

ICE Disgusts us.



The Border Power is evil.

Now what?

tactics and analyses, which will require arguments. It will be unpleasant to argue with our fellow people of conscience. (We have pressed the point here that any strategies that rely on electing Democrats or expecting politicians to do the right thing are strategies that will fail. We know some people will disagree. It gives us no joy to say they're wrong. This is one of many things we will have to argue about. While it's important to not just argue, and to have our disputes with fellow people of conscience in a principled way, we should be on guard against calls to not to argue, calls to just agree with a lowest common denominator approach. Such calls are obstacles to the struggle for justice.) This is all to say, our big-heartedness and disgust alone are not enough to win. But we can only win if we keep our big-heartedness and our disgust, and if we convince others to do the same. Our disgust is correct – our moral compass is accurate – and an important starting point.

Thank you for reading this. If you'd like an electronic copy of this text, you can find it at <https://tinypurl.com/borderpower>. That link includes a copy of a printable PDF of this, and a file with just the text. Thoughts from comrades welcome at crashcourse666@gmail.com.

The cover of this pamphlet reproduces "Effects of the Fugitive-Slave-Law," 1850 (<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661523/>). The watermark is an image of Harriet Tubman and John Brown.

Further reading:

* "Lies you will be told" by Phil Neel <https://illwill.com/lies>
 * "Los Angeles, or the End of Assimilation" by Victor Artolia
<https://illwill.com/los-angeles>

* "Defend Our Neighbors, Defend Ourselves!"

(<https://lakeeffect.noblogs.org/post/2025/11/17/defend-our-neighbors-defend-ourselves-community-self-defense-from-l-a-to-chicago/>) and

* "Chippocalypse Now"

(<https://lakeeffect.noblogs.org/post/2025/12/31/chippocalypse-now/>) both by the Lake Effect Collective

* "Voices of the Occupation: A real-time oral history of the ICE assault on Minnesota" by Keith Harris <https://rackettm.com/voices-of-the-occupation-of-mn-ice-trump>

* This text about the UK is instructive as well, for making the point that the law is not actually on our side. "The Right Against the Rule of Law?" by Robert Knox <https://salvage.zone/the-right-against-the-rule-of-law/>



Democratic Party, hope to quietly talk the big-hearted into becoming smaller-hearted and so less disgusted.

In the present conflicts, more people are coming to hold beliefs like we have stated in this text. More people are joining us in disgust against The Border Power and refusing to let The Border Power draw limits around who we care about. To put it another way, the opposition to ICE right now is partly caused by a lot of people having a sudden moral transformation – becoming more big-hearted and more disgusted. At the same time, the opposition to ICE right now is partly causing a lot of people to have a sudden moral transformation – sometimes big-heartedness and moral disgust spread like laughter, like a cheer through a crowd, like a fire.

The present conflicts will eventually subside and probably will do so before The Border Power has been defeated. This is a battle, so to speak, that is part of a longer war. When this battle ends, the war will continue. When the present opposition to ICE subsides, unfortunately, some people will undergo a moral transformation in the opposite direction, becoming less big-hearted, less morally disgusted. The dominant forces in the Democratic Party and similar social institutions will encourage this. That reverse moral transformation will happen fast for some people and slow for others. Many people will not experience that reversal, however. “We Shall Not Be Moved” was partly a statement of hope in immediate conflicts. It was also a statement of intention for the long term. The song meant, in part, that we will not undergo a reverse moral transformation. We will remain big-hearted and as a result disgusted by injustice.

Our hope in writing this text is that it might help a few more people hold on to their big-heartedness and their disgust, and to help us help each other to hold on. We must all be aware that we will need to shore each other up after this battle, and after the next, and the next. We remain more steadfast in our big-heartedness and our disgust – our solidarity lasts longer – when we make a conscious effort, as individuals and in groups, to not be moved.

In facing The Border Power we are up against terrible odds, awful power, and opponents willing to commit or rationalize incredibly heinous evils. The same was true of The Slave Power. The Slave Power was beaten, eventually. The Border Power will eventually be beaten too. To beat the Border Power we need good strategies and

ICE disgusts us. We write this to people who are similarly disgusted. We want to make a few points to help clarify what we’re up against, and to help clarify some of what to do in this situation, generally speaking.

What ICE has been doing horrifies us, and people’s resistance to ICE inspires us. This mix of the horrifying and the inspiring reminds us of slavery and the movement against slavery in US history. We think the present is particularly similar to the 1850s. That was a time when pro-slavery forces got even more violent, and when some anti-slavery forces got especially serious about stopping slavery.

Anti-slavery forces sometimes spoke of what they called ‘The Slave Power.’ The Slave Power included slave owners, people employed to catch runaway slaves, and a great deal of the US government. In the present, we can identify something similar. Call it The Border Power. It includes employers who take advantage of immigrants, ICE agents in the field trying to detain and deport immigrants, and both of the major political parties, among other people. ICE should be abolished, to be sure, and it’s important that in saying this that we not be too literal: ICE isn’t the only agency attacking immigrants and allies of immigrants. There is an alphabet soup of government stooges with guns. When we say ICE we really mean all of them. We mean The Border Power. All of it.

Abolitionists knew that stopping The Slave Power required ending slavery altogether. In important respects ‘slavery’ and ‘The Slave Power’ were the same thing. The Slave Power was the organized defense of slavery. Slavery was the violent, exploitive reality that created The Slave Power and supplied it with resources. The border and The Border Power have a very similar relationship. We can not really defeat ICE, we can not really stop The Border Power, unless we make the border itself a dead letter. That is, unless movements for justice can make the border unenforceable, problems like we are seeing now will recur.

Any society with slavery will generate racist ideas and culture to justify slavery, and will generate violence to protect and expand slavery. In our society there is a common sense view that encourages us to think of race, racism, and slavery in a way something like the following. First, assume there are real biological differences between groups of people called races. Second, assume that racism is when people feel loyalty to one of those really existing different groups and

of direct action, they prolong the life of The Border Power, which is to say, they help prolong violence.

The journey from here to fully stopping The Border Power and ending the border will be long and winding. We don't pretend to know what all it will require. But it is certain that we will not get there unless more people come to understand the border as the evil institution that it is. More people must understand that the border is a factory churning out racism and violence, and scum – some wearing riot gear and carrying clubs and guns, others wearing suits and ties and carrying briefcases and reports on the latest public opinion poll – who are willing to tolerate or even happy to perpetrate racist violence. Nor will we get there without more people coming to understand that polite, civil voices of patience and supposed pragmatic common sense like those in the Democratic Party are objectively part of The Border Power regardless of whatever they might think they are doing.

We began by saying we are disgusted by ICE. That disgust is tied to our care for ourselves and each other, for the people brutalized by ICE. We reject the evils of racism and everything tied to them. Racism is pollution. Our society includes many factories that generate this pollution. Slavery was one such factory. The border is another. To end the pollution, those factories must be shut down, and taken apart so they can never be re-opened.

In our care and our disgust, we stand together in a spirit like the old song “We Shall Not Be Moved.” The song originated among Black people in the United States in the early 1800s. It was passed down as a statement of hope and bravery against the terrible racism and violence of U.S. society. The Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century made the song an anthem because the song expressed those values. People who have sung and still sing this song express that they are steadfast in their values. We will not give up our disgust and our big-hearted care. We will continue to oppose racism in all forms. We will continue to reject the line that The Slave Power and The Border Power draws between in-groups and out-groups. In the 1800s many people were much more big-hearted than The Slave Power wished they were. Today many people are much more big-hearted than The Border Power wishes they were. It is that big-heartedness that causes our disgust. The armed men of The Border Power hope to terrorize the big-hearted into passivity. They are the bad cops. The good cops of The Border Power, like the

want to oppress one or more other groups. Third, assume slavery is an especially intense version of racism. This is an understandable way to think, but it gets the problem wrong.

It sounds paradoxical, race does not actually come before racism. Instead, racism creates race. The entire point of the concept of race is to encourage hierarchy, oppression, and divisions among people. Slavery is an especially intense form of hierarchy and oppression, and slavery actively generated concepts of race in order to create racism as a way to defend slavery. Any society with slavery will obviously draw a line between people who are enslaved and people who are not. Typically, there is also a line drawn between an in-group and an out-group. It is never or only rarely appropriate to enslave members of the in-group. It is always or often appropriate to enslave

white people and the outgroup was Black people. Indeed, our contemporary understanding of white and Black was shaped to an important degree by this division in service of slavery. That division shaped who people – especially white people – were and were not willing to be in solidarity with: it shaped the meaning of the words ‘us’ and ‘them’. Race helped The Slave Power say to white people ‘this isn’t a threat to you, you’re in the in-group. The people that we are doing this to aren’t like you, they’re in the out-group, and they deserve to be treated the way we treat them.’

The point is in part that our understanding of race is largely the result of slavery, not the other way around: race resulted from racism and slavery, slavery and racism did not result from race. To put it another way, race was a resource that The Slave Power constructed to justify and defend itself. That resource polluted the rest of society and we live in a world still subject to that pollution. The point is also that any society with slavery will be a society where it is common sense that there are biologically different groups of people called races, and where many people believe that some of those groups are superior to others – that is, where many people are racists. Furthermore, any society with slavery will be a society where people – mostly men, most of the time – with weapons beat, kill, cage, and terrorize other people in order to defend slavery and racism. In short: slavery racializes. Slavery is a factory for making racism and racist violence.

much of words, but it is important to be aware that right now in many parts of the US people are doing more than witnessing or speaking out. They are actively stopping The Border Power some of the time. It's not enough (because The Border Power must be more fully stopped and the border itself abolished) but it is very important and very high stakes. What the Democrats encourage, on the other hand, is that people stop getting in the way of The Border Power. 'Don't stop the racist violence machine,' they all but say, 'instead be witness who documents its operations, speak your disapproval of the machine (politely, though maybe with the occasional swear word), make requests to the machine that it do a little less violence, or do violence in a more orderly way.' The Democrats encourage this directly, with their calls for obeying the law, and indirectly, by proposing policies that would make The Border Power less visible to the public and so harder to oppose. Those calls defend The Border Power. If they succeed they will leave immigrants more subject to violence and with fewer real allies. In the terms we have used here, the Democrats encourage the replacement of direct action with protest. We must oppose that effort. Those of us disgusted by The Border Power and who believe that a genuinely humane society is possible should encourage the opposite movement, to help protest develop into direct action as much as possible, make protests be an entry point that helps people come to participate in more effective opposition to The Border Power.

Again the parallels with slavery and abolition are instructive. In the 1850s people might speak and write against slavery, people might listen to talks and read essays detailing the evils of The Slave Power. That was important activity, but it was more like the seeds of opposition than full blown opposition. It was not important because it encouraged the government to stop slavery: the government was part of The Slave Power. Instead, it was important because it encouraged people to begin to move toward participating in active resistance to - taking direct action against - The Slave Power, and it built support for the people currently taking such action. Similarly in the present we must be clear that the government and both parties are fully committed members of The Border Power and they will not be talked out of that. They can be beaten through direct action if enough of us make The Border Power unable to act. But that requires resistance beyond protest. Thus when the Democrats encourage protest instead

The same basic point goes for borders. Borders are lines on the ground that only some people can cross. This means drawing a line between an in-group and an out-group. The in-group allowed to cross the border and the out-group are not. This line-drawing tends to take the form of racial divisions or something very similar to racial divisions. Obviously terms like 'immigrant', 'illegal', and so on are not names for biological differences. Still, they are racist terms. They encourage people to draw lines between an 'us' and a 'them'. They are a resource that The Border Power constructed to justify and defend itself, and a resource that pollutes the rest of society, encouraging racism and violence. Similarly, these terms say to members of the in-group 'the border isn't a threat to you, you're in the in-group. The people that we are doing this to aren't like you, they're in the out-group, and they deserve to be treated the way we treat them.' And like slavery, the border requires armed people - border cops like ICE - who beat, kill, cage, and terrorize other people. The border racializes. The border is a factory for making racism and racist violence.

This is all to say that any society with slavery and any society with a border will generate racist ideas and culture to justify second class status for some people, will inflict violence on those people, and will generate justifications for that violence. This harms the people in the outgroup, and it turns many people in the in-group into inhuman monsters: ghouls willing to inflict violence or indifferent to violence that others inflict. Half measures to contain or limit slavery could at best only delay the inflicting or slightly cushion the violence, racism, and oppression. Similarly, half measures to restrain border cops like ICE can have important human stakes in the short term but they are ultimately half measures which just delay the growth and spread of racist violence.

Of course, people of good conscience can and do oppose these forms of violence. The abolitionist movement in the 1800s consisted of enslaved people who fought for their freedom as well as many free Black people and some white people who were their allies. These abolitionists rejected the dominant common sense and fought The Slave Power against incredible odds. They changed the course of history and created a culture of solidarity and concern for social justice that future generations were lucky to inherit. Similarly today we see immigrants fighting for their freedom as well as many allies who are not migrants. This solidarity is incredibly important in the

present. It opposes the dominant political common sense today, and in the long term it too will form an inheritance that helps future generations to tell right from wrong and helps them to fight injustice. We push this analogy between slavery and the border for two reasons. One is that a great many people in the United States have deep moral clarity that slavery is absolutely wrong, a terrible evil that hurt many people and was allowed to go on too long, and an evil that was only stopped through a lot of intense struggle. This moral sensibility was hard won. It was created through a lot of hard sacrifice by enslaved people who resisted and by their fellow abolitionists. This sensibility is an important resource in the present and we must safeguard it against anyone who would take it from us or blunt its power. A great many people in the United States today have a similar clarity about the border and its enforcement, what we have here called The Border Power. This understanding that the border and its enforcement are evil has been very old among many immigrants and their allies. It is more recent among some other people. More people coming to understand the evil nature of The Border Power is an incredibly important moral advance. If that advance is reversed, if it is made temporary, that will be an appalling defeat that creates a lot of suffering and death.

The other reason we push this analogy between slavery and the border is that we think it clarifies what we are up against. Both major political parties in the US supported slavery - they were both part of The Slave Power - until right before slavery's abolition, and the road to abolition helped destroy one of those parties, the Whig Party. Both major parties support the border and its enforcement - they are both part of The Border Power - and to stop The Border Power may require the end of one or both parties. This is all to say, we are up against the full might of the US government here. That is daunting. But others in the past have fought the government and won. It has been done. It can be done again.

In our view, the most brutal forms of The Border Power are relatively easy to object to morally: they shoot, teargas, beat, and cage people. Those brutal forms work hand in glove with less brutal forms that are no less evil: they tell us to resist in ineffective ways, they tell us to wait and to be patient while our friends and relatives and neighbors are caged or forced to live in terror, they tell us nothing can be done, they tell us that of course any decent society will have a

border that it enforces. Many of this second, sneakier form of The Border Power are in the Democratic Party or among the party's allies. They use their conflict with the Republicans and their limited opposition to the most intense harms by ICE goons to make themselves look like they are on the side of human liberation. They are not. They are like the false abolitionists who argued that slavery should end in several decades, that people should be patient and live with slavery, that ending slavery would be worse than keeping it. The Democrats help The Border Power in one particular way that we think it is especially important to highlight. A great deal of resistance to The Border Power that we have seen in cities like Los Angeles, Portland, and Minneapolis has been deliberately aimed at actively impeding ICE agents. These efforts recall the most important kinds of activity against slavery. When Black people would free themselves from slavery and run away, slave owners would often send armed men after them. The law was on the side of the owners and against the people who sought freedom. When men armed with weapons and backed by law would try to capture runaway slaves, sometimes crowds would gather to stop the armed men and help the runaways to escape. In important respects, runaway slaves were themselves undocumented migrants, people engaging in forms of mobility that the state opposed. The crowds that opposed the armed agents of The Slave Power and aided the undocumented freedom-seeking former slaves were trying to make The Slave Power incapable of operating. They tried to incapacitate The Slave Power in that immediate place, to make the perfectly legal yet deeply evil racism of slavery unable to operate in that particular place. Similarly, people in the cities we mentioned, and in other cities, have tried to stop The Border Power as it exists in front of them. They have tried to help some immigrants - themselves or their neighbors or coworkers or loved ones, our fellow human beings - to remain free and to prevent the armed agents of The Border Power from being able to enforce evil, racist laws.

This activity of resistance is not protest as the term is often used. It is direct action. It is contestation. It is stopping the gears of the racist brutality machine from turning. The word protest as it is often used means something different. It means making our voices heard. It means speaking our disapproval of something that is happening. Protest is very important, and we don't want to make too