

## POEM ABOUT MY RIGHTS

by June Jordan

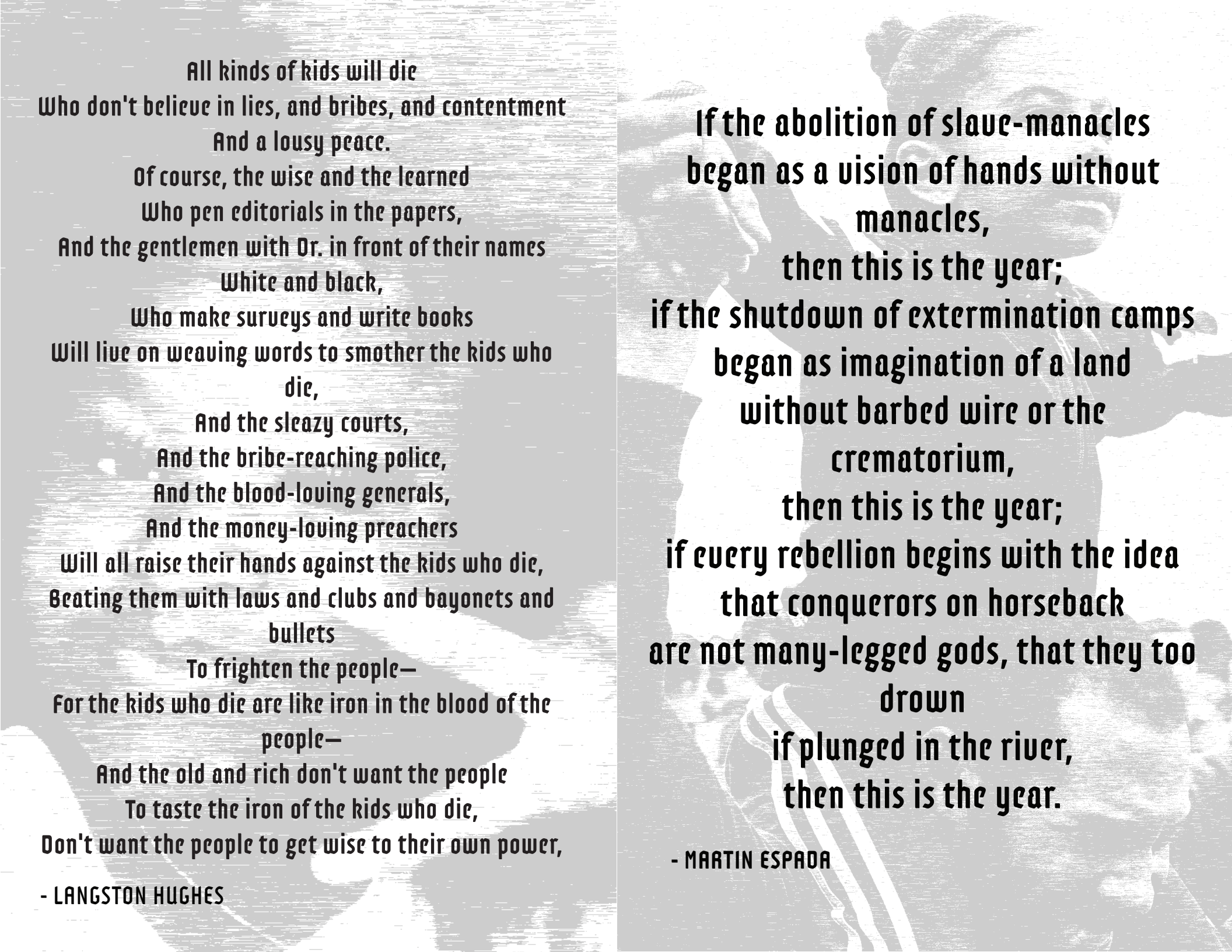
Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear / my head about this poem about why I can't / go out without changing my clothes my shoes / my body posture my gender identity my age / my status as a woman alone in the evening/ alone on the streets/alone not being the point/ the point being that I can't do what I want /to do with my own body because I am the wrong / sex the wrong age the wrong skin and / suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/ or far into the woods and I wanted to go / there by myself thinking about God/or thinking / about children or thinking about the world/all of it / disclosed by the stars and the silence: I could not go and I could not think and I could not / stay there / alone / as I need to be / alone because I can't do what I want to do with my own / body and / who in the hell set things up like this / and in France they say if the guy penetrates / but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me / and if after stabbing him if after screams if after begging the bastard and if even after smashing / a hammer to his head if even after that if he / and his buddies fuck me after that / then I consented and there was / no rape because finally you understand finally / they fucked me over because I was wrong I was / wrong again to be me being me where I was/wrong / to be who I am / which is exactly like South Africa / penetrating into Namibia penetrating into / Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if / Pretoria ejaculates what / will the evidence look like the / proof of the monster jackboot ejaculation on Blackland / and if / after Namibia and if after / Angola and if after Zimbabwe / and if after all of my kinsmen and women resist even to / self-immolation of the villages and if after that / we lose nevertheless what will the big boys say will they / claim my consent: Do You Follow Me: We are the wrong people of / the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what / in the hell is everybody being reasonable about / and according to the Times this week / back in 1966 the C.I.A. decided that they had this problem / and the problem was a man named Nkrumah so they / killed him and before that it was Patrice Lumumba / and before that it was my father on the campus / of my / Ivy League school and my father afraid / to walk into the cafeteria because he said he / was wrong the wrong age the wrong / skin the wrong / gender identity and he was paying my tuition and / before that / it was my father saying I was wrong saying that / I should have been a boy because he wanted one/a boy and that I should have been lighter skinned and / that I should have had straighter hair and that / I should not be so boy crazy but instead I should / just be one/a boy and before that / it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for my nose and braces for my teeth and telling me / to let the books loose to let them loose in other / words I am very familiar with the problems of the C.I.A. / and the problems of South Africa and the problems of Exxon Corporation and the problems of white / America in general and the problems of the teachers / and the preachers and the F.B.I. and the social workers / and my particular Mom and Dad/I am very / familiar with the problems because the problems / turn out to be / me / I am the history of rape / I am the history of the rejection of who I am / I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of myself / I am the history of battery assault and limitless / armies against whatever I want to do with my mind / and my body and my soul and / whether it's about walking out at night / or whether it's about the love that I feel or / whether it's about the sanctity of my vagina or / the sanctity of my national boundaries / or the sanctity of my leaders or the sanctity / of each and every desire / that I know from my personal and idiosyncratic / and indisputably single and singular heart / I have been raped / because I have been wrong / the wrong sex the wrong age / the wrong skin the wrong nose the wrong hair the / wrong need the wrong dream the wrong geographic / the wrong sartorial I / I have been the meaning of rape / I have been the problem everyone seeks to / eliminate by forced / penetration with or without the evidence of slime and/ but let this be unmistakable this poem / is not consent I do not consent / to my mother to my father to the teachers to / the F.B.I. to South Africa to Bedford-Stuy / to Park Avenue to American Airlines to the hardon/ idlers on the corners to the sneaky creeps in cars / **I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name / My name is my own my own my own / and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this / but I can tell you that from now on my resistance / my simple and daily and nightly self-determination/ may very well cost you your life.**

T A K E   Y O U R  
F R E E D O M

Black Autonomy & Abolition Is Our Birthright







All kinds of kids will die  
Who don't believe in lies, and bribes, and contentment  
And a lousy peace.  
Of course, the wise and the learned  
Who pen editorials in the papers,  
And the gentlemen with Dr. in front of their names  
White and black,  
Who make surveys and write books  
Will live on weaving words to smother the kids who die,  
And the sleazy courts,  
And the bribe-reaching police,  
And the blood-loving generals,  
And the money-loving preachers  
Will all raise their hands against the kids who die,  
Beating them with laws and clubs and bayonets and  
bullets  
To frighten the people—  
For the kids who die are like iron in the blood of the  
people—  
And the old and rich don't want the people  
To taste the iron of the kids who die,  
Don't want the people to get wise to their own power,

- LANGSTON HUGHES

If the abolition of slave-manacles  
began as a vision of hands without  
manacles,  
then this is the year;  
if the shutdown of extermination camps  
began as imagination of a land  
without barbed wire or the  
crematorium,  
then this is the year;  
if every rebellion begins with the idea  
that conquerors on horseback  
are not many-legged gods, that they too  
drown  
if plunged in the river,  
then this is the year.

- MARTIN ESPADA

# WHY WE ARE ABOLITIONISTS

When they walked off the beach and into the ocean at Igbo landing, when they leapt from the decks of slave ships in the Middle Passage, when they ran from plantations knowing they could be killed for the crime of stealing back their own freedom, when they escaped and established marronages and kilombos: free communities of fugitives and indigenous people, our ancestors chose freedom and autonomy in the next world rather than enslavement in this one.

Abolition is our birthright and it is the debt we owe our ancestors. We know that police forces in the United States evolved directly out of slave patrols, and that laws, prisons and jails were established for the explicit purpose of preserving the institution of slavery: that's why the 13th amendment includes the clause "except as punishment for a crime." We will never be free, and our ancestors will never be at peace, until every cell is empty and every cop is stripped of badge and gun and every law is nothing but a scary story for teenagers to whisper around campfires.

Until we abolish the police, prisons, laws, and borders, no Black person is free.

## WAYS WE CAN PROTECT EACH OTHER OUTSIDE OF STREET ACTIONS:

1. Start bail funds and jail and court support projects in your community: ones that serve everyone, not just protesters.
2. Start prisoner letter writing projects, and talk to your community about how y'all can support the families of incarcerated people in your area.
3. Cultivate strong, trusting relationships and build bridges between activist communities and other communities facing repression. Educate yourself and your community about different transformative justice practices; and use them to handle conflict without involving the state.
4. Educate yourself and your community about digital security, anti-repression cultural practices, your legal rights, and how to resist surveillance and counterinsurgency programs like CVE (Countering Violent Extremism) in Black, immigrant, and Muslim communities..
5. Start ICE watch and cop watch projects.
6. Root out patriarchy, misogynoir, transphobia, classism, colorism and ableism in your community. Misogynists and others who use their privilege to dominate others and control spaces are the state's best tools for destroying communities and movements.
7. Reject respectability politics: don't allow those who victim-blame to have a platform. Don't entertain "good protester/bad protester," rhetoric or language that justifies the criminalization of any community.
8. Create networks of community care, peer support, and mutual aid.
9. Support your friends who get arrested, are facing charges, or are doing time, and call on your community to help support them. Remember that all prisoners are political prisoners!
10. Have noise demos and/or sing outside prisons and jails to let those inside know they're on folks' minds.

3. Always roll with a buddy or a crew. If you see someone there alone who looks like they could use company and support, and you have some street experience, offer to be their buddy!

4. NEVER record anything, not even speeches or “peaceful” actions where nobody is doing anything illegal. Police and the state target people they identify in footage from protests, with charges and sometimes even with killings in the cases of many Black activists who were disappeared after the Ferguson uprisings. If someone else is taking pictures or video, ask them to stop and if they refuse, hold up a sign, banner, or umbrella to block the camera and/or hide people’s faces.

5. If police are coming in to make arrests, help undocumented folks and others who can’t risk arrest get away from the scene however you can. Practice and skill up in de-arresting so you can help folks get away. Have conversations about de-arrest and ask your buddies if that’s an intervention they’d like you to make if they get grabbed.

6. If you see someone get arrested, try to get their legal name and date of birth, so it’s easier to find them and bail them out. If there are arrests at the action, show up to do jail support afterwards! Bring water, snacks, food, and/or cigarettes if you can.

7. If you have the means and are bringing protective supplies like water bottles, goggles, heat-resistant gloves, bandannas, etc., bring enough to share and offer them to others.

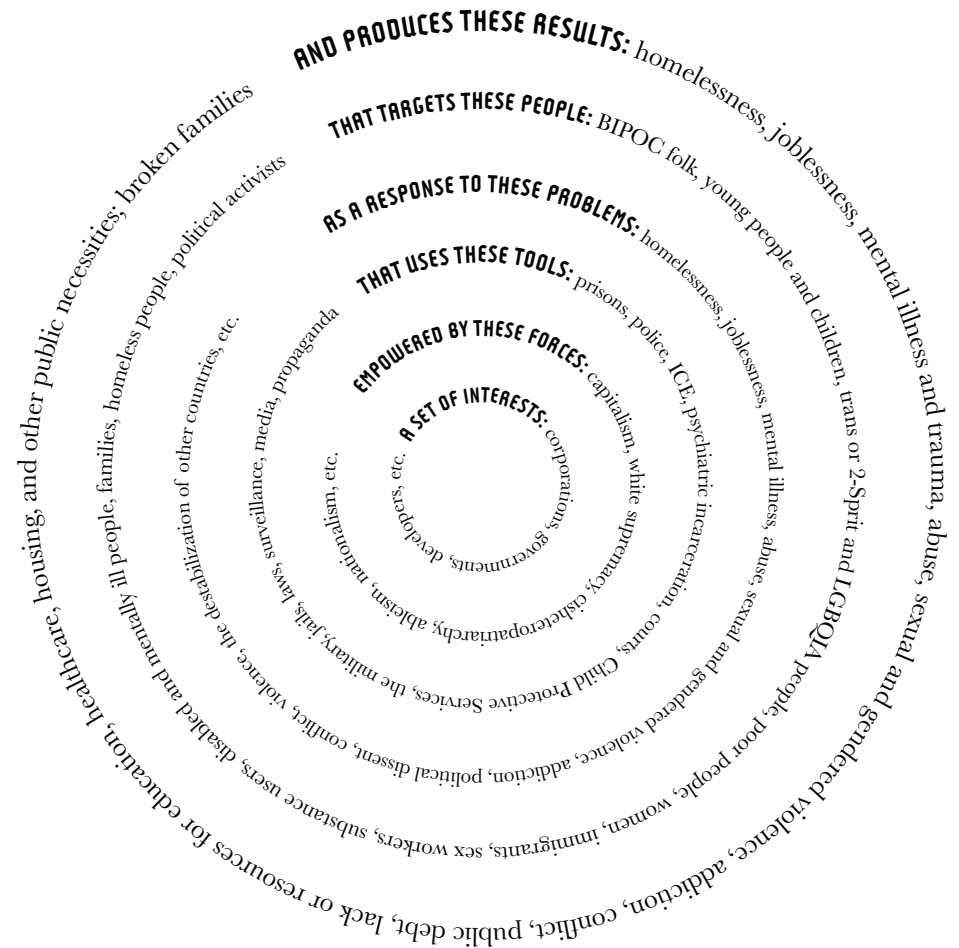
8. NEVER talk to cops. If you are stopped and/or questioned, ask, “Am I free to go?” and if you’re being detained, say, “I choose to remain silent.”

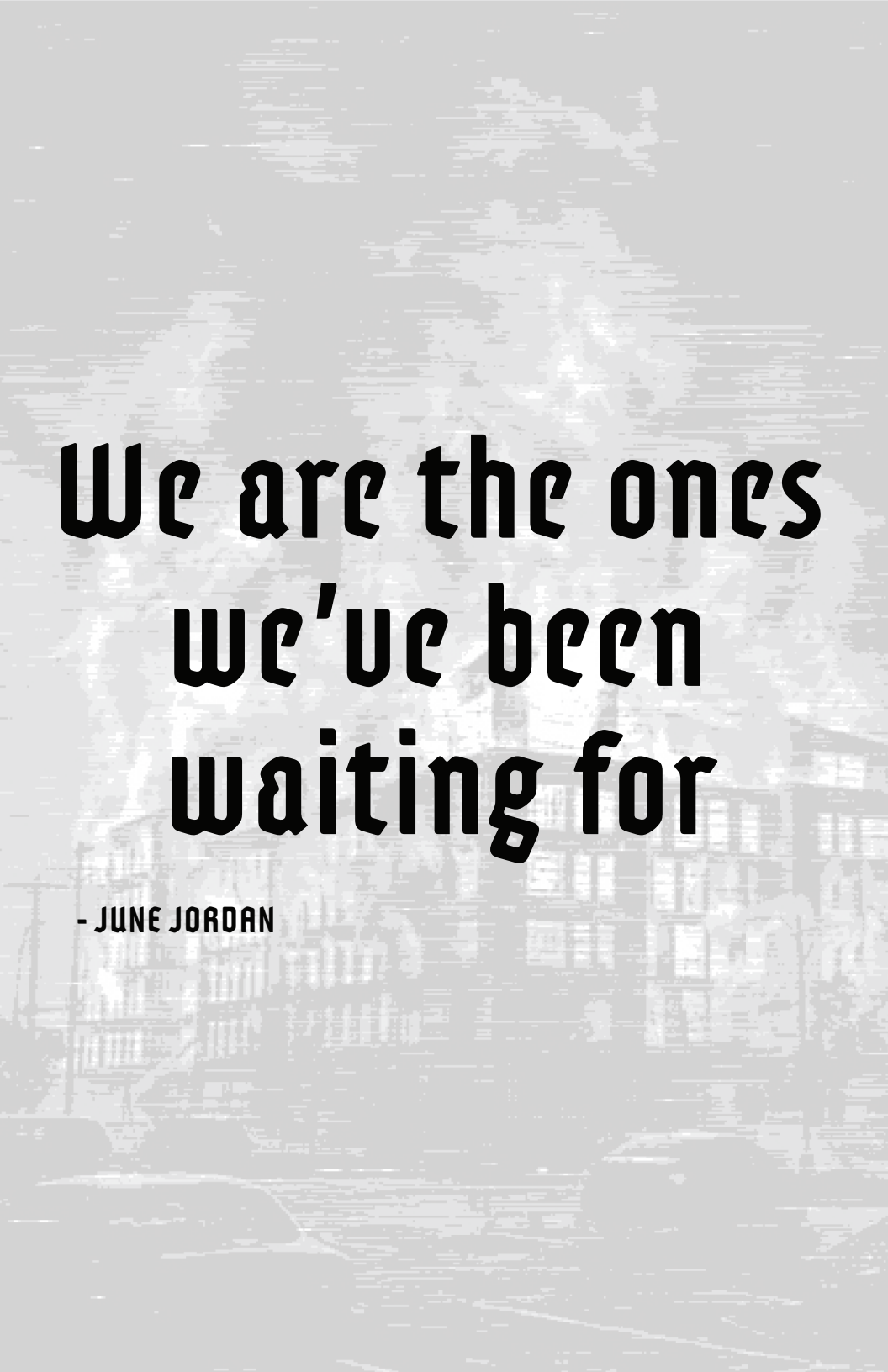
9. NEVER bring your phone to an action. Leave your phone at home, or at least in your car!

10. NEVER help ANYONE identify another protester. Do not police anyone else’s behavior, or accuse people of being undercover cops unless you know for a FACT they are.

# THE POLICE/PRISON STATE IS...

**\* Shoutout to Critical Resistance for this resource!**





**We are the ones  
we've been  
waiting for**

**- JUNE JORDAN**

**WE KEEP  
US SAFE**

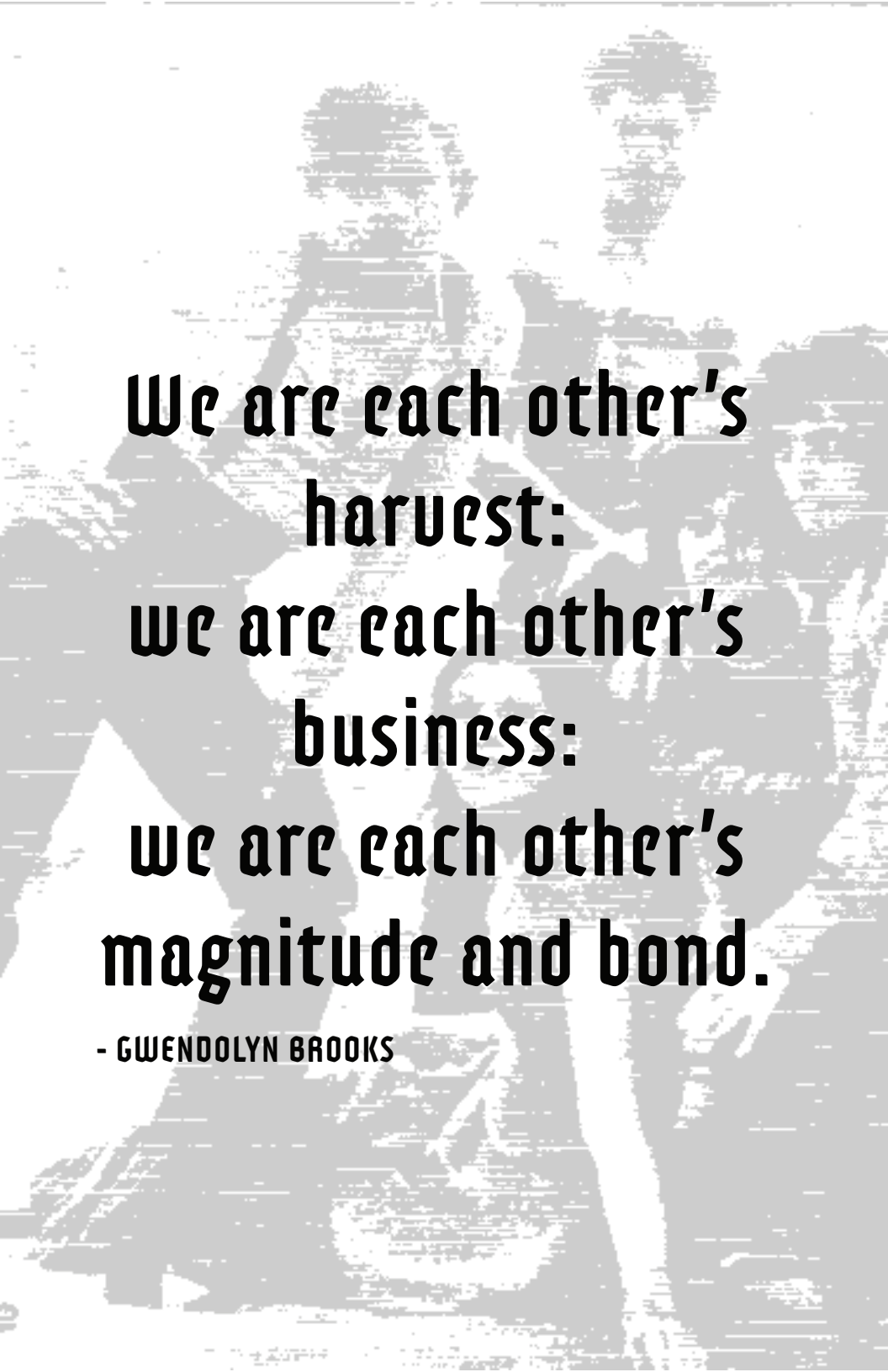
**ANTI-REPRESSION WORK** is the work we do to build up the strength and knowledge of our communities to resist attacks from the state in the form of policing, surveillance, militarization, imprisonment, and legislation.

Communities of color face repression and violence from the police and the state all the time in the form of ICE raids, the daily policing and surveillance of Black and Brown neighborhoods, and surveillance of immigrant and Muslim communities. Communities of color that take political action face even more repression in the form of political arrests, trumped-up charges, surveillance, incarceration, and infiltration.

Anti Repression work can look like jail and court support, prisoner support; educating one another about our rights and about how to fight charges and practice non-cooperation with the state in court; and building our capacity for handling conflict.

### **WAYS WE CAN PROTECT EACH OTHER IN THE STREETS:**

1. Write down and share your local National Lawyer's Guild Mass Defense Legal Support hotline number, which you can find here: <https://www.nlg.org/massdefenseprogram/>.
2. If a march is going too fast and people are getting left behind, start a chant like, "Slow down, tighten up!" to encourage the crowd to find a pace that everyone can keep up with.



**We are each other's  
harvest:  
we are each other's  
business:  
we are each other's  
magnitude and bond.**

**- GWENDOLYN BROOKS**

# WHAT IS AUTONOMY?

Autonomy is freedom. Autonomy is what the rebels and angelic troublemakers among our ancestors chose over life itself. Autonomy is the right of each and every living creature to do what we want with our bodies and our lives, and to live our lives on our own terms.

## *Autonomy is being free:*

- to get what we need to survive, no matter what.
- to live wherever we want, however we want, with whoever we want.
- to go wherever we want, whenever we want.
- to define our genders and sexualities for ourselves.
- to connect to spirituality and tradition if and how we want to
- to create families if and however we want
- to address conflict and harm in the ways we want
- to have abortions, access hormones and/or surgery, to choose freely from the full range of options for all types of medicine, healthcare, mobility aids, etc. that we need.
- from racism, misogynoir, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, capitalism, and every other system that gives anyone the power to steal anyone else's freedom.

# ALL ABOUT AUTONOMIST POLITICS

Autonomist politics are based in the truth that the freedom and autonomy of every living creature is sacred. Anarchy, Anarcha-transfeminism, Anarkata, insurrectionism, and Anti-Authoritarianism are all different names for autonomist politics: but the books we read and the labels we use don't really matter. What's important is that we believe in abolition: abolishing police, prisons, borders, laws, and all forms of social control and domination. ***There are three essential parts to every type of autonomist political practice:***

## 1. SELF-DETERMINATION & DECENTRALIZATION

Self-Determination means that not only is every individual free to choose how they engage in the work of abolition and who they do it with, but every community is free to determine what their collective needs are, how they would like to work together to meet them, and what they want abolition to look like, based on their particular geography, history, culture, traditions, and spiritual wisdom; and that every single member of every community participates directly in making those decisions. It means that there is no singular right way to do things, and that no organizational or bureaucratic structure is more important than the rights and autonomy of each individual or community, so we don't operate in formal organization structures or subject one another to social hierarchies. Self-Determination means that everyone is respected as a leader, *and* no one can be forced to obey anyone else.

## WHAT ARE THE DEMANDS OF AN AUTONOMOUS ACTION?

Nonprofit organizations have warped our understanding of what direct action is. They define direct action as something people do to put pressure on political “targets” like elected officials, to meet “demands” by making policy changes. But that's not what direct action really is: it's about using our collective power as regular people to change the world around us **DIRECTLY**, instead of relying on “targets” to change things for us.

Autonomous actions don't have any one person or organization dictating the “message.” People come to actions with lots of different ideas about how to get free, and autonomous actions leave space for us to make and meet many demands at once.

## HOW DO I KNOW AN AUTONOMOUS ACTION IS SAFE?

You don't. There is no safe way to fight back against police violence. As Black folks, we know we aren't safe in public no matter what we are doing, wearing, or saying. Our abolitionist ancestors were courageous and bold because they knew we have never had anything to lose but our chains, that there has never been and will never be any safety for us in this world until we abolish the state. “Peaceful” and “nonviolent” protests are often extremely violent and unsafe, because police don't care whether or not protesters are following the law and attack people for gathering to protest regardless of how they do it.

While there is no way to guarantee everyone's safety, it is on all of us to look out for one another and do what we can to protect each other, and there's lots of stuff we can all do to keep ourselves and each other safe. Even though we are never safe, we can always be careful with each other and dangerous together. It's important to think carefully and prepare for the risks associated with taking direct action, including the possibility of arrest and catching charges. If you can't trust yourself to stay silent under questioning, or to reject plea deals that sell out other people and damage the movement, you shouldn't be taking direct action with other people.



## **AUTONOMOUS ACTIONS CAN ALSO BE SMALL:**

something you do alone or with a small group of trusted friends, sometimes even in secret. Sometimes individuals and small groups can agree to coordinate a specific date when everyone will take lots of different and separate actions. Mutual aid projects like court and jail support, food and grocery distros, eviction defense, and community gardens in abandoned lots are all autonomous actions. Graffiti, stealing confederate flags, guerrilla theater, and puppet shows are also types of creative autonomous action. Autonomous action can be anything you can dream up!

## **WHY ARE SOME ACTIONS CALLED ANONYMOUSLY?**

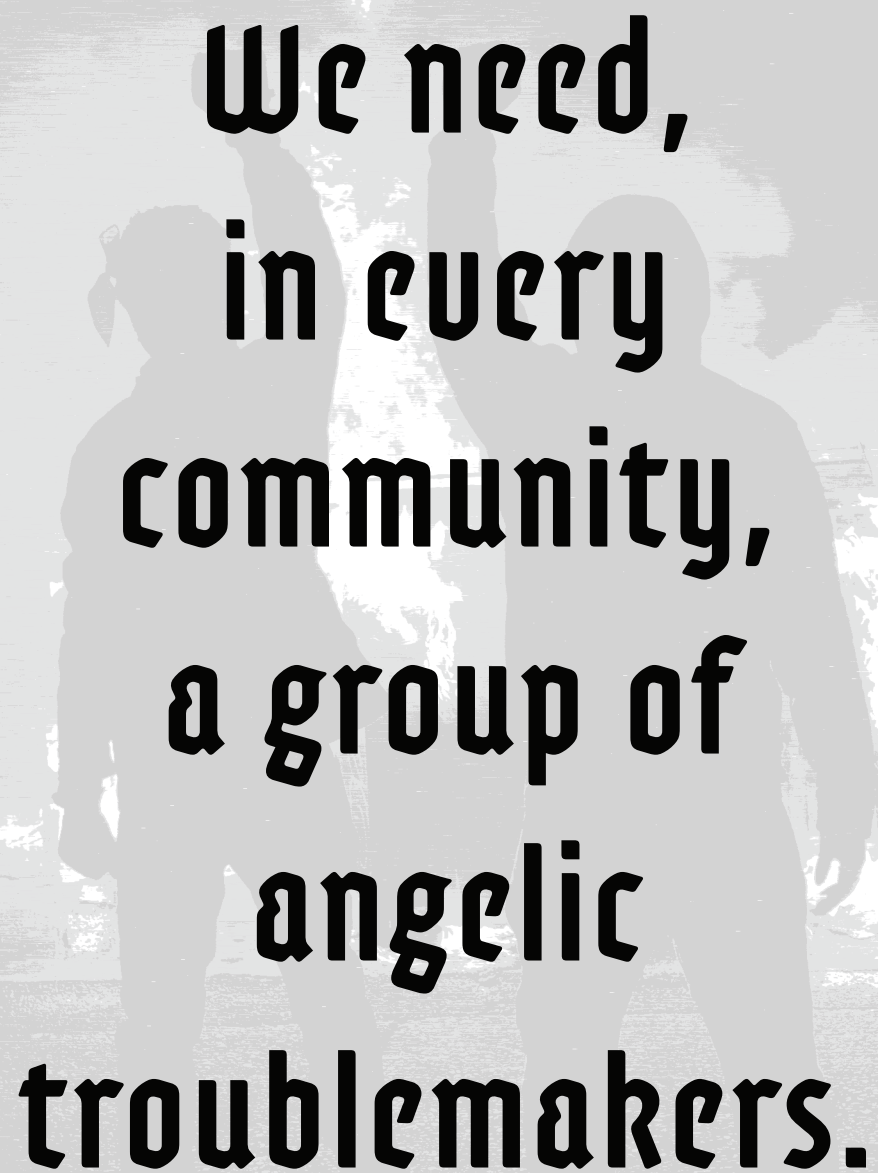
1. COINTELPRO showed us how easily the state can target and destroy militant movements when “leaders” and organizations are highly visible and publicly identifiable. Anonymity is a counter-surveillance safety measure.
2. Nonprofits and political organizations have betrayed and co-opted social movements in ways that deeply harm and endanger our communities, so many people are starting to move away from formal organization as a framework for taking direct action. Most autonomous actions are just called by small groups of friends with no formal association to each other, so there isn’t really any name that would make sense to put on flyers and social media graphics.
3. Creating a culture where communities show up for direct actions even when they don’t personally know the people calling for them helps more people feel empowered to organize direct actions, and disrupts the culture of “activist celebrities.”

## **2. MUTUAL AID**

Mutual aid projects are long-term commitments by communities to meet their own survival needs outside of the systems of capitalism and the law. Mutual aid is also, necessarily, mutual: it’s people who are being harmed by the same systems working together to defend themselves from the violence of those systems. It recognizes that the reasons we all struggle to meet our survival needs is not because there’s anything wrong with us, but because of everything that is wrong with the society we live in. Mutual aid projects are co-stewarded collectively, and there is no authority deciding who deserves support and who doesn’t. Mutual aid projects can be things like free food distros, jail and prison letter-writing projects, eviction defense, community skill-shares and political education, even free house parties where folks can enjoy music and friendship without having to pay an expensive cover. There are as many opportunities for mutual aid as there are things we all need, deserve, and enjoy!

## **3. DIRECT ACTION**

Direct action is when we act like we are already free, and directly change things about our environments and communities in ways that make us more free. Mutual Aid is a type of direct action. This can look like liberating the food and resources we need from stores owned by big corporations and distributing it for free in our neighborhoods. Direct action is both creative and destructive: we destroy the symbols and institutions of white supremacy, like police cars and jails and corporate businesses; and we build infrastructures to support autonomy by doing things like bailing our friends out of jail, creating public art without permission, taking over abandoned houses and buildings so people can live there for free, sharing in the raising of the kids in our community without following the rules of legal guardianship or involving CPS.

The background of the left page features a grayscale image of several people in silhouette, standing with their arms raised in a gesture of protest or solidarity. The text is overlaid on this image in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

We need,  
in every  
community,  
a group of  
angelic  
troublemakers.

- BAYARD RUSTIN

# WHAT DOES AUTONOMOUS ACTION LOOK LIKE?

**AUTONOMOUS ACTIONS CAN BE REALLY BIG,** like marches with thousands of people. Mass autonomous actions like this happen when communities take direct action as a collective, without being led by any singular person, nonprofit, or other type of organization. Autonomous action means everyone is looking out for each other's safety, access, and needs while we're in the streets together; and no one is "in charge" of policing people's behavior or telling a crowd what to do. Anyone can call for an autonomous action: you don't have to have any "organizing" experience, political connections, or clout to have the right to call on your community to take direct action. Sometimes autonomous actions are called for by individuals, sometimes they are called for by underground networks or collectives, and often they are called for anonymously.

They can also start out as actions that an organization or "leader" has called for and is trying to control. Any Black person who shows up in the streets has the right to be free and encourage others to exercise their autonomy as well. This means that even if the "organizers" of an action are trying to tell folks what they can and can't do, we don't have to listen. Sometimes folks who don't want to be told how to act can even initiate marches that break away from actions that are being controlled by nonprofits or celebrity activists.