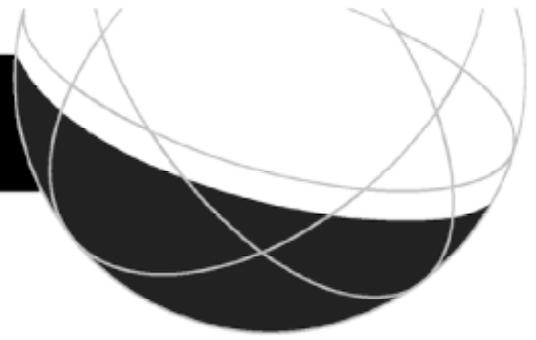


# PRISON ABOLITION IS A QUEER ISSUE

10 reasons why queer activists should work to abolish prisons



**1. Queers are overrepresented in the prison system** because of the disproportionate number of queers who are homeless, poor, unemployed, and/or HIV+ and thus increasingly vulnerable to police profiling, violence, arrest, and inadequate legal representation.

**2. Queers experience brutal human rights abuses in prisons, jails, and detention centers**, including virulent sexual and physical violence, daily harassment, and pervasive medical neglect (specifically the denial of hormones).

**3. Prisons magnify violence against queer people.** Incarcerating perpetrators of violence against queers or other forms of inter-personal does not address the needs of victims or the cause or impact of abuse. Rather, it supports a culture of domination, homophobia, racism, and misogyny.

**4. Prison expansion has continued to divert urgent resources away from queer communities.** Instead of directing funds towards healthcare, jobs, schools, and other social services that make queer communities safe and healthy, an increasing amount of public and private resources are going towards prisons and policing.

**5. Prisons enforce rigid, queerphobic codes of gender and sexual expression and identity**, through sex-segregated facilities that place people according to their birth-assigned sex, the violent punishment of gender and sexual "deviance", and the medicalization of queer and trans identities.

**6. Prisons target communities of color and low-income communities.** Almost all people in U.S. prisons and jails are poor or low-income, and over 70% are people of color (mostly African American). The prison system has had devastating impacts on the lives, families, and communities of people of color through increased surveillance, policing, and sentencing, particularly in light of the recent "War on Terror".

**7. Prisons target women and families.** The population of people in women's prisons has soared over 500% since 1970, largely because of the "war on drugs" and other measures to criminalize poor people. This rapid expansion of women's prisons has been met with increased attacks on reproductive freedoms, systemic disenfranchisement, the separation of families, and grossly inadequate medical care.

**8. Prisons are highly lucrative for private corporations and public institutions**, both in terms of the capital they produce through prison labor and privatization, as well as the cultural work of "protecting public safety" they perform. This means that an expansive network of institutions, individuals, and interests are deeply invested in the warehousing of people of color, women, queers, and poor people.

**9. The mainstream LGBT rights movement has consistently marginalized the participation, leadership, and concerns of those who are most impacted by the prison system.** In advocating for measures that both support the prison system (military inclusion, hate crimes laws, etc.), the mainstream LGBT movement is complicit in the expansion of this country's reliance on policing and prisons.

**10. Queer liberation is only possible with the liberation of all oppressed and marginalized people.** Challenging homophobia necessarily means simultaneously challenging and eradicating racism, misogyny, transphobia, classism, and xenophobia. Uprooting all these systems *necessarily* means opposing and uprooting prisons. If we do not oppose prisons and our culture's hyper-reliance on containment, surveillance, and policing, our vision for justice is fundamentally incomplete.

## 7 strategies for queer advocates to challenge the prison system

1. **End the reliance on imprisonment and policing** as a solution to violence
2. **Work in solidarity** with queers and people in prison
3. **Integrate the concerns and leadership** of queers in the prison system in your work
4. **Integrate an analysis of criminalization and policing** into your work
5. **Support the re-allocation of resources** away from prisons and policing
6. **Make coalitions** with groups working to abolish prisons
7. **Be public** about your desire to abolish prisons



