

# PREFACE FROM THE EDITOR

## The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons in an Age of Disruption

*Justin Piché*

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Observing the rapid rise in digital technologies and automation, along with their devastating impacts on our ability to make sense of the world and our place in it, the late French philosopher Bernard Stiegler (2019) argued that we live in an “age of disruption” that is disorienting and disempowering. While his principal concern was the disruptive impact of the rise and further entrenchment of “computational capitalism”, the last few years have featured other kinds of disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme heat, floods, and natural disasters that are increasing in severity in this time of climate catastrophe, wars, and other calamities plaguing contemporary times. From my vantage point, albeit an extremely privileged one, I do not recall another period in my forty-year lifetime where one local and/or global disruption so quickly gives way to the next with little to no control over what happens thereafter and little to no time to catch our collective breath.

In this fast-moving moment, there is widespread insecurity, but also significant possibilities for change. Where we will land amid all these critical “turning points” (Mathiesen, 2008, p. 62) is unknown. Will we “change everything”, to borrow the words of geographer and prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2022), by building a world capable of sustaining life and allowing it to flourish through robust supports for people and communities? Or will we simply “build back better”, as United States President Joe Biden (White House, 2021) and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Department of Finance Canada, 2020) have urged, which simply doubles down investments in a way of life where crisis is a defining feature (see Maier et al., 2021)? Or worse, shall fascism gain an even greater footing than it already has (see Burley, 2017)? The answers will be forged through struggle and our shared future, returning to the insights of Bernard Stiegler (2019), demands efforts to build collective power that meets our material means and gives renewed meaning to life. What we need, building on the words of OmiSoore Dryden (2022), are “decolonial [and decarceral] disruptions”.

## THIS ISSUE

As the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) thirty-fifth year in production comes to a close, we end 2022 with an issue featuring two special sections. The first is a dialogue on prison labour edited by Jordan House and Kelly Struthers Montford, which includes contributions that were to be shared during the “Labour and the Canadian Carceral State” conference originally scheduled to take place in March 2020 – a plan that was disrupted following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second is a dialogue on gender, health and (in)justice based on papers presented at the 2021 Wellness Within annual conference entitled, “Abolition from the Frontline”.

The pieces contained in this issue of the *JPP* highlight how imprisoned people survive in the face of the massive disruption that being subject to the punitive injustice system represents, as well as showcase their resilience when facing broader structural disruptions that intensify the austerity of human caging, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (see Roberts, 2022). The *Response* by Deepan Budlakoti poignantly reveals the disruptive impact that both the punitive injustice and immigration systems have, and the necessity of mutual aid for and with those facing the limbo that criminalization and illegalization engenders that stymies one’s ability to gain access to the necessities of life. Together, the papers in this issue, as well as cover art by Joker (“Equality”) and the late Peter Collins (“Obedience is Key”), highlight the critical importance of building bridges across prison walls (House and Rashid, 2022) to the success of resistance efforts that foster change behind and beyond bars (Paynter, 2022).

In searching for answers to our contemporary malaise, turning to the insights of imprisoned people, as readers of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* have since the publication’s founding in 1988, remains necessary. We have a lot to learn from imprisoned people about collective struggle and the emancipatory horizon we all need to work towards (Jones, 2022). As long as there are imprisoned people and as long as they continue to engage in Writing As Resistance (Gaucher, 2002), the *JPP* will continue documenting the disruptions human caging causes in a disruptive world that unsettles and imperils nature and all our relations. May we build abolition to end imprisonment (Struthers Montford and Taylor, 2021), along with the need for initiatives like this journal, in our lifetimes. May this age of disruption give rise to an age of liberation.

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