

No More Police

A Case for Abolition

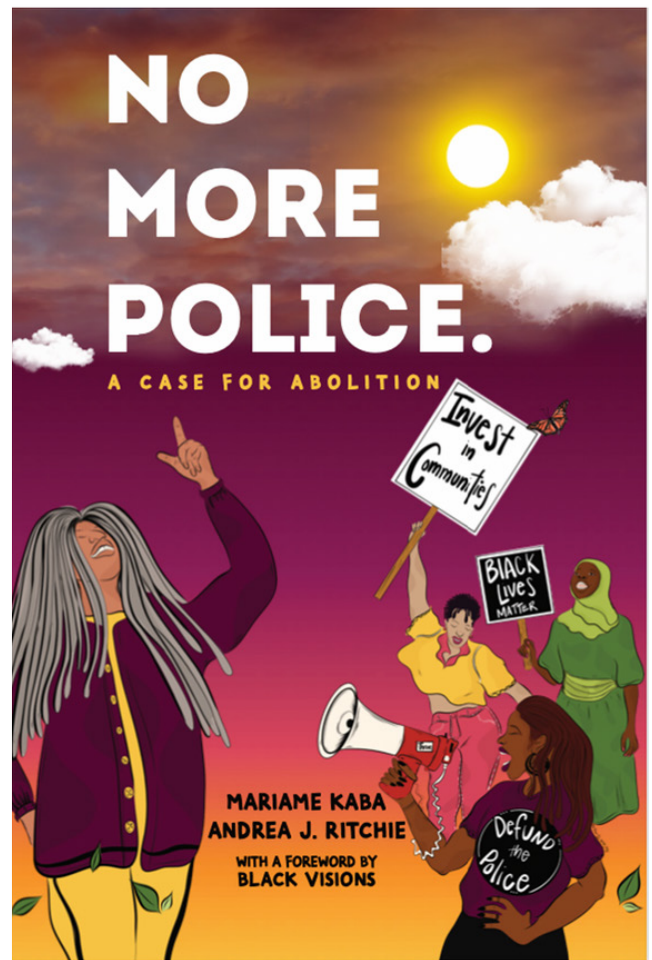
by Mariame Kaba & Andrea J. Ritchie

About the Book

In this powerful call to action, *New York Times* bestselling author Mariame Kaba and attorney and organizer Andrea J. Ritchie detail why policing doesn't stop violence, instead perpetuating widespread harm; outline the many failures of contemporary police reforms; and explore demands to defund police, divest from policing, and invest in community resources to create greater safety through a Black feminist lens.

Centering survivors of state, interpersonal, and community-based violence, and highlighting uprisings, campaigns, and community-based projects, *No More Police* makes a compelling case for a world where the tools required to prevent, interrupt, and transform violence in all its forms are abundant. Part handbook, part road map, *No More Police* calls on us to turn away from systems that perpetrate violence in the name of ending it toward a world where violence is the exception, and safe, well-resourced and thriving communities are the rule.

“Exploring movements to defund and abolish police through the lens of long legacies of Black feminist abolitionist organizing, *No More Police* offers an unflinching look at the traps that lie along the path to abolitionist futures, and critical guidance for readers who want to be part of bringing them into being. Add this timely and engaging book to the top of your must-read list.” —Angela Y. Davis



About the Authors

Mariame Kaba is a leading prison and police abolitionist. She is the founder and director of Project NIA and the co-founder of Interrupting Criminalization. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* and lives in New York City.

Andrea J. Ritchie is a nationally recognized expert on policing and criminalization, and supports organizers across the country working to build safer communities. She is a co-founder of Interrupting Criminalization, and the author of *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*. She lives in Detroit.

How to Use this Guide

This guide was created to help organizers, educators, students, people curious about police abolition, individuals, book clubs, and study groups utilize *No More Police* in community with others, as a tool for deeper reflection and self-interrogation, and to inspire concrete actions. The guide includes questions and activities for each section of the book organized by the following prompts:



Reflect

Explore the stories and experiences that have shaped your personal understanding of police and policing and clarify your stake in the abolition movement.



Research

Assess the reach and impact of policing in your community and dig into the histories, data, and strategies of local and global movements challenging the violence of policing and building toward abolitionist futures.



Vision

Seek out the spaces, practices, lessons, stories, skills, structures, and relationships that will help you imagine and build toward an expansive abolitionist vision for the future.



Practice

Think through how you can practice the world you want to build. Identify who is working to end violence—including the violence of policing—in your community, strengthen your organizing skills, assess your capacity to take immediate action, and build power and relationships for the long term.



Articulate

Deepen your understanding of abolition and build your capacity to convey abolitionist ideas to others by learning more about the defining features and nuances of different strategies, campaigns, frameworks, and narratives.

About this Guide's Author

Rachael Zafer is a writer, organizer, graphic designer, and the author of discussion guides for over two dozen books, including *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* by Mariame Kaba and *Viral Justice* by Ruha Benjamin. You can view all of her discussion guides at rachaelzafer.com.

Foreword



1. **REFLECT** | Before reading the foreword by Miski Noor and Kandace Montgomery, spend some time journaling about what you remember about the 2020 national uprisings following George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis.

- Did you participate in direct actions or join organizers at local protests? What motivated you to take action?
- What were organizers demanding in your community? How did neighbors, businesses, and institutions in your community respond?



2. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about how organizers at **Black Visions** and **Reclaim the Block** are working to abolish the Minneapolis Police Department and build toward greater safety in their community. What campaigns are they currently working on to build community safety and eliminate the police in Minnesota?

- What resources and tools did they create to support political education and encourage participation from people new to abolition?
- How do their values and language demonstrate a commitment to Black feminism, healing, liberation, and transformative justice?



3. **VISION** | How do Miski Noor and Kandace Montgomery think about seeding the work of abolition for the long term? What helped them find inspiration and build resilience?

- How can you apply some of the lessons from their work to the organizing you are doing or would like to do in your community?
- When the path ahead does not offer a clear view of immediate solutions, how can you work with others to develop strategies, build infrastructure, center care, and organize without a clear view of the solutions you are seeking?



4. **PRACTICE** | How do you practice being in right relationship with people in your community?

- What spaces and practices help you center individual and collective reflection, care, and accountability? Do you have a political home? Explore the **Building Accountable Communities Project**.
- How can you strengthen your own commitments to process, learn, study, practice, and take action together with others in your community?

Introduction



5. **REFLECT** | Before reading the introduction by Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie, reflect on their opening question, “When was the moment you first started to question the violence of policing?” Journal about this moment in time.

- How old were you?
- Where were you during this moment?
- What stories, media narratives, personal accounts, or individual experiences shaped your thinking?
- How do you feel today about the violence of policing? Have your opinions and emotions changed?



6. **RESEARCH** | What is neoliberalism and how does it perpetuate organized abandonment and criminalization? How is neoliberalism related to racial capitalism and settler colonialism?

- Read “**Epicenter: Chicago - Reclaiming a City from Neoliberalism**” by Andrea J. Ritchie in collaboration with Black Lives Matter Chicago.
- How has your community been impacted by neoliberal policies that have gutted collective resources and social services?
- What criminal laws were passed and enforced at the same time these services and resources were eliminated? How have people organized against these policies in your community?



7. **VISION** | The authors share three central elements to their case for police abolition: 1. Police don’t promote safety. 2. The violence of policing cannot be reformed. 3. We can create safety beyond policing. Choose one of these arguments for deeper reflection and learning.

- What is your initial reaction to this argument?
- Is your thinking about this argument grounded in Black feminism?
- How can you seek out and listen to the stories of people impacted by violence of all kinds, including the violence of policing, in order to integrate their needs, demands, visions, and histories into your own argument?



8. **ARTICULATE** | Read how scholars and organizers describe police and policing on the poster for **Interrupting Criminalization’s No More Police Benefit Fundraiser**.

- Which of these statements resonates most with you?
- How do these statements articulate the violence endemic to policing?
- How can you utilize one or more of these statements to clarify your own description of police and policing, and to help others understand the reality that policing is not “broken”?



9. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and read Community Resource Hub's "**Ensuring Federal Stimulus Funds Support Communities, Not Cops**" and "**Divesting from Pandemic Policing and Investing in a Just Recovery.**"

- **Find your city or county** and identify how much funding was allocated.
- Research how this funding was spent, and if any funds were diverted to police departments, jails, prisons, or other carceral responses, or for enforcement of public health orders or surveillance. How does this reflect the politics and patterns of neoliberalism?
- Deepen your learning about pandemic policing by exploring the **COVID19 Policing Project's** reports, updates, and resources.



10. **VISION** | If abolition is the sky we are reaching for, who or what can help you imagine, build, and practice other futures? Consider ancestors who have come before you, organizers and leaders who may work alongside you, and young people who will join the work of abolition.

- Make a list of the many people who are engaged in the work of building an abolitionist future.
- How can you create and join spaces and containers for practicing new ways of being, relating, and governing ourselves?

Chapter 1 | Cops Don't Stop Violence



11. **REFLECT** | How do you define crime?

- Does your definition of crime include white collar crimes and other crimes that are not systematically punished by the state?
- Does your definition of crime hinge on violence?
- Reflect on some of the ways that state power is exercised when crime is defined and punished. How are abolitionist movements working to shift this dynamic? Given that crime is a constructed category, how could it be deconstructed?



12. **RESEARCH** | Investigate the crime rate statistics in your community.

- What crimes are documented and prioritized for punishment? Does the data show a focus on crimes related to poverty and regulation of public space?
- Who collected this data? How was it collected and verified? What is missing from this data?
- How are these figures utilized in local narratives around violence and police funding?
- Is this information a reliable measure of violence and harm? Why or why not?

13. **PRACTICE** | What makes you feel safe?



- Have you witnessed actions or resources that effectively decrease violence? Are there organizations in your community that are committed to increasing access to these things to create greater safety?
- How can you strengthen your skills in de-escalation, conflict mediation, and intervention?
- How can you gather with others to facilitate or participate in conversations about preventing, responding to, and healing from violence, while identifying and practicing solutions that do not involve the police?

14. **ARTICULATE** | How do the police manufacture fear? How do they use fear to justify using violence to control and punish racialized and gendered populations in your community?



- How do police present themselves as the best solution for responding to violence and crime?
- How can you resist fear-based narratives?
- How can you help others deepen their understanding of the structural harms that contribute to violence?

15. **RESEARCH** | Identify 2-3 “hot spot” neighborhoods in your area that are targeted for increased policing.



- Who lives in these neighborhoods and is at risk of criminalization?
- What resources, organizations, and services exist in these neighborhoods? How are these neighborhoods impacted by organized abandonment?
- For an example of how organizers engaged in this analysis in Chicago, read **“Epicenter: Chicago - Reclaiming a City from Neoliberalism”** by Andrea J. Ritchie in collaboration with Black Lives Matter Chicago.

16. **PRACTICE** | For several days, pay attention to the media coverage, research, and conversations about violence, policing, and crime circulating in your community.



- What do you notice about these narratives? Do they employ fearmongering as a tactic for justifying the police? Do they advance narratives about particular people or communities, or notions that individuals are responsible for structural problems? Do they obscure interventions that don’t involve policing or structural interventions that would be more effective in preventing and interrupting violence?
- Consider how you can interrupt and resist these narratives and how you can best use your skills to shift the conversation in your community.

Chapter 2 | We Are Survivors



17. **REFLECT** | Write down some of the questions that are frequently posed by people who struggle to envision a world without police. Who is asking these questions and how do you think their identities, interests, and experiences inform their line of questioning?

- What are some of the questions that you are currently grappling with?
- How might you engage with others to talk through these questions together? Check out Interrupting Criminalization’s conversation tool, “**What About the Rapists?**” by Mariame Kaba and Eva Nagao.



18. **RESEARCH** | Deepen your understanding of the roots and trajectory of the anti-violence movement. How did the anti-rape movement in the 1970s emerge from work led by radical queer and women organizers?

- How did the passage of new laws like the Violence Against Women Act create new categories of crime to punish sexual and domestic violence? How did these laws impact the options available to survivors? How did they fuel the growth of police and policing?
- To deepen your learning, read ***Abolition. Feminism. Now.*** by Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie.



19. **ARTICULATE** | What is carceral feminism? How have the anti-rape and anti-domestic violence fields increasingly defaulted to policing and punishment when responding to violence?

- How does carceral feminism encourage building the prison industrial complex?
- Why would it be more effective to invest in community-based safety and resources like housing and health care?



20. **REFLECT** | What is your own stake in the work to end gender-based violence?

- What are survivors in your community asking for? What are some of the needs underlying their demands? How else could those needs be met?
- Read more about survivor-led organizations, campaigns, support groups, and convenings. Listen to the stories and demands of survivors. What solutions are survivors calling for that do not rely on policing and punishment?
- How can you devote your energy and skills to supporting their demands? How can you join their movement to create new forms of community safety?



21. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about the Central Park 5 case in New York or **the story of Jane Doe** in Toronto and the anti-Black media coverage related to these cases.

- How did the cops fail to prevent crime while also perpetuating violence?
- How did public focus on the story of a white survivor fail to acknowledge the violence that the majority of survivors experience?

Chapter 3 | Re-Form

22. **REFLECT** | How have you been caught in the lure of reform?



- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about addressing the violence of policing? What reforms do you feel pulled toward? What feels safer about trying to make the police “better” instead of reducing their resources, presence, and power?
- What can we learn from the history of police reform? Have reforms resulted in material changes for people targeted by policing and criminalization?

23. **REFLECT** | How have you observed policing in public spaces? How do you feel in your body when you see the police?



- How have you witnessed the police exert power?
- Have you witnessed the police prioritizing the protection of property over people?
- How do the police protect and maintain racial capitalism?

24. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about the cost of policing in your community. Review recent budgets and requests for additional funding.



- How much is spent on police overtime? Hiring bonuses and benefits? Police union staff? Public relations? Pensions?
- Deepen your understanding by exploring the **budgeting tools** available at **[DefundPolice.org](https://defundpolice.org)**.

25. **PRACTICE** | Identify a proposal from an organization in your community that seeks to advance community safety. Review the proposal and identify whether it incorporates reformist reforms or a more liberatory approach.



- Gather with a few members of your community and answer the framework questions on page 132 created by abolitionists for considering transformative demands. (For additional questions and resources, see Interrupting Criminalization’s **“So is this Actually an Abolitionist Proposal or Strategy?”**)
- Do you believe that the proposal will materially change people’s conditions to increase collective safety and well-being? Or will it legitimize and increase investment in the police? Does it presume the continued existence of the police or chip away at their power, resources, and legitimacy?
- Consider your relationships to the organization that developed the proposal and how you might respond to either support their work or share a critical assessment.

26. **RESEARCH** | How has the use of surveillance technology increased in your community? Where do you see increased surveillance in public spaces?



- What does your local police department spend on body cameras and surveillance equipment? Were pandemic relief funds spent on increased surveillance?
- How is your local police fraternal association communicating about the use of technology?
- Are there organizations in your community resisting increases in surveillance? Learn more about how to resist surveillance by reading about the **Defund Surveillance** campaign.

27. **ARTICULATE** | Review the core demands of Campaign Zero's **#8CantWait** proposed reforms and the **#8toAbolition** countercampaign. How do these two campaigns demonstrate two different approaches to responding to police violence?



- What differences do you notice in the language, data, and approach on the campaign websites?
- Read **“Why 8 Won’t Work: The Failings of the 8 Can’t Wait Campaign and the Obstacle Police Reform Efforts Pose to Police Abolition”** by Olivia Murray in the *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*. What arguments does Murray make that you can utilize in your responses to current calls for reforms?

Chapter 4 | No Soft Police

28. **REFLECT** | What is soft policing? Where have you witnessed soft policing in your community?



- Consider how you’ve witnessed rules and order enforced in medical and public health settings, public housing, schools, and social service agencies. What would these community spaces look and feel like without the presence of soft policing?
- How do you and people you know engage in policing in your relationships? In spaces you occupy?
- Make a list of actions that you and others in your community can take to resist and refuse to serve as social police.

29. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about how “police science” evolved to produce and maintain a particular social order.



- Read **“The Invention of the Police”** by Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*.
- How does current U.S. social policy promote notions of individual responsibility, deservingness, and scarcity?
- What are some of the ways policing manifests through public policy beyond law enforcement?

30. **ARTICULATE** | Examine the differences between reformist and abolitionist frameworks and how they consider the role of policing.



- How does the “Treatment, Not Punishment” framework fail to eliminate the risk of violence and punishment? How does the “Counselors Not Cops” framework ignore the carceral origins and current functions of social work? Do either of these frameworks discuss the social conditions that shape unmet needs and crises?
- Why do these frameworks focus on individual actions rather than addressing harms inflicted by the state? How does the “Communities Not Cops” campaign take a different approach?

31. **VISION** | Imagine that someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis and needs support. Consider how this crisis could be managed without any involvement from the police.



- What resources and relationships could help them navigate this crisis? Is there anything that would threaten their healing, autonomy, and stated needs?
- What would support their healing? What could potentially prevent the next crisis?

32. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about organizers working toward the decriminalization of all drugs, involvement in the sex trade, and poverty-related offenses.



- How do they advocate for the care and support that people in their community are asking for?
- What can you do to support their work?

33. **PRACTICE** | Make a list of incidents where you observed surveillance, policing, or punishment utilized in your community by public health agencies.



- Did you witness people having their needs met? Did you witness discriminatory and abusive enforcement of public health orders?

Chapter 5 | How Do We Get There? Toward a Police Free Future

34. **REFLECT** | What are some of the ways that you are invested in police and policing? What stories, media, and culture do you consume that fuel this investment?



- How can you work towards divesting ideologically and emotionally from all forms of policing?
- How might you reimagine and practice safety differently, for yourself and for others?
- What relationships, resources, and organizations can help you imagine new possibilities for greater safety?



35. **PRACTICE** | What is copspeak? Notice where copspeak is used and make a list of the words and phrases you notice (including language like “over-policing,” “alternatives to police,” “police brutality,” and “ending mass incarceration”).

- Do you use any of these phrases? Why is it important to utilize a different vocabulary that uplifts abolition and reframes problems and solutions?
- Make a list of alternative language you can utilize or share when you encounter people using copspeak.



36. **ARTICULATE** | What are some abolitionist responses to acts of violence and harm?

- What are some nonpunitive consequences that could replace carceral responses? How would these solutions increase the chances of accountability, healing, repair, and prevention of future violence and harm?
- What are some of the differences between security and safety?



37. **VISION** | Think of a time you witnessed harm being interrupted. Were the police involved in this situation?

- How can you strengthen structures of care in your community in order to prevent, interrupt, and heal from harm?
- What resources, relationships, and skills can help you build healthy relationships? What is your vision for organizing, strengthening, and utilizing collective care?
- Explore “**Skills, Relationships, Structures**” by Interrupting Criminalization.



38. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about the story of the six Tongan teens who were trapped on an island in the mid-1960s. Read “**I Spent 15 Months Shipwrecked on an Uninhabited Island**” by Julian Morgans in *Vice*.

- How did practicing values of care and cooperation help these teens survive?
- Why is it important to tell and share stories like this that help us imagine and create a new vision of safety and care?



39. **PRACTICE** | Explore the questions posed by the authors on pages 188-189. How can you work through these questions with other members of your community?

- Consider organizing a community meal or a gathering of neighbors and facilitate a discussion about community safety. How can you work together to create new structures of care and safety?
- What alternative resources to calling and engaging the police can you create together?

Chapter 6 | Tricks and Tensions



40. **REFLECT** | What is your vision of how we should govern ourselves, distribute resources, and practice collective care? How is this vision shaped by talking to people in your community? When have you practiced this vision through governance, education, and cultural work?

- What has previously blocked you from participation?
- How can you bring your skills and experience to collective decision-making processes or to participatory budgeting in your community?
- Make a list of people, organizations, and resources that can help you explore your questions about new forms of governance and community safety. Does your list include Black feminist leaders and organizations?



41. **RESEARCH** | What is commoning? How does commoning promote safety and well-being for all people?

- How does commoning resist criminalization, abandonment, and regulation?
- What shared resources are required to create and sustain the commons?
- Why is it necessary to prioritize art, culture, recreation, and rest when recreating the commons?



42. **PRACTICE** | How can practicing perpetual critique help you identify the tools and reach of the carceral state? What makes perpetual critique generative and inspiring rather than destructive and discouraging?

- How can we incorporate a practice of experimentation and recognize failures as sources of information rather than judgments?



43. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about how your local Police Fraternal Association (PFA) utilizes power, resources, and money.

- What political leaders, policies, and corporations does your local PFA endorse? Who in your community funds their work?
- Are there any local organizations limiting the reach, power, and resources given to the PFA? How can you support their work?



44. **PRACTICE** | Learn more about the **Chicago Torture Justice Center**, the **Chicago Torture Justice Memorials**, and the **Just Transition** framework.

- How do these organizations and frameworks focus on building life-giving institutions and relationships? How do they work toward accountability and repair?
- How could these frameworks inform responses to harm and violence in your community?

45. **RESEARCH** | Learn more about dual power strategies. How does a dual power approach demonstrate that we can start practicing the world we want right now?



- How did dual power strategies emerge from Indigenous and Black-led struggles in the Global South? Learn more about how the Zapatistas, the Landless People's Movement in Brazil, social movements in Argentina, people power in Rojava, and other movements practice dual power strategies.
- To learn more about organizing to build power against and beyond carceral states, watch **Mijente's animated video**.

Chapter 7 | Experiment and Build

46. **REFLECT** | What are some of the problems in your neighborhood that are frequently addressed by the police?



- Reflect on how daily, small-scale interventions could address these issues without police violence. Who else in your community is interested in practicing these interventions?
- Why must we resist demands to model and scale solutions without first building relationships, trust, and adapting to local conditions?

47. **VISION** | How can art help you think and feel differently about abolition?



- Explore the work of abolitionist artists, including Interrupting Criminalization's **Abolition Imagination Cards** and **Coronavirus Solidarity Poster & Postcard Project** and Project NIAs zine "**Practicing Abolition, Creating Community**" written by Benji Hart and illustrated by Emma Li.
- How does engaging with abolitionist art make you feel? How can art inspire engagement, experimentation, and collaboration?
- How can you create art that imagines new possibilities or support the work of abolitionist artists?

48. **PRACTICE** | What mutual aid projects exist in your community?



- Do organizers identify these projects as solidarity and not charity? Are relationships being built and strengthened through these projects? Do these projects have a political foundation that ties local action to systemic change?
- What skills, resources, and tools do you have or have access to that you can contribute to local mutual aid?



49. **ARTICULATE** | What is transformative justice? How is transformative justice different from mainstream definitions of “justice”? How is it different from restorative justice?
- Why is a process that centers accountability radically different from responding to harm by seeking punishment?
 - How have you been conditioned to seek punishment as a consequence for harm? How does punishment create cycles of destruction and harm?
 - What would it look like to take collective responsibility for transforming the conditions that produce violence and harm when addressing individual incidents?



50. **PRACTICE** | Consider your capacity to take immediate actions in your community.
- How could you join others to eliminate cops from spaces of learning and growth, end the criminalization of youth, and eliminate soft policing from schools?
 - Can you join or participate in your local school board? Volunteer at your local school? Where else can you advocate for liberatory education?

Chapter 8 | Black Feminist Musings



51. **REFLECT** | How does Black feminism inform your thinking about abolition? How can deepening your understanding of Black feminism help you to better see and understand the violent roots of the carceral state?
- Reflect on the authors’ question, “How will you practice Black feminist abolitionist freedom dreams today?”



52. **ARTICULATE** | The authors identify three primary points of focus in their organizing work: 1. Help people understand the current reality. 2. Collectively imagine a future vision of what can be. 3. Diligently labor toward that future.
- Which of these points of focus resonates most with you and the role you see for yourself in the movement for abolition?
 - Who can help you sharpen your focus?



53. **RESEARCH** | How do organizations and groups in your community define care? How is this similar to or different from your individual definition of care?
- Who is advancing mutual aid and transformative justice work in your community? What resources and support do they need to deepen and continue this work?



54. **VISION** | What would it look and feel like to live in a world where we have successfully uprooted policing and criminalization?
- What would a world where everyone is safer look and feel like? What is possible when you engage with others from a place of possibility, abundance, and care?
 - What would it look and feel like to break the limits of your imagination and contribute to collectively finding our way toward abolitionist futures?