

## Session 1: Abolition as Study

### Required Readings

- Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete*, "[Introduction: Prison Reform or Prison Abolition?](#)"
- Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete*, "[Imprisonment and Reform](#)"
- Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "[Chapter 1](#)"
- Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, "[Introduction: When History Sleeps: A Beginning](#)"

### Supplementary Materials

- Article: Robin D.G. Kelley, "[Black Study. Black Struggle](#)"
  - Podcast: [Rustbelt Abolition Radio with Stevie Wilson](#) | [Transcript](#)
  - Poem: Audre Lorde, "[A Litany for Survival](#)"
  - Primary Source: Fred Hampton, "[Power Anywhere There's People](#)" (1969)
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### Key Questions:

- Why do we study? Why read the past?
- What is important from our history?
- What is the relationship of study to struggle?
- What do we mean by study? What forms of study are there?
- What is abolition as study? What is abolition as practice?

### Exercise: Vision Activity

- Create a timeline of oppression and resistance. The timeline can go back as far as you think is necessary to record the genesis of prison abolition movements, and it should go into the future: a world without prisons and police. *What are the monumental moments in this timeline* (consider using different colors or indicators for oppression and resistance)? What movements must we highlight to understand where we are today? What will need to happen to achieve an abolitionist future? *Discuss the importance of each event and the collective pathway toward abolition.*

### Exercise: Freedom Venn Diagram

- Create a venn diagram for the concepts of "freedom dreams" and "pedagogy of the oppressed" -- *What do these visions share and how are they distinct?*

### Reading Guide

- In the first chapter of *Are Prisons Obsolete*, Davis introduces the term "Prison Industrial Complex" (P.I.C.), (12). How does she define it? What are some ways you've interacted with aspects of the PIC?
- What does Kelley mean by Freedom Dreams? Why is the collective radical imagination so critical to how movements take shape? What can "dreaming of freedom" offer as a

practice to abolitionists? What does “success” and “failure” of social movements look like for Kelley?

- Freire also talks a lot about freedom. What is Freire’s vision of freedom? How does that intersect with Kelley’s notion of freedom dreaming? What does Freire see as impediments to freedom?
- According to Freire, what is the contradiction between oppressors and the oppressed? What are “sub-oppressors”? Who is ultimately responsible for liberation, and for whom?
- In what ways can we understand education as a frame for achieving liberation as these authors see it? What do all the authors see as the relationship between the radical imaginary and social movements?