



Image: Free CUNY

Abolitionist University Studies: a provocation

Spring 2023 weekly study group

Mondays, 6pm-8pmET, online via Zoom (Jan 30 - April 24)

facilitated by [Conor 'Coco' Tomás Reed \(conortomasreed@gmail.com\)](mailto:conortomasreed@gmail.com)

The vision and practice of abolition remains a north star for our movements. As we confront all conditions of policing and imprisonment, we also work to construct life-affirming relationships, mutual aid, social care, communal defense, and liberatory spaces. For abolitionists inside and adjacent to higher education in the United States, *the question of whether to dismantle or collectively transform universities* has become heightened by the last few years of insurgencies, strikes, and state repression. Our Spring 2023 study group will explore this debate, with the intention for applicable strategic directions to emerge from our reflections.

Space is limited, and priority will be given to those who commit to being an active part of each conversation over the course of the series (barring unforeseen absences), and who also commit to creating your own Abolitionist University Studies study group after this one ends.

This study group is open to all. However, we will intentionally center the participation of:

- Black, Indigenous, and people of colors in the City University of New York (CUNY) and New York City—specifically women, gender non-binary, and queer and trans people.
- Those in CUNY and New York City who have directly navigated the impact of policing, jail, and/or imprisonment in their own, families', and friends' lives.

Participants who do not identify as part of these groups are asked to be mindful about not eclipsing the experiences and involvement of those being centered. We also ask that people with regular access to radical study resources pass along this announcement to family and friends who may not.

Schedule:

Jan 30 - Introductions, groundings

- Mariame Kaba, “[So You’re Thinking About Becoming an Abolitionist](#)” (2020)
- Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, “[Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation](#)” (2019)
- [Free CUNY](#) visioning exercise

Feb 6 - Current US contexts of abolition

- Interference Archive, [Defend/Defund](#) (2022)
- Unity & Struggle, “[Big Brick Energy: A Multi-city Study of the 2020 George Floyd Uprising](#)” (2022)
- Anonymous, “[The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis](#)” (2020)

Feb 13 - Abolish the university and/or build abolitionist counter-institutions? (Part I)

- Yulia Gilich and Tony Boardman, “[Wildcat Imaginaries: From Abolition University to University Abolition](#)” (2022)
- Robin D.G. Kelley, “[Black Study, Black Struggle](#)” (2016)
- Conor Tomás Reed, [New York Liberation School: Study and Movement for the People’s University](#) Introduction (2023)

Feb 20 - Abolish the university and/or build abolitionist counter-institutions? (Part II)

- “[Abolish the UC!](#)” Zine (2022)
- “Abolish the University?” collective essay (2023)
- Tavia Nyong’o - “[The Student Demand](#)” (2015)
 - Supplemental:
 - “[Communiqué from an Absent Future](#)” (2009)
 - “[The Demands](#)” (2016)

Feb 27 - Fugitivity, marronage, infrastructures (Part I)

- Bianca C. Williams, Dian D. Squire, and Frank A. Tuitt, eds., [Plantation Politics and Campus Rebellions: Power, Diversity, and the Emancipatory Struggle in Higher Education](#) excerpts (2021)
- Celeste Winston, “[Maroon Geographies](#)” (2021)

March 6 - Fugitivity, marronage, infrastructures (Part II)

- Jay Gillen, [Educating for Insurgency: The Roles of Young People in Schools of Poverty](#) (2014) excerpts
- Nikki Giovanni, “I Fell Off the Roof One Day (A View of the Black University)” (1970)
- Gil Scott-Heron, “[Running](#)” (2010)
 - Supplemental:
 - Deborah Cowen, “[Infrastructures of Empire and Resistance](#)” (2017)

March 13 - Undercommons, coalitions, land (back!) (Part I)

- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "[The University and the Undercommons](#)" (2013)
- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "[Studying through the Undercommons](#)" interview (2012)
- Bernice Reagon, "[Coalition Politics: Turning the Century](#)" (1981)

March 20 - Undercommons, coalitions, land (back!) (Part II)

- Sandy Grande, "[Refusing the University](#)" (2018)
- la paperson, *[A Third University is Possible](#)* (2017) excerpts
- [Land-Grab Universities](#)

March 27 - Autonomy, Care, Survival beyond Roe v. Wade and Title IX (Part I)

- Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, eds., *[Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement](#)* (2020) excerpts
- Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan, eds., *[Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators](#)* (2019) excerpts
- Njera Keith, "[Making the Case for Reproductive Revolution](#)" (2020)

April 3 - Autonomy, Care, Survival beyond Roe v. Wade and Title IX (Part II)

- Nawal Arjini, "[Don't Defend Title IX. Replace It.](#)" (2018)
- M.E. O'Brien, Melissa Gira Grant, LV, Sheila T., and Max, "[On Political Violence: A Conversation on Fascist Mobilization and Queer/Trans Community Self-defense](#)" (2022)
- Camila Valle, Sherry Wolf, Emily Janakiram, and Holly Lewis, "[The Fight for Abortion and Reproductive Justice after Roe](#)" (2022)

April 17 - Abolition in CUNY and NYC (Part I)

- Toni Cade Bambara, "[Realizing the Dream of a Black University](#)" (1969)
- June Jordan, "[Ocean Hill-Brownsville Speech](#)" (1970)
- Audre Lorde, "[Deotha](#)" (1980s)
- Adrienne Rich, "[Diving Into the Wreck](#)" (1972)

April 24 - Abolition in CUNY and NYC (Part II)

- Rachèl Laforest, Luz Schreiber, Lenina Nadal, Suzan Hammad, and Tamiëka Byer interview, "[A Culture of Resistance: Lessons Learned from the Student Liberation Action Movement \(SLAM\)](#)" (2009)
- Teona Pagan, Daniel Vázquez, Elizabeth Bazile, Hailey Lam, and Diana Kennedy, "[It's Time for CUNY to Say Goodbye to Cops: Fighting for a Free University](#)" (2020)
- Lucien Baskin, "['We Must Learn What We Need to Survive': Making Abolitionist Presence at the City University of New York](#)" (2022)
 - Supplemental:
 - [Free CUNY](#) research in [Cops off Campus Coalition](#) (2020)

About the facilitator: Conor ‘Coco’ Tomás Reed (all pronouns) is a Puerto Rican/Irish gender-fluid scholar-organizer of radical cultural movements, and the 2022-2023 Postdoctoral Fellow in Social Justice in Higher Education in the PublicsLab at the CUNY Graduate Center. Conor’s forthcoming book [New York Liberation School](#) chronicles the rise of Black, Puerto Rican, and Women’s Studies and movements at the City College of New York and in New York City, as well as CUNY’s post-9/11 oppositional relationship to US imperialism. Conor is also developing the quadrilingual anthology *Black Feminist Studies in the Americas and the Caribbean* with co-editors Diarenis Calderón Tartabull, Makeba Lavan, A. Tito Mitjans Alayón, Violeta Orozco Barrera, and Layla Zami. Conor is the current co-managing editor of [LÁPIZ Journal](#) and a contributing editor of [Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative](#), as well as a co-founding participant in [Free CUNY](#) and [Rank and File Action](#) and a member of [CUNY for Abortion Rights](#). Conor’s work can be found in print and online via [AK Press](#), [ASAP/Journal](#), [Berkeley Journal of Sociology](#), [Distributaries](#), [El Centro Press](#), [The New Inquiry](#), [Verso Books](#), [Viewpoint Magazine](#), [Wendy’s Subway](#), and [elsewhere](#).