

4STRUGGLEMAG

from the hearts and minds of north american political prisoners and friends

42 full-colour pages of art and writing
on global indigenous resistance.

Featuring

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Each issue, we send more than 200 copies to prisoners across North America, at no cost to them. Your support is needed to continue this project. Please help subsidize these costs by subscribing to the magazine and/or offering a one-time donation. Please check out the 'subscribe and donate' link on our website: www.4strugglemag.org

Your support is much appreciated.

love 4SM



*"You can jail a revolutionary but
you can't jail a revolution!!"*

War, Imperialism and Resistance • Theory and Practice
Prison Struggles and Political Prisoners • and more!

Welcome to 4strugglemag

You have just come to a dynamic and unique publication, where Truth (real and raw) speaks to power. This magazine focuses the insights and experiences of U.S. political prisoners on major issues of the day. While a lot of the writing is by political prisoners, other activists, allies, revolutionaries and insightful outside voices are included. We publish 3 issues a year and all back issues remain posted on the website (4strugglemag.org).

4strugglemag is an independent non-sectarian revolutionary voice. We are unapologetically anti-imperialist and solidly in support of progressive National Liberation, especially the struggles of New African/Black, Mexicano/Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American Nations presently controlled by U.S. imperialism. Reflecting the work and principles of political prisoners held by the United States, 4strugglemag advocates for Justice, Equality, Freedom, Socialism, Protection of our Mother Earth, Human Rights and Peace.

www.4strugglemag.org is primarily an e-magazine, but hard copies are available (free to prisoners, \$6 an issue for people outside, \$15 for yearly subscriptions). We encourage readers to respond, critique and carry on discussions in the magazine. We value and encourage feedback and discussion. The address of each political prisoner is posted with his/her article so people can directly communicate with them (few political prisoners have access to the internet. Some federal prisons now have an email system for prisoners but you have to be on a pre-approved email contact list before you can send or receive email from the prisoner. Therefore, you must first write to the prisoner and get all the information on how to get on his/her approved email list). We like dialogue, but we are not going to print racist or pro-imperialist messages, so you government agents and klansmen don't bother wasting your time.

Each issue of 4strugglemag focuses on at least 3 main topics. Additional unrelated poems, graphics, essays, announcements and more are included. Unsolicited writings and graphics are accepted and welcomed. We won't guarantee printing, but we'd like to see your work. This and other correspondence should be sent via regular mail to the following address: (remember it costs 75 cents to send a letter to Canada from the U.S.).

4strugglemag
P.O. Box 97048
RPO Roncesvalles Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6R 3B3 Canada

or via email to:
jaanlaaman@gmail.com
Jaan Laaman, editor
anti-imperialist political prisoner



Call for contributors

4strugglemag is looking for quality writing that contributes to critical, revolutionary thought and reflection. In particular, we are interested in the following:

Feature articles: We're looking for in depth, analytical articles that critically examine a particular issue, historical occurrence, political idea, or current event. We are looking for well-researched articles that broaden and challenge revolutionary thought. If you are in need of research help, don't hesitate to ask. We may be able to supply some of the resources needed in order to write a well-informed piece. We can also help with the editing and/or writing process. Let us know if you have any ideas.

Book reviews: Is there a book you'd like to review for 4strugglemag? Let us know. If you don't have the book, we can arrange to get it to you.

Letters: We love to hear from you. Please let us know if we have permission to print your letter in the next issue.

4strugglemag
P.O. Box 97048
RPO Roncesvalles Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M6R 3B3 Canada

Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners

REVIEWED BY ERNESTO AGUILAR
www.politicalmediareview.org

The Sixties presented social movements with some of recent history's most spectacular schisms, many of which continue to be debated. Assimilation versus revolutionary nationalism versus cultural nationalism; and Old Left aesthetics versus New Left rejection of convention were among them. But none so clearly defined the troubles of that period like the verbal and other skirmishes over militancy.

Pacifism, the use of political violence and the peculiar merging of the two that came to be called self-defense were prominent fixtures of the Vietnam War era. The integrationist sit-ins contrasted with the incendiary solidarity acts of groups like the Weather Underground, which were at times motivated by those same sit-ins as well as the fiery deeds and iconography of the Black Power movement, which itself clashed at points with the mainstream civil rights movement in how each saw the way forward.

Though it isn't about those debates, *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners* cannot be divorced from such either.

The massive tome, spanning over 800 pages, endeavors to tell the story of political organizing primarily from the aforementioned period, along with the narratives of individuals incarcerated for activities in alliance with same. The definition of 'political prisoner' is most assuredly to be contentious, for in this reading, such encompasses individuals who have taken up political violence as a means to an end. Such a designation, to hear groups like Amnesty International tell it, obscures non-Western activists' tribulations and the spirit of political resistance. Or does it? Meyer makes a persuasive case for consideration.

Let Freedom Ring brings together scores of previously released documents, featuring former combatants from a constellation of North American organizations including the Black Liberation Army, Weather Underground and more. Many of these writings would have otherwise been lost,

and the service Meyer does in capturing a critical though largely unknown call to free those imprisoned for actions associated with political demands in the United States is bold.

Few areas in the realm of such trends are left unaddressed. Race, history, public policy and revolutionary arts are among the themes writers cut into. Meyer should also be applauded for avoiding old-school divisions around political orientation; Earth Liberation Front sabotage, for example, is discussed with the same level of seriousness Puerto Rican liberation campaigns are, and each is presented as part of a larger vision for freedom. Gender and sexism are also plumbd, though more might have been offered. Consider books like *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left* by Sara M. Evans to supplement some of Let Freedom Ring's offerings.

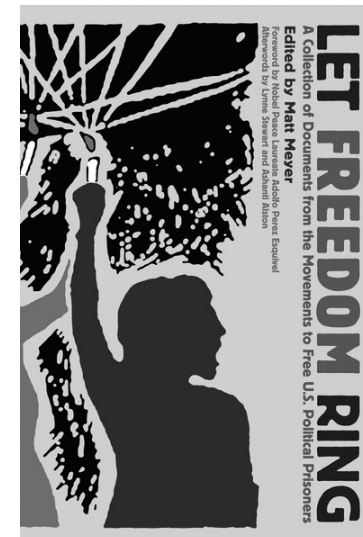
Key business for those interested in the ideas of Let Freedom Ring is how political prisoner movements cross paths with aspirations for criminal justice reform. Jails and poverty impact economically disadvantaged people and communities of color in fathomless ways. Yet, for the commitment former Black Panther Party members and others went to prison in hopes of seeing such disparities end, little progress has been made in linking their hopes and those of people caught up in the prison-industrial complex. Meyer serves to give hope such a connection is possible, and Let Freedom Ring is a great start for organizers seeking not only context but inspiration.

Contributors include: Mumia Abu-Jamal, Dan Berger, Dhoruba Bin-Wahad, Bob Lederer, Terry Bisson, Laura Whitehorn, Safiya Bukhari, The San Francisco 8, Angela Davis, Bo Brown, Bill Dunne, Jalil Muntaqim, Susie Day, Luis Nieves Falcón, Ninotchka Rosca, Meg Starr, Assata Shakur, Jill Soffiyah Elijah, Jan Susler, Chrystos, Jose Lopez, Leonard Peltier, Marilyn Buck, Oscar López Rivera, Sundiata Acoli, Ramona Africa, Linda Thurston, Desmond Tutu, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and many more.

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New Political Prisoner/POW Support Organization Formed in Vermont

BY JACOB LEACH

In the spring of this year, myself and six other comrades formed a political prisoner and POW support organization, Vermont Action for Political Prisoners (VAPP).

The opportunity to bring Robert King of the Angola 3 to Brattleboro came up just before VAPP folks started meeting, so we decided to organize an event for the following month. It was a great success, with around sixty people attending and a high level of engagement from the audience.

VAPP completed a document expressing our mission, goals and principles, which we posted to our blog (vermontactionforpoliticalprisoners.blogspot.com). We have also listed upcoming and past VAPP events, as well as links to other PP/POW organizations and resources. Over the winter months, we hope to develop the blog further to discuss specific PP/POW cases and highlight particular PPs/POWs that are in need of immediate support. We aim to work in alliance with other PP/POW support organizations (i.e. Jericho, ABCF) toward the larger goal of creating a strong and unified amnesty movement for PP/POWs in the united states.

In the upcoming months, we will be focusing on developing effective strategies for providing various forms of support to our comrades in captivity. In addition to this goal, we will also be planning more fundraising events to make this work possible. Please email us at vermontaction@gmail.com to give any suggestions or constructive criticism that you'd like to offer. Venceremos!

Mission

Vermont Action for Political Prisoners (VAPP) works for the freedom and amnesty of all U.S. held political prisoners (PP) and prisoners of war (POW)

Principles

- We are committed to being anti-racist and fighting racism.
- We are anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-sexist, class-conscious, LGBTQ-allies.
- We work in solidarity with all liberation movements in the U.S.
- We are a non-hierarchical organization.
- We are a part of a larger movement to free all PPs/POWs.

Goals

- To be in continuous correspondence with PPs/POWs to make certain that their ideas and wishes for this movement are what provide direction for this work. We want to communicate with, connect with, and take direction from PPs/POWs.
- To raise public awareness of existence of PPs/POWs, including education about the resistance movements they are a part of.
- To raise public awareness of the systemic injustices of U.S. prisons.
- To provide material, emotional, and legal support to PPs/POWs.
- To work in alliance with Jericho Movement, ABCF and other PP/POW support groups.
- To make this work relevant locally by exposing issues with VT prisons and working with VT prisoners.
- To work in solidarity with political prisoners. We want to help meet the immediate needs and desires of PPs/POWs, while maintaining the ultimate goals of getting them free and eventually abolishing prisons. We are not interested in prison reform. We want our people out of captivity.

Analysis

We believe in the struggles, fights and freedom movements that the political prisoners we support are part of and work with them in solidarity. We fight for their freedom and amnesty not only because we believe they don't deserve the charges brought against them, but because our values are rooted in their work. We work in honor of U.S. political prisoners who have passed on and strive to continue their struggles.

We are prison abolitionists.

Prisons need to be abolished. Imprisonment is a form of slavery and perpetuates a racist, classist, and sexist society. Prisons in any form will never work to solve social problems and will always serve as a tool for the rich and powerful to maintain control. Abolition of prisons is essential to moving toward a free and just society.

We also strive to dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex, the warehousing of people as a system of social control needed to perpetuate capitalism. Angela Davis gives us more definition to this concept. "The prison industrial complex is much more than the sum of all the jails and prisons in this country. It is a set of symbiotic relationships among correctional communities, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, guards' unions, and legislative and court agendas... Prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit."

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This cover of this issue of 4strugglemag marks the 40th anniversary of the death of Fred Hampton, a Black Panther leader who was assassinated by the Chicago police on December 4, 1969. Using a bogus warrant and a detailed floor plan provided by an FBI informant, the police burst into Hampton's apartment at 4 a.m. They fired 100 bullets, killed Black Panther Mark Clark, shot Hampton's unconscious body at point blank range and then beat and arrested any surviving Panthers. Twenty-one years old at the time of his murder, Hampton had organized one of the strongest BPP chapters in the country with free food, education and healthcare programs. And thanks, again, to Kevin 'Rashid' Johnson, Minister of Defense, New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter, for being our resident artist.

Issue # 14 - Introduction

Welcome to the Fall 2009 issue of 4SM. Once again we have brought you some sharp, revolutionary analysis, opinion and information from the hearts, minds and lives of some of America’s long held political prisoners, along with other rebel voices.

Issue 14 has 4 sections. Section one is on ‘War, Imperialism and Resistance.’ The lead article on ‘Afghanistan and Obama,’ is followed by information on ‘The Black is Back Coalition and March.’ This new formation may be just what the freedom struggle needs right now - check it out and see what you think. We also have a firsthand account from the streets of Pittsburgh during the G20 gathering.

Section two is ‘Theory and Practice,’ which begins with some analysis of the lumpen proletariat. The ‘Prison Round Trip’ and Bill Dunne’s introduction to this long piece discuss urban guerrillas and prison.

The third section, ‘Prison Struggle and Political Prisoners’ is the longest and has lots of information, updates and bios on u.s. political prisoners. There are other articles like the ‘Invisibility of Women’s Prison Resistance,’ the ‘Survivors Manual’ for seg/control unit prisoners, and a ‘Round-up’ of the RDTW’s runs that you will want to read. We also offer up other goodies - poems and some book suggestions, which would make very good xmas and holiday gifts.

With the approaching holidays/New Year, let me send Kwanzaa and Red Season’s Greetings to all my political prisoners comrades, to revolutionary prisoners everywhere and to all freedom fighters, activists, radicals and protectors of our Earth. There is a lot of work to do and we have a brand New Year coming up in which to do it!

See you all in issue 15 – out in March 2010. We will be out before International Women’s Day, and issue 15 will feature the struggles of women – sisters in particular. Send us your words!

Freedom is a constant struggle,
Jaana Laaman, editor

Corrections

In our last issue, we featured a profile of political prisoner, Marilyn Buck. We failed, however to provide her address. Marilyn can be reached here:

Marilyn Buck #00482-285
Unit A
5701 8th St. Camp Parks
Dublin, CA 94568

Letters

Write to 4strugglemag! We welcome your views and analysis in the form of letters, articles, poems and artwork. Please let us know if we have permission to print your letters.

A Note on writing for 4SM

We value input from our readers. We print a lot of unsolicited articles and you are welcome to send in your revolutionary thoughts, poems, information and feedback. Make sure you have something to say, either contributing to an ongoing discussion at 4SM or offering revolutionary insight on some social, political, economic or military issue. Your writing does not have to be prison related. We want to at least maintain and actually upgrade the quality of writing in 4SM. The content, thoughts and ideas are most important, but the form, grammar, spelling, smooth flow of ideas and words, is also important. So send us your finished, proofread, final draft. We do have editors at 4SM who will help writers develop and finish their articles if necessary. We ask everyone to do their best writing for articles they send to 4SM.



I’m very pleased to hear we have 12 outside runs, taking place from Los Angeles to Boston and places in between, and we have some runs in other countries too. I also know we have a lot of runs going on inside prisons from coast to coast as well.

I want to send out a salute to all my ABC Federation folks and all the people running with them. And I want to send a salute out to all my Jericho people and all the runners rolling with them. I want to salute every person and all the groups who are running today. While long miles and high walls separate us, today we run as one large collective, growing in numbers, understanding and solidarity in support of political prisoners and ALL prisoners in our struggles for justice and survival.

We are young and old, women and men, many nationalities, running in prison yards and city parks and streets. All of us should take added strength and commitment from this solidarity as we sweat out one more lap and one more mile in our run today. I’m sure we all are looking forward to hearing reports on how the various runs went.

Today also happens to be our long held Native political prisoner brother, Leonard Peltier’s birthday. Leonard has been in prison for 33 years and he just got a 15 year hit from the parole board ---You are in our thoughts bro - we are running for you and for ALL of us. So enough talk, lets get to sweating and running down these walls ---

Running for Justice -
Running for Human Dignity and Rights –

Jaana K. Laaman 10372-016
P.O. Box 24550
USP Tucson
Tucson, AZ 85734

Social Prisoner Akili Castlin

Short Corridor Few Solidarity Statement to Running Down the Walls participants and sponsors

Revolutionary greetings,

Friends, we send our deepest gratitude, love and support to you all there, who’ve gathered on all of our behalf.

Please know, we are one in “running down the walls” – whether here within the kamps such as Pelican Bay’s newly implemented, illegal and highly secret section of its infamous draconian sensory deprivation chamber, the Security Housing Unit (SHU) – or there within the less visible walls of a parasitic capitalist social system.

This year’s run is especially important due to the unprecedented changes taking place within the hearts and minds

of average everyday citizens.

As we lace-up our tennis shoes and prepare to run down these walls, know every step of these five miles, every breath we expend is done in solidarity with one another and all victims of imperialism in all its hideous terms. With every mile, we grow closer in mind and spirit to each other and the reality of an anti-authoritarian, egalitarian, free society. Together we run down the walls of gender-bias, hierarchy, racism, the prison industrial complex, the military industrial complex, homelessness, hatred and lack, in all the forms capitalism has implemented it.

We, the short corridor few, are a class of prisoners being held in California’s ultra-secret and torturous section of the SHU, which further restricts our communications, movement and associations. This tactic appears to be modeled on the federal prisons’ “Communications Management Units.” We have been classified without due process of any kind as “threats to the internal safety and security” of the prison industrial complex and subjected without court hearing or justification to extraordinary communication and sensory restrictions. All this, for no other reason than our political beliefs, ideologies and willingness to do more than talk.

We will be running the five miles with you all there. The yard in which we are able to run is 26 x 10 feet with 20 foot high walls and security cameras. Its perimeter is about 72 feet or 24 yards. Each of us will be running 315 or more laps individually within this cold gray cage where even sunlight dies. We’re allowed 90 minutes on the yard, one man at a time, so we will be running throughout the day on Saturday September 12, 2009.

Again, we send our deepest gratitude, love and loyalty. Please check out 4strugglemag.com, issue 13, or www.freejaana.com for insight and commentary on CMU prisons at the federal level. As both federal and state prisons now share techniques under the Dept. of Homeland Security, we can expect more of the same in our state institutions.

For a more in depth discussion on the state system, or to find out more about the state system, I can be written to at

Akili Castlin J-99402
D-1-210
PBSP
P.O. Box 7500
Crescent City, CA 95532

Former political prisoner Kazi Toure

We wish everyone a good run on the 12th and we will be running a little bit before you...time difference...may our run and spirit beat down the path that you follow...peace out.

Prisoner’s Human Rights Liberation Struggle” movement.

Stay strong! Keep the struggle alive and the faith in the righteousness of the cause you have embraced in the forefront of your endeavors.

Sekou Kambui (W. Turk) #113058
P.O. Box 56 SCC (B1-21)
Elmore, AL 36025-0056

MOVE political prisoner Janine Africa

I love yall’s Running Down The Walls event! It’s a good way to bring people together and focus on the cause. I know it will make Leonard Peltier feel good, and it will make all of us political prisoners feel good to see the support and care y’all have for us, THANK YOU!

We are still strong, we’re still committed to this revolution and we’re still innocent! This is why it’s so important for people to show their support in any way they can, no matter how small it may seem because there is no justice in this system. They got one set of laws for the rich and another for the rest of us. The power is in the people though, people just need to realize this.

Thanks again for y’all’s dedication to the fight for justice! ON THE MOVE!

Janine Phillips Africa #00-6309
451 Fullerton Ave.
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403-1238

Social Prisoner Sebu Kessa Saa Tabansi

Anarchist salutations and revolutionary greetings!

Comrades, I am unable to run except for in segregation, but there is NO exercise yard on September 12th 2009. However I will pace the cell in circles to be there in spirit!

My words: For you all, the struggle is a continuum, “Unified we stand and divided we fail.”

My knowledge: “A journey of one thousand miles begins with one step.”

My encouragement: “Never quit; run free or die”

My solidarity: “Struggle! Free all political prisoners and prisoners of war!”

Sebu Kessa Saa Tabansi (A. Pew)
#BT – 7263 / Box A
Bellefonte, PA 16823-0820

Indigenous political prisoner Oso Blanco de Aztlan

Brothers and Sisters,

Yes, run down the walls! Everyday I pray for revolution and freedom. But this is no small matter. The Animals-Earth Mother-Natives and all peoples need a break to cleanse from this destructive civilization. So for eight years I’ve been praying for the economy to crash. Let he who can survive in nature survive. Let he who knows only the artificial world return to the spirit.

No occupation of Aztlan! No prisons - No research labs!
No Reservations - No zoos! Free Leonard Peltier!
Free Tom Manning! Free Veronza Bowers!

Oso Blanco de Aztlan (Byron Shane Chubbuck)
07909051
USP Lewisburg
P.O. Box 1000
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Anti-authoritarian political prisoner Bill Dunne

Salutations and felicitations to all the comrades participating in Running Down the Walls 2009! This year, September 12th is a particularly meaningful day to let the peoples’ feet shake the apparatus of oppression. It is Leonard Peltier’s birthday; he is a strong comrade in the struggle for the most equitable social reality in which all people will have the greatest possible freedom to attain their full human potential. He has never wavered despite being among the longest held political prisoners in the U.S. gulag archipelago and this year he was attacked by the federal parole commission, that agency of repression inflicted yet another 15 year hit on Leonard for no other reason than that he is such a strong comrade, a powerful symbol. So let us vote with our feet! Vote for freedom for Leonard! Vote for freedom for all political prisoners! Vote against oppression! My vote may be cast in relative isolation but I will feel the walls trembling to the cadence of our collective foot falls.

Bill Dunne #10916-086
P.O. Box 2068
USP Big Sandy
Inez, KY 41224

Anti-Imperialist political prisoner Jaan Laaman

I want to send a big shout out to everyone Running Down the Walls today - Saturday, September 12th, 2009. This is Jaan Laaman and I’m speaking to you from inside the u.s. penitentiary in Tucson, Arizona. Yes, I myself and a multinational group of solid prisoners will be Running Down the Walls, behind these walls in the Sonoran desert with all of you this Saturday morning.

Afghanistan, Obama and Imperialism

BY JAAN LAAMAN

Afghanistan may well be the jagged rocks on which Obama’s presidency crashes and sinks. Barack Obama campaigned and came into office on an agenda of hope and change. Regular readers may remember in issue 11, 4SM saw Obama’s electoral victories as a positive social advance for U.S. society, a push back against racism and public support for change in many spheres of life in this country. I also said then that Obama was no radical and he came into office with the backing of significant sectors of the U.S. ruling class and power elite. In 2008, the majority of the country was opposed to the wars Bush initiated, especially Iraq, but Afghanistan too. This is even truer now, in the Fall of 2009.

Let’s look at some concrete facts and realities. With only nine months in office, the Obama government has almost doubled the U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan to 68,000. There are 38,000 other foreign, mostly NATO troops there as well. The corporate news media is now reporting that Obama is considering throwing 40,000 more U.S. soldiers into that war. Meanwhile, with all the talk of finally getting out of Iraq, there are still 130,000 U.S. soldiers occupying and killing people in that country.

The recently completed in-depth report of the new U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal, describes a failing military endeavor, a corrupt government without popular support and time running out fast for the western invaders. This general’s idea of a solution is to throw in 40,000 more U.S. soldiers. In August and September, the U.S. military suffered higher casualties than they have since the initial invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Casualties for Italian and British troops were the highest ever, in the last two months. Over 5000 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. More soldiers will mean more body bags coming back to the U.S.

Air strikes have increased since President Obama took office. Indiscriminate bombings have massacred thousands of Afghan civilians and become a major source of opposition to the occupation. Just one example: on September 4, 119 people, including dozens of children and other civilians were killed in a fireball, when a German NATO commander called in U.S. F-15 fighters to attack two hijacked oil tankers in a town called Kunduz. Overall civilian casualties increased 25 percent in the first six months of 2009. Best estimates state that at least 30,000 civilians have been killed in Afghanistan.

Polls indicate that more than half the Afghan population is now opposed to the U.S. led imperialist occupation. That

pretty much matches the over 50 percent of U.S. people who are opposed to the war and occupation and especially to any escalation of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

This cost in blood and death is horrendous. Let’s also look at the price tag of this war. For the first time, the war in Afghanistan in the next budget year will cost Americans more than the war in Iraq. By the end of the next fiscal year, which started October 1, the total military budget cost for both wars will exceed \$1 trillion. That is more than the cost of the Vietnam War, adjusted for inflation, or any other U.S. war except World War II.

A trillion dollars is impossible to imagine. But let’s break it down this way: let’s say you had an expense account where you could spend one million dollars everyday - seven days a week, it would take you 2,935 years to spend \$1.071 trillion, which is the actual estimate for the wars’ price tag by Travis Sharp of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington. This is an insane waste of U.S. tax dollars at any time. Right now, as unemployment hits 10 percent, with millions losing their jobs, millions losing their homes, cut backs in schools and government services, and still over 50 million Americans with no health care, etc., etc., it is just plain wrong, stupid and self destructive to pour this kind of money into this endless war and occupation of Afghanistan!

Even some pro-imperialist establishment voices are speaking out against deepening the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Former President Jimmy Carter’s national security advisor, old Cold War dog Zbigniew Brzezinski, recently warned that a U.S. escalation in Afghanistan could become a quagmire. Senator Carl Levin, head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, argued that adding U.S. troops would not only result in a large increase in U.S. casualties, it would arouse more Afghan support for the anti-U.S. resistance. These voices and others like them, are those of officials who support imperialism, but realize that getting further sucked into Afghanistan will be a real mistake. Other NATO countries, with their own occupation troops in Afghanistan are coming to this same realization. The Netherlands and Canada have both said that they will reduce and pull their troops out soon. Even the right-wing government of Italy is talking about getting out of that war.

The occupation and war in Afghanistan, just like the war in Iraq, is an imperialist nightmare for the people of those countries and a huge sucking chest wound for the people here in America. The U.S. ruling class and the elite political and military rulers want to extend and enforce their will on nations and regions around the world. There is a lot of oil in the Caspian Sea region and Afghanistan is a crucial pipe line route. Imperialism does not benefit or improve the life of the majority of us people in: the United States. We pay the bills and do the dirty work the killing and dying, mostly in foreign lands. The original reason for invading Afghanistan was to get Osama bin-Laden and Al

Qaeda. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda are long gone to Pakistan and other lands. Even in the original official story, no Afghans were involved in 9/11. Yet this war grinds on and on, and now Obama might be ready to launch a major escalation - a reinvasion almost that will, mark these words, result in much more death on all sides and a huge and growing financial cost, for years and years, perhaps even decades of more war.

All of Barack Obama's other efforts for reform of health care, education, environmental recovery, etc., will be lost and his presidency, quite possibly only one term, will be defined and broken by this war. More importantly, we the working people, common and poor people in America will have to carry this burden. More people around the world will come to hate the U.S., as we continue to pay the bills and our family members, from the working class, do the fighting, killing and dying. Imperialism, and U.S. imperialism in particular, is harmful and destructive to us, even as it is harmful and deadly to the people whose lands and homes are invaded and bombed.

The imperialist propaganda machine has gone into overdrive, through much of the corporate news media. The returning war dead are lauded as heroes whose deaths must not be in vain - 'the old lie' so more young people must die, whose deaths in turn must be honored by still more deaths.

It is time for the working class and regular people in the U.S. to see past these illusions and lies, to see our own interests which are peace and prosperity, jobs and health care, affordable housing and good schools - not more prisons or military for our youth. It is time for the anti-war and social and economic justice movements to step forward. We need to speak, yell and scream, let Barack Obama know we won't support or tolerate these Bush-started wars, even if he, the first Black President of "change we can believe in" tries to escalate and continue them. It is past time to get totally out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!

PS: For information on a potentially very significant and impactful effort to bring this anti-war and social and economic justice message to the Obama government, see the announcement from the 'Black is Back Coalition' and their November 7 March and Rally in Washington, DC, which follows this article.

Jaana Laaman
(10372-016)
U.S. Penitentiary
P.O. Box 24550
Tucson, AZ 85734

Angola 3 Appeal Denied

BY JAMES RIDGEWAY
October 9, 2009, *Mother Jones*

The Louisiana State Supreme Court Friday denied an appeal from Herman Wallace, who has been held in solitary confinement for more than 37 years. Wallace and Albert Woodfox are members of what has become known as the Angola 3. Convicted of the 1972 murder of a prison guard at the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, both men maintain their innocence; they believe they were targeted for the crime and relegated to permanent lockdown because of their organizing work with the prison chapter of the Black Panthers. Wallace, who is now 68 years old, was recently transferred from Angola to the Hunt Correctional Center near Baton Rouge, where he continues to be held in solitary. Two days ago, Wallace descended even deeper into the hole, placed in a disciplinary unit called Beaver 5 for unknown violations of prison policy.

Herman Wallace launched the appeal of his conviction nearly a decade ago. His lawyers have introduced substantial evidence showing that the state's star witness, a fellow prisoner named Hezekiah Brown, was offered special treatment and an eventual pardon in exchange for his testimony against Wallace and Woodfox. In 2006, a judicial commissioner assigned to study the case found that there were grounds for overturning the conviction, but Wallace's application was subsequently denied--by the state district court, court of appeals, and now by the Louisiana Supreme Court.

While every setback comes as a blow to a man nearing 70 who has spent nearly four decades in lockdown, one of Wallace's attorneys said tonight that this denial by the state's highest court came as no surprise, since it has a reputation for refusing to overturn the decisions of lower courts. Today's ruling opens the doors to a federal habeas corpus challenge, beginning with the Federal District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana at Baton Rouge. Here, if Wallace is lucky, his case will be reviewed by a fact-finding federal magistrate, and his conviction overturned by a federal judge. This is what happened to Albert Woodfox last year. Yet Woodfox, too, remains in prison--and in solitary confinement--as the state appeals the judge's decision.

The Warden of Angola and Hunt prisons, Burl Cain, has more than once suggested that the two men must be held in solitary because they ascribe to "Black Pantherism." In addition to their criminal appeals, Wallace and Woodfox (along with Robert King, who was released in 2001), have a case pending on constitutional grounds. They argue that the conditions and duration of their time in solitary confinement constitute cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment, and that they are being held there for their political beliefs, in violation of the First Amendment.

Solidarity Statements from The Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Annual Running Down the Walls 2009

MOVE political prisoner Phil Africa

My revolutionary best to all at ABCF and all those involved in the work of true revolution! Much respect to all those active in the serious work needed to gain the release of all PP/POWs! I truly hope all are strong and on THE MOVE in the work needed to completely eliminate this rotten reform world system that imposes its destructive ways on ALL LIFE.

As always I'm sure that RDTW will again be the great success it has been in the past. I speak for THE MOVE ORGANIZATION in saying that we are in solidarity with this event and all those who support it. Just heard the news of this system's continued attack on Leonard Peltier. Everyone should be up in arms about the vulgarity of the 15-year hit given Leonard by the parole board! Like with the SF8, this system's hatred for those with the courage to stand against it in defense of what's right, is historical.

Run-a-way slaves were hunted down for daring to be in the free as GOD MAMMA NATURE intends ALL LIFE to be. The Native Peoples were slaughtered for daring to hold to their right to live and the land MOTHER NATURE made them caretakers of!

31 years later THE MOVE 9 are still being held hostage by this system for daring to survive this system's attempt to murder us on August 8, 1978 and the list goes on and on. For those of you running for justice for all, I truly hope that your footsteps are heard around the world and shakes the brittle bones of all oppressors! Let each foot step, each voice heard, be a strong statement to this system, that no one it has and is still doing an injustice to, will ever be forgotten! Let each foot step be a demand to this system to release Chip Fitzgerald, Herman Bell, Sundiata Acoli, Mumia Abu Jamal, Hugo Pinell, Robert Seth Hayes, David Gilbert, Marilyn Buck, The MOVE 9, Veronza Bowers, the Cuban 5, and the unending list of others, too many to name at this time, but are not forgotten just because their names were not mentioned.

Those who have been unjustly denied their release from these hell holes for way far too long. Let the run ring loud to this system, that these folk of strong committed reflections of justice and freedom are not and will never be forgotten and that their release is being demanded!

Let every foot step remind this system that all of those who

have given their lives to this struggle are forever loved by us all! That they are, as all good soldiers of this revolution, missed but never forgotten! Let everyone feel their strong dedicated spirits flow through your hearts and souls with every step and fill you with the strength and motivation to carry on this struggle until the battle for justice and freedom for ALL is won and a reality for ALL! To quote JOHN AFRICA "SOLIDARITY IS UNITY. WITHOUT UNITY YOU CAN'T HAVE REVOLUTION." LONG LIVE JOHN AFRICA! Let us always find that common ground to work in harmony, work in solidarity in and in unity help build that better world for all.

Again my love and solidarity to ALL! Take care, stay strong and keep ON THE MOVE.
FREE THE MOVE 9!
FREE MUMIA ABU JAMAL!
FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!
FREE ALL SOCIAL AND CLASS WAR PRISONERS!
NEVER FORGET MAY 13TH, 1985!
LONG LIVE JOHN AFRICA'S REVOLUTION AND
DOWN WITH THIS ROTTEN REFORM WORLD SYSTEM!

William Phillips Africa #AM-4984
Folgies Road, Drawer K
SCI Dallas
Dallas, PA 18612

New Afrikan political prisoner Sekou Cinque Kambui

Dear friends, comrades in struggle:

As a political prisoner held hostage for over forty years now by the slave manufacturing state of Alabama. Your sacrifice and diligent efforts in solidarity and support of political prisoners and prisoners of war is deeply appreciated. Keep up the good work!

Your missive advising us in the Social Consciousness Development Group (SCDG) about Running Down the Walls event that you have organized arrived safely. All concerned are in solidarity with you and though incarcerated we will be Running Down the Walls with you here at station C.F. under the organization of SCDG Chairman Sekou Kambui.

We feel that to run with you, even removed as we are from the forerunners outside, we are demonstrating our solidarity and support of the principles by which you were guided and motivated to organize RDTW on behalf of PP/POWs.

September 6th is the birthday of Sekou Kambui, the chairman of SCDG, and so he is proud to be able to give a celebration in dedication to his fellow PP and Virgo Leonard Peltier whose birth month he shares. We, in SCDG are also fighters for social justice and a part of the "International

BY JAAN LAAMAN

Here in USP Tucson, we had a morning run -- 33 brothers, Black, white, Latino (Cubano, Boricua, Mexicano, Nica), one wheelchair and a few old heads who walked some and ran some, rolled, walked and ran down the walls in the Sonoran desert. We had a few words before we took off as one large group, reminding everyone that as we ran, many others behind other walls were running, as well as people in 12 cities across the country - separated by miles and walls, but united in our efforts for justice and freedom. We also said a few words about this being Leonard Peltier's birthday and the 15 year hit the parole board recently gave him. We ran for him and for all of us. Everyone took some inspiration in this unity and solidarity and everyone felt positive after finishing the 13 laps we ran, which was just over 5k.

BY DANIEL MCGOWAN

Today, on a muggy day at USP Marion, I ran 5K to coincide with the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's annual Running down the Walls benefit run in Los Angeles (with other runs and bike rides around the continent). Because of this year's timing, I did it solo (more than 2/3 of the men here fast during the Muslim month of Ramadan). Despite an allergy flare up and an absurd amount of smoke from a nearby wood burning stove, I finished the 5K in 33:04. I have to disclaim that time though! You should know that our yard's path is only 1/18th of a mile requiring me to run 55 laps and make a fairly hard turn 220 times! It was a great day to run and I started my run at 12 p.m. so that I would be running at the same time as the folks in LA. I thought a lot today about all the others participating in the run and how this isolation I feel is really an illusion--that there are many others out there that struggle against this cruel and unjust system. My thoughts are with all of you out there struggling for a better world and my fellow political prisoners (and all prisoners for that matter). I hope all of the runs were successful today and that a lot of funds were raised to booster the important work the ABCF does.

BY BOSTON JERICHO

More than 20 people came out on Saturday 9/12, in spite of sometimes heavy rains, to run our 5K for political prisoners at the Jamaica Pond. We set off with an inspiring message from Jaan Laaman, recorded from inside the US penitentiary in Tucson Arizona, where he organized more than 30 prisoners to run this year.

After the run, we were joined by members of the Mashpee Wampanoag community, who talked about the struggle of justice for Leonard Peltier and drummed in his honor.

We raised \$500 from the run and will be matching this with Jericho funds, allowing us to send \$500 each to the

Leonard Peltier Defense/Offence Committee and to Ojore Lutalo, a New Afrikan Anarchist prisoner of war who has recently been released.

Thanks to all who came out on Saturday for helping to make a successful event. Lets work together to make it bigger next year!

Free all political prisoners and prisoners of war!

Jericho Boston
P.O. Box 301057
Boston, MA 02130
Jerichoboston.org
Jericho_boston@yahoo.com

BY TORONTO ABCF

This was our first year participating in Running Down the Walls, and we did a solidarity run with with one organized by Akili Castlin from Pelican Bay. We raised \$500 in sponsorships.

BY ARCATA ABCF

In Arcata, CA we had a small but good run. We had a total of nine runners/walkers. Our run took place at the Arcata Community Forest where we ran slightly over 5k up and down the trails in the forest. Like some of the other RDTW we had ours scheduled for 10 a.m.-2 p.m., but had a 2 hour delay because there was another 5k run scheduled for 10 a.m.-12 p.m., and for some reason which was not told to us, they had the only two entrances to the actual trails CLOSED OFF by the fire department (even though every other time that there has been a run scheduled in the forest the public still had access as long as they did not interfere with the runners). They also had a police car parked at the entrance of the parking lot, where there never is any police, and as reported by some of the runners for our event there was also police patrolling in front of the parking lot.

We used the two hours to talk to people in the park who came up and asked us what it was that we were doing. Some people who were just at the park donated some money. Once the two hour bulls**t was over, we started our event. We talked about the importance of RDTW and of supporting PP/POWs, then read some of the statements from the political prisoners, took a group photo then started the run. We hung out for a while after then run then parted ways.

In the end we raised \$210 dollars. Some other people have contacted us and said they would like to donate more money, so there might be more money to throw into the pot for RDTW.

The Black is Back Coalition March and Rally November 7 Washington, DC!

BY BLACK IS BACK COALITION
October 12, 2009



Washington, D.C. — A newly-formed Black coalition has announced a rally and march on the White House to take place November 7, 2009 beginning in Washington, D.C.'s historic Malcolm X Park. The rally and march are to protest the expanding U.S. wars and other policy initiatives that unfairly target African and other oppressed people around the world. Known as the Black is Back

Coalition for Social Justice, Peace and Reparations, the coalition formed on September 12, 2009 during a meeting in Washington, D.C. of more than fifteen activists from various Black organizations, institutions and communities.

The Black is Back Coalition aims to draw upon the support of many of the leading anti-imperialist organizations, journalists, organizers, artists and scholars of the African world. In this age of Obama, Rally and March on November 7, 2009 aims to bring back the tradition of resistance historically associated with Black communities around the world. Comprised of seasoned veterans of Black political struggle, consisting of members of the African People's Socialist Party, the NAACP, MOVE, the Green Party, Black Agenda Report and many other grassroots organizations and efforts, this coalition is perfectly situated to do just that.

As the call to action states, "Many well-meaning people in this country and around the world are afraid to take more progressive political positions for fear of being seen as anti-Black... We need to remind people of the absolute lack of 'progress' since new faces assumed leadership of this nation. Many of the leading concerns of Black people, Latinos and working people in this country remain insufficiently addressed. Black and Brown people continue to suffer the brunt of un/under-employment and predatory loan scandal crises. Military spending under Obama has increased, as has the warfare this nation continues to export to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Venezuela and Colombia. Mass incarceration, police brutality and political imprisonment remain rampant and the most negatively impacted by the levee breach in post-Katrina New Orleans continue to be without homes, jobs or health care assistance. And to that point, these are precisely the communities who nation-

ally will be the most negatively affected by yet another myth of health care 'reform.'"

The political paralysis now being experienced by anti-war and other progressive movements suffer from the lack of a Black-led anti-imperial movement to off-set the traps set by Obama's so-called "post-racial" politics that perpetuates the same oppressive militarist agenda well-known during the Bush regime. Black Is Back is not simply a slogan for the African Diaspora but for all progressive struggles that have historically always benefited from Black-led movements. On November 7, 2009 beginning promptly at 10am, all are welcome to participate in Rally and March which will include many speakers and performers of the coalition to stand and demonstrate in political solidarity announcing the return to leadership of the world's most reliably anti-war and pro-social justice communities. As the coalition says, "To free our people's hopes and dreams from oblivion, we need a coalition dedicated to the proposition that Black is Back!"

blackisbackcoalition.org

In the Shadow of Victory and Defeat

BY MATT HART

In the last few months, the political prisoner support community has received both a huge defeat and a substantial victory. On August 21, our community learned that Leonard Peltier was not only denied parole but received a 15-year hit. As voices of rage and anger filled the air in protest of this injustice, we received news – six days later – that Ojore Lutalo, New Afrikan Anarchist political prisoner, was released from the New Jersey prison system after 27 years. While these two events have left us with mixed emotions, what is clear is that we must renew our commitment to the liberation of political prisoners and prisoners of war.

In little more than a decade, while we have seen the liberation of many of our comrades, we have also seen several pass away. The deaths of Albert 'Nuh' Washington and Richard Williams; the death of Merle Africa under questionable circumstances; and the suicide of Thomas Warner – have left us with the realization that some of our brothers and sisters will die behind the prison walls. Unless we mobilize behind the banner of liberation and freedom for these comrades, most may find themselves in that situation.

It is time that we as a movement must make a decision – shall we continue to shed tears of sorrow as our dear comrades whither away or shall we begin to build a movement to free our friends and once again shed tears of joy? We hope to move in the direction of the latter.

Showdown in September: The Battle Against the G20

BY DAVE STRANO, Denver ABCF

The streets were alive with the sounds of collective rebellion: the sounds of shattering glass mixed with shouting, laughter, and cheer, echoing off the nearby buildings and filling the night air of the student neighborhood of Oakland in Pittsburgh.

Comrades gripped each others' arms as they marched in the streets. The fire from burning dumpsters illuminated their faces, reflecting off their smiling eyes. At this moment, anything seemed possible. The energy was overpowering, as several hundred black clad figures controlled the streets...

The September mobilization against the annual meeting of the Group of 20 (G20) was the product of months of local and national organizing. For several days in the middle of September, hundreds and thousands of people from all walks of life converged on Pittsburgh to show strong opposition to the economic and social policies of the G20.

According to the website of the G20, the body was formed in 1999 to "...bring together systemically important industrialized and developing economies to discuss key issues in the global economy." Far from being a benign forum for the ruling class, the G20 has become an organization that has further strengthened global capitalism's hold over the world's resources and markets.

The meeting of the G20 in Pittsburgh, amid a global economic crisis that has left thousands without homes and jobs, and decimated the economies of developing nations, presented anti-capitalists in the United States a unique opportunity to mobilize large demonstrations and resistance against capitalism that included the participation of a broad group of people.

The mobilization also offered a unique view of policing in the Obama era. Dozens of police departments coordinated to provide security for the event. Nearly 5,000 police officers and National Guard soldiers were mobilized to keep order in the city. Hundreds of prisoners were released from the Alleghany County Jail to make room for the expected arrests of demonstrators. Police units from as far away as Florida and Illinois were shipped in.

The coordination of police forces and the development of the security apparatus for the protests revealed much about how the protests were viewed as a threat to state and capitalist power.

The mobilization's street actions started on September 24th with a march organized by local anarchists and anti-capitalists dubbed "The People's Uprising." The march would start in Arsenal Park in the Lawrenceville neighborhood and work its way toward the security perimeter established outside the convention center housing the G20 meetings. To the surprise of organizers and participants alike, over 1000 people converged on the park for the march. While falling short of numbers that could be expected during the height of the anti-globalization movement just 9 years ago, that an explicitly non-permitted and militantly anti-capitalist march could draw this many participants was surprising for most in attendance. Many had initially feared that the march wouldn't be able to get out of the park, due to the overwhelming police presence. However, the march consumed the streets and headed off toward the security perimeter with much energy, militancy, and defiance.

Thus began three days of street fighting in Pittsburgh, pitting locals and out-of-town dissidents against police officers and National Guard from all over the country. A full report back of the all the different demonstrations and events could fill pages. Street fighting and actions took place at dozens of locations throughout the city, nearly 24 hours a day for three straight days. These included many actions and confrontations in the Oakland neighborhood, surrounding the University of Pittsburgh, and a large, permitted march of thousands on September 25th.

Tens of thousands of dollars of property damage was inflicted on businesses, banks, police stations, and others that supported and protected the G20 meetings and represented the interests of the capitalist classes. Hundreds of arrests and injuries occurred during the three days. And though the details and stories of these actions and their aftermath have been the focus of much writing over the last several weeks, what the mobilization says about the state of support for capitalism is far more compelling.

Thousands of people from many backgrounds, representing many different interests, mobilized to confront the G20 under a specifically anti-capitalist banner. Militants mobilized in much higher numbers than they have in half a decade or longer. However, even the more mainstream, permitted march and actions had concrete demands for the abolition of capitalism. For the first time in a long time, capitalism as an economic system was being publicly scrutinized and attacked by thousands in the streets.

Speakers, literature, and banners called for the end of capitalism, for the creation of a more equitable distribution of all real wealth. Many locals participated in these actions. And many students, not previously disposed to be against the G20, joined the demonstrations and organized their own after violent and indiscriminate police actions on the University of Pittsburgh campus. Many new radicals were created in the streets of Pittsburgh. And most of us who

ABCF Running Down the Walls 2009 Reports

BY LOS ANGELES ABCF

Every Run Must Have Hurdles

We are pleased to report that the Los Angeles run was a success. Despite attempts to halt our activities, the event continued as planned. We came together as one – shook the ground – sending the message that we will not stop until our comrades are free.

We would like to say that the event began without a hitch, but to make that claim would certainly be a lie. Less than 48 hours prior to our event, LA ABCF received an email from the Department of Parks and Recreation informing us that we could not have the event at Whittier Narrows Regional Park. The excuse given was that – despite our event being smaller than most family gatherings or sporting events held at this location – we must have a permit. One of our members contacted the department in an attempt to resolve the issue but they were adamant that the event will not continue.

After much discussion, the chapter agreed that canceling the event was not an option. We had prisoners running in prison yards and even in their cells. To quit would fly in the face of everything the event stands for – solidarity and resistance.

When we arrived to set up, we noticed an unusual number of park employees and police patrols. We have been to this park on numerous occasions and have had only a few sightings of police. This said we were still uncertain if this was a case hyperawareness or whether our concerns were justified.

We prepared for the run as usual with only slight modifications. Rather than putting up the ABCF banner and anarchist flags, we traded them in for black, red and yellow balloons (colors of AIM) and red and black streamers (color of anarchism). From the outside, we looked like a birthday party not an anarchist event. Rather than hanging signs for the run, we hung signs for "Peltier's

Birthday Bash."

Folks who arrived for the run were quick to figure out where to go. Police on the other hand were none the wiser. While patrol passed our event, the birthday cake, festive atmosphere and broad diversity of attendees – must have given them the impression that we did not fit the typical group of anarchists they were looking for.

After a few words from LA ABCF member, Mapache, the group listened to statements from prisoners – including an audio message from Jaan Laaman. Everyone came together to take a group photograph and then the run began.

It wasn't until people were on the course for the run that we truly understood that the police presence was much larger than what we even thought. Police were stationed throughout the park riding horses, in a Bronco truck, undercover vehicle and standard patrol cars. Patrols were driving on the pathway forcing families and runners off the course and occasionally giving suspicious runners the stink-eye. At one point, one of the runners overheard a police officer inquire to the whereabouts of the anarchists. Little did they know that Running Down the Walls (AKA Anarchist Birthday Brigade or the Peltier's Birthday Bash) was running right under their noses.

After the run was over, LA ABCF presented prizes to the first and second-place runners, as well as the person who raised the most money. We proceeded to eat cake and flautas, talk politics and interact with old and new friends.

At the end of the event, we managed to raise \$900, which will be split between the ABCF Warchest, the Chip Fitzgerald Homecoming Fund and Ojore Lutalo.

Overall, we are pleased with the day. The attempt to disrupt the event only strengthened our determination to make this event happen. There was to be no excuse for failure. Turning back was not an option. Not with our imprisoned comrades running behind the barbed wire. We must move forward. It is only through our resistance that we are able to show our solidarity. In the end, we figure what would a run be without a few hurdles – it certainly wouldn't be Running Down the Walls.



Oso Blanco Treatment Statement

BY SUMNER GRAY
Citizens in Action (C.I.A.) co-founder

I don't want to use the words 'prisoner emergency' yet but we are rapidly approaching it. Hello, my name is Sumner Gray and I have been writing Oso Blanco, aka Byron Chubbuck, for over 5 of the 10 years he's been in the federal prison system and this is the **WORST TREATMENT HE HAS RECEIVED** while incarcerated. For full info on Oso visit www.osoblanco.org

There are two main areas of concern. First is my belief that USP Lewisburg is an archaic institution, stuck in time in its interactions with inmates (openly racist and hateful). Oso has been punished for the silliest things and I truly believe that this prison is trying to rack up enough punishment time against him that he will lose all contact with the outside world. In short, they are trying to keep him indefinitely in solitary. Oso has racked up 1.5 years of no phone calls, 1.5 years of no visitation, and 1.5 years of loss of store privileges! He hasn't even been at this facility for 6 months (more details below). Secondly, mail (isn't that always a problem for political prisoners?) has come to a halt in and out for Oso. He has not received any of his three current paid for magazine subscriptions nor any political papers since his transfer to Lewisburg. Oso is an avid writer – often sending two to three letters out a day. All contact has been lost for months except to me off and on.

All I'm asking from anyone who receives this email or letter is to please call or write the warden and ask the prison to STOP TAMPERING with Byron Chubbuck's mail. If you would like to comment further on the incidents listed below, great and thank you. But it is vital (and will fit on a postcard) to get Oso's mail flowing again. Keep it simple: "We have proof that Bryon Chubbuck's mail is being tampered with to and from your facility. Please immediately investigate and rectify the situation." Then ad lib the rest.

So please write or call:

570-523-1251 (keep trying if no answer)

Or write:
Warden, USP Lewisburg
2400 Robert F. Miller Drive
Lewisburg, PA 17837 (please include a return street address so we can receive the warden's response)

Feel free to post this call to action on Myspace or Facebook or email chains or Indymedia – get the word out! Oso has been brave to openly speak about prison abuse at vari-

ous facilities (that even lead to his re-capture in 2001); the least we can do is follow through with his claims.

His punishment incidents:

1. "Our cell is very, very clean but there is no ventilation. So we have to hang up anything damp to dry or in a day it will start to mold." Oso and his cellie got 6 months for a towel hanging up to dry.
2. "Around 50 people got a shot (write-up) for taking off these hot ass jump suits to work out in our dog cages. They put bar cuffs on very tight. This cuts into your wrists and swells up your hands like balloons. It's a form of torture." Oso got 6 months for removing a jump suit.

3. Oso was violently attacked by guards and gassed while cuffed and left in a cell with water on the floor with only his underwear on for 72 hours or so. The guards claimed he threw feces at them. Anyone who knows Oso (or looks at his prison record) knows this is a false claim. Indeed, Oso filed a formal complaint against the attacks and the false claims. Oso says he was left in tight cuffs from June 24 to June 26 and has lost feeling in his big right toe as a result. He has been denied medical treatment and still has no feeling months later. Oso got 6 months for getting beat up and shackled.

STOP THE ABUSE!
Writing the warden is vital but if you want send Oso a quick card or letter:

Byron Chubbuck
#07909051
USP Lewisburg
P.O. Box 1000
Lewisburg, PA, North America (Oso requests no zip codes).

Oso Blanco (left) with Leonard Peltier and Tom Maning.

Byron Chubbuck is a wolf clan Cherokee/Choctaw raised in New Mexico. His Indian name is Oso Blanco and he became known by the authorities as "Robin the Hood" after the FBI and local gang unit APD officers learned from a CI that Oso Blanco was robbing banks to send thousands of dollars worth of supplies to the Zapatista Rebels of Chiapas on a regular basis during 1998 and 1999. He is now serving 80 years at the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas for bank robbery, aggravated assault on the FBI, escape and firearms charges.



were already active in the movement left feeling exhilarated and strengthened, ready to carry on and continue the struggle already developing in our own communities.

Thousands of police officers couldn't stop the militant responses in the streets. Even after hundreds of arrests and indiscriminate use of violence, the street actions continued. The threat to capitalist business as usual posed by hundreds of militants, backed by thousands of others, proved to be very real, indeed.

The aftermath and continued state repression against specific individuals who were active in supporting the mobilizations may be the most telling of how seriously the state is taking this mobilization. Two individuals from New York are facing state level charges for their alleged participation in a communications structure for the protests. Elliot Madison and Michael Wallschlaeger are accused of utilizing internet and cell phone technology and Twitter, a program that allows users to quickly disseminate text based information to people's emails and cell phones, to communicate the actions and movements of the police during the demonstrations to protest participants. Prosecutors claim that this allowed for more criminal actions to take place in the streets and for people to avoid and outmaneuver the police.

What is even more alarming is the involvement of a federal grand jury. Although the links between the federal grand jury and the state level prosecution are unclear at this time, the grand jury investigation resulted in a raid on the Tortuga collective house, a residence that Madison and others share in New York City. Police and FBI agents seized many personal and shared belongings in the house. In what has become a theme in the arrests of radicals, literature, household tools, and even children's toys are being labeled as evidence in the investigation.

Support for the Tortuga residents and the defendants themselves will prove critical in the ongoing conflict with capitalist powers in the country. It is far too early to know what a continued resistance in this country will look like. However, if we can gauge the success of our actions based on the level of seriousness with which the state is treating these prosecutions, then we at least have a clearer picture that the state views the September mobilizations as contributing to the strengthening of a broader anti-capitalist movement.

Let us never relent.

Statement of Solidarity with Tortuga House

BY ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS FEDERATION-NYC
October 13, 2009

On October 1, 2009, at 6:00 a.m., the Joint Terrorism Task Force kicked down the front door to an anarchist collective house in Queens, New York, affectionately known as Tortuga. This much you know. And while we of the NYC Anarchist Black Cross slept, our comrades were being subjected to the type of humiliating treatment that is typical from the state. The cops claimed to be searching for evidence related to rioting. We know better. These federal rioting charges are not new to us; they were used to target the Chicago Seven in 1968. They beat the charges then and we'll beat them now.

This raid was a fishing expedition intended not only to intimidate public anarchists, but also to gather information for future prosecutions. It occurred in the context of a growing repression, the likes of which anarchists have not experienced in the last decade. What does it mean? If nothing else, it means we're doing something right. Apart from that, it means we need to intensify our capacity for effective strategizing. If the state is spending untold dollars and labor hours devising ways to vanquish our networks, physical and otherwise, we must develop ways to counteract this.

Over the last decade, two of our main strategies have been organizing in our neighborhoods and organizing in the streets. It is fair to say, we've gotten better at both. Unfortunately, divergent currents of thought have led many to think that we must focus on one or the other, that the two are in some way mutually exclusive. In reality, these two are often composed of the same people. Even when they aren't, they compliment each other; stronger ties in our neighborhoods creates support in the streets.

If we look to recent history, there are movements that did not see the separation between building stronger neighborhoods and militancy in the streets. There is plenty to learn from these movements, especially from those most affected by and entangled in the state's repression. As an organization that supports political prisoners and prisoners of war, many coming from these very movements, we believe that their input can provide insight and inform our evolving strategies while also helping to keep them tied to the streets. With the number of political prisoners increasing – the majority of those most recently arrested are anarchists – this need to communicate with them should be evident.

We stand with the anarchists in Queens, not only out of solidarity with their ideas, but also because they are our friends and comrades. We realize that the state is attacking during a sensitive time – a time in which we are primed to put another chink in its armor while understanding we also face increased risks. We can work together and tear this motherfucker down and now is the time to focus on strategy, stay ahead of the cops, and support our friends, comrades, and allies when they most need it.

For the worlds we're building, against those that must come down.

Statement by Anarchist Grand Jury Resister Carrie Feldman

Editor's note: The United States government has a long sordid history of using grand juries as fishing or witch hunting expeditions and direct attacks against progressive and revolutionary movements. Grand juries have long been used against the Puerto Rican independence movement. They have been used against Black liberation organizations. They have been used against anti-imperialist and anti-war groups and especially against clandestine resistance organizations. They are now also being used against the earth and animal liberation movement.

Grand juries are used as fishing expeditions, to try to develop information, find out the names of friends and associates, even where no "crime" or "illegal activity" is alleged against them. Grand juries are also used to gauge a movement's level of commitment, backbone and solidarity. If people easily and readily collaborate with the government when they are questioned by federal agents or called before a grand jury, the government reads this as a sign that the group or movement is weak, and they will usually intensify their investigation. If the movement, its members, associates, personal friends and family resist government and grand jury attempts to "turn" people into informants, if a wall of solidarity and silence is built, the government will have to pull back and leave people alone. This wall of silence and resistance is built by individuals taking the principled, but hard stance of non-collaboration with grand juries. The support of family, friends and other activists from the movement under assault, as well as from other progressive activist movements and individuals, is very important. We all have to support and cherish those brave and principled individuals who refuse to collaborate with intrusive, police-state like government witch hunts.

October 15, 2009

Today I had my first appearance before the federal grand jury in Davenport, Iowa. I was represented by a federal public defender (although he could not be present in the grand jury with me). After reading a brief statement expressing that I would not testify, I was released with a subpoena to reappear before the grand jury again on the 17th of November at 9:00 a.m. It is likely that at this time I will be held in contempt of court for continuing to remain silent, and could face jail time up to the length of the grand jury (it convenes for 12 months total, which leaves 11 remaining after my November appearance). We are still looking into legal questions regarding how long they could hold me.

Although the prosecutor has still not been forthcoming as to what they are investigating me for, I now feel confident in assuming that they are looking into an ALF action that occurred at the University of Iowa in 2004. Many different signs, including a question from one of the jurors, have indicated this.

Some info about federal grand juries in Iowa:

The federal grand jury in Iowa has sessions for two days at a time, once a month. They are convened for 12 months at a time. There is always a grand jury going on and they hear a variety of cases—they are not convened for any specific thing. They are secret, and even the public defenders working on those cases are kept very much in the dark. The current grand jury convened on October 14.

Here's the statement I read to the grand jury:

First of all, I would like to state, unequivocally and most certainly for the record, that I have no intention of testifying before this grand jury. Based on information from the prosecutor indicating that I may be a target of this investigation, I am invoking my Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. But beyond that, I am refusing to cooperate based on a sincere belief that to do so would run counter to my deeply held convictions and values.

Grand juries were originally created to prevent arbitrary indictments, but are now used as a tool of the prosecution to gather information. Grand juries undercut basic rights supposedly granted in the Constitution by denying access to counsel and coercing testimony. They are now, and have been for some time, used to investigate and intimidate those who would express dissent.

This is only effective when we are complicit, when we are frightened, when we are divided. Today my voice may waver, as I stand alone in this room. But I know I speak with the voice of every one of my friends, loved ones, and comrades when I say this: We will not be intimidated. We will not cooperate. I have nothing more to say to you.

Thanks to everyone for how much support I've gotten already. It means so much to me to know you have my back.

If you want to stay updated on my case, visit supportcarrie.wordpress.com

And remember—stay safe, stay strong, and fuck grand juries!

While waiting for his court hearing, Antonio Guerrero, wrote this poem and sent it to all his supporters from around the world.

I

Miami is before my eyes. I can't sleep
An obstinate verse bounces
between the luxury of a skyscraper
and the tragedy of a broken shower.

through the window I see the rising sun
to light the green tinted windows,
in every direction people, with whom
I make an imaginary world, walk.

The Royal Caribbean cruises,
the McDonald's, the school, the banks,
the homeless rummaging through the trash
the vendor under the umbrella
still there and again I look at them
from the "hole," that is, "from my altitude."

II

It is called Miami's Down Town
a mass of steel, concrete and glasses.
During the day an authentic ant's nest.
During the night a dangerous and empty place.

Its each time highest buildings
are symbols of power and opulence:
banks with millionaire transactions,
houses with few tenants.

In the cosmetic urbanization
there are parking lots for countless cars.
and I do not know how to say it in verse
but what captures more my attention
is to see that the public transportation
basically is used by the black people.

III

Once again orange jumper
Once again solitude between bricks.
Once again broken mattress without pillow.
Once again big noise in the hall.

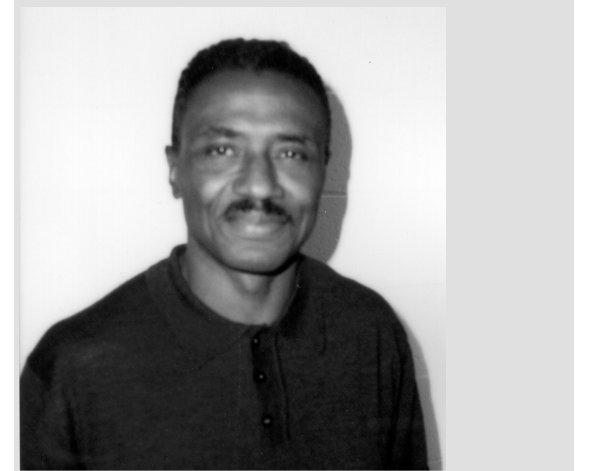
Once again to change clothes once a week.
Once again tiny yellow pencil.
One again by a miracle a phone call.
Once again to walk without destiny.

Once again a cage to "recreate,"
This time even they don't give coffee.
Once again dirty floor, cold shower.
Once again a "cop-out" to complain
and, of course, they don't answer once again.
Once again "hole" and once again poetry.

Political Prisoner Profile

Herman Bell has been a U.S. political prisoner for over 36 years. A former Black Panther, he was involved with political community work and subsequently went underground because of relentless FBI and police attacks on the Party. Herman was captured in New Orleans in 1973 and illegally extradited to New York to stand trial with Albert Nuh Washington, Jalil Muntaqim, Francisco Torres and Gabriel Torres on charges of killing two NYC police. Though the jury could not reach a verdict the first time, the NY District Attorney persisted and used many illegal tactics to obtain convictions for Herman, Jalil and Nuh. In 2007, Herman was extradited to San Francisco for prosecution of a 38 year-old unsolved cop-killing case. He was charged along with Jalil Muntaqim and six other former Black Panthers, now known as the San Francisco 8. In July 2009, he pled to reduced charges and received 5 years probation. Herman maintains this was a strategic decision which would help the defense of the others and would allow him to return to New York and continue fighting for freedom. The plea in no way jeopardized the other defendants in the case. His decision paved the way for the dismissal of four of the SF8, once Jalil Muntaqim joined Herman in accepting a plea for probation. Herman was also a founder, along with Carol Dove and Michael Vernon, and core member of the Victory Gardens Project, a collaboration between inner city and rural community groups in the northeastern U.S., in which food, as the organizing tool, was grown and distributed free of charge back into the communities.

Herman Bell 79-C-0262
P.O. Box 116
Fallsburg, New York 14871



Antonio Guerrero Sentenced to 21 Years and 10 Months

BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
FREEDOM OF THE CUBAN FIVE

Miami, October 13, 2009

The following organizations have issued this declaration: The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five; the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five; and the organizations of the Cuban Immigration in Miami that together comprise the Alianza Martiana (Marti Alliance): the Antonio Maceo Brigade, the Alianza Martiana as an individual organization, the Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community (ATC), the José Martí Association, and political parties of the United States who are part of the Cuban Five solidarity movement.

With our declaration we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to maintain and strengthen our efforts to demand the immediate freedom of our five brothers: Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González, as they are innocent of the charges that the U.S. government has convicted them of.

Today, Tuesday, October 13, 2009, in Miami's United States Federal District Court for the Southern District of Florida, a hearing was held to reduce the sentence of one of our five brothers, Antonio Guerrero. It is one of three



re-sentencing hearings ordered by the full panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in September 2008. The U.S. Federal District Court has not yet set the date or dates of the other two re-sentencing hearings of our brothers Ramón Labañino and Fernando González.

In September 2008 the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the trial court's previous life sentence imposed on Antonio Guerrero and Ramon Labañino, and the 19-year sentence imposed on Fernando González in December 2001. The Five were convicted in June 2001.

Today the Court imposed a prison sentence of 21 years and 10 months on Antonio Guerrero for his unjust conviction of conspiracy to commit espionage. Independently of the court process and the decisions that are issued by the court, we maintain our steadfast demand for the immediate freedom of the Cuban Five.

The judicial case prosecuted against our five brothers has nothing to do with justice. This is, and always has been, a political case.

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, every administration of the U.S. government has maintained a policy of permanent aggression against the Cuban people. A fundamental part of this policy of aggression has been the use of violence against the Cuban people. For decades, U.S. administrations have been directly or indirectly involved -- through terrorist organizations of the Cuban-American extreme right wing in the United States -- in countless terrorist attacks against the Cuban people, causing the deaths of 3,478 Cuban men, women and children, and injuring 2,099 Cubans. The peace, security and well-being of the Cuban people have been tragically affected.

In the interest of defending its people -- as any other responsible government would do -- the government of Cuba assigned to the Five the task of infiltrating the terrorist organizations of the Cuban-American extreme right wing. Everyone in this city knows full well that the terrorist organizations have carried out campaigns of death and terror against the Cuban people for decades. Stopping terrorism was the mission of the Cuban Five.

Instead of arresting the terrorists and prosecuting them for their crimes, the U.S. government, a participant in these nefarious campaigns of death and terror, arrested the Five 11 years ago this past September. Since then it has kept them arbitrarily imprisoned.

It is for these reasons that today in Miami we reaffirm and make known to our five brothers, to their families and all our sisters and brothers in the U.S. and the international movement to Free the Five, as well as the Cuban people, our unalterable decision to continue and strengthen our struggle for their immediate freedom.

The Case of the Tarnac 9

On November 11 2008, French Anti-Terrorism Police arrested around twenty people, mostly in Tarnac, a small village in the Corrèze region of central France. Nine were subsequently accused of "criminal association for the purposes of terrorist activity" in connection with the sabotage of train lines which had caused delays on the French railways. Very little evidence has been presented against them, but central to the prosecution is their alleged authorship of a book, *The Coming Insurrection*, and their association with what a scare-mongering French government and media have termed an "ultra-left" or "anarcho-autonomous movement."

They and others are the victims of a witch-hunt in which the word "terrorism" is applied to any ideas and practices which challenge the status quo. An international movement is emerging in their support.

The Coming Insurrection by 'The Invisible Committee' is a 45 page booklet that is definitely worth checking out. It is clearly written by and for youth. It came out in France a year or two ago. It's very European/French philosophical and practical also. 4SM might have more to say on it in issue 15 and we will print readers thoughts as well, if we receive them. In English you can find this online at: <http://tarnac9.wordpress.com>

Confronted by an Ever More Absurd State Power, We Shall Speak No More

FROM LE MONDE
March 16, 2009

For four months now, the legal and media spectacle titled "The Tarnac affair" won't come to an end. Was Julien Coupat to come out of prison for Christmas? For New Year's Eve then? Or would Friday the 13th be his lucky day? No. In the end "we" will keep him a bit longer in jail, locked into his new role as "leader of an invisible cell."

Since a few people in power appear to have an interest in letting this charade go on, even beyond the limits of the grotesque, for the sake of collective clarification, we will have to take once more the garb that has been knit for us ("the 9 from Tarnac").

Well then.

Firstly. As journoes were burrowing into our garbage cans, the cops were fingering our assholes. Not the funniest of experiences. For months you have been opening our mail,

eavesdropping our phones, harassing our friends and video-tapping our homes. And you delectate in these actions. We, the "nine," we endure them, like so many others. We have been atomised by judicial procedures, nine times one single individual, whereas you are one administration, one police force, and the one and whole logic of one system. As we stand now, we have been double-dealt, and the stake is already erected. So please don't expect us to play cricket. Secondly. Of course you do desperately need "individual suspects" making up "cells" belonging to a "movement" relating to a certain "fraction" on the political chessboard. You need all this, because it constitutes your last and only handle on an increasing part of reality, which cannot be longer reduced to "the society" you pretend to protect. You are right, there is something happening in France, but it is definitely not the rebirth of the "ultra left" [*N1]. We are merely symbolic people, a, rather rustic, crystallisation of the conflict that crisscrosses our times. The media-police edge of a ruthless conflict opposing an order that is collapsing against everything and anyone who dares pretend to survive it.

It is rather obvious that when looking at what is going in Guadeloupe, Martinique [*N2], in the banlieues (big cities' suburbs) and in the universities, among the wine-growers, the fishermen, the railway workers and the sans-papiers (undocumented immigrants), you will soon need more judges than teachers to control the mess. You don't get it -- and don't bank on the sleuths of DCRI (French home security intelligence service) to enlighten you -- they're just as clueless.

Thirdly. We can but notice that there is much more joy in our friendships and our "company of miscreants" than in your offices and court houses.

Fourthly. Whereas it would appear entirely appropriate to you, given the seriousness of your employ, to question us regarding our political thoughts and our friendships, for us, we do not feel a duty to talk to you about these matters. No life will ever be entirely transparent to the State and its judicial apparatus. You wanted to shed some light on certain things? You have rather managed to spread obscurity. And as rumour has reached us, in order to escape your glance, the numbers are growing of those who go to demos without mobile phones, who encrypt their messages, and who take the long winding way home to reach their homes. As the saying goes: makes sense.

Fifthly. From the start of this "affair," you appear to have deliberately given great credence to the statements of a mythomaniac witness, heard under the cover of anonymity. And you persist, a brave stand we admit, to somehow believe this heap of lies, reviving a practice, delation, that "honoured" France a few scores of years ago [*N3]. It would be almost moving, if this did not mainly frame the prosecution of Julien Coupat, and hence his ongoing

detention. And as if this kind of “witness statement” was necessary to make arbitrary arrests, like in Villiers-le Bel (Paris suburb) after the riots there.

And finally, given the fact that the margin of liberty left to us is henceforth rather limited, and that the only moments we can escape your clutches are actually the ones in which you subject us to questioning, what you do regularly; and that Julien Coupat has now for the fourth time seen his request for release denied; and that he is our friend; and that he is no more than we are: We are to state that from this day onwards, following the heroic tradition of Bartleby, “we would rather not.” Meaning roughly: That we will speak no more till you liberate him, that you abandon the qualification of “leader” for him, and of “terrorists” for us all. In one word, that you drop the whole case.

For all those, wherever they are, who fight and do not resign. For all those who are not suffocated by resentment, and make joy their line of offensive. For our friends, our children, our brothers and sisters, and the support committee. Have no fear, harbour no commiseration. We are not heroes, we are not martyrs. It is precisely because this “affair” had no legal standing from its very inception that we need to bring the conflict in the realm of politics. What the ever increasing number of attacks launched against us by an ever more absurd political power calls for is a generalisation of collective practices of self-defense everywhere where it becomes a necessity.

There are no nine people to be saved. There is a regime to be felled.

Aria, Benjamin, Bertrand, Elsa, Gabrielle, Manon, Matthieu, Yldune are, together with Julien Coupat, indicted in what has become known as “The Tarnac Affair.”

“Q ‘n’ D” translation by Patrice Riemens
Bangalore, St Patrick’s Day, 2009

Translator’s notes

[*N1] “Ultra-gauche” in French. A neologism of sorts coined by interior minister Michelle Alliot-Marie in a bid to distinguish it from traditional extreme left (extreme gauche) of old. The “ultra gauche” was deemed to be “anarchist,” “autonomous” and, of course “violent.” The “9 of Tarnac” were arrested and lengthily detained after a number of sabotages of hi-speed (“TGV”) train lines last autumn, which have not at all been elucidated yet, let alone materially linked to “the 9.”

[*N2] Add Reunion to the list. The French “overseas departments” in the Carraibic and the Indian Ocean are boiling at the moment, as the chickens come home to roost after years of a colonialism without name, an artificial “motherland”-oriented economy, ill-mitigated by a pretense of welfare and a reality of increasingly unmanageable clientelist hand-outs culture.

[*N3] Authors refer to the collaborationist (with the Nazis) government of Vichy France (1940-45) where the “citoyens” engaged

in settling their private scores with their neighbours by denouncing them to the regime’s police or the Gestapo with gay abandon. Official France long time choose to and still would rather like forget this unsavory page of history.

Letter from the Parents of the Tarnac Nine

When all the media come together in a cacophony of lies to slander a handful of young people currently languishing in jail it is very difficult to find the right tone with which to call an end to this racket and make room for a little truth. Many journalists bent over backwards to confirm the statements of the Minister of the Interior, even while the raids were still taking place. Those arrested were assumed to be guilty from the outset.

No one could miss the sensationalist reality cop show that our children have been forced to star in throughout the last week. The anguish, fear, and tears have submerged us and continue to do so. But probably what has hurt us the most, destroyed us the most, is the flood of lies that have been let loose. Today it was our children, tomorrow it could be yours. We are still stunned, but we are no longer paralyzed. The various facts which follow are an attempt to reestablish the truth and to silence the public condemnation.

Our children have evidently benefitted from a special treatment, locked in darkness for 108 hours, some of them without any charges, and to justify this we are told that they must be very special people, the kind that one doesn’t find on any street corner. Yet at the same time we are reminded that they are actually very normal, for everyday they become more numerous, and take up positions at every one of your street corners.

The police reproach our children being too organized, attempting to provide locally for their basic needs, reopening a village grocery store which had closed down, cultivating abandoned lands, organizing the distribution of food to old people in their area. Is it evil to self-organize for your basic needs? Here, when we have heard wind of crisis? Our children have been categorized as radicals. Radical, in the dictionary, means: taking up the problem at its root. In Tarnac our children planted carrots without bosses or leaders. Because they naively think that life, intelligence and decisions are more joyous when they are collective.

We are concerned to learn from the Minster of the Interior that simply reading the book *The Coming Insurrection* by the Invisible Committee can make someone a terrorist. As a result of the free publicity the Minister has given the book through speaking of it in the media she risks soon counting 25,000 of them on her territory. For those who take the time to read it, this book is not a “terrorist catechism,” but a political essay which attempts to open new perspectives, and one of last year’s best selling social sci-

color under the rug and make way for white development. Injunctions generally ban people from being out later than 10:00 pm, walking in a group of three or more, carrying cell phones or pagers, and signaling to a vehicle among other things. On top of the potential 10 year California gang enhancement, many residents in the Pico Union area may find themselves locked up for over a decade for waving to their child on a school bus. They also spoke about how these injunctions go hand in hand with gentrification, or the “redevelopment” of a neighborhood. This basically means ridding people of color from an area to make room for upscale whites unwilling to live among the Black and Brown. The organizer from Homies Unidos broke it down: gentrification usually starts with a new school, then a Starbucks, a McDonald’s, then a gang injunction, raised rents, and so forth, all of which are now present in Pico Union. Alex Sanchez’s work, on the other hand, was both a challenge to the injunction and gentrification since gang rehabilitation and peace treaties create healthy communities, not fractured ones. Broken communities have no structure; they fall apart and eventually fade away leaving plenty of developing space for expensive high rises and condominiums.

There are some sentiments of fear amongst the people being affected by all this attention, and COINTELPRO tactics of wiretapping and harassment are already in place for the activists of Homies Unidos. I was told that the RICO laws are being applied to the indictment, something that was used to break up mobsters back in the day. Now, if you are working for gang peace and living in the Pico Union area you too could find yourself in an unlucky situation for just about anything. A photo of a person lending money to a friend for the bus could potentially get them charged with racketeering, and there are more cameras per square mile in the Pico Union district than any other neighborhood in the country.

Aggressive politics against Alex Sanchez and Homies Unidos go beyond the Pico Union neighborhood. It has traditionally been in the pilgrim government’s nature to continue a 500 year old legacy of colonialism through its oppression of people of color, namely the indigenous people in question: Central Americans. In terms of Alex Sanchez, it is no mystery why the same charges are not happening to Father Greg Boyle, a gang peacemaker in East Los Angeles, since it is easier to incriminate a person of color by falsely labeling him/her as a gang member.

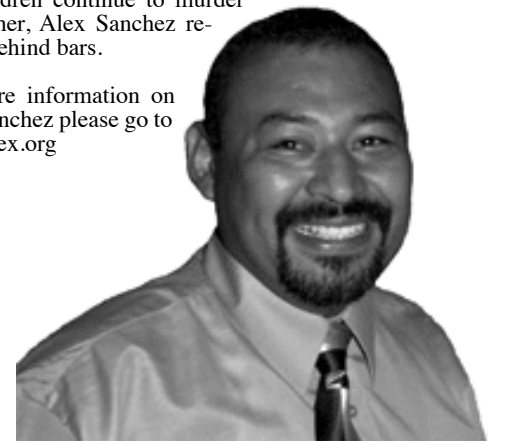
Similar tactics were used recently against the Black Riders Liberation Party, which focuses on squashing Black on Black violence in the community. Recently, after many months of struggle, the courts finally dismissed the gang enhancement aimed at the BRLP, although the trend of labeling gang peacemakers as gang members has now shifted toward Alex. The systematic deportation of undocumented Central Americans who find themselves in gangs also mim-

ics the days in which American Indians were required to have documentation in order to leave reservations. In this case, however, many of the activists involved with Homies Unidos are sent back to Central America with a death sentence. In the past few years, six Homies Unidos activists have been murdered in Central America, the most recent being in Guatemala when a former director was killed a month after being deported. Alex’s case seems quite relevant when considering the politics of LAPD and Salvadoran police relations, as well as the murders of Homies Unidos activists, which continue to remain unsolved.

Alex’s brother commented that instead of locking him up, the city should be giving him an award for his work, since he’s doing what the police have not been able or willing to do. Instead, he is isolated without a set bail or an address, so even today on his birthday we cannot contact him. There is over one million dollars raised in funds to bring Alex back to his family while awaiting trial; there are already four donated homes that have been put up as collateral for bail; and former state senator Tom Hayden as well as Father Greg Boyle have already come out in support of Alex. When we finished speaking it was very apparent that there is still a feeling of hope growing out of the mass amount of support, and as long as people are being harassed for healing their communities, there will continue to be people like Alex.

As I left and waited for the bus this evening I commented to a Chicano teenager that it was taking forever. After a few minutes of exchanging profanity toward the city’s transport service, we began talking and he told me about his experiences in the gang life. Earlier on he had a near death experience with some enemies and the police had prevented him from getting on the last bus passing through to his neighborhood. He now needed to catch another bus deep in an enemy’s territory and said he was worried about making it home shortly before he got off at his stop. While our children continue to murder each other, Alex Sanchez remains behind bars.

For more information on Alex Sanchez please go to wearealex.org



the Davis case, “This Court has never held that the Constitution forbids the execution of a convicted defendant who has had a full and fair trial but is later able to convince a habeas court that he is ‘actually’ innocent. Quite to the contrary, we have repeatedly left that question unresolved, while expressing considerable doubt that any claim based on alleged ‘actual innocence’ is constitutionally cognizable.”

The esteemed Senator from North Dakota, Byron Dorgan, who is now the chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, used much the same reasoning in writing that “our legal system has found Leonard Peltier guilty of the crime for which he was charged. I have reviewed the material from the trial, and I believe the verdict was fair and just.”

It is a bizarre and incomprehensible statement to Natives, as well it should be, that innocence and guilt is a mere legal status, not necessarily rooted in material fact. It is a truism that all political prisoners were convicted of the crimes for which they were charged.

The truth is the government wants me to falsely confess in order to validate a rather sloppy frame-up operation, one whose exposure would open the door to an investigation of the United States’ role in training and equipping goon squads to suppress a grassroots movement on Pine Ridge against a puppet dictatorship.

In America, there can by definition be no political prisoners, only those duly judged guilty in a court of law. It is deemed too controversial to even publicly contemplate that the federal government might fabricate and suppress evidence to defeat those deemed political enemies. But it is a demonstrable fact at every stage of my case.

I am Barack Obama’s political prisoner now, and I hope and pray that he will adhere to the ideals that impelled him to run for president. But as Obama himself would acknowledge, if we are expecting him to solve our problems, we missed the point of his campaign. Only by organizing in our own communities and pressuring our supposed leaders can we bring about the changes that we all so desperately need. Please support the Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee in our effort to hold the United States government to its own words.

I thank you all who have stood by me all these years, but to name anyone would be to exclude many more. We must never lose hope in our struggle for freedom.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,
Leonard Peltier #89637-132
USP-Lewisburg P.O. Box 1000
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Statement in Support of Alex Sanchez

BY MAPACHE, LA ABCF

Today I had the pleasure to speak with Alex Sanchez’s brother Oscar and an organizer from Homies Unidos who will remain unnamed. For those of you who do not know about Alex Sanchez’s case, he is named in a federal indictment targeting Mara Salvatrucha gang members for a number of crimes. However, Alex is not involved with the gang and has actually done the opposite: he is the head director of Homies Unidos, a gang rehabilitation and prevention program. The inclusion of Sanchez as a “gang member” in this indictment is obviously political.

In the 1990s, Alex Sanchez was granted political asylum after arguing that he would be killed if he was returned to El Salvador and that he had been victim of harassment by the Los Angeles Police during the Rampart corruption scandal. Since then, he has remained an outspoken critic of police repression in Los Angeles, especially in the Pico Union area which was devastated by the Rampart Division’s corrupt tactics. Lead by officer Rafael Perez, some of these tactics included dropping arrested gang members off in a rival’s turf, planting false evidence, selling drugs into the community itself (Perez alone sold over \$800,000 worth), bank robberies, perjury, and the list goes on. Alex’s brother and the organizer from Homies Unidos implied that his outspoken stance against such misconduct was enough to get him on the LAPD’s bad side already. However a further look at the gangs and neighborhood Alex worked in adds more to the story.

Los Angeles is a sanctuary city, as are most cities in the county, meaning that the police are prohibited from enforcing immigration laws or cooperating with immigration authorities. This helps to protect undocumented immigrants from police by instilling trust that if they call to report a crime their legal status will not be subject to debate. The LAPD, however, has a different protocol when dealing with gang members from the 18th Street and MS-13 gang. I was informed that if police see tattoos or anything implying that someone may be a member of either gang, they are taken in to have their names run through the LAPD and immigration databases. Unfortunately this is due to the racist media’s promotion of these two as the world’s most dangerous gangs that are usually made up of “illegal” immigrants, though both formed in the U.S.

If you look on the LAPD’s website you can see a list of gangs with what are called “gang injunctions,” basically a court order against gang members of a certain neighborhood. As we spoke about these, it became quite apparent that they are in place in order to sweep communities of

ence books according to the Nouvel Observateur and Libération.

Our children are accused of going to a demonstration at Vichy on November 3rd. Some among us are the children, the grand children, of those deported by the Vichy regime. That our own children have taken the decision to go and physically oppose the functioning of a summit on immigration in this city of such symbolic significance, this fills us with pride, but also with hope and courage.

Let us return to the suspicions leveled against our children. Contrary to what has been said, and what we might think, the sabotage of railway lines did not terrorize the population or put anyone in danger. It simply caused the population to lose or kill time. What did terrorize the government was not the fact that it had to reimburse a thousand or so train tickets, but that an idea of politics, which was also an idea of action, ceaselessly reproduced itself. Sabotage, whether one employs it or rejects it, has never been an arm of terror, but always an arm of social change. There was a time when the CGT [France’s main trade union] called for it.

Bankers are responsible for the biggest economic crisis of the last 80 years. This will not fail to cause millions of people to starve. And we continue to cordially greet our bankers in the street. Our children are only suspected of causing the delay of a few trains, and for that they face 20 years in prison.

The most impressive police operation in the last week was not bursting open doors in balaclavas on a sleeping nine-month-old baby, but rather convincing people that the desire to change such a perfect world could only emanate from the heads of the mentally deranged, of powerful assassins.

When doors slam we feel fear that it is the balaclavas returning. When they open we dream of seeing our children return.

— the parents of Bertrand, Mathieu, Elsa, Aria and Yldune

PS: We salute and offer our thanks to the inhabitants of Tarnac who prefer to believe what they live than what they see on TV.

Visit <http://tarnac9.wordpress.com>

Ray Luc Levasseur: Defendant in the Great Sedition Trial of Western Mass Returns After 20 Years...

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 7PM
UMass Campus Center 1009, Amherst, MA

With opening remarks by Bill Newman, Director, Western Regional Office of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

In 1989, Ray Luc Levasseur, along with his comrades Pat Levasseur and Richard Williams, stood trial in Springfield, Massachusetts on federal charges of seditious conspiracy. After ten months of deliberation, in the most expensive trial in Massachusetts history, a jury found all three not guilty of conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government through armed force. In his first public address in the Pioneer Valley in twenty years, Levasseur will reflect on the past and present significance of the Springfield sedition trial. He will also discuss his life experience as a French-Canadian youth growing up in a Maine mill town; as a Vietnam veteran; as an anti-imperialist revolutionary active in the Civil Rights, antiwar, and prison reform movements; as a prisoner arrested with other members of the “Ohio 7” and incarcerated for twenty years for his involvement in a series of bombings carried out to protest U.S. backing of South Africa’s racist apartheid regime and Central American right-wing death-squads; and his 2004 release and ongoing involvement in movements for social justice.

Levasseur’s prison writings and his closing statement from Springfield sedition trial are available on the following websites: home.earthlink.net/~neoludd/ and home.earthlink.net/~neoludd/statement.html.

Sponsored by: Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, UMass Amherst; UMass Amherst Program in Social Thought and Political Economy; UMass Amherst Department of History; Food For Thought Books; Vermont Action for Political Prisoners; Rosenberg Fund for Children; and the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts.

With partial support from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and the Dean of Graduate School, UMass Amherst.



Statement Regarding Visits by Olympic Police Agents

BY GORD HILL, Kwakwaka'wakw
Occupied Coast Salish Territory [Vancouver, BC]

Vancouver's Incredibly Stupid Unit (VISU), also known as the 2010 Integrated Security Unit, attempted to visit me, Gord Hill, at my residence in downtown Vancouver on Saturday, October 17, 2009. As I was not home at the time, they left unrequested junk mail (their business cards). The next day, two plainclothes cops repeatedly knocked on my apartment door throughout the day, although I declined to answer. They were subsequently observed sitting in a gold-coloured SUV across the street of my apartment building. Perhaps they learned something as they sat watching the homeless, the poor, the drug addicts – casualties of the 2010 Olympics and business greed – who regularly congregate outside my apartment building near Hastings and Carrall. Maybe they saw their compatriots routinely harassing, searching, ticketing and arresting poor people, and thought it unjust. Then again, probably not, cuz they're the Incredibly Stupid Unit.

I am confident that these visits by the Olympic cops were instigated by my comments to CBC News on October 13, in which I stated I supported direct action and would not be opposed to the downing of power lines or other acts of sabotage. Such are my views, and such are my "legal rights" to express in the nation-state of Canada, which presents itself as a champion of democracy and free speech, and which whores itself around the world as a leader of human rights. Regardless of such propaganda, Canada is in fact a routine violator of human and civil rights and in particular those of Indigenous peoples, who today suffer the highest rates of poverty, suicide, imprisonment, violent death, poor health, substandard housing, etc. The Tar Sands in Alberta, missing and murdered Native women, police violence against Natives (including the deaths of elder Harriet Nahanee, Frank Paul, Kyle Tait, etc.) are also forms of human and civil rights violations against Indigenous peoples. Where is the justice, the alleged fruit of Canada's laws, in any of this?

Furthermore, the governments of Canada and BC lack the legal and moral authority to govern or carry out business on unceded Indigenous territories. The 1763 Royal Proclamation, which legally bound the British, and later Canada, to negotiate treaties before any trade or settlement could occur, was re-affirmed in the 1982 Constitution and remains law to this day. "BC" exists in violation of this law and is an illegal government; consequently, Canada lacks jurisdiction on these lands. I reject the authority of both the provincial and federal governments. In principle, no person on unceded Indigenous territory is bound to follow the laws of an illegal and immoral government, which in any case only serves the interests of the corporate elite.

Despite my beliefs, the government will seek to impose its rules on me as a "citizen" and to force my conformity to its laws. The government, being little more than organized crime at its highest levels, have at their disposal their gangs of street enforcers (the police), armed with a vast apparatus of social control to ensure we all conform to its dictates (which many do, naively believing in their state and its laws). As such, we must hold these authorities accountable to their own laws, upon which their legitimacy to rule are based, and expose their true nature:

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enshrined in the constitution of Canada, guarantees each of its citizens the "freedom" to express our views, thoughts and beliefs, without fear of prosecution, intimidation or harassment, so long as we do not promote hatred against any group of people.

I hereby state: I would not oppose the sabotage of power lines or other critical infrastructure of the capitalist economic system. I support all forms of direct action and resistance against this corrupt and illegitimate government along with its corporate circus, the 2010 Winter Olympics. We must use any means necessary to defend the earth for future generations. Colonialism and genocide are violations of international laws and covenants (as well as being forms of systemic violence). That such conditions have existed for over 150 years shows the futility of negotiations and seeking justice through the courts.

Due to their failure to follow their own laws, whether it is the Charter or the 1763 Proclamation, I know I will be proven correct and that the true nature of the government-corporate system will be revealed. It is a criminal regime with no regard for human beings or the earth, except as resources to be exploited. It will defend its criminal activities by any means necessary, including the establishment of a militarized police state (or the invasion and occupation of other countries). This situation, and that of the world in general, with deepening environmental, economic, and military crises, requires radical social change" a struggle to transform society which will not be achieved through purely legal or reformist methods. This is why I believe, and history shows this to be true, that when the poor and oppressed rise up against their oppressors, they do so by any means necessary. Ghandi and Martin Luther King, prayers and pacifism, did not by themselves liberate India or Blacks in the United States (or anyone, ever). In this struggle, I stand on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor. I stand with the earth and for life. Where do you stand? And if you answer "on the fence," be forewarned that the fence, along with the power lines, are sooner or later going to come down. Will it be the land defenders or Mother Earth? I don't know, but either way I would not oppose it.

In the Warrior Spirit of Harriet Nahanee!

No Olympics on Stolen Native Land!

I Am Barack Obama's Political Prisoner Now

By LEONARD PELTIER
From www.counterpunch.org
September 11-13, 2009

The United States Department of Justice has once again made a mockery of its lofty and pretentious title.

After releasing an original and continuing disciple of death cult leader Charles Manson (sic - Lynette Squeaky Fromme) who attempted to shoot President Gerald Ford, an admitted Croatian terrorist, and another attempted assassin of President Ford under the mandatory 30-year parole law, the U.S. Parole Commission deemed that my release would "promote disrespect for the law."

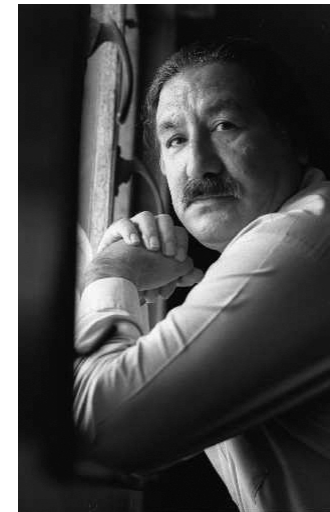
If only the federal government would have respected its own laws, not to mention the treaties that are, under the U.S. Constitution, the supreme law of the land, I would never have been convicted nor forced to spend more than half my life in captivity. Not to mention the fact that every law in this country was created without the consent of Native peoples and is applied unequally at our expense. If nothing else, my experience should raise serious questions about the FBI's supposed jurisdiction in Indian Country.

The parole commission's phrase was lifted from soon-to-be former U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley, who apparently hopes to ride with the FBI cavalry into the office of North Dakota governor. In this, Wrigley is following in the footsteps of William Janklow, who built his political career on his reputation as an Indian fighter, moving on up from tribal attorney (and alleged rapist of a Native minor) to state attorney general, South Dakota governor, and U.S. Congressman. Some might recall that Janklow claimed responsibility for dissuading President Clinton from pardoning me before he was convicted of manslaughter. Janklow's historical predecessor, George Armstrong Custer, similarly hoped that a glorious massacre of the Sioux would propel him to the White House, and we all know what happened to him.

Unlike the barbarians that bay for my blood in the corridors of power, however, Native people are true humanitarians who pray for our enemies. Yet we must be realistic enough to organize for our own freedom and equality as

nations. We constitute 5% of the population of North Dakota and 10% of South Dakota and we could utilize that influence to promote our own power on the reservations, where our focus should be. If we organized as a voting bloc, we could defeat the entire premise of the competition between the Dakotas as to which is the most racist. In the 1970s we were forced to take up arms to affirm our right to survival and self-defense, but today the war is one of ideas. We must now stand up to armed oppression and colonization with our bodies and our minds. International law is on our side.

Given the complexion of the three recent federal parolees, it might seem that my greatest crime was being Indian. But the truth is that my gravest offense is my innocence. In Iran, political prisoners are occasionally released if they confess to the ridiculous charges on which they are dragged into court, in order to discredit and intimidate them and other like-minded citizens. The FBI and its mouthpieces have suggested the same, as did the parole commission in 1993, when it ruled that my refusal to confess was grounds for denial of parole.



To claim innocence is to suggest that the government is wrong, if not guilty itself. The American judicial system is set up so that the defendant is not punished for the crime itself, but for refusing to accept whatever plea arrangement is offered and for daring to compel the judicial system to grant the accused the right to right to rebut the charges levelled by the state in an actual trial. Such insolence is punished invariably with prosecution requests for the steepest possible sentence, if not an upward departure from sentencing guidelines that are being gradually discarded, along with the possibility of parole.

As much as non-Natives might hate Indians, we are all in the same boat. To attempt to emulate this system in tribal government is pitiful, to say the least.

It was only this year, in the Troy Davis case, that the U.S. Supreme Court recognized innocence as a legitimate legal defense. Like the witnesses that were coerced into testifying against me, those that testified against Davis renounced their statements, yet Davis was very nearly put to death. I might have been executed myself by now, had not the government of Canada required a waiver of the death penalty as a condition of extradition.

The old order is aptly represented by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who stated in his dissenting opinion in

Political Prisoners in the United States

BY JAAN LAAMAN

There are about 100 political prisoners in various prisons across the United States. These women and men are listed and recognized as political prisoners by numerous human rights, legal defense and progressive/socialist organizations.

These people all come from the Civil Rights/Black Power/New African Liberation struggles, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, Indigenous Peoples survival struggles, Chicano/Mexicano Movements, anti-imperialist/anti-war movements, anti-racist/anti-fascist struggles, the Women's Movement, social and economic justice struggles, and especially in the past several years, from the Environmental/Animal Rights movement. They are Black, white, Latino and Native American. Most of these political prisoners have been in captivity since the 1970s and 80s. Some were convicted on totally fabricated charges, others for nebulous political conspiracies or for acts of resistance. All received huge sentences for their political beliefs or actions in support of these beliefs.

Additionally, there are many thousands of revolutionary minded, politically conscious prisoners in U.S. jails. These are people who became more politically aware and active once they landed in prison. A lot of these prisoners also get singled out for extra harsh and restrictive treatment like the political prisoners. Since 9/11, the U.S. has also imprisoned thousands of Arab and Muslim visitors to this country, as well as some Islamic citizens and residents.

The U.S. government likes to deny that it holds political prisoners. The harsh punitive conditions of confinement, often in special "control unit type" prisons, that political prisoners face day in, day out, decade after decade, exposes and refutes this government myth. Not only does America hold political prisoners, but they are being held under longer sentences than any kind of prisoners, anywhere in the world! Despite this, these women and men remain committed to their communities, movements, and principles. As best they can, through their voices and very lives, they continue to uphold the politics of justice, equality and liberation, especially for the poor and working class people throughout the world. Political prisoners in the United States want and need your awareness and support.

"We as revolutionaries will work on turning every prison into a university, and every cell into a classroom. We must educate to liberate. All power to the people." – Ali Shakka

The following are organizations that do support work for political prisoners in the U.S.:

Jericho Movement
P.O. Box 650
New York, NY
10009 USA
www.thejerichomovement.com

Partisan Defense Committee
P.O. Box 99 Canal Street Station
New York NY
10013 USA

ABC Federation
P.O. Box 11223
Whittier, CA
90603 USA
www.abcf.net

ABCF
UPDATE
QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE ABCF

The Update is a quarterly publication, in print since 1995, produced by the Anarchist Black Cross Federation. It is one of the few publications designed specifically for news/articles about and from political prisoners and prisoners of war in North America.

Issue 53, out in November!

You can download the illustrated ABCF Updates in pdf format at <http://abcf.net/abcf.asp?page=update>

For hardcopy subscriptions, write LA-ABCF at la@abcf.net or

Los Angeles ABCF
P.O. Box 11223
Whittier, CA 90603

Anarchist Black Cross Federation

abcf.net

The Freedom Archives Celebrates

BY CLAUDE MARKS

The Freedom Archives is celebrating 10 years of existence. The 10 years is a bit misleading in the sense that the materials—the politics and culture that we are privileged to be the guardians of—date back to the 1950s, 60s and 70s in many cases. The political culture of those times and our vision of media's role in chronicling social change and even worldwide revolutionary movements were different then because of the times that were rising around us.

We lived in a world where the possibility of radical transformation and the vision of playing an active role as journalists and cultural workers was influenced by the victories of the Cuban Revolution, attempts to create an anti-capitalist model in the

form of socialist nations, the defeat of the U.S. by a National Liberation Movement in Vietnam, the success of anti-colonial struggles in Africa, ferment among working people, the rising of radical Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicano-Mexicano movements, the student movement, the centrality of understanding the nature of conquest from Europe and the ongoing resistance of Indigenous struggles, and an affirmation of the participation of women and gay and lesbian activists in many movements. Anti-imperialism rose to worldwide heights—revolution was on the agenda.

Many of us as individuals and as members of production collectives had the vision and foresight to document the unfolding of the fires inside the empire, and fires directed at empires. We tried to work collectively and tried to stay rooted in our communities. We struggled to build a synthesis between political and cultural rebellion.

The outcome was a body of significant speeches, poetry, theater, and music, part of a vision of what was possible, more humane—for human and civil rights—radical media. The voices from inside prisons, the rebellions, the occupations, rebel radios in the mountains, the musicians who

sang the inspirations of the people, and some who would ultimately be sacrificed by the coup-makers.

After many unregretted decisions, after 13 clandestine years, I found myself doing several years of prison time—a result of political work and solidarity. It was during that period that I was able to reconnect with many people I had produced media with in my late teens and 20s. It turned out that much of our work had been stored—another milagro created by foresight. We started to dialogue about how to repurpose the history, the creative product of our own youth. An archive was born—in the community, connecting with current movements for social justice, radical change, and cultural liberation—a resource for newer generations.

Fast forward to Thanksgiving of 1998—I'm now in a halfway house—we begin to map out the project—The Freedom Archives. 1999 becomes a formal beginning on paper and on January 1, 2000 we move boxes of tapes into

a physical space. We build shelves. We start to gather equipment and begin sorting many thousands of hours of materials—a task that continues today, even as others add to the growing collection. The idea is realized, becomes tangible, finds a home in the midst of the Mission District of San

Francisco—back in the community again!

Now some 10 years later, we've produced CDs and videos, catalogued thousands of hours of media, been sampled by garage bands and professional rockers, spoken-word artists, jazz musicians, djs. These voices live at the Museum of the African Diaspora, in the streets of the Mission, and in documentaries done by independent artists who seek context and content. We are sampled, we are broadcast, films flow on the web, in festivals, via satellite, in schools. We've met amazing people and created in collaborative ways—across generations and with all the richness that collectivity promotes. We have an active youth training program. We've gained support and supporters by organizing, rather than turning to the corporate and non-profit game. We are there for the community, and that community is there for us. That's why we're celebrating ten strong years!

For more details about the Freedom Archives, visit our website: www.freedomarchives.org

The Call of the Lumpen

BY MICHAEL MORIN

Lumpenproletariat: a German word meaning “raggedy proletariat” -Wikipedia (2009)

I. Depictions of a Class

It was in 1854, in a work titled *The German Ideology*, that authors Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels first coined the term “lumpenproletariat.” Marx would later go on to use this term in his reference to the “refuse of all classes, the swindlers, confidence tricksters, brothel keepers, rag-and-bone merchants, beggars, and other flotsam of society” (1). Trotsky made reference to this lumpenproletariat as the “countless bands of declassed and demoralized human beings whom finance capital has brought to desperation and frenzy” (2). And today this term is used in contemporary sociology (both Marxist and non-Marxist alike) to further include the prostitutes, pimps, petty drug dealers and bootleggers, operators of small-time illegal gambling enterprises, impoverished alcoholics and drug addicts, thieves, fencers, loan sharks, welfare recipients, the homeless, and those in gangs – in short, all victims of modern day capitalist society who exist outside the wage labor system.

Some political organizations have even begun categorizing the lumpenproletariat into three very distinct groups stemming from three very different and distinct geopolitical regions and classes of people: militiamen, survivalists, and disaffected veterans (etc.) found in rural areas; a suburban lumpenproletariat consisting of student radicals, countercultural and rebellious, disconcerted youth; and the lumpenproletariat (herein referred to as the lumpen) of the urban under-class – the gangbangers, convicted felons, and the ethnic minority nationalists.

But regardless of however some may attempt to define or categorize this class, the ranks of the lumpenproletariat continue to swell into the millions and represent both the most dire consequences of capitalism here within the borders of the united states, and the most potentially radical sector of humanity within those very same borders.

II. Theoretical and Historical Perspective

“The ‘dangerous class,’ the lumpenproletariat, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.” -Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

According to Marx, the lumpenproletariat were more of a counter-revolutionary force than anything else. In the

Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, he notes them as the political power base resorted to by Louis Bonaparte, which enabled him to be placed above both the proletariat and bourgeoisie of 1848 France. Engels wrote about the lumpenproletariat during the repression of the 1848 revolution of Naples as well, declaring them to have been the deciding factor in the people’s defeat. And Trotsky, nearly a hundred years later, would note how Benito Mussolini’s success in mobilizing this “dangerous class” ultimately contributed to his rise and eventual capture of power over WWII Italy.

In 1960, Ernesto Che Guevara would make a critical note of comparison between the lumpen and the guerrilla combatants. In the opening pages of his work, *Guerrilla Warfare*, he writes that “they have many characteristics of a guerrilla army: homogeneity, respect for the leader, bravery, knowledge of the terrain, and, often, even a good understanding of the tactics to be employed. The only thing lacking is the support of the people.” But it wouldn’t be until the publishing of *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961, by Martinican psychologist and revolutionary philosopher Frantz Fanon, that a qualitative theory of the lumpenproletariat would be reached. Fanon argued in his work that the lumpenproletariat were not simply just an ‘under-class’ with counterrevolutionary tendencies but, in fact, “one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people.” He went on to further argue that not only could revolutionary cadre not afford to exclude the lumpenproletariat, but that the education of these dispossessed masses should be made central to revolutionary strategy.

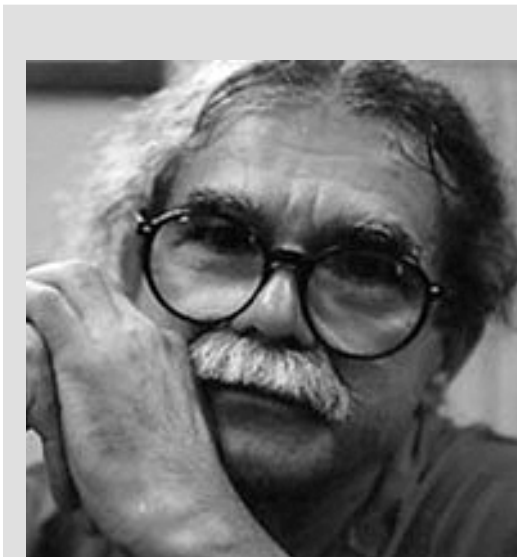
Throughout the later 1960s and into the early 1970s, Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party (BPP) would lead the way in applying practice to theory. Huey would argue that it was the Black lumpenproletariat who were the true revolutionary class in u.s. society. The BPP, under the Leninist concept of the vanguard party and Maoist ideas of armed struggle, would set out to organize, politicize and mobilize this sector of u.s. society against the imperialist establishment. In sync with the BPP, there were a number of other parties that set out to do the same amongst the Pacific Islanders and Asian American communities. Amongst the Latin American communities, there were the likes of the Brown Berets and the Young Lords parties. And there were even such groups as the Young Patriots, which were primarily made up of young, disconcerted, rebellious white youth. Extensive work was being undertaken (especially by Fred Hampton and Bunchy Carter) in such major metropolitan areas as Chicago and Los Angeles to form a United Front amongst the already existent lumpenproletarian organizations (LPOs) of that era. In L.A., the BPP began making contact and progress with the Black Leaders of Our Days (BLOOD) and Community Revolution in Progress (CRIP) organizations; and in Chicago the same was being made between the warring factions of the Disciples and the Rangers (3). At the same time, the Brown Berets in

So this is my struggle and these are just some of the things I have to endure because of my beliefs and the actions behind my beliefs. I have to suffer through all kinds of psychological abuse, harassment, and degradation, while trying to stay strong, focused and determined to not let them break my spirit through it all. Every day is a struggle, just to make it to the next day without losing my cool, or my sanity.

But I also want all of you guys, my comrades, to understand that none of what these pig muthafuck-as do to me is going to stop me from doing what I do. Yes, there are real abuses of authority going on in these American death camps, every day. And if I don’t stand up for the oppressed and downtrodden – whether I’m on this side of the razor wire, or out there on the other side – then I would feel like shit. I can’t just sit here and act like nothing’s happening.

This is my struggle, the struggle of an anarchist radical, the Coyote who howls in darkness. I invite any and all comrades to get involved in something real. Much love to all of you.

In Struggle, and towards Anarchy,
Coyote, 2009
ABC-Nevada Prison Chapter



Political Prisoner Profile

Oscar López-Rivera was born in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico on January 6, 1943. At the age of 12, he moved to Chicago with his family. He was a well-respected community activist and a prominent independence leader for many years prior to his arrest. Oscar was one of the founders of the Rafael Cancel Miranda High School, now known as the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School and the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. He was a community organizer for the Northwest Community Organization (NCO), ASSPA, ASPIRA and the 1st Congregational Church of Chicago. He helped to found FREE, (a half-way house for convicted drug addicts) and ALAS (an educational program for Latino prisoners at Stateville Prison in Illinois).

He was active in various community struggles, mainly in the area of health care, employment and police brutality. He also participated in the development of the Committee to Free the Five Puerto Rican Nationalists. In 1975, he was forced underground, along with other comrades. He was captured on May 29, 1981, after 5 years of being persecuted by the FBI as one of the most feared fugitives from US “justice.”

Oscar, who has a daughter named Clarissa, is currently serving a 55-year sentence for seditious conspiracy and other charges. He was convicted of conspiracy to escape along with Jaime Delgado, (a veteran independence leader), Dora Garcia, (a prominent community activist) and Kojo Bomani-Sababu, a New Afrikan political prisoner.

Oscar was one of 12 Puerto Rican political prisoners offered some form of leniency by the Clinton Administration in the fall of 1999. According to the Chicago Sun Times, he “declined the president’s offer, which still would have him left with 10 years to serve on conspiracy to escape charges. Now he faces at least 20 more years in prison. His sister, Zenaida Lopez, said he turned the offer down because he would be on parole. ‘Accepting what they are offering him is like prison outside of prison,’ she said. Zenaida Lopez said her brother ‘was in total agreement’ with the decision of the 11 others to take the conditional clemency.”

During his incarceration, he has written many short stories and articles for Libertad. He also writes for the proindependence publication Patria Libre. Oscar is considered one of the most brilliant political thinkers in Puerto Rico.

Oscar López-Rivera
#87651-024
P.O. Box 33
Terre Haute, IN 47808
U.S.P. Terre Haute

The Struggle of an Anarchist Radical

BY COYOTE

I am a 31 year old, self-defined anarchist, social prisoner and a self-proclaimed imprisoned radical intellectual, and because my activism within these suffocating walls, it has been declared – through their actions – that the administration who run this maximum security gulag, most definitely hate me and want to break me, and they have even tried on a couple of occasions to do me in.

I want to make it clear here, to my comrades out there, some of the reasons they have been coming down on me so hard. Here are a few:

1. Because, while captured and confined, under the thumb of their oppression, I have been agile enough to start my own prison chapter of Anarchist Black Cross, which they consider a threat to safety and security of their institution.
2. Because I have successfully organized, politicized and educated other prisoners here at Ely State Prison.
3. Because I have successfully helped politicize, educate and organize other prisoners in various other prisons across the United States, including Texas, California, and Pennsylvania, just to name a few. And because I have assisted some of these prisoners in starting up their own prison chapters where they are at.
4. Because I undermine the administration's agenda to keep its prisoners stagnant. I have done this by holding study groups and having study sessions with other prisoners in here, having long political, philosophical, theosophical and intellectually stimulating discussions and dialogue over the tier, while through the cracks of the side of our doors (we are all locked down in single cells) and also engaging in written study sessions with some of these comrades, conducting book reviews, chapter summaries, writing essays and articles together, and doing all I can do to raise radical awareness in the minds of these oppressed men, even sharing and passing out literature (even though sharing is against the rules) and sometimes even engaging in group exercise with several different comrades, each in their own cell, all simultaneously doing the same exercise routine together (this type of radical, militant organizing frightens these pigs).
5. Because I've made successful attempts to connect and network with serious comrades on the outside, who were inspired by our plight and our strength in the face of adversity and who wanted to get closely involved in

our activism and who wanted to assist us on our paths to betterment and personal enlightenment.

6. Because I've saved lives, stood up to the oppressors, tried to bring racial solidarity to all of these prisoners, and because I've connected with good people in real and meaningful ways.
7. Because I write zines, booklets, pamphlets, essays and articles (which the admin. here calls "poison") that touch people's hearts and open people's minds far and wide, reaching people on both sides of the prison walls. And because I've used the written word as a weapon, exposing the injustices and the oppressive, unconstitutional and cruel acts of the warden, the assistant wardens, the guards and the prison administration, and even the medical staff, in different newspapers (see my article "They can't kill a revolutionary" on sfbayview.com) and on the internet (check out makethewallstransparent.org and nevadaprisonwatch.blogspot.com).

I am putting all this out there, because I want the comrades out there to get a truthful, in-depth understanding of why the administration at ESP has tried to set me up, once to get attacked by other prisoners (which did not work out too well for the would-be attackers) and once more recently they've made an attempt to set me up on bogus criminal charges (by planting numerous so-called "weapons" in my cell). I'm a revolutionary; this is what I've become through years of confinement, constant study and from-the-heart activism, therefore if I were to commit any type of radical or political act against the state, I'd be the first one to let it be known that I did that and why I did it. I'm not a criminal; I'm a revolutionary. But, I will not let these people set me up on bogus, criminal charges for something I did not do. Not without a fight.

I want the comrades out there to understand that, because of my activism and because of my anarchist beliefs, the admin here have labelled me a "threat to the safety and security of the institution" and placed me on "high risk potential" status. This means, basically, that I am on super-max custody level, and therefore, any time I leave my cell to go to the shower, or the rec yard, I have to be escorted by 3 guards dressed in helmets, vests and full riot gear, while they cuff my hands behind my back, make me kneel down on my knees so they can place shackles around my legs and then attach a leash to my handcuffs. Any time I have to leave the unit, for medical, a visit, or a bed move, I'm escorted by two specially trained officers, called c.e.r.t. officers (correctional emergency response team) also known as the "goon squad," and these officers are also dressed in full riot gear, using the cuffs, the leash and the shackles to escort me. If I am ever fortunate enough to receive my visitors, all my visits would be non-contact visits, behind glass, while I am to remain cuffed and shackled for the duration of the visit.

California were working with such LPOs as the Southern United Raza and the Norteños; and in Illinois the Young Lords were working hand-in-hand with the Latin Kings. In less than ten years, Fanon's theory was manifested into a true threat. And the federal government acted accordingly.

III. Strategic and Psychological Degradation of the Lumpen

"The Black Panther Party is the number one threat to security in the USA." (4) -J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director from 1924 to 1972

In ten more years, and in the wake of J. Edgar Hoover's violent COINTELPRO (Counter INTELligence PROgram) victory over the BPP, the ruling class bourgeoisie would consciously make a decision to foster the development of a Black middle class so as to serve as an effective obstacle for future unrest amongst ethnic minorities, and the Iran-Contra scandal (the evidence that it was the CIA flooding our communities with cocaine) would help reveal that the federal government's "war on drugs" was in all actuality the furtherance of its "war on the lumpen."

By this time the crack epidemic would sweep through the homes of the lumpen community like the biblical Passover and the angel of death striking down nothing less than the first born of every family. The demoralized and psychologically defeated lumpen would swarm the ranks of the leftover LPOs, who were themselves unknowingly being provoked in the direction of their own destruction by federal-agent infiltrators and unseen hands. The gang-banging phenomenon of the 1980s and early 1990s would explode and it would be the captives of this war, unconscious of it all, who would serve to impregnate the prison industrial complex of today, while the government worked to manipulate the young minds of tomorrow.

From the 1990s into the first decade of the new millennium, the credo of the lumpen has gone from get free or die tryin' to get rich or die tryin.' The ruling class has taken measures to monopolize and filter their every source of inspiration and the result is a gross deformation of oppressed humanity bent on materialism and mentally blockaded by brick walls of individualism. Those who believe and teach that the lumpen are a "parasitic class" by nature, fail to perceive the power of education. It is true that in most cases the lumpenproletariat share a common trait with the bourgeoisie – that of living off of the labor of others – but it is incorrect to conclude that the lumpen have an overbearing conscious interest in preserving the capitalist/imperialist system. The lumpen, more than anyone else in u.s. society, feel the brunt of the capitalist/imperialist system – whether they realize its inherent nature or not. The system will continue to drive them deeper into the graveyard of ignorance, tricking them with illusions of wealth, while exploiting them (in every fashion) every step of the way. The dispossessed lumpen are always ready to rebel, but just as hap-

pened in the L.A. riots of 1992 and the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005, because they lack the moral, discipline, and direction seemingly wasted upon the masquerading proletariat of North America (a labor aristocracy), they will continue to fail.

IV. The Final Call

"The reactionary has chosen his reactionary position. The revolutionary has chosen his position, that is, of going to others to win them over. If he can't win reactionaries to the revolution, the forces of reaction will grow through the world." (5) -Thomas Sankara (on the eve of his assassination)

...How much more so is it, then, that the revolutionary must win over the lumpen? The BLOODS and CRIPS, Disciples and Kings are still very much active today. They have grown and spread throughout every major city in the country. They are now even present in small town usa. And they have even begun to transcend oceans and international borders. Yet it is corporate America, drug cartels, other criminal racketeers, and First-through-Third World reactionary forces in between that show the greatest interest in winning their allegiance and tapping into both their energy and their creativity. Larry Hoover (Gangster Disciple) and Luis Felipe (Latin King) were both sent to the federal supermax prison in Colorado, Felipe to serve thirty-five years of complete isolation, affirmed by the United States Supreme Court – because they began reorganizing around the banner of nationalist revolution. Crip co-founder Stanley 'Tookie' Williams was ultimately executed by California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger because he dedicated the books that he wrote in prison to leaders of the Black Liberation struggle – books that were meant for the next generation of lumpen coming up in the ghettos of America (a generation of whom in every one could be found the potential of a George Jackson or a Malcolm X – lumpen icons bar-none). But there are countless other lumpen leaders still willing to sacrifice their all who are struggling to pick up where the BPP was knocked off. Every one of these LPOs herein mentioned (and an untold amount of others) has a revolutionary history of leaders who struggled to grasp a hold of the torch of freedom, so as to ward off the spirits of oppression, and shed its light upon the downtrodden.* And just as they've struggled to hold on to the torch of freedom, the last of the remaining imprisoned Panthers, Weathermen, Macheteros, etc. of the 1960s will soon be struggling to hold on to the torch of life...

The call of the lumpen is this: "Do not die with out giving us your last." Do not pass before passing us the light. Do not succumb to death before teaching us how to live and fight. Your inheritance is ours to receive.

Where Newton and the BPP found that the White radicals and their organizations lacked significant influence amongst the white working class, the same will not be

found in regards to the LPOs and their relationship to the lumpen in general. The LPOs have a dominant influence in both the streets of urban america and upon the yards of a locked-down nation. What they lack is a political consciousness.

In order to effectively reach the lumpen on a mass level, the revolutionaries must reach the hundreds of thousands of LPO members. And in order to reach the LPO members, they must reach the LPO leaders. The leaders, especially in prison, are present everyday, groping, struggling, hoping and failing. Their failure is just as much the failure of the revolutionaries as the failure of the revolution is theirs.

A sound and solid dialogical relationship needs to be built with the LPO leaders, and it needs to be established with the same patience afforded a Third World peasantry. As history has shown, the fate of many movements, diverse in both culture and cause, have depended upon just such a relation. A Maoist comrade wrote in January 1994 that the "...urban youth gangs of Black and Latinos [in north Amerika] are the closest to putting armed struggle into an organized framework for revolution" (6). As the conditions for evolution in this country fluctuate and rise, the actual capacity for such an event is in serious question. The words of the revolutionary are still published, but among the lumpen, they are rarely received. Their portraits are still painted, but among the majority of the lumpen, their faces remain unknown...

But the beat goes on...and revolutionaries and lumpen alike continue to fall...

AYUDANOS!***
The lumpens call...

Morin Michael #R04862
Florida State Prison
7819 NW 228th Street
Raiford FL 32026

- Notes**
1. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852)
 2. *Fascism: What it is and How to Fight it*, by Leon Trotsky
 3. *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, by Bobby Seale
 4. *COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*, by Ward Churchill and Tim Vander Wall.
 5. *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-1987*.
 6. See the article "Factors Falling into Place for Successful Revolutions" in *MIM theory* #7 by MCS.

*For more on the history and political line of the ALKQN, read *The Almighty Latin Kings and Queens Nation*, by David Brotherton and Luis Barrios; or see *The Revolutionary History of the Almighty Latin King Nation* (MIM Notes #187 and 188) at www.prisoncensorship.info.
** Help us!

Zolo Agona Azania Update
September 25, 2009

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice." --Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

Dear Family, Friends, Supporters:

This is an update about my current situation. Much has happened in the last 28 years of my life--I am physically off death row and I am glad! The written contractual concession was a hard won travail. I can now stretch my legs and breathe a little better in the open air under the beautiful spacious sky behind the concrete walls of the general prison population. But I'm in prison still. I want out of this hellhole! The struggle continues and the good fight for total freedom and liberation must intensify to snatch me from the diabolical clutches of the unjust state.

I am now attending college inside the prison studying for my Associate Degree. Educational credit time cut is one of the benefits. And without your financial support that could not have been possible at this time.

I've also filed a comprehensive petition for writ of habeus corpus in federal court challenging my unconstitutional extended incarceration. It includes contesting the false charges, illegal amendment of charging information, prejudicial bogus indictment, ethnic bigotry, all-white rigged jury, perjury, the fact that I had been shackled in the presence of the jury during the entire trial. Insufficient evidence, double jeopardy, prosecutor misconduct, non-disclosure of exculpatory evidence, armed guards in courtroom intimidating my defense and supporters, falsified evidence that was planted by police against me, and a myriad of other fundamental human rights violations.

The dialectical formula for Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity is written as E=Mc2. This stands for energy equal to matter times the speed of light. Everything in the universe is energy. I want all of you to continue advocating for my release. Please share this update with your family, friends, co-workers and students urging their valuable help. Energy flows where the attention goes. My attention is on the positive goal: Freedom from oppression. I have the patience, perseverance, energy and determination to overcome.

I highly appreciate each of you as a compassionate human being; and I humbly appreciate your charity and energetic generosity. Thanks a million more.

Zolo Agona Azania #4969,
Indiana State Prison
1 Park Row Street
Michigan City, IN 46360-6597

Violence between Raza and African Prisoners at California State Prison

BY THE CHICANO MEXICANO PRISON PROJECT

Editor's Note: 4SM does not have independent inside information about the August 8, 2009, events and violence at Chino State Prison in California. All we know is what was reported in the mainstream corporate news media, which we know has a pro-government and pro-cop perspective. We received this article from the Chicano-Mexicano Prison Project, which we edited slightly. We feel their words make sense and should be seen. Convicts across the country know that when we fight each other, the cops are the biggest winners.

Once again, major violence between Raza and African prisoners has erupted within the United States Concentration Camp (Prison) System, this time at Chino California State Prison. Beginning at 8:20 PM, on Saturday evening (August 8, 2009), African and Raza (Latino) prisoners, in the most brutal fashion, slashing, cutting, hitting each other with anything that could get their hands on, battled against each other for more than 11 hours. Over 200 hundred were hurt, several were critically injured with severe head injuries or stab wounds. Blood was spilled by everyone. Many of those involved will be scarred and maimed for life, both physically and mentally.

But this latest violence is nothing new. Nor was it the worst. For years, not only in California, but also throughout the United States, Raza and African prisoners have been at each others' throats. Those of us who should know better -- the social activists and so-called educated -- should be clear about the root causes of this horrific violence that continues, unabated, decade after decade, and how it only serves to keep both nations oppressed and colonized; and most importantly, what we must do about it.

While some refused to see or accept the truth, the reality is that the prison wars between Raza and Africans are nothing but the old strategy of divide and conquer, which the European (white) colonialist - capitalist system has successfully used against our people for more than 500 years. The "hand of white supremacy" behind the recent hostilities should be obvious to everyone.

It is no coincidence that so few white prisoners were involved or hurt. Or, that not "one guard" suffered even a scratch. That fact is, that the racist prison system, which is responsible for the torturous and inhumane treatment of Raza and African prisoners was not the object of the prisoners' anger. In fact, our carnales and brothers (and carnalas and sisters) in the prisons are so confused and disoriented by the divide and conquer tactics of the capitalists (from which white power comes), that they don't even see the prison sys-

tem as their main enemy.

The constant blaming of Mexicans/Latinos for all the problems facing the United States, branding us "illegal aliens," and the fact that even as the "riot" at Chino was taking place, prison officials and politicians were already blaming "Latinos" as the cause of the violence, all form part of the trickery called "divide and conquer."

What we, Raza and Africans, and all oppressed people (including poor whites) must understand, it is that the "divide and conquer" strategy is the foundation upon which colonialism-capitalism rests. And, if we are serious about ending the vicious violence among colonized and oppressed (poor and working class) people, colonialism-capitalism must be destroyed.

It is in the question of the "destruction of capitalism" in which we find so many otherwise "educated" people acting dumb and stupid. It is here where we find some people to be "utterly lost" as to what causes violence and what is the solution -- as the answer is found with them deciding on whether they want to keep their nice cars, cushy jobs, vacations, and nice homes, which capitalism provides, or do they destroy the foundations of capitalism (racism, colonialism, oppression, and destruction of our planet) and thus risk losing the materialistic lifestyle that they enjoy so much.

All of us, living inside and outside the U.S. Concentration Camp (Prison) System must realize that the violence between colonized people affects all of us, as prison wars spill out into the streets, communities, and the schools. "Race" violence occurs everyday within the United States. Most of the victims are innocent, and most are young people. Therefore, if we care about our youth, and about peace and justice, then we have to get involved in the struggle to end prison violence.

The CMPP calls on all of us to unite against colonialism-capitalism and all its manifestations. We must struggle for a revolutionary change in society. If the CMPP has learned anything during the last 20 years, is that prisoners respect revolution. Only this type of struggle can unite Africans and Mexicans-Raza, and put an end to the antagonistic confrontations between our peoples.

El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Sera Vencido!
The People United, Will Never Be Defeated!

Note: The Chicano Mexicano Prison Project (CMPP) was established in 1993 by Union del Barrio. For close to 20 years the CMPP has been the most active and consistent Mexican-Raza organization doing work around the question of prisons and their role in the oppression of poor and working class communities. On June 27th of this year (2009), the CMPP held its annual conference in East Los Angeles, where one of the issues discussed was the ongoing war between Mexican-Raza and African prisoners.

was wounded as was Sundiata's other passenger, Assata Shakur, who was at the time the object of a nationwide "woman hunt" and she was captured. Sundiata was also wounded, then captured 40 hours later. Sundiata and both his passengers were members of the Black Panther Party at the time. For those reasons, and because Assata escaped prison long ago, the Parole Board has twice denied Sundiata parole claiming he's likely to commit another crime.

Sundiata has endured some of the harshest treatment a prisoner could experience. Still, he maintains a favorable prison record. He is a talented painter and has written numerous published articles about the prison industrial complex. He is a beloved father, grandfather, brother and elder to many with a rich history of making invaluable contributions to his community.

In the 60s Sundiata left a promising career at NASA as a computer programmer to travel to the South to help register Blacks to vote. During his activism with the NY Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Sundiata contributed to various programs providing the city of Harlem with community control of schools, tenant control of slum housing, free breakfast for school children, free health care, legal clinics and political education classes. He also worked on community programs against drug dealers and police brutality. Numerous Panthers are still languishing in prison and have repeatedly been denied parole despite clear support for their release.

Sundiata comes up for parole hearing again in Feb. 2010 and people concerned about justice are urged to send letters, cards and signature petitions which express in effect: 36 years of imprisonment is enough. Sundiata Acoli NJ#54859/Fed#39794-066 has long ago fulfilled all requirements for parole and is too old, infirmed and is highly unlikely to commit another crime so I urge you to release him on parole.

The attorneys will present your letters formally and keep record of the number of letters received. Please do not mail them to the Parole Board directly. Instead mail your letters to:

Atty. Florence Morgan
120-46 Queens Blvd.
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Letters should be addressed to:
Chairwoman Volette C. Ross
New Jersey State Parole Board
P.O. Box 862
Trenton NJ 08625

To join the Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign (SAFC) email list or request additional information, feel free to contact SAFC by email at TheSAFC@gmail.com.

More info on Sundiata at: www.sundiataacoli.org

Political Prisoner Profile

Daniel McGowan is an environmental and social justice activist from NYC. He was charged in federal court on many counts of arson, property destruction and conspiracy, all relating to two incidents in Oregon in 2001.

Daniel had initially been offered two choices by the government: cooperate by informing on other people, or go to trial and face life in prison. His only real option was to plead not guilty until he could reach a resolution of the case that permitted him to honor his principles. As a result of months of litigation and negotiation, Daniel was able to admit to his role in these two incidents, while not implicating or identifying any other people who might have been involved. He was sentenced to 7 years in prison on June 4, 2007 and began serving his time on July 2, 2007 at MDC Brooklyn.

Up until May 14, 2008, he was serving his sentence at FCI Sandstone in Minnesota. He is currently serving his time in a Communications Management Unit in Marion, Illinois.

Daniel McGowan
#63794-053
P.O. Box 1000
Marion, IL 62959
USP Marion



Prison Round Trip

BY KLAUS VIEHMANN, with BILL DUNNE and KLAUS VIEHMANN

Preface

BY BILL DUNNE

Nothing is more certain than that radical leftists working for a revolutionary replacement of the imperial capitalist paradigm will increasingly go to prison. The social, economic, political contradictions are sharpening; the tipping point approaches as competition from the developing world imposes on first world bourgeoisie a need to depress the living standards of the working class it exploits and oppresses. The repressive strategies used against revolutionary movements in third world countries, however, will not fly in the first world, at least not yet. Populations there are too steeped in the political mythology that governments of the "free" do not prey upon the citizenry and class war is a fiction of "outside agitators." Further, first world societies tend to be too well integrated for such wholesale predation as occurred in, say, Suharto's Indonesia or even Videla's Argentina to be adequately hidden until its work is done. Witness the recent defeats of Bush's reactionary U.S. administration regarding torture and killing of even non-citizens. Plus, the richer and more educated populations have greater capacity to resist their immiseration. Hence, prisons will be the leading edge of the repressive apparatus as the current ruling class seeks to maintain its hegemony by criminalizing, incapacitating, and intimidating its challengers.

Former political prisoner Klaus Viehmann spent 15 long times jousting with the German state in its maximum security prisons after his capture as a practitioner of armed struggle. From that vantage, he lays out a strategy and tactical examples for continuing the struggle for the most equitable social reality in a prison environment—and, in so doing, surviving the oppression politically intact. And he correctly asserts that this is THE task: succumbing to a replacement consciousness imposed by a bourgeois state is tantamount to political and therefore personal death, whatever the residual corporeal state. In addition, Klaus shows that the rigors of surviving prison as an instrument of political repression hold lessons for people beyond the dark concrete corners and razor wire thickets that somewhat arbitrarily define the boundary between fettered and free.

Every person who aspires to revolutionary status has an obligation to struggle in whatever community s/he finds him or herself. Klaus shows that in this obligation is the key to surviving imprisonment. Prison is a de facto community. Seeking out comrades, friends, and potential comrades and friends—both within and without the durance vile—with whom to contest the authoritarian status quo in however limited a manner—is good advice. Sometimes this may

involve direct and furious action; more usually it entails reading and writing and otherwise communicating. This resistance is what maintains a political consciousness that might otherwise be bled and squeezed into unrecognizability. While dreaming and fantasizing and speculating as a strictly cerebral activity may be diverting and useful in formulating a vision of the future we would build, they are not enough by themselves. Verily, they can be a debilitating distraction. Their results must be tested against the vagaries of empirical reality and the conclusions of others. Praxis is, after all, the unity of thought and action.

Part of this unification is overt resistance to the agency of repression via direct action, but the bigger part is maintaining and improving the implements of emancipation. Klaus pictures how this may be done by actively and passively opposing encroachments on prisoners' retained and contested rights where possible and by filling the vast bulk of time where that is not happening with reading, writing, and otherwise interacting with people both within the prison and across its barriers.

Moreover, Klaus explains that we cannot just ride with the tide and go with the flow. An isolated prisoner will find that relating to the world solely according to the norms of the prison administration and whatever bourgeois media it might make available—or even only through the norms of the criminal element characteristic of prison populations—will result in the analysis and attitudes thereof insinuating themselves into consciousness without vigilant efforts to contextualize or exclude them. Not relating to the world, merely wallowing in assumed misery, is even worse.

Conditions, time, and place always govern the mode of struggle. Klaus explores how in prison, where the power relations are so asymmetric, this means we must pick our fights and that there is "no absolutely correct way of acting." Today's effective action might be tomorrow's counterproductive debacle. Jurisdictions vary widely in what is possible and what may be fatal, as Klaus's contrast of German political imprisonment with that of past Latin American military dictatorships and nazi gulags illustrates. Even now, prison conditions and practicable political action within them vary markedly across first world jurisdictions, let alone the rest of the world.

Socio-political survival strategies within and without prisons may not necessarily mean individual physical survival. Klaus raises the RAF hunger strikes—and their tragic deaths—as examples: they drew the prisoners together and made them more conscious of their identity and strength and mobilized outside support that otherwise may have flagged. The apparatus retreated in the face of such solidarity. The hunger strikes of the IRA prisoners and their martyrdom worked similarly, as are the death fasts of Turkish political prisoners against F-type (isolation) prisons now. Class war, like any other, will have casualties; risk is an unavoidable element of life and struggle.

Sometimes a prisoner must precipitate the contradiction—barricade the cell and refuse a diminution of his or her circumstances, that being a losing proposition notwithstanding; physically resist an injustice, consequences assumed; sabotage the prison or forced labor or organize the strike, wagering whatever penalties; try the perimeter, chancing apparatus gunmen; file the grievance, writ, law suit, despite their connection to “diesel therapy” and other retaliation. Sometimes losses happen on the best analysis, and sometimes the results of such actions turn out better for the group than the individual. Nevertheless, they are often demanded by principle and/or analysis and turn out well worth the tax because they roll the struggle forward and the apparatus back. Such deeds also inhibit agents of repression from selecting their doers as people who will acquiesce to the next increment of oppression and make it easier to impose on subsequent victims.

That the personal is political is axiomatic on the left. Everything is political. Klaus informs us that we must not allow the prison regimen to focus us unduly on the personal, make us see the world (and our imprisonment) in terms of self, make us, in Klaus’s word, egotistical. He lyrically tells us, “True survival means to experience yourself as a human being who is socially, politically, mentally, and emotionally autonomous and self responsible. This requires breaking your isolation... Those who cannot transcend their own imprisonment... will be unable to find meaning in their arduous situation.” Only through connecting with a social infrastructure via such transcendence can we both sow and reap the liberation that builds in a sociological feedback loop of synthesizing the personal and political.

Each of us has just a single, finite life, and its youth is but a fleeting commutation. That can make the prospect of a 10, 20, 30 year, or life sentence exceedingly threatening and daunting. Klaus reveals, however, that such apparent doom is an avoidable matter of perception. Don’t dwell on the passage of time, we learn, use it; time is our most valuable resource. Just because we’d rather be doing something else doesn’t mean there’s nothing to do. Don’t pine for the blandishments of the outer world! Live life! We don’t “miss” life in prison, we just have a different one to lead—as we would have if any of a number of things had happened instead of arrest. Use that life to read, write, study, learn; on the basis of being free to do that, we can teach as well. Even if the interaction is so little as with authors and unsendable writing, it is work and connection and valuable—life. This is, as Klaus says, the most important advice.

Develop a broader, deeper, more durable understanding of why we seek revolution to increase the likelihood of achieving it. Maintain and hone the tools of the struggle and improve facility with them. A book, a magazine, a newspaper is a sawn bar, a cut fence, a hole in the wall, at least for a time. Learn how to do something material—electricity, welding, mechanics, computers—whatever. We are material beings in a material world, and knowing how to ma-

nipulate material will also raise the probability of achieving revolution. And on material, don’t neglect the body, the most basic tool of struggle. It cannot be disparaged as merely the meat; the mind and the body are symbiotes, both essential elements of our potentially revolutionary beings. Exercise can be done in virtually any circumstances. Nor is exercise strictly physical; it is therapy, and it steals time back from the apparatus.

Communication is the thing out of which all other action grows. This is inherent and the core in Klaus’s advocacy of reading, writing, and interacting. In order to be the autonomous, self-responsible person within and to and for the social relation of a revolutionary movement and act accordingly, communication is inescapable. We are and will be only as effective as our communication, internal and external. Our ability to read and learn and understand and even act from the experience of others and to communicate that knowledge, preferably refined through our own praxis, is what lets us advance social liberation. Klaus’s take on survival strategy tells us we can not only survive thusly but can as well continue to serve the cause of liberation—which are really the same thing. We can be captured without giving in or giving up.

I cannot comment from experience on Klaus’s rendition of how surviving thusly will facilitate the sea change to lower security existence on the streets, not having made that transition. But I am still here and I am still curious, as Klaus says a stir survivor will be. So I assume his conclusion is also correct that “there is life after survival and it is still worth living.”

Bill Dunne #10916-086
P.O. Box 2068
Inez, KY 41224
USP Big Sandy

Introduction

BY GABRIEL KUHN

“Prison Round Trip” was first published in German in 2003 as “Einmal Knast und zurück.” The essay’s author, Klaus Viehmann, had been released from prison ten years earlier, after completing a 15-year sentence for his involvement in urban guerilla activities in Germany in the 1970s. “Einmal Knast und zurück” first appeared in Arranca!, a journal founded 1993—coincidentally the year of Viehmann’s release—to encourage critical debate within radical left and autonomist circles. The essay was subsequently reprinted in various forums. It is a reflection on prison life and on how to keep one’s sanity and political integrity within the hostile and oppressive prison environment. In line with the Arranca! issue it was written for, “survival strategies” are its central theme.

“Einmal Knast und zurück” soon found an audience ex-

Life, Health Care, Prisons and Cutting Costs

BY SUNDIATA ACOLI

Health care costs are soaring and have become unaffordable for many families. It is no different for the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) except they’re required by law to provide medical care to their wards.

Although much of prison health care is inadequate, many of its youthful captives can at least squeak by on what’s presently provided. Not so for those over 50 years of age, most of whom are beset by the common old age infirmities: high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes, clogged arteries, heart disease, cancer and the need for body part replacements.

California has the largest prison population in the U.S. plus the highest health care cost and spends \$98,000 to \$138,000 per year for each prisoner over 50.(1) An August 11, 2009 *NY Times* editorial noted that ...Just days before a Chino, California, prison riot, a 3-judge panel ordered the state to reduce its 150,000+ prison population by about 40,000 in the next 2 years as the only way to bring its prison health care system up to constitutional standards...The editorial concluded: “The riot at Chino and the federal court’s ruling contain the same message for states everywhere: They must come up with a smart way to reduce prison populations and they must do it quickly.”

More prisoners today are serving life sentences than ever before. They are called “Lifers,” and their numbers have quadrupled since 1984 to over 140,000 and they’ve become a major driving force behind the explosion of health care cost in prisons (2). Many Lifers are over 50 and most are parole eligible while the remainder are doing life without parole (LWOP).

One reason for the ballooning of life sentences result from the 3-strikes you’re out, mandatory minimums, 100 to 1 ratio of crack to powder cocaine sentences, children sentenced to LWOP (in clear violation of international law) and other harsh edicts of the law and order climate of the last several decades.

The other reason for the balloon is the unrectified racial residue that has accompanied America’s justice system since ante bellum days. Two-thirds

of prisoners serving life sentences are Latino and Black and nearly half of those serving life are Black. In 13 states Blacks make up 60% of the Lifers. In NY state only 17% of prisoners serving life are White (3).

Many Lifers over 50 have already done 20, even 30 years or more and some are 60, even 70 years old and more. Crime has been decreasing for the last decade or two and ALL indicators show that elderly prisoners, once released, rarely commit another crime and are least likely to return to prison.

So it is self-evident that the smartest and quickest way to begin reducing prison health care cost and prison overcrowding is to release aged and infirmed Lifers and LWOPs whose age + years served = a fixed number (say 70 years, for example) which could be further reduced in proportion to the seriousness of the Lifer’s illness. Such a release process would not only be smart but ethical and prisoners’ families, loved ones and the public would be even wiser to urge their Congressperson to put such a Prison Cost Cutting bill into effect immediately.

Sundiata Acoli is a 72 year old prisoner at FCI Otisville, NY, who is sentenced to life with the possibility of parole, afflicted with common old age infirmities and has been imprisoned 36 years to date. He was arrested for the May 2nd, 1973 NJ Turnpike shooting incident in which he shot no one but merely managed to survive but in which his passenger, Zayd Shakur, and a New Jersey trooper, Werner Foerster, were killed. Another trooper, James Harper,



I was fortunate to have friends who chipped in to get me the paper. I wonder if the Campaign to Stop Control Units could somehow get money or get people to get subs to weekly news magazines — Time or Newsweek, or a decent daily or weekly newspaper— for people in control units? In women’s prisons and most control units, no news media are provided.

- I fought for every shred of what I was supposed to have a “right” to, based in the Code of Federal Regs, which governs the BOP. But it’s hard not to get full of rage and frustration while doing this, so once in a while I would write a furious letter to the warden or someone else, saying everything I wanted and then tear it up. Therapeutic, to a point.

Warden Burkhardt of Alderson responded to my BP-9 (fed prison grievance form) protesting my isolation. He said I was being held in solitary because of my “associations and beliefs.” Knowing what your enemy’s goals are helps you a lot in resisting giving ground. In my case, on days when I felt (and was) particularly abused and mistreated, I could always find hope and strength in feeling it was an honor to be held in conditions of control—in the way Chairman Mao meant it in that old quote we used to love so much about it being a good thing to be hated by the enemy.

Finally, one thing about control units is that, since their goal is to dehumanize, to destroy one’s personality, each individual kind of needs to design her/his own program for survival, based in her/his identity and sense of what makes each of us human. How one person expresses and controls rage is not necessarily right for another. For example, for some people, keeping busy is important; for others, maybe stillness and inward thought is important. What resources, internal and external, each prisoner has available make a big difference, too. (One reason why activist groups are so important!)

Finally, really, I do believe that everyone who has spent time in prison, double for control units, suffers physical if not also mental damage. Having this recognized—say, by the international anti-torture forces—helps. I think it was Stuart Grassian who observed that the women in the LexHSU developed illnesses as a result of the unit. When I read that, it helped me understand the damage to my own health that resulted or was exacerbated by the control unit time.

Venceremos!

P.S. Have you been able to see the comet? It’s gorgeous! Every morning I get up at 5 to go to a window in our unit from which I can see it; now in the evening we can see it before we’re locked in. Every time I look at it I think of all those in the control units who are robbed of this incredible experience.

Laura Whitehom, California

I.

Bodies leaning
against steel doors
eyes always watching, missing nothing.
A deep breath taken amid isolated tension.
White walls stretching endlessly,
Silent barriers between two worlds
containing society’s shame, the prisoner.

II.

The men
of nothingness
pursue the endless hours
and the passage through silence.
in lands of half-burned hopes
and shattered dreams
scratched by vengeful winds

III.

He has gone to bed crying
And woke up crying
He has begged for a peace that was never given.
He has plunged into the deepest despair
and fallen into that place
where everything is nothing.
Growing in the darkness, his rage.

IV.

Each day
in this place
is a struggle for him;
he’s alive, but not living.
He’s feeling everything, feeling nothing,
tired of existing, and longing to join
those who truly know peace, the dead.

V.

He can hear
it,
it’s there in his head, everywhere.
A voice he prays will not last, but does.
An unrelenting being
that chokes his mind, his vision blurs...
Another creature runs inward, mad.

VI.

But the
pain
goes on and on...
running down the walls.
crawling beneath the bunks,
and deep within the cracks
where lay his sanity, lost.

tending beyond Germany’s borders. Thanks to translations by comrades and radical distribution networks, it has since been eagerly discussed amongst political prisoners from Spain to Greece. This is the first time the text is available to a wider English-speaking audience.

Klaus Viehmann grew up in Germany’s industrial heartland, the Ruhr River Valley. He was politicized in the context of the late 1960s anti-establishment rebellions. In 1972, he moved to West Berlin in order to avoid military service, as residents of the city were exempt from the draft during Germany’s division following World War II. Viehmann has cited the military coup in Chile in September 1973 as a pivotal event in his political development. In his words, the overthrow of the Allende government “destroyed the last illusions about a ‘peaceful transition to socialism.’” As a consequence, the urban guerilla struggle seemed “much more plausible” than it had before.

In 1975, Viehmann established contact with the 2nd of June Movement (Bewegung 2. Juni), one of four major urban guerilla groups that emerged in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, the others being the Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion), the Revolutionary Cells (Revolutionäre Zellen), and the Rote Zora.

The Red Army Faction (RAF) was the first and most enduring of these groups and remains the most legendary. Spectacular actions throughout the 1970s brought far-reaching attention, a dedicated circle of sympathizers, and effective martial law in Germany. With the unresolved prison death of the so-called First Generation’s most prominent members, the RAF experienced a strong blow in the fall of 1977. However, the group remained active for another twenty years, before it finally disbanded in 1998.

Where the RAF had shaped a Marxist-Leninist and increasingly anti-imperialist ideology in a series of theoretical documents, the second of West Germany’s urban guerilla groups, the West Berlin-based 2nd of June Movement (2jm), was committed to anti-authoritarian principles and served to give armed expression to everyday struggles. Formed in January 1972, its members were drawn from radical grassroots and community groups, including both students and workers.

The Revolutionary Cells (RZ), a group with its roots in the undogmatic left, announced its existence in 1973. The RZ soon divided into a “social revolutionary” and an “anti-imperialist” wing. The latter collaborated with guerrilla groups operating in an international context, mainly from the Middle East, and its involvement in high-level hostage-takings and skyjackings outside of West Germany would prove extremely controversial. On the other hand, the social revolutionary wing, made up of members who remained active aboveground, would carry out numerous, often low-level, actions in connection with popular struggles of the day, achieving an enviable level of support on the left.

If the social revolutionary wing of the RZ was popular, this was arguably even more the case for the Rote Zora, a women’s guerrilla group that grew out of the RZ. Largely concentrating on issues central to women’s struggles, the Rote Zora would play its most influential role through a 1980s campaign of actions directed at gene tech and biotechnology.

Both the Revolutionary Cells and Rote Zora ended their activities in 1993.

Klaus Viehmann was arrested in West Berlin in 1978, charged with membership in the 2JM and a number of related activities, including bank robbery and the liberation of prisoners, and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Viehmann was one of the 2JM members who were opposed to any collaboration that threatened the group’s autonomy—this concerned an anti-imperialist alliance with international guerilla movements as much as closer ties to the Red Army Faction. The involvement of German guerillas in the hijacking of passenger planes proved particularly divisive within the group. Eventually, the conflict led to a split in 1980 when some members joined the Red Army Faction, while Viehmann and others did not. This marked the end of the 2JM as an active group. Viehmann subsequently emphasized his long-standing affinity for the social revolutionary wing of the Revolutionary Cells.

While still in prison, Viehmann wrote an essay that became the centerpiece of the book Drei zu Eins (“Three to One”), published in 1991. The book introduced the concept of “triple oppression”—the interrelations between class, gender and race in oppressive social structures—to a radical German-speaking audience, and proved highly influential, especially in autonomist circles.

Since his release, Viehmann has been active in various left-wing projects, including solidarity campaigns for World War II forced laborers and Colombian trade unionists. He remains involved in numerous publishing activities, as an author, translator, and a graphic designer. He is also co-editor of two extensive volumes documenting the history of autonomist political poster art in Germany: hoch die kampf dem (1999) and vorwärts bis zum nieder mit (2001). His home is once again Berlin—today officially undivided, but, as he puts it, “a place where a lot needs to be done.”

Prison Round Trip

BY KLAUS VIEHMANN

Bang. The door to your cell is shut. You have survived the arrest, you are mad that you weren’t more careful, you worry that they will get others too, you wonder what will happen to your group and whether a lawyer has been called yet—of course you show none of this. The weapon, the fake papers, your own clothes, all gone. The prison garb and the

shoes they’ve thrown at you are too big—maybe because they want to play silly games with you, maybe because they really blow “terrorists” out of proportion in their minds—and the control over your own appearance taken out of your hands. You look around, trying to get an understanding of where you’ll spend the next few years of your life.

What is the point of talking about survival strategies today—years later? Is it worth trying to organize and sum up your experiences? It is, at any rate, difficult to bring them into words and sentences. Yet, for those who will spend time behind bars in the future, they might be useful. Besides, since the experiences of (political) prisoners are neither extra-societal nor a-historical, their survival strategies might also help those comrades who experience their everyday life as little more than a somewhat coordinated form of “getting by.” To focus on what’s essential, to plan your everyday life consciously, to use your energies in meaningful ways—these are all qualities that are useful. Everywhere. Survival strategies are personal (which is why this text is, also rhetorically, directed at you, no abstract third person), but not egotistical. Emancipation and liberation do not happen within the individual—they are socio-historical processes. In the words of Peter Brückner, “It was only the late bourgeois who has turned freedom and independence into a question of ‘inwardness.’” This shows the limits of all individual survival strategies. Surviving can only turn into living through social liberation. But this is another story, one in which prisons will hardly play a role...

In prison, the necessity of survival strategies is immediate; without them you are at the mercy of the enemy. Prison is a hostile environment, and it has been designed as such by people who see you as their foe. Have no illusions about that. In regular prisons—especially old-fashioned ones—conditions are often atrocious and sometimes violent, but there are at least social structures. In isolation or maximum security units, social relations are controlled, regulated, abolished. Isolation means the absence of social life and the presence of yourself. You have nothing but yourself, and you have to find ways to deal with it. This is possible, but it is not possible to know beforehand who will get through prison okay and who won’t. For someone with little life experience, limited political self-motivation and uncertain (possibly egotistical) future plans, it will be difficult. A colorful biography in which prison does not mark the first rough period, optimism even in the face of a dire situation and the ability not to take yourself too seriously all help.

Ernst Bloch might have said that “those who acquire their knowledge only from books should be put onto shelves,” but it is not necessarily a tragedy if the knowledge about certain things only comes that way. I have not experienced physical torture, death threats or confinement in dark cells. Personal or literary descriptions of such experiences, however, can help you to understand your own experiences better and to get through them.

The empirical basis (if you will) for this text is 15 years imprisonment. Seven years—after 1978—were spent in isolation or with small groups of inmates, five of these in maximum security units (in Moabit and Bielefeld). From 1986 until my release in 1993, I was in a special “security cell” in Werl, an old German prison. I had one hour in the yard every day with other inmates. My visits and my mail was monitored, I was separated from my lawyers by a bulletproof glass window, I was hardly ever allowed to buy extra supplies, had no visits of other prisoners in my cell, showered alone, was allowed a maximum of 30 books, no radio and five or six subscriptions to newspapers and magazines. Mail restrictions were eased during my last years there, and from 1991 to 1993 I was permitted to jog in the yard twice a week. What I am writing here is the quintessence of my experiences. During the first five or six years of my imprisonment, I learned the survival strategies that got me through the last ten. These are the experiences I’m summarizing here.

Back to the first day in prison. You have no conception of the day you will be released. 5,500 days are beyond what is imaginable, even when I look back at it. What you see at the time is what you need to know to survive right there and then: Where do I get reading and writing material? Where do I hide secret messages? When should I expect a cell search? Where are the cells of my comrades? There is a lot to do. Boredom is the least of your concerns. Besides, you know why you are in there—an enormous advantage compared to those who have no idea. It was a radical political challenge that got you there; one that you could see as “just another step” in a life that you had chosen by engaging in militant left-wing politics. Sure, they were one up on you at that point, but prison was a new terrain and they still had to prove that they could break you. This is exactly what you must not allow them to do—and this, in turn, defines your struggle from the first day to the last.

To have a clear objective and clear front lines enables you to fight well. You must never allow them to persuade you that there are no clear front lines and that “big brother” is your friend. Ulrike Meinhof’s declaration that “the fight of the people against power is the fight of remembering against forgetting” sums this up perfectly. The ability to remember requires political and/or moral conviction. Those who lose this conviction refuse to remember and get lost in self-reflection, self-pity and lack of orientation. This is the steep decline where desperation can turn into suicide and political denial into betrayal. Solitary confinement and the control of social contact (letters, visits, news), you can also call it brainwashing, aim at causing you to forget and to become egotistical. Resistance, solidarity, responsibility, collectivism and a corresponding personality shall vanish.

Maximum security prisons also follow the bourgeois-capitalist principle of “everyone is his/her own best friend.” Those who adopt this principle do not survive—they turn into someone else. Not because they grew and achieved

Tips from a transgender woman in a men’s facility on surviving in AdSeg (higher levels)

1. Try to maintain a respectful stance with inmates and staff alike because staff control who stays and who leaves. Even though other inmates are in your situation, it’s best to be respectful to them because you could very well create a situation with another inmate that will follow you for years unresolved.
2. Find things to do to spend your time productively such as writing songs, poems, reading. Idle hands are the devil’s playground.
3. Remember that guys hate rejection. There are ways to tell someone you’re not interested that doesn’t hurt his pride so much. If you’re too harsh in your tone, he may be concerned about how others think and will try to show off for their behalf.
4. It’s best to remain single but if you must, be cautious of “getting with” more than one guy. You’re playing a dangerous game when you toy with someone’s emotions. There’s no safe way to have sexual intercourse. Many guys have different health problems that they hide. Ask for paperwork ensuring his health is up to code (at that moment). Be watchful that he isn’t messing around with more than one partner. Some choices don’t end well.
5. Focus on a goal; build a time table of when you’d like to be released or your custody reduced. Remain misconduct free.
6. Choose your friends closely. Remember you’re locked up with prisoners who are locked up for being in some type of trouble so some people enjoy continuing that same behavior. Don’t gossip or spread rumors as this will only keep you in constant conflict.
7. Some guys (predators) will do anything to get with you against your will, creating situations where you’d need his assistance! Remember it’s only a ploy. He could very well be behind the situation. Don’t go into debt. If someone wanted to squeeze you for money, they’d be able to continuously keep you owing them simply by taking you. Or your debt could be passed on from inmate to inmate. Guys look at transsexuals as being the weakest link and will play off of that. If you don’t have it, consider going without it or if the risk is worth it!
8. Many transsexuals and homosexuals get with other inmates in a relationship for money. Remember if a guy feels used he may cause you harm. Many guys believe that they own you after they’ve bought you so much. Then think about that if you realize his money is gone, then what? Many guys are in prison because they felt

betrayed by family, friends, wives, or girlfriends and once betrayed again, you could be in a situation that’s hard if not impossible to get out of.

Anonymous, Michigan

Controlling the control unit

To me the overriding thing of importance in surviving my various stints in control units was to refuse to relinquish control! By that I mean: keeping always in mind the purpose of the control unit — i.e., remembering what the state was trying to accomplish by putting me there, and then using my own powers of understanding to resist their plan. Among other things, this meant:

- Making a schedule for my days, instead of allowing the cops to determine my days.
- Having several different schedules, and alternating them, to avoid having the days all melt into sameness, and to keep track of what day and date it was, etc.
- Using exterior signals, such as changes in light, shift changes, regular noises from outside my cell, to keep track of time. The first few weeks I’d note a sound or other objective occurrence, then yell for the cops to find out what time it was, etc.
- Developing several different forms of exercise for different days and conditions. One technique of control used in every unit I’ve been in is withholding or postponing rec time. Since exercise was a very important way I controlled my anger so that I didn’t become upset or stressed, it was crucial for me to develop ways to avoid letting this necessity for exercise become one more tool for them to use against me. I learned yoga and did isometric weight-training in my cell, and I ran on the occasions I was able to go out to the rec yards.
- Developed some creative activity that allowed me to admire my own human creativity — i.e., draw, write, make things from what is available, etc. Reminding myself that my place in the universe was as a sentient, loving, creative human being, not a caged animal, was helpful. (This is why so many prisoners turn out incredible drawings in ballpoint pen!)
- Learn something—undertake to study something and use the mind so I left each unit having grown rather than been diminished by the experience.
- Write letters—get pen pals if needed; some active communication with the outside.
- For me, as a political creature, it was essential to get a subscription to a major newspaper. (I then managed to share it by smuggling it to another prisoner in the unit.)

er, but reward other prison elements who opportunistically allow themselves to be participants in prisoncrats' games. Prisoners have had their names and reputations destroyed simply by engaging in "good-intentioned measures" that were made to look like bad or unprincipled prison politics.

Prisoners are placed in new and ambiguous situations, for which the standards are kept deliberately vague and unclear, and then pressured to conform to what is desired in order to win favor and a reprieve from pressure. Speaking, however, for prisoners who by choice have worked long and hard not to be victimized by the actions of over-zealous prisoncrats, these are the true "revolutionaries" by their own actions of displaying an Oppositional Consciousness. By refusing all forms of dehumanization – these men and women are stand up.

Bro. Khalfani Malik Khaldun, (Leonard McQuay),
874304, B-Unit, (SCU),
Wabash Valley Correctional Facility, (WVCF)
P.O. Box 1111,
Carlisle, IN. 47838

Excerpts from Survivors Manual: Surviving in Solitary A Manual Written by and for People Living in Control Units

EDITED BY BONNIE KERNESS, AFSC

For copies of the full pamphlet, write to: Bonnie Kerness, AFSC Prison Watch Project, 89 Market Street, Newark, NJ 07102. Prisoners are asked to send \$2.50 for postage if possible, but free copies are available as well. The Manual, along with other materials, can be downloaded at www.afscprisonwatch.org.

What survival is

Survival is being spiritually and mentally filled by the Angels of Justice fighting the fight for our liberation from Pelican Bay SHU.

Survival is possessing the intellect to know when the psych comes into the housing unit to ask the mentally unstable if they need a psych line, and you realize how ridiculous he sounds — you're surviving.

Survival is waking up in the morning, in a sound mind, realizing that one was not killed during the night or moved to some unknown destination.

Survival is hearing one's neighbor laughing out loud because his son or daughter received a good grade in school or a great report card.

Survival is when one can assist his neighbor in his time of need, no matter what his racial, political, or cultural views may be.

Survival is hearing one's neighbor call out to make sure the man is not taking advantage of one, and to let the man know you're not alone.

Survival is being able to state to oneself that I have made it through another day — without being killed, beaten half to death or made to stand in a shower or holding cell naked, hand-cuffed for hours (for not moving fast enough, or having the wrong look, not using the right words, or for speaking out on injustices) — having one's dignity at the end of the day still intact to fight another day.

And giving thanks to whatever God one might believe in, before closing one's eyes for sleep. You smile because you have survived another day at Pelican Bay.

Bambari S. Kelly Andersen, California

Contact

As for doing time in the Control Unit, my suggestions are to establish and maintain contact with activists out there; use the time productively by studying law, theology; reading; exercising and working to improve your mind and body.

Maintaining outside contacts is very important. Without such contacts, the prisoncrats will abuse prisoners, knowing they don't have anyone to answer to.

Unity is also important since prisoners are often pitted against others, by design.

It's a bad environment, both mentally and physically, so you need to set a program for yourself to try and maintain any form of sanity. Long-term isolation causes Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as well, so those in contact with prisoners should always work to keep them in touch with reality.

I know for years I was in the Us v. Them mode, where it was the feeling you're at war, which in reality you are, since the whole purpose of the control unit is to break your spirit. But you have to keep a semblance of future goals in mind too, or you can self-destruct.

It's important for everyone out there to send as much literature as possible, and try to establish one-on-one contact with those in the control units. Outside support should be a priority, as well as an emergency response network for crises.

John W. Perotti, Ohio

emancipation, but because they regressed and de-socialized. The consequences are de-politicization and the disintegration of the personality. True survival means to experience yourself as a human being who is socially, politically, mentally and emotionally autonomous and self-responsible. This requires breaking your isolation and finding reference points outside your cell. Those who cannot transcend their own imprisonment and who cannot understand it in a wider context will be unable to find meaning in their arduous situation. The narrower your horizon, the more paralyzing and desperate your personal fears. Jean Amery once described these "reference points" in connection with the most extreme of all experiences, that of Auschwitz:

"You must realize," a religious Jew once told me, "that your intelligence and education is worthless here. Me, however, I know that God will take revenge." A German leftist comrade, in the camp since 1933, expressed this more bluntly: "There you are, you bourgeois know-it-alls, and you shiver when the SS appears. We do not shiver, and even if we will perish in here miserably, we know that the comrades who follow us will line them all up." Both these men transcended themselves and projected themselves into the future. ... Their belief or their ideology gave them a stable point in the world that allowed them to spiritually defy the SS-State.

Günter Anders has called this the "paradox of hopelessness creating hope."

In the much less dangerous world of West German high security prisons, it is rare that your physical survival is threatened. There is enough food, clothing, warmth and hygiene—an enormous difference from the conditions in, for example, military prisons in Latin America. Despite such differences, however, you have to figure out how to survive with your personality intact. How do you protect yourself? How do you organize your defense? And when do you have to attack? The first impulse of course says: Always! But to act politically means to assess power balances and the consequences of your actions—also in prison. For example, there is no point in destroying your cell if no one on the outside will ever know about it. It might be fun, sure, but it will almost certainly cause time in the hole and repercussions. However, when in 1980 the first prisoners were meant to be transferred to the newly constructed maximum security unit in Moabit, it made sense to barricade yourself behind the dismantled furniture of your cell. This showed that you refused to go to this unit voluntarily, that you refused to accept a worsening of your conditions without resistance. If you do not show such resistance it will make them overconfident and you will feel powerless in your new surroundings. In the case of Moabit, comrades protested on the outside, there were militant actions and the media coverage was huge. For surviving the maximum security conditions, this was all extremely helpful.

The hunger strikes of the 1970s and 1980s were—despite the critique of their exact circumstances and certain de-

mands—"survival strategies" for prisoners in isolation and maximum security units. The solidarity campaigns that followed the deaths of Holger Meins and Sigurd Debus—killed by medical negligence and force feeding—definitely helped the survival of their imprisoned comrades. Here is an example for an immediate survival strategy from my own experience: In 1983, the authorities intended to implement a new model of isolating small groups of prisoners in the maximum security unit in Bielefeld. It was planned to supplement the maximum security architecture with an extremely rigid regime: for a dirty sink, you would lose three days in the yard, turning off the common room's idiotic, prison-selected TV program meant confinement to your cell for two weeks, etc. Forced labor programs were added to this: assembling 3,000 clothespins in an eight-hour workday, five days a week, under CCTV surveillance, with disciplinary measures for poor output. The enforcement of repetitive and mind-numbing activities is essential in all psychological conditioning, a classic means of brainwashing directed at the body. To assemble clothespins for years equals a slow mental death. Punishment for work refusal was the hole. Since a hunger strike (possibly of several weeks) is difficult under such circumstances, and since everything seemed at stake anyway, the only available means was a thirst strike. Thirst strikes do not last long—one way or another. Public pressure has to be mounted fast, and this pressure has to become stronger than, in this case, their interest in implementing the new maximum security forced labor model. The survival strategy in this case was to challenge them to explain why 3,000 clothespins a day were worth a human being's death. Besides, there was an unspoken, yet clear, understanding that if they did implement forced labor within the maximum security units, attacks on the prison labor system would become so strong that it would be impossible to maintain prison labor even in the regular units, which would have caused substantial loss of income. They gave in after five days, having suffered significant property damage: the Revolutionary Cells (Revolutionäre Zellen, RZ) had bombed the prison bureau and the offices of two companies profiting from prison labor. Added to this were demonstrations, a riot in the maximum security unit in Köln-Ossendorf and bad press. Since then, no further attempt has ever been made to implement forced labor in maximum security facilities.

Most times, however, the life of a prisoner is less heroic. After all, the natural enemy of the hero is daily routine. Here is an example, though, of a tiny survival strategy: If your request to see the prison dentist remains "overlooked" for two days, you can tape it to the toilet which can then be demounted and, at the next opportunity, placed in front of your cell—just so it won't be "overlooked" any longer. This will lead to some money being taken from the solidarity account and will result in a disciplinary measure, but you will see the dentist. Such an action works because the denial of dental services becomes official with the property damage which needs to be registered. This means you will have the option of filing a legal complaint—something that

the prison administration usually does not want to deal with in such petty cases.

Of course you cannot rattle your bars or kick against your door all day. You won't be able to keep that up for very long. However, not being able to tear down the bars or to kick in the door does not mean that you have to accept the prison's regime and be forced into norms that are a lot narrower than those on the outside. You can keep your individuality only by resisting these norms. Live or be lived. An acceptance of the norms means an end to your own development. You lose interest in social contact and refuse to accept that circumstances and situations change. To adapt to the prison regime means to forget individual strength and success. The adaptation reproduces itself endlessly, both because you fear the actual regime and the personal consequences of resistance. You lose hope. Eventually, accepting the wrongs turns into embracing the rules. Not only optimism is dependent on activity, resistance is too. Being lethargic makes you dumb. Merely thinking about resistance (what the Nazi pawns called "inner emigration") is no survival strategy; it is cynicism: you think one thing, but you do another; or you refuse to draw the consequences of your thoughts.

The praxis of imagined resistance has a name: expected behavior. When you are passive you internalize fear and hopelessness. This creates—and reproduces—the obedient, neurotic prisoner. This prisoner's daydreams about spectacular escapes or unexpected pardons fall under the authority-sanctioned category of "Give-us-our-daily-illusion." Within the "false life" of prison there can be no absolutely correct ways of acting. However, fundamental decisions about your actions can still be made—decisions that are an important part of your survival strategies. They are not dogmatic. They have to be revised again and again. Is it wrong to give in? Are the old principles still valid? You always have to know this; you always have to convince yourself anew. Your responses must not just be habits. You ought to be curious and open when it comes to the experiences and perspectives of others, and you ought to appreciate friendly advice.

To make clear decisions on the basis of your memories and your knowledge, while accepting contradictions and acknowledging the change of social and political realities, in other words, to think dialectically, is a solid basis for your own conviction. Rigid and inflexible thinking can only make an exterior frame that does not even allow for the tiniest of cracks. If one detail seems off, everything seems off... This is why it is such tiny cracks that can sometimes cause those who once professed a "150%" conviction to crumble. The next thing they do is to look for a new framework. Not one that necessarily makes much sense, but one that might lead to an earlier release. Look at the example of Horst Mahler: after a lot of ideological meandering, he finally settled on the far right when, after studying the relevant literature extensively, he came to the brash conclu-

sion in the late 1970s that Marx had misunderstood Hegel and that we all ought to reconsider our understanding of the State. In a Spiegel interview, he managed to outdo even the Minister of the Interior in his praise for the State institution. He was released early.

Of course, you will develop politically, reflect on the political praxis you were engaged in before you went to prison, etc. Yet, dialectical thinking will only foster your conviction that exploitation, oppression, poverty and war will not disappear without the overthrow of the prevailing order. This is what will always separate you from a Minister of the Interior.

The question of whether it is "wrong to give in" can be put into simple terms: Do you want to talk to someone who locks you up during the day and who is ready to shoot you if you attempt to escape during the night? Do you want to talk to the head of a prison who prohibits any commemoration of those who, in 1943, were sent to die in Mauthausen from the very yard you walk in every day? Or do you want to talk with the one who attends military training as a "reserve captain"? Do you want to strike a deal with the Federal Criminal Bureau (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA), an organization maintaining a department called "TE" (formerly "Sicherheitsgruppe Bonn" and established by former officials of the Nazis' Reich Security Head Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt)) that spies on your visitors and was involved in the death of Wolfgang Grams? Do you want to bow in front of them in exchange for nothing more than a few perks? The "reason" that they demand of you rocks the cradle of both madness and betrayal, and the "common sense" they evoke "is the little man in the grey suit who never makes a mistake in addition—but it's always someone else's money he's adding up." (Raymond Chandler)

It is sweet but dangerous to wait for letters... to lay awake till the morning and stare at the ceiling... Forget your age, beware of the spring evenings... It is bad to dream of roses and gardens, but good to think of mountains and oceans. My advice to you would be: read and write as much as possible—and ignore the mirror Nazim Hikmet letter to a fellow prisoner

Nazim Hikmet's lines express pure survival strategies. Letters are important fractures in the prison walls, but to focus on receiving them makes you dependent. Be happy when they arrive—look for something else to be happy about when they don't. To lie awake until morning and stare at the ceiling does not change anything. To read and write until morning, however, might, as it means that you are active. To forget one's age and the mirror eradicates the worries about missing out on life. Beautiful spring evenings can cause terrible yearning for the world outside. To dream of roses and gardens appeases you in a place where you shouldn't be appeased. To think of untamed mountains and seas puts your own problems into perspective. To read and

oner, Indiana needs to find better alternative measures than just mindless prison construction. They're building more prisons to keep space; more space and bodies equal more money, period.

Revolutionary Oppositional Consciousness

Indiana's Prison System is home to all sorts of men/women who share a commonality with one another. They're all similarly situated inside a prison. Prison, as many of you know or may not know, are institutions maintained through the enforcement of policies, rules, procedures, and Executive Directives. These guidelines for maintaining a prison are enforced by correctional officers, some of which display real professionalism, while others see it as an opportunity to carry out repression, disguised as correctional work.

By nature, certain groups of prisoners, who are strong-minded and strong-willed, will oppose any guidelines that dehumanize them. These types of prisoners are health-conscious, motivated to educate themselves, and demand respect from their fellow prisoners and staff. They oppose any system of thought that goes against what they hold dear to their hearts. So, they are constantly engaged in internal/external wars, not to be defeated by the deteriorating environmental conditions of prison.

Whether in general population or solitary confinement, or isolated on a control unit, these wars are for survival, mental stability, staying connected to the streets by the building or re-building of greater relationships with family. There are some procedures that only serve the purpose of breaking people down by discouraging supporters from remaining connected.

Prisoners who stand tall and never surrender their will to be free in any way, to me, share with me an Oppositional Consciousness. They share knowledge, wisdom, and guidance for the younger prisoner, to help straighten out their path; these prisoners – men or women – are Revolutionary by Action. The State Prison System, the Indiana Department of Corrections, as early as February 9, 2009, and February 11, 2009, surprisingly changed some of their procedures (it would appear on the face of it) by bringing some solutions to the – by then – out-of-control disciplinary problem. We have fought long and hard submitting proposals requesting modifications in the way disciplinary hearing boards were excessively handing out sanctions to prisoners for placement into disciplinary segregation or demotions resulting in more prison time.

In Executive Directive #09-07 it states:

"...it is the intent of the Department that the facilities will reduce the amount of Disciplinary Segregation time that offenders are given for most offenses..."

"...However, for those offenders who commit the most serious (egregious) offenses, such as Batteries (A-102), Escape (A-108), Rioting (A-103), etc. The Disciplinary Segregation guidelines for (2004) shall remain in effect. Accordingly, most serious offenses an offender may receive up to one (1) year in Disciplinary Segregation..."

Under this new progressive directive, time-deprived due to prison infractions are now given back 90 days earlier, ultimately resulting in some cases where prisoners are being released much earlier than expected; 90% are now being restored which is good.

Now, on to the additional Directive #09-11, effective date February 9, 2009, which constitute lesser-included "charges," or conduct infractions that can be given to offenders. In doing so, it really allows the Chairman/Members of the Disciplinary Hearing Board time to consider alternative sanctions; because sometimes prisoners are charged with things that do not fit the incident.

It states the following:

"...It should be noted that to help staff in determining whether an offender has been charged with the correct offense, the new list of offenses include "lesser and included" offenses; if it appears that the original charged offense is not the most appropriate charge."

Exposing Overzealous Prisoncrat's Aspirations of Power

In my 22 years of incarceration sadly enough, I have had to witness with my own eyes, Indiana prisoncrats creating situation after situation inside this prison environment, just so they can come in to resolve it, and somehow gain the "brownie points" for being a problem-solver. Many of these prisoncrats have been promoted in rank, status, and position, having used real-life incidents inside these prisons, "pre-conditioned" as they may be; and they have advanced their own careers. The exaggerated gang problem inside U.S. prisons is one example of "creating a situation." The mere mention of a gang problem opens the floodgates for funding to organize for safer security measures.

Prisoncrats will go to great lengths and at the expense of one prisoner (or as many of them as it takes) to accomplish their pre-meditated agendas that ultimately would end up benefitting the prisoncrats. Administrative Segregation Units are where most prisoners have been, or are, warehoused because their presence is a potential threat to a prison administration in some way. But in some cases, a manufactured and unjustifiable claim can be made by prisoncrats that would permanently keep certain prisoners warehoused who "do not" cooperate with their manipulation of a situation.

Prisoncrats will severely punish the uncooperative prison-

Revolution by Action: Advocating Oppositional/Con- sciousness Inside an Indiana Con- trol Unit

BY KHALFANI MALIK DHALDUN

....a highly restrictive, high-custody housing within a secured facility, or an entire secure facility, that isolates inmates from the general population and from each other due to the grievous opposition, to violation against their humanity....

Politics of Imprisonment

Amerika is currently experiencing a recession that's being felt by almost all of its citizenry – from local, small business to prisons. From 1931 until the beginning of economic recovery and the decline of relief programs in 1940, the relationship between economic relief expenditures and incarceration became apparent.

This special relationship, like the one between unemployment and incarceration, underscores the economic basis for the prison problem in the United States.

The maximum use of the U.S. prison system as a weapon of class warfare was part of the neo-conservative agenda initiated during the Reagan Administration. Rudy Giuliani, then Assistant U.S. Attorney General in 1981, articulated the new policy in classical terms. “In the beginning,” he said, “man formed government to protect against the dangers of invaders from without as well as predators from within. National defense and domestic defense are, therefore the two primal functions of any government. Our criminal justice system is charged with one of these two primal tasks.” No subsequent administration, including that of past Democratic President Bill Clinton, has deviated from the prison policies established during the early 1980s.

The Prison Population, as high as it is, is only the “tip of the iceberg.” There are millions more who are under “correctional control”; the total adult population now under correctional control exceeds 6.6 million. There has been a corresponding upward trend in the cost of operating the criminal justice system in the United States. Between 1982 and 1997, expenditures on corrections increased 381%. Total direct spending on the Criminal Justice System in the United States for the period rose by 262%. The layout for Criminal Justice in the United States approached \$130 billion in 1997.

Four million jobs have been lost in Amerika since last year. In Great Britain, over two million people are out of work,

and millions more lost jobs in Germany, France, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. But these losses pale in comparison to the twenty million jobs that China has lost since the start of the downturn. And the “Great Depression” is only (the) beginning.

Unexpected Changes Inside Indiana Prison Policies

There is an over-crowding prison problem inside the State of Indiana. In a recent article describing this, information was released of correctional facility construction underway to accommodate the expected additional bodies.

Since 1989, 116 laws have been enacted by the legislature that created new crimes or enhanced existing penalties. 269.4 prison years were added by the enactment of those Indiana “Sentencing Laws.” There were 7,365 inmates in maximum-security in Indiana DOC custody in 2008; 6,186 is the number of beds now available in maximum security.

Highlighting a recent escape, IDOC Commissioner Edwin Buss stated that this is why there was a need to build additional maximum-security cell blocks at two of the prisons here. A debate ensued in the political community over the State's correctional system priorities. Indiana State Senator (R)-Noblesville and Luke Kensley, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman, stated: “We clearly have a tendency to want to show that we're strong on law enforcement by passing more crime laws and by elevating things to felonies. That's somewhat of a contagious disease around here.”

Bill Crawford, Indiana House Ways & Means Committee Chairman, stated: “It would be difficult to justify an expansion of prison beds at a time when Governor Mitchell Daniel's proposal to sort of “flat line” education; it emphasizes incarceration over education.” That's not rehabilitation at all. And, Indiana Senate Minority Leader Senator Vi Simpson, (D)-Ellettsville, said she'd rather see those prison dollars going to education, including Indiana University at Bloomington, which is in her district.

So, it seems that rehabilitation programs and opportunities to obtain higher education are being shoved to the back burner to facilitate prison expansion. Dr. Terry L. Baumer, Associate Professor of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Director of Criminal Justice Programs at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA), Purdue University at Indianapolis, blames the “War on Drugs” for filling up prison space that should be used by more violent offenses. He noted that the crime rate is going down, from a high of 525.1 violent crimes per 100,000 in 1994, to 333.6 in 2007, according to the Bureau of Justice statistics.

Larry Landis, Executive Director of the Indiana Public Defender Council, said that at a cost of \$54.28 per day, or more than \$19,000 annually to house and feed one pris-

write as much as possible is the most crucial advice; in the long term, this is the most important requirement of each and every survival strategy in prison.

Books can take you to a different world when the one you are facing is intolerable. They allow you to travel even though you are trapped. This is of inestimable value in solitary confinement. Besides, it helps your survival strategies in the long run to engage with thoughts and people through reading and writing. It might be difficult against the backdrop of the exhausting monotony of prison, but it is the precondition for you to be engaged. Being engaged means new social relationships and new thoughts that keep you alive. Nobody wants to hear the same stories from you year after year, about shoot-outs or eternal truths or your problems inside. The Salvation Army might want to listen to your laments, but nobody who sees you as a political subject will.

Once you have managed to resist repression during your first months and years of prison, time becomes your main enemy. Physically you can stay fit—you can exercise even in a prison cell, and cigarettes, coffee and sweets are too expensive anyway. The sheer length of the years, however, affects the possibilities of creating a life trajectory, of experiencing life as a whole—something that forms an identity. It is difficult to understand your own patterns of behavior as coherent and meaningful. On the outside, you can be relatively certain in your knowledge that you are a person who—despite developing, of course—is always the same person, with his or her interests, ideas, reasoning and self-confidence. Now you always have to check your personality, your consciousness and your ability to think and see if all this hasn't somehow changed without you noticing. Without a rigorous self-reflection about your thoughts, emotions and actions, you cannot be certain that you still think and act rationally—something you could take for granted before.

“You can understand things by changing them,” Bertolt Brecht said dialectically, and it is this praxis of realization that Nazim Hikmet describes above. To read Marx and Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg and Assata Shakur, Malcolm X and Primo Levi, Vera Figner and Peter Weiss, or to read about the history of the Peasant Wars or the Black Panthers, or about internationalism, natural sciences, art history or chess games—all this does not cut through the bars of your cell, but it helps you to preserve your ability to think and discuss. In the worst case, you can use the Bible as the only book allowed in the hole: “to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.” (Isaiah 42: 7)

Reading is an active exchange of thoughts with others. Language is practical consciousness. Writing is production. Intellectual activity that does not result in communicable thoughts, i.e. in speaking or writing (for others), turns, in the long run—not only in prison—into a Sisyphean task. You do not live and think and write on a mythical mountain,

though, but in a specific social situation. In this case: in prison. You ought to be aware of the impact that the contradictions of your situation have on your thoughts. Certain essential political realizations might in fact come more easily with some distance from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but you ought to be very careful with all evaluations that require sensual experience. ... In any case, it is the connection of your theoretical reflections to the current problems of the left, i.e., the problems of your comrades and friends on the outside, that gives your learning and writing a practical meaning—something that can get you through many years.

Bang. The door is shut again. This time, however, you are on the outside. This does not come as surprisingly as the arrest and is significantly more pleasant. It is similarly confusing, though. You spin around like a matchbox car. It takes awhile—and hitting a few corners—before you stop and are able to really take a good look around. Your prison survival strategies helped you deal with an environment that is not really suitable for human life. Now all the strategies that you internalized get in your way. The prison experience teaches you to keep what is important to yourself, not to reveal anything, not to make yourself vulnerable. On the outside this appears—to put it mildly—as being insensitive. Friends cannot understand your (lack of) reactions. Others—certainly not your friends—raise “ex-prisoners” onto pedestals that are, in fact, closets. It is neither uplifting nor a political program to have spent time in prison. The inevitably acquired ability to make decisions for yourself often leads to avoiding challenging collective discussions. Not wanting to be dependent on anything complicates possible bonds. The ability to be alone turns into a desire to be so. Your resistance to norms and your struggle to stay afloat as an individual now make you skeptical towards groups. After the seriousness of the prison experience, disputes within the left often appear irrelevant or even ridiculous—yet when you show this you appear arrogant. It is difficult to switch off the control over your emotions that you have worked so hard to attain, just so that they wouldn't be able to use your emotions against you. Love, hate, passion—everything is secured in an intellectual bag, and you look over your shoulder carefully before you untie anything. Sure, you keep misery away from you that way. But happiness too. With time, this becomes less severe. Things become easier. Still, what a former Tupamaro described with the following words will stay with you:

You realize that one ... cannot live a lie comfortably without being disgusted by oneself, because you believe that those who understand but live inactive in comfort will break.

In any case, there is life after survival, and it is worth living. Sean McGuffin's comment that “age and trickery will always beat youth and strength” is as much a comfort to you as the useful degrees of persistence, patience and endurance that you could only acquire as a prisoner. You are still here, and you are still curious.

Invisibility of Women Prisoners' Resistance

BY VICTORIA LAW

Introduction

Between 1990 and 2000, the rate of female incarceration increased 108% [1]. Despite the fact that the number of women incarcerated is increasing more rapidly than that of men, interest in women prisoners' organizing around their conditions of confinement remains much lower than that of their male counterparts.

Why the cloak of invisibility? Like their outside counterparts, women in prison are perceived as passive. Such neglect leads to the definition of prison issues as masculine and male-dominated, dismissing both distinctly female concerns (i.e. the scarcity of sanitary hygiene products, the lack of medical care specifically for women, especially prenatal care, threats of sexual abuse by guards, etc.) and any actions that women take to address and overcome these concerns. Thus, researchers and scholars do not search out acts of defiance among the growing female prison population [2]. Furthermore, while male prisoners have well known examples of figures like George Jackson, and instances like the Attica uprising among other well-publicized cases of prisoner activism, women have limited resources and well known people or events that are relevant to them.

On the 28th of August 1974, inmates at Bedford Hills, an all women's prison, protested the beating of a fellow inmate by holding seven staff members hostage for two-and-a-half hours. However, "The August Rebellion" is virtually unknown today. All male state troopers and (male) guards from men's prisons were called to suppress the uprising. Twenty-five women were injured and twenty-four others were transferred to Matteawan Complex for the Criminally Insane without the required commitment hearings [3]. This event was virtually ignored because it lasted only two-and-a-half hours, and no one was killed. The story was relegated to a paragraph buried in the back pages of The New York Times. The "August Rebellion" is seen as less significant than the Attica Rebellion. The women at Bedford Hills also did not have any opportunity to contact media, big-name supporters and politicians, whereas as the men incarcerated at Attica were able to gain public attention. The "August Rebellion" is easily overlooked by those seeking information on prisoner protests and disruptions.

Similarly, women in a California prison held a "Christmas riot" in 1975 to protest the cancellation of family holiday visits and holiday packages. Inmates gathered in the yard, broke windows, made noise and burned Christmas trees in a "solidarity" bonfire. Once again, because there were no blatant acts of violence, this was not considered a major act

of disturbance. This act is overlooked by anyone researching prison disturbances [4].

Women prisoners face different circumstances during their incarceration and, thus, have different priorities and ways of challenging their conditions than their male counterparts. Mainstream ideas about prisoners are gendered masculine: the term "prisoner" usually calls forth an image of a young, black man convicted of a violent crime such as rape or murder. Politicians seeking votes, as well as media seeking specific audiences play on this representation, whipping the public into hysteria to get tougher on crime and build more prisons. The stereotype of the male felon makes invisible the growing number of women imprisoned under the various mandatory sentencing laws passed within the past few decades. Because women do not fit the media stereotype, the public does not see them and are not then aware of the disturbing paradoxes of prisoners as mothers, as women with reproductive rights and abilities, and as women in general.

Medical Care

One pressing issue for women prisoners is the lack of, or poor medical care within prison. While all prisoners face poor medical care, prison administrations often ignore or neglect the particular health care needs of women prisoners. That the majority of lawsuits filed by or on behalf of women in prison are for inadequate medical services testifies to the importance women prisoners place on health care and treatment[5]. Not only are the particular health care needs of women ignored or dismissed, but health care in general is often inadequate or life-threatening.

Even prison wardens agree that several of the particular needs of pregnant women, including adequate resources to take care of false labors, premature births and miscarriages, "have yet to be dealt with in any of the facilities [6]." Pregnant women are not provided with the proper diets or vitamin supplements, given the opportunity to exercise or taught breathing and birthing techniques. Kebby Warner, who entered prison while pregnant, recounted, "We ain't even taught breathing exercises. The only extra food I had was three snacks a day, which would consist of cereal, cheese and graham crackers or lunch meat sandwiches. [All of the food here is] high in starch and carbs, no fresh vegetables, nothing." [7]

Pregnancy is not the only female specific medical concern ignored by prison officials. Prevention, screening, diagnosis, care, pain alleviation and rehabilitation for breast cancer are virtually non-existent in prisons. In 1998, a study at an unnamed Southern prison found that seventy percent of the women who should have had mammograms under standard medical protocol had not been tested. Although many of the women were at high risk because of family histories, they were not provided with a clinical breast exam, information or basic education on self-examination upon admittance [8].

23. Harris, Jean. *Stranger in Two Worlds*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1986. 286.

24. Boudin, Kathy. "The Children's Center Programs of Bedford Hills Correctional Facility." *Maternal Ties: A Selection of Programs for Female Offenders*. Cynthia L. Blinn, ed. Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association, 1997. 68.

25. Boudin, 84.

26. Letter from Kebby Warner. Dated 29 April 2001.

27. Human Rights Watch Women's Project. *All Too Familiar: Sexual Abuse of Women in U.S. State Prisons*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, 1996.

28. Letter from Barrilee Bannister. Dated 21 June 2001.

29. Ibid.

Statement from the San Francisco Eight: Claiming Victory, the Struggle Continues

August 2009

We, the San Francisco 8 - Herman Bell, Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown, Richard O'Neal, Hank Jones, Jalil Muntaqim, Harold Taylor and Francisco Torres, express our deepest gratitude to the people of San Francisco and the world for their support and energy that brought about our success in this ordeal with the "justice system."

We and our support committee are claiming victory in this latest battle. As we go forward and prepare for the next one we ask that you lend your strength, your ideas and your spirit to win the dismissal of the charges against Francisco Torres. We also ask that you give your full support to the effort to gain release on parole by Jalil and Herman.

The many years of fighting this case have depleted our resources. We again ask that you help us raise the necessary funds to keep on battling. All contributions are deeply appreciated. Let it be known that the San Francisco 8, as the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, will continue to labor in the human rights struggle and the support of Political Prisoners. We depend on the continued support of our friends and allies around the world for without it none of our successes would be possible.

Committee for the Defense of Human Rights
P.O. Box 90221
Pasadena, CA 91109
www.freethesf8.org
freethesf8@gmail.com

30. Thaxton, Rob. "Red, White and Blue Fascism." *Chain Reaction* #5. 6-7

31. Letter from Dawn Amos. Dated 28 September 2001.

32. "Defend the Lives of Women in Prison." *Prison News Service*, #51. May/June 1995. 2.

33. Human Rights Watch. 232. As of 1999, the suit was still unresolved. However, the Michigan legislature approved legislation that year that would remove all of its prisoners from the state's civil rights and disabilities laws. The legislation would apply retroactively, thus eliminating the lawsuit, brought under the Civil Rights Act. See "Attacking Prisoners' Rights." *The New York Times*. 21 December 1999. A30.

34. Thaxton, Rob. "Red, White and Blue Fascism." *Chain Reaction* #5. 6-7.

35. Heinlein, Gary. "Prison Sex Could Draw Prison Term." *The Detroit News*. 11 October 1999.

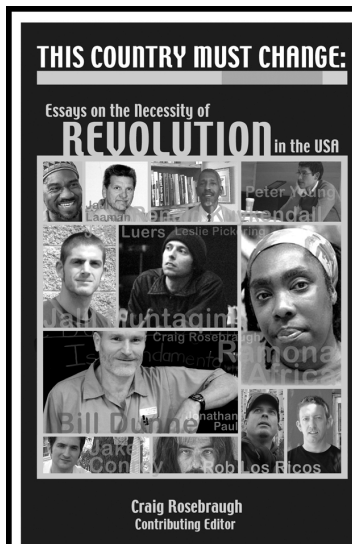
36. Pens, Dan. "Bag'm, Tag'm and Bury'm: Wisconsin Prisoners Dying for Health Care." *Prison Legal News* vol. 12, #2. Feb 2001. 1-2.

Now Available:

This Country Must Change:
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sively accepted their conditions. Women inmates have both individually and collectively struggled to improve their health care, abolish sexual abuse, maintain contact with their children and further their education. These actions are often ignored or dismissed by those studying the prison-industrial complex, prisoner rights activists and outside feminists, making documentation and research all the more important in giving women inmates a voice in the discourse.

Notes

1. Beck, Allen J. and Harrison, Paige M. "Prisoners in 2000." U.S. Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics: August 2000. 1. This increase is due, for the most part, to the mandatory sentencing laws. First-time offenses, which would have been treated as misdemeanors, mandated treatment or dismissed altogether now warrant harsh sentences. New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws stipulates a sentence of fifteen years to life for anyone convicted of selling two ounces or possessing four ounces of a narcotic. No regard is made to circumstances or (lack of) prior history. The results? In 1973, when the Drug Laws were enacted, four hundred women were imprisoned in New York State. As of January 1, 2001, there were 3,133. Over fifty percent had been convicted of a drug offense and one in five were convicted solely of possession. (Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York. "The Effects of Imprisonment on Families." Cites New York State Department of Correctional Services' The Hub System: Profiles of Inmates Under custody on January 1, 2001.) According to the Sentencing Project, the number of women imprisoned nationwide for drug offenses rose 888 percent from 1986 to 1996. ("Drug Laws Putting Too Many Women in Prison, Reform Group Says." <<http://www.cnn.com/2000/US/01/29/women.prison/>>)

2. Radical scholar Nancy Kurshan, in acknowledging the lack of documentation around women prisoners' activism, argues, "We do not believe that is because resistance does not occur, but rather because those in charge of documenting history have a stake in burying this herstory. Such a herstory would challenge the patriarchal ideology that insists that women are, by nature, passive and docile." She then cites instances of resistance and rebellion in women's prisons from the Civil War period to the 1970s.

3. Diaz-Cotto, Juanita. *Gender, Ethnicity, and the State: Latina and Latino Prison Politics*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996.324-5.

4. Faith, Karlene. *Unruly Women: The Politics and Confinement of Resistance*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1993. 235.

5. One issue particular to female inmates is the distribution of sanitary napkins. For instance, in New York State prisons, each inmate is allocated a set number of napkins per year. Because of the scarce supply, many women are forced to reuse and share them. (Human Rights Watch Women's Project. All Too Familiar: Sexual Abuse of Women in U.S. State Prisons. Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, 1996. Cites interview with Rhea S. Mallet, The Correctional Association of New York. 30 January 1996.)

6. Belknap, Joanne. "Programming and Health Care Accessibility for Incarcerated Women." *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention and Prisons*. Joy James, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 112.

7. Boudouris, James. PhD. *Parents in Prison: Addressing the Needs of Families*. Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association, 1996. 11.

8. Letter from Kebby Warner. Dated 29 April 2002.

9. Cooper, Cynthia. "A Cancer Grows." *The Nation*. 6 May 2002. <<http://www.thenation.com>>

10. The Women of the ACE Program of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. *Breaking the Walls of Silence: AIDS and Women in a New York State Maximum-Security Prison*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1998. 23.

11. Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York. "Women Prisoners and HIV." Cites Laura Manuschak's *HIV in Prisons and Jails*, 1999. Bureau of Justice Statistics. July 2001, revised 25 October 2001.

12. ACE, 41-44.

13. ACE, 54.

14. ACE, 66-67.

15. *The Fire Inside*. (Newsletter of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners) #4. May 1997.

16. Shumate v. Wilson was the class-action lawsuit filed by inmates at the Central California Women's Facility and the California Institution for Women against the state, alleging that those with cancer, heart disease and other serious illnesses were being denied medical care and that the prisons' medical staff failed to protect the confidentiality of inmates with HIV and AIDS. In August 1997, the California Department of Corrections agreed to a settlement in which untrained prison employees would be barred from making judgments about inmates' medical care, the prisons would ensure medicines without undue lapses or delays, and medical staff would offer preventive care, including pelvic and breast exams, pap smears and mammograms. See "California Agrees to Settle Inmates' HIV Privacy Claims." *AIDS Policy and Law; Prisons*, Vol. 12, #17. 19 September 1997. On 31 July 2000, in light of evidence of tampering with medical files in preparation for the assessors' visits, the Department of Health Services' reports citing CCWF's failure to comply with regulations, and the CDC's failure to retest prisoners who had received fraudulent lab results, the plaintiffs' attorneys submitted a motion to reopen discovery in the case. The motion was denied by Judge Shubb and the case was dismissed in August 2000. (See "Strategies for Change: Litigation." <<http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/litigation.htm>>)

17. Greenfeld and Snell, 8.

18. Henriques, Zelma Weston. *Imprisoned Mothers and Their Children: A Descriptive And Analytical Study*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. 1982. 132.

19. Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York. "The Effects of Imprisonment on Families." 3.

20. Morash, Merry. Bynum, Timothy S. Koons, Barbara A. "Women Offenders: Programming Needs and Promising Approaches." U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. Research in Brief. August 1998. 1.

21. This is not to say that women prisoners never employ tactics of disruption. In 1971, women at Alderson Prison staged a four-day work stoppage in solidarity with the Attica uprising. However, this, like the "Christmas riot" and the August Rebellion have been largely ignored by historians and academics.

22. Morash et al. 8.

However women have been active about trying to change their medical neglect within the prison system. The most successful and well-known prisoner-initiated project organized around health care is the AIDS Counseling and Education Project (ACE) at Bedford Hills. AIDS is the leading cause of death among U.S. prisoners, being five to ten times more prevalent in prison than in the outside society [9]. In 1999, the New York State Department of Health found that the rate of HIV infection among women entering the New York State Correctional Facilities was nearly twice that of their male counterparts [10]. More than ten years earlier, in 1987, women at the maximum-security Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York, recognized the need for AIDS counseling and, motivated by watching their friends die of AIDS and by the social ostracism and fear of people with AIDS, started ACE [11].

The founders of ACE hoped to educate and counsel their fellow inmates about HIV/AIDS as well as help care for women with AIDS in the prison infirmary. The fear that the one-to-one peer counseling sessions would lead to inmate organizing and the staff's own ignorance and fear of HIV/AIDS led to staff harassment and interference. Educators from the Montefiore Hospital conducting sessions were banned from the facility for suggesting that the Department of Correctional Services lift its ban on dental dams and condoms [12]. A year after its formation, ACE members were prohibited from meeting at its regular time, to use the meeting room, give educational presentations or to refer to themselves as "counselors." [13]

Despite these attacks, the members of ACE not only managed to implement and continue their program, but also received a grant for a quarter of a million dollars from the AIDS Institute. In 1998, they wrote and published a book detailing the group's history and its positive impact on women with AIDS as a guide for other prison AIDS programs.

Women have also worked individually and without the auspices of administrative approval to change their health care. Until her recent death, California prisoner Charisse Shumate worked with her fellow inmates with sickle-cell anemia to understand the disease and the necessary treatments [14]. She also advocated the right to compassionate release for any prisoner with less than a year to live and was the lead plaintiff in the class-action lawsuit *Shumate v. Wilson* [16].

Just as scholars and researchers have ignored women's organizing around HIV/AIDS, they have also ignored the struggles of individual women for adequate health services and support. The works of ACE, Charisse Shumate and other women may not be as immediate or dramatic as a work strike or a boycott, but they nonetheless address crucial issues facing women in prison. These actions also contradict the notion that women do not and cannot network and organize to change their conditions.

Children

Separation from children is another major issue for women inmates. In 1998, more than a quarter million children under the age of eighteen had a mother behind bars [17]. These numbers should warrant that all women's prisons have family and parenting programs available. However, such is not the case. Inmate mothers, many of whom were single heads of their households prior to incarceration, are left on their own to navigate the rocky path of maintaining contact and custody of their children.

Women prisoners are viewed as incapable of being good mothers and thus not automatically deserving of the same respect and treatment accorded to mothers on the outside. While this may be the case in some instances, such a sweeping generalization ignores the fact that many inmate mothers were single heads of households, the sole provider for their children and may have been forced to rely on illegal means to support and protect their family. Prison and social service authorities rely on the notion that inmate mothers are somehow unfit and unworthy to legitimize over-reaching policies regarding the children of imprisoned parents. A 1978 directive of the Department of Social Services specified that it can refuse imprisoned parents visits with their children placed in foster care if it believes that visits will hurt the children [18]. In 1997, the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA) was enacted, reducing the time



in which children may remain in foster care before parental rights are terminated. Under this act, if an incarcerated parent does not have contact with his or her child for six months, he or she can be charged with “abandonment” and lose parental rights. If the child is in foster care for fifteen of the last twenty-two months, the state can terminate parental rights. Once these rights are terminated, parents have no legal relationship to their children and are not permitted to have any contact with them [19].

In 1998, over two-thirds of all women prisoners had children under the age of eighteen, and, among them, only twenty-five percent said that their children were living with the father. In contrast, ninety percent of male prisoners with children under the age of eighteen said that their children were living with their mothers [20]. Thus keeping family together is not an issue that must be addressed by many of the male prisoner activists.

Maintaining parental ties has not been won through prisoner boycotts, work stoppages or hunger strikes, tools traditionally used by male inmates to challenge their conditions [21]. Rather, women who want family maintenance programs must negotiate and cooperate with their prison administrations.

One example of such a program is the Children’s Center at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York. The Center houses a nursery where inmates are allowed to live with their infants for the child’s first year as well as a program helping new parents “learn to be mothers.” The Center is administered by the Brooklyn Diocese of Catholic Charities and funded by the state’s Department of Correctional Services although it is staffed by inmates [22]. Under the Center’s auspices, inmates, recognizing the need for supportive programs for mothers, organized two parenting courses for Bedford’s inmates—one on infancy for new mothers and pregnant prisoners and the other, a ten-week course called “Parenting Through Films,” with each week devoted to a new subject on growth and care for children [23]. These were the prison’s first courses both organized and taught exclusively by inmates. Out of the Children’s Center also came more policies and political change. Until 1983, children of prisoners placed in the New York State foster care system did not have the legal right to visit their parents in prison. Inmates at Bedford Hills who had been unable to have their children visit them because of this formed the Foster Care Committee which, with the help of outside advocates, led to new legislation giving prisoners with children in foster care the same rights and responsibilities as parents who are not incarcerated, as well as the right to monthly visits provided that the prison was not too far away [24]. In addition, inmates involved in the Children’s Center published a foster care handbook for women prisoners whose children had been placed in the foster care system.

The success of the Children’s Center did not go unnoticed

by the more reform-oriented penal authorities: Modeled on the Children’s Center, a similar nursery at the Taconic Correctional Facility opened in 1990 with twenty-three inmate mothers [25].

Women who give birth while incarcerated not only face the trauma of immediate separation from their newborns but also administrative and social service pressure to relinquish their new child. The case of Kebby Warner, a pregnant woman imprisoned in Michigan for a bad check, illustrates the institutional belief that inmates cannot and should not retain custody, or even contact, with their children.

Warner, after having been misdiagnosed as having the stomach flu during her first month in prison, was informed that she was pregnant. Luckily, Warner’s parents agreed to take care of the baby while she was incarcerated. After the birth of Helen, Warner refused to passively accept the prison requirement that separates mother and newborn after only one day. She protested by refusing to eat and thus won two more days in the hospital with her child. When the guards finally managed to separate them and bring her back to prison, she was told that if she had wanted to have children, she should have stayed out of prison. This remark sums up the prevailing view of inmate mothers.

With the death of her father, came another loss: her mother, unwilling to care for a half-black baby alone, gave Helen to the foster care system, thus starting the clock for the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act. When her daughter was two years old, a judge terminated Warner’s parental rights on the grounds that she “neglected and abused my child due to the length of my incarceration.” When she started to appeal this decision, her caseworker and the Family Independence Agency threatened to place Helen with a new foster family who would adopt her immediately, thus permanently sealing her file and preventing Warner from ever being able to find her. Under this pressure, Warner finally signed an affidavit relinquishing her rights as a parent.

This loss inspired Warner to speak out and organize against the prison-industrial complex’s policy of breaking up families: she is currently forming a support organization for incarcerated parents. The organization she envisions “will stand at the courthouse and protest the kidnapping of a child that deserves to know who her mother/father is” [26]. Although the prison-industrial complex negatively impacts families and severs family ties in an attempt to break the individual inmate, women both collectively and individually resist such efforts.

Sexual Abuse

A far greater problem for incarcerated women is the sexual aggression of male corrections officers. In 1996, international human rights group Human Rights Watch released *All Too Familiar*, a report documenting sexual abuse of women prisoners throughout the United States. The report,

reflecting two-and-a-half years of research, found that sexual assaults, abuse and rape of women prisoners by male correctional employees were common and that women who complained incurred write-ups, loss of “good time” accrued toward an early parole, and/or prolonged periods in disciplinary segregation [27].

In the case of Barrilee Bannister, sentenced under Oregon’s mandatory sentencing law, she and seventy-eight other women were sent to a privatized, all-male prison in Arizona run by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). The approximately 1300 mile move completely cut the women off from family, friends and others whose outside support could have prevented their abuse. Only weeks after the women’s arrival, some were visited by a captain, who shared marijuana with them. He left it with them and then returned with other officers who announced that they were searching the cell for contraband. They promised that if the women performed a strip tease, they would not search the cell. “Two of the girls started stripping and the rest of us got pulled into it,” Bannister recalled. “From that day on, the officers would bring marijuana in, or other stuff we were not suppose[d] to have, and the prisoners would perform [strip] dances.” From there, the guards became more aggressive, raping several of the women. Bannister reported that she was not given food for four days until she agreed to perform oral sex on a guard [28].

Once out of segregation, Bannister called outside friends and told them her story. They, in turn, informed the media. The media attention led to the return of some of the women to Oregon, where they filed a federal suit, resulting in a public apology, a promise of stricter rules concerning sexual abuse, and the reimbursement of attorney’s fees [29]. The negative publicity also led to the suspension and dismissal of three dozen CCA staff members [30].

Bannister’s story is unusual only in that the women themselves were able to organize and obtain sufficient outside support to stop their abuse. Women inmates who have been assaulted by prison staff usually lack the outside support services which male prisoners may turn to. For instance, male inmates raped by other inmates can band together to ward off sexual aggression (as in the case of Men Against Sexism, a group of gay and bisexual inmates who protected weaker inmates from rape and physically punished the prison’s sexual predators) and turn to outside groups such as Stop Prisoner Rape (started by an ex-inmate who was himself raped in prison). Women raped by prison staff, on the other hand, face not only administrative harassment and retaliation for complaining but also a lack of support services outside the reach of the prison administration. Dawn Amos, herself having experienced sexual misconduct, stated that when two women were physically and sexually abused, they were transferred to a facility in Denver while the offending officer remained, unreprimated, on the job. In her own case, the District Attorney has yet to press charges against the offending officer. “I’m still in the

middle of trying to find an attorney to take my case,” she stated [31]. This absence of a support network, both inside and out, not only mirrors but magnifies the general lack of support for rape victims.

Grievances, Lawsuits and the Power of the Media

Women’s struggles to change their conditions often lie in filing grievances and lawsuits rather than physically challenging or confronting prison officials. In 1995, women at Central California Women’s Facility at Chowchilla and at the California Institution for Women at Frontera filed *Shumate v. Wilson*, a class-action lawsuit against the state demanding an immediate improvement to the life-threatening medical care given to all women prisoners of the state [32]. On 27 March 1996, seven women prisoners in Michigan filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of all women incarcerated in Michigan, charging the state’s Department of Corrections with sexual assault, sexual harassment, violations of privacy, and physical threats and assaults [33]. That both suits included women prisoners throughout their respective states in their charges and demands dismisses the assumption that there is no sense of solidarity among women in prison.

Gaining media attention goes hand in hand with filing lawsuits. While prison abuse remains behind closed doors and out of the public eye, policymakers, legislators and the courts remain reluctant to interfere in the daily operations and conditions of prisons. Barrilee Bannister and the other 77 women transferred to Florence were removed from the abusive all-male prison only after their plight caught the media’s attention. Prior to that, those who complained about the guards’ sexual assaults were placed in segregation units, had good time taken away and were sometimes monetarily fined while their attackers suffered no consequences [34]. In Michigan, lawmakers began to consider harsher penalties against prison staff who have “sexual contact” with an inmate only after prisoner lawsuits drew embarrassing publicity to the state [35]. In Wisconsin, an anonymous female prisoner telephone call to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* to report the medical neglect leading to an inmate’s death led to the suspension of the two nurses who initially ignored the woman’s requests for help and then bungled their eventual response, leaving her to die. The call and story also led to the paper’s own investigation into medical neglect within the state’s prison system. Their findings led to a series of articles about the inadequate and often life-threatening medical care in Wisconsin prisons, prompting state lawmakers to introduce legislation requiring better-trained medical staff, improved medical record-keeping and the creation of an independent panel of outside medical experts to review prison deaths [36].

Conclusion

Women prisoners are even more overlooked by mainstream society than their male counterparts. They have not pas-