

## Challenges and Pitfalls of Reforms

What is recuperative (mainstreaming)? – putting a legitimizing face on existing harmful system vs what is liberatory? – leading us towards more justice and freedom

*Pitfalls of Reforms Outlined by Dean Spade*

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNKTX6RqTLM>)

Is a particular tactic or reform recuperative? Questions that Dean Spade asks to try to assess:

1. Does it provide material relief?
2. Does it leave out an especially marginalized group (people with criminal records, the undocumented, etc...)?
3. Does it legitimize or expand a system we are trying to dismantle?
4. Does it mobilize most affected for ongoing struggle (i.e. Is this building power?)

Don't want reforms:

1. That provide no material relief/no reduction in harm
2. Where relief only reaches least marginalized
3. That offer window dressing/legitimization of harmful systems and institutions
4. That tinker, do not reach root causes
5. That expand harmful systems
6. That divides into deserving/undeserving people

Peter Gelderloos – Is it liberatory? Dean Spade relies on Peter Gelderloos's work in "*The Failure of Non Violence, How Nonviolence Protects the State.*"

1. Does it seize space in which new social relations can be enacted?
2. Does it spread awareness of its ideas (participatory not passive)
3. Does it have elite support? [if it does, it's probably not liberatory]
4. Does it achieve any concrete gains to improve lives?

Erica Meiners's questions:

1. Who benefits from this campaign, initiative, reform, form of resistance? Who doesn't, and why?
2. What are the logics, languages, and "commonsense" discourses that initiatives validate and/or reinforce? Are these logics liberatory or punitive?
3. Who is working on this initiative? Who is not? Why us? Why now?
4. Is this something that we, or others, will be organizing to undo in five years because it is used to cage or dehumanize people?

## ABOLITION AS PRAXIS

“The purpose of abolition is to expose and defeat all the relationships and policies that make the United States the world’s top cop, warmonger, and jailer...Abolition is a movement to end systemic violence, including the interpersonal vulnerabilities and displacements that keep the system going. In other words, the goal is to change how we interact with each other and the planet by putting people before profits, welfare before warfare, and life over death.” – Ruthie Gilmore

“Big problems require big solutions. Nothing happens all at once; big answers are the painstaking accumulation of smaller achievements. But dividing a problem into pieces in order to solve the whole thing is altogether different from defining a problem solely in terms of the bits that seem easiest to fix. In the first instance, the remedy for each piece must develop in relation to its effect on actual or possible remedies for the other pieces. The other way is to solve a small part without considering whether the outcome strengthens or weakens the big problem’s hold on the world...The distinction sketched out above is the difference between reformist reform – tweak Armageddon – and non-reformist reform – deliberate change that does not create more obstacles in the larger struggle.” Ruthie Gilmore