

Subject-based Zine Finding Aid: Prisons, police brutality & the criminalization of minority communities

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Introduction

The theme for this zine collection is prisons, police brutality and the criminalization of minority communities. It includes materials that educate community members about their rights, police violence, and the prison system. Police brutality and racist ideologies continue to govern modern decision making and this phenomenon greatly affects BIPOC communities. Terry Cook, a Canadian archivist noted how: “in many societies, certain classes, regions, ethnic groups, or races, women as a gender, and non-heterosexual people, have been de-legitimized by their relative or absolute exclusion from archives, and thus from history” (Cook, 2011, p. 174). The stories documented in this collection of zines are important to ensure that the struggles of BIPOC communities are not pushed to the side, de-legitimized, or forgotten in history. These zines also ensure that the voices of these communities populate their own records rather than having narratives constructed about them without their input or consent.

While this collection only describes injustices and how to deal with police from 1978 to 2016, there is a shift over time to be noted. In 1991, Rodney King was severely beaten by police officers when evading arrest and this beating was caught on video. When distributed by news outlets, this video created a massive uproar. It showed police officers: “crossing the line from legitimate law enforcement into raw brutality, [prompting] journalists to grant visibility and legitimacy to people and perspectives they had rarely included in the news” (Lawrence, 2022, p. 3). Since then, more media coverage has been given to the violence experienced by people of colour at the hands of law enforcement. Names such as Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Elijah McClain, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Daunte Wright are in the thoughts of not only marginalized communities, but also the white majority due to the increase of personal recordings on social media and the media coverage given to protests and the Black Lives Matter movement. These protests and movements are why organizations like the Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (COBP) have the multi-zine series: *Guess What! We've got Rights?! Building Strength in Relation to the Police*. This media coverage sparking outrage

is not limited to police brutality either, it can also be seen in global politics such as the violence experienced by Palestinians in Gaza.

While there has been an exponential increase in media coverage of state-sanctioned violence, many issues have been realized in this process. For instance in the list of names given above for notable public outcry cases, only one of them is a woman. Women like Michelle Cusseaux, Shelly Frey, or India Kager, did not get as much limelight in the media, highlighting how: “state violence [has been] part of a broader intersectionality story of racial patriarchy working itself out on the bodies of Black women” (Crenshaw, Forum Policy American African, Monáe, 2024, p.16). It is not just the bodies of Black women either as demonstrated by this collection. Palestinian and Latina women are going through struggles with racism and patriarchy. These zines are important to the collection because, according to the African American Policy Forum and #SayHerName movement: “Art has the power to release trauma and open possibility” (Crenshaw, Forum Policy American African, Monáe, 2024, p.207).

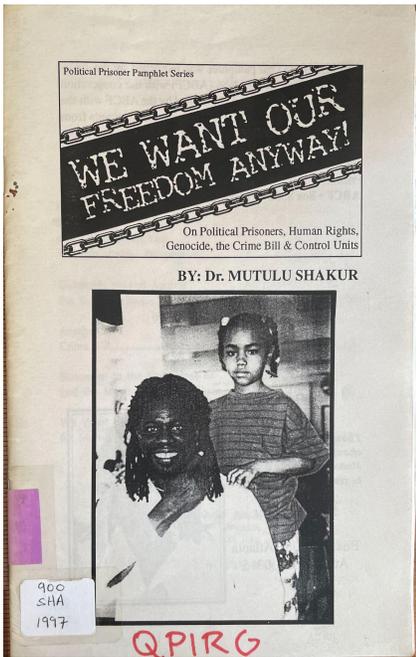
Overview of Items

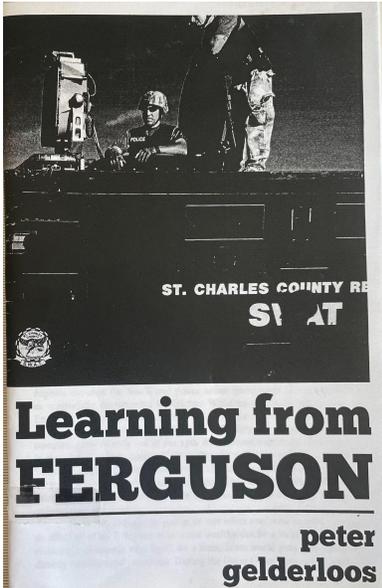
For our selection process, we parsed through material related to colonization, incarceration, police violence, and other intersecting axes of oppression, but, at first, we decided to focus on the carceral state and police brutality in North America. Since the carceral state is a global issue related to intersecting experiences of oppression, we then amended our selection and included some zines pertaining to prisoners in Spain and political prisoners in Palestine. We selected zines that feature granular and universal views concerning the prison system, because the carceral state contains both global and local spheres that can be linked to American chattel slavery. However, despite policing and imprisonment being a universal and global system, it is also a material reality that afflicts people who are currently incarcerated or who face police violence due to race or gender. For this reason, we selected several know-your-rights zines that offer practical advice regarding how to deal with encounters with the police (*Guess What? We’ve Got Rights vol. 1 + 2*), as well as more theoretical explanations on the for-profit prison system and its evolution into the massive industry it is today (*Slavery on the New Plantations*).

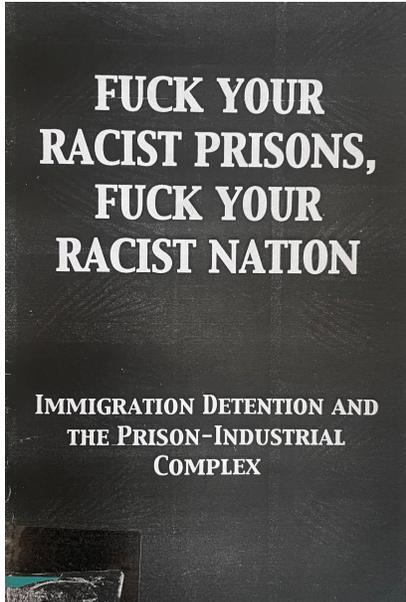
To understand some of the zines, it is helpful to have knowledge of movements such as the Black Panther movement, Black feminism, and Black liberation, as they provide the theoretical underpinning for many of the zines, such as *We Want Our Freedom Anyway! On Political Prisoners, Human Rights, Genocide, the Crime Bill & Control Units*, by Dr. Mutulu Shakur, published by the Anarchist Black Cross Federation in 1997, which critiques specific pieces of legislation such as the 1994 Clinton Crime Bill. With regard to *Women in Prisons: How it is with us*, published in 1978 and written by Assata Shakur, it is helpful to understand that Shakur is a preeminent Black feminist

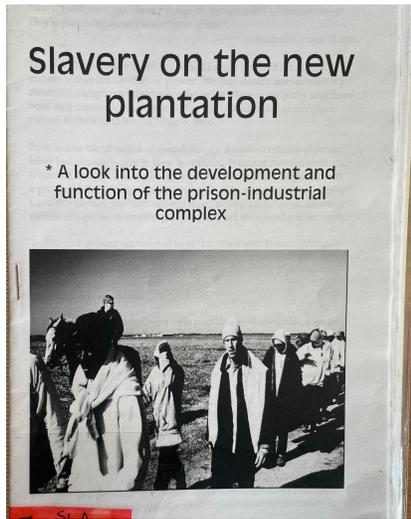
scholar and former political prisoner herself who has inspired the activism and scholarship of many who followed.

We chose to arrange our collection in thematic order. We noted several subcategories, including women in prisons, guidebooks, global perspectives, and police brutality. We arranged the zines following this logic as opposed to alphabetically because some of the zines had no author or multiple authors. For instance, the zine *For the Love of Palestine: Stories of Women, Imprisonment and Resistance* (2016) was published anonymously and edited by Diana Block and Anna Henry. Similarly, the know-your-rights and toolkit publications, such as *Guess What! We've got Rights?! Building Strength in Relation to the Police* (1998), are published by a collective rather than an individual author. Our first and second zines, *We Want Our Freedom Anyway! On Political Prisoners, Human Rights, Genocide, the Crime Bill & Control Units* and *Learning from Ferguson*, are not collectively authored, but emphasize a collective approach to scholarship that borrows from the contributions of a rich history of anti-carceral activism. The latter zine, authored by Peter Gelderloos, discusses the racist institution of the police, "They kill young black, Latino, and Native people at a disproportionately higher rate than white youth, and the institution itself descended from the patrols created to capture fugitive slaves in the South and police urban immigrants in the North..." (Gelderloos, 2014, p. 1). This collectivist and historical approach is constant throughout our zine collection, emphasizing the importance of scholarship and activism rooted in historicity and intersectionality.

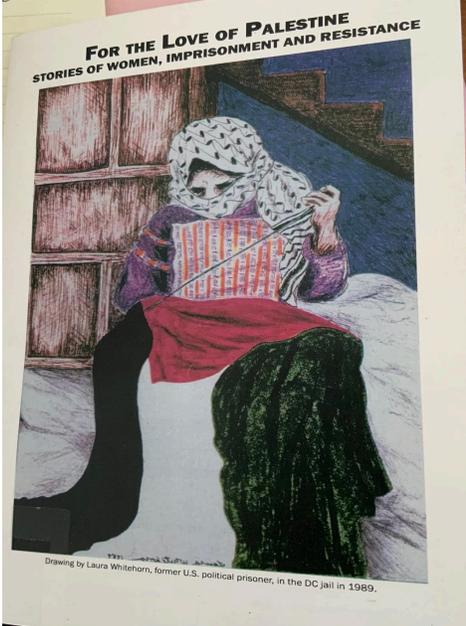
Title	We Want Our Freedom Anyway! On Political Prisoners, Human Rights, Genocide, the Crime Bill & Control Units	
Date	1997	
Author/s	Dr. Mutulu Shakur	
Publisher	Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF)	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 WEW 1997	
Subjects	Human Rights; Freedom; International Politics; Genocide	
Description	<p><i>We Want Our Freedom Anyway!</i> Addresses human rights issues and state violence, particularly within the American prison system. Shakur brings a humane aspect through his focus on the struggle of political prisoners and advocacy of their release; all while cleverly critiquing the state's genocidal tendencies, the 1994 Crime Bill, and prison control units that silence dissent.</p>	
Pages	40	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Learning from Ferguson	
Date	2014	
Author/s	Peter Genderloos	
Publisher	Left Bank Books	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 LEA	
Subjects	Police Brutality; Civil Rights; Violence; Black Resistance	
Description	<p><i>Learning from Ferguson</i> draws lessons from the true story of Michael Brown, an innocent black man killed by police brutality, and the 2014 Ferguson protests that followed. Gelderloos critiques state repression and systematic racism, while also examining grassroots movements' power to resist and transform oppressive systems. He further highlights the importance of collective power and solidarity in the face of state violence.</p>	
Pages	32	
Dimensions	8.5 x 6 "	
Number of Copies	1	

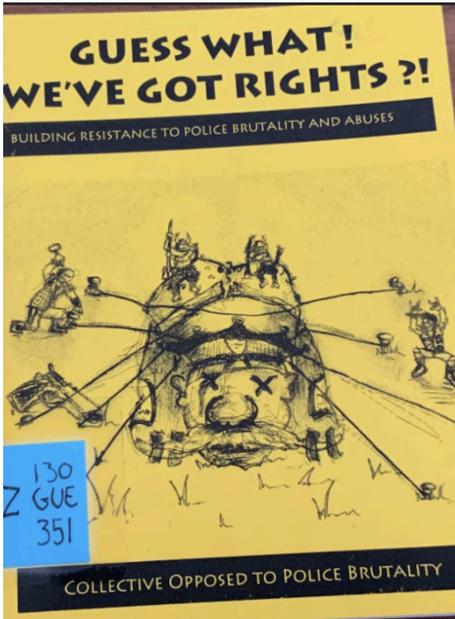
Title	Fuck Your Racist Prisons, Fuck Your Racist Nation: Immigration Detention and the Prison-Industrial Complex	
Date	2013	
Author/s		
Publisher	EPIC	
Language	English	
Call No	120 FUC	
Subjects	Anarchism; Prison Abolition; Immigration Law; Racism; Colonialism	
Description	<p><i>Fuck Your Racist Prisons, Fuck Your Racist Nation</i>, is a passionate call for freedom written by an anonymous anarchist radical group from Kingston, Ontario. It critiques Canada's immigration detention system, telling the story of the Kingston Immigration Holding Centre (KIHC) and the broader context of the prison-industrial complex. The zine touches on themes of racism and colonialism within immigration laws and insists on the abolition of borders, prisons, and the state itself.</p>	
Pages	16	
Dimensions	8.5x5.5"	
Number of Copies	1	

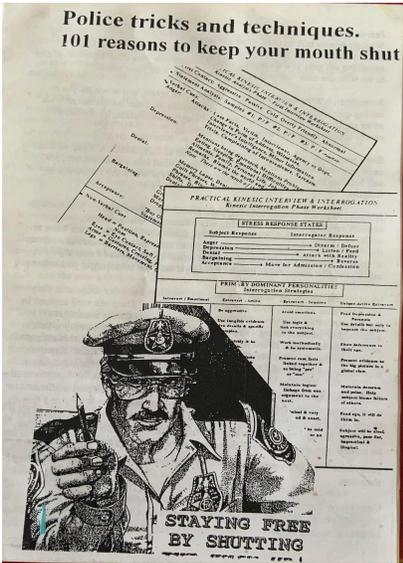
Title	Slavery on the New Plantation: A Look into the Development and Function of the Prison-Industrial Complex	 <p>The image shows the cover of a zine titled "Slavery on the new plantation". The cover features a historical black and white photograph of a group of people, likely enslaved, being led by a man on a horse. Below this is a smaller, more modern photograph of a group of people, possibly prisoners, standing in a line. The text on the cover includes the title and a subtitle: "* A look into the development and function of the prison-industrial complex".</p>
Date	2013	
Author/s		
Publisher		
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 SLA 2013	
Subjects	Prison Industrial Complex; Prisoners of War; Prison Labour; Privatization; Slavery	
Description	Slavery on the new plantation draws striking parallels between the modern American prison system and historical slavery. The zine examines how the prison industrial complex exploits marginalized communities, particularly Black and Brown individuals, through mass incarceration, privatization of prisons, and the commodification of labor, thus continuing the legacy of exploitation that began with slavery.	
Pages	14	
Dimensions	8.5x5.5"	
Number of Copies	3	

Title	Prison Was Created for the Poor, Mothers & Sons: From Fies to Aachen	
Date	2007	
Author/s	Pastora & Xose Tarrío Gonzales and Julia & Gabriel Pombo Da Silva	
Publisher	Leeds Anarchist Black Cross (ABC)	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 PRI 2007	
Subjects	Prison Industrial Complex; Motherhood; Poverty; Prison Activism	
Description	<p><i>Prison Was Created for the Poor</i> discusses the intersection of poverty, motherhood, and the prison system. The zine explores how the prison system disproportionately targets the poor, especially mothers and their sons, drawing from raw, firsthand accounts of Spanish mothers and their children who endured the harsh realities of incarceration.</p>	
Pages	32	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5"	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	For the Love of Palestine / Stories of Women, Imprisonment and Resistance	
Date	2016	
Editors	Diana Block & Anna Henry	
Publisher	The Freedom Archives	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 FOR 2016	
Subjects	Palestine; Women in Prisons; Prison Industrial System; Prisoners of War; Prison Activism	
Description	<p>This zine describes the effects of imprisonment on the lives of Palestinian women. These women were imprisoned for protesting Israeli occupation, causing incitement through social media and poetry, and accusations of nationalistically motivated violence. It also describes how these women in prison face medical neglect, assault, being refused bail, being denied visits, and other forms of violence. It also describes a community of women who have formed around collective resistance to advocate for each other, be each other's family, and strive for each other's release.</p>	
Pages	41	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5"	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Guess What! We've got Rights?! Building Strength in Relation to the Police.	
Date	1988	
Collaborators	Pascal Lescarbeau & Julius Greys	
Publisher	Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (COBP)	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 GUE 2004	
Subjects	Guidebooks; Anti-oppression; Police Brutality; Political Organizing	
Description	This zine gives advice on identification, the arrest process, and how interrogations should be dealt with. Also, the zine explains how to navigate police interactions calmly before a lawyer's in	
Pages	21	
Dimensions	5.5x4.5"	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Title: Guess What! We've got Rights?! Building Resistance to Police Brutality and Abuses	
Date	2013	
Collaborators	Pascal Lescarbeau & Julius Grey & Daredjane Assathiany	
Publisher	Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (COBP)	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 GUE 2013	
Subjects	Guidebooks; Anti-oppression; Police Brutality; Political Organizing	
Description	Educates readers on how to interact with police and understand your rights. This zine gives advice for dealing with interrogations and seizures, detailed examples of by-laws and other possible offences dealing with protests, what to do and what not to do when dealing with police at protests, non-lethal weapons police may use, and resources you can seek when police abuse has occurred.	
Pages	36	
Dimensions	5.5 x 4.5 "	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Police Tricks and Techniques: 101 Reasons to Keep your Mouth Shut	
Date		
Collaborators		
Publisher	BBC Distro	
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 POL	
Subjects	Guidebooks; Anti-oppression; Police Brutality; Political Organizing	
Description	<p>This zine explains why people talk during investigations and how investigators manipulate people into speaking. The zine advises on the difference between interviews and investigations, the scope of an ongoing investigation. The zine also lists techniques employed by investigators such as gaining rapport, repetition, dummy files, body language, gauging emotional reactions, and appeals to ego. Finalizes by stating it is always best to remain quiet in custody.</p>	
Pages	14	
Dimensions	8.5x5.5"	
Number of Copies	1	

References:

Cook, Terry. 2011. “‘We Are What We Keep; We Keep What We Are’: Archival Appraisal Past, Present and Future.” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32 (2): 173–89.

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197616543.003.0001>.