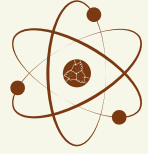


JASMINE  
OWENS



# BUILDING THE WORLD ANew

THE CASE FOR  
RADICALLY REDEFINING  
THE NUCLEAR  
ABOLITION MOVEMENT



For Ebb Cade, Patrice Lumumba, and all victims  
of nuclear weapons, past, present, and future.

*“The world you are fighting for, beyond  
oppression, is possible. Believe it. Know it.  
Hold it as sacred.”*

— J Mase III

Thanks to Win Without War and Ploughshares Fund  
for the support to create this zine.

**WIN WITHOUT WAR**

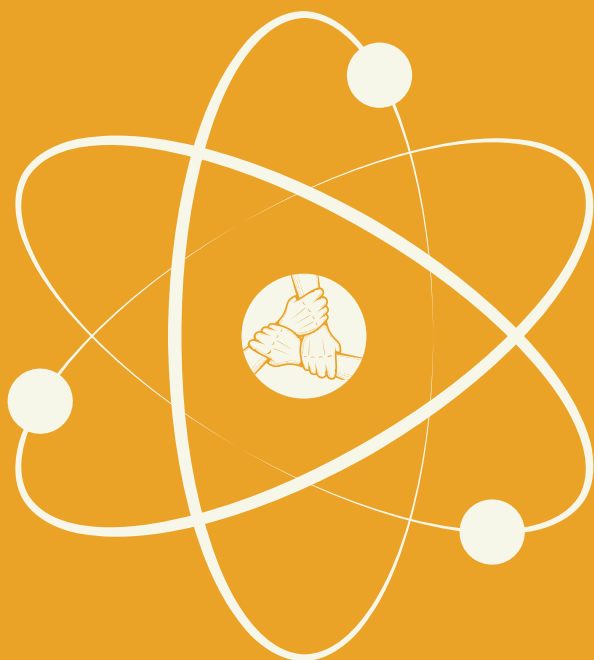
**PLOUGHSHARES**

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# INTRO DUCTION

“THE STRUGGLE FOR  
FREEDOM AND  
TRANSFORMATION IS NOT  
A DREAM. IT’S A FIRE  
THAT’S BURNING IN REAL  
TIME.

AND THE BLAZE IS  
SPREADING.”

- Maya Schenwar

We are at a pivotal moment in modern human history. There are several oppressive systems working together to amass great wealth and power for a select few at the expense of the death and destruction of people and the planet: white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, and militarism.

These systems of oppression cannot last forever — our lives, future generations, and the Earth depend on us taking radical and revolutionary action to rebuild the community destroyed by these evils, and to commit ourselves fully to transforming the world into one abundant in life, justice, community, cooperation, freedom, love and joy.

If we are to fully make the leap to this new, more sustainable, and life-affirming world, the abolition of nuclear weapons is crucial. All life on Earth is threatened and made fragile by the mere existence of nuclear weapons, and will be completely obsolete if these weapons are ever used.

Those in power weaponize this threat of nuclear annihilation to maintain other systems of oppression and achieve global domination, linking these systems together to create the global nuclear death machine that defines our current world and necessitates an intersectional movement for nuclear abolition.



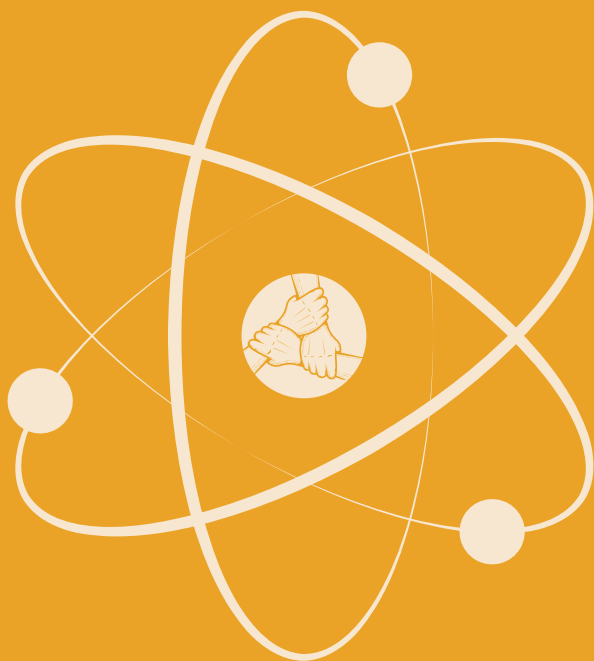


To fully realize this world of abundance we are fighting for, we must all engage in the self-transformational work of becoming more radical. Angela Davis defines ‘radical’ as merely grasping things at the root. We need to grasp at the root of the problems that ail our society, that encourage the development and maintenance of these weapons of mass death for the mere illusion of security.

In the foreword of *Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care*, Maya Schenwar imparts to us that “becoming radical isn’t an impulsive dalliance. It’s a leap toward

allowing yourself to believe in the possibility of our collective survival — and to believe that even if we don’t make it, we are all still worth fighting for, to the last breath.”

As we radically transform ourselves, we will transform the world. One of the first steps towards this self- and world-transformation is radically redefining our understanding of what nuclear abolition truly is, and what it will require of us in order to usher in a new, abundantly life-affirming world free from the threats posed by nuclear weapons.



# NUCLEAR ABOLITION<sup>AS</sup> PRACTICE



“IF WE’RE NOT CAREFUL, WE ALLOW MOBILIZATION TO BECOME EVENTS. THE STRUGGLE IS NEVER AN EVENT. IT’S A CONTINUAL, ETERNAL PROCESS.”

– Kwame Ture

Photo: Reuters / Getty Images / Joe Breen / iStock





Since the fight to abolish nuclear weapons is an extension of the broader fights to abolish oppressive systems, there is much to learn from the writings and teachings of activists, organizers, and educators from other movements for social justice, especially those fighting for Black and Indigenous liberation.

From these other movements, we learn that abolition is a place we can arrive at through the practice of transforming not just our world but also ourselves. Black lesbian immigrant writer, lawyer, and activist Andrea J. Ritchie asserts that abolition “requires profound transformation within each of us, in how we see, experience, and relate to the world around us, and of the societies we create and perpetuate.” Our systems and societies are a reflection of us — what we value, and what action we are willing to take to improve or transform the systems that make up our societies. Therefore, it requires all of us to be

active practitioners of the self-transformation required to usher in a new, abundant world.

Learning from the practices and traditions of the Black and Indigenous movements for liberation is extremely useful in this process of self- and world-transformation because “Imperialism and ongoing colonialism have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence, and Indigenous and Black peoples have been building worlds and then rebuilding worlds for as long as we have been in existence,” renowned Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reminds us in *Rehearsals for Living*.

Prison abolitionist, organizer, and educator Mariame Kaba offers a potential pathway to practice abolition in her collection *We Do This 'Til We Free US: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. It begins with re-



flecting internally on how we must change in order to be able to imagine the world we seek to build:

“Our imagination of what a different world can be is limited. We are deeply entangled in the very systems we are organizing to change. White supremacy, misogyny, classism, homophobia, and transphobia exist everywhere. We have all so thoroughly internalized these logics of oppression that if oppression were to end tomorrow, we would be likely to reproduce previous structures. Being intentionally in relation to one another, a part of a collective, helps to not only imagine new worlds, but also to imagine ourselves differently.”

Key to our self-transformation is “enlarging our vision and decolonizing our imagination,” as American revolutionary organizer Grace Lee Boggs claims. In fact, you will be hard pressed to find any abolitionist writings that do not discuss how imagination is crucial to the process. As poet Lucille Clifton puts it, “I cannot change what I cannot imagine.” How are we to build a new world if we cannot envision what that new world could look like? The current oppressive systems intentionally work to limit our imaginations, to make us believe that there are no better alternatives, this is all we’ve got. But as rapper Noname asks, “I feel like someone dreamed the world that we are in, so why can’t we dream of something

else?” As MPIC abolitionists are asking themselves how we can build a world free from prisons and police, so must we as nuclear abolitionists ask ourselves how we can build a world free from these genocidal weapons.

Once we decolonize our imaginations to allow for visionary transformation, Kaba explains that we then must put that imagination to work, experimenting “with new collective structures that enable us to take more principled action, such as embracing collective responsibility to resolve conflicts.” In this context, Kaba is referring to experimenting with new systems for transformative justice that aren’t punitive in nature like the MPIC, whose abolition is vital to Black liberation. The lesson applies to the nuclear abolition movement as well. On a larger scale, nuclear weapons are punitive.



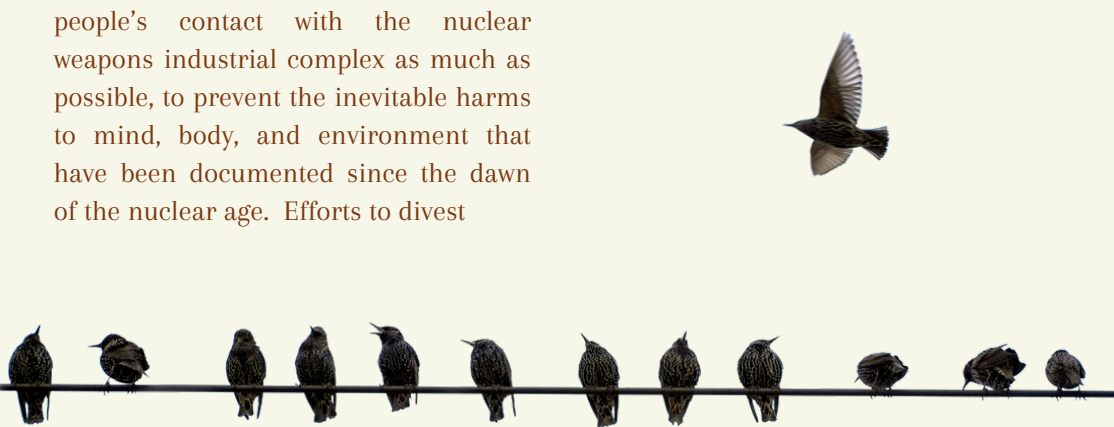


Because of their massive and indiscriminate destructive nature, they are the ultimate form of punishment, not just for the state singled out for punishment, but for the rest of us, too. We are all imprisoned by the threat of apocalypse posed by nuclear weapons states, and therefore we should all be working to free ourselves from this prison of mass death.

This falls in line with the next stage of the abolition process, which Kaba presents as creating and engaging strategies that limit contact between people and the criminal legal system, or in our case, the nuclear weapons industrial complex. As I've written elsewhere, nuclear weapons don't have to be detonated to cause irreparable harm; their development, production, testing, maintenance, and modernization are harming countless communities across the U.S. and the globe. Our work must center on reducing people's contact with the nuclear weapons industrial complex as much as possible, to prevent the inevitable harms to mind, body, and environment that have been documented since the dawn of the nuclear age. Efforts to divest

funds that sustain the nuclear weapons industrial complex, garner support for international diplomatic efforts to ban nuclear weapons, or advocate for governmental assistance for nuclear victims, are all examples of working to reduce contact with, and therefore harms of, the nuclear weapons industrial complex.

Lastly, Kaba reminds us that building a new world requires not just minimizing harm, but changing everything. The systems of oppression and domination we live with were designed to create death and destruction in order to enrich and empower a select few. These systems cannot be reformed or controlled, because at their very core they are antithetical to the life-affirming practices at the heart of nuclear abolition. The idea of changing everything "might sound daunting," Kaba contends, "but it also means that there





## Bayview-Hunters Point Naval Shipyard

Photo Source: "Berkeley University BAAMAP project to map and breakdown each overburdened communities and demographic information," Marie Harrison Community Foundation.

The majority-Black residents of Bayview-Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco have been working diligently for decades to mitigate the harms of and reduce contact between their communities and the toxic Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. During the Cold War, the shipyard was vital for various aspects of building up the U.S. nuclear arsenal, including decontaminating ships that were used in nuclear weapons tests out in the Pacific. The radioactive contamination from the site leaked into the environment, poisoning the surrounding mostly Black communities. Marie Harrison, known as the mother of the environmental justice movement, dedicated her life to holding the U.S. government and corporations accountable for poisoning the Bayview-Hunters Point communities and advocating for their health. Her leadership led to the closing of a toxic Pacific Gas and Electric Co. power plant responsible for a large share of San Francisco's asthma and cancer rates, and raising community awareness about the Shipyard's history and its shoddy clean-up efforts responsible for

the lethal radioactive contamination seeped into the surrounding environment. Today, Harrison's daughter, Ariann, is continuing her legacy through her organization Can We Live, which provides toxin screenings to local residents, installs airborne pollutant monitoring devices, and offers scholarships to local youth interested in studying environmental justice.

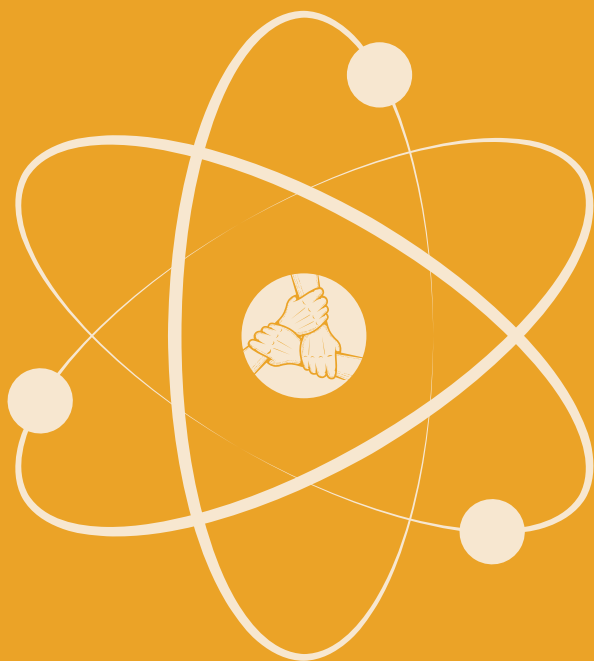
Harrison, her mother, and other local activists have been and are doing the work to create a place free from the harms of the nuclear weapons industrial complex and other industrial toxins. While they can't remove the radioactive contamination themselves, their efforts to educate and arm their communities with the knowledge and tools to mitigate the harms is a perfect example of what it means to be creating the community-centered world we want to live in, and the importance of leadership from those most harmed by these oppressive systems to recognize and manifest what justice looks like for them.

are many places to start, infinite opportunities to collaborate, and endless imaginative interventions and experiments to create.” Aiming to build a new world free from nuclear weapons allows us the freedom to imagine and create expansively, to not limit ourselves in what we can achieve when we come together to build something that serves and uplifts us all. These are the practices utilized and modified by MPIC organizers as they fight to abolish the penal systems that act as a continuation of slavery in the U.S.

Viewing nuclear abolition as a pro-

cess, a practice of transformation, “helps us to see that abolition isn’t a singular destination but an ‘ever-evolving set of practices that are embedded in how we care for each other and how we value each other,’” Ritchie contends. This is a process that requires us to value radical reciprocal care, community, and cooperation over domination, violence, and oppression, and to continuously practice these values in all aspects of life, so that the systems we build anew are founded on life-affirming, not life-depreciating, values.





# NUCLEAR ABOLITION AS PLACE



“AT THE SAME TIME, WHILE WE’RE  
SURVIVING IN THE MOUTH OF THIS  
DRAGON, WE ALSO NEED TO BE  
FEEDING OUR VISION...DEVISING A  
FUTURE WHERE WE WILL LIVE  
SOMEPLACE OTHER THAN THE TEETH  
OF THE DRAGON.

IF NOT IN MY LIFETIME, OR EVEN IN  
MY CHILDREN’S LIFETIME...BUT THAT  
EVENTUALLY WE WILL MOVE  
BEYOND DRAGONHOOD.”

- Audre Lorde



When we live and organize under this complex definition of abolition, we realize that our practices towards abolition lead us to a place of freedom made by our daily actions to commit to building the world anew. Prison abolitionist and scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes this as abolition geography. We must think of freedom from and abolition of nuclear weapons not as singular goals, but places that we make daily.

According to Gilmore, thinking like geographers helps us to think about why places are the way they are, what led

them to exist in whatever state they exist in, in order to better understand what remediative action is required. This involves working in alignment with the inhabitants of places that have been poisoned and destroyed by the nuclear weapons industrial complex. Each place will require its own unique actions to remake it into a place of freedom and life. That means listening to and taking guidance from these communities, who are more often than not, Black and Indigenous communities, and who likely have already been taking action locally to remake their communities in spite of profound oppression.



Decolonization and Land Back are crucial to creating places of freedom — from nuclear weapons, capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression. Returning the lands back to Indigenous tribes, who are the rightful stewards of Mother Earth, will provide the proper leadership to restore the environment from radioactive and other contamination caused by these extractive and exploitative oppressive systems — environments populated disproportionately by Indigenous and Black communities.

This cannot happen without decolonization — without restoring Indigenous cultural, political, economic, and environmental sovereignty.

Decolonization isn't just the work of Indigenous peoples. Like nuclear abolition, it will require all of us, all of our unique capacities and skills, to heal the land and ourselves, and to build systems of cooperation and transformative justice in place of these systems of oppression — all of which necessitate the leadership of Indigenous peoples.





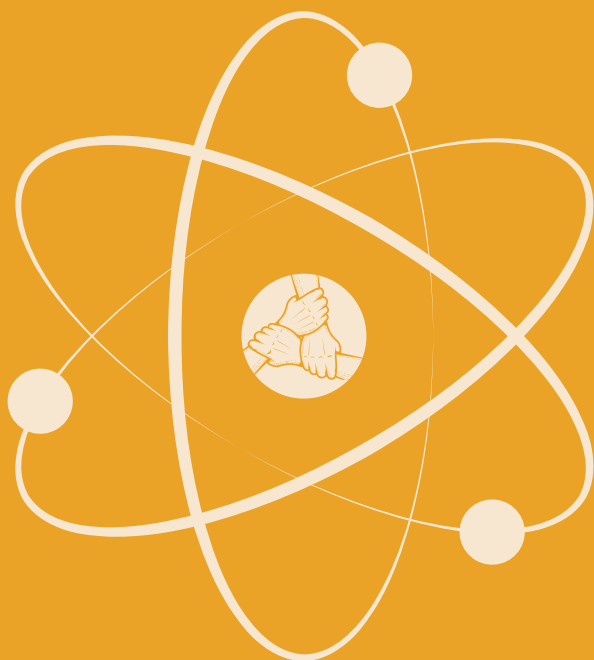
Photo Source: @Nuclear\_truth\_project / Instagram

One community engaging in abolitionist place-making is Tewa Women United. Located in the ancestral Tewa homelands that make up northern New Mexico, the multi-cultural/racial organization is led by Indigenous women working to create sacred spaces centering Indigenous women and girls, uplifting ancestral knowledge and healing that benefits all, and ending all forms of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Mother Earth. Their work is grounded in their ancestral values: respecting oneself and others, loving and caring for each other, feminine and masculine ancestral knowingness, Mother Earth, letting go, commitment to living life with purpose and good intentions, and living these values together. Together, these women have spent decades creating a sacred and safe space for women and girls, educating and advocating for reproductive justice, gender justice, and environmental justice. Key to their environmental justice work is advocating for governmental and corporate accountability for their communities living downwind and downriver from the nuclear weapons industrial complex occupying their sacred Jemez

Mountains.

What started off as a small effort to build a space where women and girls can share their experiences at the hands of violent patriarchy turned into a movement for self-determination, sovereignty, in(ter)-dependence, and sharing Tewa ways of being as a means of combatting various systems of oppression, including militarization and nuclear weapons. Teaming up with the Nuclear Truth Project—an initiative led by First Nations Peoples, people of color, impacted community members, queer people, and women — this movement has begun to form an international network for nuclear abolition led by those most harmed by these weapons. The work of TWU illustrates abolition geography, meaning what it looks like for us to implement daily our abolitionist practices to build a new world — one that centers Indigenous sovereignty and leadership, community care, accountability, transformative justice, and the belief that the eradication of nuclear weapons is vital to building the world anew.





CON  
CLUSION

“BEYOND ALL  
THAT WE MUST  
DISMANTLE,  
ABOLITION IS A  
VISION FOR ALL  
THAT WE MUST  
BUILD.”

– Naomi Murakawa





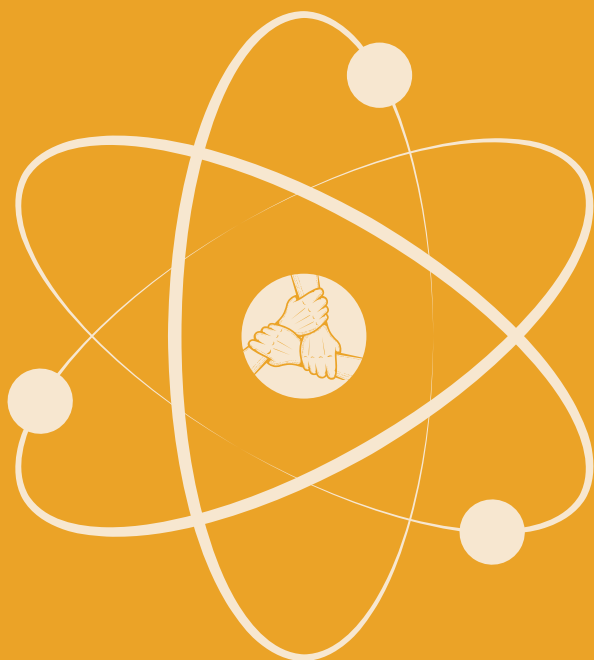
In order for the nuclear abolition movement in the U.S. to thrive and build the power necessary to eliminate these weapons of mass genocide, we must radically redefine our framework of abolition. We must rethink and reimagine how we show up and commit ourselves fully to the movement. We need to create new visions that invite and empower people to join us in our struggle to create a new world centered on community care and cooperation rather than violence, domination, and profit.

Boggs once said, “These are the times that try our souls...Each of us needs to be awakened to a personal and compassionate recognition of the inseparable interconnection between our minds, hearts, and bodies; between our physical and psychical well-being; and between our selves and all the other selves in our country and the world. Each of us needs to stop being a passive observer of the suffering that we know is going on in the world and start identifying with the sufferers.”

The time to act is now. We cannot be passive observers of the horrific violence caused by the nuclear weapons industrial complex, or the systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia that uphold it. We must all pick up the

mantle to abolish these systems of oppression, and to engage in the self- and society-transformation required to build a world in which this effort can succeed. It's time to grow our souls; to go forth into the world and take action that will plant the seeds of a new world that will liberate us all.





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