Canada (2010, March). Section 2: The Mandate, Mission and Priorities of the Correctional Service of Canada. *Speakers Binder*. Retrieved July 2022 from <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/sb-go/pdf/2-eng.pdf>

Davis, A. Y. (2011). *Are Prisons Obsolete?*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Davis, A. Y. (2020). Abolishing Police is Not Just About Dismantling. It's Also About Building Up. *Democracy Now* (June 12). Retrieved October 2021 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ebWFnGWOaA>

Davis, A. Y., Dent, G., Meiners, E. R., & Richie, B. E. (2022). *Abolition. Feminism. Now* (Vol. 2). Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.

Dawkins, M. (2018). "I fight for me, I fight for us," in Cell Count 87, PASAN. Retrieved March 2021 from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/420954541/87-updated-and-final-pdf>

Donald, D. (2016). From What Does Ethical Relationality Flow? An "Indian" Act in Three Artifacts. *Counterpoints*, 478, 10-16.

Drawson, A. S., Toombs, E., & Mushquash, C. J. (2017). Indigenous Research Methods: A Systematic Review. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(2).

Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Vol. 21). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Government of Canada. (March 09, 2022). CORCAN. Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/corcan/002005-index-en.shtml>

Holtzman, B. (2008). In the Middle of a Whirlwind, An Interview with Robin D. G. Kelley. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*. Available on Scribd. Retrieved January 2022 from: https://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/3108689?access_key=key-1lm99olqw7oyfm2erchmn

Hwang, R. Y. (2019). Deviant Care for Deviant Futures: QTBIPOC Radical Relationalism As Mutual Aid Against Carceral Care. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 6(4), 559-578.

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. (2016). *Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*. Duke University Press.

INCITE. (n.d). *Community Accountability*. INCITE. Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://incite-national.org/community-accountability/>

Kaba, M. (2021). *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Kelley, R. D. (2003). *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Beacon Press.

Lourenco, D. (2020, January 25) Moka Dawkins Says Toronto Jail Experience Violated Her Human Rights. *Huff Post*. Retrieved April 2021 from: https://www.huffpost.com/archive/ca/entry/moka-dawkins-trans-lgbtq-ontario-jail-transgender_ca_5e29c870c5b6779e9c2f0161

Maynard, R. (2022). *It's Long Past Time to Talk About Policing Black Woman in Canada*. Toronto Star (May 29). Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/05/29/its-long-past-time-to-talk-about-policing-of-black-women-in-canada.html>

Marcus-Ware, S. (2021). "Antarctica". Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://www.syrusmarcusware.com/art/antarctica>

McBride, H. L. P. (2021). *The Wisdom of Your Body: Finding Healing, Wholeness, and Connection Through Embodied Living*. Brazos Press.

McDonald, C. (2015). *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*. Edinburgh, Oakland, Baltimore: AK Press.

Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press.

Peltier, C. (2018). An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods With Participatory Action Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. Volume 17: 1–12.

Rojas Durazo, A.C., Bierria, A. & Kim, M. (2011-2012). Community Accountability, Emerging Movements to Transform Violence. *Social Justice, A Journal of Crime, Conflict & World Order*. (Vol 37. No 4.) Editors introduction. Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://communityaccountability.wordpress.com/social-justice-journal-issue/>

Sharpe, C. (2016). *In The Wake: On Blackness and Being*. ProQuest Ebook Central. Retrieved January 2021 from: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

Saskatchewan Manitoba Alberta Abolition Colation (SMAAC). (2020). *Origin of Prisoner's Justice Day*, SMAAC. (August 1). Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://smaac.org/origins-of-prisoners-justice-day/>

Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society. (2022). About Us. TWHLS. Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://www.twhls.ca/about-2/>

Transformharm. (2020). Transformative Justice. Transformharm. Retrieved July 2022 from: <https://transformharm.org/category/transformative-justice/>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, United Nations., University of Manitoba., Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada., Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada., & United Nations. (2015). Truth & reconciliation: Calls to action, 3-4.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-428.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is Not a Metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society* 1(1), 1– 40.

Xenakis, S. and Cheliotis, L. (2018). Neoliberalism and the Politics of Imprisonment. In: DeKeseredy, Walter S. and Dragiewicz, Molly, (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Criminology*. Routledge international handbooks (2nd). Routledge, Abingdon,UK, 249-259.

Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism. (2022). About Us. Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism. Retrieved April 2022 from: <https://wildseedcentre.com/about/>

Wngz, R (2020, July 31). *As a Queer, Trans and Afro-Indigenous woman, I believed That I Could Never be a Representative of Black Liberation*. Macleans. Retrieved July 2002 from: <https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/as-a-queer-trans-and-afro-indigenous-woman-i-believed-that-i-could-never-be-a-representative-of-black-liberation/>