No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future

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Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which critical reflection, a model for critical incident debrief within social work, is an act of abolition pedagogy and social work which confounds settler colonialism and carceral logics which pervade this profession as well as educational/learning environments. Theoretically grounded in the abolition thinking of Angela Davis and Mariane Kaba, this paper argues that opportunities to unpack binaries and hidden assumptions through collective learning are opportunities to unpack the ways in which Foucault's Panopticon Effect is unwittingly internalised and reproduced within 'helping' professions and at the micro level. In addition, an intersectional, critical autoethnographic exploration of a personal experience in a critical reflection group is interwoven throughout. I contend that the integration of these 'selves' serves as a reminder that use of self in its most authentic form has the potential to challenge and confound the constructed separation between personal and professional that attempts to depoliticise all realms of our lives and relegate our primary duties to that of working and consuming. As a site of potential transformation and liberation, critical reflection's alignment with abolition stands in direct contrast to neoliberal educational structures often focused on individualism, credentials, surface learning, and brevity. Finally, CRoP provides a site for abolition social work and pedagogy to take root in its capacity to foster an unrestrained imagination.

Key Words

abolition, critical reflection, social work education, settler colonialism, pedagogy

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

1 | P a g e

Introduction – A Rhyzomatic Reading of Future Pathways and Current Learnings

The following paper is an examination of the Critical Reflection of Practice (CRoP) as a necessary site of abolition pedagogy and social work, whose radical potential remains rooted in the present but also provides space to engage in collective critical imagination (hooks, 1994) I begin with an overview of this analysis' theoretical grounding in abolition (Davis, et al. 2016; Kaba, 2021) intersectional feminism, and Black feminist thought (hooks 1988; hooks, 1994; Davis, 2016) as a mechanism to highlight the ways in which oppression and resistance are interwoven at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of interactions and relationships between people and between communities and the state. Subsequent sections work to historically situate carceral logic within settler colonial educational systems and highlight the ways in which social work's foundations reflected and reinforced this retributive approach to 'good citizenship.' In addition, an exploration of Critical Reflection of Practice (Fook and Gardiner, 2007; Fook, 2016; Béres and Fook, 2020), as a site of abolition social work is explored. This paper ends with concluding thoughts that open space for affective solidarity (Zembylas, 2021) as a necessary tool for critical reflection and social work practice rooted in anti-racism and decolonisation.

I make mention of rhizomatic pathways in the introductory subheading to provide a directional signpost when it comes to the ways in which I have made meaning throughout this work. Additionally, subheadings used throughout this paper are identifying landmarks meant to orient the reader through my own learning process within critical reflection of practice. In brief, my understanding of rhizomatic pathways is based on Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the rhizome as multiplicities that provide a springboard from which to formulate and encounter ontological processes not based on either/or binaries or existing in opposition or comparison to something else. Much like a rhizome extends in divergent and intersecting directions, my hope is that ongoing engagement with the tensions within and between social work education, critical reflection, and abolition will catalyse emergent ways of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and being within the realm of social work in settler colonial capitalism. Briefly, I will offer up an explanation of my social locations to situate from where my own learning and abolition framework

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

2 | P a g e

emerged. I identify as a middle-class, cisgendered woman and White settler in a long-term common-law heterosexual relationship. I'm a mature student and parent of two young children and my own approach to my learning has been one of an ever-increasing humility and, since becoming a parent, a simultaneous hope and fear for the future that faces my children. Further, re-engaging with public school following my older child's entry into kindergarten has been its own exercise in critical thought (and honestly, criticism) when it comes to day-to-day classroom activities and who and what get labelled as 'good.'

Finally, I employ personal anecdotes throughout to not only highlight that the personal is political (hooks, 1988) but also to show up in this paper not as an academic persona committed to reifying specific ideals concerning 'goodness' but as myself. My approach to abolition is not relegated to 'higher learning,' but my work in my community, being a neighbour, parenting, the ways in which I approach my other profession as a doula. In addition, critical empathy (Zembylas, 2021) demands continually identifying the privilege I hold and the ways in which I benefit from settler colonial capitalism, while participating in concrete action rooted in equity. This use of self in a holistic manner challenges what Davis calls "insidious capitalist individualism" (2016), a discourse which relies on the severing of self: we have our work self, our school self, our social self, our home self, our internal self. I contend that the integration of these 'selves' serves as a reminder that use of self in its most authentic form has the potential to challenge and confound the constructed separation between personal and professional that attempts to depoliticise all realms of our lives and relegate our primary duties to that of working and consuming.

Theoretical Grounding

Abolition 101

The contemporary understanding of abolition is that it is anti-prison. Certainly, the goal to abolish prisons is a central tenant of this political project. However, its emergence is one that goes back to the nineteenth century United States abolition movement which demanded an end to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In brief, DuBois asserted that to abolish slavery in the fullest sense necessitated new democratic institutions (Davis, 2016) which re-imagined "racialised and

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

3 | P a g e

propertied notions of U.S. citizenship" (Zembylas, 2021, p.123), but ultimately went unfulfilled as a social and economic vision. What emerged in the American context was segregated education, economic and political disenfranchisement, Jim Crow laws, over- and under-policing racialised communities, and mass incarceration (Davis, 2016). Further, more recent prison abolition movements, in their enactment of an ethics of communal care, have stemmed from the activism of queer and trans people of colour, who have historically and to this day "been criminalised for existing and persevering" (Dozono, 2022, p.419).

While the impulse towards Canadian exceptionalism can be a strong one, it's essential to note that Canada also practised slavery; that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were established to police Indigenous and racialised bodies as the Canadian nation-state continued to expand via extractive capitalism; that land theft, genocide, and the bad faith enactment of nation-to-nation treaties with Indigenous nations continues to be played out today (Fortier and Wong, 2021). The Canadian carceral logic in which difference is met with punishment and isolation (Kaba, 2021; Dozono, 2022) is comparable to the United States: deletion of Indigenous histories and languages; sanctioned, policed dispossession of territory; systematic cultural genocide and intergenerational trauma wrought by residential schools at the hands of state and church; the and the disproportionate rates of incarceration amongst Black and Indigenous communities. What remains exceptional with regards to the Canadian mythology is the erasure and absences within it; the steadfast insistence that settler colonialism is 'over' and that this is a nation of peacekeepers (Fortier and Wong, 2019). My own confrontation with this ahistoricism and my complicity within this structure of oppression involves learning about residential schools by chance in my final year of high school in an optional history class. I selected a book at random to complete a review on and felt puzzled and angry that at 18, this was the first time I had even heard of residential schools. Why had this act of genocide for which multiple institutions were complicit never been covered in required classes? Why had I learned about residential schools by chance? Considering the last residential school closed when I was 12, why was this being taught as history?

Ultimately, abolition is the belief that no one is disposable. We do ourselves a disservice when we continue to uphold carceral logics that necessitate conformity and punishment, but we also do violence to ourselves when we divest from full and organic expression of our identities and

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

engagement with community (Davis, 2016; Zembylas, 2021; Kaba, 2021). This belief is, however, inextricably interwoven with organising, praxis, and action or "abolitionist obligation," which Zembylas (2021) defines as "a relentless labor of action that is morally committed to being against all forms of dehumanisation, oppression, and colonialism" (p.125). Abolition confronts the very ideals which prop up and perpetuate settler colonialism and capitalism: that there are 'good' and 'bad' people, that confinement and isolation of people who are 'disruptive' or 'unproductive' is an appropriate and justified response. Indeed, in a settler colonial society, one's sense of normalcy and perceived safety rests on binaries. I say this precisely because a common response when discussing abolition is one which assumes that if there are no prisons, then there is nothing, and 'nothing' is a metaphor for chaos (Love, 2019). Instead, what is proposed through abolition is an act of liberatory and critical imagination that shatters this false dichotomy (Dozono, 2021) and offers an unrestrained imagination which offers an antidote to the tragedy and falsehood of an assumed inevitability. Abolition—of prisons, within pedagogy, of visions for democracy—interrogates what manner of state-sanctioned institutionalised violence has become discursively invisible, through generations of repetition and indoctrination. Operating through the lens of abolition examines the why which precipitated the harm, it is not a refutation of accountability (Kaba, 2021). Abolition is solidarity and compassion in its creation of space for proactive interventions, community building, and radial imagination (hooks, 1994).

Time Outs: Considering Panoptic Surveillance and Compliance in Education

Prior to situating the carceral logic that pervades settler colonial endeavours within education and social work, I start this section by posing uncomfortable questions I sit with as a cisgender, heterosexual, white settler, a social worker, a student, and a parent. How do we punish and police difference in all areas of our lives? What daily violence is enacted through isolation: through 'time outs' and attendance monitoring, through workplace quotas, through demands to comply and conform to neurotypical behaviour, through dehumanised long-term care facilities, through ableism, through structural racism embedded in curriculum at all levels? What role has education at all levels played in this indoctrination and normalisation of state-sanctioned violence? What role has social work played in the enactment and reproduction of this state-sanctioned violence against racialised and/or bodies living in poverty due to structural barriers to accessing support? And a

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

question which will be explored in the subsequent section, how can engagement in critical reflection of practice serve as an act of abolition within social workspaces?

A helpful entry point to engagement with these questions is Foucault's Panopticon Effect (Foucault, 1995). Through his expansion of the Panopticon—originally conceived of by Bentham as a central tower seen in prisons or factories through which a supervisor observes all but is never seen—Foucault highlights power is invisible and omnipresent; we are, each of us, under constant surveillance and self-surveillance. Within this disciplinary society, we exist within a spectrum of submission and compliance that remains largely unconscious, so effective is this set of 'musts and shoulds.' Within a settler colonial disciplinary society, carceral logic operates at the internalised, discursive level since disobedience or deviation are punished through a spectrum of alienations, from literal imprisonment to playground social exclusion. This Panopticon Effect, in its invisibility, is effective in its diffusion and discursive repetition, thereby modelling, an innate, lifelong impulse towards self-censorship. I think back to my time in high school: I never knew or spoke with my Vice-Principal, but I feared her and imposed a system of behaviour modification that relied on compliance with rules both implicit and explicit. Visibility was not a helpful path if an encounter was to be avoided (Foucault, 1995). I make these points not to crystallise an Orwellian 'Big Brother' but highlight the ways in which compliance, complicity, and self-surveillance are imposed and internalised to varying degrees from a young age.

Foucault goes on to highlight that surveillance and discipline accompanied early capitalist endeavours. Necessary to these endeavours, as well, is an accessible public education system that requires a literal Panopticon and Panopticon Effect. There is a Principal, a school social worker, and administrators; there is also a punitive system that enforces a standard, highly structured day largely devoid of choice that places children in a learning system that is based on discursive repetition of principles that also prepares them for the highly structured, alienated labour of workplaces within late-stage capitalism. From the earliest moments, there is a carceral system in which students are labelled according to goodness or badness, which primarily hinges on their willingness or capacity to conform to the overt and covert regulations within this structure (LeMaster and Mapes, 2020).

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

6 | P a g e

That said, I approach an overreliance on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* with caution. Certainly, we can also complicate a binary reading of education as either liberatory or punitive. My own experiences have been nuanced combinations of both. Indeed, the community fostered through critical reflection of practice speaks to the ways in which learning as both process and practice exists within a spectrum that is not an either/or and can be a liminal space of critique: we simultaneously exist within and are critical of structures and institutions imbued with power by the liberal nation-state. Of particular use here is a return to the rhizome not as a reproduction of what is known but rather a map of entirely new terrain. In acknowledging the potential for multiplicity within the learning process, there is a radical shift in which each point of rhizomatic learning is connected to various other points. Moreover, a map affords the ontological space for "constant modification" within individual, group, and social spheres. "The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged "competence" and affords opportunity for moments of transcendence and experimentation, "in contact with the real" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.13).

Education & Social Work: Exercises in Erasure, Social Control, and Coercion

While social work is certainly a helping profession, I argue it is rooted in an ideal of goodness that is founded in upper-class white femininity. A necessary facet of settler colonial nation-building in Canada, both settlement houses and charitable organisation societies relied on a notion of self-reliance that was 'boot strappy' in its efforts to mould and model what productive citizenship looked like in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In other words, assimilation into a racialised hierarchy which upheld Anglo-Saxon norms as the ideal were and continue to be reinforced within social work's labour of 'extraction' operating under the guise of helping (Fortier and Wong, 2019).

More recent scholarship in Canada and the United States draws attention to the ways in which social work is embedded within and possesses the radical potential to confound carceral pipelines. In their work analysing the ways in which child protection, immigration, and criminal systems are mutually reinforcing, Bergen and Abji's case analysis of a noncitizen foster child's experience in Halifax, Nova Scotia provides a salient critique of the ways in which social workers are embedded

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

within carceral pipelines logics, while also presenting pathways to transformative justice and anti-carceral feminisms. Throughout this analysis, the authors highlight that social work can, in the Canadian context, replicate and reinforce existing punitive structures. From this perspective, carceral logics refers "…to presuppositions that frame marginalised communities as threats to the social order rather than adopting a systemic analysis of the structural barriers experienced by such communities" (Bergen and Abji, 2020, p.34). Purported responses and state-sanctioned solutions are punitive and result in ongoing surveillance and detention, from increased policing in systemically marginalised communities to deportation (Beck, Ohmar, and Warner, 2012; Boyd, Fast, and Small, 2016; Whalley and Hackett, 2017; Willison and O'Brien, 2017).

I further contend that the disassociation and alienation from self that 'professionalism' often demands, especially in helping professions like social work, is itself an act of neoliberal, state-sanctioned violence for which we are prepared via early educational experiences which stress conformity over critical thought (hooks, 1994) and cacophonous, collective learning. Through this alienation and/or disassociation, we can move through the days without critically interrogating our complicity with or replication of state-sanctioned violence, within a profession that can be draining and replete with moral grey areas. This is not meant to be an accusation; rather, this critical engagement with the ways in which each of us are implicated within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 1988) is an acknowledgement that we exist along a spectrum of oppression and domination, but we do not exist in isolation; each of us is part of communities filled with possibility and relational connection. From this perspective, critical reflection also has the potential to serve as an abolition-based affective practice that disrupts the Panopticon Effect. Further, this disruption can assist in catalysing the emergence of new routines and possibilities can disrupt the status quo in a manner that reorients who is centred in the creation of new affective communities and economies (Zembylas, 2021).

Within the macro-level context of neoliberalism, there is an opportunity for critical reflection and curiosity to examine the ways in which social services are embedded within, normalise, and uphold prison systems, immigration detention, and colonial borders. And yet, it is social workers who possess "the skills of facilitating and holding space for groups to heal, learn, and grow together are one that social work can offer (Beck, Ohmar, & Warner, 2012 cited by Bergen and Abji, 2020, p.

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

42). It is within this dissonance of multiple, co-existing truths—to be both embedded within systems which can perpetuate interpersonal and structural violence while also critiquing said structures—that the possibility for radical, unrestrained imagination (Kaba, 2021) provides a hopeful space to consider the possibility of critical reflection of practice as a mechanism to cultivate care and compassion.

"Don't Judge Me": CRoP, Carceral States, Radical Pedagogy, Abolition in Deed and Word

This first portion of this paper is firmly rooted in a critical lens. This lens, I should note, is also loving. By taking accountability and engaging in reconciliatory truth telling, my hope is to begin to embody a model of accountability that is not punitive but relational (Fortier and Wong, 2019; Kaba, 2021). This subsequent portion is an autoethnographic account of my first foray into critical reflection-based group work, which was part of a required course in the second year of my MSW. At the beginning of this course, each student wrote a critical incident, which could be personal or professional but was an experience that had 'stuck' with us or that we continue to think about. There were no requirements about when the incident happened, but our written descriptions served as 'data' for this process and we were not meant to analyse the 'whys' informing the shape this incident took (Fook and Gardiner, 2007). Further, the incident could be a positive, negative, or ambiguous memory. We were then placed in assigned groups of six students and, over the course of seven weeks, met in our groups for 60-75 minutes to critically reflect on each incident. When I think of these weeks spent as a group, the words that come to mind are nurturing, vulnerable, challenging, safe, equitable. It should also be acknowledged that the group I was part of was homogenous in terms of social location, which I am certain assisted in the sense of safety that pervaded it but may have initially created an impulse to not push one another towards critique: each member was cisgendered, heterosexual, white women, ranging from middle to upper-middle class. While there was heterogeneity in terms of age and family structure, by and large, this was a group of relative 'sameness' when it came to intersectional identities.

As a theory-informed practice, critical reflection is an opportunity for pause not afforded in most contemporary social service settings. Within each critical incident reflection, there are five practice

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

theories which provided structure to help guide these conversations. Further, there are three stages within CRoP: stage one, the Ma (a pause), and stage two. Each of the theories or elements that comprise CRoP provides opportunities to ask questions through various lenses which can catalyse new awareness and ultimately shift practice towards a more social justice orientation. In summary, this model of critical reflection requires an unsettling examination of

> …deeply hidden assumptions in order to create better guidelines for action and so improve professional practice and develop a more ethical and compassionate stance. It is informed by a reflexive awareness of how the whole self influences knowledge-making and behaviour by an appreciation of the link between language and power, an understanding of how personal experience is also social and political, and how individual beliefs can be changed in order to contribute to socially just change (Béres & Fook, 2020, p. 3).

The theories which encompass CRoP are reflective practice, reflexivity, post-structural thinking, critical perspectives/critical race theory (CRT), and spirituality. While some CRoP groups may reach consensus on order of questions, the group I was part of used a fluid, conversational approach that was akin to a layering process. Rather than asking 'what's the next question,' we focused on a group norm that returned to the question of how we wanted to feel together. That said, stage one always concludes with a discussion of spirituality which may be faith-based, but also could focus on meaning making and hope. My group elected to end stage two with the spirituality-informed question, "What brings you hope about your incident? What is the phrase you're taking away?" Ultimately, critical reflection of practice is an opportunity to learn directly from experience in community with colleagues. This process further asks us to consider the micro, mezzo, and macro levels that influenced our actions, assumptions and biases, perspectives, the incident itself, and the after (Fook and Gardiner, 2007; Fook, 2016; Béres and Fook, 2020).

I would argue that critical reflection, with its particular focus on social justice and interconnection, learning collectively from experience and taking steps towards an ever-more affirming and equitable practice, is abolition social work and pedagogy in action. This experience was a profound shift away from linear, manualised models of social support that are reflective of neurotypical and colonial white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 1988). As each week passed, the affective

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

10 | P a g e

and intellectual openness the process demanded was not lost on me (Béres, 2016). Within social work as a profession, I would argue that it is a much more accepted and straightforward process to identify, critique, and potentially remedy an egregious act of violence or barrier to access. Harder still—and precisely what critical reflection and abolition demand—is the unsettling and examination of the ways in which seemingly small quotidian actions and choices may perpetuate harm, entrench barriers, or uphold structures of oppression (Fortier and Wong, 2019).

In their analysis of abolition-based narrative medicine, Varman et al. (2022) highlight a parallel process for medical students:

> Conscious expansion acknowledges the necessity of crystallising the environment surrounding the text. It is only after the reader becomes aware of their own positionality in reading that they can collapse the distance floating warily between themselves and the text/patient. This collapse might bring the form and content of the text too close for comfort, but discomfort is precisely what stimulates self-interrogation and action (e10).

My own discomfort regarding my critical incident along with the uncovering of my own assumptions and biases were unsettling but necessary moments of growth. I shared an incident that was in fact a series of conversations between myself, a supervisor, and a student I was supporting in a student services role several years ago. The distressing and ambiguous manner in which the incident concluded is something I've continued to play out for years and wonder how the various individuals have processed what occurred. At times, the content of the incident did feel "too close for comfort" but it was this unsettling of assumptions (Béres, 2016) which planted the seeds for growth and shifts in perspective.

The critical reflection process was also one of mutual aid and deep learning. Further, I was able to access a wellspring of self-compassion I did not know I possessed. I'm grateful to my group for asking me challenging questions that were encouraging rather than punitive but did catalyse introspection—typically occurring on long bike rides to and from my placement—requiring an examination of how I wanted people to see me, the binaries I directed towards myself regarding goodness and perfectionism, the ways in which acculturation in a racist society had led to internalised binaries, what self-determination and 'meeting someone where they are at' really

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

11 | P a g e

means, as well as power structures between myself and authority figures and service users. The process of sharing this incident and then being posed critically reflective questions was like shaking up a snow globe: the implicit was made explicit (Fook and Gardiner, 2007) and thoughts were sometimes hard to parse apart before the storm settled and vision was restored. In other words, critical reflection necessitated that I delve into the ways in which I was both subject to and arbiter of the Panopticon Effect (Foucault, 1995) in my quotidian existence. This process, and my fellow group members, also gave me the gift of a one-sentence reminder I hope to employ throughout my life as I make mistakes, unlearn, and face challenges: I did my best.

Further, the incorporation of critical race theory in this ongoing at of reflection in community is vital in addressing the ways in which social work's history and contemporary practices have reinforced, intentionally or not, racialised and classist hierarchies informed by hegemonic discourses of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism. This required my own letting go of the questions I 'should' be asking or the answers I needed to give to sound competent. Rather, as Béres (2016) suggests, a willingness to be present through a validating process that was also vulnerable necessitated a letting go of dogma which stands in direct contradiction in an academic setting that is ruled by highly subjective, quantifiable grades that are meant to reflect cumulative learning.

In so doing, critically reflecting through critical perspectives, reflexivity, and post-structural thinking afforded me personally potent moments to tease apart the ways in which power is not only a social construct, but that denying its presence is a denial of the ways in which practitioners may be complicit in upholding ableism, classism, colonialism, racism, and sexism. An erasure of this nature is not only oppressive, but also a denial of the power contained within a critically-minded collective not satisfied with 'the way things are.' Within my own incident, there were racialised dynamics involved as well as gender-based discrimination. Had I not collectively engaged with these questions regarding intersectional domination and resistance, I would have disavowed my own agency and the possibility for new paths of action (Vinsky & Prevatt-Hyles, 2022). Further, there is no end point or destination for this critical reflection. As the course concluded I found myself at a place that allowed for self-compassion and burgeoning comfort with alternative possibilities for my own practice that challenged the status quo and centred abolition

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

as a lifelong, community-based process (LeMaster and Mapes, 2020). I worked hard to identify the ways in which I had applied a carceral logic and binary thinking to my actions in a manner that was continued to cause me pain. Both critical reflection and abolition ask us how we might engage in a praxis of social work and citizenship that does not exclude, blame, isolate, or judge even in moments of harm and hardship. Both political projects and modes of learning ask how we might engage and centre the most marginalised in a manner that imagines alternatives to carceral logics and reduction of identities to consumer and worker.

Stated earlier, both abolition and critical reflection of practice are moments in which we engage in communal reflexivity that interrogates not only what sanctioned structures perpetuate harm, but also requires us to examine the ways in which we may be, wittingly or not, complicit with this harm. Within neoliberal structures of social services that prioritise quantifiable efficiency and brevity, being able to look inward in a manner that is at once accountable and self-compassionate is no easy feat. Finally, both political projects and structures for reflection entail a justice orientation that catalyses action, experimentation, and reflection. While this spiral-like process may not be quick or straightforward, envisioning a 'what if' that is radically inclusive could never be a linear step-by-step set of instructions.

Critical reflection of practice provides a model and mechanism to also interrogate what standard (and frankly inadequate) notions of 'safety' in critical reflection looks like in a university and workplace setting. I highlight here the title of this section begins with the phrase "Please don't judge me." I said these words prior to sharing my incident and underscore the subtext which pervades this phrase: there was a fear of exclusion, of being viewed as inadequate or ill-equipped to be a social worker by my peers. This is yet another illustration of the ways in which I came to realise that my capacity to deconstruct binaries in a class setting did not translate to critical reflection in a group setting regarding my own assumptions. Years of education and labour informed by a carceral logic (LeMaster and Mapes, 2020) that privileged neutrality and objectivity did not instil an initial ease or comfort with the vulnerability and ambiguity that pervades CRoP (Fook and Askeland, 2007).

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

13 | P a g e

As fraught sites of struggle, reflection, *and* potential, abolition social work and critical reflection provide critical yet optimistic frameworks which can fuel action that identifies, confronts, and disrupts intersectional dispossessions, both epistemological and material, within neoliberal universities (Dozono, 2022):

> to think the university through an abolitionist mode entail approaching our study of and relationship to such institutions through a combination of social critique and a willingness to struggle to think and build the impossible. We have chosen this name, a name that positions the university as the object of abolition, in an effort to short-circuit the university's claims of *a priori* goodness, as a way of making the university newly available for thinking. (Boggs et al., 2019, p. 3–4).

In other words, this process's suggestion that we transform our relationship to when, how, and with whom we learn is also a moment of possibility and growth in which each individual's thoughts are challenged and, one hopes, pushed to new realms (Dozono, 2022). By opening up critical reflection, we begin to also open up a willingness, as Boggs et al. (2019) suggests above, to grapple with 'the impossible.'

From our earliest days, statements of "That's impossible" can serve to stifle imagination and silence debate. What if critical reflection or practice, abolition pedagogy, and social work create new space for unrestrained imagination (Kaba, 2021)? What if there was an acknowledgement that a profession rooted in advocacy, social justice, and self-determination must engage with its own carceral logic, its origins, and the societal conditions within which social work is enmeshed that continue to perpetuate harm? These are neither easy questions, nor are they meant to be accusatory. Rather, they are questions which are ongoing and centre community. No one is disposable and we carry within us myriad stories. What if, from our earliest moments, space was made not for conformity, compliance, 'right' and 'good,' but radical compassion that centred an inherent right to connection, community, and imagination?

Concluding Thoughts and Future Pathways: The Potential of Affective Solidarity

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

14 | P a g e

In many ways, this paper began as a thought experiment that provided a much-needed opportunity for imagination. Rooted in reproductive justice and intersectional feminism—specifically, Black feminist thought (hooks, 1988; hooks, 1994; Davis, 2016)—and attempting to situate education and social work through a decolonial lens that acknowledges the ways in which the Panopticon Effect (Foucault, 1995), pervades this ostensibly neutral institutions of citizenship and social control, this paper also marks the beginning of my social work practice. In essence, I am working through questions of how do I want to show up for individuals and communities? What do I need in terms of community? On a material level, how can 'critical reflection of practice moments' be consensually applied to interactions with service users and colleagues daily?

These questions are not rhetorical nor are they meant to incite a weightiness that negates action. Rather, they are questions informed by the macro level which can catalyse mezzo- and micro-level reflexivity and action. Further, these are the questions that provide me with opportunities for unrestrained imagination (Kaba, 2021) and remind me that change is longitudinal, and it is rooted in accountability that expands rather than contracts, and refuses binaries enforced by carceral logic and capitalism. While this refusal may feel risky, abolition provides radical, organic alternatives (not reforms) that recenter and reimagine what voices are centred, what 'justice' means, and when and where critical reflection occurs. Both social work and abolition emerged as professions and political projects respectively within nineteenth-century settler colonial expansion. And yet, both abolition and social work (particularly within the lens of critical reflection of practice) are opportunities to engage in the messy, living process of affirming care that are dialectical and relational, rather than hierarchical and alienating.

Freedom is a constant struggle (Davis, 2016). Freedom is not a matter of accumulation but rather a freedom to be holistically in community with others. Freedom is accountability within an abolition social work that acknowledges that we carry stories from ancestors and that we are, no matter what late-stage capitalism tells us, more than isolated consumers and labourers: we are changed through relationships, just as we change from collective learning and critical reflection. We are fully formed, nuanced, messy, interconnected constellations whose power lies in a collective affective solidary (Zembylas, 2021) and WEB DuBois's 'joyful noise' (Davis, 2016) that requires lifelong, critical, compassionate curiosity. Freedom is a desire and capacity to resist

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

15 | P a g e

surveillance and judgement of service users in favour of a person-centred support. In summary, freedom is the willingness to be "…transformed in the service of the work [and] be willing to be transformed in the service of the work and the struggle" (Kaba, 2021, p.192).

Pirie: No One is Disposable – Abolition Pedagogy & Social Work Future.

16 | P a g e

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17 | P a g e

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18 | P a g e

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19 | P a g e