British International Studies Association

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Abolitionist Thinking as an unanswered question

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In light of increasingly sinister attacks on anti-racist praxis in academic spaces and scholarship across the globe, the roundtable is part of a year of activities through which we, as a community of colonial, postcolonial and decolonial scholars, carve out space for collective responses. We are inviting our colleagues to submit work that speaks to a range of colonial, postcolonial, and settler colonial contexts, past and present, in order to carry on the conversation started last September at the BISA workshop.

The themes are:

From the physical sites of prisons/military complexes; to the legal and bureaucratic infrastructures that produce carceral life; through to the deeply colonial and capitalist structures that organise our everyday intimacies; our suggestion is that all struggles, all violence, all structures can be framed through the lens of abolition. Although academic training can lead us too quickly to the assertion of certainties, abolitionist thinking, we hope, opens the possibility of creativity through uncertainty, experimentation in the service of justice, with the idea that as we reveal, we also refuse, challenge, produce and create new things. Abolitionism, while it has a specific history in anti-slave and anti-colonial movements, remains unfixed and open. We invite colleagues to reflect on the lessons of newly resurgent abolitionist movements, in both their refusal of institutional structures built on and through carcerality and in the insistence that the work of liberation demands that we imagine new worlds every day. The roundtable offers a space to participate in that opening - stretching and extending our thinking of what abolition is, might look like, might be, from multiple different lenses, practices, spaces and experiences.

Participants and their emails:

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