

Sojourners
for
Justice
Press

Manifesto

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We welcome and encourage work from currently and formerly criminalized people; Black people; queer, trans, and gender nonconforming people; disabled people; people from low-income backgrounds; people from non-traditional educational backgrounds; and people who have been historically excluded in their respective crafts and industries.

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Carte de visite of Harriet Tubman taken during the Civil War in Auburn, NY around 1868 or 1869.

Where our name comes from

so·jour·er (noun): A sojourner is a person who resides temporarily in a place.

sojourner may also refer to: Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), abolitionist and Black feminist.

The name of our press is inspired by the legacies of several Black feminists and their commitments to radical dissent. In 1951, a group of socialist and Communist Black women formed the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, a short-lived but significant formation. Their manifesto "A Call to Negro Women" expressed their anti-imperialist, antiracist and anticapitalist values. Their ideas resonate today and our press hopes to advance them into the future.

Many of the members of the Sojourners for Truth and Justice were writers and intellectuals, including Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, Claudia Jones, Charlotta Bass and more. Some worked with and/or sub-

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mitted their work to independent radical publications like Freedom and Freedomways. Sojourners for Justice Press (SJP) endeavors to be a publishing vehicle in this lineage.

SJP is also inspired by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, as well as the individual literary and publishing efforts of various Black feminist forebearers, such as organizer, journalist and civil rights activist Ida B. Wells who self-published her 1892 pamphlet Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases and Dr. Margaret T. G. Burroughs, a teacher, author, poet, artist, and activist who self-published many publications.

The name of our press is an encapsulation of, and homage to, these collected histories. The name of our press is both a reminder of and an active commitment to truth-telling, the connective tissue that binds all of us who seek freedom, liberation, and justice together through space and time.

Communist party member Louise Thompson Patterson speaking in Berlin, Germany during the 1950s or 60s.

What we believe in

An expansive definition of creative practitioner. We embrace an expansive understanding of who is an artist and what is a creative practice or work. We understand how difficult it can be to identify with a title, profession or expertise such as: creative, artist, writer, poet, illustrator, etc. We reject the idea that artistic creative practices are reserved for the elite classes. We believe art making is a regular part of the human condition and essential to the radical movements and traditions that we're a part of.

Zines and zine-like reading materials are mechanisms for taking ownership of our community education. We each have personal stakes in gathering information and sharing knowledge in service of our ethical responsibilities for the welfare of members in our community. Zines are effective mediums for the widespread sharing of intellectual, political, and emotional expression.

Zines are tactile things to be discovered.

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Through this discovery, we can find ourselves and how we're connected to other living and non-living beings. Because of this, we publish printed media that engages the life-giving politics found in abolitionist and black feminist theories and practices.

Most people struggle with reading and are capable of changing their relationship to reading. Reading as an academic, elitist practice can make us feel ashamed and embarrassed for not having read specific things in order to be considered "well read." Most, if not all, people struggle with reading, and because of this, avoid reading altogether. While it can be hard to engage that which we struggle with, that struggle is a generative space of possibility where new relationships can emerge. We exclusively publish short form printed media like zines and pamphlets to make the practice of reading feel more friendly and accessible.

Reading can be a pleasure and leisure that activates the imagination. We separate reading from a capitalist definition of productivity and reject the oppressive colonial systems of indoctrination and subtle re-programming that distort the way we read with -isms and phobias.



Activating the imagination is how we pre-figure the worlds in which we want to live. We can activate our imagination through small gestures that slowly unravel the grip -isms and phobias have on our imagination. Exercising the imagination in small ways in ourselves, our spaces, and our communities, is a way of being in the right relationship with our minds, our bodies, and our communities. Reading, writing, and engaging with our publications and other Black feminist or abolitionist work are two among many examples of the kind of gestures we reference here.

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Who we acknowledge

Sojourners for Justice Press is an imprint of Haymarket Books and we operate independently in terms of our editorial content and decisions. Our logo was designed by Darnell Henderson.

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