

ATOMIC



ALCHEMY

*A zine series on emotional transformation as
fuel for liberation in life and death*

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"The struggle for freedom and
transformation is not a dream.
It's a fire that's burning in
real time.

And the blaze is spreading."

— Maya Schenwar, *Let This Radicalize
You: Organizing and the Revolution
of Reciprocal Care*



“Freedom is the Horizon:” On the Infinite Possibilities of Nuclear Weapons Abolition

ZiNE #4

Somehow, it’s been almost a year since I started this zine series. So much has changed in that time. The world seeming to finally find the courage to publicly acknowledge the ongoing genocide in Palestine (may we do the same for Sudan). Rising energy bills and contaminated water from the desperate push of AI onto every aspect of our lives, with predominantly Black communities already experiencing various forms of systemic racism paying the highest prices. Not to mention the mass AI-induced psychosis spreading across the world while AI fanatics dream of replacing the human race with digital “transhuman” beings. Many Americans are struggling financially as almost half of U.S. states are in or close to a recession, while President Trump wastes taxpayer dollars on sending National Guard troops (and potentially other military troops) to various majority-Black and brown cities around the country—cities that were largely already experiencing declines in their crime rates—in a rather blatant authoritarian power grab.

On top of all of that (which just barely touches the surface of the horrors of 2025), sprinkle in some nuclear panic with President Trump throwing around unfounded accusations of other countries resuming nuclear testing as a defense for his unclear calls of resuming US nuclear testing (thankfully, we finally have some clarification).

And yet so much has stayed the same. We are still expected by those pulling the levers of this bloodthirsty technocratic oligarchy masquerading as U.S. democracy to go about our lives as if everything were normal. Wake up, go to work (or school so you can prepare to go to work), come home, eat dinner, go to bed, repeat. We’re expected to not ask questions of our elected leaders or those that line their pockets in exchange for favors; to quietly accept whatever consequences

reverberate from their selfish actions—actions guided by an insatiable hunger for profit and power, no matter the human or environmental cost. We're supposed to let the white supremacist patriarchal capitalist-imperialist nuclear death machine do what it was intended to do, no questions asked: predetermine our deaths for us via any one of its many creative manifestations of exploitation, extraction, or destruction.

I refuse. I refuse to willingly lay down and let the military tanks drive over the bones of the masses; the Black, the brown, the Indigenous, the poor, the queer, the disabled. All those deemed sub-human, expendable. Perfect candidates to be fed to the death machine; to be harassed and poisoned and irradiated, left to die by the very systems claiming to protect us.

What I've learned in dissecting the intersections of nuclear weapons, broader systemic violence, and frameworks of abolition, is that the terrifying yet exciting truth is: **no one is going to do the work of dismantling these death-making systems for us. We have to find the courage and build the resilience to carry on the fight for a liberated future.**

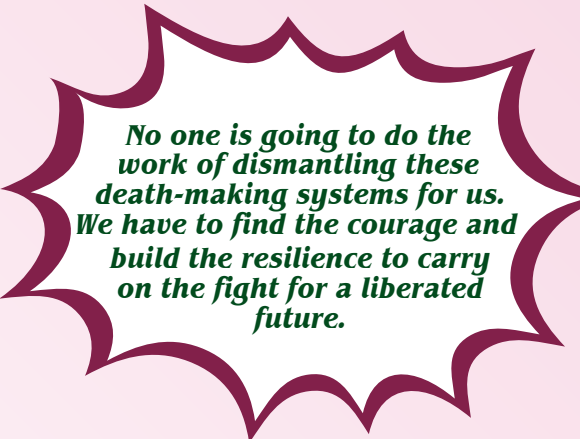
It's terrifying because these death-making systems are all we have ever known, and there is no guarantee that the long arc of history will bend toward justice. Because contending with our emotions, and how they've been weaponized against us to perpetuate our oppression, is difficult



and messy and uncomfortable, even painful at times, and sticking our heads in the sand is easier than doing the hard work of healing. It's easier to pretend that nothing is wrong than to accept that everything is, in fact, wrong—and that there is no one else but us to fix it.

And at the same time, it is oh so exciting to think about and imagine all the beautiful futures we can build together! To know that the work (no matter how hard) of building a more just, equitable, sustainable, abundant, community-centered world is work that can only be accomplished in community and movement and alignment with each other. That we do have agency and power over our futures and what world we want to leave behind for our future generations by practicing the world we want to build each day; transforming ourselves so we can transform the world.

As community activist and educator Bill Ayers puts it in his book *When Freedom is the Question, Abolition is the Answer: Reflections on Collective Liberation*, “the void before us is also a horizon of infinite possibilities.” There are infinite possibilities of the kind of world we could build together, and it's our job to do the work of figuring out what shape that world will take, and what it will encompass. “World building,” Ayers continues, “is the true vocation of abolitionists, and, while we don't and can't know exactly what replaces it, the aspiration, the struggle, the process is all we have to lead us to the answer. Freedom is the horizon.”



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It can be difficult or scary to try and imagine a world free from nuclear weapons, from systemic violence, from mass exploitation and destruction and greed. But we can begin to better imagine, and subsequently create, the just, abundant, sustainable, liberated future we're seeking by undoing the internalized oppression we all carry in this deeply oppressive world. That includes the nuclear oppression we've internalized via political, economic, and cultural osmosis—the narrative that these weapons of mass death are in fact necessary in keeping us all safe.

That's why it is never a waste of time or energy to do the slower, more quiet work of transforming ourselves so we can better show up for ourselves and each other, and build a better world. Capturing our fear, our grief, our anger; even our love and our hope and our imaginations, is a necessary component of maintaining these oppressive (and highly profitable for a very select few)

systems. Those that profit off these death-making systems—the puppets we’re supposed to call our leaders that are actively ignoring the will of the people who elected them in exchange for a check and an endorsement from the uber-wealthy and well-connected elites that pull their strings as they see fit—will continue to find new ways to exploit and weaponize our emotions, our minds. They will continue to tell us that there is no better way, this is the only way, so shut up, lay down, and let the tanks roll.

It’s our duty to reject these orders of submission and oppression. To do whatever we can, no matter how small, to build a better world for not just ourselves and our communities, but for future generations who also deserve the chance to live a just, equitable, sustainable, abundant life free from all forms of systemic violence and death-making—both nuclear and non-nuclear. As activist, teacher, author, and farmer Stephen Jenkinson, MTS, MSW, asserts in *Die Wise: A Manifesto for Sanity and Soul*, “Dying well nails you to the wheel of the world. It binds you to your people, to your ancestry and to those who will come after you. Dying well loves life. How we die, and how we care for dying people, and how we carry the dead: Taken all together, this work makes our village life or breaks it.”

And so this is where I leave you: **only through opening ourselves up to the pain and death of the world can we open ourselves up to the reassuring embrace of community care and the liberating knowledge of the sanctity of all that life (in all forms, human and non-human) has to offer.**

