Recall This Book
174: A Moment of No to the Prison-Industrial Complex
with Anna Terwiel (JP)
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**John Plotz**

Hello and welcome to recall this book where we invite scholars and writers from different disciplines to make sense of contemporary issues, problems and events. I'm John Plotz of Brandeis, and today we ask a set of questions that brilliant radical thinkers have been asking for decades, or perhaps for centuries. First, how might we, quote, respond to harm and violence, beside relying on the criminal legal system to send people to prison. Close. Quote. Second, how might we establish a realistic way to abolish that prison system? And third, how might we rediscover a fundamental human right, the right to comfort as one basis of the case to be made against an imprisonment system that here in the United States has wrecked or sideswiped so many lives and continues to accumulate collateral damage. So that is a very small order of business. And fortunately, we have 200 years. No, I'm sorry, we only have 45 minutes to cover it. And I'm joined today by a professor who spent, I'm going to hear how long, but at least that last decade, I'm going to say, working on this topic. That is Anna Terwiel assistant professor of political science at Trinity College in Hartford. Her work includes the co-directorship of the prison education project there, and she is the author of many articles in such journals as political theory, polity theory and event and new political science. And she's here today to explore with us her fantastic new book out from University of Minnesota Press, December 2025 (Merry Christmas) which is called "prison abolition for realists." So, Anna, welcome. It's great to have you Super so generally, as listeners know, we'd like to invite our guests to basically set the terms for the conversation to to begin by presenting the intellectual origins of the book, its Genesis moment, you might say, and also the key claims and interventions. Would you like to get us started in that way?

**Anna Terwiel**

Yeah, that sounds good. It has been at least a decade of work on this book. And in a way, it started, or the origins go back to when I was a graduate student at Northwestern just outside of Chicago, and intellectually speaking, origins were my encounter with Foucault's work, Discipline and Punish, but also soon thereafter, his activism with the prisons Information Group in the early 1970s the group information sur le prison. He co founded this activist group in 71 and it existed for a

number of years. And so I found myself really interested in his both intellectual and or like a theoretical and practical critiques of the prison and his insights into how central prisons are to our society, even though we think of them as marginal institutions and they are places where already marginalized people are routinely sent but I think I was really drawn to The power of his analysis that showed important continuities between prisons and other institutions and between imprisonment and kind of broader power dynamics in in society. At the same time, when I was that I was working on my dissertation, I also was connected to a group of scholars and artists and activists who offer poetry and humanities and arts classes at Stateville prison, about an hour outside of the city of Chicago. This was the prison and neighborhood arts and education project. I could say more about what I want, what I think of as the book's interventions. So it's called prison abolition for realists, and that title is to try to be really clear about one large claim I'm making, which is that abolitionism, like abolitionist thinking, is not a set of abstract fantasies, some kind of wishful thinking, disconnected from reality, but really a set of reflections on punishment and on our broader democracy that is very lucid, very attuned to how our society actually works in practice, and how punishment actually works in practice and how it works in practice. As different abolitionists will tell you is that we're told that this is we're told that punishment protects us from the bad guys, and that this makes our society safer and generally, what is that punishment and imprisonment inflict state violence on already marginalized groups who are most intensely targeted by the punishment system, while other forms of harm and law breaking are allowed to continue and are not, in fact, like punished. And you might think about just the really widespread harm of sexual violence that come at abolition; as a feminist, you can think about white collar crime. So we're told that that punishment keeps us safer. And in fact, when you look empirically at what happens, it tends to solidify already existing inequalities in society while leaving like while not addressing problems like poverty or deprivation or lack of access to health care.

**John Plotz**

You have a nice line, maybe I could quote it. I think it's an amplification of what you just said, but early on, you say "prison abolition departs from both abstract normative theorizing and from realist tendencies to underestimate possibilities for positive change." So I understand you just gave us the negative version there, because you talked about the committed crimes that go unacknowledged or unpoliced. But that isn't the only thing you mean when you're talking about possibilities for positive change--

**Anna Terwiel**

Like equal punishment for all, yeah? So many abolitionists, though not all, offer alternative visions of how we might respond to harm, yeah. So you get abolitionist accounts of restorative justice or transformative justice, like different mechanisms that center the question of repair, that center question, the question of prevention and that try to that, try to involve the directly affected people directly into the resolution process or the justice process, rather than relying on state like on professionals to sort out these issues for us. But I think, importantly, most abolitionists don't just focus on alternative ways of responding to harm, but they offer visions of bigger social, economic, political change that would prevent a lot of harm that exists and that is done, and would just make society more, just more democratic, and less willing to warehouse or throw away entire groups of the population in the name of justice.

**John Plotz**

I would love for us to land there. I think your final chapter is the right to comfort, so I'd love to get to there. And also, I think I mentioned to you, I'm interested in this category of like non reformist reform. In other words, how does one work with generally benevolent moderates who are trying to do something, and how do you align yourself with them without just sinking back into the logic of the system? But maybe, since you're an academic, and the point of academic work is to make these sharp distinctions, maybe you could talk about these different categories that you have proposed for making sense of a different sorts of abolitionist thinking. So the phrase, the terms you use are the *paranoid*, *purity politics,* and then the *agonistic*. So do you want to talk us through the pluses and minuses of the paranoid and the purity approach?

**Anna Terwiel**

On the one hand, so one aim of the book is to say most abolitionist thinking really belongs in the realist tradition, in that it is very attuned to empirical realities and thinks about practical interventions and how you can shift power dynamics. Another ambition of the book is to reveal and help us better understand the internal richness and diversity of abolitionist thinking. I mentioned like I've in graduate school was very shaped by the work of Foucault, and then as I read more about abolition, I noticed that sometimes, like Foucault and foucaultian, abolitionism was just assumed to be the same as or very similar to, or simply very compatible with the abolitionism of Angela Davis, and that struck me as just not right. There are theoretical distinctions between the approaches to society and a black feminist Marxist one. And I got the sense that these differences were not being seen clearly

enough, or teased out and thought through. So, yeah, what I do in the book is develop a kind of typology, not to say that any one thinker fits entirely into any one of these boxes, but to try to help us distinguish between different styles or different modes of abolitionist thought and practice.

**John Plotz**

I really appreciate that notion of the style or the mode. I don't know if we'll come back to that or not, but obviously everything is nothing is conceived in a vacuum. Everything has its historical moment, and things are produced in moments of despair or optimism. So I like the logic of style or mode. If I understand what you mean by it is that you could have proposals that one ultimately might not want to get behind the proposal, but you can understand why it would have been engendered at a moment--

**Anna Terwiel**

Also why, like the thinker or the group or the movement that supports one proposal in one moment, like might at a later point in time, offer something different. One concept I offer is that of abolitionism in a paranoid style or in a paranoid mode. And I work with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of the term paranoid thinking. I'm not at all saying paranoid thinking is wrong or incorrect or to in any way pathologize it, but I find sedgwick's reflection on par anoid thinking as a style of critique useful for identifying one kind of abolitionism, and I often use Foucault as a as an example, actually, of to illustrate what I mean. So abolitionism in a paranoid mode, see, has a very, has a very big concept of the carceral so carcerality or carceral power. We're not just talking about prisons or even punitive institutions, but like this, is a concept that can travel.

And so Foucault sees this like carceral power in schools and in workplaces and in in hospitals and then abolitionism, in this paranoid mode, is very attuned to all the forms that carcerality can take, and very worried about inadvertently replicating it, or supporting something that turns out to be that you thought was going to be different, like that you thought was going to be abolitionist, but, yeah, turned out to be carceral. So it's, it operates in a kind of mode where it, it's very attuned to carcerality. It tries to expose it in places where we might not suspect it, had you, *had you considered that perhaps social workers could actually fulfill a similar policing function to the actual police*? Had you considered to think about the example of deinstitutionalization, that you might close a large state hospital that warehouses and confined people with disability labels, but that they might find themselves in

smaller group homes that could also actually be another kind of prison, just a variation of the same.

**John Plotz**

there was a punk rock band when I was in I just remembered in the 1980s called the (creeping) Corrosion of Conformity. And I got the point, but it is right. It's just like, ultimately, if it's everywhere, that on some level, it can be nowhere as well, and that's a problem.

**Anna Terwiel**

And if you are primarily worried about, or, like really preoccupied with anticipating carcerality, then how can you move from, how can you move to to offering to daring to offer an alternative. So I think in practice, yeah, maybe like the car shows everywhere but or nowhere, but like, how, like Foucault never. Foucault never offers an alternative. Famously, right in the prisons Information Group too, they're like, prisons are intolerable. We're gonna try to bring to the public sphere, like, what incarcerated people say about them, as opposed to pundits and the Minister of Justice. But we're not going to tell you what alternative, no response to harm, we would like to see, or like, what kind of economic changes or redistribution we would like to see, to advance, like a political project that we are for. So, yeah, my concern with abolitionism in a paranoid mode, it's like, it has really great insights into the pervasiveness of Garcia more power. It has very good insights into the risks of any kind of do-gooder project that,. You might actually end up, yeah, like reproducing some of the problems that you were trying to remedy. But it can lead to, it can lead to inaction, like it can mobilize people, because it is not clear how you could ever escape.

And if it doesn't demobilize then it can lead to a politics of purity, which is maybe we can rid ourselves of the cop in our head of carceral logic, yes. Like, we can try to, yeah, like, really, to become free of this thing, but again, like, that's not the same as affirming, like, a shared vision and then trying to assemble a political coalition to realize it.

**John Plotz**

Yeah, I have a very dear friend who speaks about the nonprofit industrial complex. And I do understand what he means by saying it, but I worry about that, that it pushes you to a space of purity where you just don't have any friction under your feet anymore. Your feet flip out from under you because you don't have anyone to hold on to. The way you diagnose, the way you characterize the the extremity of

purity is that it causes people to, quote, “withdraw from political struggle, to pursue changes inside the self.” And incidentally, I studied the Chartists, mid 19th century political movement. The Chartist that's what happened to them. After they were politically defeated. They turned towards, like, moral reform. And that is, I get that, like it became a question of self purification, but I hadn't quite understood: rather than purity and paranoia existing in opposite poles, you're seeing them more they're diagnostically linked to one another as a problem.

**Anna Terwiel**

I see that the purity politics as one outgrowth or one response to a diagnosis of the problem that is overwhelming--without something that can pull us toward a positive vision that we're willing to risk fighting for, even though it might but my, I don't know my backfire. It might disappoint like it have problems of its own. It won't be pure, but nonetheless, abolitionism has to contain both a radical critique, like a no to mass incarceration, like a no to the warehousing and sacrifice, or like the throwing away of so people and communities, but it also has to offer alternative like concrete alternative proposals, like both in terms of how we're going to deal with harm, but because, but also like bigger question just what would a more just society look like, and what will we try to secure

**John Plotz**

one word you use for that that I found very suggestive, and I'd love to like invite you to talk to us about maybe tangible or particular practical versions of this agonistic realist abolitionism you think, but you use the word *remainders* as something that, like people, we might have to be content with remainders rather than purity.

**Anna Terwiel**

Yeah, or I wouldn't say we have to be content with remainders, but we have to be reconciled to the reality that even best, most radical, most democratic project is going to have remainders. Will not be able to be perfect. Is going to have its own limits and shortcomings, and therefore that we're not going to we're never going to achieve abolition or achieve freedom or achieve democracy that like these are, these are ongoing, open ended projects that have to remain open to contestation and critique, because they will never be perfect.

**John Plotz**

So you situated us very helpfully in terms of your own, your dissertation work and the expo, what you were exposed to at the pH in the in your writing, and

thinking about these intellectual groups that influenced you. Can you talk a little bit about how this connects with the work that you do now, like at Trinity?

**Anna Terwiel**

I co direct Trinity's Prison Education Project. We It was founded before I got to Trinity offering, at one institution in Connecticut, the women's prison, and we've been able to expand it to the jail in Hartford. Now we're operating at these two sites, and jails are jails mostly house unsentenced people, so folks who have been accused of a crime but not convicted, and detained while their criminal cases unfold, and that can take months, and that can take years. And so we think of jails as temporary. There often aren't a lot of programs. There isn't necessarily a library, but in fact, actually these warehouse, these are spaces that warehouse people for a long time. So I'm very glad that at least we can offer some college classes there to offer anything at all, I see it as I see this work as a practical intervention that I can facilitate because I am located in a university or in a college, yeah, and therefore I teach classes, I can recruit colleagues to teach classes, the institution will give college credit for this work. So I see it as a small intervention in mass incarceration that supports incarcerated people like it makes the experience of incarceration just a bit less awful, even if only because it's a distraction. Like our classes are a distraction they offer something from the boredom of incarceration and a way also to advocate for education as something that everybody has a right to like. We frame our work, not as these are classes that will help rehabilitate fallen individuals. It's more like these are classes that are like a small way to a small, practical way to support people in this experience, and they are a way to work toward a world in which anybody, regardless of where you find yourself and whether or not you've been accused of a crime like you have a right to learn. You have a right to education.

**John Plotz**

So in Boston, we discuss these things as well. I teach right now outside of the prisons, but with people who are very much implicated in the system, and I have to admit, I struggle with it. I really respect and admire the people in the system that I work with, but I'm aware of working in a prison in a system that has been set up by people who are committed to this carceral system as it is. And so I think of these categories, like non reform, reform, I think, okay, there's things that the judges, the parole officers and I all agree on. It doesn't mean I'm abetting them. It means we're collaborating on finding something that is such a space. How do you think about that?

**Anna Terwiel**

Yeah, I think there is a risk that by offering college classes in carceral spaces, we're shoring up the image of carceral spaces as rehabilitative, as sites of all these services that are really there to help people who have been who have made mistakes. I think that's a really misleading account of what the American prison system is. A statistic to focus on is mass incarceration, which I know best as a scholar, situated in the US. The US is unique, not only in how many people it incarcerates. Like for many years, it was it had just like the single largest prison system in the world. Currently, El Salvador, because of its extreme authoritarian war on drugs has a larger percentage of its population behind bars, Cuba might similarly be a rival in mass incarceration at this moment, but really big picture like the US is exceptional in how many people it incarcerates, and also in how terrible prison conditions often are like much, much worse than in comparable developed countries. And so to frame that as, I think, to frame it as justice, like this is criminal justice being so right, or to frame it as support or like rehabilitation, like people are getting what they need, I think it really is a gross misrepresentation of reality that abolitionists, I think, are much more realistic in seeing what's actually going on, which is the throwing away and the warehousing of, like, predominantly poor people, predominantly poor people of color. So yeah, there is a risk in education work then, yeah, shoring up this image that that the system doesn't deserve. But at the same time, there's an opportunity to make a small difference in the lives of people who are currently trapped in the system. It's an opportunity to affirm a different orientation to the world.

**John Plotz**

I think your paradigm of purity, apropos of that, is very helpful in terms of thinking about what it means to, like, keep your hands clean of that. And yeah, thank you. You stated both sides much more eloquently than I did. I appreciate that. I want to get to right to comfort it and maybe we'll get there next. But you also talked about like, when we're thinking about alternatives to the extant, yeah, it seems funny to call it a criminal justice system, but the extant carceral system. You talk about the democratic emancipatory potential of something like community accountability, but you also really, in the same breath, say you're aware that it, too, has its dark sides. Can you talk more about that kind of double-edged possibility of what it means to look outside and beyond these sanctioned carceral systems.

**Anna Terwiel**

Yeah, I think, I think feminists and abolition feminists are our guides here for thinking about it, because they point out how much violence against women, how much gendered and sexual violence happens every single day in our society, and

how the criminal legal system is rarely there to do anything about it. We know that only, only a minority of people report sexual violence to the police, and then only part of those actually lead to charges, and only some of Those actually lead to a conviction. And really, for the most part, there is gendered and sexual violence in our societies that is pervasive, that is extremely serious and extremely harmful, and that the state is just not, certainly, like the criminal state, or like the criminal legal system, is not actually effectively doing anything to stop.

From that perspective of, okay, so we're critical about like, we're critical of state punishment as it exists, but we're also really concerned about interpersonal violence, for instance, gendered and sexual violence. So then what do you do? And abolition feminists have thought a lot about this and have experimented with community accountability or restorative justice or transformative justice initiatives, to say, what can we do to fight this harm? What can we do to seek some kind of accountability, to hold to confront people who've done this stuff with what they've done to make demands on them, to try also to prevent this from happening again. So I think that's where I see, I see so much democratic value and potential in these efforts because, because they're right that this violence is pervasive and unacceptable, and rather than be resigned to *that's just how it is, nothing can be done* to take the risk of working together with other people to see what you might be able to do, and to develop guidelines and processes for then pursuing these kinds of efforts. So in chapter four, I talk about a Seattle based group called communities against rape and abuse *CARA.*

**John Plotz**

We have a carceral studies reading group, and we read, when we read your book, that was, I had to miss the day, but that was, I know they focused on that chapter. So, yeah,

**Anna Terwiel**

They've produced writing as many of these abolition feminist groups have done, like trying to to theorize and share what they've done, what they've learned, what has worked, what has not worked. And so I read that document as like a real effort to try to address harm in like, without further inflicting violence on anyone.

I think their first guideline is like, we need to respect the humanity of everybody involved. This isn't a kind of vendetta group that like is going to pursue violence against agai nst folks accused of wrongdoing. There's a real effort to think about what a process might look like and what they might be able to do to achieve some measure of accountability.

**John Plotz**

I take that point, but I was also struck in that chapter, you also cite Charles Tilly on the question of who has the monopoly on violence. And it's a basic, straightforward point, but it's just we shouldn't forget that notion of the state having the monopoly on, quote, legitimate violence. And though those things seem up for debate, it's not a given that the state has to be the one to we have to make a decision to give the state that, like there's an element of consent.

Maybe I can ask you, we there's such a genealogy here so many people. You obviously talk about Angela Davis in your work. You mentioned Miriam Kaba, who I really, I was thinking about on these questions as well, Ruth Wilson Gilmore. But can I bring in Ursula Le Guin here, just briefly, if you want to comment, I've always struck by the implications of that Le Guin line, "we live in capitalism and its power seems inescapable, but then so did the divine right of kings." In other words, that we live in an imaginative structure as much as we live in a kind of physical one. And, yeah,

**Anna Terwiel**

no, and I've been reading more sci fi of late. I've come to the genre very late, and I still haven't read any Le Guin that's in my near future. Yeah,

**John Plotz**

actually, the dispossessed is talks about prison abolition right at the get go. That is one of the first scenes. Is basically these kids on this anarchist Moon rediscovering they reinvent the prison, and they successfully reinvent it, and then they're terrified by what they've invented. I love it. It's four pages, but it's brilliant.

**Anna Terwiel**

I look forward to reading that. It so the line that you quoted from the Le Guin actually reminds me a lot of what Angela Davis does in *Are prisons obsolete?* which is to insist that even by raising the question to try to break the common sense of prisons, in part by reminding us of prior institutions and practices that seemed inevitable or like they were just never going to end, and that were successfully overthrown through collective action. So for Davis, it's racial chattel slavery. We absolutely still live in its afterlives, and nonetheless, like one form of this unfreedom, of this exploitation and this domination was successfully ended through the Civil War. Then she talks about lynching that that came after that. And of course, like Ida B Wells and many others like, it took a lot of work to tend that practice. So

yeah, I recognize that invitation to to really see the world as it is now, and like the oppressive systems that exist in it as potentially open to change. And also, I think maybe at a more personal level, like I read it as an invitation to join the struggle of those who will try to make it obsolete, even if we don't know the timeline, like we don't know, like no victory is guaranteed but to commit yourself to that, to that struggle, and I think that's one of the things. I haven't talked much about Angela Davis yet, but she's really at the core, like at the heart of the book. I associate her with *agonistic abolitionism*, and

**John Plotz**

I want you to associate with her with Brandeis too, because we're very proud of that genealogy, I think her reading Marcuse there was so influential in her going to Germany eventually, and being exposed to this kind of late Frankfurt school thinking__

**Anna Terwiel**

amazing. We should Yes, and like Brandeis, should honor her if it hasn't already, if just, I would love to see a symposium, or just, that's a really valuable connection to be proud of.

**John Plotz**

Agreed.

**Anna Terwiel**

So I see Davis as both offering a really strong critique, like a moment of no to to the prison industrial complex, as she puts it, but then also as offering, or, like affirming, a positive vision that she gets. I think a lot of she gets a lot from working with WEB DuBois and this concept of abolition democracy, but like looking back to the abolition of slavery and then the reorganization politically, economically, socially in the United States, to change a slave society into something approximating equal citizenship for black and white people.

She offers that as a as like, in part, to help us imagine, I think, what abolitionism might look like, or just like, what to Yeah, to remind us of like victories in the past that that took a lot of struggle, but that were able to advance equality and freedom and democracy in a really meaningful way, also in an incomplete way; we got Jim Crow, we got we got intensified lynching. now we're in mass incarceration. So like, the struggle goes on, but we can take inspiration from from those people who struggled before us. And I think she invites us to take inspiration from radical reconstruction, to help us think about what the kind of radical change of prison

abolition might look like. That. It's in part I read her as not rejecting the state, not rejecting law. There are abolitionists who there's a strong anarchist tradition in abolitionism, but I read Davis as a Democratic socialist who sees a lot of potential in trying to trying to create enough popular power to change what the state does and for whom, and to use it to advance meaningful democracy.

**John Plotz**

Maybe the point of the radical imagination allows us to connect to your right to comfort. Maybe there's radical comfort. Can we talk about that?

**Anna Terwiel**

The chapter begins with a discussion of how abolitionists think about rights and rights claims, and like, whether there's anything to be gained from them. Because, of course, there's also such important critiques of rights discourse as just a fig leaf over the reality of just like vastly vast inequality, if it's okay, so maybe on paper, we have equal rights, but like in practice, there's so like the racialized wealth gap and other indicators of like vast inequality, rather than conclude that rights claims will get us nowhere, because they are inevitably fully going to be part of liberalism or like part of the status quo. I suggest that maybe emergent rights claims can help, can help us imagine what abolitionism might be for. And so an emergent rights claim is a claim that isn't yet recognized widely as a right that we have.

So it's like an insurgent rights claim, maybe, and like many rights claims that we now take for granted, once were emergent. So yeah, I suggest that the right to comfort could orient us to an abolitionist democracy. The context in which I develop it is that of extreme heat in prisons, in many prisons across the country, especially in the south, but not only, prisons are not always air conditioned, and incarcerated people are exposed to extremely uncomfortable but also life threatening temperatures. And so then there's resistance to air conditioning these places out of a sense that prisons ought to be uncomfortable because, like some degree of physical suffering is part of the penalty that people pay, and this is punishment.

And so, there's a desire for there's a desire for people to suffer, and there's a moralization of that suffering as the rendering of justice, and yeah, the right to comfort counters that. So it really proposes a different way of looking at the situation, inviting us to consider that maybe we actually have a right to be comfortable, like not and maybe even incarcerated people and people convicted of crimes do not need to suffer, and that their suffering is not part of the rendition of justice, but that perhaps all of us incarcerated, non incarcerated, have a right to comfort and so on the outside, actually, to stay within prisons like that might also translate to affirming a right to hug, a right for the children and loved ones of

incarcerated people. They're incarcerated loved one, there is a there's so many limitations on visitation, and then, especially in recent years, a move toward like online visitation of prison takes people away from their communities, from their loved ones, from their houses, from their jobs, and to then deprive folks of touch, like, yeah, like hugging their children, or like, hugging their loved one, we need to take really seriously and like, the right to comfort. It could be one way of thinking about we really want to affirm that right to touch.

**John Plotz**

So can I add another axis and if you don't want to go there, it's totally fine. But I have a colleague, a friend, old friend of mine, Sharon Dolovich. She's worked on prisoner's rights for a long time, but her latest set of articles is about the status of correctional officers. Life expectancies are very low. It's a very crummy job. There's a lot of cortisol and stress involved, and one of the things she's tackling is the problem of the prison as like a space of dehumanization, not just as you said, where it's intended to punish people as prisoners with dehumanization, but in fact, correctional officers are themselves as well, dehumanized by the nature of the work they're doing And the way we've construed it, could that be part of that conversation as well?

**Anna Terwiel**

I think so. I was emphasizing, like, incarcerated people's exposure to extreme temperatures, but like, insofar as correctional officers are also in those spaces, like it affects them as well. And as you say, Yeah, I think rates of suicide and self-harm are considerable in this profession, even as it also offers, I think, relatively like a good salary and a pension and benefits like it also, in some ways, is an attractive job in comparison to others, but then it's a tough bargain--

**John Plotz**

And I think that might only be true in a universe of very limited choices. I don't want to disagree with you on the facts, but I do feel like it is. There's a reason a lot of those prisons in New York are in upstate New York, where there's not that many other economic opportunities; you don't see people flocking to the job if other alternatives present themselves, I think.

**Anna Terwiel**

I see abolition as needing to provide and fight for alternatives. Incarcerated people should be not incarcerated, and those who currently get by because of a job in the Department of Corrections like everybody else, need to have other ways of

making a good living and getting the benefits that that we all need and we all deserve.

**John Plotz**

So maybe we can make this the final turn there on that note, to invite you to think about a Recallable Book.

**Anna Terwiel**

Yeah, there's so much on abolition, I thought of, like one really influential, a bit older, but like, short and very accessible book is Angela Davis's *Are prisons obsolete* from 2003 A really valuable, concise overview of some of this thinking for folks who are interested in, like older thinking about alternative justice mechanisms, or like alternative ways to resolve or like to respond to interpersonal harm, I would also recommend Nils Christie's essay conflicts as property, a Very compelling account of what some of the downsides are of criminal law and criminal courts as the vehicles through which to respond to harm. So I think what it does really well is show how poorly the current system does regarding its own criteria of success, since Christie talks about how victims are basically completely kept apart from like criminal proceedings and like, what the democratic costs are of outsourcing conflict resolution to lawyers and judges and just like professionals and that the kind of de - killing that happens and like that, see that as another important reason why abolitionism is part of a democratic project like it's it invites us to think how we individually and with others around us. What could we do? Yeah, maybe we can do better than the state in some ways. And let's think about that. Let's try.

**John Plotz**

Yeah, that's great. Well, so glad you ended with '74-'75 because that allows me to end with Le Guin. I will say another word about *The Dispossessed*, just to say it's called an ambiguous utopia, and I think its spirit comes in a line from William Morris, which is that people fight for things, and then they find out, when they fought for them, that they didn't get what they wanted, and they have to fight for them again under different names.

Speculative fiction forces you to think about those different names that things go under, and the way that we're constantly re inscribing systems, without thinking about it, without bringing them to mind. And the work of fiction is to just help bring to mind how we do actually live, not how we think we live, but how we're, in fact living. And thank you so much. The one book is wonderful. I wish it all the best. It should flourish. And this conversation has been a pleasure and a real act of generosity from you and thanks.

And for those of you listening at home, thank you for listening. You will find related material. I think the most recent thing you will find that's related is Mark Latteney and Matthew Larson's book about ancient Mediterranean incarceration. We just spoke with them a couple of months ago, and other topics that are close to this also come up on the podcast, so have a listen. From all of us, thanks and goodbye for now.