

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Building a world free of police and prisons requires focus on the ultimate goal

We are abolitionists. We envision and work toward a future where prisons and police do not exist — a future where the kinds of crimes that people invoke to justify cages simply don't happen. Abolition, ultimately, is a philosophy of radical hope.

Because there is so much work that must be done to reach such a future, and because carceral attitudes are so pervasive, many so-called abolitionists lose sight of the principles that should be guiding them.

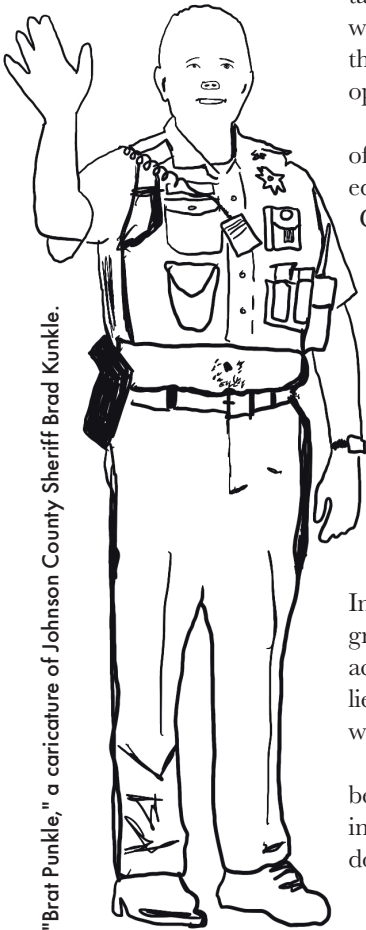
We cannot be conditional abolitionists. We cannot neglect our principles under any circumstances. A future without prisons and police depends entirely on our strength and clarity.

At the September 16 City Council meeting, in response to community members' statements that the majority of people in the Johnson County Jail are there for nonviolent offenses, councilor Shawn Harmesen took it upon himself to read the jail roster out loud. His choice to do so was tactless, but admittedly our weak arguments against the jail left the floor wide open for such a response.

While it's true that many of the people incarcerated — not just in Johnson County but nationally — are not there for unequivocally harmful crimes, this argument against incarceration falls devastatingly short of the boldness and integrity our movement needs.

If we concede that there is a logic to caging violent criminals, we've already lost the battle. Investing in diversion programs does little to address actual harm if we don't believe it's possible to divert the worst offenders.

Abolitionists must always believe that this is possible in the face of people who do not, like Shawn Harm-



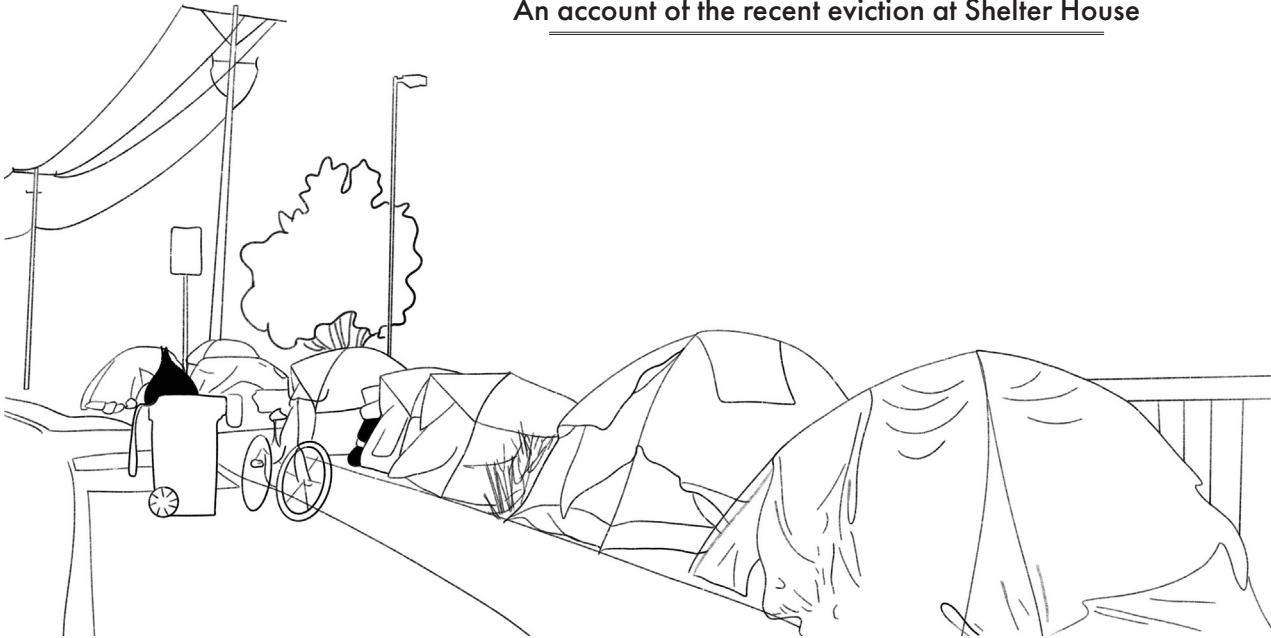
"Brat Punkle," a caricature of Johnson County Sheriff Brad Kunkle.

ABOLITION, cont'd on back

NO WHERE TO GO

Field Report

An account of the recent eviction at Shelter House



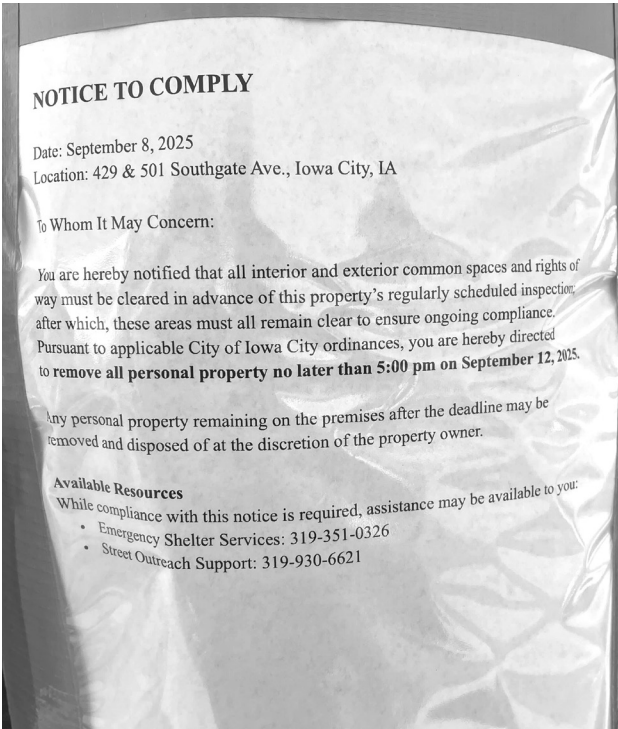
Imagine you have been experiencing chronic homelessness for an extended period of time: the options available to you require that you throw away personal belongings, live in close quarters with a stranger, and comply with rules that restrict when you go to bed, when you shower, where you can hang out, and what you can do. If you choose not to accept these services, you are sequestered to live outside. The city has run you off of every public property except one area that is not very accessible, or you can live on the private property of the homeless services organization in town.

One day you wake up to this notice:

"NOTICE TO COMPLY"
Date: September 8, 2025
Location: 429 Southgate Ave, Iowa City, IA

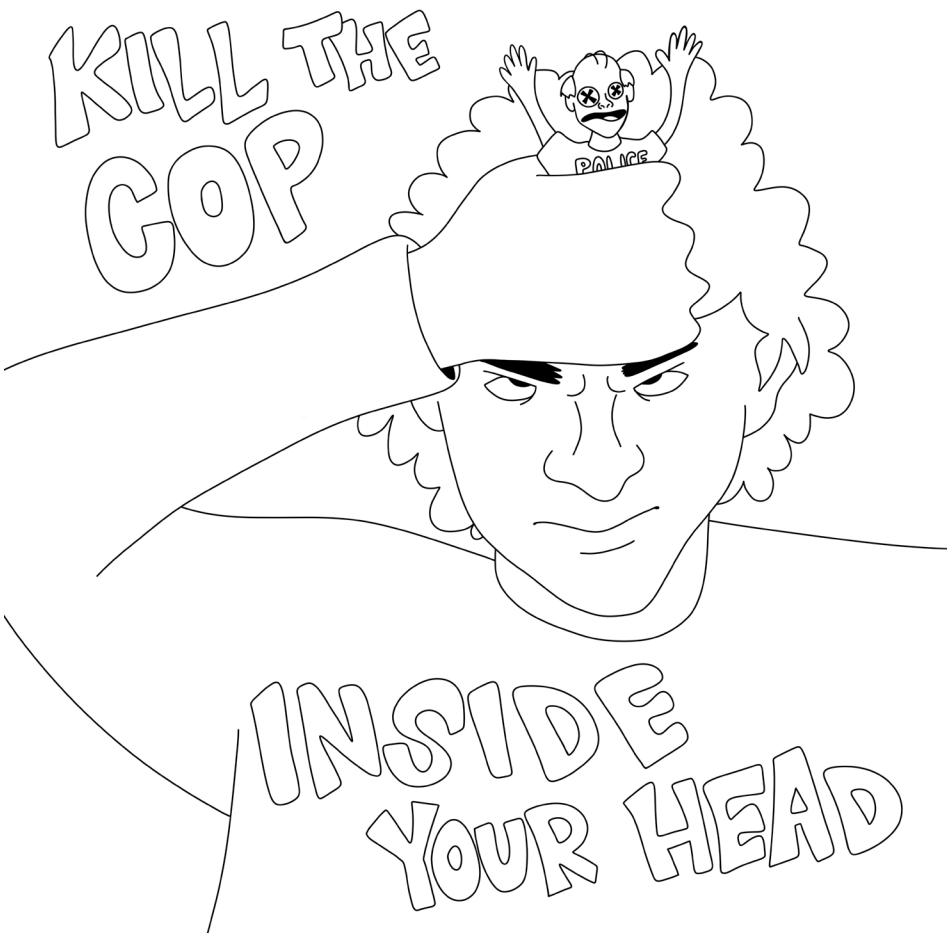
To Whom It May Concern:
You are hereby notified that all interior and exterior common spaces and rights of way must be cleared in advance of this property's regularly scheduled inspection, after which these areas must all remain clear to ensure ongoing compliance. Pursuant to applicable City of Iowa City ordinances, you are hereby directed to **remove all personal property no later than 5:00pm of September 12, 2025.**

FIELD REPORT, cont'd on back

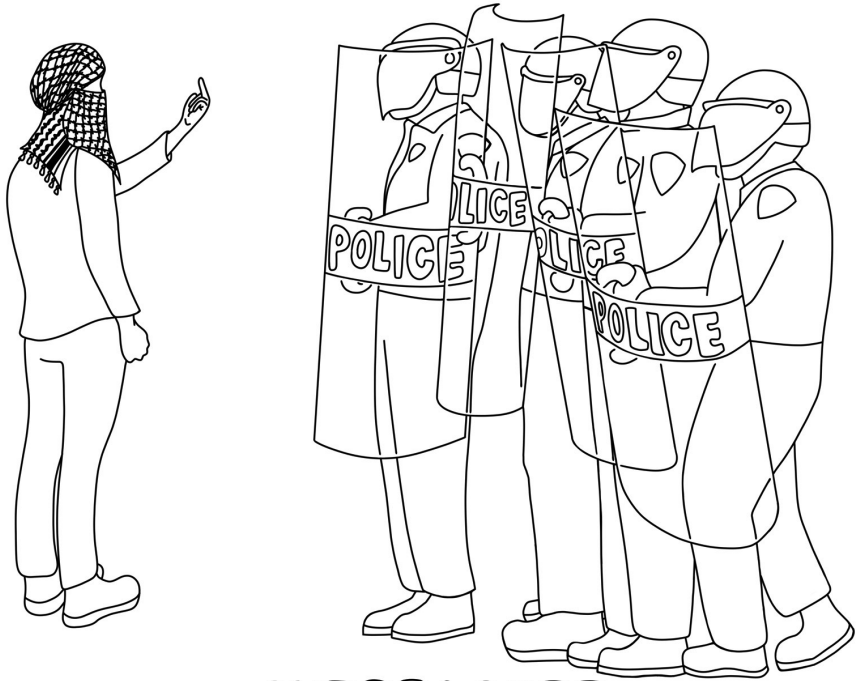


Notice posted outside Shelter House on Sept. 8, 2025.

@SOFTPUNKK



I AM DELIBERATE
AND AFRAID OF NOTHING



AUDRE LORDE

Poetry

FROM WHERE I'M STANDIN'

BY THE BLACK CLOWN

From where I'm standin'
I can see for miles away
But not into another day
But that's okay
For now
But right now is gone
So long...
So grow on
From where I'm at
I still can't figure
How some can say nigga
To another brotha
Who's not their enemy
At least not today
But tomorrow may be...
A different story
Or they could just ignore me
But we're one of many
To get no pity
In the many big cities
And from what I can see
I'm despised and denied
And sometimes
Feel alone inside
With no pride to hide
But I'm still alive
So just like everybody else
We live in...
Seconds
Minutes
Hours
Days
And years
But why does it often take
Until we're considered old
Before we choose to live
Our lives to the fullest?
Well, today
Is the day
To share and care
With those we love
'Cause we won't always be
here
And time only moves forward
And doesn't stop
So we can't try again
So treasure every day
As if it was your last
'Cause it just might be
After all whatever you do
today
Will be remembered
In days to come
Love + action = joy

FIELD REPORT, cont'd

Any personal property remaining on the premises after the deadline may be removed and disposed of at the discretion of the property owner.

Available Resources

While compliance with this notice is required, assistance may be available to you:

- Emergency Shelter Services: 319-351-0326
- Street Outreach Support: 319-930-6621”

On Monday, September 8, we received information about this exact notice that was posted outside the Shelter House location at 429 Southgate Ave. We immediately formed an emergency response team and created

a plan of action: we verified what little information was made public, privately and compassionately discussed the personal needs of the campers, and raised funds to fix or replace belongings damaged in the moving process — sometimes at the hands of shelter staff.

A member of ICMA went to Shelter House to inquire about the notice and to get information at around 11am. Shelter House staff were also quite shocked and upset by the notice and told us that the residents were still sleeping and not to disturb them or talk to them until they were able to learn about the notice and process the information. It is important to note that, to our knowledge, individual conversations did not occur with residents living outside on the property prior to the posting of the notice.

The following day, another ICMA member went to the location to meet folks and learn what needs they had and how many people needed assistance moving to an alternative location. There was a clear need for bins or bags to transport belongings, first aid supplies, and replacement tents from when storms or other occurrences irreparably damaged current structures. About 6 people would need help moving to an alternative location.

On Wednesday, we were unable to get out there other than to drop off some necessary supplies because our members had been incredibly busy earlier in the week with other mutual aid projects, including supporting a member of the IQPCP at trial.

Thursday, we got to work delivering bins to the campers so that they could work on packing up their belongings. When we arrived, there was a dumpster trailer on the property and employees outside engaging with some clients. Misinformation was being spread that the encampment had porta-potties, which is not the case and is something shelter staff were misinformed of. Tensions were high among the campers, which is understandable given their lives had been uprooted a dumpster had been brought in, insinuating that at least some — if not all — of their belongings are trash.

The understanding was that campers had until 5pm on Friday to leave, and no one should be touching their belongings until after that deadline. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Thursday night, a camper returned to the location to go to sleep only to find that his tent, along with everything he owned, had been thrown away by a shelter house staff member who did not help him retrieve his

belongings. When he went inside to get new clothes, he was told he would have to wait for 3 to 5 days.

Thanks to a generous donation we were able to provide a hot meal to our community members at this location during this trying time.

Friday was all hands (and cars) on deck. We needed to ensure people had the ability to pack up their belongings and transport them where they wanted to go. All day we were driving back and forth to different locations and the Shelter House encampment. It was a chaotic day to say the least. Due to all the supportive donations we received, we were able to purchase bins, tarps, tents, water, and replace a small fraction of the belongings that were thrown away.

This work can be enraging. There is a consistent lack of care for the people in our community that live outside. People believe that they should take what is offered to them and be grateful for scraps, that they shouldn't care about hanging onto the belongings they have worked so hard to collect if it means they can get a bed in an emergency shelter.

We must see all people as deserving of autonomy and care. Capitalism fuels the conditions that allow for these situations to exist and the local municipality and the non-profit industrial complex cave to this system and cause harm every day. At best, the system of non-profits is designed to just slap band-aids on societal problems rather than work for systemic change. At worst, they're places for the rich and powerful to profit via tax-free philanthropy while maintaining the status quo that keeps them on top.

We must work to imagine a city and community that loudly rejects this system of capitalism that manufactures harm and death. We could be a city that stands up for its people and takes necessary steps to disconnect from the state and federal economy so that we can decide what our lives look like, so that we can all live with dignity, care, and autonomy. We could be a community that takes care of one another and works to meet each other's needs without needing to afford the artificial “cost of living” we force upon every human being born into this capitalist hellscape.

Worlds like this do exist. Worlds like this have existed for all of human history, and with the correct strategy formulated through compassionate practice, careful study, and an empathetic human-centered analysis, we can fight to build an Iowa City, and a world, that works for everyone.

— ICMA MEMBERS

Poetry

THAT'S HOW I FEEL

BY HEATHER MICHELLE (PAWZ)

My emotions are like,
A blender at top speed.
Or a NASCAR driver racing,
For a trophy he needs.

Then there's the twister,
With hurricane force winds,
I just can't get a hold of them,
I just can't seem to win.

Like a car going off a cliff,
Maybe like a bullet from a gun,
Or a skydiver's parachute won't open,
This shit ain't never fun.

My world is out of control,
Though to you I seem fine,
But that's just my mask,
I'm going out of my mind.

I tried to find a way,
To make you understand,
About how I really feel,
So please at least pretend.

Maybe try to understand,
Just what I'm going through,
And help me figure out,
How to talk to you.

I need to talk to someone,
But I can't figure out how,
I got to, need to,
And I must do it now.

But where to start,
Now? Sooner? Or later?
But my next question is,
Where to park the trailer?

See a suitcase is too small,
More like an airliner bus,
To pack in all my problems,
Now who can I trust?

I need to unload,
I need to vent,
I feel like I might explode,
Damn there I went.

Now I'm in pieces,
A trillion to be exact,
Like a giant jigsaw puzzle,
I need to be put back.
But no one can figure me out,
Most don't even try,
Some turn away for me,
And wish I would die.

Some try to help,
But just can't seem to touch,
Or get past the surface,
There's just way too much.

So what should I do,
Why should I try,
If you can't figure me out,
Then HOW THE HELL CAN I.

I can't seem to cope,
But I guess that's my deal,
There's no way to change it,
'Cause that's just how I feel.

Donations support homeless and housing insecure people in Iowa City and queer incarcerated people in Iowa.

ABOLITION, cont'd

sen. We must always maintain that detention is an illegitimate response, even to the most harmful crimes. We must remember that it is, has always been and will always be unquestionably wrong to cage another human being.


Abolition is about much more than just increasing diversion programs or releasing non-violent offenders. While these outcomes are certainly welcome improvements, we must not fight for them at the expense of our ultimate goal.

What we as abolitionists bring to the table is the radical notion that we can build a future free of the harms

that “justify” incarceration. If we cede this ground for the sake of argument, we abandon the very principles that push us to fight for the future we all deserve.

— JUNK

Do not fall for quality-of-life arguments to justify building a new jail. They will tell you that the current jail is inhumane, but we will tell you that EVERY jail is inhumane. Sign the petition with demands for updating the existing jail and remember that our goal, above all else, is no jail at all.




DECLASSIFIEDS

The Iowa City Community Fridge is Open!


Wright House of Fashion, 910 S Gilbert St.,
North side facing Jimmy John's

Corresponding bus stop: 7010
Open 24/7



Ready to volunteer?

Email iowacityfridge@proton.me to be added to the food drop off group chat



Help clean the fridge on a monthly or weekly basis by signing up using the QR Code



AUTONOMY IOWA CITY

Supporting bodily autonomy, right here in Iowa.

- Assistance getting abortion pills for a self-managed abortion or miscarriage
- Assistance with out of state travel for abortion related medical care
- Support and education for people choosing self-managed abortion
- Free DIY HRT

autonomyiowacity.org