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**The Future of Prisons**

# What is to be done?

## Thinking about abolitionist alternatives

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**The prison is unequalled in pain. Uniquely designed and operationalised through deliberate pain infliction it performs a key function in the maintenance of blatantly unequal societies through the control of poor, marginalised and disproportionately BME male lawbreakers.<sup>1</sup> But diagnosis and critique of the pains and harms of penal incarceration is not enough. It is also essential that consideration is given to feasible, policy relevant and progressive interventions that can challenge gross economic and social inequalities and mitigate the humanitarian crises confronting contemporary penal practices, without abandoning the broader obligation to promote radically alternative responses to troublesome human conduct and the logic of capitalist accumulation. This necessitates recognition and engagement with the problems and possibilities of our historical moment alongside a disruption of the ideological limitations placed upon what are considered appropriate and feasible means of social and penal transformation. Such engagement must be rooted in a normative framework — what I have described elsewhere as the ‘abolitionist compass’<sup>2</sup> — that can assist our navigation away from deeply entrenched social inequalities and the problems associated with the criminal process.**

Abolitionist alternatives to Liberal Market Capitalism and the penal apparatus of the Capitalist State should be informed by the principles of human rights, social justice and democratic accountability. Principles of human rights precipitate the recognition of a fellow human beings innate dignity and the symbolic and cultural respect of other people’s shared humanity and provide a basis for critiquing *dehumanisation* through valorising basic human characteristics that must be promoted and protected at all costs. Principles of social justice

problematise the current application of the criminal label, which overwhelmingly punishes the poor, and actively promotes interventions that aim to meet human need alongside aiming to foster values of care, love, kindness, forgiveness and solidarity. Principles of democratic accountability highlight the importance of adhering to democratic values which require unhindered participation, processes of shared decision making and validity for the voices to all concerned in the creation of social norms, whilst at the same time emphasising the importance of legal guarantees and safeguards. To ‘remain in the game’ alternatives must also be able to ‘compete’ with advanced capitalism and the criminal process by drawing upon interventions grounded in historically immanent potentialities and simultaneously possess an *emancipatory logic* that ‘contradicts’ current institutions and practices of repression by undermining capitalist and punitive rationales. Interventions dealing with troublesome human conducts should be non-punitive and in practice it must be demonstrated that they actually do *replace* a penal sentence of the criminal courts.

The very idea of ‘abolitionist alternatives’ has in recent times, however, been questioned by some radical critics of the criminal process, who have argued that what is required instead are ‘transformative solutions’<sup>3</sup> and ‘zemiological transpraxis’.<sup>4</sup> Those advocating such interstitial (i.e. non-engagement with the Capitalist State) approaches argue that when abolitionists take the penal system ‘as their starting point against which they offer ‘alternatives’, they cannot help but reify that framework’.<sup>5</sup> In other words through their arguments to abolish the existing penal system abolitionists actually reproduce the existing ‘regime of truth’ that prisons and punishment are indispensable. For such thinkers, it is imperative that critics of the criminal process avoid entirely the contaminating logic and language of the penal apparatus of the Capitalist State. Whilst interstitial initiatives (i.e. those which are framed and promoted independently of the

1. For overview of contemporary debates and discussion in penal theory see Scott, D. (ed) (2013) *Why Prison?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Scott, D. (2013) “Visualising an abolitionist real utopia: principles, policy and praxis” in Malloch, M. & Munro, W. (eds) (2013) *Crime, critique and utopia* London: Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Moore, J.M. and Roberts, R. (2016) “What lies beyond criminal justice? developing transformative solutions” in *Justice, Power and Resistance*, Foundation Volume, September 2016.
4. Copson, L. (2016) “Beyond critique: realistic utopianism and alternatives to prison” in *Justice, Power and Resistance*, Foundation Volume, September 2016.
5. *Ibid* p.85.

legal process) are undoubtedly important, this 'clean hands approach' of non-engagement has never been the strategy of penal abolitionists in Britain, nor indeed many places elsewhere. For abolitionists it is crucial they are prepared to get their 'hands dirty' via direct engagement with *penal realities as they are in our present*.<sup>6</sup> It is only via directly confronting the Capitalist State and its penal institutions, such as through contributing to debates in penal policy and practice, that abolitionists can meet their humanitarian impulse to acknowledge human suffering in all its different manifestations. Whatever the dangers, 'abolitionist alternatives' remain absolutely essential for progressive transformations.

It should be made clear at this point that it is not my intention to explore each of the abolitionist alternatives reviewed in this article in great depth or outline all of their strengths and weakness. Rather my hope is that through highlighting a number of feasible, realisable and immanent interventions I illustrate *existing potentialities for progressive radical change* and demonstrate that with sufficient political will, economic and social inequalities and penal colonisation can be dramatically reduced. In other words, my purpose is not to be comprehensive but to simply show that *immediate change is possible*. It should also be recognised that the historical experience of any country or region is unique and that both penal culture and penal change are embedded within given geographic, historical, socio-economic and political contexts.<sup>7</sup> Each nation has its own specific risk and protective factors and what works best in terms of penal reductionism is likely to vary on a country by country basis.<sup>8</sup> This being said, the problems of global hyper-

incarceration and the penal colonisation of social welfare and state detention must be located within wider structural contexts. Effective challenges to penal excess must first address the economic and social inequalities which plague advanced capitalist societies, meaning that radical social policies calling for the redistribution of wealth *must* be promoted on a *global scale*.

Abolitionist 'real utopian' alternatives<sup>9</sup> requires the realisation of at least the following nine interlinked strategic objectives.

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*1. Acknowledgment that social inequalities and penal responses are intimately tied*

It is now more than 100 years since the Dutch pioneer of critical criminology, Willem Adrian Bonger,<sup>10</sup> identified in *Criminalité et Conditions Economiques*<sup>11</sup> that the problems associated with inequalities and 'crime' — and subsequently those of punishment — are intimately connected. Political recognition and action are long overdue. Economic and social inequalities breed anxieties, insecurities and the need for scapegoats<sup>12</sup> and provide fertile ground for the rapid growth of penalisation.<sup>13</sup> Both inequality and the deliberate infliction of pain destroy human health and well being. In the long term rampant social inequalities and penalisation are likely to make society less caring, weaken social bonds, and create more problematic

incidents.<sup>14</sup> In our time of increasing social polarisation, prisons maintain the status quo by disciplining and controlling certain segments of the working class.<sup>15</sup> It is time for politicians all around the globe to stand up and tell the truth about the collateral consequences of advanced capitalism and the absolute failure of the

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6. Sim, J. (2009) *Punishment and Prisons* London: Sage; Scott, D. (2016) *Emancipatory Politics and Praxis* London: EG Press.  
7. Melossi, D. (2011) "Neo-liberalism's elective affinities: penalty, political economy and international relations" pp 45–64 in Melossi, D., Sozzo, M. and Sparks, R. (eds) (2011) *Travels of the Criminal Question* Oxford: Hart Publishing.  
8. Tonry, M. (2007) "Determinants of penal policies" pp 1–48 in Tonry, M. (ed) (2007) *Crime, Punishment and Politics in Comparative Perspective* London: The University of Chicago Press.  
9. Scott (2013 see n.2).  
10. Bonger, W. A. (1905/1916) *Criminality and Economic Conditions* New York: Little, Brown, and Company.  
11. This title is the original French title. The book was published in English in 1916 under the title *Criminality and Economic Conditions*.  
12. Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clark, J. & Roberts, B. (1978) *Policing The Crisis* London: Macmillan.  
13. Hudson, B.A. (1993) *Penal Policy & Social Justice* London: Macmillan.  
14. Christie, N. (2000) *Crime Control as Industry* London: Routledge; Scott, D. (2009) "Punishment" in Hucklesby, A. and Wahidin, A. (eds) *Criminal Justice* Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
15. Mathiesen, T. (1990) *Prison on Trial* London: Sage; Christie (2000) see n.14.

confinement project. There needs to be moves towards the stigmatising of high prison rates and expanding prison populations and every effort made to limit the reach of the punitive rationale. One pragmatic way forward that could help facilitate penal de-escalation is for politicians, their spin doctors and the mainstream media to place much greater emphasis on informing the general public about the *social harms* created by economic and social inequalities. Political strength could then be demonstrated by challenging the dreadful injustices of poverty on both a national and global level rather than blaming and then punishing the poor.

### 2. *Escape from the punitive trap*

The analysis above has indicated how central political culture and the media are in the rise of global hyper-incarceration.<sup>16</sup> We urgently need to find ways in which politicians can escape a punitive trap of their own making. To do so it is essential that in Neo-Liberal/Liberal Market Economies politicians and the media downplay 'crime' and place high profile single issue 'crimes' into appropriate context. This indicates the necessity of a de-politicisation of 'crime' and, especially in majoritarian democracies, a move towards a 'crime' and punishment *armistice* between the main political parties. Although the obligation for initiating this will inevitably fall upon the party in power, moral and political pressure, through concerted lobbying, needs to be directed to all mainstream political parties. Politicians need to recognise that *it is possible* to orchestrate a de-escalation of penalisation if they have the appropriate *political will*. Governments need to be asked to reflect seriously about the mantra *the less punishment, the better*. The general public's view is polycentric and contradictory and the more information people are given about an individual case the greater their understanding and leniency. A well funded public media campaign on the facts about 'crime' and punishment would help in such endeavours. Alongside this, however, the power of the national media itself also

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needs to be weakened. In the first instance this requires steps towards a de-monopolisation of the ownership of the media; the de-nationalisation of media so that journalists make local issues and serving local audiences their main priority; and that investigative and serious journalism in the public interest are the rationale behind news selection rather than the drive for profits through newsworthiness criteria.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. *Generate knowledge from below and fostering moral responsibility*

Much greater emphasis must also be placed on fostering informed public opinion beyond the restrictive remit of mainstream media. Superficial consumption of penal knowledge results in a failure to understand the painful realities of imprisonment and undermines democratic engagement with, and critically scrutiny of, pain delivery.<sup>18</sup> Providing a platform for the voices of prisoners to be heard, whether through public presentations, video or audio recordings, or written testimonies may be one way to achieve this. Showcasing prisoner art and poetry may also provide a more sophisticated insight into prison life, as may independent prison documentaries.<sup>19</sup> This 'knowledge from below' may initiate new in-depth understandings, meanings and empathy alongside providing concrete links between theory and practice. It is also more likely than the pre-packaged news of the national media to produce what Stanley Cohen<sup>20</sup> calls *acknowledgement*. Acknowledgement occurs when someone has knowledge of human suffering; recognises the full reality of the pain and harm this information imparts; and identifies the personal implications of possessing such knowledge, leading ultimately to some form of action that attempts to mitigate or end the injuries inflicted upon their fellow humans. In short it means knowing the truth about the devastation created by advanced capitalism and penal incarceration and doing something about them through interventions rooted in the principles of human rights and social justice.

16. Green, D. (2008) *When Children Kill Children* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

17. Cohen, S. (2001) *States of Denial* Cambridge: Polity Press; Green (2008) see n.16.

18. Brown, M. (2013) "Penal spectatorship and the culture of punishment" in Scott, D. (ed) (2013) *Why Prison?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

19. See for example independent documentaries like *Punishment: A Failed Social Experiment* (Directed by Dale Hallatt. Released in January 2012).

20. Cohen (2001) see n.17, p.290–296.

#### 4. Creation of an alternative public space

To effectively turn the tide on penal excess and growing social polarisation requires morally responsible discussion of human needs and rationale responses to problematic human conduct. It also requires adherence to the principles of democratic accountability. De-democratisation facilitates distance between the perceived law-abiding 'us' and the perceived lawless 'them'.<sup>21</sup> The breakdown in democratic participation in penal politics has eroded social bonds and made the punishment of 'enemies within' appear more palatable.<sup>22</sup> Increased social distance has also made it easier to withdraw welfare support and allow the development of the privatisation of [social] security. Genuine democracy requires unhindered participation, processes of shared decision making and validity for the voices to all concerned in the creation of social norm. To facilitate such a vision of democracy Thomas Mathiesen<sup>23</sup> has talked about the creation of an 'alternative public space' where 'argumentation and principled thinking represents the dominant values'. This alternative public space would require significant time and investment so that it could compete with the mainstream media and allow genuine democratic debate on the key issues of the day, but if successful would be a significant step forward in providing a genuinely legitimate form of governance.

#### 5. Humanising aliens and monsters

Relatively equal societies do not need symbolic punitive acts to shore up fragile social solidarities as they are likely to have a greater sense of a shared moral responsibility for social problems.<sup>24</sup> In such circumstances we do not need to search for suitable enemies but rather to search for *suitable friends*. Greater economic equality on a global scale reduces global migration and increases levels of social justice in countries with weak economies and a low GDP. Rather than conceive the 'non-national stranger' as a potential threat, competitor in the labour

market or service user for relatively scarce welfare services, the encounter with the stranger could be considered an opportunity to learn new insights, share experiences and develop new understandings. This *humanising of aliens* requires us to acknowledge that the arrival of 'strangers' may sometimes benefit all and that 'others', 'enemies' and 'aliens' have the ability to feel pain and suffering in prison and elsewhere. This would also include highlighting the discrepancies between the criminalisation and punishment of 'crimes' of the powerful and the powerless; the problem of conflating 'good' and 'evil' with good and bad people through the construction of a negative, dehumanised one dimensional caricature of the offender situated solely in the nature of her/his 'crime'; and ultimately point to the universality of criminal activity and in the end the similarities between those inside and outside the prison walls. In short we must stress we are all united by a common or shared humanity and must learn to live with the inherent ambivalence of human society. *Humanisation* requires a reassertion of non-punitive values that emphasises the best of humanity — fraternity, friendship, solidarity, trust, love, compassion, hospitality, kindness and forgiveness — and recognition of a fellow human beings innate dignity, whatever their biographies or backgrounds.<sup>25</sup>

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#### 6. Radical reduction of economic and social inequalities

The ideological myth of the *natural order* that economic regulation is beyond the legitimate scope of government needs to be exposed and undermined.<sup>26</sup> Legitimacy can, and should, be derived from interventions which aim to provide a more equitable distribution of the social product and where humans, whatever their backgrounds, are treated fairly and given the opportunity to flourish. Social policy interventions need to strive towards 'abolition democracy' which demands that our present social

21. Christie, N. (1981) Limits to pain Oxford: Martin Robertson; Christie (2000) see n.14.

22. Barker, V. (2013) "Prison and the public sphere: Toward a democratic theory of penal order" in Scott, D. (ed) (2013) Why Prison? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

23. Mathiesen, T. (2001) "Television, public space and prison population" pp 28–34 in Garland, D. (ed) (2001) Mass Imprisonment London: Sage, p.33.

24. Christie (1981) see n.21; Christie (2000) see n.14.

25. Cohen (2001) see n.17; Christie (2000) see n.14; Scott (2013) see n.1.

26. Beckett, K. & Herbert, S. (2010) Banished Oxford: Oxford University Press.

order is radically transformed in accordance with the principles of social justice.<sup>27</sup> Beckett and Herbert<sup>28</sup> have championed a 'harm reduction model' that places social harms at the centre of analysis and recognises that whilst it may be impossible to totally eradicate certain problems, appropriate help and support can transform lived experiences. In this model focus is placed on job creation, full medical care and appropriate forms of welfare. There could also be a concerted attempt to challenge inequalities in public services. This would include the further enhancement of existing commitments to provide free transport, healthcare and education. More could also be done to improve housing and accommodation, including the introduction of rent guarantees. These interventions could dramatically reduce the harm, suffering and dehumanisation associated with wealth and income disparities whilst at the same time contradict to the logic of capitalist accumulation. For Beckett and Herbert<sup>29</sup> there requires recognition that,

*[e]xtreme inequality adversely impacts us all, that poverty stems from structural dynamics that extend well beyond the lone denizen of the street, that security means something more than protection for middle-class whites from the discomforts or urban life, that justice includes the proposition that everyone enjoy a minimal quality of life, and that tolerance of diversity is integral to democracy.*

A number of other social policy interventions could also instantaneously reduce economic inequalities. A very small percentage of the people who live in England and Wales (and indeed most countries in the World) own the vast majority of material wealth. Challenging the legitimacy of such wealth inequalities through progressive taxation

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would entail significant increases in the tax rate for the richest 100,000 people in England and Wales but would dramatically reduce inequalities and provide funding for essential public services. Another straightforward historically immanent policy that could greatly diminish wealth disparities would be to introduce higher inheritance taxes, or, more radically, follow the suggestion of Emile Durkheim and abolish inheritance altogether. There could be the introduction of a maximum wage to ensure that the accumulation of wealth in future generations is more tightly restrained and creating clear boundaries between the top and bottom of the pay structure. The most desirable policies, however, are those that can abolish poverty, such as a universal basic income.<sup>30</sup> A universal basic income would both end poverty and provide a direct challenge to the very logic of capitalist accumulation. Whilst its introduction would likely be strongly objected by capitalists, if successfully implemented its implications would be immense. People could choose to work, or not, and whilst the balance of power would still favour the capitalist, labourers would have considerably more choice than at present.

#### 7. Radical reduction of prison populations

Critical criminologists have long held that we must work both *with* and *against* the capitalist state to challenge and exploit its contradictory nature in the interests of human freedom.<sup>31</sup> One feasible strategy that engages with the capitalist state is the 'attrition model'.<sup>32</sup> Directed at the mechanics of the criminal process, this model can be utilised *right now*.<sup>33</sup>

It entails the following:

*i) Permanent international moratorium on prison building.* International, national and local campaigns, political lobbying and legal cases which challenge the moral, economic and political viability of building more prisons.

27. Davis, A. (2005) *Abolition Democracy* New York: Seven Stories Press, p.72; Davies, J. (2011) *Challenging Governance Theory: From Networks to Hegemony* Bristol: Policy Press.

28. Beckett, K. & Herbert, S. (2010) *Banished* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

29. *Ibid* p.158.

30. Scott (2013) see n.2.

31. Sim, J., Scraton, P. & Gordon, P. (1987) "Crime, the state and critical analysis" pp 1-70 in Scraton, P. (ed) (1987) *Law, Order & The Authoritarian State* Milton Keynes: OUP; Sim (2009) see n.6.

32. Knopp, F.H. (1976) *Instead of Prison California: Critical Resistance*; Oparah, J. (2013) "Why No Prisons?" in Scott, D. (ed) (2013) *Why Prison?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Scott (2016) see n.6.

33. In California where the prison population is currently falling by around 2,000 every month. From July 2011 to July 2012 the California prison rate declined by 16.5 per cent. See McBride, K. (2013) "Why Prison?" in Scott, D. (ed) (2013) *Why Prison?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ii) *Negative reforms*. Enhancing existing practices that protect the shared humanity of those subjected to penalisation through greater legal safeguards and legal rights; strict adherence to due process; and challenging authoritarian occupational cultures.

iii) *Decriminalisation, diversion, and minimal legal intervention*. Keeping people out of prison through interventions like raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility; police warnings; diverting certain vulnerable people from criminal proceedings; and removing legal prohibitions on certain 'victimless crimes'.

iv) *Decarceration*. Deploying pragmatic ways of getting those currently incarcerated out of prison as quickly as possible, such as early release; probation; shorter sentences; home monitoring; amnesties; part time incarceration; and the introduction of waiting lists.

#### 8. Promotion of radical alternatives

Without rational alternatives the penal apparatus of the capitalist state may still appear permanent and inevitable.<sup>34</sup> The word 'alternative' should be used cautiously here to mean practices which are not derived from criminal processes, but with recognition that in everyday life people use many strategies to handle conflicts. People generally try to deal with problems as pragmatically and effectively as possible, and only on relatively rare occasions do they turn to the police and the criminal process. Alternatives are then those interventions which contrast with the practices of state punishment and question the logic of penalisation. To prevent 'net widening'<sup>35</sup> such interventions must avoid co-option by the capitalist state, which today includes devolved and decentralised agencies and networks.<sup>36</sup> Alternatives must therefore always be *in place of* rather than merely *additions to* existing criminal processes and there are a number of non-punitive interventions which could be advocated.

Alternative means of handling of conflicts have also been suggested that engage more constructively with the community rather than the capitalist state.

i) *Turn the system on the head*. The current focus of the penal system is on punishing the offender whereas the victim is largely ignored. One radical alternative would be to turn the system on its head — rather than inflict pain and suffering the aim of interventions would be to provide assistance, help and support for the person who has been harmed.<sup>37</sup> This would ultimately mean providing massive investment in support for victims and redirecting criminal justice system budgets to public social services to help rebuild lives for all. Such 'justice reinvestment' could be used to support women's refuges; shelters for homeless people, drug takers and other troubled people; or drying out centres.

ii) *Reject the penal law*. Abolitionist initiatives have often focussed on the civil law and the concept of tort where *compensation* rather than penalty is the objective of proceedings.<sup>38</sup> Alternative means of handling of conflicts have also been suggested that engage more constructively with the community rather than the capitalist state. Through peace circles, peer juries, and motivational interviewing, for example, community members can become involved in delivering safety and building new social bonds.<sup>39</sup> New relationships can be

developed that build solidarity and trust rather than deploying the penal law which undermines it.

iii) *Provide help and support*. The shift away from punishment can be augmented by a drive towards help and support for all people in society. For children and young adults in trouble greater leisure facilities could be made available, such as youth clubs; adventure playgrounds; and educational programmes in music and art. Adult lawbreakers could be helped with community based employment and job skills training.

iv) *Intentional and therapeutic communities*. The vast majority of people who break the criminal law are not dangerous and should not be considered as such. There are some people who may, however, benefit from a change of context and environment.

34. de Haan, W. (1990) *The Politics Of Redress* London: Unwin Hyman.

35. Cohen, S. (1985) *Visions of Social Control* Cambridge: Polity.

36. Davies (2011) see n.27.

37. Mathiesen, T. and Hjemdal, O.K. (2016) "A new look at victim and offender – an abolitionist approach" *Justice, Power and Resistance*, Foundation Volume, September 2016.

38. Scott (2013) see n.2.

39. Oparah (2013) see n.32.

One idea would be to develop 'intentional communities' where wrongdoers — and perhaps their families if they so wished — could be relocated to small villages in sparsely populated areas, such as in the northern parts of Scotland. Here they could learn new skills, develop more pro-social attitudes and look to rebuild their lives. Such an intentional community for law breakers could also become a form of 'sanctuary' where serious offenders could be placed in quarantine to allow for time to cool off; establish grounds for negotiations; and attempt to deliver what might be considered as acceptable solutions. Additionally the idea of developing an 'intentional' or new community could also be available for less serious harms. As a place where people live and share problems together, it could become an option for people with family difficulties. Residential family projects, where each family has a 'family worker' could follow a similar model. Some people embroiled within the penal law would undoubtedly benefit from therapeutic interventions and those people who have mental health problem, substance usage problems or require other forms of medical interventions could be offered effective voluntary non-custodial treatments and options to participate in alternative 'non-penal' therapeutic communities.<sup>40</sup>

#### 9. Building grass roots activism and abolitionist praxis

The mobilisation of grass roots activists and abolitionist social movements is necessary for any sustained radical transformation of current penal and social realities. In England and Wales the radical penal lobby over the last forty years has included a diverse range of organisations including, *Radical Alternatives to Prison*, *Women in Prison*, *INQUEST* and *No Prison Manchester*. The publications and radical lobbying of *INQUEST* on deaths in custody and the campaigns by members of *Women in Prison* on the experiences of incarcerated women and girls in the United Kingdom have delivered clear and principled critiques of penal incarceration and helped facilitate progressive humanitarian change. Such important interventions noted, however, in recent times the connections between abolitionist thought and political practice have been weak in England and Wales. *Radical Alternatives to Prison* [RAP], which operated from

1970 until the mid-1980s, was unique in that it aimed to challenge both economic inequalities and penal colonisation. Its key aim was to present a 'fundamental critique of the existing economic and political order and the manner in which we chose to define and correct deviant behaviour'.<sup>41</sup> RAP both visualised and supported radical alternatives to handling social and individual problems, especially in its early days, and advocated concrete 'negative reforms' of penal incarceration grounded on the principles of human rights, especially in its later days. Contra its critics,<sup>42</sup> the research, campaigns and activism of RAP members provided an essential challenge to the capitalist states exclusive role in defining 'penal truth' and a vehicle for collective mobilisation. Although in the last three decades abolitionist social movements in England and Wales have faltered,<sup>43</sup> lessons can be learnt from the past and contemporary abolitionist social movements like *Critical Resistance* in the USA.<sup>44</sup> *Critical Resistance* grounds its opposition to penal incarceration in coalition politics promoting anti-violence, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and black and women's liberation. Their activism and community interventions offer testimony of how global hyper-incarceration is *not justified in their name*. Abolitionist social movements can help foster a *politics of inclusion* based on shared humanity and highlight the abnormality of prison and the dehumanising context of poverty and social inequalities. Most significantly of all, abolitionist praxis is essential in the creation of an *alternative power base* that can be utilised to challenge the role, function and legitimacy of the penal apparatus of the capitalist state and the unequal society it upholds.

An 'abolitionist real utopia'<sup>45</sup> requires immediate direct policy interventions alongside the fostering of community based social movements that can join forces in struggles for freedom and recognition of human dignity for all. Anti-prison activists and theorists must continue to aspire to live in, and fight for, a *world without prisons* alongside advocating non-punitive interventions rooted in immanent possibilities that can start to roll back the penal colonisation of the life world. In the long term, of course, the best way to protect and guarantee the safety and security of citizens is to ensure that there is a socially just, democratic and accountable distribution of the social product. Though this seems some way off, the time to act is *now*.

40. Scott (2016) see n.6.

41. Ryan, M. (1978) *The Acceptable Pressure Group Aldershot*: Ashgate, p.2.

42. See Copson (2016) see n.4.

43. On the 13th September 2012, however, a new 'Coalition Against Penal Excess' was formed in London, England that developed in an abolitionist direction. It is now called the "Reclaim Justice Network".

44. Oparah (2013) see n.32.

45. Scott (2013) see n.2.