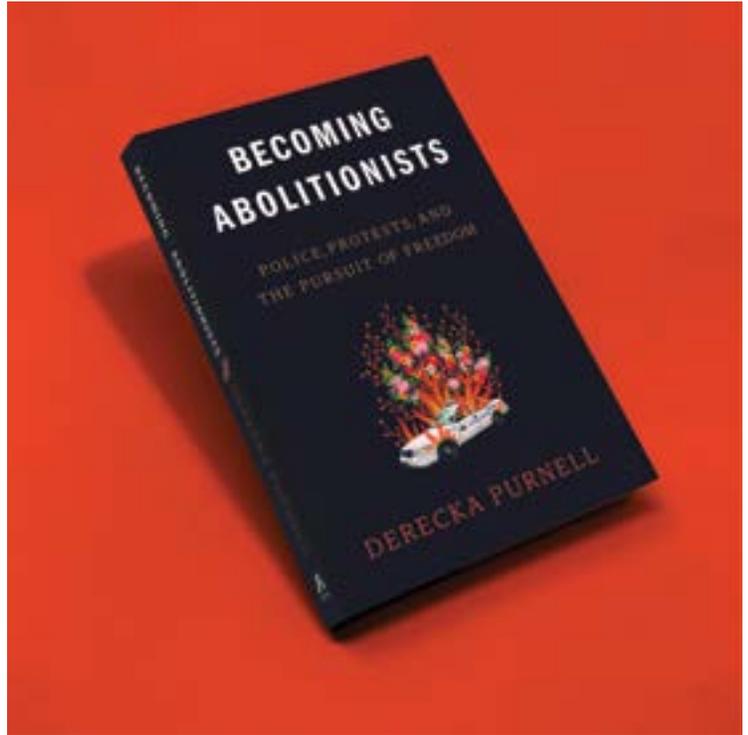


FAITH COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom by Derecka Purnell

1. What are your primary associations with the word “abolitionist”? Share one positive association, one negative association, and one association you’re curious about.
2. What scriptural passages or biblical stories come to mind when you think about police and prisons? About abolition?
3. Derecka Purnell shares her story of politicization (beginning to intentionally develop a new way of understanding relationships and power) in the book. Were there events in your own life or in the national news that politicized you around anti-racism and police violence?
4. What did you do after the death of Trayvon Martin? Michael Brown? George Floyd? What did you see your churches, faith communities, and spiritual leaders do? What, if anything, do you wish had been done differently?
5. Purnell talks about a painful experience of theology in church that taught her to treat others as if they were not God’s children. Have you ever had a difficult experience of encountering conservative theology around issues of police violence or white supremacy? How did you respond? Do you wish you had responded differently?
6. In what ways do you find yourself inspired by the public witness of the church around racial justice? Are there pastors, theologians, or political organizations you consider to be guiding lights?
7. Did reading Purnell’s book stir up your spirit—to get involved in activism or just learn more about the issues? If so, share one commitment with the group about a way you’d like to deepen your engagement.



Derecka Purnell, Photo by Alyssa Lisbon

8. The prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore says “abolition is a presence”—meaning that the world of abolition is defined not by the removal of police and prisons but rather by the construction of systems that will render them increasingly unnecessary. What changes can you imagine in your life—in your family, your church community, your job, or your city—that would decrease dependence on police? How can you take a concrete step toward enacting those changes?
9. Out of recognition of the crisis of racialized police violence in the US, some churches have committed to not calling the police. Can you imagine your church doing this? What would it take to turn that imagination into reality?
10. Purnell concludes her book with a list of proposals for an abolitionist future. Which one did you find the most exciting and why? How do you imagine getting from here to there? What are your proposals? Try creating some alone and with others.

SOME FURTHER RESOURCES

Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom by Derecka Purnell

On radical movements

Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Movements in America*

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880*

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*

Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*

Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (editors), *Futures of Black Radicalism*

Dan Berger and Toussaint Losier, *Rethinking the American Prison Movement*

Angela Y. Davis (editor), *If They Come in the Morning . . . : Voices of Resistance*

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (editor), *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*

Victoria Law, *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women*

Dan Berger and Emily K. Hobson (editors), *Remaking Radicalism: A Grassroots Documentary Reader of the United States, 1973–2001*

On prisons and incarceration

Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America*

SOME FURTHER RESOURCES

Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom by Derecka Purnell

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*

Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*

Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*

James Forman Jr., *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*

Marie Gottschalk, *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics*

Joy James (editor), *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings*

Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law, *Prison by Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms*

Kay Whitlock and Nancy A. Heitzeg, *Carceral Con: The Deceptive Terrain of Criminal Justice Reform*

On policing

David Correia and Tyler Wall, *Police: A Field Guide*

Adam Elliott-Cooper, *Black Resistance to British Policing*

Stuart Schrader, *Badges without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*

Kristian Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America*

Paul Butler, *Chokehold: Policing Black Men*

Alex S. Vitale, *The End of Policing*

Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (editors), *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Blacks Lives Matter*

Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*

Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*

Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces*

On anti-carceral feminism and transforming harm

Emily L. Thuma, *All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence*

Ann Russo, *Feminist Accountability: Disrupting Violence and Transforming Power*

Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (editors), *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*

Judith Levine and Erica R. Meiners, *The Feminist and the Sex Offender: Confronting Sexual Harm, Ending State Violence*

Molly Smith and Juno Mac, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights*

Creative Interventions (editor), *Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence*

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (editor), *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*

SOME FURTHER RESOURCES

Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom by Derecka Purnell

On LBTGQIA+ liberation

Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith (editors), *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*

Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock, *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*

Ryan Conrad and Against Equality (editors), *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion*

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (editor), *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*

Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left*

On disability justice

Liat Ben-Moshe, *Decarcerating Disability: Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition*

Keith Rosenthal (editor), *Capitalism and Disability: Selected Writings by Marta Russell*

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*

Talila Lewis, [“Disability Justice Is an Essential Part of Abolishing Police and Prisons”](#)

Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey (editors), *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*

On climate change

David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*

Kate Aronoff, *Overheated: How Capitalism Broke the Planet—and How We Fight Back*

The Red Nation, *The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth*

Max Ajl, *A People’s Green New Deal*

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

On faith and abolition

Joshua Dubler and Vincent Lloyd, *Break Every Yoke: Religion, Justice, and the Abolition of Prisons*

Laura Magnani and Harmon L. Wray, *Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Prison System*

Garrett Felber, *Those Who Know Don’t Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State*

Lee Griffith, *The Fall of the Prison: Biblical Perspectives on Prison Abolition*

On (settler) colonialism and the criminalization of migrants

Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*

SOME FURTHER RESOURCES

Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom by Derecka Purnell

César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández, *Migrating to Prison: America's Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants*

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Not "A Nation of Immigrants": Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*

Nick Estes, Melanie K. Yazzie, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, and David Correia, *Red Nation Rising: From Bordertown Violence to Native Liberation*

Adam Goodman, *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Deporting Migrants*

Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*

ORGANIZATIONS AND BOOK CLUBS

All of Us or None: www.prisonerswithchildren.org/about-aouon

Appalachian Prison Book Project: www.appalachianprisonbookproject.org

Believers Bail Out: www.believersbailout.org

Black and Pink: www.blackandpink.org

BreakFree Education: www.breakfree-ed.org

BYP100: www.byp100.org

Critical Resistance: www.criticalresistance.org

Dream Defenders: www.dreamdefenders.org

Dreaming Freedom, Practicing Abolition: www.abolitioniststudy.wordpress.com

Fight Toxic Prisons: www.fighttoxicprisons.wordpress.com

Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop: www.freemindsbookclub.org

Freedom Reads: www.freedomreads.org

Hacking//Hustling: www.hackinghustling.org

HEARD: www.behearddc.org

Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee: www.incarceratedworkers.org

INCITE!: www.incite-national.org

Liberation Library: www.liberationlib.com

Movement for Black Lives: www.m4bl.org

Project Nia: www.project-nia.org

Southerners on New Ground: www.southernersonnewground.org

Survived and Punished: www.survivedandpunished.org

Study and Struggle: www.studyandstruggle.com

Find more organizations at The Abolitionist Map by The Digital Abolitionist: www.thedigitalabolitionist.com/the-abolitionist-map

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TransformHarm.org: www.transformharm.org

Prison Abolition Resource Guide: www.micahherskind.com/abolition-resource-guide

Prison Policy Initiative: www.prisonpolicy.org