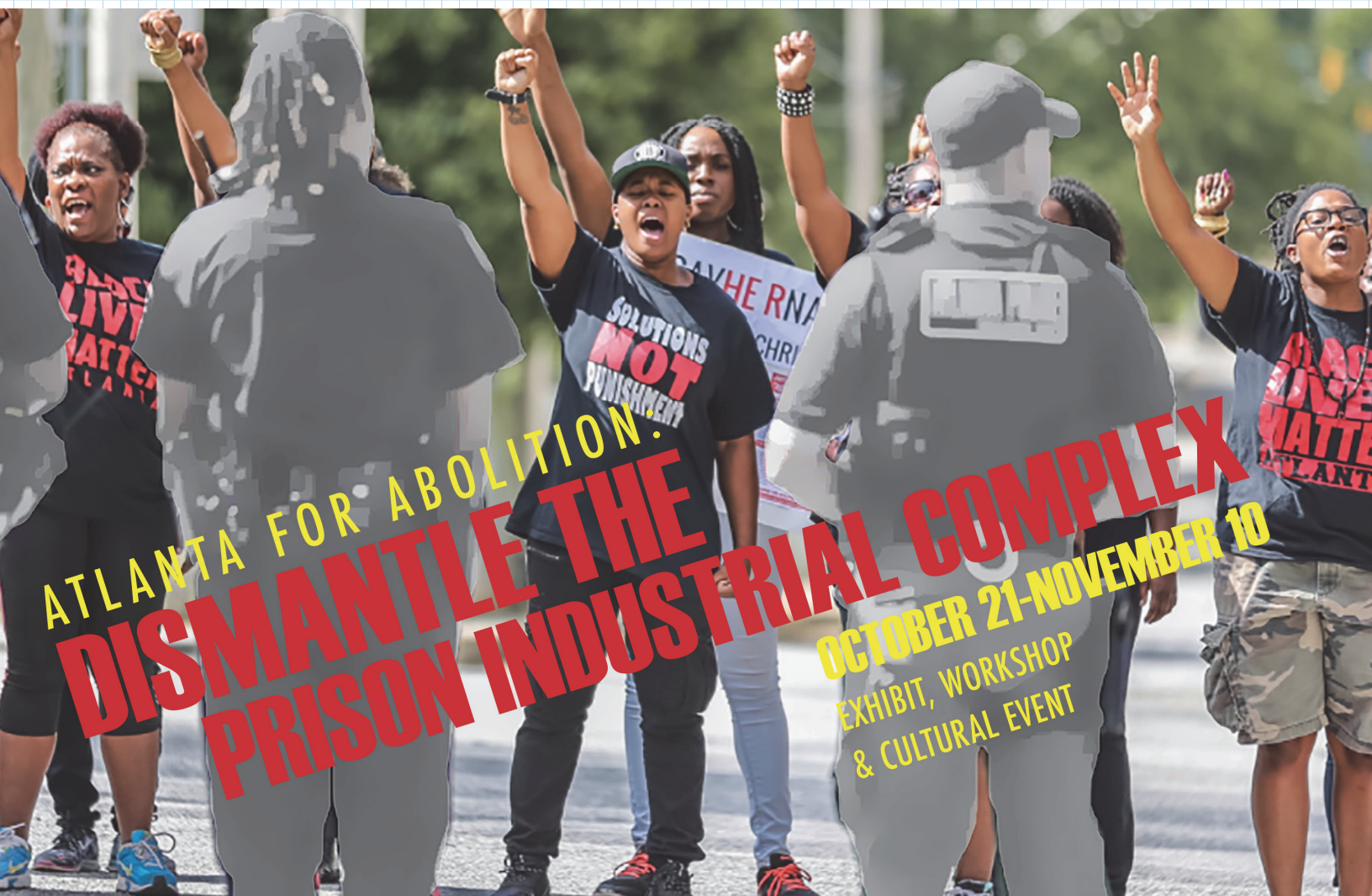


"All I can tell you is that our capacity is for 108 men and women, and the jail is holding more than that."

Roanoke County Jail, Salem, Virginia



ATLANTA FOR ABOLITION.
DISMANTLE THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
OCTOBER 21-NOVEMBER 10
EXHIBIT, WORKSHOP & CULTURAL EVENT

DEGREES OF VISIBILITY

Ashley Hunt, with Critical Resistance, Project South, Solutions Not Punishment Coalition (SNaP Co), and Southerners on New Ground (SONG) Presented by WonderRoot and Profiles in Abolition

As a six-year survey of the visual politics of the prison industrial complex, *Degrees of Visibility* offers a body of photographs that study the landscapes in which over 250 prisons, jails and detention centers sit, throughout each of the fifty US states and territories. Each photograph is shot from a publicly available point of view, and is titled according to the number of people imprisoned and concealed within that view. While in some, that number is described in the language of the system itself, in others, the prison's language gives way to a history, a document or record that offers a different understanding of the space. All statistics were obtained between 2013 and 2016.

The project is a study of the *aesthetic regime* that governs today's prison industrial complex, documenting how history's largest system of civil imprisonment has been enabled through its disguise within everyday landscapes—disappearing the bodies, practices and systemic inequalities it conceals among various types of space and land-use. Recognizing today's mass imprisonment as one arm of a larger system of racial, class and gendering controls that structure the United States' hierarchies, segregations, political and economic relations, the project looks to the spaces in which we encounter prisons each day, often without any sense of what we have or have not seen, or what we might be participating within.

Rather than see this as a coincidence of appearance, however, *Degrees of Visibility* studies this as a *politics of appearance*—an aesthetic organization that is as integral to a mass, industrial-scale imprisonment as walls, fences, weapons, laws and cages; rooted in the prison's racial and security practices and the ongoing manufacture of political consent. To counter this systemic erasure, this survey offers a visual literacy in the system's appearances, while juxtaposing them with the very statistics, qualities and histories they attempt to conceal.

As the system's camouflage offers us landscapes and cityscapes without the prison, however, their image can also point us to *a future after the prison*—each image showing a different space in which we can imagine the costs of the prison industrial complex redirected, reinvested into what can truly build strong communities and new horizons of justice, ones in which prison and police no longer restrict our political imagination.

The seeds of this body of work were sown during my research into prison architecture in the early 2000s, tracking the changes that accompanied today's extraordinary prison expansion, as it began during the Civil Rights movement and the people's movements of the 1960s and 70s. While mass incarceration truly begins after Emancipation, when the policing and imprisonment regime of today replaced the social and political controls that chattel slavery had previously provided, it is in the Post-War years, as Jim Crow segregation breaks down, that the system begins to militarize, professionalize and multiply to the globally unprecedented scale we see today.

At this same, a two-hundred year history of modern prison architecture shifted, from designs that highlight the presence of the prison to ones that camouflage and disappear

ATLANTA FOR ABOLITION: DISMANTLE THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The exhibition of Degrees of Visibility will include a series of events, including an weekend of cultural events and workshops, hosted by Project South, SNaP Co, SONG and Critical Resistance.

From the founding of the United States until the present, the South has perpetuated a legacy of state-driven racial and economic oppression, whether through slavery, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, or imprisonment. However as with abolition of slavery and the movement for civil rights, people in the South and in particular Black communities, have also been on the frontlines of resistance, continuing their own legacies of struggle.

Through the building of resilient and participatory communities, like in Jackson, Mississippi, or in fighting state repression, as in the Free Alabama Movement and other southern leadership in recent prisoner strikes, organizing in the South continues to make strides towards liberation that inspires allied movements nationally.

At Critical Resistance (CR), we are taking steps to support national work outside our chapter cities, including Southern movements for liberation. CR has historically engaged in organizing in New Orleans, Atlanta, Durham, and supported other Southern movement builders working to get cops out of schools, decrease arrested and jailed populations, and build community based models for safety. We're thrilled to announce **"Atlanta for Abolition: Dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex"** as part of **Profiles in Abolition**, a series of events intended to reinvigorate critical understandings of the prison industrial complex and inspire us to take practical steps toward a future free of policing, imprisonment, or surveillance.



it, as the obvious contradiction between the era's promises of equality and its heightened repression required new and more secretive spaces. Similarly, as this repression bred resistance and identification with anti-colonial revolutions around the world, an architecture of invisibility would also serve the state's growing need for architectures of counter-insurgency, where disappearance became one more piece of technology within the prison's security arsenal.

This was embodied especially by the 1990 expansion of the Marin County Jail, which in order to avoid public controversy, was "buried," surrounded by an artificial hill; the parts of ADX Florence which, in Colorado, are actually built underground; the general era-ure of signifiers of punishment so that a jail will look like a neutral office building; or the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Detention Center in Kentucky, whose 1999 reconstruction is designed to resemble the surrounding racing horse barns.



1,266 men and women, Lexington-Fayette County Detention Center, Lexington, Kentucky

Despite these changes, the security fundamentals of prison architecture remain rooted in the military fortification of castles and fortresses that preceded the modern era—slot windows and curtain walls, ramparts—but instead of keeping things out they are designed to keep them in. This connection suggests that the prison is, at its root, dedicated to a continual form of warfare against those considered "enemies" and "outsiders." This history tells us much more about the nature of the prison industrial complex than motivations toward overt profit represented by prison labor or for-profit prisons.

It is for this reason that the public presentation of **Degrees of Visibility** is conceived in partnership with organizations who are dedicated to changing the very society that needs prisons and policing; groups who, instead of asking for limited reforms that will ultimately strengthen the system, fight instead to diminish it, to abolish the conditions that make it appear necessary, and redefine safety as we know it.

Partnering Organizations

Critical Resistance – Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. We believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, our work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the PIC. Because we seek to abolish the PIC, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope.

Critical Resistance (CR) is engaged in concrete programs, campaigns, and educational efforts to reduce the power and reach of the prison industrial complex while building up community resources towards addressing harm and accountability. At CR, we are taking steps to support national work outside our chapter cities, including contributing towards Southern movements for liberation with recognition of the crucial role the South plays in fighting racial oppression. CR has historically engaged in organizing in New Orleans, Atlanta, Durham, and supported other Southern movement building. Towards that effort, CR is thrilled to partner with local organizations for "Atlanta for Abolition: Dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex". This event is offered as part of Profiles In Abolition, a series of events intended to reinvigorate critical understandings of the prison industrial complex and inspire us to take practical steps toward a future free of policing, imprisonment, or surveillance. www.criticalresistance.org

Project South – Project South is a Southern-based leadership development organization that creates spaces for movement building. We work with communities pushed forward by the struggle – to strengthen leadership and to provide popular political and economic education for personal and social transformation. We build relationships with organizations and networks across the US and global South to inform our local work and to engage in bottom-up movement building for social and economic justice. Project South works on defunding of police in schools and on shutting down immigration detention centers as well as federal immigrant-only prisons." <http://projectsouth.org/>

SNAP Co – Solutions Not Punishment Coalition

Orgs mission statement: We envision a vibrant, inclusive Atlanta that ensures the safety, and holistically meets the needs of all the city's stakeholders and residents. We envision an Atlanta where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and live as their authentic, whole selves, without facing unfair barriers, especially from the criminal justice system.

The work: SNAP Co. is leading the city of Atlanta in radical reforms to policing and prisons by taking concrete, practical steps on the local level to divest from cops, courts, and corrections and reinvest in the resources and services our communities need to thrive. In 2015, SNAP Co. drafted, championed, and won the implementation of a Pre-Arrest Diversion Initiative, creating a radical shift in Atlanta's approach to public safety.

A pre-arrest diversion program (also known as pre-bookings diversion) is one that identifies people for whom probable cause may exist for an arrest, and redirects

