

"The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a complicated system situated at the intersection of governmental and private interests that uses prisons as a solution to social, political, and economic problems. The PIC depends upon the oppressive systems of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. It includes human rights violations, the death penalty, industry and labor issues, policing, courts, media, community powerlessness, the imprisonment of political prisoners, and the elimination of dissent." Critical Resistance, a prison abolition organization

"The prison does not prevent anti-social acts from taking place. It increases their numbers. It does not improve those who enter its walls. However it is reformed it will always remain a restraint, an artificial environment...which will make the prisoner less and less fit for life in the community. It does not achieve its end. It degrades society. It must disappear."

-Peter Kropotkin



To get involved and/or learn more:

**RICHMOND ANARCHIST
BLACK CROSS
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MISSION STATEMENT

The Richmond Anarchist Black Cross is an autonomous collective committed to prison abolition and prisoner support. As anarchists, we are opposed to all systems of oppression and repression and have concluded that prisons serve no positive function in society. We actively seek to abolish the institutionalized slavery of the Prison Industrial Complex. We are dedicated to working in solidarity with prisoners and drawing connections between a multitude of struggles.

WHAT IS THE ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS?

The origins of the ABC date back to the 1905 Russian Revolt. It was originally formed as the Anarchist Red Cross to organize aid for Political Prisoners and their families as well as organize self-defense against political raids by the tsarist regime. During the Russian Civil War, its name changed to the Anarchist Black Cross to avoid confusion with the International Red Cross, also organizing relief in the country. It has continued, at times very sporadically, serving its purpose of organizing aid for Political Prisoners & Prisoners of War (PP/POWs) for over 100 years.

In the 1980's, the ABC began to grow and resurface once again in North America. Since then the ABC name has been kept alive on the continent by a number of autonomous groups that work on a wide variety of prison justice issues. Some ABC campaigns have included: PP/POW support work; books to prisoners projects; challenging the racist death penalty; fighting against supermax prisons, privatization, the 'drug war', youth and immigrant incarceration, and countless other issues. Currently, there are at least 20 ABC groups throughout North America.

WHY PRISON JUSTICE?

Today the United States leads the world in incarceration. Over 2 million people are locked behind bars with countless more on probation and parole. The vast majority of these prisoners are working class or poor. A massive number are people of color, reflecting the long history of racism in this country that started with genocide of the indigenous peoples and the importation of Africans for slavery.

Many of these prisoners have mental health issues and/or substance abuse and addiction. Despite public perception, most of these prisoners are convicted of property crimes and non-violent drug offenses. Currently, the fastest growing prison population is women of color.

This is simply the tip of the iceberg, but it clearly points to a system that is bankrupt, unethical, corrupt, and damaging to society. As anarchists, we believe that this system needs to be dismantled. The current system of cops, courts, and prisons does not stop 'crime' or anti-social acts, it simply punishes them while leaving the root causes of these acts in place. The Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) warehouses prisoners, it doesn't rehabilitate them. Prisons are big business.

If our communities are ever to be truly safe and free we must begin the work of tearing down the prison system and envisioning and creating real examples of justice and accountability. We need justice that is restorative and transformative.

SOME DEFINITIONS:

Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POWs) are "those persons incarcerated as a result of political beliefs or actions consciously undertaken and intended to resist exploitation and oppression, and/or hasten the implementation of an egalitarian, sustainable, ethical, classless society, predicated on self determination and maximization of all people's freedom." (Bill Dunne, political prisoner).

Anarchism is a political theory which aims to create a society within which individuals freely co-operate together as equals. Anarchism opposes all forms of hierarchical control - be that control by the state or a capitalist or any other - and instead calls for free individuals to join together in the spirit of mutual aid, solidarity, and voluntary cooperation. We believe this will allow the free development of the individual and the organization of society to satisfy human need.

Self-determination is the ability to determine your own destiny without coercion or compulsion. This is often referring to the freedom of the people of a given territory to determine their own political status or independence. In liberation movements this means respecting the strategy and tactics of others. This doesn't mean always agreeing but respecting the right of the oppressed to challenge their oppression as they see fit.

