

Community Reading Group Annotations October 2023

Family Abolition: Capitalism and the Communizing of Care

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Pop-culture is a dominating practice in our lives and as a teenager to my young adult years (go ahead argue I am still a young adult because I am 26), I aimed to avoid popular ideals and subjects. I wanted to be everything that was my niche and concentrated on the struggles and interests of my own community rather than other communities. After adolescence I made major progress on learning and experiencing more pop-culture icons and traditions that affect the people around me, because community care is necessary. There is still a lot to learn about the deeper issues that plague our current communities, some of which as an adult I became closer to.

A few of my selections are straight manifestos or manifesto-like writings that come from the heart of communities I became closer to in my adult years through a change in my identity, the queer community, and through the nature of my work, the indigenous community. While others are reconciling with the communities I grew up in: the fat community, the working-class American community. The way these communities are often described in pop-culture is sometimes faithful and sometimes unfaithful. Many of the selections I chose aim to break that apart and offer different narratives we can start practicing in our own daily lives.

–Bernadette Schoeman

Family Abolition: Introduction & Chapter 1

The family is a limit to human emancipation. The family's horrors are vast, its abuses widespread, its logic coercive. The family is a joy for some, a necessity for most, and a nightmare for too many. Behind its closed doors, the household is a gamble. Children born into abusive households have no recourse from harmful parents. Those trapped in abusive couple relationships may see their means of escape gradually cut off by manipulative and controlling partners. Those working-class adults who wish to be a part of a child's life are forced into degrees of economic precarity to keep their children fed and cared for, trapping parents further within awful jobs. The family policing system targets poor, Black, Indigenous, and migrant families with new forms of state violence in the name of protecting children, leaving the violence of the white, propertied family form untouched. (12)

Family abolition is a commitment to making the care necessary for human flourishing freely available throughout society. Rather than relying solely on one's immediate personal relationships, access to care could be built into the social fabric of our collective lives. Family abolition is the vision that the basis of thriving should not depend on who your parents happen to be, who you love, or who you choose to live with. Family abolition is a horizon of sexual and gender freedom beyond the bigotry imposed by those on whom we depend. Family abolition is the expansion of care as a universal, unconditional social good. Family abolition is not just the positive assertion of care but also a refusal of the harmful relationships of domination that the family form enables. Family abolition is a belief that no child should be trapped by cruel parents; no woman should be afraid of poverty or isolation in leaving her violent husband; no aging, disabled, or sick person should be afraid of having to depend on an indifferent and uncaring family member. Family abolition is the recognition that no human being should ever own or entirely dominate another person, even children. No individual should have the means to coerce intimacy or labor from another, as current property relations enable. Family abolition is the destruction of private households as systems of accumulating power and property at the cost of others' well-being. (14–15)

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic made it starkly evident that working-class families have always been asked to do too much work. The tasks of daily and generational social reproduction are more than any family can bear alone. Vast hours of work are needed to care for the elderly, to raise and educate children, to keep everyone fed and clothed and housed, all to enable family members to make it to work the next day. Social reproduction theory argues that this people-making within and beyond the nuclear family plays an essential role in the functioning of capitalism, the creation of a viable workforce each day and across each generation.

Everyone needs others, beyond our families, in order to survive. Families depend on outside help, linking the family into broader networks of care. Nuclear families cannot carry the immense burden of work placed on them. In capitalist society, this extended support typically takes the forms of extended family, of services purchased on the market, or through increasingly limited state programs and institutions. Without these supports, families are crushed under the impossible burden of reproductive labor. This necessary dependency of families on outside support reproduces the inequality of market relations, dividing people's material conditions and life chances by class, by race, and by family structure. The care crisis of the coronavirus pandemic illuminated how families function as private households. (26–27)

Identifying the family as a private household helps make sense of how families situate us within the circuits of capitalist reproduction.

A household is made up of people who live together, who share resources together, and who are interdependent on each other in decisions about employment, housing, and schooling. They function partially as a single economic unit. Often the family as private household also consists of formal, legal, and biological kinship units, constituted by marriage, procreation, and genetic ties. These relationships can be especially charged, often people's primary emotional attachments. Households can include multiple generations of a family, but increasingly under capitalism, they are primarily composed of nuclear families: adults and their minor children. A household may also be chosen family, as close friends, complex kinship ties, or members of a shared community housing together. Chosen family function as households in the sense used here insofar as they are intimately economically interdependent and systems of organizing private care, such as relying on each other during periods of unemployment. (28)

The experience of family life often depends on the illusion of being free of transactions or exchange. Instead of impersonal domination characteristic of market relationships, the power relationships within a family are quite personal forms of intimacy or control. Domineering husbands might command their wives. Parents might command their children. These hierarchies are naturalized and fiercely defended. Unlike most jobs, much of a household's internal labor is often unwaged. Housecleaning, cooking, childcare, and other reproductive care may, in some contexts, be outsourced to wage workers outside the family. Yet when these tasks are done by family members, they are typically performed without pay by feminized members of the household, often mothers or wives. Despite the illusion of being free of internal exchange, one's power within a family is often linked to access to outside resources. Among family members, it is typically adult men who have the best access to outside wages, accrued property, social privilege, or legal legitimacy. Those (often male) family members with the most access to outside resources can leverage them to reduce their personal responsibility for household labor and increase their authority within the family. (29)

The functions of the family as economic units vary between classes. Capitalist families may pass down accumulated property and wealth through inheritance. Households with wealth are structures of ownership and property relationships; spouses generally jointly own whatever assets and debt they have acquired, bonds between children and adults are managed through promised inheritance or monetary aid, power dynamics within the family unfold through access to wealth and control over financial decision-making. For working-class people, families can be important strategies for sharing limited resources and sustaining each other when work is unavailable. The family serves as the primary institution mediating access to the wage for working-class people. Proletarian families may share their wages and debt; some privileged strata of the working class may aid their adult children in accessing a particular form of work, or after their death leave an inheritance of a privately owned home. Each class works to instill in children its particular values and strategies for navigating the world, and to support its children in acquiring the best opportunities available. Class inequality and the class relations of capitalism are reproduced through the family as a system of private households. (31)

The theoretical side of these debates often narrowly focused on the question of whether unwaged household labor creates value, a specific and technical idea in Marxist theory. Unfortunately, these debates often did not explicitly state the political consequences of their positions. Implicitly, the discussion centered on whether household labor was a legitimate issue of struggle by the working class. Should women's demands specifically about household labor be included in socialist organizing strategy? For working-class families, these struggles challenged the internal relationships between family members, upending gender roles within heterosexual relationships. Some activists called for "wages for housework" as a way of drawing attention to the vast, unwaged labor often done by working-class women within the household. This campaign was one of several efforts to politicize and mobilize both housewives and working mothers as political agents, challenging the private domain of the family.⁹ All these efforts echoed a long-standing debate among socialists. Was the way to winning gender equality through having all women working outside the home for wages? Could the private, unwaged, atomized labor of housework be transformed into a collective, waged social good? Should those doing unwaged housework within the family demand that their work be respected and valued? How did struggle by housewives and working mothers over unwaged household labor relate to the struggles of Black and brown paid domestic workers, or incarcerated women, or sex workers? (32)

Households cannot survive without outside support, requiring their dependency on the broader capitalist society. Proletarian families depend on one or more members of their family finding a job, the means of selling their capacity to work to an employer. These wages are then partially or wholly distributed to other family members who cannot or do not work. Access to wages shapes how people form families. Capitalism has built into its development certain long-term tendencies that all transform people's access to wages: urbanization, industrialization, the growth and decline of whole industries, and the increasing production of surplus populations who are excluded from formal labor markets. Because the family as a household unit is almost entirely dependent on the income derived from its outside economic activities, the changing dynamics of capitalist industry has enormous consequences for how people are able to form families. Stable employment is a necessary precondition of stable family relationships. Under economic strain and protracted underemployment, families are likely to fracture. As industries rise and fall, families change with them. As the forms of work in capitalist society changes, this in turn forecloses or enables new forms of family life. (33)

The normative, white, property-owning family, unlike their poor or Black counterparts subjected to state surveillance, is one founded on privacy. The private space of the bourgeois home is one separated from the public world of production and governance. This division was made possible through dynamics unique to capitalist society. This division was first widely available to capitalist families, who used the resources available through capital accumulation and colonization to create a protected sphere of family relations. Isolating the family into a private world in turn helped create new radicalized concepts of femininity, of women needing to be isolated and protected. It also inaugurated new approaches to child raising that placed a huge emphasis on the child's psychological and spiritual development but also subjugated them to new intensive forms of control. For much of early capitalist history, private households depended on control over property, a power only available to elites. Only later did it become available to others.

(45 in PDF)

Alongside the long history of extralegal racial terror, state actors enforce white supremacy through their day-to-day jobs as social workers, border patrol agents, or parole officers. These agents of their state gain their power amid the horrors of racialized poverty, surplus populations excluded from stable wage labor, and the erosion of working-class life. Yet children are often in real danger in their families. The family hides its own internal terrors. The private family operates as a space of gender and sexual coercion and control, providing the opportunity for abuse and coercion. These two forms of violence may appear in direct opposition—those claiming to protect children on one hand, and the widespread reality of child abuse on the other. But the family form bonds these two forms of violence together. This bond operates through the binary logic of the family ideal, by naturalizing and normalizing some families while treating others as pathological. It operates historically (and at times presently) through the eugenic racial policies of immigration, nationalism, and uneven access to reproductive health to attempt to promote and defend the white settler family while discouraging or fracturing other household formations. It works in zoning, marriage and divorce law, and taxation, encouraging nuclear family formation while making other kinship relations more precious and difficult. Some families are strengthened, protected from scrutiny, empowered in their normative status, while others are subject to surveillance and violence. (51-52)

George Floyd's family was fragmented by mass incarceration, racial terror, and the legacy of American slavery. Far from a normative white, propertied household, Floyd's family reflects many dimensions of the racist state violence and poverty that shape the domestic lives of Black Americans. Growing up with a single mother in a poor, segregated neighborhood, and then lacking the stability and resources to establish a household of his own, George Floyd's life was marked by exclusion from a family ideal. But in calling to his deceased mother, George Floyd offers a third, radically distinct meaning of family: *a plea for help*. For Floyd at his most horrifically vulnerable, I take his comments to mean that he saw in his mother the meaning of

salvation, aid, and care. I hear in his call a turn to his love for his mother to save him, to comfort him, to be with him. In his plea, many people recognized something of themselves, of their own fears and despair, their own desire to help and comfort. Family abolition, as offered here, includes the destruction of private households as economic units reproducing the system of class inequality that relegated Floyd's family to poverty. It is a call for the overcoming of a normative ideal built on racism and homophobia, and an end to the violent assault against care relations. It is a policy demand to undo the regulatory regimes that support some normative families by punishing others, families like Floyd's.

...

Yet family abolition is not just a call for destruction and overcoming; it is also a positive embrace of the love at the heart of the best families. Floyd called to a woman who had cared for him against the cruelty of the world. Family abolition must be an affirmative response to George Floyd's plea to his mother. That tie of love is at the heart of justice, of the struggle for a free world. The affirmation of family abolition is the demand that this love be a universal and unconditional basis for a social order that extends to include everyone. Yes, we all deserve love. Yes, we all deserve help. Yes, we all deserve to survive. Yes, we will defend each other. Yes, we will keep us safe. (53-54)

If *the family* calls up a cacophony of associations, *abolition* has its own multiple meanings. As with the word *family*, I mean something both quite specific and a bit obscure by the word *abolition*, and still seek to engage its other connotations. I draw from two great traditions of abolitionist thinking: the Black freedom struggle in the Americas, and revolutionary Marxist thought.

...

There are ways this abolitionist lineage differs in some ways from family abolition. While most prison abolitionists would gladly support burning prisons to the ground after freeing everyone inside, family abolitionists generally do not advocate setting out to destroy all families. Family abolitionism does not seek to obliterate the social basis through which people may romantically partner, or raise children, or care for each other.

...

The second abolitionist tradition is less well known in the United States: revolutionary socialism, particularly as it is articulated through Hegelian Marxism. For the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, the concept of abolition, of *Aufhebung*, is central to his understanding of transformation. *Aufhebung* has multiple contradictory meanings: to suspend, to annul, to

cancel, but also to preserve, to lift up, to save, and to keep. Hegel seemed to delight in these contradictory meanings and played off them in his thinking. In philosophical writing, *Aufhebung* is most often translated as *to sublate*, or as a *positive supersession*. It here suggests both destroying something and preserving part of that thing in a new, transformed form. In their early writing Marx and Engels used the word *Aufhebung* extensively. In their work, it is typically translated as *to abolish*.
(60-61)

“Under the conditions of factory labor, kinship ties between proletarians could no longer serve as a ready-made, naturalized system of obligation, care, and domination. Children would work on factory teams often headed by men to whom they were distantly or vaguely related. Proletarians lived in households with multiple families and generations. Proletarian women sold sex to survive. The conditions of wage work loosened and fragmented natal bonds and kinship ties, and remade them in increasingly heterogeneous ways. Coercive gendered violence occurred in workplaces, the streets, and homes, but it was not exclusive to kin-based fathers. For Marx, Engels, and many bourgeois reformers, the family was nonexistent among the industrial working class.” (71)

Marx’s lumpenproletariat: “Alongside decayed rascals with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, rogues, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, maquereaus, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la bohème*.” (72)

“Engels contrasts them with people who still held ‘sound peasant nature,’ who ‘had not as yet been possessed by the venality and depravity of the present ‘civilised’ lumpenproletariat.’ The lumpenproletariat in these passages is a heterogeneous array of criminals and informal laborers from which mercenary armies are recruited. These individuals belong to the new industrial cities and capitalist society, drawn from the breakdown of feudal life. But little clearly marks them as entirely separate from the industrial proletariat. Marx believes the lumpenproletariat are recruited to be deployed against strikes and workers’ uprisings, but little actually distinguishes them from the rest of the working class.” (73)

“The fundamental basis of this new family form, as Engels argues in *The Origin of Private Property, the Family and the State*, is the accumulation and expansion of private wealth. As Marx and Engels write in the Manifesto: “On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie.” This bourgeois family, Marx and Engels argue, finds its “compliment in the practical absence of the family among proletarians, and in public prostitution.” The new family of capitalist wealth is the necessary counterpart to the destruction of proletarian kinship ties.” (74)

“For Marx and Engels, family abolition is a necessary dimension and an inevitable consequence of the abolition of bourgeois society and private property. Communists do not need to directly challenge the family as a strategic priority, nor is there anything positive to salvage in the ideology of the family. In arguing this nuanced and specific position, Marx and Engels are distancing themselves from other tendencies of the socialist movement — both from those like Proudhon who defended and sought to reclaim the dignity of the peasant family, and those like Fourier who argued for a direct assault on the family as a primary communist task. For Marx and Engels, since the bourgeois family is based on property, its abolition in the Manifesto takes the programmatic form of the “Abolition of all right to inheritance.” Though elsewhere they critique the specific goal of abolishing inheritance while leaving untouched private property in general, in the Manifesto they locate inheritance as integral to the logic of bourgeois family relations. For

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Marx and Engels, the abolition of the family is the destruction of the bourgeois family, inherent in the overcoming of private property.” (78)

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Across the Americas, white explorers, colonists, and missionaries encountered an immense range of ways of approaching gender, sexuality, family, romantic partnership, child-rearing, and collective identity. This diversity of kinship forms threatened the imagined naturalness, universality, and social order of the European, bourgeois family. First Nations people included a broad range of nonbinary gender identities, such as the *winkte* of the Lakota, *lhamana* of the A:shwi, *nádleehí* among the Diné, *agokwe* and *agowinini* among Ojibwe people, and many other genders later grouped together under the identity of two-spirit. Missionaries and settlers consciously sought to exterminate such gender diversity. Anti-indigenous genocide efforts foregrounded same-sex eroticism, often articulated through nonbinary gender identities. Even in First Nations where gender and sexual diversity was oppressed, Europeans still saw it everywhere. For example, though Aztecs repressed same-sex eroticism, Spanish Conquistadors still found their comparative tolerance to be an abominable culture of rampant sodomy.

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Slave-owner wealth expanded when enslaved women had children. This embedded the dynamics of generational reproduction as components of capital accumulation and the work process. Most enslaved people could not effectively assert any form of parental rights, as the selling of enslaved people was completely beyond their control and often broke up families. Enslaved children were raised by whoever was on hand and available, often enslaved elders too old to work in the fields. In reviewing court law, Hartman finds the definition of motherhood for enslaved people encompassed only that which served slave owners. Enslaved people were subjected to “enforced kinlessness” — their relations were outside the law. Enslaved women were further subject to the violence of sexual assault, rape, and forced reproduction. The work of enslaved women played integral involuntary roles in the domestic reproduction of slave-owning families, as nannies, wet nurses, mistresses, elder care attendants, cooks, and cleaners. The only families enslaved people could have were temporary bonds of care under conditions that constantly worked to destroy and fragment those ties.

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It is less often recognized that Jim Crow included a coercive family politics. Since white landowners would only lease sharecropping tenancies to married couples, Black sharecroppers were forced into marriage. The frontier of cotton agriculture was expanding, plots were small, and land was available to new Black families whenever they were ready to marry. Land was denied to single Black adults or those in unconventional family arrangements. As a result of these conditions, Black people married early and could not separate. When and where Black people were able to escape tenant farming, their rates of marriage declined sharply. This is a crucial and underemphasized dimension of Black American history: heterosexual marriage was a forced feature of Jim Crow white supremacy through the concrete mechanism of access to land in sharecropping. Jim Crow was an imposition not only of poverty, racial terror, political exclusion, and legal subordination, but also of a particularly rigid patriarchal family.

Beginning during World War I and continuing into the 1960s, over six million Black people fled the rural South and migrated, largely to major cities in northern and western states. Taking advantage of the labor demand in industrializing urban centers, along with political openings caused by the decline of the cotton industry, they again seized the opportunity for greater freedom. Among these freedoms were efforts to escape the heterosexual, marriage-based family norm. The post-Jim Crow low rates of Black marriage — a

major topic of debate among 1960s policymakers and Black activists – may not only be caused by poverty and lack of stable work, but could also be read as a resistance and flight from the family regime of tenant sharecropping. Recognizing that Jim Crow sharecropping mandated heterosexuality is essential for recognizing the element of sexual freedom in the low rates of Black marriage during and after the Great Migration.

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For both enslaved and waged proletarians, their kinship ties were not recognized by those in power, not respected by law, and did not readily conform to elite social expectations. In each case, proletarian deviancy was understood in opposition to the consolidation of gender and sexual norms among the property-owning class, who formed sharply structured families based on inheritance and status. The differences between enslaved workers and waged workers are considerable, and the racialized chasm would divide the world proletarian movement. But despite these differences, in both cases the observation of Marx and Engels that capitalism was already destroying the working-class family described a key feature of nineteenth-century proletarian life.

Family Abolition: Chapters 6 & 7

Freed of the rigid hierarchies of the peasant family or rural farm life, evading the surveillance of social workers or vice squads, proletarians pursued the pleasures of sex. The great cities of industrial capitalism offered historically unprecedented opportunities for casual sex, for sodomy, for anonymous sex, for gender transgression, for exchanging sex for money, for subcultures organized around sexual activity, and much else. Sex in the Great Towns took a broad variety of forms, both consensual and coercive, beautiful and brutal. Within exclusively male and hierarchal spaces, men had a great deal of sex with each other, not uncommonly intergenerational and often nonconsensual. Men across class paid sex workers of all genders. Later in the twentieth century, the experience of same-sex relationships among urban wage workers provided the basis for new self-chosen identities, including the emergence of gay identity.

Simultaneous with the increasing availability of wage labor, cities also provided the means of surviving for those whose gender and sexual deviancy were too visible for employers to welcome them into wage labor. While wage workers could pursue sodomy in their off hours, those who expressed their deviancy in their gender were often excluded from wage labor. Gender variation is a universal throughout human history; what has changed, during each period of economic development, were the means gender-variant people had to survive, and their place in the social order. Mass urbanization created new spaces for gender-variant people to survive, not through wage labor but through criminalized hustles possible in cities. (104)

For Marx, the proletarian struggle for communism meant seeking to abolish class society, and thus destroy the social relations that constituted the working class. The task of the proletariat as a revolutionary class, for Marx and much of the early communist movement, was its self-abolition. ... In the 1880s and 1890s a new and distinct articulation of working-class struggle took shape that often identified itself as Marxist but offered a contrasting understanding of socialist society. The new workers' movement no longer meaningfully imagined the vision of full communism suggested by Marx, one where wages, money, and the class relation itself have been overcome.

Instead, the workers' movement constituted itself through affirming a working-class identity, based on what we may now call working-class pride. The advocates of the workers' movement argued that their status as the working class provided the shared basis of struggle. This working-class identity offered a means of collective organizing, constituting formal organizations of struggle, and a vision of revolutionary society as the "emancipation of labor," the rule of the working class over the whole of society. The working class can struggle, in this conception, because it is already partially autonomous, able to act independently from capitalist relations. [Latter-day Marxist theorists] criticized the workers' movement as unable to grasp that the very basis of the existence of the autonomous, affirmative working class is only constituted through its relation to capital and within the logic of capitalist development. (115–116)

Rather than destroying the capitalist system of value, abstract labor, and wages, the workers' movement argued that these forms could provide the basis for workers' emancipation. This new workers' movement sought to create a workers' society. The workers' movement called for a socialist society ruled over by wage workers, where the interdependence and cooperation of the factory become the basis of society as a whole. This vision, shared across the anti-capitalist political spectrum, sought to found a socialist society on the experience of industrial labor. The movement conceived the emancipation of the wage laborer as being the generalization of wage labor across the vast majority of society—making everyone into a worker. This would include the destruction or subordination of the capitalist class and the proletarianization of the peasantry through economic development.

The workers' movement, by basing its vision on the experience of wage labor and factory production, created a long series of internal oppositions and divisions within the proletariat—distinctions that adopted

and accentuated the divisions introduced by the capitalist mode of production. ... The workers' movement created a new identity to contrast and distinguish itself from the poor, the unwaged, the unemployed, or the nonworker. This split the proletariat into two distinct categories still with us today: the respectable worker proud of their work, and the very poor, an unneeded and shameful surplus of society. It was through the workers' movement and its new divisions that the lumpenproletariat became the despised and excluded enemies of the working class. The family was essential to this distinction.

It was the invention of a respectability politics for the working class. (116–118)

This family form was a tremendous victory in improving the standard of living and survival of millions of working-class people. It created a basis for stable neighborhood organization, sustained socialist struggle, and major political victories. Yet more insidiously, it was also the means by which the workers' movement would distinguish itself from the lumpenproletariat, Black workers, and queers. It would provide a sexual and gendered basis for white American identity and middle-class property ownership. The accessibility of this family form expanded dramatically for white American and European wage workers in the 1880s and 1890s, and it became the dominant family form in many stable working-class neighborhoods.

Trade unions, workers' parties, and liberal bourgeois social reformers, aided by the threat of disruptive working-class insurgency, won a series of regulations and public infrastructure developments that dramatically improved working-class life. Trade union agitation and organization won significant wage increases and a growing wage share, enabling an overall improvement in the standard of living. Higher wages enabled a single- wage-earner household, distinguishing the respectable working class from the lumpenproletariat. The male-breadwinner family aspiration provided a symbolic solidarity between workers, employers, and state officials. Trade unions explicitly used the demand of a "family wage" through the 1890s as a legitimating basis for higher wages. This call resonated with their progressive bourgeois allies precisely because it demonstrated bourgeois family aspirations on the part of the working class. (119)

This male-breadwinner family form served as a measure and marker of respectability. Families where mothers continued to work for pay inside or outside the home faced condemnation from their neighbors, and increasingly social exclusion. Male workers, meanwhile, began to link the ability to support their families to a patriarchal sense of pride. ... Workers pursued this family structure as a way of claiming a moral dimension to their wages, legitimizing pro-worker legislation to bourgeois politicians. Against the functionalism of some Marxist feminist theory, there is little evidence that the male-breadwinner family form was an inevitable outcome of capitalist development, nor that it was engineered and implemented by employers at the end of the nineteenth century. The majority of employers lacked direct control over workers' nonwork hours, choice of family, or domestic arrangements. The working-class family was not engineered by capitalists to serve their interests. ... Nor was it a matter of the inevitable expansion of bourgeois family values in working-class life. Key elements of bourgeois families, including inheritance, had little or no relevance for the vast majority of proletarians. This family form was a contingent outcome of class struggle. (122)

The nuclear family, they saw, was a system of domestic privacy that protected against scrutiny and struggle, enabling and defending terrors: childhood abuse, intimate partner violence, marital rape, atomized isolation, anti-queer abuse, and coerced gender socialization. The radical feminist and gay liberationist critiques rejected the atomized, isolating, and social conditions of the American suburbs. They were vague in their understanding of what the class basis of the family was, partly because of the success of the workers' movement in modeling its families after the bourgeoisie. The construction of the suburbs had blurred the distinctions among white people between working-class, middle-class, and capitalist family forms. (138)

"The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," also known as the Moynihan Report, laid out an assessment that continues to guide in various guises much thinking among liberal sociologists, policymakers, and even among gender-conservative Black nationalists. According to the report, high rates of Black unemployment, crime, and other social dysfunction were the result of the excessive preponderance of women-headed households in Black communities, a so-called "Black matriarchy." The report argued that marital and lifestyle choices of Black women, including high rates of wage work and comparatively low rates of marriage, both marginalized Black Americans within a broader society that expected male-headed households and produced a crisis of Black male masculinity and misbehavior of crime, disruptive social protest, and unemployment. Here the exclusion of Black Americans from the characteristic family form of the workers' movement is blamed on Black women, and in contrast that heteronormative, patriarchal family form is seen as the fundamental condition of social order.

...

Black feminist theorists challenged the Moynihan Report, pushing beyond the limits of the white family norm. Black women were not willing to sacrifice independence for a desperate, halfway emulation of an impossible respectability, often opting to raise children with friends or female relatives rather than husbands. In "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," Francis Beale writes:

It is idle dreaming to think of Black women simply caring for their homes and children like the middle class white model. Most Black women have to work to help house, feed and clothe their families. Black women make up a substantial percentage of the Black working force, and this is true for the poorest Black family as well as the so-called "middle class" family.

(140- 141)

In advancing a critique of coercive binary gender expression and normative gender expectations, the Red Decade radicals began to envision the overcoming of narrow gender and sexual identity as the endpoint of the abolition of the family. They saw the struggle to abolish the family as necessitating direct personal transformation in one's expectations and behavior toward others, advancing and deepening the previous socialist critique of male chauvinism as an obstacle to class struggle. In their engagement with economic survival and work, the gender radicals of the 1970s moved toward a rejection of work and a desire to escape from the subjugation of wage labor, rather than solely imagining equality through universal proletarianization.

(146)

Family life has been radically transformed. The normative family ideal no longer bears much resemblance to anyone's actual lives. In many ways, this has been a huge improvement in human freedom. But these shifts also entail an intensification of another form of unfreedom. The decline of the male-breadwinner working-class family form has shifted the experience of women and queers from dependency on the personal domination of a husband or father to dependency on the impersonal domination of the wage. Just as the male-breadwinner family was enabled by a succession of victories of the workers' movement, prolonged economic crisis and the collapse of the workers' movement has condemned people to material deprivation, market dependency, and alienated work. The new heterogeneous family structures are a symptom of desperation as much as they are of the practice of care, and in this market dependency everyone is subject to new forms of predation. A queer youth freed from a violent relationship with their parents may be subject to the new risks of street based sex work; young mothers opting not to marry their abusive boyfriends may find themselves working long hours in retail service under managers who sexually harass them. Everyone is forced to find and secure work, competing constantly with other proletarians, and subject to the gender and sexual discipline of employers and the work process. Freedom from the normative patriarchal family may be an improvement for many, but it has not made a free society.

(159-160)

Chapter 10

1. Book 165-166 / PDF 170-172

... In 1997 Cathy J. Cohen('s)... essay opens by surveying the emergence of queer politics as an effort to link radical activism and academic theory in a refusal of normative and stable identity categories... In her conclusion, Cohen calls for "radical coalition work," through an "intersectional analysis of who and what the enemy is and where our potential allies can be found," one not "rooted in our shared history or identity, but in our shared marginal relationships to dominant power which normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges." She writes:

As we stand on the verge of watching those in power dismantle the welfare system through a process of demonizing poor and young, primarily poor and young women of color—many of whom have existed for their entire lives outside the white, middle-class, heterosexual norm—we have to ask if these women do not fit into society's categories of marginal, deviant, and "queer."⁴

Cohen points to ACT UP New York's needle exchange and prison organizing as an example of such coalition projects that both destabilize and politicize identity categories.

2. Book 176-177 / PDF 181-183

... global capitalism has faced a protracted economic downturn since the 1970s, resulting in a transnational organized ruling-class offensive to displace the costs of this crisis onto the working class. Broadly termed neoliberalism, this offensive has included substantial rollback of welfare state programs won in the post–World War II era. In this context, it has proved extremely difficult for working-class and poor movements to win an expansion or preservation of welfare benefits....

...Welfare states have long structured access to benefits in ways that attempt to coerce people into conventional family structures and punish those who live otherwise...

...Often, poverty-relief programs are deeply dehumanizing. Need-based welfare programs were often deliberately following cruel and abusive policies, involved elaborate impersonal and discouraging bureaucracies, and were generally resented by all involved. Nancy Fraser has argued that neoliberalism's attack on social democracy, state programs, and welfare benefits gained ground in part because it seized on and co-opted the antistate sentiments of social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁹

3. Book 177-178 / PDF 183-184

...People's lives are profoundly bisected by class and racial stratifications, and aspirations of mutual care rarely can survive intact in the face of crises of severe chaotic drug use, prolonged unemployment, incarceration, or mental illness. Capitalism and the conditions of working-class life destabilize the broader communities and social networks that chosen family may rely on.

Other critics, including Sophie Lewis and Ariel Ajeno, have pointed to the exclusive character of chosen family. Conventional families have the pretense of unconditionality—you are welcome because you are family: no one has to choose you. But needing to be chosen requires the active sympathy of others. This allows for considerable coercion, evaluation, and status competition. If

chosen family becomes necessary for material survival, survival becomes bound up with status and the opinions of others. What happens to those who are not chosen?

Chapter 11

1. Book 183-184 / PDF 189

... Sophie Lewis's 2019 book... provides an extensive listing of recent writing on family abolition, ... movingly concludes by calling for "comrades against kinship":

Being together as people and ending the separation of people— this is a future that can be imagined, even if it cannot be fully desired yet, at least, not by us. I don't know how to desire it fully, but I can't wait to see what comes after the family. I also know I probably won't see whatever it is. Still, I hope it happens, and I hope it is a glorious and abundant nothing.¹²

For Lewis, as the family is an organized form of scarcity, the nothingness that is put in its place is an abundant freedom.

2. Book 187 / PDF 192

...Revolutionary ideas can only take on mass appeal during revolutionary moments. The rest of the time, they can only gain traction among marginal and disaffected sections of society. But even when unrecognized, they speak to persistent and deep-set social contradictions, widespread dissatisfaction, and social problems with no obvious pragmatic solutions. Developing and maintaining revolutionary ideas between the revolutions, as I and other contemporary family abolitionists are attempting to do, is a necessary task.

UTOPIANISM AND PROVOCATION

Much excellent writing on family abolition skillfully sidesteps the question of what is to come. All these family abolitionists discussed previously offer powerful critiques of the family form, argue persuasively and explicitly for the need to abolish the family, and point to present refusals of the family. Some, like Madeline Lane-McKinley, Sophie Lewis, and Tiffany Lethabo King, are wisely leaving it to the future to find new ways of life. This move is sound and defensible. In this and the following chapters, I join with Griffiths and Gleeson in doing something much trickier: imagining the revolutionary future.

3,a Book 191 / PDF 197 NOT THE STATE, NOT THE WAGE, NOT THE FAMILY

...Here I call for a vision of family abolition, however, that refuses the consolidation of authority into the hands of even a benevolent state.

Book 192 / PDF 198

Here the state is understood as an institution that rules over social life yet is separated from the direct relationships between people... States necessarily require the compulsion to work—wage labor, slavery, or a similar instrument of impersonal domination—to manage the activity of people removed from its decision-making.

3,b Book 192-193 / PDF 198-199

...Yet in a stateless, communist society, this administration would be undertaken by popular mass organs enlisting the majority of the population, a part of the fabric of day-to-day life, and directly integrated with production and distribution. Such mass organs of collective decision-making and administration have emerged during peak periods of rebellions historically, in the forms of soviets, workers' councils, and popular assemblies. I distinguish such forms of communist administration from states, and argue they have a different relationship to the society as a whole.

This abstract rejection of the state and wage labor as instruments of class rule becomes much clearer and concrete in imagining a state-mandated form of family abolition, using this definition of the state. Imagine a society where all people giving birth are immediately visited by a state agent, perhaps their own physician...But a scenario of the socialist state literally and directly replacing the family is rightfully terrifying to many.

4,a Book 194 / PDF 200 QUALITIES OF COMMUNIST SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

... Communism, as understood in this book, is a classless society, founded on the revolutionary abolition of capitalist social relations and institutions. Communist social reproduction names the generalized practices necessary to directly meet human needs without the mediation and domination of capitalist relations... As a general maxim, I use Marx's succinct description: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his Needs!"²²

Book 195 / PDF 200-201

... Communism would be the abolition of all capitalist social institutions—both those invented by capitalism and those remade from previous eras of class society. Communism would be a society based on human freedom, where large numbers of people work to undo and remake institutions, dismantling the social basis for domination.

...

... In a communist society, a positive potential of each of these social institutions would be preserved while their present form is destroyed ... The positive aspects of their social roles would be incorporated into new, freer social institutions that may be completely unrecognizable compared to their previous form. To constitute communism at all, the structural basis for white supremacy, nationalism, settler colonialism, and xenophobia would necessarily be destroyed.

4,b Book 197-198 / PDF 203-204

... All people have rich capacities for creative, intellectual, and spiritual lives. But fully developing ourselves requires space, time, and the support of others. Capitalism, in producing mass poverty for large numbers of people and requiring most others to devote themselves to working for others, denies people the possibility of discovering their own potentials... Because surplus resources are currently amassed through the exploitation and violence of racial capitalism, those consuming them require a constant denial and disavowal that spiritually and psychically distorts human growth. Communist social reproduction would provide the **social minimum** of the means of survival, but also the conditions for learning, growing, thinking, developing, and discovering one's capacity.

...

... Along with material needs, people also require the love and care of others. Humans deprived of necessary care get stuck, unable to develop and mature....**When possible**, communist social

reproduction should include social forms that affirm and facilitate age-appropriate love and care, as the family is imagined to provide now.

5. Book 200-201 / PDF 206

... Until transphobia within the hearts and minds of everyone is eradicated—a nearly inconceivable goal—coming out as trans is likely to have some impact on one's romantic and kinship ties.... Yet the well-being of trans people relies not only on freedom from coercion but also the positive presence of supportive care.... Care in our capitalist society is a commodified, subjugating, and alienated act, but in it we can see the kernel of a non-alienating interdependence and love. Positive freedoms are enabled by the foundation of universal material support. They also depend on a queer, feminist, anti-ableist, and anti-racist cultural transformation centering love and supporting our mutual self-development.

... Such institutions could free both children and their parents from bonds of coercive obligation, dependence, and isolation, without unnecessarily separating loving parents and children.... Trans freedom depends on overcoming the private family and establishing communist social reproduction.

6. Book 201 / PDF 207

... Communist social reproduction is a theorization of the basic coordinates of a free society. It articulates both freedom from coercion and the positive presence of care necessary for the flourishing of human potential. No utopian plan will ever guide mass revolutionary struggle. But envisioning alternative futures and revolutionary values can enrich our lives, our struggles, and our freedom dreams. This book, in attempting to theorize family abolition, is an invitation for everyone to imagine how social reproduction, intimacy, and care could work in a free society. ... But how do we get there?

Abolition of the Family, M.E. O'Brien

Chapter 12

1. Communes in a capitalist society are forced into the shared poverty of economic self-sufficiency and isolation to depend on significant contributions from wage labor or inherited wealth. Group houses may function similarly to private households, dependent on the inherited wealth of one member, the steady income of another, and the tangle of dependency and care that holds people together. Though perhaps less oppressive than many nuclear families, they are subject to all the same forces of pressure from capitalist labor markets and the state, producing many of the same internal contradictions. The pressures of state policies, poverty, class differences among residents, or lack of mental healthcare inevitably exacerbate interpersonal conflict and often lead to the collapse of such deliberate communities. Like in society at large, within deliberate communal living arrangements, only considerable class privilege offers long-term stability. **p. 209 book/214-15 pdf**

What does O'Brien suggest we might do, in this communal utopia, to avoid simply reproducing the same systems and pitfalls, privileges and poverties (both interpersonal and infrastructural) we're so accustomed to navigating in present society? Especially considering they often exacerbate each other in a circular manner?

2. In protracted riots and rebellions, people may fight the police, loot stores, and convene in ad hoc assemblies to discuss what to do next. Rioters gather in each other's kitchens to cook looted food, form medic teams to treat injuries from fighting police, or check up on each other for safety and care. In an imagined communization scenario, these insurrections are able to survive the retaliation of the state and the forces of capital. Forms of insurgent social reproduction take root, becoming the basis for day-to-day survival. Protest kitchens do not just feed a few hundred protesters but are expanded out into coordinated canteens spread throughout neighborhoods to feed millions. Medical care is not just a tent in the corner of an occupied square, but teams providing free medical care to entire movements, neighborhoods, and cities in insurrection. The rebellion at this phase is characterized primarily by widespread looting, occupations, combat with state-loyal forces, and collective forms of consumption like protest kitchens and medical centers. Such an insurrection, if militarily successful against the forces of reaction, could potentially abolish capitalist social relations, including wage labor, prisons, police, and the state. **p. 216-217 book/222 pdf**

It seems like the embryo of O'Brien's utopia is the long-term protest camp that reproduces elements of domestic life/caregiving. Is this because these communities are inherently resisting the state? What are some of the other communized micro-settings we currently navigate, aside from protest camps and the occupied square? ARE THERE ANY??????? IS THIS THE ONLY ONE?!!!

Chapter 13

3. To survive as the basis of freedom, the commune must be a part of a broader and successful effort to destroy the coercive mechanisms of the racial state, to seize the means of production and collective survival, and to defeat the class enemies of the revolutionary struggle. Establishing such free communities

must be a part of an expanding, universalizing, and revolutionizing process that also develops fully communist modes of production and circulation of material goods. These communes would not be self-sufficient agricultural communities or isolated units struggling to survive in a market society. A communist transition would take time and would unfold unevenly in different places. But to survive, it must continue to expand, and ultimately destroy the means of reinstating the domination of the state or the market anywhere. These communes would be integrated with a communist production system expanding to a global reach, depending on the highest level of technology compatible with human decency and ecological sustainability. Interdependence in production would require practices of shared deliberation, decision-making, and coordination bridging across many communes. **p. 222 book/227 pdf**

4. The communes must work around an internal commitment to fostering a culture of mutual respect across lines of difference. Though individuals can harbor whatever beliefs they choose, their relations with others would be subject to public challenge and political struggle, including with children. People within the commune could challenge examples of abuse and harm they see in each other. Even disliked or harmful people must be able to find a home in a commune. This raises the question that is common in discussions of police and prison abolition: what happens to those who commit serious harm? Many forms of crime may disappear in a classless society, but interpersonal violence like sexual assault is likely to persist. Without the intervention of a state and against the practice of banishment as a matter of principle, communes would need to develop well-resourced internal practices to address harm. Many current efforts at transformative and restorative justice, for example, could be implemented with much greater resources and shared support than currently available. These could include long-term monitoring of individuals through the constant rotating presence of friends both to prevent them from further harming others and to support their rehabilitation. **p. 222-23 book/228 pdf**

5. To avoid becoming centers of survivalism, ethno-nationalism, white chauvinism, or gender fascism, such communes must also resist tendencies toward religious and social homogeneity. Many would be tempted to form homogenous communities centered on shared values or religious practices. But these would potentially reproduce many of the harms of racial capitalism, now recast in a collectivist form. If a religious or cultural sect wants to live on their own on a self-subsistent basis, it may make sense for that to be tolerated by the surrounding networks of production and communal life to avoid reproducing the imperialist violence of a white liberalism that seeks to “save” anyone against their will. But access to outside goods could be conditioned on also allowing outside contact for all residents, giving women, queers, or others experiencing oppression a chance to encounter and choose the outside world. The free circulation and migration of people between communes could be an essential contribution to such heterogeneity. Individual adults would not be permanently bound to their community and could choose to relocate at will, enjoying a similar assurance of material well-being in any other similar commune. **p. 224 book/230 pdf**

6. Fourier also points us to another dimension of the commune: it includes multiple forms of collective pleasure and joy. The commune could become the center for new forms of communist sociality, art, expression, community, sex, and love. These communes could be the center of a new communist sociality, both challenging and transforming oppressive practices of interpersonal subjugation, stratification, and

alienation. As well as supporting shared survival and ongoing rebellion, the new institutions of the commune could come to offer new forms of joy and belonging. The commune could provide a basis for cross-generational friendship. Just as some protest kitchens today offer many opportunities for making cross- generational contacts, connecting with new people, or feeling like a part of something larger than oneself, the canteen and the commune offer people a chance at richer social lives. Today, if you want to have a long-term and close relationship with a person of a different generation, the family is one of your few opportunities for doing so. The shared life of the commune, in contrast, provides ample space for rich and diverse relationships. For example, the structure of the commune could make it relatively easy to play a very active role in nurturing and supporting a young person, without the massive life-changing commitment required of parents under capitalism. Being able to easily form diverse relationships could help break down the multiple forms of segregation inherent to class society. Over time, this could open up space for new, transformative modes of identification and relating that could transcend some identity categories. **p. 227-28 book/232-33 pdf**

7. Sex and sexual pleasure could become collective concerns, both challenging sexual coercion and abuse and supporting people in finding paths toward sexual fulfillment. Unlike Fourier, I recognize that full sexual satisfaction and perfect harmony is likely not possible, given psychoanalytic insights about human development. But the commune provides the opportunity to transform sexual practice and eroticism into something that could be collectively considered as a human need, a source of well-being, and a field of ethical care. This might occasionally take the form of Fourier's imagined mass planned orgies. But more often it would look like helping people in their sexual health and sexual satisfaction by having long, supportive conversations and incorporating sexuality into mental and physical health education. Polyamorous relationships could be more common. A social acknowledgment that good sex is a source of human well-being could help undo heteronormative misogyny.

To resist the threat of a reassertion of the patriarchal family as a counterrevolutionary force, ongoing struggles around gender and sexuality within the commune would be essential. Like Fourier, I imagine self- interest coupled to transformed consciousness would be integral to maintaining the collective commitment to the commune. Women and feminized partners could refuse the reimposition of the family, having witnessed the reduced domestic labor of the collective commune and the opportunities the commune affords to contesting sexist relationship dynamics. Queer and trans people could recognize in the commune the means of resisting the abuse and domination of the family for themselves and future queer and trans children. Those who have experienced the insurrectionary commune could recognize in it the material basis for a freer gender and sexual order, and choose to defend and expand its reach. All those who come to realize what is at stake in winning communism could join queers, trans people, feminists, and radical women of color in resisting the return of the family, and instead fight for the family's full replacement with the commune. **p. 228-29 book/232, 234-35 pdf**

8. Within the commune, kinship ties could persist in many forms but would be integrated with a broader, interdependent community. Individuals could opt into an arrangement of coparenting with one or more adults, creating family-like arrangements for the purposes of raising children. Research into psychological development suggest that children do benefit from the consistent attention of a small number of adults early in life. This challenges some historical family-abolitionist currents that have mistakenly seen mother-infant bonds as inherently oppressive and in need of complete prohibition. Among the heterogeneous arrangements of close relationships within a commune, people may choose to raise

children they gestate or with whom they have a biological relationship; or they may choose other arrangements; or they, their child, or those immediately in their life may change those arrangements as a child ages. Similarly, a few may choose to form lifelong relationships with their biological family or choose to partner romantically for the long term with one other person and incorporate child-rearing as a practice.

Yet these close parenting or familial units would not serve as an economic unit in any sense. They would not organize material consumption nor social reproduction. Instead, they would only act as a voluntary and personal arrangement to be entered into within a broader economic unit, within the ready availability of multiple alternatives for anyone to opt out. If a child found their living situation intolerable, there would be many other adults interdependent with them and in social proximity who could observe the situation, intervene collectively if needed, and offer easily accessible alternative housing arrangements, including other families the child could join, or crèches specializing in such tasks. Children could pass through multiple households and living arrangements as they grow up—including time in children-centered group housing—always being within a building or walk of the original group of adults who they may identify as their parents. These alternatives allow parents to pass in and out of a child's life over time, while assured their children's material and social needs will be met by others. Commune members would share a general commitment to providing adequate care for each other, but the particular forms this takes in relationships could be negotiated and changed according to varying capacities and needs. When children come of age, as Fourier imagined, they could set out to travel across continents exploring the richness of the world, maintaining digital remote contact with their friends and many forms of familial relations. **p. 230-31 book/235-236 pdf**

9. A child coming out as trans could quickly find allies and supporters. If their parents happen to be bigots, the surrounding neighbors are integrated enough in their daily life to quickly identify and intervene in child abuse. Interventions against such abuse, rather than permanently severing contact between parents and children by removing children altogether, could instead enable them to continue to relate to each other regularly in collectively shared spaces, but with many means available to stop abuse or violence. The shared culture of the commune could support the child's free gender expression. Completely accessible medical technologies could make age-appropriate transitioning relatively easy. As they grow, adolescents could be supported in pursuing age-appropriate romances and sexual pleasure, while also being protected against predatory childhood sexual assault. The commune, unlike the family, makes it possible for such affirming experiences to become universally available. **p. 232-33 book/238 pdf**

From last week...

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Conclusion

1. Care are those activities that directly help us reproduce our physical health and development, our psychic well-being, and our capacity for rich relationships and pleasures. Care is a material relationship, a set of forms of labor. It is a form of labor, performed as a relation between people, that offers a use value necessary for living tolerable lives. For many, it takes the particular forms of personal dependency within the family ...Increasingly, care also takes the form of a commodity exchange, a service you buy on the market or for which state services pay...Care is not necessarily good or done with kindness.

...Under capitalism, care is alienated. Access to the care in a family requires submitting to state policies, cultural norms, and the direct domination of another person. Access to care in the market requires finding a capitalist employer who wants to exploit your labor, or having access to resources produced through other people's work...Care, in a nonalienated form, is helping each person or group heal from psychological and physical harms. It is providing people with the resources, education, love, and support to be able to explore all their capacities for intellectual, creative, and physical action. **(pp. 239-240 pdf)**

2. Family abolition, throughout this book, is understood as a material process of struggle, concurrent with overcoming capitalist society. Family abolition is the creation of the material conditions for full human flourishing, and for minimizing and redressing harm. It is a commitment to making nonalienated care available to all. It means unlocking care from its restriction to the private family and transforming it into something that is collectively and democratically shared. Family abolition is the dimension of care specific to a classless society. *Family abolition is the communization of care.*

...A free society is one built on mutual care. Care, in its unalienated form, is not just the labor of meeting human needs; it is an affect of communism. Care, under communism, is the facilitation and support of full human flourishing. Love, care—these are words heavy with the meanings that they carry in our alienated, capitalist society. They also point us to an often-neglected question: What might it be like to experience a free, communist society? **(pp. 240-241 pdf)**

3. Among King's most compelling formulations was beloved community. The concept appears multiple times throughout his writing and speeches. King often emphasized that the beloved community was the endpoint of nonviolence. Through nonviolence, the rend of segregation and oppression could be overcome, and people could finally have the chance to recognize each other as fully human. These points are evident across several speeches and writings between 1957 and 1960.

In three different speeches in 1957 and 1959, King uses minor variations of the following: “The way of violence leads to bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. But, the way of non-violence leads to redemption and the creation of the beloved community.”...For nonviolence, “the intent is always to create the beloved community.” Its immediate form is reconciliation: “There is another element that must be present in our struggle that then makes our resistance and nonviolence truly meaningful. That element is reconciliation.”

Earlier, I called family abolition a *horizon*, a way of theorizing about a postrevolutionary free society. Throughout these comments, King is emphasizing that the practice of nonviolence offers its own revolutionary horizon, that of beloved community. **(pp. 243-244 pdf)**

4. Joshua F. J. Inwood provides a detailed theorization of King’s beloved community. Love is not sentimental but is based on Christian notions of redemption, close to the Greek word Agape, which King defined as “a willingness to go to any length to restore community.” As King’s thought developed, justice was increasingly bound up with an international struggle against colonialism, and for massive global wealth redistribution, requiring the eradication of “racism, materialism, and militarism.” King expressed a conditional sympathy for Karl Marx, the Black Power movement, armed revolt, and the growing anti-colonial struggles of the Global South. Dr. King, Inwood concludes, “radicalizes the concept of community” in ways that are directly counter to today’s neoliberalism. **(pp. 246 pdf)**

5. ...Communities are always precarious.

Communities fail to live up to our aspirations for them because they do not control the means of production. Capitalists and capitalist states have the monopoly on everything we need to survive. People may love those they consider their community, but the priority must be finding a way to sell their capacity to work. The demands of employers and labor markets dominate people’s lives. Without having the resources to actually provide for people, what we call communities are subject to constant instability. Miranda Joseph critiques notions of community as deployed by nonprofits. She argues that community takes the place of widespread and collective aspirations to be free of capitalist violence, the dominance of property and wealth, and universal coercion—in short, community is a word in the place of our desire for communism. **(pp. 247 pdf)**

6. Like King, Marx understood social revolution as overcoming our separation from our basic shared humanity. Marx also grasped alienation as a force that rules over human life. Under capitalism, the product of labor is separated from the laborer. It becomes the private property of the capitalist, who directly subjugates and dominates the laborer. The more the laborer works, the more she creates the basis for her own subjugation. Marx also understood that this dominating force takes on an impersonal, universal quality. Through the generalization of market dependency, the abstract forces of the market dominate the whole of human activity. Capitalists and laborers come to rely on the capricious and irrational violence of market competition, on what Marx understood as the global regulating regime of value. Social revolution is simultaneously the destruction of the domination of value and all the capitalist social relations that accompany it. **(pp. 248 pdf)**

7. ...The abolition of the family must be the positive creation of a society of generalized human care and queer love. Family abolition and communist social relations are the realization of the beloved community. A society based on communist social reproduction would be the chance to genuinely care for each other, to be cared for, and for that care to extend through the vast global fabric of our interdependence. In a free society beyond capitalism and beyond the family, we can finally know what it means to love and be loved. **(pp. 250-251 pdf)**