



Selected Papers of #AoIR2025:
The 26th Annual Conference of the
Association of Internet Researchers
Niterói, Brazil / 15 – 18 Oct 2025

AI ABOLITION AS DECOLONIAL RUPTURE IN AI EMPIRE: RADICAL CYBERPRACTICES FROM BELOW

Jasmina Tacheva
Syracuse University

Sarah Appedu
Syracuse University

Jeongbae Choi
Syracuse University

Mirakle Wright
University of Colorado Boulder

Yigang Qin
Syracuse University

Introduction: AI Empire's Routine Violence and the Need for AI Abolition

The critical study of AI allows us to analyze it not merely as a set of technical tools but as an expansive regime of governance embedded in histories of racial capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, carceral logics, and colonial control – what critical scholars describe as AI empire (Benjamin, 2019; Tacheva & Ramasubramanian, 2023; Pruss et al., 2024; Ricaurte, 2025). While mainstream critiques of AI tend to focus on its most visible harms, such as predictive policing, biometric surveillance, exploitative labor practices, and ecological destruction, this paper argues that AI empire's violence is far more pervasive: embedded in the everyday systems that quietly shape our lives. From hiring algorithms to financial lending, from healthcare risk scores to social media moderation, AI does not merely predict behavior; rather, it actively produces populations as governable subjects and seeks to shape and regulate their actions, emotions, and thoughts (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013). Consequently, these mechanisms do not simply reflect structural inequities, but actively reproduce and intensify racial, gender, economic, and geopolitical hierarchies and reinforce AI's role as an imperial force.

Too often, responses to AI empire's harms remain trapped within reformist frameworks that promise better regulation, more transparency, and bias mitigation. But these

Suggested Citation (APA): Tacheva, Z., Appedu, S., Choi, J., Wright, M., & Qin, Y. (2025, October). *AI Abolition as Decolonial Rupture in AI Empire: Radical Cyberpractices From Below*. Paper presented at AoIR2025: The 26th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers. Niterói, Brazil: AoIR. Retrieved from <http://spir.aoir.org>.

interventions do little to disrupt AI's carceral expansion: they tinker at the edges while remaining embedded in the same carceral logics that normalize AI empire's domination of social life (Benjamin, 2019; Broussard, 2023). In response, this paper positions AI abolition as a strategic rupture: a decisive break that challenges AI's claim to inevitability, exposes its embeddedness in broader interlocking systems of oppression, and confronts these systems head-on. AI abolition is not about rejecting technology altogether, nor is it merely a reaction to recent AI harms. Instead, it emerges from a long lineage of radical cyberpractices, insurgent technological imaginaries, and abolitionist struggles "from below" that have existed long before the Internet and AI became buzzwords (Sandoval, 1994).

AI Abolition as Ongoing Cyberpractices of Refusal and Reimagination "from below"

To make this case, this paper turns to the pioneering decolonial queer feminist cybercultural work of Chela Sandoval (1994), who radically reimagined cyberspace and the cyborg not just as tools of oppression under the informatics of domination (Haraway, 1985), but also as generative sites of social transformation and resistance. Sandoval's cyberfeminist work shows how contemporary AI abolitionist tactics and cyberpractices, such as disidentification, obfuscation, and refusal, function as tactical ruptures that challenge AI's carceral expansion and create openings for alternative world-making practices. These abolitionist practices transcend mere resistance by actively refusing AI empire's hegemonic logic while simultaneously imagining and enacting new technological relationalities that center justice, autonomy, and collective liberation.

Sandoval's (1994; 2000) work powerfully demonstrates that technological subversion isn't new. It has long been practiced "from below" by those whom interlocking systems of oppression have cast as passive subjects of technological change, including communities of color, Indigenous organizers, queer and feminist technologists, and anti-colonial socialists, who have not only adopted technology but actively hacked, repurposed, and subverted it for liberatory ends. In this context, counter-histories and ongoing community practices provide numerous examples that defy AI empire's narrative of Western-centric capitalist progress. Such examples include the early teleconferencing experiments of Toni Cade Bambara and Gloria Anzaldúa, which forged transnational feminist solidarity long before social media became common (Pitts, 2024). Chile's socialist cybernetic project, Cybersyn, represents another deliberate refusal of neoliberal control over economic life (Medina, 2011). Indigenous computing projects similarly demonstrate that technological and data practices can be developed in alignment with sovereignty rather than extraction (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Woman-led space engineering projects in 1980s socialist Bulgaria, such as the development of the first fully automated space greenhouse, SVET (Ivanova et al., 2001), further contest the prevailing capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal narratives of technological innovation (Ivanova et al., 2001). And contemporary experiments with *economía solidária digital* and platform cooperativism in Brazil show that workers and communities are actively constructing democratically governed infrastructures that refuse platform extractivism (Rubim & Milanez, 2024).

Through a critical discourse analysis of these cases, we demonstrate that they are not isolated or anomalous, but part of a long-standing lineage of radical technological resistance, confirming that struggles for technological justice have always emerged from the margins (Sandoval, 1994; Trudel & Tréguer, 2016). Furthermore, our analysis shows that these fugitive technological reimaginings are not just sites of resistance but blueprints for alternative technological futures that reject extractive and exploitative regimes. We thus argue that together, they provide a powerful framework of epistemological refusals and insurgent technological practices that offers a rupture from AI empire which remains unavailable from within the carceral system that engendered it – a system now preoccupied with narrow deflectionary interventions masquerading as “AI safety” and “AI risk.”

By reclaiming this lineage, AI abolition ceases to be an abstract demand and becomes a tangible ongoing practice that has always been about both refusal and reimagination (Davis, 2011). Against AI empire’s drive to categorize and control, abolition insists on the right to be unreadable – to reject colonial classification systems that demand a neat, superficial truth, a tidy binary for sorting human and non-human entities into one-dimensional categories (Sandoval, 2000; Lugones, 2007). Rather than conforming to AI’s rigid logics of sorting, abolition embraces a pluriversal politics of being, where identities and truths are multiple, contradictory, and beyond the grasp of the colonial gaze – and therefore, of algorithmic governance (Anzaldúa, 1987; Sandoval, 2000).

Conclusion: Towards Abolitionist Technological Futures

Ultimately, this paper argues that abolishing AI empire is not about rejecting technology but about radically reimagining it. By foregrounding the long-standing cyberpractices of marginalized communities, this work contributes to critical AI and data studies by shifting the discourse from narrow harm mitigation to social transformation. AI abolition is already happening – it has always been happening in and across communities routinely classified into the subjugated categories of colonial, racist, cisheteronormative, and ableist typologies of being. Our task, then, is not to invent it, but to recognize, amplify, and build upon the abolitionist technological futures already being forged from the cracks – ruptures, that always begin from below.

References

- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity.
- Broussard, M. (2023). *More than a Glitch: Confronting Race, Gender, and Ability Bias in Tech*. MIT Press.
- Davis, A. (2011). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.
- Haraway, D. J. (1985). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. *Socialist Review*, 80, 65–108.

Ivanova, T., Sapunova, S., Kostov, P., & Dandolov, I. (2001). First successful space seed-to-seed plant growth experiment in the SVET-2 space greenhouse in 1997. *Space Research Institute, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*. <http://www.space.bas.bg/astro/Aerosp16/tania1.pdf>.

Kukutai, T., & Taylor, J. (2016). *Indigenous data sovereignty: Toward an agenda*. ANU press.

Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 186-209.

Medina, E. (2011). *Cybernetic revolutionaries: technology and politics in Allende's Chile*. Mit Press.

Pitts, A. "Estamos todas en la línea": La formación de coaliciones entre las mujeres de color de los EE. UU. a través del giro hacia lo digital" in *Comunidades digitales: Perspectivas interdisciplinarias sobre y desde América Latina*, translated by Romina Muni and edited by David García León, Javier García León, and David Dalton. Raleigh: Editorial A Contracorriente (in press).

Pruss, D., et al. "Prediction and Punishment: Critical Report on Carceral AI." (2024). <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm?abstractid=5017321>

Ricaurte, P. (2025). The digitalization imperative. *Dialogues on Digital Society*, 1(1), 12-17.

Rouvroy, A., and Berns, T. "Algorithmic Governmentality and the End(s) of Critique." *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2013, pp. 19–34.

Rubim, E. and Milanez, L. (2024). *Economia Solidária Digital: Caminhos para potencializar políticas e ações baseadas em cooperação e solidariedade*. DigiLabour, Fundação Rosa Luxemburgo e Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego. https://www.gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/noticias-e-conteudo/2024/Agosto/mte-apoia-livro-sobre-politicas-sociais-de-economiasolidaria-digital/livro_economia_digital_solidaria_v2_comprimido.pdf

Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. University of Minnesota Press.

Sandoval, C. (1994). Re-entering cyberspace: sciences of resistance. *Dispositio*, 19(46), 75-93.

Tacheva, J., & Ramasubramanian, S. (2023). AI Empire: Unraveling the interlocking systems of oppression in generative AI's global order. *Big Data & Society*, 10(2), 20539517231219241.

Trudel, D., & Tréguer, F. (2016). Alternative communications networks throughout history (Doctoral dissertation, ISCC-CNRS).