"IMA MAKE IT LOOK FLY!"

ABOLITIONIST FEMINIST AESTHETIC CODING IN FASHION AND ADORNMENT

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As an abolitionist, fat, Xicana femme, I navigate social media with attention to images that conjure femme-centered futures big enough to deconstruct the state's inherent settler-colonial anti-Blackness, xenophobia, and misogyny. The first time I saw @thoughty_ organizer's #DefendTheCriminalized bodysuit on Instagram, I was taken aback by the unapologetically abolitionist stance and style of this piece of clothing.[1] The Instagram post featured the one-piece bodysuit laid over a floral desk calendar that reads June 2018. The tight-fit lines of the garment are framed by a stapler and tape dispenser on one side and a pen on the opposite side. The sexiness of the bodysuit is counterbalanced by elements of work, craft, and collective organization included in the photograph. The more I looked at the post, the more I realized the importance of the garment and its form as a bodysuit. The square neckline is formfitting to the chest and torso with thin, fixed straps. Lettering across the bodysuit powerfully links the carceral state to racial capitalism along with the conceptual binaries that organize these violent institutions and the urgent need for abolition in order to imagine radical forms of freedom.* Together, the message and

* The implicit links between the carceral state and racial capitalism are bound up in the physical, political, and sensorial lives of those crushed by anti-Black cisheteronormative US law.

aesthetic choice (which are inseparable) name the urgency of abolition to imagine radical forms of freedom. When I think about wearing this bodysuit, I feel a sense of radicalness and femme fierceness. Bodysuits, as a form of clothing, convey femme-ness, femininity, fashioning, and sensuality all wrapped up in a single article of clothing.* Without reducing to the "binaries" of man/woman, male/female—which are central to statecraft—this bodysuit is a gesture to queer femininities that challenge gender and sex and, accordingly, challenge the larger carceral state. Among other things, the #DefendtheCriminalized bodysuit is a poetic call to action that references the body, making express the connection between the politics of the body and freedom work.

This article examines the abolitionist feminist work of two Instagram accounts, @thoughty_organizer and @emotionalgangzter, with the hope of understanding how each platform utilizes abolitionist aesthetics as a catalyst for organizing against the state. The #DefendTheCriminalized Collective (which operates under the username @thoughty_organizer) uses their Instagram account to form a rigorous and playful relationship with abolitionist language; they use sartorial and embodied aesthetics as a vehicle to address the complexities of dismantling prison systems. Similarly, writer, organizer, and abolitionist Alejandra Pablos (who operates under the Instagram username @emotionalgangzter) joins them in using her profile as a popular education site that, among other things, critiques the most pervasive narratives used by those in the immigrant justice movement. These two accounts are in conversation with each other, in real time, and have organized collaboratively in the past. Unlike other prison abolition social media campaigns, the two accounts I discuss here are striking because they have created an online abolitionist feminist aesthetic code. This code is transmitted through the fashion and adornment of femme and gender nonconforming people.

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* For this essay, femme is defined as a radical form of femininity that seeks to challenge sexist, racist, and homophobic diatribes. Femme acts in defiance to the patriarchal world and invites us to reimagine femme through an abolitionist framework. This definition is inspired by a genealogy influenced by the works of Kara Keeling, Natasha Omise'eke Tinsley, Julia Serrano, Lisa Duggan, and Kathleen McHugh.

This article seeks to make an intervention into abolition feminism by closely examining online communities that center the many connected calls for state abolition. With attention to the critical importance of aesthetics, style, self-artistry, and the fashion choices of women, femmes, and gender nonconforming Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, I argue that the abolitionist feminist aesthetics inherent in the expressive choices of these online communities are based in a poetics of visuality, embodied sensuality, and femme labor that challenge masculinist—and more generally sex/gender normative—perceptions of anti-prison activism while also deepening analysis about the meaning and practice of abolition.

INSTAGRAM AND THE POLITICS/ POETICS OF VISUALITY

The photographic archive that I focus on in this essay is rooted in a poetics of visuality and sensuality that illuminate the role of aesthetics in abolitionist feminist thought. Gloria Anzaldúa's poetic approach to visual theory understands images to be theory-made; images are allowed to speak for themselves and offer theoretical engagement through composition, form, and medium.[2] The Instagram photographs representing imagery like the bodysuit not only think for themselves, they also cocreate theoretical and active communities centered around mutual aid, consciousness raising, and abolition. More than that though, they put forward theory of (and *through*) the transformatively beautiful and sensual.

Beyond the notion of image-as-theory, I also draw on the work of transdisciplinary scholar Jillian Hernandez to read Instagram as a photographic archive.[3] I also read it as a repository of creative works and as a uniquely positioned social media platform that utilizes photography as a means to draw in viewers' attention, which also makes it an important addition to online community and university activism. With Instagram, photographic and visual information is foregrounded, amplifying the aesthetic dimensions of political messaging and taking seriously the abolitionist message transferred onto the bodysuits as a

living text. Through this medium, abolitionist organizers and believers attend to the hypervisible bodies and invisible labor of Black, Indigenous, undocumented, women, femmes, and queer people.[4]

As Hernandez points out, visual archives cannot possibly hold all information, because these digital spaces are also made up of anti-Black, anti-Brown algorithms designed by corporate capitalism. They are also heavily regulated and emphasize individualism. Yet, with Instagram as a stage, activists produce their own resistance code in which users advocate for and organize the abolishment of capitalism, including through the anti-capitalist practice of cocreation and corroboration in the form of reposts, comments, or "likes." While this digital archive of feminist abolition depends heavily on the combined use of photographs and text to resist the state violence deployed through political and deputized actors against Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and (im)migrant communities, it's striking that the violence being resisted often manifests on a visual register (not only via surveillance but also through destructive projections). Traveling alongside Anzaldúa's thinking about images and Hernandez's insight into the communal, unruly, and (thus) abolitionist potential of digital media, we may be able to see how women and femmes of color popularize abolitionist aesthetics through these online platforms and communities.

ABOLITION AESTHETICS, EMBODIMENT, AND THE MASCULINIST "UNIFORM" OF ANTI-PRISON ORGANIZING

To contextualize the importance of visuality, sensuality, and adornment to abolition aesthetics, I point readers to some of the sartorial logics of anti-prison organizing. As a queer femme, I have spent the last decade of my life in graduate school studying prison abolition. There have been many times when I have felt isolated in prison-abolitionist spaces and was read as suspect because of my stylish, fat femme-ness. Anti-prison and anti-police organizing is often embodied by an anti-femme fashion and bodily aesthetic hewn out of masculinist anarchist politics. Those who deviate from this aesthetic—or who see the very

potential of aesthetic as important in imagining radical futures organized around freedom—are read as insincere, as problematic consumer capitalists, or as frivolous and unfocused on the cause. To be clear, the spectrum of aesthetics to which I am attentive does not position abolitionist masculine and femme fashion as existing on two polar extremes. Instead, I view these categories as multiple, dialogical, and in dynamic conversation with one another because they share an abolitionist ideal; however, in the context of anti-prison organizing culture, they often operate according to different expressions and codes of adornment. However, the traditional cismasculinism of some radical organizing movements may inform the way adornment is considered in the work of freedom.

In anti-prison and anti-police organizing spaces, I have experienced individuals wearing the "all black uniform" and other types of recognized anarchist color combinations (black and red) as preferred by people often read as "authorial."[5] But in the abolitionist activist spaces I visited, the black-blocking uniform was rarely body conscious. Instead, it was aimed at erasing bodies and the differences that inform the lived experience of those bodies. As a fat, queer femme, I came to feel as though abolition was something that had to be separated from my body and my personal fashion and style choices. Abolition and radical freedom spaces seemed to be strictly rooted in a disembodied, disaffected, academic or intellectual disposition. As a result, these spaces can be seen as masculinized and anti-aestheticized. I make a distinction between the #DefendTheCriminalized bodysuit and the respectable activist uniform to further reveal the bodysuit as a mode of fashioned aesthetics that can help us imagine queer femme abolitionist futures.

The use of the #DefendtheCriminalized bodysuit, a historically fraught article of clothing, enriches the sartorial landscape and the very analysis of anti-prison organizing by implicitly challenging the policing of women's bodies. The bodysuit was originally created by French gymnast Jules Leotard to wear during evaluated performances on the trapeze.[6] In the 1940s, designers Claire McCardell and Mildred Orrick created their own versions of the suit inspired by elements of

dance in their one-piece stretchy leotard. These early iterations of the bodysuit created controversy, which led to censorship and policing of women's bodies in the public sphere, similar to the policing of bathing suits. Eventually, in 1985, Donna Karen utilized the bodysuit as a foundational piece for her Seven Easy Pieces collection, launching a minimalistic version made from jersey. Understanding the bodysuit means understanding the activated history of policing bodies.

Beyond this, the term "bodysuit" explicitly references the "body," and the policing of it functions according to a weaponizable politics of respectability that polices the body *by* policing clothing, style, and embodied aesthetics. This weaponization occurs even among those who would claim to embrace a radical politics. For example, when the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective became a portal for me and for other women, femmes, and genderqueer abolitionists to come together and curate conversations about fashion(ing), aesthetics, adornment, embodiment, style, and sensuality,[7] our work garnered a number of negative online comments. Many of the negative comments were more aggressively pitched toward those wearing the #DefendtheCriminalized bodysuit, revealing an ongoing commitment to the "binaries" that undergird the logics of prisons and policing. Following this punitive understanding of the controlled/controllable body, the commenters particularly antagonized and criticized the fat bodies, femme bodies, and gender nonconforming bodies seen working the bodysuit. However, through styling and repurposing aesthetic items, the #DefendtheCriminalized Collective draws on the traditions of gender and body nonconforming communities* in order to interrogate and ultimately blur and dismantle binaristic laws and damaging stereotypes

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* The followers featured throughout the digital archive are in many instances abolishing the gender binary by taking up the important work started decades before by elders such as Sylvia Rivera, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Marsha P. Johnson, and countless others. As a result, in this essay I strictly focus on reading the photographs of the screen-printed clothing, ephemera, and adornment techniques. This critical decision is due to safety concerns and privacy measures for those featured wearing the clothing. Many of the community members and supporters are Black, Indigenous, gender nonconforming, undocumented, formerly incarcerated individuals whose lives are always/already precarious.

about gender and the body. In so doing, they provide brief instances of abolitionist imaginaries.

The assumed masculinity of activist labor and street protest reveals the ways in which embodied expressions of femininity go unseen, unacknowledged, dismissed, and always doubted. But the bodysuit centers attention on those who do not embody masculinity only. More importantly, the bodysuit refuses an essentialist, reductive account of the body and allows us to envision the importance of desire in political discourse (which are not antithetical, as anarchists have historically suggested regarding the role of pleasure in work). In her own radical thinking, Audre Lorde insisted upon the power of the erotic (of desire) and the relationship our bodily and experiential differences have in the erotic.[8] Where the wording on the bodysuit (and perhaps the bodysuit itself) issues demands like "Abolish Binaries," the negative reactions to it (even among fellow abolitionists) draw us to ask questions like: How might our ideas of the body reflect legacies of racial, gender, and carceral violence that are anti-difference? How might we queer the importance of bodily difference? Could femme of color aesthetics and embodied adornment allow us to really see and celebrate bodily difference without categorizing or punishing it, which is central to the abolition project? Beyond aesthetic and erotic matters, the bodysuit makes possible an acknowledgment of who exactly is doing abolitionist labor and how widely varied and invisible those laborers, and the bodily impact of their labors, can be. After the bodysuits were created, the collective also screen printed shorts—referred to as "booty shorts"—with the phrase ABOLISH ICE on the backside. Shortly thereafter we began to see different color bodysuits (black and gray), "unisex" shirts, hoodies, crew neck sweaters, and baby onesies. In wearing the consciousness-raising clothing, abolitionist action is happening, but it has been turned into something personal, something integrated with the body and the bodies of comrades rather than an abstracted or deaestheticized, disembodied practice. The ways in which these collectives co-create within their communities and alongside others teach us how online activism is being translated into personal action by incorporating visual elements that can be worn

and carried on the individual's body. The clothes show that we have a stake in this political movement and, when shared on Instagram, it gets translated into a whole aesthetic activism.

FASHIONING AESTHETICS AS ABOLITIONIST PROPAGANDA

"The femme aesthetics of the garments worn and shared by the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective also function as abolitionist propaganda.[9] The use of "propaganda" is similar to the work done by prison abolitionist organization Critical Resistance (CR), which collaborates with visual artists to create visual campaigns, images, and other forms of propaganda. In addition to the aesthetic function of the bodysuit, this propaganda actively shifts the narratives surrounding abolition within (im)migrant justice narratives, particularly in the way that messages like "Abolish Binaries" might be utilized to not only undermine gender categories but also binaristic categories like "good immigrant" and "criminal immigrant." Furthermore, the message on the bodysuit and subsequent garments work to express the meaning of prison abolition, which, according to Angela Davis, seeks to end policing and the use of the prison system as the primary solution to address larger social, political, and economic problems.[10] This also means an eradication of the prison system and any other sites of forced imprisonment such as immigrant and juvenile detention centers. As such, another screenprint shirt created by the collective states "ABOLISH ICE &/ ABOLISH DHS &/ ABOLISH Prisons &/ ABOLISH the Police &/ ABOLISH Binaries &/ ABOLISH Landlords &/ ABOLISH the Nation State &/ #DefendTheCriminalized." The block-lettered words state the collective demands of the "#DefendTheCriminalized Call to Action." Later reprints of the screen added phrases like ABOLISH Poverty" and "ABOLISH Landlords." Here, aesthetic choices are made into propaganda through certain rhetorical strategies like printing the word ABOLISH in all capital letters, repeated eight times, multiplying one right after the other for emphasis.

These abolitionist aesthetic choices also work to undermine binaries and highlight exactly *who* is at the heart of abolitionist by training its focus on fashion as an inside-outside collective practice of resistance. According to their Instagram profile, "the design was created by a collective of illegals, immigrant, and border crossers in Los Angeles" with the understanding that their "affinity *lies with criminalized communities across the nation*: poor, queer, black, refugee folks whose existence and survival is criminalized every single day."[11] To that end, any discussion about abolitionist aesthetic choices must also recognize the reality that incarcerated people have little to no choice about clothing. The bodies and actions of incarcerated people are so heavily surveilled and controlled that it makes it almost impossible to wear anything other than "prison approved uniforms." Yet, it is important to remember that despite the constant surveillance, incarcerated people still find ways to incorporate personal style.[12] As much as the state wants to regulate bodies deemed criminal, these same bodies still find a way to resist. The stylistic and aesthetic resistance by incarcerated people is not lost on the Instagram organizers mentioned in this essay. For them, abolition also must mean that the voices and experiences of those currently or formerly incarcerated people with clothing must be centered. The work created by @thoughty_organizer and @emotionalgangzter utilizes narratives created and shaped by formerly incarcerated people. For example, Pablos (@emotionalgangzter) is open about her experiences as a formerly incarcerated person, and the organizing work that she does on her social media pages is geared toward abolitionist work in Arizona. She is also in constant contact with incarcerated people and actively listens to their needs. For instance, she has organized fundraisers to send commissary money to women inside the Arizona State Prison Complex-Perryville.

The propaganda and resistive function of style for organizers outside *and* inside shows how abolition is ultimately an invitation to imagine the social world in radically different terms. It is an invitation to ask what freedom is or might mean. It is in this spirit that I see abolition aesthetics as central to the project of imagining.

COLLECTIVE DAYDREAMING ON- AND OFFLINE: MAKING ABOLITIONIST FUTURES WITH @THOUGHTY_ORGANIZER AND @EMOTIONALGANGZTER

This article argues that the aesthetic co-creations and collective daydreaming of the Instagram profiles @thoughty_organizer and @emotionalgangzter put into motion abolitionist futures. According to Lena Palacios, Black, Indigenous, and other non-Black women of color "engage in a politics that calls for collective self-recognition and a 'turning away' from the carceral state, every time they daydream about the Americas disappearing into a singular landmass and sacred place called Turtle Island, these collectives engage in ceremony."[13] This collective daydreaming and plotting for the sake of our futures function as world making ceremony, and I would add that the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective and Pablos both offer a glimpse into this abolitionist world-making that centers aesthetics as a way of initiating, activating, and vitalizing the imagination. Daydreaming, like online activism, creates a connection between the online world space and everyday lived space, and the point of imaginative connection is the aestheticized body. Daydreaming and connection are femme-centered organizing principles that expand the type of aesthetic coding I am tracking. In thinking alongside Palacios's description of women coming together, I am interested in how dreams of freedom are envisioned by the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective and produced through online activism that is being transmitted and materialized into actual fashion and bodily objects that make one feel connected to something in the world and online. I also want to invoke the Critical Resistance (CR) and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence statement: "We seek to build movements that not only end violence, but that create a society based on radical freedom, mutual accountability, and passionate reciprocity. In this society, safety and security will not be premised on violence or the threat of violence; it will be based on a collective commitment to guaranteeing the survival and care of all people."[14] #DefendTheCriminalized Collective and Pablos deploy similar tactics committed to building up movements centered on imagining radical

freedom and providing care to those most vulnerable. For example, Pablos and the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective have co-created work with artists and other creatives that vary in scope and in size. These social media accounts do not just exist in the digital space, the organizers have also created events centered on community building such as teach-ins, fundraisers, and parties fostering acts of ceremonies that bring forth a glimpse of abolitionist futures.

The events created by #DefendTheCriminalized Collective are a strong component of their community-building and mutual-aid work. Early on in the group's history, they sold their bodysuit and other articles of screen-printed clothing as a way to fundraise direct assistance to Central American migrants stuck in Tijuana, Mexico. The collective also co-organized with other groups in the Los Angeles, Orange County, and Inland Empire regions to fundraise bail money for people in immigrant detention and direct support for migrants deserted by the California Border Patrol in isolated locations.[15] Additionally, the collective organized events that involved community building such as the "Future Femmes" event. According to the group, the space was imagined for "hood femmes, womxn, and girls" in order to lead with anti-capitalist values that celebrate, dialogue, and build with others.[16] This event, moderated by Pablos, was organized as both a "teach-in" and a "pop-up" event. The organizers associated with both Instagram accounts work to center community, material conditions, and the *situatedness* of differences foregrounded by abolitionist aesthetics, and mutual aid has always been at the heart of their work. For #DefendTheCriminalized, mutual aid includes efforts to gather supplies needed for those in migrant caravans, getting people out of detention, helping community members pay legal fees, and information regarding rent strikes. Mutual aid has been an essential part of the group's objective since its inception, and it continues to fuel the organizing they do online and in real life. All of the work that they do is methodical and discussed in great detail by those participating. In fact, #DefendTheCriminalized Collective's very story begins with an action that sought to bring attention to the way that migration is tied to incarceration. The collective began by staging an act of civil

disobedience, standing and sitting on top of jail beds positioned in one of the busiest intersections in Los Angeles to draw attention to the links between criminalization of migrants and jails/prisons. To be sure, the collective has a deep history of utilizing what is known as "carceral aesthetics." Theorized by scholar Nicole R. Fleetwood, "carceral aesthetics is the production of art under conditions of unfreedom."[17] Abolitionist aesthetics, then, may propose something similar: sensory pleasure in the context of freedom work. This is just a small example of the events organized by the group in order to cultivate digital spaces and in-person spaces that centered abolitionist work and theory. Placing community and collectivism at the core of their work is arguably in the Black radical feminist tradition of adornment and everyday style, to bring attention to the co-optation of #AbolishICE.

The online community that is being built and fortified through the Instagram profiles of @thoughty_organizer and @emotionalgangzter is attentive to the historical legacies of abolition and follows familiar lineages of critique and activism, but they also translate the conceptual work of abolition into a visual vernacular of activism, using textual cues, printed on clothing and through the use of hashtags, in their daily posts to circulate conversations around abolition beyond just the academy. In a world where undocumented (im)migrant people and children are captured, disappeared, and are incarcerated for an indefinite amount of time on a daily basis, abolitionist feminist, inexpressible. This work draws heavily from the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, who teaches us that "the artist uses the imagination to impose order on chaos . . . provides language to distressed and confused people—a language that expresses previously inexpressible."[18]

The #DefendTheCriminalized Collective's focus on making copies, through screen printing and in using Instagram as a mode of circulation of online activism, highlights the importance of the multiple in the work of the femme-centered group. Screen printing is an analogue of the constant posting of the Instagram story. Circulation of reports, petitions, events, news, and other forms of online engagement are currents of involvement and solidarity that are translated directly into material/textual form through the screen-printed garments worn

in "real life." In this way, the fashions become a continuation of the work happening through a different medium, producing yet another sense of shared commitment. This labor of making copies follows the conversation happening between fashion activism and online activism and helps us to understand something about the visuals and fashions that emerge in response to the prison industrial complex.

In the T-shirt project, the repetition of the word "abolish" reminds viewers of the way that communities, especially those criminalized, such as Black, Indigenous, (im)migrant, are unfree. The group was frustrated with the co-opting of the #ABOLISHICE by many in politics and decided to reclaim the term and to explain what it meant for them. For the collective, abolition means "#Defendthecriminalized and is an ongoing CALL TO ACTION / We are unapologetic / Uncompromising / We want liberation for ALL oppressed and criminalized people of the world / Nothing short of that." Stating the goals of the collective and translating them to their followers/audience further advocates how abolition is not only a theoretical framework in which to organize but also a theory in practice. The feminist abolitionist framework that #DefendTheCriminalized utilizes takes into account how femme fashioning and adornment challenge normative logics of white supremacy that aim to obliterate difference through distortion.

PINK SWEATERS ON THE LINE: VISUALIZING INVISIBLE FEMME LABOR AND AESTHETIC RESISTANCE

Although all of the garment styles deployed by @thoughty_organizer and @emotionalgangzter are not pictured in this article, I want to focus briefly on a collection of crew neck sweaters to illustrate the organizers' visual analysis of the labor needed to screen print and ultimately *enact* the call and demand for abolition. The staging of the Instagram photograph of pink hanging sweaters (figure 2) is an intervention into the invisibilized labor of this community. The clothesline in the photograph offers the viewer a brief glimpse of the type of labor

needed in order to create abolitionist feminist aesthetic materials. Part of the collective's abolitionist ethos is a do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic practice, an everydayness and attitude regarding the creative work that they produce and redistribute. The act of screen printing is an embodied technique that involves the artist's attention to reproduction and transfer of the abolitionist message. Utilizing elements normally considered an integral part of household labor such as the clothesline is a mirror of the feminized labor and materials that are often obscured within political and social movements. The movement for abolition is no different. #DefendTheCriminalized Collective understands that labor deemed "feminine/household" is hardly ever made visible and not valued because it happens within the home. Screen printing for the collective is part of the invisibilized domestic and feminized labor that is often the foundation for hundreds of mutual aid networks in poor and criminalized communities. For them, attending to the aesthetic does not require a turning away or abstraction of labor or material conditions.

Fig. 2. Instagram post by @thoughty_organizer, February 1, 2019. Image courtesy of #DefendTheCriminalized Collective.

The post's appropriation of the term "PINK ARMY"[19] also works as a signifier and reference to the mutual aid work and activism done by the 1980s group the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).* They juxtapose the color pink, which is a symbol of domesticity, femininity (and femme-ness), and queerness alongside the word "army," which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as "an organized body of soldiers trained and equipped to fight on land; a land force."** The photograph of various sweaters appearing in the post acts as a metaphor demonstrating the "pink army" ready to organize in the name of dismantling the carceral system. Similarly, the caption and image also mobilize an organic, community-centered and community-facing site of organizing, which challenges the co-optation of the terms abolish/abolition within movement spaces, even amongst the collective's own followers. #DefendTheCriminalized challenges performances of "allyship," including by members of their Instagram following, and instead call for their followers to be respectful "accomplices" in dismantling prisons, detention, borders, and other systems of the carceral state.*** They ask: How are their social media followers

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* Firstly, ACT UP formed in 1987 in New York, NY. During this emergence, ACT UP utilized and transformed modes of resistance, such direct action, videography, and screen printing in response to the AIDS crisis. For example, the appropriation and critical transformation of the pink triangle, historically used to identify gay male prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, is rendered in the collective's 1987 Silence=Death campaign. This references queer resistance within times of political repression and state violence. Secondly, this mode of appropriation in queer codes of resistance by ACT UP can also be seen in the work of @thoughty_organizer in their continuation of this legacy of street protest, DIY aesthetic, and art action. Finally, it is also important to note that the Stonewall rebellion, another important moment in LGBTQIA history, created a link between the criminalization and harassment of LGBTQIA people and prison abolition. Understanding these two historical points in LGBTQIA resistance have also greatly influenced the work of the collective.

** It should be noted that this play with militarism, though, is not without dilemma. As scholars like Julian Go, Amina Mama, and many others have noted, military maneuvers of imperialism, conquest, and border enforcement form the root of modern US policing and are connected to notions of "defense" of the domestic in ways that enable logics of gender violence.

*** The term "accomplice" used by the collective is directly tied to the 2014 zine and statement called "Accomplices not Allies: An Indigenous Perspective

willing to corroborate? In the sale of items and other forms of support, the collective notes that accomplices are "engaging in "MATERIAL SOLIDARITY!" as the money exchanged for these articles of clothing is a form of material solidarity that allows for mutual aid and continues efforts to #DefendTheCriminalized by economically supporting the needs of the community. Being accomplices to abolition is also about defying internalized binaries that surround identity formations such as gender, sexuality, race, disability, and citizenship.

Fig. 3. Instagram post by @thoughty_organizer, December 27, 2018. Image courtesy of #DefendTheCriminalized Collective.

The 2019 post featuring the #DefendTheCriminalized pink sweatshirt is not the first time the collective has worked to visibilize invisible, "domestic," or femme labor in their work. The Melt ICE. Burn Prisons. screen print was first printed on a tube top (later also utilized on turtleneck crop tops) and featured in a post, hanging across clotheslines and Christmas lights (figure 3). Beyond its work to make the invisible visible, this article of clothing echoes the emphasis on femme aesthetics and embodiment, as it is meant to fit tight on the chest and does not have any sleeves or straps, held up, instead, by

Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex" created by Indigenous Action.

tight stitching and/or elastic. What's more, this is one of the designs that demonstrates how the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective has evolved their message into a more succinct abolitionist feminist stance. This position is a direct result of the ongoing contributions, lived experiences, and institutional knowledges of trans people that are an integral part of the collective body and organizing principles. In addition to what I call "#DefendTheCriminalized call to action," the Collective has five other screen prints. The second is ABOLISH ICE, the third is FUCK ICE (infinity sign), the fourth is ABOLISH POL-I.C.E., and the fifth is Melt ICE. Burn Prisons. This last screen print is also one of the most used screen prints by the collective and featured on several different items like totes, sweaters, and shirts. On the tube top, the words "melt" and "ICE" are inside a black rectangle making the lettering direct and minimalist as compared to some of the other screen prints discussed above. The collective is playing on the words melt and ice (as in frozen water). Here ICE is presented as the acronym for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Although one cannot simply melt an institution like ICE, it can be slowly chipped away at. It is important to note the period at the end of the phrase "Melt ICE.," as it signifies a definitive statement that ICE must be dismantled "period." The letters are not created by the paint but through negative space within the black rectangle. The black rectangle can be read as a minimalist representation of a prison, and the text becomes the pathway to freedom. The phrasing on this tube top illustrates the kind of rhetorical/aesthetic play with language that brings intellectual pleasure to the political demand and makes it accessible to the community. Too, the symbolic accomplishment of the black-rectangle-as-prison uses visuals to express what is inexpressible, as Anzaldúa says. The screen-printed design in the photograph uses text and symbols to provide an alternative abolitionist understanding that seeks to inform, educate, and organize the community to see themselves as participating in abolitionist world building.

Finally, a playful but important aesthetic and discursive element of the tube top message is the period at the end of the phrase "Melt ICE," as in ICE must be dismantled "period." While female hip-hop artists like

City Girls and Megan Thee Stallion have widened use of the vernacular term "period," it has been a long-standing expression of definitive discursive force among young Black and Brown femme and queer culture.

The abolitionist feminist discourse utilized by the #DefendTheCriminalized uses femme aesthetics to critique an immigrant rights discourse that refuses to acknowledge the relationship between abolishing ICE and a larger movement for prison abolition. The second phrase on the tube top screen print states "Burn Prisons" in black lettering without any background. It is necessary to pause and examine both phrases in conversation with one another. The collective created "a quick history" documenting the early actions and they state, "In *summer 2018* some of us came together again bc [*sic*] we saw how *politicians, candidates* and mainstream immigrant rights orgs were *coopting and watering down the #AbolishICE* movement . . . Together we created this design ("the call to action" screen-print) to explain what abolishing ICE means to us."[20] This brief look into the history of the collective reminds us that abolishing ICE is not the end but merely an extension of the work already being done to abolish prisons. One cannot exist without the other. They are mirrored movements that must be thought of as connected to one another. The tube top is a reminder of the necessary work that must happen alongside each other. Understanding the #DefendTheCriminalized history reminds us, as the viewer, of the importance of having both of these phrases alongside one another to remind those in the immigrant rights movements of the necessity to also demand for the abolition of prisons.

The phrase "Burn Prisons." acts similarly to "melt" in that they are both actions concentrated around heat and fire. Again, if one institution is going to be "melted away," then the other must also have the same fate which is "burning it down." "ICE" and "Prisons" one alongside the other demonstrate the similarities that exist between the two. As much as government and ICE officials want to say that ICE detention centers are not prisons, the collective reminds us that they are one and the same. Both function as institutions of captivity that together serve as mechanisms of control for communities of color. For this collective, femme clothing and adornment is one of the many

tools they are utilizing to engage in abolitionist organizing with their immediate community in Los Angeles along with their online virtual communities.

BEYOND THE GARMENT: ABOLITIONIST BODILY ADORNMENT

In addition to photographs from followers wearing the abolitionist propaganda, tweets, memes, screenshots of articles, and quotes with themes that range from abolition to anti-capitalism, the Instagram account of the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective includes photographs of other abolitionist feminist aesthetics that include other forms of femme adornment. According to the OED, adornment is "(t)he action or an act of adorning or embellishing something; the result of this; embellishment, ornamentation." From this definition one can assume that adornment is "an act" which I would characterize as a deliberate choice or a series of choices to embellish "an object" or maybe an ornamentation on an object. I would also propose that adornment is an invitation into self-styling and self-artistry that allows bodily difference and experiential knowledge to be presented as a direct affront to the logic of normativity that is predicated on sameness and distortion of difference.

Fig. 4. Instagram post by @thoughty_organizer, July 31, 2018. Image courtesy of #DefendTheCriminalized Collective.

One photograph of femme adornment, highly stylized nail art (see figure 4), demonstrates what Jillian Hernandez calls a "femme Latinx beauty practice(s)." According to Hernandez, this specific beauty practice is a type of poetic and refers to ways cis/trans/queer women and femmes relate to and recognize each other.[21] I also look at the beauty practice of "nail art" and "getting nails done" to examine closely the intimate labor and relationality that this work allows. I highlight the relational aspect of this nail art as being interconnected to larger critiques that seek to destroy the violence enacted against criminalized, undocumented communities.

Nail art is an element of abolitionist femme aesthetics that centers histories of working-class Black, Latinx, and Asian communities. The race/gendered spaces of hair salons and/or nail salons are spaces of community building, intimacy, and sharing. Furthermore, they are built on a poetics of sensuality and visuality. When this image appeared on my Instagram feed, I was immediately drawn to this photograph of someone's hands, specifically moved by the Old English calligraphy design on the nails of the index, middle, and ring finger of both hands, calligraphy that calls up Black and Latinx vernacular style. The focus on the hands also reminds me of the labor that is done with hands and how the hands can be a site of exploitation and intense work especially for the gendered bodies of women, femmes, and gender nonconforming people. This photograph also demonstrates the social media–based labor as well as the embodied labor behind the nails. In the photo, the points of each nail appears as if it is sharp enough to inflict injury or pain—femininity, here, is not a docile accompaniment to masculine codes. With these nails, femininity becomes femme-ininity, which breaks with the sex/gender binary that supports white supremacy. I want to linger on the way that abolitionist femme adornment can be utilized as a weapon instead of being seen as "weak" and/or other gendered assumptions. These nails are a reminder of the way that fashioning and adornment can be utilized as protection. It is also important to note the hashtag #MilitantFemininity used in the caption. For the collective, this is a hashtag that is utilized throughout their social media page and functions as a challenge to the gendered idea of femininity as

weak and self-absorbed. Adornment of the nails is just as important as the style and shape of the nail, and it is the place where the nail technician shows their skills.

The photograph documents a femme aesthetic practice that externalizes abolitionist feminist thought as a response to the invisibilized labor of women, femmes, and gender nonconforming people of color. Nail art is not something new or unique; it is an aesthetic choice that has made its way into popular, mainstream "high fashion" publications and the repertoire of designers. For many working-class women and femmes who have expressed themselves using nail art, their aesthetic choices were often ridiculed as a caricature rooted in misogynoir. For example, the white nail color acts as a blank canvas for the nail technician to receive some guidance and/or a request from the customer. In this instance, asking a nail technician to write out the phrase "FCK ICE" in calligraphy might prompt them to ask about the meaning behind the phrase, which, in turn, would result in a moment of community building and sharing between both people. Notably, the caption for the photograph says "💅🏾FCK💅🏾ICE💅🏾 All day, everyday [*sic*]. #HastaLaVictoria #Venceremos! #MilitantFemininity."[22] This caption is similar to what is written on the nails on the hands featured in the photograph. The design on the nails says "FCK ICE," an abbreviation of Fuck the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Although the use of the expletive might offend some, it is important to closely examine the way in which it is mobilized as a crucial element of femme aesthetic adornment. If one examines the phrase "FCK ICE," the first part of that statement, "FCK," I argue is utilized by the person in the photograph to mean "destroy" and "put an end to" ICE and all of its actions. ICE, as an agency, is responsible for executing deportation orders such as kidnapping people from their homes or taking people away during routine immigration check-ins; it is also responsible for caging families, including children, for an indeterminate amount of time. The real profanity occurring on these nails is the violent acts committed by ICE and its officials. Putting the phrase "FCK ICE" on your nails is an abolitionist feminist act of femme adornment that utilizes nail art as tool for abolitionist organizing.

FEMME AESTHETIC ABOLITION: A PATTERN OF PRACTICE

Prison abolition is a pattern for everyday living that is manifested not only through the community building happening online via social media but also in daily activity and life. Alejandra Pablos's personal account catalyzes feminist abolition discourse while crossing it with other aesthetic actions. Pablos is an Arizona-based abolitionist writer and organizer who is actively fighting against her own deportation order. She has been featured many times on the #DefendTheCriminalized social media page and considers herself part of the collective. Her social media account is an insightful critique on criminalization, immigrant rights movement discourse (specifically deserving vs. undeserving), detention/incarceration, sexism, and reproductive health. Through her social media account, Pablos has also utilized abolitionist feminist aesthetics to convey critiques on the detention-industrial complex that further reinforces the necessity to continue saying #AbolishICE. The photograph and social media posts included below (figure 5) were taken at the 2019 Coachella Music and Arts Festival.

The caption on the post reads:

> DHS (department of homeland "security") is the largest police force in the US and is under complete control of the Trump administration. They have shown that they have no respect for anyone's human rights and that they are completely unaccountable. As a movement abolish ICE means:
>
> 1. Defunding ICE so they can no longer surveil, detain, and deport, our communities and reinvest that money into the basic education, health services and infrastructure for our community. It isn't enough to simply move ICE from one agency to another. We need to disinvest from policing at every level in this country, and that includes ICE.
>
> 2. Defund detention: There are [a] record number of people in immigration detention right now, and over 70% are in private detention centers. Most of the people currently behind bars right now could easily be released by ICE if they just paroled them in [*sic*]

or gave them bonds. This should be done immediately and DHS should close down all detention centers.

3. Decriminalize Migration: That means changing the laws that are criminalizing people at the border. Before the [1930s] migrating wasn't a crime. This changed when racist lawmakers wanted to create a way to lock up migrants and deal with [the] "mexican" problem. Last summer, through his Zero Tolerance policy, the DOJ weaponized these laws to create the family separation crisis. These laws are used in my home town of Tucson to prosecute thousands of people through Operation Streamline. We should immediately repeal 1325 and 1326 that make crossing the border a crime, and also take away the '96 immigration laws that make it easier to deport immigrants like myself. #chingalamigra @conmijente 📹: @laqulonaconcausa[23]

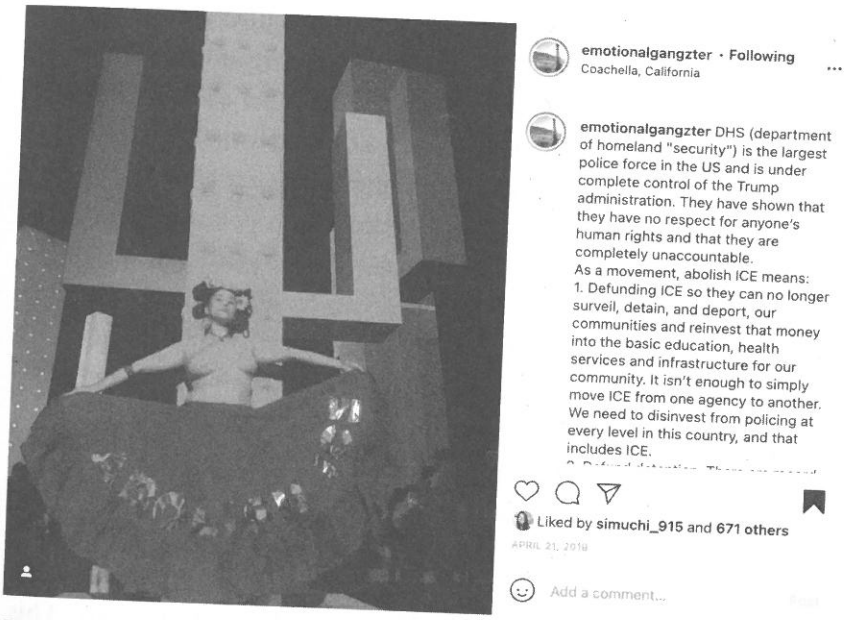

Fig. 5. Instagram post by @emotionalgangzter, April 21, 2019. Image courtesy of Alejandra Pablos.

Pablos succinctly and eloquently describes what abolishing ICE means; it is not just as a call to action that gained popularity in the summer of 2018 when it became widely known that children and families were held in detention centers alongside the Trump regime's "Zero

Tolerance" (im)migration policy. The hashtag #AbolishICE made its rounds, not only trending on social media sites such as Twitter but also within the news cycle and the political sphere as many politicians began using it on their social media platforms. It is important to note how Pablos utilizes a photograph of herself wearing a skirt emblazoned with the words "Abolish ICE" to call in her followers and others to incorporate feminist abolitionist analysis that works to end ICE and other governmental agencies that prey on criminalized people. The photograph activates the viewers and the caption, then provides them with an opportunity to think through the function of ICE and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in a critical way.

The femme aesthetics of fashioning within abolitionist feminist discourses that I argue for in this essay are what draws the viewers into Pablos's post. Making an abolitionist feminist call to action through the use of her wardrobe, Pablos takes the opportunity of attending Coachella to make a statement about the need to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The photograph includes elements of color, lighting, and sensuality that draws the audience's attention to the photograph of Pablos posing in front of a colorful, geometric, large-scale Saguaro statue. Abolitionist feminist aesthetics of femme fashioning and adornment are key elements for Pablos and her organizing. The adornment of, alteration to, and expansiveness of her skirt is what makes Pablos such an important figure when discussing abolitionist feminist aesthetics. The skirt is an example of the creative labor that organizers like as Pablos engage in. The garment was designed by Pablos and executed by a community of like-minded kin; in the photograph we see her arms extended out and with her hands holding onto a portion of her long skirt, unfolded and spread out, perfectly displaying the words "ABOLISH ICE" sewed on the bottom. This skirt is reminiscent of those utilized by ballet folklorico performers who are a key staple in Mexican culture, practice, and tradition. It is designed to be worn by different body shapes, refusing the shaming logic of sizing that defines mainstream fatphobic fashion. It is also necessary to note that the skirt features the words "abolish" and "ICE" in all capital letters as if the statement was being yelled out. The space

between each word allows the viewer to read the phrase accurately so that there is no mistake about what the skirt and Pablos are saying. Pablos is defiant in her stance, with her head tilted up slightly as her gaze remains steadfast, looking down toward the camera. In 2018 her story received national attention when she was singled out by ICE after participating in an act of civil disobedience and was detained for forty-three days.[24] As a result, on December 11, 2018, she was given a deportation order by an immigration judge and, at the time of writing, is actively appealing that decision. She was granted bond and brought home after a nationwide, organized community effort advocating for her release. Her defiance in the photograph is not only directed toward the camera, it is also directed at the violent detention and removal that the US nation-state wants to enact on Pablos. Despite her criminalization, Pablos is steadfast in her commitment to abolition and expanding the critique of abolition within (im)migrant rights spaces.

The creativity and resilience of the work created by Pablos and the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective is manifested through the femme aesthetic choices of both online accounts. These two accounts understand the importance of embodying an everyday practice of prison abolition and the necessity of externalizing that politic through fashion. Early writings about abolition and radical feminism describe two important elements of abolitionist organizing; for example, writer Fay Honey Knopp discusses two elements of activism: consciousness raising and creativity.[25] These two elements are enacted throughout Pablos's social media page. For example, Pablos swiftly and deliberately engages in political education work as consciousness raising that elevates issues of criminalization, detention, and incarceration within Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other non-Black people of color communities. This online activist labor is parallel to the reworking of the skirt so that it contains not only a political statement but also a call to action, similar to the work done by the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective. The statement created by Pablos is rooted in an abolitionist feminist discourse that uses something as simple as a skirt to make a statement about the larger structural issues and the need to dismantle the institution that is enacting so much violence to the immigrant

community. Using a skirt, a piece of clothing synonymous with femininity—especially something rooted in Mexican cultural traditions—to bring forth a conversation centered on abolition is abolitionist feminist aesthetics in practice. Abolition is not just some abstract idea. Through the work of Pablos and her social media page, one can see how hers is a daily practice of embodiment. In turn, the act of wearing this skirt at the event that takes place about 114 miles away from Adelanto Processing Center, where people are detained in inhumane conditions, has the power to familiarize people with an understanding of abolition feminism (figure 5). Pablos is utilizing a femme aesthetic fashioning and adornment approach to convey an abolitionist feminist discourse as to why it is necessary to dismantle ICE along with the DHS as communicated in her caption. Despite the fact that Coachella draws people in from all over the country and stages musical acts from all over the world, including Latin American countries, the disconnect of inviting musicians from countries like Mexico while ICE continuously criminalizes the migration of people from Central America and Mexico makes one wonder exactly how culture is welcomed and valued while the people who carry that culture are not.

I argue that the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective and Pablos's skirt used an abolitionist feminist discourse that mobilizes femme aesthetic coding in fashion and adornment to convey aesthetics rooted in prison abolition. The various screen prints created by the collective, especially their "Call to Action," is a cartography for abolitionist everyday practice. The screen print is a study of the various maps of abolitionist everyday practices and strategies that moves a theoretical concept into the aesthetic sphere of fashion and adornment. I imagine the #DefendTheCriminalized "Call to Action" printed on everyday objects of life from books to buildings to on the street and, ultimately, inside the hearts and minds of the community. That said, I argue for the importance of this abolitionist feminist practice that was manifested through online fashion and adornment. This femme aesthetic coding I named throughout this article was an external manifestation of an internal theory that responded to institutionalized oppression and violence at the hands of the US nation-state. The posts featured

throughout this text are also examples of coded images that were posted and then circulated throughout social media and now have a life of their own through publishing. In crafting a careful analysis of a handful of Instagram posts, I was able to conduct a close reading of the fashion photographs in order to unpack their meanings. More importantly, the photographs document the community building taking place on social media centered around prison abolition. This work is important because it seeks to make visible that which is often invisibilized. It draws attention to the importance of shifting culture and culture making, which includes fashion and adornment, within abolitionist theory and practice that moves beyond the academy. The garments featured in the photographs speak to an abolitionist feminist poetics of visuality and sensuality that give the body power and force.

Embodying the collective's call to action, I decided to post a photograph of myself wearing the bodysuit, which accentuated every curve and carefully outlined my protruding stomach with the hashtags #abolitionist and #FemmeOfColorVisibility.[26] I tagged the collective, and they responded immediately with "OMG FRIEND?! Can we PLEASE SHARE!??? Like PORFAS." This online exchange further reinscribed the importance of community building and how a bodysuit on a fat Xicana femme is an act of resistance that centers women, femmes, and other gender nonconforming Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Similar to the translation of a screen print, my photograph was reposted and circulated amongst the community of followers that #DefendTheCriminalized has cultivated. I am proud to be part of such a community of abolitionists committed to challenging narratives of "deserving" and "undeserving" within (im)migrant justice discourses. Following and contributing to these accounts committed to popular and critical education about abolition constantly move and challenge me to rethink my own learned understanding of abolition. Through this writing and the online activist work at the center of it all, I, similar to Pablos, consider myself a member of the #DefendTheCriminalized squad, a network of women, femmes, and gender nonconforming folks who believe in and organize around abolition as an everyday practice and future. In owning one of the #DefendTheCriminalized "Call to

Action" bodysuits, I feel energized and compelled to show how the body creates new forms of shared engagement and solidarity that happen through visual codes, signs, and elements, and that using these codes can make one feel like they belong. I am committed to abolishing the many abstract and visual boundaries that alienate femme, woman, gender nonconforming sensuality and activism and that seek to keep our communities apart. In the spirit of abolitionist feminist aesthetic coding, I close this article with a collage poem that I was inspired to write based on the visions of the #DefendTheCriminalized Collective.

The Squad

ABOLISH ICE &
ABOLISH DHS &
ABOLISH Prisons &
ABOLISH The Police &
ABOLISH Binaries &
ABOLISH Landlords &
ABOLISH The Nation
State &
#DefendTheCriminalized

ABOLISH ICE &
ABOLISH DHS &
ABOLISH Prisons &
ABOLISH The Police &
ABOLISH Binaries &
ABOLISH Landlords &
ABOLISH Poverty &
ABOLISH The Nation
State &
#DefendTheCriminalized

EACH ITERATION GROWING EXPANDING ADDING MORE AND MORE
The sum of all the parts equals a mass, a group, a crew
A SQUAD
Is your squad suited up?!
If we gonna stunt on this hating ass cis-tem
we gonna make it look sexy!
This isn't a trend
#IssssaaaaMOVEMENT!
MILITANT FEMMES TO THE FRONT
This isn't just a cute bodysuit with a message it's
A CALL TO ACTION

ABOLISH ICE &
ABOLISH DHS &
ABOLISH Prisons &
ABOLISH The Police &
ABOLISH Binaries &
ABOLISH Landlords &
ABOLISH Poverty &
ABOLISH The Nation
State &
#OrganizeTheCriminalized

#FreeThemAll from ICE &
#FreeThemAll from DHS &
#FreeThemAll from Prisons &
#FreeThemAll from The Police &
#FreeThemAll from Binaries &
#FreeThemAll from Landlords &
#FreeThemAll from The Nation
State
#OrganizeTheCriminalized.

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