

THE PROBLEM

WHAT WE DO

The US depends on police, courts, and prisons to solve problems. We call this the prison industrial complex (PIC).

The results: Over 2 million people are behind bars. Social services are disappearing. There have been huge increases in police and court powers over all our lives. Poor people of color have lost power. And prisons have failed to cut crime. They have instead led to more racism, poverty, and sexism. Our communities only become weaker when we believe punishment will solve our problems.

WHO WE ARE

Critical Resistance (CR) is building a grassroots movement to stop using punishment to “cure” complicated social problems. We do not think that more police and prisons make our communities safer. We believe that things like food, housing, and freedom are what make us safe. We work to prevent people from being arrested or locked up in prison. And we work to build power in the communities hit hardest by police and prisons.

CR has ten chapters and hundreds of members. Our members lead CR. Almost everyone is hurt by the PIC, but CR tries to involve those harmed the most. Former prisoners and their families, victims of police abuse, communities that lose many people to jails and prisons, immigrants, and towns that play host to prisons are all deeply harmed by the PIC.

CR finds new ways of solving old problems. CR’s work falls into three big categories. We build the movement against the PIC. We organize grassroots campaigns and projects. And we educate others about the issues.

MOVEMENT BUILDING

In its short life, CR has organized three major conferences. We brought together thousands of people from many different places and backgrounds. The Critical Resistance National Conference (1998, Berkeley) gave CR its name. 3,500 people came to the first CR conference to support anti-prison activism and talk about shared problems and solutions. Critical Resistance East (2001, New York City) brought in over 2,000 people. At CR East, we moved from defining the problem to skills sharing and developing ways to end the PIC. CR East also led to CR Chapters in New York, New Haven and Washington, DC. Most recently, we held CR South (2003, New Orleans). At CR South we took our conference into the historic Treme neighborhood, a neighborhood directly impacted by the PIC.



GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS AND PROJECTS

CR has 10 local chapters. All the chapters are member led and run. With support from CR’s small national staff, each chapter develops and carries out its own projects and campaigns to address the PIC issues they see impacting their communities. CR’s projects are diverse and innovative. Some examples include: CR-New York’s La Casita Project where members work with mothers in an alternative-to-prison residential drug treatment center in the Bronx. They hold workshops to help improve reading skills and build community-organizing skills. CR-Oakland’s Budget Campaign builds non-traditional coalitions to change the way California invests in the future. Our members want to starve the prison system and invest in programs and services that truly make communities safer. CR-New Orleans’ Know Your Rights project helps the people of New Orleans learn their legal rights.

EDUCATION

CR’s education work takes many forms to reach as many people as possible. Examples include: CR Radio programs, produced mostly by former prisoners. CR films such as *A Prison in the Fields*, and *The Making of CR South*. CR holds CR Film Festivals. We create workshop tools like *PIC Jeopardy* and *The Abolition Organizing Toolkit*. We are working on toolkits on involving former prisoners and family members. We create books such as *Critical Resistance to the Prison Industrial Complex*. We put together readers such as *The Environmental Justice and Prison Expansion Reader*. And we have a CR Pamphlet series.

WE NEED YOU

CRITICAL RESISTANCE MISSION STATEMENT

CRITICAL RESISTANCE SEEKS TO BUILD AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT TO END THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX BY CHALLENGING THE BELIEF THAT CAGING AND CONTROLLING PEOPLE MAKES US SAFE. WE BELIEVE THAT BASIC NECESSITIES SUCH AS FOOD, SHELTER, AND FREEDOM ARE WHAT REALLY MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SECURE. AS SUCH, OUR WORK IS PART OF GLOBAL STRUGGLES AGAINST INEQUALITY AND POWERLESSNESS. THE SUCCESS OF THE MOVEMENT REQUIRES THAT IT REFLECT COMMUNITIES MOST AFFECTED BY THE PIC. BECAUSE WE SEEK TO ABOLISH THE PIC, WE CANNOT SUPPORT ANY WORK THAT EXTENDS ITS LIFE OR SCOPE.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH CR.

You can:

- Get involved in a local CR chapter
(for a complete list of chapters, see our website
or call our National Office).
- Start a CR chapter in your community.
- Volunteer or intern in one of our offices.
- Make a donation of money or needed items.
- Spread the word.

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WHAT IS CRITICAL RESISTANCE?