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4strugglemag
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Issue 21: Fall 2012

4STRUGGLEMAG

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



IN THIS ISSUE: The Occupy Movement • Prison Struggle
Letters • Poetry • Updates & Actions • and more!

Welcome to 4strugglemag

You have just come upon a dynamic and unique publication, where Truth (real and raw) speaks to power. This magazine focuses on the insights and experiences of north american 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 three 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 on the work and principles of political prisoners held by the United States, 4strugglemag advocates for justice, equality, freedom, socialism, protection of our Earth, human rights and peace.

www.4strugglemag.org is primarily an e-magazine, but hard copies are available (see sidebar for subscription details). 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).

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 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.).

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or via email to:
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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: In-depth, analytical articles that critically examine a particular issue, historical occurrence, political idea, or current event.

Book reviews: Is there a book you'd like to review for 4strugglemag? Let us know.

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

Moving? Don't forget to send us your new address!

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If you wish to pay by cheque or money order, please **get in touch first**. We **cannot** cash cheques made out to 4strugglemag.

If you are one of our 500+ subscribers with a free prisoner subscription, one way to contribute is to **send us stamps**, which help off-set our huge mailing costs.

Back issues

Unfortunately, we lack the funds and resources to send back issues. You can print articles from our website, or have a friend do so, if you don't have internet access: 4strugglemag.org

To the Man-Child, Tall, evil, graceful, brighteyed, black man-child – Jonathan Peter Jackson – who died on August 7, 1970, courage in one hand, assault rifle in the other; my brother, comrade, friend – the true revolutionary, the black communist guerrilla in the highest state of development, he died on the trigger, scourge of the unrighteous, soldier of the people; to this terrible man-child and his wonderful mother Georgia Bea, to Angela Y. Davis, my tender experience, I dedicate this collection of letters; to the destruction of their enemies I dedicate my life.

George L. Jackson



August 7, 1970, just a few days after George Jackson was transferred to San Quentin, the case was catapulted to the forefront of national news when his brother, Jonathan, a seventeen-year-old high school student in Pasadena, staged a raid on the Marin County courthouse with a satchelful of handguns, an assault rifle, and a shotgun hidden under his coat. Educated into a political revolutionary by George, Jonathan invaded the court during a hearing for three black San Quentin inmates, not including his brother, and handed them weapons. As he left with the inmates and five hostages, including the judge, Jonathan demanded that the Soledad Brothers be released within thirty minutes. In the shootout that ensued, Jonathan was gunned down. Of Jonathan, George wrote, "He was free for a while. I guess that's more than most of us can expect."

United Struggle Project

Giving a voice to displaced people globally through music. United Struggle Project aims to produce CDs/DVDs of songs, music videos, and documentaries recorded in remote communities slums refugee camps, and prisons in Africa, Palestine, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Australia. Help us bring these voices to the world.

I want to produce 1000 audio CDs and DVDs containing the best musical and video elements of my project United Struggle. It will consist of songs, music videos and mini documentaries that I have recorded and filmed over the past 2 years of United Struggle tours in slums, refugee camps, war zones and prisons in Africa, Palestine, Afghanistan, Cambodia and remote aboriginal communities in Australia. I am currently trying to source funding to produce these DVDs and CDs and send them to the artists involved as well as unleash to the world this unheard talent and stories of survival.

My name is Isabella Brown, founder of the no profit collective – United Struggle Project, rapper in Melbourne hip-hop band Combat Wombat and co founder of the Lab Rat Solar sound system. I’m a lyricist, performer and film maker. My latest film “Ghettomoto” premiered at the London International Documentary Film Festival. I presently live in Melbourne but have spent the last few years on tour with United Struggle project.

Donate a Beat

Producers from around the world delved deep into their hard drives to donate beats to host unheard voices of displaced peoples. I then took the donated beats to those artists in places with little access to beat making technology to collaborate on.

Objectives:

- 1. Record music and make music video clips addressing issues faced by displaced people with artists in affected areas, displaced by war, colonisation, development, poverty and environmental issues.
- 2. Create collaborative songs with representative artists from each place.
- 3. Create a forum for displaced people to express their stories through music and video and documentary making.
- 4. Create networks to unite struggles and create links amongst artists globally
- 5. To target racism in the broader international community with music.

Background and Inspirations

I was first inspired to do this project whilst I was in Kenya 2007 filming the documentary Ghetto Moto (fire) about the journey of a hip-hop spoken word poet after the post election violence. During the filming I was approached daily by artists from the slums in Nairobi to produce music videos of their songs. I noticed the huge demand and lack of accessible equipment and

skills in video production for people in these poverty stricken areas. I also noticed a wealth of talent and wisdom.

I met a Rwandan refugee in Nairobi who got me to film a music video for his song One Nation Africa. He told me of many other artists like himself but who were still trapped in refugee camps. After the success and popularity of the music videos in the slums I thought why not try and reach artists in these camps and give them the opportunity to record music and communicate their issues through video. I had a very strong feeling that there was some incredible talent and insight hidden in these isolated places of limbo.

An example of uniting artists and struggles is the song ‘Bow Down No Way,’ a collaborative track between Shoeshine Boy from Mukurru slum and Adel from Star Studios in Nairobi with Monkeymarc (Combat Wombat) and myself. The video clip was shot in Nairobi, Melbourne and Alice Springs. It has had a good response and draws parallels between the poverty of indigenous people in Australia and Africa and unites their struggles.

Palm Island was a prison island made up of 65 different tribes displaced from their traditional lands. The people from Palm Island are dealing with similar social issues as the displaced people in the camps in Africa, Palestine and Cambodia, including overcrowding, poor health and tribal tensions. Today they are still suffering the effects of colonisation.

“I feel like a refugee in my own country,” Uncle Chappy, Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

I have been working in remote Aboriginal communities all over Australia since 2000. I have seen a very positive response from the kids and the community to the music and video workshops. They have proven to be a fantastic way for youth to voice their issues. Even though Australia is a very multicultural society there is a definite underlying racism that needs to be addressed in the cases of refugees and indigenous people. Music, being a universal language, can be a very effective way to address the issues of racism in society.

Another element of the project is the ‘Donate a Beat’ web site. This gives producers from anywhere in the world the opportunity to donate beats to the project via the Internet, Thus creating links with producers and artists globally.

My main motivation is my love for music and belief in social and environmental justice. Music can be used as a tool for change and education to break down walls, create common ground and unite common struggles.

With a suitcase sized recording studio in hand, my 7 year old son Bassi Brown and I will set out on a 2 year tour to record and collaborate on trax and make music videos in the far corners of the planet in refugee camps slums and prisons and remote communities. Help us bring these voices to the world...enjoy the journey

unitedstruggleproject.org

Cover image:
prisoners in the Attica rebellion

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Introduction to Issue 21

Welcome to 4sm, issue 21. We are very glad to finally get this issue out, in Fall 2012. I know a lot of readers, friends and activists have been wondering what happened to 4strugglemag? This is the first issue we are putting out in 2012. It is a combined Summer and Fall issue. Normally 4sm comes out three times a year (March, July/August, November). This is the first time we have had to combine two issues into one.

Some people may have been wondering about my ability to continue working on 4sm, after the death of my son last October. Without any doubt, the death of Rick was and continues to be the hardest reality in my life. This was not the reason for the delay in issue 21. We have had medical and personal problems with key outside people. A valued precious sister (Sara), who does so much to make 4sm a reality, seriously broke her arm in a bicycle accident earlier this year.

Some material in this issue covers events from earlier in the year, but all of it remains important and pertinent. Regular readers know that 4sm always runs a section on Black August in our summer issue. Because 21 is coming out so late this summer, there is no usual Black August section. We are running some significant insight and analysis, by Mumia Abu Jamal, George Jackson and his nephew Jonathan Jackson Jr., about the events of August 7, 1970 (the Marin Courthouse Raid and the deaths of Jonathan Jackson and others on that day).

Also, because of the late arrival of this issue, we are not helping to announce and organize this year's Running Down the Walls, which takes place on September 2. We do want people who participated in RDTW, both inside prisons and out in cities across the country, to send us words and photos of your run. We will use some of this material in the next issue.

There are many other important and informative articles in this issue. Definitely check out the reports on Occupy. Also check out the lengthy section on prisons. Finally take time to read David Gilbert's letter, calling for discussion and action around the issue of sexist and male chauvinist attitudes and behavior in activist and radical communities. This is a serious and ongoing problem and 4sm hopes many readers will respond and begin a discussion on this.

We welcome our readers' thoughts and responses to everything in 4sm. Send us your thoughts and best writing. Issue 22 will be out in the winter. And yes, there is another election coming up in the United States in November. The Republicans seem to be more reactionary and backwards than ever. Certainly Mitt Romney is a shameless member and advocate for the corporate imperialist 1% elite. He also would be a horror for prisoners. I was in Walpole state

prison in Massachusetts when he was Governor, and I can tell you from personal experience, the Mass DOC got even worse under his rule. As for Obama and the Democrats, more war, more secrecy, more drone attacks and little real help for all the rest of us – unemployed, underemployed, still losing homes, mounting college loans and other bills, and well over 2 million people in prison. One thing is for sure, no Washington politician will secure a better future for the vast majority of the people. Both imperialist parties – Republicans and Democrats – have no plan or intention to change the inherently unequal, unjust, racist and warlike USA capitalist imperialist system. It is time for more activism on all levels – more unity and more direct action and participation of the people. Some time tested slogans seem appropriate and called for now:

Black and white, unite and fight...Less talk, more action...
All Power to the People!

On that thought, we'll see you in issue 22.

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in this nationalist goo. Dr. Jill Stein, Green Party presidential candidate, says "It's time to ... make this economy work for all of us," and to "not rest until we've pulled our nation back from the brink." Rocky Anderson of the Justice Party is much concerned with "national security."

The working poor and shrinking numbers of well-paid workers in the U.S. have much more in common with exploited workers in India, austerity protesters in Greece, student strikers in Quebec, and farmers reclaiming land in Honduras, than with capitalist America. This year's election is a great time to reject the false unity of nationalist appeals and vote for socialists and anti-capitalists — our own working class interests.

Send feedback to lfthanks@yahoo.com.

Support the Tinley Park 5

BY MONICA MOOREHEAD
From workers.org

The Tinley Park Five — Jason W. Sutherland, Cody L. Sutherland, Dylan J. Sutherland, Alex R. Stuck and John S. Tucker — are currently imprisoned in Cook County Jail in Chicago. The Five, white anti-racist anarchists, were arrested on May 19 for allegedly physically breaking up an "economic summit" by members of the Illinois European Heritage Association at a restaurant in Tinley Park, a Chicago suburb. The Five are facing major felony charges, including "mob action, criminal damage to property and aggravated battery."

Two of the IEHA members were also arrested at the scene. One was charged with Internet child pornography. The other was charged with unlawful possession of a semiautomatic weapon in his car, which was parked near the restaurant. Bail for the latter charge is \$25,000. The bonds for the Five, who reportedly possessed no guns, are \$175,000, \$200,000 and \$250,000!

The IEHA is part of a worldwide network of white supremacist neofascists known as "Pioneer Little Europe," which is connected with Storm Front. This network promotes the outright extermination of people of color and Jewish people. The "summit" was one in a series called throughout the Midwest over the past several years. White supremacists have ratcheted up their racist demagogic organizing, especially in the economically hard-hit Midwest region.

The Five are being defended by the Hoosiers Anti-Racist Movement, based in Indiana. HARM has been monitoring and exposing the activities of the neofascists for many years. Thirteen other anti-racist activists allegedly took part in the breakup of the IEHA meeting and are still being pursued by the police. When this WW reporter asked Chandra Vanvliet from

HARM about the well-being of the Five, she explained, "They have a wonderful legal team representing them. They are in great spirits. They're looking forward to their day in court and are humbled by the shows of solidarity that they've received, especially from people they've never met. They're getting along fine without any problems whatsoever from fellow inmates and guards. Their support network has been doing all they can to make sure that they're as comfortable as possible and have reading materials to keep their minds occupied."

June 12: Pack the courtroom

The Five are scheduled to have an initial court hearing on June 12 at 9 a.m. at the Bridgeview Courthouse, which is located at 10220 S. 76th Ave. in Bridgeview, Ill.

HARM is urging supporters to pack the courtroom. Vanvliet's message to the progressive movement, which she conveyed to WW, is the following: "At the arraignment, the mainstream media decided to take pictures and hound a few personal friends of the defendants after they made it clear they weren't interested in talking to the press. These unfiliated friends have since received death threats because of the recklessness of the Chicago Tribune, despite the fact that they were clearly warned about the potential consequences of releasing identities of family and friends when a member of HARM gave an interview to Stacy St Clair."

Vanvliet went on to say: "What we're trying to do, is to gather a large enough group of supporters at the courthouse and in the courtroom that the white supremacists will be unable to ascertain who actually has ties to the Tinley Park Five and who is simply there to support. We wish to stress that this show of support still carries some degree of risk, but we encourage those that might come out to support not to allow themselves to be intimidated by white supremacy.

"We're hearing stories about other groups all over the country raising funds to help their families and legal defense by having benefit shows and bake sales. The Tinley Park Five and their friends and families are so moved by the support they've received, especially from the anarchist community. I can't tell you how much any show of solidarity means to both them and us."

WW wrote in a recent editorial called, "Tinley Park Five: Fight Fascism," which is posted on HARM's website: "What the Tinley Park 5 did on May 19 was to carry out a preemptive strike to help expose the real danger that extremist groups pose to the movement and the masses here and worldwide. The Five heroically showed that these groups have to be crushed sooner than later. Free the Tinley Park 5!" Go to indianaantifa.wordpress.com for information on the case. To send letters of support to the Tinley Park Five along with reading materials, go to tinyurl.com/88a5rkw.

nation.”

Obama tells the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “We need to make America the best place on earth to do business ... and we have to do this together: business and government; workers and CEO’s; Democrats and Republicans.”

Romney charges “Unions drive up costs and introduce rigidities that harm competitiveness and frustrate innovation.” Lumping workers and business together against unions, he asks “Whose interests should come first, those of workers and businesses, or those of organized labor?” Put his way, you’d never know the “costs” unions “drive up” are workers’ wages — for creating all the wealth!

So let’s get real. Service cutbacks, austerity measures, and wage cuts benefit only the bigwigs, not the whole country. The capitalist economy can never work for all of us, because it’s designed for the wealthy, who control the elections and relentlessly widen the gap between rich and poor.

Romney promises to “press for an immigration policy designed to maximize America’s economic potential” by attracting those with advanced degrees and granting immediate citizenship to wealthy “job creators.” This assumes that immigrants with money will fix our economic crisis, and others should be turned away.

But rich business owners are not job creators — workers are. Bosses don’t create jobs out of kindness. They hire more workers when other wage earners have enough income to buy more products and services.

Militarization pure and simple.

Ever since 9-11, the U.S. public has been pressed to the heights of patriotism, dread of terrorism, and fear of “foreigners.” It is all crafted to justify warmongering and massive military operations abroad, and Homeland Security spending at home. This all in the name of “national security.” Militarization, of course, is very profitable.

But not for the soldier/workers. Occasional, well publicized flag-waving and war medals welcome some returning troops. But poor youth volunteer for service out of necessity, or to gain citizenship. When they get home, soldiers are not getting what they need — jobs, healthcare and support services.

Romney chillingly pledges to use “the full powers of the presidency to complete an impermeable border fence protecting our southern frontier from infiltration by illegal immigrants, trans-national criminal networks, and terrorists.” Immigrants, we are to believe, have become the “national enemy.”

Condoleezza Rice called education a “national security” issue, turning charter school foes into national enemies!

Wall Street concern over increasing China and India trade with Latin America has led to troop deployments, activation of the Pacific fleet, and massive spending on Latin American militaries — to “protect U.S. economic interests.”

An escalating military presence in Australia is creating a staging area for U.S. intervention in Asia and the Pacific — to “preserve our global competitiveness.” And over 3,000 more U.S. troops are being sent to Africa to gain control of resources there — in the guise of “spreading democracy.”

Protectionism is not for workers.

When Obama intones, “I hope you buy an American car,” or unions run “Made in America” campaigns, they are really pitting U.S. workers against their class allies in other countries. These pro-America campaigns enrich the very corporations that outsourced and caused job losses in the first place in order to exploit cheap labor.

Union misleaders fan the flames of nationalism to hide the fact that they are not willing to fight against mass layoffs and take backs. It’s their way of diverting U.S. workers’ anger toward other countries’ laborers and away from the real cause of the economic crisis — the profit system. U.S. working people can improve their conditions by uniting with the mates across borders, instead of swallowing patriotic slogans against their own class interests.

In the same way, union heads push through endorsements for Democrats, against the wishes of many union members, in order to keep the rank and file caught up in the capitalist electoral campaigns instead of building their own labor party. Obama says, “I know we can out-compete any other nation on earth. We just have to make sure we’re doing everything we can to unlock the productivity of American workers.” Increased productivity’ is really code for speed-up, downsizing, and pay cuts! To be patriotic, workers are told they must nobly sacrifice to save the economy and the nation. “Bullshit,” a good many say.

“Shared sacrifice” means accepting giveback contracts without rocking the boat with protests and strikes — all for the good of “our” national economy! Now, doesn’t that sound better than sacrificing for the bonuses of “our” CEOs?

In this together?

A Michelle Obama campaign letter says “America prospers when we are all in this together, when everyone from Main Street to Wall Street — does their fair share.” Speaking at Laborfest in Milwaukee, the president exhorted unions to, “Remember that we all rise or fall together — as one nation, and one people.” Some progressive and liberal third parties are also treading

NEXT ISSUE: Combating Sexism, Homophobia and Transphobia

[Note: Issue 23, coming out in the winter, will be a special issue on combating sexism, homophobia and transphobia in our movements. This theme was suggested to us by political prisoner David Gilbert, and he is helping Jaan and I compile material to further the discussion.

We know that right-wing backlash against the rights of women, queer people and trans people is growing right now. But as revolutionaries we must also struggle against these tendencies in our own movements and communities. Many of us internalized a lot of poisonous ideas growing up in this society, and we have to confront and work to change attitudes that contribute to the oppression of others. I myself have been working to be a better ally to the trans people in my life.

I hope that the following letter from David will inspire you to reflect on your own attitudes and experiences, and that you will send us some writings for Issue 23 — and for future issues, as I’m sure this important dialogue will continue. — Sara Falconer]

An Open Letter to Movement Men About Sexism

BY DAVID GILBERT

Dear Brothers,

There is no way we can be revolutionaries, no way we can stand with humanity for liberation, without actively combating male supremacy. That imperative requires both a political program against patriarchy and concerted struggle against sexism within ourselves. We all grew up in this society so, even with our passionate ideals, problems with ego, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism within ourselves are inevitable. What is inexcusable is to fail to engage in sincere and open-hearted efforts to change.

It has been extremely upsetting to have heard, even with my limited contact with the outside activist communities, of several incidents of sexual assault and then — to add bitter insult to monstrous injury — the frequent failures to have a process for holding perpetrators accountable and for setting unmistakable standards for activist communities. We are fighting for a world without sexual assault, abuse, coercion — how can we allow that to continue within our ranks?

Men’s sense of entitlement to women’s bodies, the violations and the denial of self-determination involved, parallels the ideology and practice of imperialism. Each attack does vicious harm to a sister, while the reality of sexual assault is the ferocious spearhead of the much broader offensive against women’s fully active and assertive role in our movements, which we sorely need for the colossal challenges we face. Also, our failure to develop a process to stop such crimes is corrosive to our own humanity.

In the 1960s we started from nowhere in terms of dealing with patriarchy — and nowhere meant the continued dominance of male supremacy. Then, women’s collective leadership around feminism and anti-imperialism, although often faced with reactionary resistance from men, won major advances.

As dramatic as those changes were, they of course weren’t nearly enough; on top of that we have evidently failed in our responsibility to pass on hard-won lessons to the post-Seattle, 1999, generation of activists. If we don’t do better on this, we leave a lethal hole in the heart of our movement.

In my own experience, the most fruitful response to women’s liberation came in the form of Men Against Sexism groups — if they weren’t just a place to talk about our feelings but if we also consciously grappled with sexism, checked-in with and sought guidance from feminists, and took on solidarity work such as childcare and/or educating other men and boys.

Today, we may want and need additional formats, for example, to fight the oppression of those who are gender nonconforming. Whatever the forms, concerted struggle against patriarchy, with male supremacy as a central axis, is absolutely necessary.

Male supremacy is extremely deep-seated in history and in society. Change doesn’t come easily and won’t always be comfortable. As difficult as it may seem, advances on this front can stop the brutality of men’s assaults on women in our communities and help create a welcoming climate for their full participation. We can’t have a real movement, we can’t possibly be successful, without the invaluable contributions and leadership women can provide. Such advances can also make us men more whole, more loving human beings.

White supremacy, male supremacy, homophobia, transphobia, class rule, and imperialism are powerful pillars of oppression. We have to dismantle them all to clear the ground to build the more humane and sustainable world that is so urgently needed.

One love,
David Gilbert
(anti-imperialist political prisoner)

Collected Updates from the Occupy Movement and More...

COMPILED BY ROGER DREW

[Note: Roger compiled this great account of the early months of the Occupy movement. Actions and analysis under the banner “Occupy” has continued to evolve in cities around the world since then. We’ve added a few updates to his list – Sara Falconer]

Some Major Victories

Occupy Our Homes

Occupy Our Homes has been preventing evictions of people who are facing foreclosure and helping families without homes move into empty buildings. “Occupy Our Homes is a movement that supports Americans who stand up to their banks and fight for their homes. We believe everyone has a right to decent, affordable housing. We stand in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement and with community organizations who help the 99% fight for a place to call home.”

These actions have been taking place for years led by community-based organizations. Recently, more attention has been focused on the illegal and immoral actions by the banks which have led to people losing their homes. Since the Occupy Movement has begun, community orgs have partnered with Occupy, and there have been more and more victories nationwide of people being able to save their homes! (As recently as April 2nd in DC when an eviction was prevented!) [occupyourhomes.org]

Occupy Oakland

Oakland has set a tone for powerful non-violent actions confronting injustice, including the West Coast port shut down. This was one of the most militant, large-scale actions since the beginning of the Occupy Movement. In December of 2011, strikes led by labor and Occupy groups shut down a number of West Coast Ports in support of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) who were in contract negotiation. Dozens of occupysites participated in the action on some level, led by the militant shut down of the Oakland port by OccupyOakland and others. In February, ILWU ratified a new contract and thanked the Occupy Movement for their essential support: “This is a victory for Occupy in their involvement in forcing negotiations. Make no mistake – the solidarity and organization between the Occupy Movement and the Longshoremen won this contract,” said Jack Mulcahy, ILWU officer with Local 8. “The mobilization of the Occupy Movement across the country, particularly in Oakland, Portland, Seattle, and Longview were a critical element in bringing EGT

to the bargaining table and forcing a settlement with ILWU local 21.” [westcoastportshutdown.org]

Occupy Oakland has led in other ways, including the Occupy4Prisoners National Day of Actions opposing and exposing racist policies of mass incarceration. Occupy Oakland also has been a leader nationwide in confronting brutal and violence police repression to their protests. (As well as Occupy Wall Street in NYC where they have recently joined the call for the resignation of the NYPD police chief Ray Kelly, especially following murders by NYPD members.)

Occupy Chicago

Chicago recently saw two big victories with the help of Occupy Chicago. First, on February 18 the Brian Piccolo Specialty School in Humboldt Park, was Occupied by parents, teachers, and students. Occupy Chicago and other allies were outside the building in solidarity and set up an encampment. Piccolo, an elementary school with a student body that is almost entirely from low-income communities of color, is one of 16 Chicago public schools slated to be closed by Mayor Rahm’s service cuts to the poor. After less than 24 hours of occupation the Occupiers emerged from the school to thunderous applause and declared victory! The demands were met, proving that direct action and community power can be leveraged for real change! Parents will be given the opportunity to meet with the Board of Directors to submit a counter-proposal for local education. This is what real community control looks like.

Secondly, on February 24 workers facing layoffs at a Chicago window factory declared victory after occupying their plant for 11 hours. Through direct community action, including the support of Occupy Chicago, the workers and their union prevented the California-based Serious Energy company from closing the plant for another 90 days. The workers hope this will give them time to keep the plant open, possibly by purchasing it themselves and creating a worker-owned co-op. This action was led by the union United Electric Local 1110. Some people may remember in 2008, workers at the same factory occupied their plant for six days during a labor dispute with its previous owners, Republic Windows and Doors. (They won then, too!)

National Days of Action

February 29: Shut Down The Corporations and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)

This national day of action included actions in over eighty cities and specifically called “on people to target corporations that are members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). The biggest corporations in America, like ExxonMobil, Bank of America, BP, Monsanto, Pfizer, and Wal-Mart use ALEC to buy off legislators and craft legislation that serves only the interests

Clipped Wings

BY JALIL MUNTAQIM
freejalil.com

With clipped wings I’m laid to the test,
where the weary gets no rest.
Subject to psychological warfare to learn
if I can withstand others who grandstand
because they believe they own the land.
While my life is sustained by sleight of
hand – no it’s not magic – it’s a matter
of having a better plan.
You ask, what is the plan? Well, it’s to
know your enemy as you know yourself. Be
capable of adjusting to conditions you do
not trust; stay away from those who don’t
have your best interest at heart; and
always depart when all else is lost.
Get as much education as your brain can
stand; build a strategy even from a grain
of sand – heat applied to sand will make
glass – so turn up the heat and out your
ass to the task.

As they say, free your mind and your ass
will follow – as opposed to a closed mind
that is often hollow. Nothing on the
brain and time to waste is the place
where the devil makes grace – prepared to
feast on your life, like your enemy to
to ensure you stay on a path of strife.
What can be said when you know the
repercussions of your decision?
A matter of acknowledging a reality not
of my choosing, and yet not claiming its
name. A prisoner of colonial consciousness
the farce of it, not claiming its name for
all the shame that strains the brain, that
hurts the heart and stirs the soul in a
dark place, in haste to escape.
However, my light ignites the night and puts
shadows in convulsions, as death creeps on
my illumination, footsteps moving from the
past in slow motion, the turning back to
darkness incremental reaction to revolution.
The future beholds the enlightened, as earth
emits magnetic gravity, holding down truths –

as is often said, truth crushed to the
earth will rise again.

And, again I Rise !

The defiant denial of the demented racist,
although my aspirations are chained to
steel bars as the grim reaper tests my
hope for tomorrow, unable to kill my
dreams.

I Rise !

Soaring to make a country a home of my
own embraced by a population in elation,
who identify themselves as free beings,
never to deny each other’s lives – to be.
I dream beyond M.L. King, for I seek to
redeem the scheme of Afrikan Kings from
Ahkenaton to Kwame Nkrumah, that Marcus
Garvey and Malcolm X claimed the pain
to demand the same.

For we know that Liberators freed their
minds of colonial consciousness!

Liberators freed their minds and grew
Wings !

U.S. Elections: Flag-waving and False Unity

BY LOIS DANKS

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socialism.com

Every four years the big capitalist parties break out the red, white, and blue banners to create a frenzy of patriotism. Voters are expected to jump on the bandwagon and cheer for the good old USA, blind to the gulf between Wall Street’s billionaires and Main Street’s evicted.

This is especially true in the 2012 election, because the ruling class is faced with a staggering economy, big-time international trade competition, and unprecedented popular anger at the high and mighty. So they pour illusory phrases into the public air waves such as, “national economic interest,” “national security,” “national unity,” “national competitiveness,” and so on. Here’s what these words really mean.

Painting over class differences.

One of the key arenas for nationalist fast talk is the economy. In the patriotic fog voters are urged to ignore class divisions, shun unions, and join the bankers and bosses, sacrificing their own worker interests for the “good of the

unlivable to livable hell, from encampments that he called reminiscent of Nazi Germany to at least a scaled-down version of the like. With his influence, these changes occurred not only in California, but throughout the nation. Only now is his influence beginning to slip, with reactionary politics bringing about torture and sensory deprivation facilities such as Pelican Bay State Prison in California, as well as the reintroduction for adoption of the one-to-life indeterminate sentence. This type of sentence is fertile ground for state oppression, as it is up to a parole board to decide if an inmate is ever to be let go. A prison can easily and effectively create situations that transform a one-to-life into a life sentence. (Tellingly, the indeterminate sentence is being promoted not by the right, but by a California senator formerly associated with mainstream liberal causes.)

Politically, George Jackson provided us all with a radical education, a viable alternative to viewing not only the United States but the world as a political entity. He gave the disenfranchised a lens through which they could clearly see their situation and become more conscious about it. He wrote in April 1970:

“It all falls into place. I see the whole thing much clearer now, how fascism has taken possession of this country, the interlocking dictatorship from county level on up to the Grand Dragon in Washington, D.C.”

Crucially, George’s treatment is a concrete, undeniable example of political oppression. Race is more times than not the easy answer to a problem. Among people of color in the United States, the quick fix, “blame it on whiteness” mentality has become so prevalent that it shortcuts thinking. Conversely, stereotypes of minorities act as simple-minded tools of divisiveness and oppression. George addressed these issues in prison, setting a model for the outside as well: “I’m always telling the brothers some of those whites are willing to work with us against the pigs. All they got to do is stop talking honky. When the races start fighting, all you have is one maniac group against another.” On the surface, race has been and is still being put forth as an overriding issue that needs to be addressed as a prerequisite for social change. In fact, although it seems to loom as a large problem, race as an issue is again a symptom of capitalism. Of course, on a paltry level and among the relatively powerless, race does play a part in social structure (the racist cop, the bigoted landlord, etc.), pitting segments of the population against each other. But revolutionary change requires class analysis that drives appropriate actions and eliminates race as a mitigating factor. Knowing these socioeconomic dynamics, George Jackson was first and foremost a people’s revolutionary, and he acted as such at all times without compromise. His writings clearly reflect his belief in class-based revolutionary change.

Considering the many structural elements affecting him, it is easy to see why George and his message have been misinterpreted. The quick takes on him are abundant: it’s

assumed that he was imprisoned and oppressed because he was black, because he had publicized ties with the Black Panther Party and was a well-known organizer within the prison reform movement. Although George became a “prison celebrity,” a status that certainly didn’t help him in terms of acquittal and release, ignorance of the actual forces responsible for his prolonged imprisonment is inexcusable. The radical viewpoint is absolutely indispensable when regarding both George’s life circumstance and philosophy. His life serves not as a mere individual example of prison cruelty, but as a scalding indictment of the very nature of capitalism.

In these times, there are two very different ways to be born into privilege. First and most obvious in the system of capital is to be born into wealth. Second, and not precluding the first, is to have an intellectual, politically conscious base from which to grow as a person philosophically and spiritually. Radical figures in modern society – Lenin, Trotsky, Ché Guevara, my father, Jonathan Jackson, and my uncle George Jackson – have the capability of providing this base through their examples and writings.

Those not born into privilege can achieve a politically conscious base in different ways. No veils separate the lower class from the realities of everyday life. They have been given the gift of disillusion. Bourgeois lifestyle, although perhaps sought after, is in most cases not attainable. Daily survival is the primary goal, as it was with George. Of course, when it finally becomes more attractive for one to fight, and perhaps die, than to live in a survival mode, revolution starts to become a possibility. Not a riot, not a government takeover by one or another group, but a people’s revolution led by the politically conscious.

This consciousness doesn’t simply appear. Individuals must grow and work into it, but it’s an invaluable gift to have insight into and access to an alternative to the frustration, a goal on the horizon. The nineties are an unconscious era. The unimportant is all-important, the essential neglected. What system than capitalism, what time period than now, is better suited to naturally create the scape-goat, the seldom-heard political prisoner, misunderstood in his cult-of-personality status, held back in a choke hold from society? It is not only our right, but our duty, to listen to and comprehend George Jackson’s message. To not do so is to turn our backs on one of the brilliant minds of the twentieth century, an individual passionately involved with liberating not only himself, but all of us.

“Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that fascism is already here, that people are dying who could be saved, that generations more will die or live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution. Pass on the torch. Join us, give up your life for the people.” – George Jackson

of corporations and not people. They then duplicate and spread this corporate legislation in Washington, D.C. and in state legislatures across the country. The anti-labor legislation in Wisconsin and the racist bill SB 1070 in Arizona are two recent and destructive examples of what corporations use ALEC to do.”

As an overview, the actions varied from sit-ins and pickets to street theater and banner drops. There were many creative actions including a foreclosure on Citibank, a “Corporate Debutant Ball” in Salt Lake City, teach-ins in Norman, OK and Naples, FL, actions targeting Pfizer, the Koch Brothers and Bank of America in New York, and a delicious Ice Cream Bloc in Oakland. Three distribution centers of Wal-Mart were shut down in a coordinated southern California action, as well as the World Corporate Headquarters of Pfizer in Connecticut. Further ALEC corporations targeted included Monsanto in Washington D.C., AT&T in Kansas City, MO and Atlanta, an action at the BP trial in New Orleans, Bank of America in Charlotte, PNM in Albuquerque, Altria in Richmond, and Peabody Coal in St. Louis. Dozens of other cities took action as part of F29 including Denver, Minneapolis, Louisville, Winston-Salem, and many others. We are proud to say the tone of the actions remained jubilant and focused even in the face of police repression.

Simultaneously, European trade unions have declared February 29 a European Day of Action against austerity, following massive demonstrations against budget cuts in Greece, Spain, Belgium, and elsewhere. Decentralized actions in all 27 European Union nations and beyond will be “sending a clear message to the EU leaders: this imposed austerity is going to plunge Europe into a recession!” www.shutdownthecorporations.org

March 1st National Day of Action For Education

From March 1 to 5, Occupy Education California staged a 99-mile march from Berkeley to San Francisco, CA to mark the national day. There were additional actions in dozens of other cities in defense of the right to quality, affordable education.

Meanwhile, students in Spain continued their fight against cuts in education by occupying university buildings. Solidarity protests have erupted across Europe after police violently suppressed peaceful student demonstrations in Valencia, which have seen as many as 60,000 people in the streets. Students are also taking action to support workers and other marginalized 99%ers. In the Netherlands, students along with Occupy Utrecht, Occupy Rotterdam, and other local Occupy groups joined thousands of cleaners who

occupied buildings at the University of Utrecht for better working conditions. Students at Harvard will be taking action to stop lay-offs of school workers. From last year’s student rebellions in the United Kingdom to the recent massive post-secondary strike in Quebec that saw 36,000 students walk out, students are rising up against austerity across the world.

March 5 saw additional large protest, under the name, ‘Occupy the Capitol’ protests are taking place in Sacramento, California, and Albany, New York, to demand full funding for education. www.occupied.org

What else? A lot more...

This is only a small snapshot of actions associated with the Occupy Wall Street Movement. There are still occupy sites around the country and world. From Occupy Nigeria to Occupy London to numerous Occupy sites in South Africa to actions in Huntsville, AL and New Brunswick, NJ. There is Women Occupy and Occupy Patriarchy – which aims to address sexism on a systemic level as well as within the Occupy movement. There are also movements including Occupy Our Food Supply – which held a national day of action on February 27.

Increasingly, local Occupy sites support and are a part of the ongoing struggles of their communities. There are more links being formed between Occupy and long-existing community organizations, unions etc. For example, Occupy Atlanta has joined with Jobs With Justice, the Teamsters, AFL-CIO, Communication Workers of America, AFSC, the Georgia NAACP and others to work together to oppose job layoffs at AT&T and fight back against proposed anti-worker legislation.

On March 31, “just days after a General Strike against austerity in Spain, protesters are again taking to the streets in Europe. Organizers said, “there will be simultaneous demonstrations, rallies and assemblies in many European cit-



ies. Protests have been organized by anti-capitalist groups and libertarian grassroots unions from all over Europe. The initiative is labeled M31 – European Day of Action against Capitalism. Members of M31 want to send a clear signal against current austerity policies and authoritarian labour reforms by national governments and the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) on the backs of waged workers, migrants and the unemployed. NYC and other places held solidarity demonstrations as well.

The ‘99% Spring’ and May Day 2012

Many organizers and supporters of the Occupy Wall Street movement have been building towards the ‘American Spring.’ The concept is that come Spring time in the United States – and the warmer weather, many Occupy protests will see a huge upswing in activity. The name comes from the Arab Spring – the pro-democracy movements that swept across the Arab world last Spring. Not only did the Arab Spring overthrow dictators in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, but they were a primary inspiration for the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Taking place from April 9-15, they aimed to train 100,000 people “in homes, places of worship, campuses and the streets...in non-violent action and join together in the work of reclaiming our country.” The website states: “History is calling; it’s time to step up.” Most exciting about this effort is that so many different organizations are coming together; anti-poverty organizations, workers’ rights orgs, anti-war, environmental and more are uniting under the banner of the ‘99% Spring.’ This is a real opportunity to build strong movements for change! the99spring.com

May Day, (May 1st-International Worker’s Day), always sees global protests, including in the United States. In the last few years there have been larger actions, including the 2006 national immigrant strike ‘A Day Without An Immigrant.’ This May Day saw some of the biggest protests in recent memory – in the U.S. and around the world.

Occupy Wall Street is proving one thing without a doubt.... Another World IS Possible!

[Much of this info was pulled word-for-word from Occupy Wall Street, occupywallst.org as well as from the weekly Occupy roundup written by Jennifer Sacks and posted on Occupy Together]

Roger is an activist working for a world with economic justice and gender and racial equality. He sits on the advisory board for the WESPAC Foundation, a grassroots peace & justice action network in Westchester County, NY. As a young white man, he lives with the understanding that people with privilege must work to end inequality in society. Jaan Laaman and other political prisoners have been important mentors for his activism.

March on the RNC

The corporate media won’t report on it, so follow and find livestreams on Twitter: #resistRNC #marchontheRNC #OccupyTheRNC #frnc,@OccupyRNC and @Occupy-Tampa. The protest will continue throughout the week. Nonviolent direct action marches will take place every day at 10 am as an alternative to the official, barbed-wire enclosed “event zone” (cage) declared by the city and police to keep protesters far away from the eyes of the media, while the wealthy are given lavish parties and the ears of the politicians inside the heavily-guarded walls.

Those who come to demonstrate at the RNC do not come to confront you. They come to confront:

- those who give you your orders, our Elected Officials.
- those who give them their orders, the Power Elite.

We, police officers and protesters alike, should be standing together to remind our government that they work for us, the people. That it is WE THE PEOPLE who elect them, and we who give them their orders.

You have been told that we are coming to commit acts of violence and destruction. We are not. We utilize peaceful means to promote peaceful ends and to stand up for justice...social, economic and environmental justice.

You have been told that we are coming to fight the police. We are not. You are being abused right along with us. It is the Power Elite we are after. They are screwing over all of us and laugh at us when we fight one another.

It’s time we stood together. We know who the real enemy is, and its neither you or us. So it’s pointless to fight one another.

If you are ordered to assault a non-violent peaceful crowd, we ask you to defy your orders. Stand for justice. It is our sincere hope that you allow the demonstrators to do what they come to do, peacefully protest an unjust system. We stand for justice.
-resistRNC

resistRNC.org

“Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community and sow the seeds of discontent among them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary.” --Oscar Wilde

ucts of the system. None of us functions from a clean slate when considering or debating any issue, especially history as it pertains to the United States.

George Jackson struggled against the constraints of denial and self-censorship, to say nothing of his physical and communicative distance from society. Political prisoners are inherently vulnerable to an either/or situation: isolating silence or elimination. For George, his vociferous revolutionary attitude was either futile or self-exterminating. He was well aware of his situation. In *Blood in My Eye*, his political treatise, he wrote:

“I’m in a unique political position. I have a very nearly closed future, and since I have always been inclined to get disturbed over organized injustice or terrorist practice against the innocents – wherever – I can now say just about what I want (I’ve always done just about that), without fear of self-exposure. I can only be executed once.”

George was equally aware that revolutionary change happens only when an entire society is ready. No amount of action, preaching, or teaching will spark revolution if social conditions do not warrant it. My father’s case, unfortunately, is an appropriate indicator. He attempted a revolutionary act during a reactionary time; elimination was the only possible consequence.

The challenge for a radical in today’s world is to balance reformist tendencies (political liberalism) and revolutionary action/ideology (radicalism). While reformism entails a legitimization of the status quo as a search for changes within the system, radicalism posits a change of system. Because revolutionaries are particularly vulnerable, a certain degree of reformism is necessary to create space, space needed to begin the laborious task of making revolution.

George’s statement “Combat Liberalism” and the general reaction to it typify the gulf between the two philosophies. George was universally misunderstood by the left and the right alike. As is the case with most modern political prisoners, nearly all of his support came from reformists with liberal leanings. It seems that they acted in spite of, rather than because of, the core of his message.

The left’s attitude toward COINTELPRO is a useful illustration. COINTELPRO, the covert government program used to dismantle the Black Panther Party, and later the American Indian Movement, is typically cited by many leftists as a damning example of the government’s conspiratorial nature. Declassified documents and ex-agents’ testimonies have shown COINTELPRO to be one of the most unlawful, insidious cells of government in the nation’s history. COINTELPRO, however, was really a symptomatic, expendable entity; a small police force within a larger one (FBI), within a branch of government (executive), within the government itself (liberal democracy), within the economic system (capitalism). Reformists in radicals’ cloth-

ing unknowingly argued against symptoms, rather than the roots, of the entrenched system. Doing away with COINTELPRO or even the FBI would not alter the structure that produces the surveillance/elimination apparatus.

In George’s day, others who considered themselves left of center, or even revolutionary, concerned themselves with inner-city reform issues, mostly black ghettos. The problem of and debate about inner cities still exists. However, recognition of a problem and analysis of that problem are two very different challenges. The demand to better only predominantly black inner-city conditions is unrealistic at best. In the capitalist structure, there must be an upper, middle, and especially a lower class. Improving black neighborhoods is the equivalent of ghettoizing some other segment of the population – poor whites, Hispanics, Asians, etc. Nothing intrinsic to the system would change, only superficial alterations that would mollify the liberal public. As Chomsky asserts in *Turning the Tide*:

Determined opposition to the latest lunacies and atrocities must continue, for the sake of the victims as well as our own ultimate survival. But it should be understood as a poor substitute for a challenge to the deeper causes, a challenge that we are, unfortunately, in no position to mount at the present though the groundwork can and must be laid.

Failure to understand the radical, encompassing viewpoint in the sixties led to reformism. In effect, the majority of the left completely deserted any attempt at the radical balance required of the politically conscious, leaving only liberalism and its narrow vision to flourish.

Nobody comprehended the radical dilemma more fully than George Jackson. Indeed, he developed his philosophy not out of mere happenstance, but with a very conscious eye upon maintaining his revolutionary ideology. He writes in *Blood in My Eye*:

“Reformism is an old story in Amerika. There have been depressions and socio-economic political crises throughout the period that marked the formation of the present upper-class ruling circle, and their controlling elites. But the parties of the left were too committed to reformism to exploit their revolutionary potential.”

George’s involvement with the prison reform movement should therefore be seen as a matter of survival. Unlike the reformist left, prison oppression was directly affecting him. His balanced reform activities – improving prisoners’ rights while speaking out against prison as an entity – were required to make living conditions tolerable enough for him to continue on his revolutionary path. Simply, he did what he had to do to survive – created space while simultaneously pursuing his radical theory.

The reform George Jackson did accomplish was and still is incredible, transforming the prison environment from

U.S. citizenry, generally uncritical and willing to accept digestible versions of historical personalities and world events. The reasoning behind denial and self-censorship: do not make the public uncomfortable, even if that means diluting, sensationalizing, or lying about the truth.

Ultimately, when denial and self-censorship may not be sufficient for control of information, the state resorts to imprisonment. All imprisonment is political and as such all imprisonments carry equal weight. Society does, however, distinguish two categories of imprisonment: one for breaking a law, the other for political reasons. A difference is clear: American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier, serving a federal sentence for his supposed role at Wounded Knee, is considered a different type of prisoner than an armed robber serving a five-to-seven-year sentence.

State policy reflects institutional needs. When the state as an institution cannot tolerate an outside threat, real or perceived, from an individual or group, the consequences at its command include isolation, persecution, and political imprisonment. All may occur in greater or lesser form, depending on the degree of threat.

Political incarceration removes threats to the political and economic hegemony of the United States. Even though in 1959 George Jackson initially went to prison as an “everyday lawbreaker” with a one-year-to-life sentence, it was his political consciousness that kept him incarcerated for eleven years. In 1970 George wrote:

International capitalism cannot be destroyed without the extremes of struggle. The entire colonial world is watching the blacks inside the U.S., wondering and waiting for us to come to our senses. Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside. We are the only ones (besides the very small white minority left) who can get at the monster’s heart without subjecting the



world to nuclear fire. We have a momentous historical role to act out if we will. The whole world for all time in the future will love us and remember us as the righteous people who made it possible for the world to live on. If we fail through fear and lack of aggressive imagination, then the slaves of the future will curse us, as we sometimes curse those of yesterday. I don’t want to die and leave a few sad songs and a hump in the ground as my only monument. I want to leave a world that is liberated from trash, pollution, racism, nation-states, nation-state wars and armies, from pomp, bigotry, parochialism, a thousand different brands of untruth, and licentious usurious economics.

Nothing is more dangerous to a system that depends on misinformation than a voice that obeys its own dictates and has the courage to speak out. George Jackson’s imprisonment and further isolation within the prison system were clearly a function of the state’s response to his outspoken opposition to the capitalist structure.

Political incarceration is a tangible form of state control. Unlike denial and self-censorship, imprisonment is publicly scrutinized. Yet public reaction to political incarceration has been minimal. The U.S. government claims it holds no political prisoners (denial), while any notice given to protests focused on political prisoners invariably takes the form of a human interest story (self-censorship).

The efficacy of political incarceration in the United States cannot be denied. Prison serves not only as a physical barrier, but a communication restraint. Prisoners are completely ostracized from society, with little or no chance to break through. Those few outside who might be sympathetic are always hesitant to communicate or protest past a certain point, fearing their own persecution or imprisonment. Also, deep down most people believe that all prisoners, regardless of their individual situations, really did do something “wrong.” Added to that prejudice, society lacks a distinction between a prisoner’s actions and his or her personal worth; a bad act equals a bad person. The bottom line is that the majority of people simply will not believe that the state openly or covertly oppresses without criminal cause. As Daniel Singer asked at the Evergreen conference in 1987, “Is it possible for a class which exterminates the native peoples of the Americas, replaces them by raping Africa for humans it then denigrates and dehumanizes as slaves, while cheapening and degrading its own working class – is it possible for such a class to create a democracy, equality and to advance the cause of human freedom? The implicit answer is, ‘No, of course not.’”

How does a person – inside or outside prison – confront the cultural mindsets, the layers of misinformation propagated by the capitalist system? Sooner or later, what can be called the “radical dilemma” surfaces for the few wanting to enter into a structural attack/analysis of the United States. Culturally, educationally, and politically, all of us are similarly limited by these layers of misinformation; we are all prod-

August 26th Day of Action: Women’s Equality Day

occupywallst.org/tag/rnc/

Call to Action via Women Organized to Resist and Defend. Occupiers across the country are organizing in solidarity; we encourage everyone who can to attend!

On Women’s Equality Day, August 26 – on the eve of the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida, which will be immediately followed by the Democratic National Convention – women and their allies will take to the streets of Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York City, Chicago and other cities across the country in defense of women’s rights.

August 26 – Women’s Equality Day – commemorates the 1920 passage of the 19th amendment, giving women the right to vote. Winning the right to vote was an important victory, but the struggle for full equality continues. Celebrate Women’s Equality Day by taking to the streets and demanding full equality now. Honor the women who fought for the rights we’ve won and continue the struggle for full equality.

Many women voted for President Obama believing he would stand up for women’s rights. But he has compromised with the anti-choice forces on many occasions. When Republicans opposed a 2009 provision for family planning, he dropped it. In 2011, the White House took the unprecedented step of overruling the FDA in order to keep Plan B out of the reach of women under 18. While President Obama is not a right-wing pro-lifer, we cannot count on him or any politician to defend our rights. In fact, in order to reach a budget compromise with Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner in July 2011, President Obama said, “I’ll give you abortion in D.C.” Meaning, low-income women in the District of Columbia would be prevented from receiving Medicaid assistance offered by the D.C. government for abortion procedures.

Women’s reproductive rights continue to be slashed at the state level. Legal restrictions on abortions tripled from 2010 to 2011. 92 new abortion restrictions were enacted in 2011. In 2011, there were 114 reported violent attacks against abortion providers. Clinics that provide vital services for millions of working-class women are under siege. More than 55 percent of reproductive age women now live in states that are “hostile” to abortion rights. (Guttenmacher Institute)

So while they’re convening and concocting new ways to attack our rights and our lives, let’s come together in the streets to stand up and fight back!

There will be mass demonstrations in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities around the country. We will mobilize thousands in the streets to show the world that there is a new women’s movement rising and we will not go back.

We believe that access to reproductive choice – the basic right of women to control our own bodies – is a fundamental right and must be defended. We believe in equality. We support working women. We are tired of the right wing trying to turn back the clock and take our hard-won rights away. All people who support equality and choice should organize with us and help these actions grow.

If you can’t make it to protest in Tampa and Charlotte, join or organize a protest in your community. There is a long, proud tradition of women in the United States mobilizing and fighting to win equality and respect. Let’s continue this legacy this summer!

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A Memory or 3 of OWS

BY ALOZIE

I am always skeptical about describing the Occupy movement, particularly because the only narrative I can tell is my own. That being said, I will try to touch on a few moments that stand out to me as I ponder upon my months in the movement. My original reason for joining the movement is because as an AIDS activist, highlighting the social and economic injustices of our society is my job. What the Occupy movement is doing now is nothing new under the sun. ACT UP Occupied Wall St. during their first action – how many ever years ago that was. It just so happens that the rhetoric of the plight of the 99% really resonates with almost everyone. This economic crisis has touched almost everyone one in some way, even if you haven't lost everything.

The beginning was unorganized, uncertain, and beautiful all in one. I recall being excited to finally drag my sleeping bags out of my closet to join the movement in sleeping outdoors. Mind you, this is way before there were quasi-comfy tents thrown up. I remember thinking to myself that first night that I slept outside, "Thank god I have friends to do this with, and thank god I drank enough to fall asleep right away." I recall waking up to people walking around my listless body, taking photos of my friends and I sleeping and posing above us. Many of these individuals were dressed in business like garb with nooses around their necks, as if to signify the evils of the corporate world. I decided I would no longer sleep outdoors, because unless I am inebriated, I doubt I would ever be able to close my eyes and sleep with that many people around me. Up till now I truly tip my hat to those who can sleep easily with so many strangers constantly moving about.

The movement to me changed once I realize that many activist groups were slowly feeding themselves into the Occupy movement. A lot of the working groups I saw being formed were transfers of already established social justice groups that realized there was great press coverage in being part of the movement. I decided to join the Queering and People of color (POC) caucuses to become more active. The difference between a working group and a Caucus is that working groups actually actively had tasks to accomplish, such as feeding people or managing the library. Caucuses on the other hand were meant for groups that were historically silenced and needed a space to present

"For every one torturer, there are a thousand people ready to risk their lives to save another. For every soldier who shoots in a neighborhood, there are a thousand companeros who help and protect each other." -- Isabel Allende

and get their voices heard within the movement. The POC caucus was one of the largest groups I have yet to be a part of. I didn't feel the need to attend meetings because they had everything taken care of. The Queering groups on the other-hand were much more of misfits who reminded me of myself. I've stuck with them for most of the movement while pushing my goal forward.

My goal has been to bring attention to the need to implement a financial speculation tax on the financial institutions that gamble away funds in the speculative market. A small tax of 0.01-0.05 could raise billions of dollars for global health. Focusing specifically on this tax's connection to HIV/AIDS, we are at a moment in time when science clearly dictates that if we treat people with medication and they become undetectable, the chances of spreading the virus are virtually impossible – essentially we can end the AIDS pandemic if we treat everyone.

Even though science has been exciting, our economy has been the bearer of horrible news. Social services have been cut at every level and a lot of them affect people who are HIV positive. The housing budget for people living with AIDS has been cut on a federal level, the ban on federal funding for needle exchange has been reinstated, the President's Emergency plan for AIDS has been cut, and the current round of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and malaria has been paused and so much more. The U.S. made some powerful claims, when Secretary Clinton said it is now U.S. policy to create a generation free of HIV/AIDS back in the end of 2011. Everything our government is doing now is going against this goal, all in the name of limited funding. The Financial Speculation Tax is the way to fund all the social services and funding streams we need to end the AIDS pandemic!

The moment that stands out the most in my mind was the march (whose date I don't remember) that had several starting points throughout the city. I decided to start with the student group at Union Square. Although I am no longer a student, I like to feel like I've still got it going on by hanging out with them. I live for large groups of protesters who are coming together to make a noise. I had no idea what the game plan was for this march, all when I realized we were going to take the streets and march down 5th Avenue I became ecstatic. I remember holding up our group banner and chanting, "Show me what democracy looks like, this is what democracy looks like." We were cut off on our way southbound by the blockage of police officers on their motorbikes at 14th street. Luckily for me this was right on the corner of the New School, where students were occupying their school in solidarity.

I remember spotting this one anarchist looking kid from the New School, whom I recognized from previous actions – with a pink beanie and a septum piercing throwing paper outside into the streets. Totally my type! The March unfortunately was titrated down a smaller street with the Police

cept of Manifest Destiny, which held that it was the colonists' inherent right to expand and conquer. Further it was a duty, the "white man's burden," to save the "natives," to attempt to convert all heathens encountered. Protestant Calvinism provided a set of ethics that fit perfectly with the colonists' conquests. Max Weber, in his definitive study on religion, *The Sociology of Religion*, wrote, "Calvinism held that the unsearchable God possessed good reasons for having distributed the gifts of fortune unevenly"; it "represented as God's will [the Calvinists'] domination over the sinful world. Clearly this and other features of Protestantism, such as its rationalization of the existence of a lower class, were not only the bases for the formation of the United States, but still prominently exist today. "One must go to the ethics of ascetic Protestantism," Weber asserts, "to find any ethical sanction for economic rationalism and for the entrepreneur." When a nation can't admit to the process through which it builds hegemony, how can anything but delusion be a reality? "The monopoly of truth, including historical truth," stated Daniel Singer in a lecture at Evergreen State College (Washington) in 1987, "is implied in the monopoly of power."

Clearly, objective history is an impossibility. This understood, the significant problem lies in how the general population defines the term; history implies that truth is being told. It is an unfortunate fact that history is unfailingly written by the victors, which in the case of the United States are not only the original imperialists, but the majority of the "founding fathers," dedicated to uniting and strengthening the existing mercantile class among disjointed colonies. There can be no doubt that from the creation of this young nation, history as a created and perceived entity moved further and further away from the objective ideal. Genocide, necessary for "the development of the modern capitalist economy," according to Howard Zinn, was rationalized as a reaction to the fear of Indian savages. Slavery was similarly construed.

The personalization of history, the process by which we construct heroes and pariahs, is a consequence of its dialectical nature. Without fail, an odd paradox is created around someone who, by virtue of his or her actions, becomes prominent enough to warrant the designation "historical figure." There is a leap on the part of the general public, sparked by the media, to another mindset. Sensational deeds are glorified, horrible acts reviled. A few points are selected as defining characteristics. The media, conforming to their restrictions of concision (which make accuracy nearly impossible to attain), reiterate these points over and over. Schools and textbooks not only teach these points but drill them into young minds. Howard Zinn comments that "this learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly."

A few tidbits, factual or not, incomplete and selective, are

used to describe the entirety of a person's existence. They become part of mainstream consciousness. We therefore know that Lincoln freed the slaves, Malcolm X was a black extremist, and Hitler was solely responsible for World War II and the Holocaust. All half-truths go unexplained, all fallacies go unchallenged, as they appear to make perfect sense to the everyday, noncritically thinking American. The paradox has been created: The more famous a person becomes, the more misunderstood he or she is. This accepted occurrence is incredibly counterintuitive: the public should know more, not less, about a noteworthy individual and the sociopolitical dynamics surrounding him or her.

This historical mythicization is not, for the most part, a consciously created phenomenon. The media don't go out of their way to mislead the public by constructing false heroes and emphasizing the mundane. Fewer "dimly lit conferences" take place than conspiracy theorists believe. It is the existing political system that is responsible for the information that reaches the general public. The state's control of information created the system, and it continually re-creates it. Propagated by schooling and the media, information that reaches the public is subject to three chief mechanisms of state control: denial, self-censorship, and imprisonment.

Denial is the easiest control mechanism, and therefore the most common. If events do not follow the state's agenda or its ecumenical ideology and might bring unrest, they are denied. Examples are plentiful: prewar state terrorism against the people of North and South Vietnam and later the bombing of Cambodia; government funding and military aid to the Nicaraguan Contras; and support of UNITA and South Africa in the virtual destruction of Angola, among many others.

Denial goes hand in hand with self-censorship. The media emphasize certain personal characteristics and events and de-emphasize others, in a pattern that supports U.S. hegemony. The information that reached the public after the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989 is telling. It was not until much later, after the heat of controversy, that the average citizen had access to the scope of the devastation. The effectiveness of self-censorship in this case was maximized, as the full details of the Panama invasion were patchwork for years.

While we may assume that the media have an obligation to accurately convey such an event to the public, the media in fact perpetuate the government's position by engaging in their own self-censorship. Noam Chomsky points out in *Deterring Democracy*, "With a fringe of exceptions – mostly well after the tasks had been accomplished – the media rallied around the flag with due piety and enthusiasm, funnelling the most absurd White House tales to the public while scrupulously refraining from asking the obvious questions, or seeing the obvious facts."

Denial and self-censorship create a comfort zone for the

Commemorating the 42nd Anniversary of the Marin Courthouse Slave Rebellion

BY JONATHAN JACKSON, JR.

From the Forward to *Soledad Brother* (1994)

I was born eight and a half months after my father, Jonathan Jackson, was shot down on August 7, 1970, at the Marin County Courthouse, when he tried to gain the release of the Soledad Brothers by taking hostages. Before and especially after that day, Uncle George kept in constant contact with my mother by writing from his cell in San Quentin. (The Department of Corrections wouldn't put her on the visitors' list.) During George's numerous trial appearances for the Soledad Brothers case, Mom would lift me above the crowd so he could see me. Consistently, we would receive a letter a few days later. For a single mother with son, alone and in the middle of both controversy and not a little unwarranted trouble with the authorities, those messages of strength were no doubt instrumental in helping her carry on. No matter how oppressive his situation became, George always had time to lend his spirit to the people he cared for.

A year and two weeks after the revolutionary takeover in Marin, George was ruthlessly murdered by prison guards at San Quentin. Both he and my father left me a great deal: pride, history, an unmistakable name. My experience has been at once wonderful and incredibly difficult. My life is not consumed by the Jackson legacy, but my charge is an accepted and cherished piece of my existence. It is out of my responsibility to my legacy that I have come to write this Foreword to my uncle's prison writings.

Today I read my inherited letters often – those written from George to my mother with a dull pencil on prison stationery. They are things of beauty, my most valuable possessions, passionate pieces of writing that have few rivals in the modern era. They will remain unpublished. However, the letters of Soledad Brother demonstrate the same insight and eloquence – the way George's writings make his personal experience universal is the mainstay of his brilliance.

When this collection of letters was first released in 1969, it brought a young revolutionary to the forefront of a tempest, a tempest characterized by the Black Power, free speech, and antiwar movements, accompanied by a dissatisfaction with the status quo throughout the United States. With unflinching directness, George Jackson conveyed an intelligent yet accessible message with his trademark style, rational rage. He illuminated previously hidden viewpoints and feelings that disenfranchised segments of the population were unable to articulate: the poor, the victimized, the imprisoned, the disillusioned. George spoke in a revolutionary voice that they had no idea existed. He was the prominent

figure of true radical thought and practice during the period, and when he was assassinated, much of the movement died along with him. But George Jackson cannot and will not ever leave. His life and thoughts serve as the message – George himself is the revolution.

The reissue of *Soledad Brother* at this point in time is essential. It appears that the nineties are going to be a telling decade in U.S. history. The signposts of systemic breakdown are as glaringly obvious as they were in the sixties: unrest manifesting itself in inner-city turmoil, widespread rise of violence in the culture, and international oppression to legitimize a state in crisis. The fact that imprisonments in California have more than tripled over the last decade, supported by the public, is merely one sign of societal decomposition. That systemic change occurred during the sixties is a myth. The United States in the nineties faces strikingly analogous problems. George spoke to the issues of his day, but conditions now are so similar that this work could have been written last month. It is imperative that George be heard, whether by the angry but unchanneled young or by the cynical and worldly mature. The message must be carried farther than where he bravely left it in August of 1971.

Over the past twenty-five years, why has George Jackson not been an integral part of mainstream consciousness? He has been and still is underexposed, reduced to simplistic terms, and ultimately misunderstood. Racial and conspiracy theory aside, there are rational reasons for his exclusion. They stem not only from the hard-line revolutionary aspects of George's philosophy, but more importantly from the nature of the political system that he existed in and under.

Howard Zinn has pointed out in *A People's History of the United States* that “the history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated.” U.S. history is essentially that type of hidden history. Without denying important mitigating factors, the United States of today is strongly linked to the values and premises on which it was founded. That is, it is a settler colony founded primarily on two basic pillars, upheld by the Judeo-Christian tradition: genocide of indigenous peoples and slave labor in support of a capitalist infrastructure. Although the Bible repeatedly exalts mass slaughter and oppression, Judeo-Christian morality is publicly held to be inconsistent with them. This dissonance, evident within the nation's structure from the beginning, informs the state's first function: to oversimplify and minimize immoral events in order to legitimize history and the state's very existence simultaneously.

Ironically, traditional Judeo-Christian morality is a perfect vehicle for genocide, slavery, and territorial expansion. As a logical progression from biblical example, expansion and imperialism culminated in the United States with the con-

being the barrier from us staying together and remaining a large mass. I lost most of my friends during this process. I ended up on Broadway walking side by side with a double row of officers – the first row on foot and the second on motorbikes. I could not believe the city was spending so much money on cops when we are obviously in a time of austerity. The march ended by the Brooklyn Bridge, where apparently an affinity group earlier that day conducted a civil disobedience. Before we could get on to the bridge the cops tried to block the entire march from entering the bridge. By then it was already sunset and the weather was getting a bit nip. I was clearly already upset. Occupy managed to get large projections onto the side of the buildings that read “99%,” which I thought was an amazing visual when approaching the bridge. The march ended in Dumbo Brooklyn, where I found myself wishing I wore another layer.

The movement is still alive today. It has endured a lot of criticism and pitfalls along the way. There are so many horrible things I have experienced and witnessed during my time as well, but that is totally for another time. When a group represents 99% of the population without a screening process you can get all types of people in there. I have interacted with many people I wish I never did, but isn't that a part of life. Occupy is not over and this spring will be a true American Spring. I cannot wait to see what the movement has in store.

On #S17, Follow the Money: All Roads Lead to Wall Street

Last September 17, as part of a wave of global protest, people from across the country raced to the heart of New York's financial district to occupy Wall Street. In the face of big banks foreclosing on our homes, killing our jobs, buying up our democracy, and turning our environment into just another toxic asset, you showed up, and we became the 99%.

On September 15-17, join us in this fight for our country, our world – this fight for our lives.

For years, people all over the world have been crippled by the corporate greed of the 1%. They built their bonuses out of stolen pensions of teachers, civil servants, and our neighbors. We pay for their welfare. They bet and borrow against our future. We drown in debt. So who is really in debt to whom? Now our elected representatives want us to embrace austerity—work harder for less, retire later (if at all), and say goodbye to our fundamental labor protections. They're betting on our obedience. They're betting wrong.

Join us for three days of education, celebration and resistance to economic injustice with permitted convergences

and assemblies, concerts, and mass civil disobedience.

For every crumbling aspect of our society, the cause of the ruin can be traced back to corporate greed. Follow the money. All roads lead to Wall Street. And in the days and weeks before (and long after) September 17, we will be here, demanding a system that puts the health of our communities over the profits of the 1%. We are the 99%.

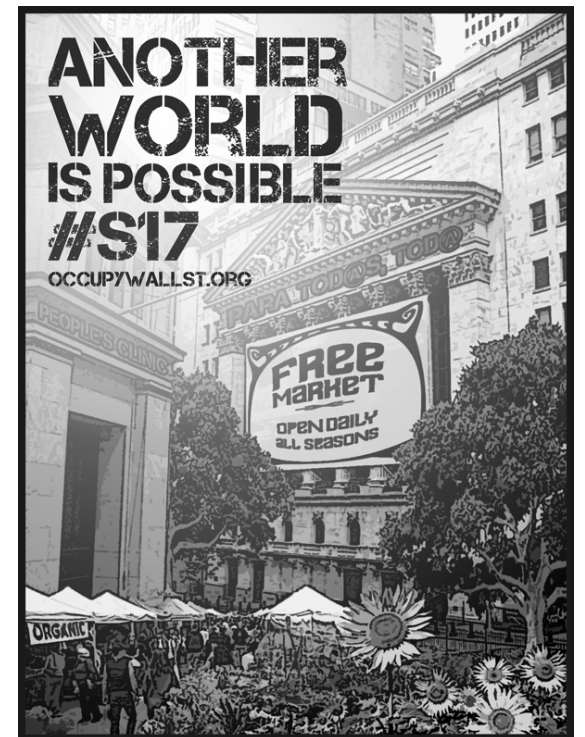
Can't join us in NYC? It's just as important that we Occupy Main Street. Pick a local target that embodies corporate greed—occupy your state Capitol building like the people of Wisconsin, or a chamber of commerce conference as they did in D.C. Take inspiration from revolutionary occupations worldwide, from the railroads of India to the rivers of the Amazon to the streets of Spain. Wall Street has occupied our entire planet. What do you have to say about that?

There are more of us than them and they know it.

One year, and over 7,000 arrests later, we are still fighting. We are not afraid, and we will never, ever, quit.

Join us September 15-17, 2012 for three days of education, celebration, and resistance!

— Occupy Wall Street



Statements from People in Prisons for February 20th: National Occupy Day in Support of Prisoners

occupyforprisoners.org

Pelican Bay Human Rights Movement Hunger Strikers in Solidarity (PHSS)

Sitawa Jamaa, s/n Dewberry C35671; Todd Ashker C58191; Antonio Guillen P81948; and Arturo Castellanos C17275

Corporate Amerika has coalesced its efforts around the exploitation of Human Beings, while using the political apparatus of the U.S. government, federal, state and local to institute policies that set in motion the creation of a corporate police state, which has targeted the poor as a surplus for incarceration and exploitation.

Those of us housed in solitary confinement throughout California and Amerika, support “Occupy Wall Street” and understand the necessity to resist against corporate greed. We will no longer willingly accept the subjugation, oppression and exploitation of Humanity.

Banks and the “prison industrial complex” are corporate empires that prey on the souls of Humanity. Therefore we officially join you all in Struggle.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: Souls on Ice

When I heard of the call, just raised in Oakland, California, to “Occupy the Prisons,” I gasped.

It was not an especially radical call, but it was right on time.

For prisons have become a metaphor; the shadow-side, if you will, of America, With oceans of words about freedom, and the reality that the U.S. is the world’s leader of the incarceration industry, its more than time for the focused attention of the Occupy Movement.

It’s past time.

For the U.S. is the world’s largest prisoner for decades, much wrought by the insidious effects of the so-called ‘drug war’—what I call, “the War on the Poor.”

And, Occupy, now an international movement, certainly has no shortage of prisons to choose from. Every state, every rural district, every hamlet in America has a prison; a

place where the Constitution doesn’t exist, and where slavery is all but legalized.

When law professor Michelle Alexander took on the topic, her book, the New Jim Crow, took off like hotcakes—selling over 100,000 in just a few months.

And where there are prisons, there is torture; brutal beatings, grave humiliations, perverse censorship—and even murders—all under a legal system that is as blind as that statue which holds aloft a scale, her eyes covered by a frigid fold of cloth.

So, what is Occupy to do?

Initially, it must support movements such as those calling for the freedom of Lakota brother Leonard Peltier, the MOVE veterans of August 8th, 1978, the remaining two members of the Angola 3 (Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox), Sundiata Acoli, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz, and many other brothers and sisters who’ve spent lifetimes in steel and brick hellholes.

But, the Occupy Movement must do more.

As it shifted the discussion and paradigm on economic issues, it must turn the wheel of the so-called ‘Criminal Justice System’ in America, that is in fact, a destructive, counter-productive, annual \$69 billion boondoggle of repression, better-known by activists as the Prison-Industrial-Complex.

That means more than a one-day event, no matter how massive or impressive. It means building a mass movement that demands and fights for real change, and eventually abolition of structures that do far more social damage than good.

It means the abolition of solitary confinement, for it is no more than modern-day torture chambers for the poor.

It means the repeal of repressive laws that support such structures.

It means social change—or it means nothing.

So let us begin—Down With the Prison Industrial Complex!

Lynne Stewart

This occupy rally is what Must happen at every jail in the United States—a direct challenge to Arbitrary Power that thinks it can lock up those with the greatest grievances against the system and systematically demonize them to their fellow citizens. I speak now for all the 2 Million but of course, particularly on behalf of those political prisoners who actively fought and tested this unjust system and

Ruchell Cinque Magee: Sole Survivor Still

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Slavery is being practiced by the system under color of law—Slavery 400 years ago, slavery today; it’s the same thing, but with a new name. They’re making millions and millions of dollars enslaving Blacks, poor whites, and others—people who don’t even know they’re being railroaded. —Ruchell Cinque Magee (from radio interview with Kiilu Nyasha, “Freedom is a Constant Struggle,” KPFA-FM, 12 August 1995)

If you were asked to name the longest held political prisoner in the United States, what would your answer be?

Most would probably reply “Geronimo ji jaga (Pratt),” “Sundiata Acoli,” or “Sekou Odinga”—all 3 members of the Black Panther Party or soldiers of the Black Liberation Army, who have been engaged for their political beliefs or principled actions for decades. Some would point to Lakota leader, Leonard Peltier, who struggled for the freedom of Native peoples, thereby incurring the enmity of the U.S. Government, who framed him in a 1975 double murder trial. Those answers would be good guesses, for all of these men have spent hellified years in state and federal dungeons, but here’s a man who has spent more.

Ruchell C. Magee arrived in Los Angeles, California in 1963, and wasn’t in town for six months before he and a cousin, Leroy, were arrested on the improbable charges of kidnap and robbery, after a fight with a man over a woman and a \$10 bag of marijuana. Magee, in a slam-dunk “trial,” was swiftly convicted and swifter still sentenced to life.

Magee, politicized in those years, took the name of the African freedom fighter, Cinque, who, with his fellow captives seized control of the slave ship, the Amistad, and tried to sail back to Africa. Like his ancient namesake, Cinque would also fight for his freedom from legalized slavery, and for 7 long years he filed writ after writ, learning what he calls “guerrilla law,” honing it as a tool for liberation of himself and his fellow captives. But California courts, which could care less about the alleged “rights” of a young Black man like Magee, dismissed his petitions willy-nilly.

In August, 1970, Magee appeared as a witness in the assault trial of James McClain, a man charged with assaulting a guard after San Quentin guards murdered a Black prisoner, Fred Billingsley. McClain, defending himself, presented imprisoned witnesses to expose the racist and repressive nature of prisons. In the midst of Magee’s testimony, a 17 year old young Black man with a huge Afro hairdo burst into the courtroom, heavily armed.

Jonathan Jackson shouted “Freeze!”, tossing weapons to McClain, William Christmas, and a startled Magee, who given his 7 year hell where no judge knew the meaning of justice, joined the rebellion on the spot. The four rebels took the judge, the DA and three jurors hostage, and headed for a radio station where they were going to air the wretched prison conditions to the world, as well as demand the immediate release of a group of political prisoners, know that The Soledad Brothers (these were John Cluchette, Fleeta Drumgo, and Jonathan’s oldest brother, George). While the men did not hurt any of their hostages, they did not reckon on the state’s ruthlessness.

Before the men could get their van out of the court house parking lot, prison guards and sheriffs opened furious fire on the vehicle, killing Christmas, Jackson, McClain as well as the judge. The DA was permanently paralyzed by gun fire. Miraculously, the jurors emerged relatively unscratched, although Magee, seriously wounded by gunfire, was found unconscious.

Magee, who was the only Black survivor of what has come to be called “The August 7th Rebellion,” would awaken to learn he was charged with murder, kidnapping and conspiracy, and further, he would have a co-defendant, a University of California Philosophy Professor, and friend of Soledad Brother, George L. Jackson, named Angela Davis, who faced identical charges.

By trial time the cases were severed, with Angela garnering massive support leading to her 1972 acquittal on all charges.

Magee’s trial did not garner such broad support, yet he boldly advanced the position that as his imprisonment was itself illegal, and a form of unjustifiable slavery, he had the inherent right to escape such slavery, an historical echo of the position taken by the original Cinque, and his fellow captives, who took over a Spanish slave ship, killed the crew (except for the pilot) and tried to sail back to Africa. The pilot surreptitiously steered the Amistad to the U.S. coast, and when the vessel was seized by the U.S., Spain sought their return to slavery in Cuba. Using natural and international law principals, U.S. courts decided they captives had every right to resist slavery and fight for their freedom.

Unfortunately, Magee’s jury didn’t agree, although it did acquit on at least one kidnapping charge. The court dismissed on the murder charge, and Magee has been battling for his freedom every since.

That he is still fighting is a tribute to a truly remarkable man, a man who knows what slavery is, and more importantly, what freedom means.

FREE CINQUE !!

ger, asked, referring to Stewart’s issuing the press release on her client’s behalf, “Lynne, if you had to do it all over again would you do the same thing?” With a tear in her eye, Stewart stated, “I would hope that I would have the courage to do it again, I would do it again.”

Stewart also insisted that her sworn duty to represent her client had to be weighed against the formalities of laws or court orders that prevented such diligent representation.

This refusal to bow to authority, to show the “required deference” to legal bullies with power, outraged her persecutors, who sought vengeance in the rigged criminal “justice” system.

Stewart’s now rejected appeal argued three essential points:

1. In relying on Lynne Stewart’s public statements to enhance the original sentence of 28 months, her First Amendment rights were abridged.
3. The fourfold increase in the sentence was substantively unreasonable and failed to balance her lifetime of contribution to the community and country with the criminal act of which she was convicted.
5. The Judge’s findings of Perjury and Misuse of her position as an Attorney on which he also based the increase, were error.

“Free Lynne Stewart” must remain the rallying cry of all those who cherish civil liberties and democratic rights.

Stewart, like so many others, but perhaps among the first tier, was a victim of the government-promoted malicious and murderous “war on terror” aimed at stifling all dissent and imprisoning the innocent to justify its wars against working people at home and against the oppressed and exploited across the globe.

Write Stewart at:

Lynne Stewart 53504-054
FMC Carswell
P.O. Box 27137
Ft. Worth, TX
USA 76127

Contributions can be made payable to the

Lynne Stewart Organization
1070 Dean Street
Brooklyn, New York
USA 11216

Jeff Mackler is the West Coast Coordinator of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee.

‘Panther Baby’: The Journey of Jamal Joseph

REVIEW BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL
From www.workers.org

Joseph, Jamal, *Baby Panther: A Life of Reinvention & Rebellion*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2012.

If one is high school age in America, the story of the Black Panther Party, one of the most significant Black radical organizations of the mid-20th century, is virtually unknown.

Few teachers dare to teach it, burdened as they are by the repressive, politically driven testing frenzy that ensures teachers stick only to the tests, amid fears of the consequences of failure.

If some rare teacher wants to teach this powerful period, they need look no further than Jamal Joseph’s new autobiography, *Panther Baby*.

Jamal Joseph was a member of the New York chapter of the Black Panther Party, but a member with a difference. At 15, he was still in high school, and thus the youngest member in the state.

Thankfully, he writes with the head of a teenager, explaining his choices as they are presented to him — often based on his rampaging emotions at the time. Why did he join the Party? Why not other such groups?

What did his foster grandparents, who though they were old Garveyites [named after Marcus M. Garvey, the founder of an early 20th century nationalist group], really think of his joining?

That story is as funny as it is tender, for these parents — though not of his blood — loved him intensely, and worried about a boy his age running around with Black Panthers, people frankly regarded as crazy.

Jamal’s story is one of a social movement, that, at the height, lifts all to new levels of possibility. But like a wave, it can wash away, leaving the once-high steeped in mud.

Throughout this often heart-rending cycle of love and betrayal, Joseph finds his best self and arises from the mud to find a life of service and reconciliation.

Panther Baby is a touching, beautiful and transformative document. May it reach as many young people as possible.

now suffer in SHUs, and other forms of Solitary, for that. Many have been tortured for the last thirty years or more. When they were captured in the heady political days of the ’60s and ’70s, we were convinced that fundamental change was inevitable — indeed that it was right around the corner. It still remains inevitable but now we understand the protracted struggle necessary to breach this evil system. I for one am recruited to accomplish the freedom of political prisoners and as my comrade Chairman Fred says “FREE ‘EM ALL!!!”

Khalfani Malik Khaldun

All power to the people. I am in support/solidarity with your work to expose the contradictions existing at San Quentin prison, and all prisoners across the country.

Please extend my clenched fist salutation to brother Kevin Cooper/those men on death row.

I am a political prisoner here in Indiana. I have been in prison for 26 years now, with 18 years in isolated confinement. I am currently being held in a Secure Housing Unit, where the conditions are cruel and unusual punishment, and there are deplorable violations of state and federal policy all across the unit.

Those in charge have used criminal tactics to keep many of us in perpetual isolation. We could use some organized, principled help here in Indiana. Could you provide me and e-mail or other address of other occupiers in solidarity against prison injustice? We need to organize a force here to Occupy the Indiana SHU. I have some committed supporters...along with others we can move mountains. I agree with Kevin: just never forget us.

Kevin Cooper: We Dissent – An Occupy Death Row Production

A few of the definitions of the word dissent are: to withhold assent; to differ in opinion; difference of opinion; religious nonconformity; a written statement in which a justice disagrees with the opinion of the majority.

The above word “Dissent” and these few definitions speak in part to what all the different “Occupy Movements” are about.

While they all, each and every one of them, have different thoughts, ideas, tactics, agendas, and people who they represent, they all have, for the most part, “dissented” from what has been going on, and going on for decades, in this world and country.

We all disagree with, and do not want to be part of, the norm anymore! Nor do we want what is considered “normal” to be part of us, because the status quo is outright harming us on all of life’s different levels.

We all are saying in our own unique way that we don’t trust the people who are running the system, just as we don’t trust the system itself.

All across the world, people who don’t eat the same food, or wear the same garb, speak the same language, belong to the same religion or pray to the same named God, if they do pray, are dissenting.

Everywhere, people are standing up and fighting back, and speaking out from under the universal umbrella of humanity. This umbrella provides protection for the oppressed, from the oppressor.

The Occupy Movement as a whole is another form of the universal umbrella for human rights. From within this movement, we dissenters can speak the truth as to how the status quo, the ruler’s agenda, has a negative effect on “We the People” and this one planet we all must live on, and share.

Something must be seriously wrong and it is not us! The system is wrong and it has always been wrong and will always be wrong!

Some in the top 1% use their subordinates to ask, “What is it that they want?” Each movement within Occupy may want different things, especially since we all come from different places and have different real life and death experiences.

So while I can’t speak to what any one movement wants per se, I can speak to what all these different occupy movements don’t want.

We don’t want terrorism of any kind, against any people. We don’t want pollution of the air or water and other natural resources that Mother Earth produces; We don’t want a government that uses the mainstream news media to help a President send its people to war based on lies; We don’t want war in any of its forms; We don’t want sexism, racism, classism, or poverty!

We don’t want corruption, the death penalty, the prison industrial complex — either public or private prisons. We don’t want unions to be busted, nor do we want jobs sent overseas to other countries. We don’t want to go without healthcare or a good education. We don’t want police brutality or intimidation of any kind!

These few things mentioned above should go a long way to help people understand that there are two sides to every story, and while many seem to want to focus on just one side... “What is it that they want?” they must now come to terms with some of what we don’t want! If they do, then they will truly understand why we dissent. Everything that we don’t want is a very real part of what is wrong within this country and world, and it is having a very negative

affect on the quality and quantity of life of the masses of people—the poor!

All these manmade ills are happening and have happened simply because of greed and the very real fact that the powers that be – They really don't care about us!

So, we respectfully dissent!

Jane Dorotik

The 2.3 million individuals that we as a nation incarcerate has become one of the defining qualities of this country of ours. Never before in the history of civilization has a country locked away so many of its own people. Have we as society become so violent, so incorrigible that we must lock away so many? How did we get to this point under the guise of 'public safety?'

The cost of incarcerating women is immense. The average annual cost to incarcerate a woman is \$50,000 and the average cost to incarcerate a woman over 55 is a staggering \$138,000. Because of their role as mothers, the costs and consequences go far beyond the criminal justice system. Their children are either raised by other family members or are sent to the state's foster care system. Children whose parents are incarcerated are 4-5 times more likely to become incarcerated themselves, thus perpetuating the inter-generational incarceration cycle. Since 1991, the number of children with a mother in prison has increased by more than 131% and nationwide more than half of children whose mothers are incarcerated are under age 10.

The prison system is a system gone awry, gravely compromised and rampant with abuses. It is a terrifying breeding

ground for anger, hatred, sexism, homophobia and dominating exploitation of other human beings. We are warehousing people, punishing them and then returning them to society worse off than when they entered the system. The violence that then comes out of these prisons is a much greater threat to public safety than any foreign terrorist group ever could be.

Krista Funk

The bankers are legal racketeers. They are rewarded for their crimes. But the people at the bottom of the 99%, the poor, we are warehoused in the Prison Industrial Complex. They take away our ability to vote once we are inside because that might change the way things are. The rich get richer, the poor give up, and out of desperation they turn on their families and their communities. This cycle has to change!

Herman Wallace

Most all U.S. citizens benefit in some way from the capitalist mode of production, a system that exploits underdeveloped nations as well as 99% of its own nation's people. This creates a vast contradiction that causes much emotional pain.

In 1865, Union Generals admitted to Lincoln that they were on the verge of losing the war and could only turn the tides if Lincoln would free the slaves. Of course, slaves were never freed; it was only the form of slavery practiced in the South that was disrupted, moving from chattel slavery to wage slavery as has been so well documented.

Defy permits to occupy, civil disobedience is a form of struggle, and where there is no struggle, there is no change.

We must strengthen our forces by uniting with the Occupy movement and liberation movements throughout the world in order to disrupt the capitalist mode of production and send capitalism to its grave.

Free All Political Prisoners and Prisoners of Consciousness
All Power to the People

Robert King

First of all I would like to applaud and salute those in the Occupy movement for focusing on the hideous corruption of corporate America and the effects this corruption has on all of us in the 99%, including the well over two million individuals that fill our detention facilities and their families.

Being in prison, in solitary was terrible. It was a nightmare. My soul still cries from all that I witnessed and endured. It does more than cry – it mourns, continuously. I saw men so desperate that they ripped prison doors apart, starved and mutilated themselves. It takes every scrap of humanity

Court Confirms Ten-Year Sentence for Lynne Stewart

BY JEFF MACKLER
lynnestewart.org

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit today confirmed the 2010 decision of Federal District Court Judge John Koeltl to change his 28-month jail sentence for radical attorney and human rights activist, Lynne Stewart, to ten years. The court's June 28, 2012 decision was not unexpected.

Following federal prosecutors' appeal of what was widely considered a "lenient sentence," the Second Circuit all but ordered a compliant Koeltl to re-sentence Stewart and harshly. Koeltl did just that, forcing Stewart to appeal to the very court that originally pressured Koeltl, in what was widely considered a "career decision" to do Stewart great harm.

Stewart was convicted at an outrageous 2005 New York frame-up trial on five counts of conspiracy to aid and abet and provide material support to terrorism. Her crime? Representing the "blind Sheik," the Egyptian cleric, Omar Abdel Rachman, who has also been convicted on trumped-up conspiracy charges, Stewart issued a press release from her client stating his views on how Egyptian Muslim oppositionists should react to the ongoing crimes and murders of Egypt's then President Hosni Mubarak.

Stewart was convicted of violating a vaguely-worded court-ordered SAM (Special Administrative Measure) that barred her from revealing her client's opinions. The penalty for such violations had traditionally been a mild slap on the wrist, perhaps a warning to not repeat the "violation" and to bar attorney-client visits for a few months. Stewart, barring an unlikely Supreme Court reversal, will now serve her ten-year sentence with perhaps a one-year or ten percent reduction for "good behavior." She is presently incarcerated at FMC Carswell in Fort Worth, Texas.

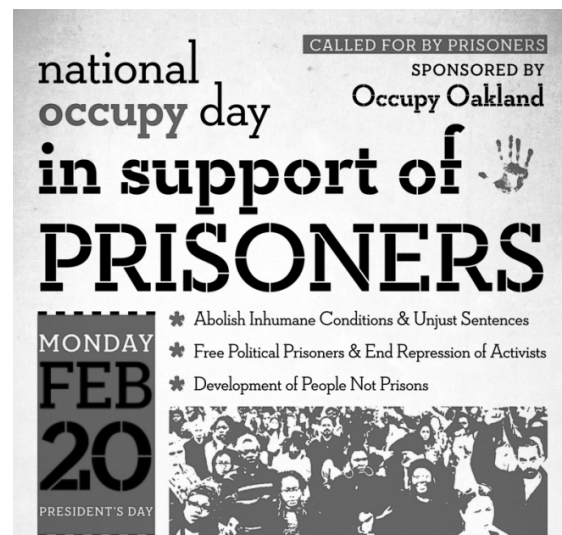
Koeltl's original 28-month sentence statement, in the face of federal prosecutors demanding 30 years, noted that Stewart, known for representing the poor and oppressed for three decades with little financial remuneration, was a "credit to the legal profession."

Stewart served as lead counsel for her client along with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who testified on her behalf during the trial. Clark himself has issued similar press releases with no punishment. Indeed, an indignant prosecutor during Stewart's trial suggested that Clark himself be charged with conspiracy, but his superiors decided that imprisoning the nation's former top attorney was not yet in their game plan and the suggestion was ignored.

The Second Circuit decision was based on the allegations that Stewart demonstrated insufficient deference to the original sentence. The court claimed that her statement to the media immediately following her sentence that, "I can do 28 months standing on my head" demonstrated contempt for the legal system.

I was standing next to Stewart at that moment and saw nothing other than a great expression of relief that she would not be sentenced, in effect to death, based on the 30 years that federal prosecutors sought. Stewart entered the sentencing hearing on that day, totally ignorant of whether her sentence would be the deeply punishing 30 years demanded by the federal prosecutors or perhaps something that she, 70 years old at the time, could "live with" and look forward to a normal life. She carried nothing but a plastic bag, some medicines and a toothbrush.

The Second Circuit also took umbrage at Stewart's courageous statement when she took the stand to make her closing remarks. Her attorney at that moment, Michael Ti-



comparison to social housing which is \$5-25/day – yet jails are being built in the place of housing.

If you want to genuinely make communities safer, the solution cannot be locking away more people for longer in jails where we only become more angry and disillusioned. We need to change the conditions under which people are locked away and we need strategies to make sure fewer people from our communities are locked up at all. We need to focus on rehabilitation and not warehouses. We need to focus on the root causes of why people end up here in the first place so that when people get out there is something better to go back to. We need to uphold human dignity, not deprive people of it. We can do this by safeguarding people's human rights, not by stripping them of all responsibility and opportunity. We need to foster community and interpersonal ties that are based on something deeper than the 'us against them' mentality that this system instills in us.

By moving towards a system that protects the rights of all people including prisoners we can move towards real justice for all.

Support Six Nations Land Defenders: An Open Letter to All Those Who Have Supported Me

BY ALEX HUNDERT [G20 political prisoner]
alexhundert.wordpress.com

This is a letter I am writing to everyone who supported me over the past two years, since our arrests brought to light the massive police operation against a group of solidarity activists and community organisers.

In that time I have received such an incredible amount of support from friends and family, from allies, from "movement" organisations, and also from civil liberties organisations, academic and journalist associations, and unions. I have a tremendous amount of gratitude and appreciation for all of it.

As I head back into jail on Tuesday, lots of people have been offering renewed support, and having seen how substantial that support can be, I am asking that the support people are hoping to give to me over the next year, be instead extended to the new Legal Defence Fund recently established for Six Nations Land Defenders.

The type of targeting, repression, manipulation, intimidation and harassment that were directed at anarchist and other activist communities in the lead up to the Olympics and the G20 are realities that are standard fare in Indigenous communities where resistance to colonialism is a

part of daily life.

However, in the years since the Reclamation action in 2006, people from Six Nations have not always seen the same kind of support that I and some of the other G20 defendants received.

Part of what is sadly ironic about the contrasting levels of support is that those who were most directly targeted by the intelligence/security operation against activists in the lead up to the G20 were those whose primary organising work includes building linkages and relationships with the strong network of Indigenous Sovereignists and their allies, migrant justice organisers, and anarchists. The policing operation was largely designed to disrupt those relationships and that movement building. These are standard tactics used against the resistance movements that arise from Indigenous and other racialized or otherwise targeted communities.

I would like to propose that we now strengthen those linkages by turning the massive capacity for support that we have developed over the past two years towards supporting front line land defenders from Six Nations.

Since 2006 there has been a particularly insidious wave of criminalisation and demonisation aimed at Haudenosaunee people who are asserting the sovereignty of the Six Nations Confederacy and defending the land. The tactics used in everyday policing operations against Six Nations, like with other Indigenous nations, are exactly the type of oppressive state security that the rest of the southern Ontario "activist community" got a taste of around the G20.

I would strongly encourage you to consider formally supporting the new Six Nations Land Defenders Legal Defence Fund.

The fund is currently being administered and coordinated by the April 28 Coalition which includes organisers from Six Nations as well as established allies from various unions and activist organisations. If the fund is successful, a formal board of directors will be established and procedures codified. For now, the immediate concern is fundraising for Francine "Flower" Doxtator and Kevin "Sleeper" Greene, though the goal is a sustainable fund that can cover legal costs for people from Six Nations who are charged while engaging in land defence actions.

Support for the Six Nations Land Defenders Legal Defence Fund could include a formal endorsement, a public statement of support, promotion within your organisations or networks, and/or making donations. Please contact the April 28 Coalition (kanonhstaton@gmail.com) for more information, or visit this link to donate directly: bit.ly/K39HCN.

Thanks again so much for your continued support.

to stay focused and sane in this environment. The pain and suffering are everywhere, constantly with you. But, it was also so much more than that. I had dreams and they were beautiful dreams. I used to look forward to the nights when I could sleep and dream. There's no describing the day to day assault on your body and your mind and the feelings of hopelessness and despair.

There is far more than a casual relationship between the Occupy Movement and the work so many of you are doing to change the criminal justice system.

The same people who make the laws that favor the bankers, make the laws that fill our prisons and detention centers. We have to continue to make the connection between Wall St. and the prison industrial complex. The growth of the private prison industry is just one symptom of this unholy alliance.

I stand in solidarity with the Occupy 4 Prisoners rally and hope these rallies shed further light on the insidious effects of prisons for profit and politics.

Free all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

Steve Champion

I want to thank all the participants of Occupy San Quentin for being here today. Thank you for reading my statement.

My name is Steve Champion. I've been incarcerated for over 30 years and twenty-nine of those years and counting, have been spent on San Quentin's death row.

We are living in a critical time in history. There is a global and domestic crisis going on. Our body politics is under siege because it is dominated by crony capitalism and social and economic indifference. We are fast moving toward a bicentric society of "haves" and "have nots." If we fail to take a strong stand to transform this nation then we can expect an ill forecast for the future.

One of the most powerful unions in the state of California is the Correctional Peace Organization Association (CCPOA). As tuition for students are being raised, schools being shut down, cuts being made in the fields of education, social programs, nurses and other care-givers, everyone is being forced to make a sacrifice. But we don't hear cuts being made in the salaries of prison guards. Why is that? Because the CCPOA (through rigorous lobbying in Sacramento) have the ear of California State Legislators. They make huge campaign contributions to both the Governor and State Legislators. This allows them to peddle influence and get implemented the policies they want in place.

What this ought to tell those of us who are concerned about social justice, prison reform and the abolishment of the

death penalty is we have to up the ante of our struggle. If we want to see the eradication of the death penalty and the prison, it requires a multifaceted approach. It is not enough for prisoners to struggle on the inside; it is not enough to picket, protest or occupy specific places. Those things are important. But we also need to have a robust voice and seat among the decision makers who shape, influence and create policies that we vehemently oppose. We need to build a grassroots political organization to challenge those in power.

Too often, our social movements are on the defensive. We react as opposed to being proactive and taking initiative on programs we want implemented and policies we want changed. Building a grassroots political organization can facilitate a lot of the fragmentation that exists in our movements by uniting us. It would give focus to our objectives. If we don't do this, then who? If we don't do this now, then when?

The one percent who dominate the political and economic system in this country is not an accident. It was carefully planned. They want a government for the one percent and by the one percent, but not by the people.

We have to strengthen and intensify our struggle. We have to become more committed. We have to remember that our struggle isn't a sprint, but a marathon. What we do today will alter the course of history tomorrow. Thank you.

Long live the struggle.

Todd Ashker

You all know we've been on a "counter propaganda" campaign here [in Pelican By State Prison] since Dec. 09 and much of what myself, Castellano, Sitawa, and Mutope have in mind in our writings about our struggle and resistance 24/7 is in line with our counter propaganda campaign!! Actually, I'd prefer criminal prosecution because 1) I'd be acquitted and 2) the publicity it would garner would be real great for the cause. Now that it's not a DA referral (I expect due to legislative inquiry), I expect to be railroaded & found guilty administratively (first time guilty of a serious rule violation since Jan 94).

This will be used by the Board of Parole Hearings to issue me a longer parole hearing deferral when I go in Aug 2012 (probably a 7-10 year deferral). It will mean no art material or photos for a year, etc., etc., etc. This bogus CDC 115 RVR should be getting propagated out there as much as possible as well as other CDCR/PBSP dirty shit.

This is where I (and many others) stand on this struggle: For more than 30 years CDCR policy and practice has been "us vs. them" — viewing us as the enemy who they are at war with.

The 1st thing one does in war is propagate against and de-humanize the enemy. For 22+ years PBSP has been propagated as housing “the worst of the worst,” responsible for all the state’s gang problems.

We see it in reverse. CDCR (the prison industrial complex) are the criminals committing multi billions in fraud and many murders each year (law makers and courts are enablers and just as guilty). CDCR is housing us to put money in their pockets, all of which is part of the bigger problems – the class war in this country: the 1% vs. the 99% (the ultra rich v. poor). It’s no longer a “people of color v. white man” issue; it’s a “poor v. ultra rich” issue. The so-called middle class is long gone.

We’re at war (the poor 99% including the prisoners) and the people in power are scared to death and they should be. Most of us should have been out long ago. A life sentence has never meant “life” until the last 30 years. Most of us are many years beyond our minimum eligible parole dates.

We’re not serving a legally valid sentence anymore. We’re here illegally, immorally, and unethically based on politics and money.

Our supporters need to propagate against the system at every opportunity and tie our struggle to that of the poor and disenfranchised at large. This is just the start. We plan to force CDCR to open up all the level IV General Populations and spend money on our benefit, such as rehab programs, etc. and force change to sentences and paroles.

Our supporters need to see the system for what it really is and to educate people about it to bring more support in. It’s important to humanize and decriminalize us to the mainstream. Granted we’re “convicted felons,” but we’ve already served above and beyond any form of a valid prison term.

We shouldn’t even be recognizing that these CDCR “criminals” have any power over us. We really should be actively resisting our illegal confinement a lot more and our people outside should be doing so too, with all of our beings, until these “criminals” cut us loose or kill us.

Right now we’re waiting – waiting to get out to these General Population prisons. Then we’ll straighten out the B.S. on them so these people can no longer justify warehousing everyone. Then, we’ll go from there. People need to realize these “criminals” are the real enemy who we’re at war with and act accordingly in a smart way. The time is coming when they will fall and it’s not too far in the future. But we all must stay strong and do our part to make it happen. We need strong outside support. People should not fear nor be intimidated by CDCR’s “crime syndicate” staff. They’re really cowards in truth and need to be forced to get right.

As always, I send my best to all.

FROM CCWP WOMEN (Alisha, Veronica, Margarita)

Truth is...
The picture I’m about to paint can only be heard,
so listen closely to every word.
Innocent until proven guilty?
They can’t be serious,
In a system where
Drug dealers get more time
than serial killers,
juveniles get tried as adults,
before they become one.
I guess nobody musta warned ’em
about playing with knives and guns.
Guilty by association?
That’s what it’s called
then they get hauled
off to the pen,
where some girls become boyz and some boyz
become women.
Sitting around
unaware of who they are,
wounded while in the belly of the beast.
I call ’em invisible scars,
the kind that can’t be healed
by Neosporin and stitches.
Went in walkin’
came out switching.
Could you imagine what it’s like?
Being told that the beginning
is really the end of your life.
3 strikes and you’re out!
Some think it’s a game,
but it’s really outta my hands.
Lord knows, I’m not tryna do life
on installment plans.
Everybody wanna be a part
Of the occupy system,
I need to occupy my life and
find something to do with it,
otherwise it’s useless.
Some may mistake my words as verbally abusive,
But the truth is...
How do we expect our kids to grow
from concrete,
accept defeat,
have to fend for themselves
in cells where it is dark
and hot as hell?
More parents come to see kids in jail
than they do at graduations.
That’s cuz the new diploma
is parole or probation
Fucked up situation
No contender.
“Now I’ll be gone until November”
Listening to a public pretender
telling me to plea

Prisoners’ Statement on Prisoners Justice Day

alexhundert.wordpress.com

On Prisoners’ Justice Day in every jail in Canada and in prisons around the world, inmates will go on a 24-hour hunger strike. We do this to remember Eddy Nolan who died in Millhaven Penitentiary in Ontario on August 10 1974 as a victim of the inhumane conditions in that prison at that time. We do this to remember all of the inmates who fought and the two who died in a four day riot in April of 1971 at Kingston Penitentiary. Both of those incidents led to major reforms in the Canadian prison system. We fast so that we ourselves remember. We strike to remind the institutions and the world that even behind bars we are still entitled to human rights and human dignity, and we can still fight for both.

This statement for Prisoners’ Justice Day 2012 was written by Alex Hundert, with input from more than a dozen inmates inside the Central North Correctional Complex in Penetanguishene Ontario, and Mandy Hiscocks at the Vanier Centre for Women in Milton Ontario. Both are provincial jails in Ontario, Canada. This statement has been signed so far by 56 inmates in Penetang and Vanier, which is 100% of all of those who had the opportunity to read it. Most of those at Penetang who provided input into the very first draft of the statement were unable to sign onto this final version as they were, for reasons unrelated to the drafting of this statement, either moved or are now in the hole (administrative segregation).

It is an outrage that the federal government is enacting the first measures of its Omnibus Crime Bill C-10, the so-called ‘Safe Streets and Communities Act’ on August 9, just one day before the annual Prisoners’ Justice Day. This bill will only serve to make prisons more crowded and will make our prison system even less about justice than it currently is. We want people to know how bad things already are before they get worse.

In provincial jails in Ontario we have no functional protections for our human rights the way that federal penitentiaries have had since the 1970s when inmates fought and died for them. In provincial jails we are subject to arbitrary authority with no effective grievance process. Provincial prisons are significantly more overcrowded than federal penitentiaries. Close to 70% of inmates in Ontario provincial institutions have not actually been convicted, and are instead awaiting bail or trial or in many cases are awaiting deportation.

With the loss of conditional sentences and instead new harsher measures (especially for youth) and mandatory minimums, there will be an even greater reliance on the prison system. We are concerned and angry that the federal laws are going to do nothing but aggravate an already unacceptable situation.

Rehabilitation programs have been decimated and jails have become little more than warehouses. For example, this year we will see a massive cut to the Drug Treatment Program by \$42 million dollars and under Bill C-10 this money will now be directly transferred to investigations and prosecutions. Bill C-10 will cost Ontario an estimated \$1 billion dollars on new prison infrastructure, while social programs and jobs are gutted, further driving people into poverty. The Ontario government says that the average cost to keep someone in a provincial prison is \$183/day in



RIGHT TO EXIST, RIGHT TO RESIST!
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WAR ON LAND DEFENDERS & THE ENVIRONMENT
building an anti-imperialist environmentalist movement
and uniting with indigenous people's struggles

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ilps.canada@gmail.com

Samidoun Statement on Prisoners Justice Day

samidoun.ca

August 10, Prisoners' Justice Day, was initiated by prisoners at Millhaven Maximum Security Penitentiary in 1976 as a day to remember all of the men, women and youth who have died inside Canadian prisons, and to draw attention to the conditions that contribute to prisoner deaths. Thousands of prisoners across Canada went on a one day hunger strike to protest the deaths of prisoners and, in particular, the use of solitary confinement, and supporters outside held vigils and fasts outside prisons across the country. In the ensuing years, prisoners in the U.S. and Europe also joined in 24 hour fasts on August 10 for justice, dignity and against solitary confinement and repression.

36 years later, on Prison Justice Day 2012, Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network stands in solidarity with prisoners in Canada and around the world struggling for justice on this day. We note in particular that the prison system disproportionately affects Indigenous people and communities, and has been a weapon of colonialism and destruction further uprooting Indigenous nations from their land. Prisons continue to reflect the horrors of the residential schools, as people, families and communities affected by residential schools continue to be frequently criminalized today.

Refugee claimants, migrants, asylum seekers, racialized and oppressed communities are subject to detention and imprisonment, and heavily criminalized physically in prisons and through government rhetoric in Canada. The creation of security certificate regimes and other forms of "anti-terror" imprisonment particularly target Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities, and highlight the ways in which political imprisonment, criminalization and racism go hand in hand for all prisoners. And while the government denies refugees access to health care, defunds programs and supports for migrants, refugees and communities, it pursues the building of ever more prisons across the country.

Palestinian prisoners in occupation prisons struggle daily against solitary confinement, racism, and a mass imprisonment system that targets Palestinians as a whole for criminalization and subjugation. Yet Palestinian prisoners have been a beacon of resistance and steadfastness, leaders of the Palestinian movement for liberation. Today, at least 4 Palestinian prisoners are on hunger strike – Samer al-Barq (81 days), Hassan Safadi (51 days), Ayman Sharawna (41 days), and Samer al-Issawi (10 days) – demanding freedom and an end to their unjust imprisonment without charge or trial.

Samidoun expresses its solidarity with all those in prisons struggling against solitary confinement, racism and oppression, and longs for a day of freedom, justice and liberation for all.

Solidarity Statement Against the Raids and Grand Jury

On Wednesday July 25, the FBI conducted a series of coordinated raids against activists in Portland, Olympia, and Seattle. They subpoenaed several people to a special federal grand jury, and seized computers, black clothing and anarchist literature. This comes after similar raids in Seattle in July and earlier raids of squats in Portland.

Though the FBI has said that the raids are part of a violent crime investigation, the truth is that the federal authorities are conducting a political witch-hunt against anarchists and others working toward a more just, free, and equal society. The warrants served specifically listed anarchist literature as evidence to be seized, pointing to the fact that the FBI and police are targeting this group of people because of their political ideas. Pure and simple, these raids and the grand jury hearings are being used to intimidate people whose politics oppose the state's agenda. During a time of growing economic and ecological crises that are broadly affecting people across the world, it is an attempt to push back any movement towards creating a world that is humane, one that meets every person's needs rather than serving only the interests of the rich.

This attack does not occur in a vacuum. Around the country and around the world, people have been rising up and resisting an economic system that puts the endless pursuit of profit ahead of the basic needs of humanity and the Earth. From the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement to now Anaheim, people are taking to the streets. In each of these cases, the state has responded with brutal political repression. This is not a coincidence. It is a long-term strategy by state agencies to stop legitimate political challenges to a status quo that exploits most of the world's people.

We, the undersigned, condemn this and all other political repression. While we may have differences in ideology or chose to use different tactics, we understand that we are in a shared struggle to create a just, free, and liberated world, and that we can only do this if we stand together. We will not let scare tactics or smear campaigns divide us, intimidate us, or stop us from organizing and working for a better world.

No more witch-hunts! An injury to one is an injury to all.

Y?
Cuz I'm young, black, and sell crack in da streets.
Babies committing robbery,
1st degree.
Even with blind eyes
I could see it ain't cool.
They building prison programs
and tearing down schools.
We all got an opinion
just like we all have a choice.
No one can hear you speak
if you don't use your voice!

Veronica Hernandez

My name is Veronica Hernandez and I am a 20-year-old young woman that has been incarcerated since I was 16-years-old and tried as an adult at 17-years-old.

Prior to being charged as an adult I was appointed a no-good attorney that couldn't have cared less about me or the outcome of my case and consequently had put absolutely no effort into representing me adequately. There are no law libraries or legal services at Juvenile Hall so a juvenile rather it be for better or for worse had literally no choice but to be dependant on his or her court-appointed attorney and trust that him or her will lead them in the right direction. Unfortunately, for me that direction was to adult court where I now face a life sentence should I be convicted.

In California, people who are 16-years-old are eligible to be tried as adults and in some states, the minimum age to be tried as an adult is 13-years-old and in others, there is no age limit at all depending on the nature of the crime. Regardless of the age, juveniles that are tried as adults are subjected to harsher punishments that juvenile court judges lack the power to impose such as life without the possibility of parole or sentences that are so outrageous like "43 to life" or "51 to life" that those sentences might as well be life without the possibility of parole.

Although a juvenile's right to a hearing before a case can be transferred to adult court was established by Kent V. U.S. (U.S. Sup. Ct. 1966) there are still cases that get transferred to adult court without a hearing at all and that is known as a "direct filing." The D.A. can file a direct filing on a juvenile that is 14-years-old or older and that contradicts California's so-called minimum age of 16-years old or older to be eligible at being tried as an adult and a juvenile's so-called right to a hearing.

The human mind doesn't stop developing until the age of 25, so it is ridiculous that a judge can even be given the power to determine that a juvenile can never be rehabilitated and will remain at the same state of mind that the juvenile was in at the time of their crime was committed for the rest of his or her life. Aside from ridiculous...it is outrageous...oppressive...opprobrious...and something that

needs to cease...abolish this oppression and give children the chance at life that each and everyone of them deserves.

Sean Swain: Occupy, Liberate, De-Colonize: A Statement for Occupy Columbus from Prison

In 2007, in a published interview I observed that if Ohio prisoners simply laid on their bunks for 30 days, the system would collapse. I wasn't talking about just the prison system, but Ohio's entire economy.

I came to that conclusion because I recognized that 50,000 [Ohio] prisoners work for pennies per day making the food, taking out the trash, mopping the floors. We produce parts for Honda and other multi-nationals at Ohio Penal Industries (OPI), making millions of dollars in profit for the State. If we stopped participating in our own oppression, the State would have to hire workers at union-scale wages to make our food, take out the trash, and mop the floors; slave labor for Honda and others would cease.

Ohio would lose millions of dollars a day in production. The State's economy would not recover for a decade.

When I made that observation, I didn't know for certain that I was right. I suspected I was. But more than a year later, prison officials came to get me. My cell was plastered with crime tape. All of the fixtures, including lights, sink, and toilet, were removed and inspected, something that I haven't seen happen in 20 years of captivity. I was taken to segregation and slated for transfer to super-max.

The reason? My observation in a year-old published interview, that Ohio's economy would collapse without prison labor. That's when I knew my observation was right. The enemy confirmed it.

I eventually avoided super-max because friends and supporters made enough noise, but I am now on a Security Threat Group list even though I have never been part of any organization, and my incoming mail is screened.

I share all of this in order to underscore how seriously and irrationally terrified the state is about the possibility of anyone awakening the prisoner population to its own power. The state is hysterically shit-their-pants petrified of an organized prisoner resistance, the way plantation owners feared a slave uprising.

I was subjected to repression in 2008. Since then, the situation for the State has become even more dire. Given austerity cuts and privatization of a few prisons, the guard-to-prisoner ratio has drastically dropped, leading to more disruption in the standard prison operations. On top of that, the Kasich administration's efforts to bust public workers' unions, though a failure, has destroyed the morale of guards and staff, the majority of whom now only care about collecting their pay checks. With each downturn in

the economy, the prison system takes more essential services from prisoners – from medical to food to clothes – and thereby increases hostility and resentment of the prisoner population.

With very little effort, very little money, and a great deal of advanced planning, Ohio’s prison population could be inspired to completely disrupt the operation of the entire prison complex. If such a disruption were to occur, it would cause more than the economic collapse of the State that I already discussed. Such a disruption would ultimately seize from the State the power the power to punish. This would pose more than a simple political problem for the government: in such a scenario, it loses all power to enforce its edicts and impose itself; the government ceases to be the government.

Such a development would be a great benefit to the Occupy Movement. While Occupy directly challenges the capitalist system, it must be remembered that the global capitalist matrix uses governments as factory managers. If you protest private bankers, you get beaten by public cops. Given the recent bail-outs, the public trust is nothing more than a corporate slush-fund. It is nearly impossible in this blackwater-enron out-source era to tell where governments end and corporations begin – and vice-versa.

The prison complex is an essential component to the larger capitalist matrix. If an Occupy-prisoner collaboration in Ohio could take the prison system out of the enemy’s control – if the Occupation could expand to the prisons – we can collectively create a prototype for the larger movement to replicate, building momentum that collapses prison complex after prison complex, paralyzing state government after state government, spreading like a computer virus, liberating and de-colonizing the most-essential and intimidating bulwark against freedom the empire relies upon: the prisons.

For those of you who are part of the 99% but don’t really want to identify with this segment of the 99% and object to the possibly causing all of these criminals to go free, I remind you: The most hardened and irremediable criminals, the most ruthless killers and rapists, currently run the Fortune 500; they dictate U.S. foreign policy; they drive cars emblazoned with “To Protect and To Serve”. You serve the agenda of those criminals if you turn your back on these “criminals.” Without us, you’re not the 99%. If my math is right, without us, you’re only about 94%.

This 5% is only waiting for the invitation. You can let your enemy keep his slaves and possibly defeat you over time, or you can liberate his slaves and defeat him quickly. To me, it’s a no-brainer. It’s a matter of actually living up to what you present to be – something your enemy has never done.

We’re still waiting for that invitation.

Gerardo Hernandez

On behalf of the Cuban 5 we send you our solidarity on this the National Occupy Day in Support of Prisoners. We know first hand about the injustice inherent in the U.S. judicial system. In our case we are serving long sentences for defending our country against terrorist attacks by monitoring groups whose whole existence is to carry out violent acts against Cuba. It is our hope that what you are doing today will bring attention to the plight of those behind bars and help bring about a more humane society that provides jobs, housing, education and opportunity instead of incarceration.

A big embrace to you all
Venceremos!

Leonard Peltier

From inside a prison cell I call out to you. Hello to Mumia Abu Jamal supporters. Hello to Troy Davis supporters. Hello to Occupy Oakland. Hello to my own supporters. Hello to everyone else whose conscience compels you to gather here today. I’m so thankful this country and the world still has people who look beyond their own lives and their own condition to remember others who for different reasons have become victims of a deeply flawed justice system. I believe whenever people gather together with an interest of the common good of all men in their hearts, that is a sacred gathering and pleases the Creator. For what man is a man and what woman is a woman who does not try to make the world a better place?

Today in the shadow of San Quentin, the belly of the beast housing 700 men the state wants to kill, you come together to speak of injustice and reform. While they will not come out and say it, I have been given a life sentence for a crime I did not commit. I defended my people from a government waging war on defenseless elders and traditional believers. Many friends of mine died in that war, and because two FBI agents also died, I have been in jail for 36 years. I have been held despite evidence the government withheld and manipulated evidence, coerced witnesses, and did all they could do to keep me from proving my innocence. I have been held longer than their own laws say I should be. All because I am a symbol and a reminder of what they will do to anyone who stands up against their authority. But all this shows is that they only have violent access to authority. They do not have righteousness or decency or even legality on their side. Throughout history all such systems that ignored justice and rights to rule by force eventually fell.

We have seen that minorities are incarcerated far more and for far longer periods of time than Caucasians. We further know that minorities receive the death sentence in far greater numbers. We know poor people get convicted and serve longer than those with money and influence. Even if you support a death penalty these facts alone indicate that

Gaza Talks

ANONYMOUS

as i walk through the check-points-
“PASS!” fires at me.
i grimace, flashing the papers that allow me
to get to my destination.
i never make eye contact,
only press my paper on the gates.
we’re all in uniforms.
weapons surround us as we weave through traffic/
long lines of lost souls
trekking through the fog of
broken lives,
broken hearts and
hard life sentences.
a few rebels are sprinkled in the mix.
lethargy surrounds me.
i’ve been able to blend in,
only slightly detectable
when my face goes stone at the sounds of
“RIGHT SIDE OF THE LINE!
SINGLE FILE!”

i’m shuffled back into a place that
at least 90% of my surroundings don’t know exist,
even though the guards are the same,
the walls are the same,
the mentalities are the same and...
the slow motion genocide is the EXACT same!

the beast continues to chomp away at the
people whom are less fortunate.
i’m part of the few that have
merged with the feelings of rage of the oppressed!
Suheir Hammad’s poetry has become a
Bible Study in my daily walk.
i pass the check points/gates/cages
and almost fail to realize
This is McConnell Unit
(and not Palestine)
which is like Polunsky
which is like Telford
which is like Michaels-
the prototypes
of a new oppression:
control unit prisons!
boxes within boxes within boxes.
we have apartheid here too!
we smuggle tastes of freedom under our clothes too!

we hustle for extra food too!
just trying to
reclaim those feelings of
humanity stripped from our fingertips.

my face contorts at orders and

those that accept them with no rejection.
at least give me some disdain.
our annihilation has become a sugar-coated bomb.
in our gluttony and ignorance
we greedily gobble down the
high cholesterol laws and policies
that are slowly
creeping through our valves
getting ready to
STRANGLE OUR HEARTS!

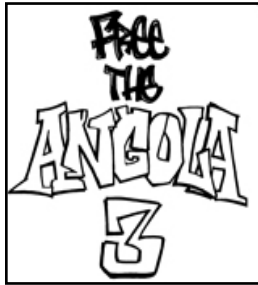
there has been no true cease fire.
just as Israel has increased the
number of settlers in the West Bank
from 190,000 to more than half a million
Texas has built over 120 prisons
over a span of 20 years.
137 prisons total.
political minded prisoners should be sprouting abundantly!
Texas and Gaza are fraternal twins separated at birth-
Both spawning concentration camp like conditions.
amerika can’t swallow the Intifada breathing down
their door.

we must tap into the wind of
international consciousness
which brings our pain to ONE inhale
and our actions into ONE exhale.

i’ve overridden my prison #'s with
Arabic tattooed on my neck-
my body
(chest to back)
is now a billboard for revolutionary messages.

YES!
our massacre is unfolding in slow motion
and not even death
should stop us
from trying to rewind this
fucked up story
which has become our
LIFE!

Supporters Rally for Albert Woodfox



Angola 3 supporters filled the federal courtroom in Baton Rouge, LA, from May 29 through May 31 for Albert Woodfox's evidentiary hearing on racial discrimination in the selection of the grand jury foreperson in West Feliciana Parish, where in 1993 Woodfox was reindicted for the 1972 murder of a prison guard.

Woodfox sat at the defense table with his team of attorneys, his feet shackled and with one hand chained to his waist with two prison guards sitting just a few feet behind him, yet several times he managed to acknowledge the family, friends and supporters who had taken off from work and school to be in the courtroom.

The first day of the hearing, a bus of supporters and activists from New Orleans joined others from all around Louisiana, as well as from New York City; Houston; Oakland, Calif.; Atlanta; and Memphis, Tenn. International supporters were there from Britain, Scotland and Ireland.

Sitting in the courtroom each day were Robert King, the only freed member of the Angola 3; Woodfox's brother, Michael Mable; Black Panther historian Billy X Jennings, publisher of "It's about Time BPP"; activist and playwright Parnell Herbert, whose play, "The Angola 3," was recently produced in New Orleans; Gordon Roddick from Reprieve in Britain; Southern University law professor Angela A. Allen-Bell; Everett Harvey Thompson, Amnesty International's Southern regional director in Atlanta; and Mwalimu Johnson, with the Capital Post-Conviction Project in New Orleans.

Woodfox's case began 40 years ago, deep in rural southern Louisiana, when he and two other young Black men, Herman Wallace and Robert King, were silenced for exposing racial segregation, systematic corruption and horrific abuse in the biggest prison in the U.S. at that time, an 18,000-acre, former slave plantation called Angola.

Protests such as hunger strikes and work stoppages were organized by prisoners, as were political education classes. A chapter of the Black Panther Party was formed. Prisoners called for investigations to uncover numerous unconstitutional and inhumane practices.

After a prison guard was killed in a 1972 rebellion, officials framed the three activists and threw them into solitary confinement. King was released from prison in 2001, but

Woodfox and Wallace remain in solitary confinement to this day and are continuing to fight their convictions.

Solitary confinement and racism

The matter heard in court was the issue of racial discrimination in the selection of the grand jury foreperson in 1993, when Woodfox was reindicted for the guard's murder, after having had his conviction tossed out in 1992.

The foreperson of the grand jury that indicted Woodfox for his 1998 retrial was white.

Woodfox's lawyers presented expert testimony on the consistent underrepresentation of African Americans as grand jury forepersons compared to their numbers in the general population and pool of eligible voters.

The hearings were presided over by Judge James A. Brady, the same judge who overturned Woodfox's conviction the second time in 2008. Brady is expected to rule before the end of 2012.

April 17 was the 40th anniversary of the Angola 3 being held in solitary confinement — held every day for 40 years in a six-by-nine-foot cell! These cruel and debilitating conditions are internationally considered torture.

A delegation of Angola 3 supporters joined Amnesty International at a press conference at the Louisiana state Capitol on April 17. They then submitted to Gov. Bobby Jindal's office more than 67,000 petition signatures from people in 125 countries urging that Woodfox and Wallace be removed from solitary confinement. Jindal refused to meet with the delegation.

In a statement, Thompson argued that "the 40-year isolated incarceration of these two men is scandalous. There is no legitimate penal purpose for keeping these men in solitary. Louisiana authorities must end this inhumanity."

Thirty-three people stood in a line on the Capitol steps, each holding a large letter to form the message: "40 YEARS OF SOLITARY" and "40 YEARS OF TORTURE!"

The story of the Angola 3 has been spotlighted by many media outlets. There are two new art exhibits focusing on the Angola 3: "The House That Herman Built" and "The Deeper They Bury Me, The Louder My Voice Becomes." A play — "The Angola 3" — written by New Orleans native Parnell Herbert, has been produced in New Orleans and Houston.

Information on the case of the Angola 3 can be found on Facebook as well as at Angola3Action.org; Angola3.org; and Angola3News.blogspot.com.

we must have a moratorium on executions until we can rectify these issues. It's the only reasonable alternative to continuing a racist and biased system.

I believe a civilized country does not commit murder. Murder is not justice no matter the crime or situation. Justice is all parties agreeing on a suitable outcome. Murder does not bring closure to anyone or any situation. Murder does not create healing. We know that America has executed innocent people. We further know more innocents will die unless this system is rebuilt from the ground up. It is true that for those working to right these wrongs, the life you save may be your own.

And so my friends I ask you to look around. Look at your friends and family and allies. Appreciate them and support one another, for in doing so you support myself, Mumia, and so many others wrongly serving time. Know that I am with you and appreciate your efforts. Know that I am in the water that refreshes you, in the food that nourishes you, and in the air that sustains you. You cannot lock justice within walls or bars. Justice surges through all of us and unites us. Justice has done more to further the advance of mankind's endeavors than any gun or weapon. Thank you for your belief in Justice. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your love. Thank you my brothers and sisters. Thank you.

Mitakuye Oyasmin, We Are All Related

Herman Bell

In your pushback for social justice, you give us hope. Failure to claim your rights is failure to know whether they exist or not. Abstract terms though they be, you make them real. A parasitic social order has fully emerged and affixed itself to our existence and now requires our unquestioned loyalty and obedience to its will. And we have come dangerously close to complying.

Ordinary people doing uncommonly brave things have rekindled our hopes that we can do better this time in safeguarding the public trust. Far too many of us have grown complacent in our civic and moral responsibility, which explains in part how Wall Street, big banks, and corporations, in political connivance, have gotten away with so much. So we have to take some responsibility for that.

I think we are now coming to understand that. Your occupation in these troubling times calls attention to much of what is wrong in our society. So keep it tight: no elitism, no arrogance, no divisiveness, and consult the elders as you go forth, because youth often do the wrong thing for the right reason.

And in a clear, unwavering voice wherever you go, wherever you speak, wherever you occupy, demand release of our political prisoners, for they are the embodiment of our movement's resolve. And don't let anyone punk you out,

because what you do matters. Big jobs call for big people and you already stand pretty tall in my eyes.

David Gilbert

Your creativity, energy, and love of humanity bring warm sunshine to many of us behind these prison walls. You've eloquently and concisely articulated the central problem: a society run by the 1% and based on corporate greed as opposed to human need. That obscenity of power and purpose creates countless specific and urgent concerns. Among those, the criminal injustice system is not just a side issue but essential to how the 1% consolidate power.

The U.S. mania for putting people behind bars is counterproductive in its stated goal of public safety. A system based on punishment and isolation breeds anger and then difficulty in functioning upon return to society — things that generate more crime. The U.S., which imprisons people at about seven times the rate of other industrialized countries, has a higher rate of violent crime. Punishment does not work. A transformative, community-based justice model would be more effective as well as more humane. It would both support victims and work with offenders, to enable them to function well and make a positive contribution.

Although the punitive approach does not make communities safe, it has served the rulers well. In the same 30 years that the 1% nearly tripled their share of U.S. national income—with global inequities far steeper—the number of people behind bars in the U.S. went up from about 500,000 to 2.3 million. It's no coincidence. The "war on crime" started in 1969 as a code for attacking the Black Liberation Movement, at a moment when that movement was at the front of a widespread wave of radical social action which seriously threatened the dominance of the 1%. Mass incarceration, especially of people of color, was an important part of the 1%'s strategy for holding on to their wealth and power.

The second way the criminal injustice system works to keep the powerful in power is that as the 1% steal more and more of humanity's wealth, they face the pressing political need of deflecting attention from their colossal crimes. Over the past 30 years mainstream politics have been driven by a series of coded forms of racial scapegoating—against "criminals," welfare mothers, immigrants, Muslims, the poor who get token concessions from the government—to turn the frustration and anger of the majority of white people away from the rulers and toward the racially constructed "other." Confronting that demagoguery and hatred is critical to resisting the 1%'s offensive.

As activists, we often grapple with a tension between prioritizing the needs of the most oppressed—based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ability—and maintaining a universal vision and broad unity. But those two important concerns are not in contradiction. The only road to prin-

ciplend and lasting unity is through dismantling the barriers formed by the series of particular and intense oppressions. The path to our commonality is solidarity based on recognition of—and opposition to—the ways this society makes us unequal. Our challenge is to forge this synthesis in practice, on the ground, in the daily work of building the movement of the 99%.

With an embrace to you and your inspiring stand, one love.

Jalil A. Muntaqim

The 2.3 million U.S. citizens in prison represent more than a problem of criminality. Rather, the human toll of the U.S. prison industrial complex addresses and indicts the very foundation of America's history.

In 1865, the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution served to institutionalize prisons as a slave system. “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime....shall exist within the United States.”

This Amendment evolved out of the Civil War allegedly to abolish chattel slavery. However, since that time, prisons have become an industrial complex. As an industry, its investors are financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs & Co., Prudential Insurance Co. of America, Smith Barney Shearson, Inc., and Merrill Lynch & Co. Understand, these investors in this slave industry in 1994 are no different from investors in the slave system prior to 1865.

The political system supports this industry by passing laws that enhance criminal penalties, increase penal incarceration and restrict parole. Former U.S. President Clinton's 1985 Crime Bill effectively caused the criminalization of poverty, exponentially increasing the number of people being sent to prison. On May 12, 1994, the *Wall Street Journal* featured an article entitled, “Making Crime Pay: Triangle of Interests Created Infrastructure to Fight Lawlessness; Cities See Jobs; Politicians Sense a Popular Issue and Businesses Cash In—The Cold War of the ‘90s.” The article clearly indicated how prisons have become a profitable industry, including so-called private prisons.

Given this reality, the struggle to abolish prisons is a struggle to change the very fabric of American society. It is a struggle to remove the financial incentive—the profitability of the prison/slave system. This will essentially change how the U.S. addresses the issue of poverty, of ethnic inequality, and misappropriation of tax dollars. It will speak to the reality that the prison system is a slave system, a system that dehumanizes the social structure and denigrates America's moral social values.

The prison system today is an industry that, as did chattel slavery, profits off the misery and suffering of other human beings. From politicians to bankers to the business investment community, the prison industrial complex is a

multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise, all of which has been sanctioned by the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

It is imperative that those of you here come to terms with the reality that America is the prison industrial complex, and that the silence and inaction of Americans is complicit in maintaining a system that in its very nature is inhumane. Abolish the American prison industrial complex!!

All Power to the People! All Power to the People! All Power to the People!

Survivor of Domestic Violence Gets 20 Years

BY MARGARET VIGGIANI

Freedom Socialist, Vol. 33, No. 4,
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In August 2010, only nine days after giving birth, Marissa Alexander fired a warning shot into the kitchen ceiling of her home in Jacksonville, Fla., to fend off her abusive estranged husband. Alexander is a young Black mother of three.

The jury deliberated 12 minutes before convicting Alexander of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon — even though her husband had previously hospitalized her, she had no prior criminal record, and no one was injured.

On May 11, 2012, a judge rejected Alexander's “stand your ground” defense and sentenced her to 20 years under Florida's mandatory minimum sentencing rules. As is so often true for abused women, especially those of color, the “justice system” proved to be anything but.

Outraged supporters around the country, including Radical Women (RW), are organizing rallies, vigils, and letter campaigns. Seattle RW wrote a statement and has collected hundreds of signatures on a petition demanding Alexander's release. The statement and a link to an online petition can be found at www.radicalwomen.org.

In June, Friends of Marissa Alexander organized a Freedom Rally and Motorcycle Ride to raise awareness and funds. And on July 13, the Jacksonville NAACP chapter held a rally in defense of Alexander and victims of domestic abuse.

In a letter thanking RW for its support, Alexander wrote that she is “Keeping my head up!” To help build a big, visible, and determined fight for her pardon and release, go to Justice4Marissa.com.

sible because of all the torture that goes on in there physically and mentally.”

After years of isolation, paranoia, and gradual deterioration, he took his life.

“He was a loving brother, son, and uncle...raised by a single mother and got lost in the system,” says Cynthia. “He wanted to be treated fair.”

Central Prisoners Vote to End Hunger Strike

prisonbooks.info

We received word that prisoners at Central in Raleigh voted to end their hunger strike, started on July 16 in protest of conditions on Unit 1. We have not heard from prisoners at Bertie or Scotland. Small groups of prisoners at Foothills CI and Tabor CI have also said they have joined the protest.

The strike was organized to take aim at the fundamental conditions of sensory deprivation, psychological and physical torture, and abuse that characterize solitary confinement, and for that matter, prisons in general. It was also catalyzed by the need for law libraries for prisoners to be able to be better organized and defend themselves in the legal realm.

Some of the short term demands of prisoners, such as tools with which to clean cells, clearing the windows to the outside, and other demands have already been granted, but more significant demands have been put to the unit manager and have yet to be addressed. For the strikers involved, it seems like this strike was a way to garner much needed attention towards their conditions, as well as demonstrate to other prisoners that it is indeed possible to organize across lines of race or gang status, and to do so with meaningful support and solidarity from the outside.

At least one of the strikers, Jamey Wilkins, who has also been active in a successful lawsuit against guards, is facing reprisals for his involvement in organizing activity. Despite not having write-ups or infractions, he is being recommended for Supermax. Outside supporters are strongly encouraged to continue to call in or demonstrate on his and others' behalf; prison officials are trying to send a warning to others who would organize or rebel, and they must be opposed resolutely.

In related news, several of the “Strong 8” prisoners, eight men who refused to continue to work in the face of undressed labor grievances in Central's kitchens, have been taken off I-Con status and allowed back to general population, despite their involvement in the hunger strike.

Others have remained on solitary due to (the admin. claims) infractions.

This hunger strike has garnered a good deal of attention, and the support and solidarity of a number diverse groups. At least four solidarity demonstrations have occurred, as well as a growing swell of support from alternative and social media sources and call-in days from all over the country. So it seems appropriate to end this update with some words of thanks from the strikers with regards to outside support and protest:

“I had assumed that the strike was over until Friday when I heard it on NPR! I'm going to practice solidarity with my fellow activists abroad and push out 2 or 3 days...I really appreciate you guys on your activism and bringing things together. Stay solid!” — Foothills CI, Morganton, NC

“I've been housed on Unit 1 since May 15 2009 for assault on police back in 2007. So I know all the bullshit that goes on here at central or unit 1. I heard y'all by my cell window good around 1 pm or 130 pm on Sunday, but I couldn't understand the words that was said because everybody on unit one was kicking their cell doors.” — Central Prison, Raleigh, NC

“Keep up the good work all the up and tell everybody we do really, really appreciate all the help of stepping up for prisoners period.” — Central Prison, Raleigh, NC

“I told a couple guys about the hunger strike and we began a little something of our own. It's only like four of us, but four is plenty!” — Tabor CI, Tabor City, NC

“Thank your for the demo! I heard it from outside. The solidarity is felt.” — Central Prison, Raleigh, NC

“We heard y'all! I was ready to go all out!” — Central Prison, Raleigh, NC

Hopefully this strike can be seen and felt as a beginning.

Not to editorialize, but we would urge fellow supporters on the outside not to see this sort of flare-up as a simple quest for certain demands, like toilet brushes or cleaner windows or even law libraries. This kind of moment, even on the small scale in which it has occurred here, can only be fully understood as a struggle for dignity and freedom in the face of the largest and arguably the most brutal system of policing and human warehousing in the history of the world. The forms of these moments will grow and change: it may be a hunger strike today and a riot tomorrow, or a quiet study group the next day. But the content of these struggles, at least for some, remains a burning desire for liberty set against an institutional matrix of petty tyrannies and genocidal abuses that characterize all prisons everywhere.

“On Thursday, June 16, 2011 at 1440 hours I was summoned to the cell of Inmate Machado...by Registered Nurse...Upon looking in the cell window, I observed a noose hanging from the air duct. I observed the No-Tear Mattress lying on the cell floor torn apart. I ordered Machado to submit to handcuffs, to which he complied. After handcuffing Machado I placed him in holding cell #136 so Dr. N could speak with him. I returned to cell 188 and observed feces smeared on the right wall. It appears Machado had torn off the outer layer of the mattress, fashioned a noose from it, and tied the noose to the vent...”

Just days after the incident, he was issued a notice that he would be placed in Pelican Bay’s Administrative Segregation Unit:

You were endorsed by the CSR on 02/04/10 to serve an indeterminate SHU term, due to your validation as an Associate of the ...prison gang...On 06/22/11, your Mental Health Level of Care (LOC) was elevated to Correctional Clinical Case Management (CCCMS), PBSP-SHU Exclusionary; therefore, your placement in PBSP-SHU is no longer appropriate. Due to the above, on 06/22/11, a decision was made to place you in the PBSP Administrative Segregation Unit. Single celled due to prison gang validation.

By June 30, he was deemed to have “active psychotic symptoms” but had a low risk of suicide.

On July 6, he threw his breakfast through his food port and refused breakfast the next day. On the date of the incident a referral indicated “inappropriate behaviors,” “hallucinating” and “poor impulse control.” The referral notes that he believed “electromagnetic pulses are interfering with his thoughts.”

A mental health document says later that “[he] is believed to be in a desperate situation with an equal amount of anxiety. During ICC in Ad Seg, he refused the debriefing process; hence his situation appears to be deteriorating possibly leading to [his] current state of mind.”

In June and July, he was variously diagnosed with Anti-social Personality Disorder and Brief Psychotic Disorder.

According to his sister, though he was officially granted a vegetarian diet for religious reasons, he would primarily subsist on an unhealthy cheese-only diet due to his being allergic to peanuts, the other primary component of a prison vegetarian food tray. This is believed by his sister to have been one of the factors that contributed to the already physically and mentally stressful environment.

Machado’s sister noticed her once coherent and seemingly adjusted brother decline in his time at Pelican Bay. “I noticed he started writing strange things, about seeing things,” she says. Around this time, she and her mother

called Pelican Bay after receiving a despondent letter from Alex. “I’m afraid for my son’s life,” Machado’s mother told one of his mental health counselors.

Though CDCR has previously gone on the record to say that he was not a participant in the hunger strikes, the Machado family believes that he in fact did participate in the strikes. He reportedly mentioned the strike many times in letters sent to his family.

In late July or early August, he sent a letter to his sister claiming that he saw “someone I know and I saw another in pieces and demons...I don’t know the significance of it...I hope it was a hallucination.” He wrote that was taken to the infirmary for leg pains, where he further wrote:

“I was handcuffed in a cell and was being watched by two officers I never seen before...I was handcuffed for what seemed like an eternity. I felt like I was in that room handcuffed for days but it was only an hour...the shooting in my case flashed in my mind and they suggested I died that day in the shooting and that I was now in ‘purgatory’ or in ‘Dantes Inferno.’ I felt trapped. I thought I was condemned to be handcuffed in that cell forever. They made me believe I was killed in real life. I thought I was caught in another realm. I saw insects in the cell and demons. It was way out I don’t know what happened...”

Also written while at Pelican Bay, Machado reflected on his decade long incarceration, writing “I wish my life was different and that we could all be out there together...I don’t know what to do. I’m stuck and I have been away from home for a long time now.”

In the final months of his life, he would continue to spend over 22 hours a day in a small cell. His letters came less and less frequently. During his time at Pelican Bay, he told his family not to make the over 700-mile trip to visit him. He didn’t want them to see him in chains.

Though his letters in the two months leading to his death were increasingly distorted, he did have some glimmer of hope. He had secured a lawyer who was in the process of challenging his original criminal conviction.

His sister describes his plight this way, “It takes one inmate informant to report you falsely. Then you are in solitary confinement. When you want to fight to get out it is impos-

“Truth has a power of its own...A poem can inspire a movement. A pamphlet can spark a revolution. Civil disobedience can arouse people and provoke us to think.”

--Howard Zinn

Occupy Oakland is Dead. Long Live the Oakland Commune.

BY SOME OAKLAND ANTAGONISTS
May 2012 from bayofrage.com

For those of us in Oakland, “Occupy Wall Street” was always a strange fit. While much of the country sat eerily quiet in the years before the Hot Fall of 2011, a unique rebelliousness that regularly erupted in militant antagonisms with the police was already taking root in the streets of the Bay. From numerous anti-police riots triggered by the execution of Oscar Grant on New Year’s Day 2009, to the wave of anti-austerity student occupations in late 2009 and early 2010, to the Native protest encampment at Glen Cove in 2011, to the the sequence of Anonymous BART disruptions in the month before Occupy Wall Street kicked off, our greater metropolitan area re-emerged in recent years as a primary hub of struggle in this country. The intersection at 14th and Broadway in downtown Oakland was, more often than not, “ground zero” for these conflicts.

If we had chosen to follow the specific trajectory prescribed by Adbusters and the Zucotti-based organizers of Occupy Wall Street, we would have staked out our local Occupy camp somewhere in the heart of the capitol of West Coast capital, as a beachhead in the enemy territory of San Francisco’s financial district. Some did this early on, following in the footsteps of the growing list of other encampments scattered across the country like a colorful but confused archipelago of anti-financial indignation. According to this logic, it would make no sense for the epicenter of the movement to emerge in a medium sized, proletarian city on the other side of the bay.

We intentionally chose a different path based on a longer trajectory and rooted in a set of shared experiences that emerged directly from recent struggles. Vague populist slogans about the 99%, savvy use of social networking, shady figures running around in Guy Fawkes masks, none of this played any kind of significant role in bringing us to the forefront of the Occupy movement. In the rebel town of Oakland, we built a camp that was not so much

the emergence of a new social movement, but the unprecedented convergence of preexisting local movements and antagonistic tendencies all looking for a fight with capital and the state while learning to take care of each other and our city in the most radical ways possible.

This is what we began to call The Oakland Commune: that dense network of new found affinity and rebelliousness that sliced through seemingly impenetrable social barriers like never before. Our “war machine and our care machine” as one comrade put it. No cops, no politicians, plenty of “autonomous actions”; the Commune materialized for one month in liberated Oscar Grant Plaza at the corner of 14th & Broadway. Here we fed each other, lived together and began to learn how to actually care for one another while launching unmediated assaults on our enemies: local government, the downtown business elite and transnational capital. These attacks culminated with the General Strike of November 2 and subsequent West Coast Port Blockade.

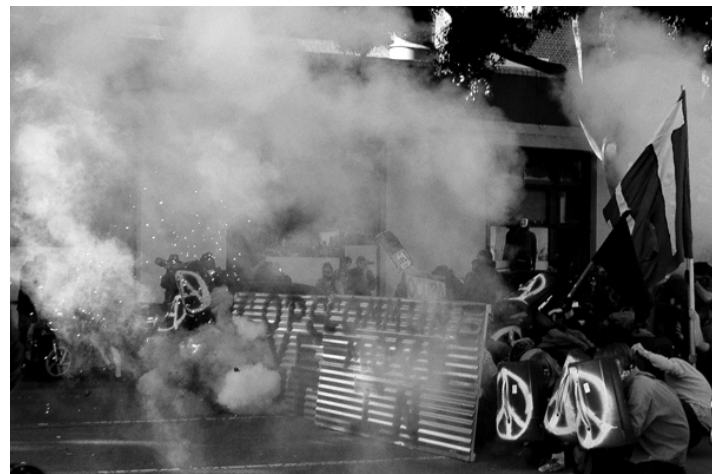
In their repeated attacks on Occupy Oakland, the local decolonize tendency is in some ways correct.[1] Occupy Wall Street and the movement of the 99% become very problematic when applied to a city such as Oakland and reek of white liberal politics imposed from afar on a diverse population already living under brutal police occupation. What our decolonizing comrades fail to grasp (intentionally or not) is that the rebellion which unfolded in front of City Hall in Oscar Grant Plaza does not trace its roots back to September 17, 2011 when thousands of 99%ers marched through Wall Street and set up camp in Lower Manhattan. The Oakland Commune was born much earlier on January 7, 2009 when those youngsters climbed on top of an OPD cruiser and started kicking in the windshield to the cheers of the crowd. Thus the name of the Commune’s temporarily reclaimed space where anti-capitalist processes of decolonization were unleashed: Oscar Grant Plaza.



Why then did it take nearly three years for the Commune to finally come out into the open and begin to unveil its true potential? Maybe it needed time to grow quietly, celebrating the small victories and nursing itself back to health after bitter defeats such as the depressing end of the student movement on March 4, 2010. Or maybe it needed to see its own reflection in Tahrir, Plaza del Sol and Syntagma before having the confidence to brazenly declare war on the entire capitalist order. One thing is for sure. Regardless of Occupy Wall Street's shortcomings and the reformist tendencies that latched on to the movement of the 99%, the fact that some kind of open revolt was rapidly spreading like a virus across the rest of the country is what gave us the political space in Oakland to realize our rebel dreams. This point cannot be overemphasized. We are strongest when we are not alone. We will be isolated and crushed if Oakland is contained as some militant outlier while the rest of the country sits quiet and our comrades in other cities are content consuming riot porn emerging from our streets while cheering us on and occasionally coming to visit, hoping to get their small piece of the action.

The Movement

For a whole generation of young people in this country, these past six months have been the first taste of what it means to struggle as part of a multiplying and complex social movement that continually expands the realm of possibilities and pushes participants through radicalization processes that normally take years. The closest recent equivalent is probably the first (and most vibrant) wave of North American anti-globalization mobilizations from late 1999 through the first half of 2001. This movement also brought a wide range of tendencies together under a reformist banner of "Fair Trade" & "Global Justice" while simultaneously pointing towards a systemic critique of global capitalism and a militant street politics of disruption.



The similarities end there and this break with the past is what Occupy got right. Looking back over those heady days at the turn of the millennia (or the waves of summit hopping that followed), the moments of actually living in struggle and experiencing rupture in front of one's eyes were few and far between. They usually unfolded during a mass mobilization in the middle of one "National Security Event" or another in some city on the other side of the country (or world!). The affinities developed during that time were invaluable, but cannot compare to the seeds of resistance that were sown simultaneously in hundreds of urban areas this past Fall.

It makes no sense to overly fetishize the tactic of occupations, no more than it does to limiting resistance exclusively to blockades or clandestine attacks. Yet the widespread emergence of public occupations qualitatively changed what it means to resist. For contemporary American social movements, it is something new to liberate space that is normally policed to keep the city functioning smoothly as a wealth generating machine and transform it into a node of struggle and rebellion. To do this day after day, rooted in the city where you live and strengthening connections with neighbors and comrades, is a first taste of what it truly means to have a life worth living. For those few months in the fall, American cities took on new geographies of the movement's making and rebels began to sketch out maps of coming insurrections and revolts.

This was the climate that the Oakland Commune blossomed within. In those places and moments where Occupy Wall Street embodied these characteristics as opposed to the reformist tendencies of the 99%'s nonviolent campaign to fix capitalism, the movement itself was a beautiful thing. Little communes came to life in cities and towns near and far. Those days have now passed but the consequences of millions having felt that solidarity, power and freedom will have long lasting and extreme consequences.

We shouldn't be surprised that the movement is now decomposing and that we are now, more or less, alone, passing that empty park or plaza on the way to work (or looking for work) which seemed only yesterday so loud and colorful and full of possibilities.

All of the large social movements in this country following the anti-globalization period have heated up quickly, bringing in millions before being crushed or co-opted equally as quickly. The anti-war movement brought millions out in mass marches in the months before bombs began falling over Baghdad but was quickly co-opted into an "Anybody but Bush" campaign just in time for the 2004 election cycle. The immigrant rights movement exploded during the spring of 2006, successfully stopping the repressive

Suicide in Solitary: The Death of Alex Machado

BY SAL RODRIGUEZ
solitarywatch.com

Alexis "Alex" Machado was a prisoner at Pelican Bay State Prison's isolation units for nearly two years when he took his own life on October 24, 2011.

According to the autopsy report, Machado was last seen alive at approximately 12:15 AM "as he was examined and then cleared by medical staff for a complaint of heart palpitations." Thirty minutes later, at 12:45 AM, an officer found Machado and reported that "...Machado [was] hanging inside his cell..." He was seen "sitting on the floor with a sheet tied to his neck and the sheet tied to the top bunk."

Concluded the autopsy: "The decedent died as a result of asphyxiation due to strangulation by hanging." Toxicology reports were negative.

As institutional records and letters from Machado in the year leading up to his death show, he had been suffering severe psychological problems in response to his prolonged isolation. Once a jailhouse lawyer whose writings were both clearly and intelligently composed, his mental state would decline at Pelican Bay.

Machado had been incarcerated since 1999 on a robbery charge and a related shooting. He was sentenced to an 80-to-life prison term. Described as an intelligent and thoughtful man with a warm smile by his sister, Cynthia, he generally experienced no problems in his initial 11 years of incarceration. For most of his time, he was held at Kern Valley State Prison.

Things began to change in late 2007, when a race riot took place. "The prison said he was the one who started the riot," according to Cynthia, "when he really had nothing to do with it."

His involvement in the riot would result in his being placed in Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) in December 2007. Though he was never officially found guilty for the riot, prison gang investigators would begin to build a case for his validation as a gang member. In December 2008, he was placed in the ASU again for "manufacturing a weapon"; in January 2009, a confidential informant was officially cited by prison officials as evidence of his gang activity.

He was finally validated as a gang associate, in large part due to the confidential informant, on February 4, 2010. In his appeal of the validation, he argued that the source items used in his validation were insufficient, saying that "these

allegations are not true and I initiated nothing." He further charged in his appeal that his validation as a gang member was in retaliation of his acquittal in the racial riot case.

He was sent to Pelican Bay to serve an indeterminate SHU sentence on February 17, 2010 from the Kern Valley ASU.

Being screened into Pelican Bay, he reported no psychological problems.

Soon after arriving, however, he reported in letters that he was consistently harassed by the guards. In a letter dated March 10, 2010, he wrote that "when I first got here an officer told me that he was being pressured to make a bogus psychologist referral on me...I guess they want to make it look like I am going crazy." He reported that guards took him to debrief in an attempt to make him look like an informant. Further, he was told that a green light (hit order) had been placed on him; a claim that he didn't believe.

An ASU classification document indicates that he received some mental health services in May 2010, and previously in October 2009.

A mental health chronos indicates his first significant problem at Pelican Bay surfaced on January 24, 2011 with a mental health referral from a correctional officer for paranoia." Also beginning in January, he was noted to have decreased the number of showers he took, from a regular of three a week to only once or twice a week.

He received a 115 (rules violation report) on March 1, 2011 for "willfully resisting" officers after "fishing line" for communication with other inmates was found and he refused to "cuff up." He told the health care worker who saw him after his extraction with pepper spray that "I want you to put down that they are denying my legal mail."

On May 31, a mental health referral reported that he "stated he is being watched, listened to, cell has bugs and cameras. He also stated he hears knocking on all his cell walls."

Things would decline significantly in June. On June 5th, a mental health record reports that he was depressed, anxious, poor hygiene/grooming, hallucinations, paranoia and delusion. He reported that is presenting complaints were listed as "hearing voices, can't sleep anxiety attacks, someone/something controlling thoughts, hasn't cleaned cell in three days."

Days later he would receive another referral for anxiety and reporting increased heart rate and breathing. On June 12, he was placed in a crisis room for threatening to kill himself.

The following is from a Counseling Chrono dated June 21, 2011:

Short Corridor Collective Announces Agreement to End Hostilities

from hungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com

Representatives of the CA Hunger Strike issued a statement calling for an end to all violence and hostility between different groups of prisoners throughout the state of CA from maximum security prisons to county jails.

The statement asks prisoners to unite beginning October 10, 2012.

The full statement is reprinted below.

Agreement to End Hostilities August 12, 2012

To whom it may concern and all California Prisoners:

Greetings from the entire PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Hunger Strike Representatives. We are hereby presenting this mutual agreement on behalf of all racial groups here in the PBSP-SHU Corridor. Wherein, we have arrived at a mutual agreement concerning the following points:

1. If we really want to bring about substantive meaningful changes to the CDCR system in a manner beneficial to all solid individuals, who have never been broken by CDCR's torture tactics intended to coerce one to become a state informant via debriefing, that now is the time to for us to collectively seize this moment in time, and put an end to more than 20-30 years of hostilities between our racial groups.
2. Therefore, beginning on October 10, 2012, all hostilities between our racial groups... in SHU, Ad-Seg, General Population, and County Jails, will officially cease. This means that from this date on, all racial group hostilities need to be at an end... and if personal issues arise between individuals, people need to do all they can to exhaust all diplomatic means to settle such disputes; do not allow personal, individual issues to escalate into racial group issues!!
3. We also want to warn those in the General Population that IGI will continue to plant undercover Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY) debriefer "inmates" amongst the solid GP prisoners with orders from IGI to be informers, snitches, rats, and obstructionists, in order to attempt to disrupt and undermine our collective

groups' mutual understanding on issues intended for our mutual causes [i.e., forcing CDCR to open up all GP main lines, and return to a rehabilitative-type system of meaningful programs/privileges, including lifer conjugal visits, etc. via peaceful protest activity/noncooperation e.g., hunger strike, no labor, etc. etc.]. People need to be aware and vigilant to such tactics, and refuse to allow such IGI inmate snitches to create chaos and reignite hostilities amongst our racial groups. We can no longer play into IGI, ISU, OCS, and SSU's old manipulative divide and conquer tactics!!!

In conclusion, we must all hold strong to our mutual agreement from this point on and focus our time, attention, and energy on mutual causes beneficial to all of us [i.e., prisoners], and our best interests.

We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit!! Because the reality is that collectively, we are an empowered, mighty force, that can positively change this entire corrupt system into a system that actually benefits prisoners, and thereby, the public as a whole... and we simply cannot allow CDCR/CCPOA – Prison Guard's Union, IGI, ISU, OCS, and SSU, to continue to get away with their constant form of progressive oppression and warehousing of tens of thousands of prisoners, including the 14,000 (+) plus prisoners held in solitary confinement torture chambers [i.e. SHU/Ad-Seg Units], for decades!!!

We send our love and respects to all those of like mind and heart... onward in struggle and solidarity...

Presented by the PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Collective:

Todd Ashker, C58191, D1-119
Arturo Castellanos, C17275, D1-121
Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa (Dewberry), C35671, D1-117
Antonio Guillen, P81948, D2-106

And the Representatives Body:

Danny Troxell, B76578, D1-120
George Franco, D46556, D4-217
Ronnie Yandell, V27927, D4-215
Paul Redd, B72683, D2-117
James Baridi Williamson, D-34288, D4-107
Alfred Sandoval, D61000, D4-214
Louis Powell, B59864, D1-104
Alex Yrigollen, H32421, D2-204
Gabriel Huerta, C80766, D3-222
Frank Clement, D07919, D3-116
Raymond Chavo Perez, K12922, D1-219
James Mario Perez, B48186, D3-124

[NOTE: All names and the statement must be verbatim when used & posted on any website or media, or non-media, publications]

and racist HR4437 legislation by organizing the largest protest in U.S. history (and arguably the closest thing we have ever seen to a nation-wide general strike) on May 1 of that year [2]. The movement was quickly scared off the streets by a brutal wave of ICE raids and deportations that continue to this day. Closer to home, the anti-austerity movement that swept through California campuses in late 2009 escalated rapidly during the fall through combative building occupations across the state. But by March 4, 2010, the movement had been successfully split apart by repressing the militant tendencies and trapping the more moderate ones in an impotent campaign to lobby elected officials in Sacramento. Such is the rapid cycle of mobilization and decomposition for social movements in late capitalist America.

The Decomposition

So what then killed Occupy? The 99%ers and reactionary liberals will quickly point to those of us in Oakland and our counterparts in other cities who wave the black flag as having alienated the masses with our "Black Bloc Tactics" and extremist views on the police and the economy. Many militants will just as quickly blame the sinister forces of co-optation, whether they be the trade union bureaucrats, the 99% Spring nonviolence training seminars or the array of pacifying social justice non-profits. Both of these positions fundamentally miss the underlying dynamic that has been the determining factor in the outcome thus far: all of the camps were evicted by the cops. Every single one.

All of those liberated spaces where rebellious relationships, ideas and actions could proliferate were bulldozed like so many shanty towns across the world that stand in the way of airports, highways and Olympic arenas. The sad reality is that we are not getting those camps back. Not after power saw the contagious militancy spreading from Oakland and other points of conflict on the Occupy map and realized what a threat all those tents and cardboard signs and discussions late into the night could potentially become.

No matter how different Occupy Oakland was from the rest of Occupy Wall Street, its life and death were intimately connected with the health of the broader movement. Once the camps were evicted, the other major defining feature of Occupy, the general assemblies, were left without an anchor and have since floated into irrelevance as hollow decision making bodies that represent no one and are more concerned with their own reproduction than anything else. There have been a wide range of attempts here in Oakland at illuminating a path forward into the next phase of the movement. These include foreclosure defense, the port blockades, linking up with rank and file labor to fight bosses in a variety of sectors, clandestine squatting and even neighborhood BBQs. All of these are interesting directions and have potential. Yet without being connected to the vortex of a communal occupation, they become iso-

lated activist campaigns. None of them can replace the essential role of weaving together a rebel social fabric of affinity and camaraderie that only the camps have been able to play thus far.

May 1 confirmed the end of the national Occupy Wall Street movement because it was the best opportunity the movement had to reestablish the occupations, and yet it couldn't. Nowhere was this more clear than in Oakland as the sun set after a day of marches, pickets and clashes. Rumors had been circulating for weeks that tents would start going up and the camp would reemerge in the evening of that long day. The hundreds of riot police backed by armored personnel carriers and SWAT teams carrying assault rifles made no secret of their intention to sweep the plaza clear after all the "good protesters" scurried home, making any reoccupation physically impossible. It was the same on January 28 when plans for a large public building occupation were shattered in a shower of flash bang grenades and 400 arrests, just as it was on March 17 in Zucotti Park when dreams of a new Wall Street camp were clubbed and pepper sprayed to death by the NYPD. Any hopes of a spring offensive leading to a new round of space reclamations and liberated zones has come and gone. And with that, Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Oakland are now dead.

The Future

If one had already come to terms with Occupy's passing, May 1 could actually be viewed as an impressive success. No other 24 hour period in recent memory has unleashed such a diverse array of militancy in cities across the country. From the all day street fighting in Oakland, to the shield bloc in LA, to the courageous attempt at a Wildcat March in New York, to the surprise attack on the Mission police station in San Francisco, to the anti-capitalist march in New Orleans, to the spectacular trashing of Seattle banks and corporate chains by black flag wielding comrades, the large crowds which took to the streets on May 1 were no longer afraid of militant confrontations with police and seemed relatively comfortable with property destruction. This is an important turning point which suggests that the tone and tactics of the next sequence will be quite different from those of last fall.

Yet the consistent rhythm and resonance of resistance that the camps made possible has not returned. We are once again wading through a depressing sea of everyday normality waiting for the next spectacular day of action to come and go in much the same way as comrades did a decade ago in the anti-globalization movement or the anti-war movement. In the Bay Area, the call to strike was picked up by nurses and ferry workers who picketed their respective workplaces on May 1 along with the longshoremen who walked off the job for the day. This display of solidarity is impressive considering the overall lack of momentum in the movement right now. Still, it was not

enough of an interruption in capital's daily flows to escalate out of a day of action and into a general strike like we saw on November 2.

And thus we continue on through this quieter period of uncertainty. We still occasionally catch glimpses of the Commune in those special moments when friends and comrades successfully break the rules and start self organizing to take care of one another while simultaneously launching attacks against those who profit from mass immiseration.

We saw this off and on during the actions of May 1, or in the two occupations of the building at 888 Turk Street in San Francisco or most recently on the occupied farmland that was temporarily liberated from the University of California before being evicted by UCPD riot police a few days ago. But with the inertia of the Fall camps nearly depleted, the fierce but delicate life of our Commune relies more and more on the vibrancy of the rebel social relationships which have always been its foundation.

The task ahead of us in Oakland and beyond is to search out and nurture new means of finding each other. We are quickly reaching the point where the dead weight of Occupy threatens to drag down the Commune into the dust bin of history. We need to breathe new life into our network of rebellious relationships that does not rely on the Occupy Oakland general assembly or the array of movement protagonists who have emerged to represent the struggle.

This is by no means an argument against assemblies or for a retreat back into the small countercultural ghettos that keep us isolated and irrelevant. On the contrary, we need more public assemblies that take different forms and experiment with themes, styles of decision making (or lack thereof) and levels of affinity.

We need new ways to reclaim space and regularize a contagious rebel spirit rooted in our specific urban contexts while breaking a losing cycle of attempted occupations followed by state repression that the movement has now fallen into. Most of all, we need desperately to stay connected with comrades old and new and not let these relationships completely decompose. This will determine the health of the Commune and ultimately its ability to effectively wage war on our enemies in the struggles to come.

Notes

[1] The decolonize tendency emerged in Oakland and elsewhere as a people of color and indigenous led initiative within the Occupy movement to confront the deep colonialist roots of contemporary oppression and exploitation. Decolonize Oakland publicly split with Occupy on December 5, 2011 after failing to pass a proposal in the Occupy Oakland general assembly to change the name of the local movement to Decolonize Oakland. For more information on this split see the 'Escalating Identity' pamphlet:

escalatingidentity.wordpress.com

[2] The demonstrations on May 1, 2006, called El Gran Paro Estadounidense or The Great American Boycott, were the climax of a nationwide series of mobilizations that had begun two months earlier with large marches in Chicago and Los Angeles as well as spontaneous high school walkouts in California and beyond. Millions took to the streets across the country that May 1, with an estimated two million marching in Los Angeles alone. Entire business districts in immigrant neighborhoods or where immigrants made up the majority of workers shut down for the day in what some called "A Day Without an Immigrant".

Stay Strong, Stay Committed

BY COYOTE

There is no time better than right now to take a deeper look at self, life and struggle. Many of us in the struggle have long resisted before we even knew there was a struggle. There's something inside of us; like a fire! But where does it come from? How did we get like this; I mean what made us so honorable to carry this fire inside of us? For most of us, this rebellious spirit, of course, stems from some form of abuse or injustice in our pasts, or from our early childhood, or something; we are who we are for a reason. Well, for lots of reasons actually. Once you know yourself, you can only become strengthened and empowered through this understanding. I speak of it here, because it's important to understand what it is that has cultivated us into the rebels and warriors we are, especially now that we know and see who and what it is – this terrible beast – that we are up against.

Sometimes we have to go through our own personal strife before we can again be awakened to the ultimate struggle. I think this is the critical importance of understanding ourselves and our inherent connection to humanity, liberty and struggle. We have to go through things in life, stumble, fall, and then pick ourselves back up and ask ourselves what just happened and why, before we can really start to understand things, and somewhere in all of this turmoil we begin to see that there's a connection between one's own personal life and experiences and the lives and experiences of humanity as a whole. And that's when we realize that we're not alone in this struggle. We are a part of something. Something that's bigger and greater than we ever understood.

And now that our eyes are opened, we must stay strong, stay focused and we must stay committed. It's not just about "me" anymore, now it's about "us". Solidarity is what we have, freedom is what we strive for.

One Year After Historic Hunger Strike, Isolated California Prisoners Report Little Change

BY SAL RODRIGUEZ
solitarywatch.com

At this time one year ago, a three week hunger strike across California prisons had been concluded, and the California Assembly had begun planning a hearing on the use of solitary confinement in California's prisons.

The conditions of the California Security Housing Units, where over 3,000 inmates are held in isolation, many for decades, had come to the public's attention.

In the time since August 2011, there would be another round of three week hunger strikes, a smaller series of hunger strikes at the Corcoran Administrative Segregation Unit, a new "Step Down Program" announced in California, a federal lawsuit filed by Pelican Bay SHU inmates, and a U.S. Senate hearing on solitary confinement.

Even so, the situation in the SHUs and ASUs remains much as it did one year ago. A few concessions by prison officials, such as issuing sweatpants and allowing family photos, did nothing to change the problem of long-term isolation and non-existent due process.

It should be reiterated that in California, the majority of SHU inmates are not necessarily there for conduct, but for gang membership.

In a letter to California activists, Pelican Bay hunger strike leader Alfred Sandoval reports feeling like "just banging my head against the wall because nothing ever changes around here. Right now the Department of Corruption and the current administration have been attempting to pacify prisoners with items...ie. sweats, watch caps, and various food items from canteen—in hopes of distracting us ..."

He continues, "the sad fact is that some have been complacent and accepted the physical and psychological abuses as normal because it has been implemented in small increments over decades, year after year so it has become the norm."

Isolated inmates throughout California continue to report desolate conditions and more-of-the-same.

According to one inmate in the Corcoran State Prison SHU, "The reality is there is a significant number of us for whom death holds no real fear, in fact, in some ways—as an al-

ternative to another few decades of this—it holds some appeal. If it becomes necessary to take up peaceful protest again—and it's unfortunately looking that way—you may be writing a lot more Christian Gomez articles...Most here only want to, after so very long, hold their children, kiss their wives, speak to their families, and have access to some meaningful program that will give them some hope of parole, higher education, and marketable job skills. But all of this is indicative of a sick society, of values and mores that have never been seriously and confronted and corrected in the history of U.S. social, political, and economic development."

Christian Gomez was an inmate in Corcoran State Prison's ASU who died while participating in a January-February hunger strike protesting the conditions of the ASU.

One of the leaders of the Corcoran ASU strike, Juan Jaimes, was transferred during the strike to Kern Valley State Prison's ASU unit as a means of limiting the strike. Jaimes recently reported to the San Francisco Bay View that he has received poor medical care for a broken back.

Another Corcoran inmate who has been in the SHU for over 20 years also reports doubts about the Step Down Program, and thinks that there will be no changes. He also offers his opinion on the validity of the SHU in the first place, echoing the sentiments of many SHU inmates that any use of isolation should be based on conduct rather than gang affiliation.

"I don't think anyone should be housed in isolation for more than a few weeks, if at all, and without meaningful program. SHU should consist of a system that includes earning meaningful privileges, and a dignified manner in being released. The SHU should be used for exactly the purpose that it is supposed to be used for: to house those prisoners who conduct threatens the safety and security of the prison," he writes.

An inmate at North Kern State Prison's Administrative Segregation Unit reports that himself and several inmates have waited over a year to be transferred to one of the SHUs. "The waiting list can take up to three years, I've been here 15 months due to the overcrowding by the I.G.I. (Institutional Gang Investigators) validating everybody as prison gang members," he writes, "a lot of us New Africans, Latin Americans, poor whites and indigenous people have been labeled for reading our culture and history... I've witnessed men lose their minds behind these walls, cut their wrists to kill themselves in order to escape this mental torture, spread feces on themselves and the walls, yell out and scream, some are on psychotropic medication that causes them to turn into human zombies where they don't even know who they are anymore."

Solitary Watch will continue to report on the situation in California as information becomes available.

prisoners, prison lawyers, or rebellious young prisoners. It is this class of prisoners that occupies the control units in prison systems across the United States.”

Holbrook’s observation is anything but surprising to those familiar with the routine violations of prisoners’ human rights within U.S. jails and prisons. The prison discipline study, a mass national survey assessing formal and informal punitive practices in U.S. prisons conducted in 1989, concluded that “solitary confinement, loss of privileges, physical beatings” and other forms of deprivation and harassment were “common disciplinary practices” that were “rendered routinely, capriciously and brutally” in maximum-security U.S. prisons.

The study also noted receiving “hundreds of comments from prisoners” explaining that jailhouse lawyers who file grievances and lawsuits about abuse and poor conditions were the most frequently targeted. Black prisoners and the mentally ill were also targeted for especially harsh treatment. This “pattern of guard brutality” was “consistent with the vast and varied body of post-war literature, demonstrating that guard use of physical coercion is highly structured and deeply entrenched in the guard subculture.”

Race and revolution

But while broad patterns can be discerned, these are the numbers that are missing: how many of those in solitary confinement are black? How many are self-taught lawyers, educators or political activists? How many initiated hunger strikes, which have long been anathema to the prison administration? How many were caught up in the FBI-organised dragnet that hauled thousands of community leaders, activists and thinkers into the maws of the U.S. “justice” system during the Black liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s?

Former Warden of United States Penitentiary Marion, the prototype of modern supermax-style solitary confinement, Ralph Arons, has stated: “The purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in the society at large.”

One of these revolutionaries is Russell “Maroon” Shoats, the founder of the Black Unity Council, which later merged with the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party. He was first jailed in early 1970. Hailing from the gang-war-torn streets of West Philadelphia, Shoats escaped twice from prison system, first from Huntingdon state prison in September 1977 and then again in March 1980.

Shoats’ escapes – the first of which lasted a full 27 days, despite a massive national search complete with helicopters, dogs and vigilante groups from predominantly white communities surrounding the prison – earned him the nickname “Maroon,” in honour of slaves who broke away from plantations in Surinam, Guyana and later Jamaica, Brazil and other

colonies and established sovereign communities on the outskirts of the white settler zones.

Still, it was not until Shoats was elected president of the prison-approved Lifers’ Organisation in 1982 – the closest thing to a union for inmates, through which they demanded basic rights such as proper visiting hours, access to legal documents and healthier food – that the prison system decided he was a “threat” to administrative stability and placed him in solitary confinement.

For the past 30 years, Maroon has been transferred from one “torture chamber” to another, where his best efforts to interact with his fellow prisoners or resurrect his old study sessions for the younger generation are thwarted at every turn. In 2006, the U.S. had an incarceration rate for black males that was more than five-and-a-half times greater than that of South Africa at the end of the apartheid era in 1993.

Yet most mainstream authorities on the prison system in the U.S. – such as the eminent scholar Michelle Alexander, whose book *The New Jim Crow* suggests that the prison system is racially “biased” – do not come close to touching on the phenomenon of political prisoners, let alone on the inmates who take up the cudgels on behalf of their fellow detainees and attempt to carve out niches of justice in a massive chamber of terror.

The discussion of solitary confinement as a violation of a basic human right comes five decades after Malcolm X first began to preach that black people in America should take their grievances not to the U.S. Supreme Court, but to the United Nations, to appeal not for civil rights, as white bourgeois parlance would have it, but for basic human rights, as a colonised people.

He argued not for “integration” into a system that had brutalised and enslaved “Africans in America” for years, but for an overhaul of that system and a transfer of power away from those who created and maintained it. Not master walking hand-in-hand with slave, but an end to mastery and slavery altogether. As a black revolutionary, Malcolm X’s words were largely painted over by mainstream historians. But if the struggle to end inhumane treatment inside prison is to become anything more than a largely apolitical movement for so-called “civil rights,” it must put two long-ignored points back on the agenda: race and revolution.

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The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera’s editorial policy.

It Didn’t Start with Occupy, and it Won’t End with the Student Strike! The Persistence of Anti-Authoritarian Politics in Quebec

BY ANNA KRUYNSKI, RACHEL SARRASIN AND SANDRA JEPPESEN, Research Group on Collective Autonomy (Collectif de Recherche sur l’Autonomie Collective or CRAC)*

What we are seeing today in Quebec, and particularly in Montréal, is a public moment of a much more ingrained movement that has been around for decades. If we use the rhizome analogy, we can better understand what is happening. A rhizome is like a root that runs underground: once in a while little shoots pop out above ground, and sometimes an enormous shoot breaks the surface. It is an analogy that suits the description of the anti-authoritarian movement in the province.

We could go back quite far in the history of social movements in Quebec to identify traces of this movement, but let’s start with what is now considered as the first large contemporary shoot which erupted through the surface, signalling a shift in the province’s political sphere. April 2001, Quebec City: huge street demonstrations took place protesting against the Third Summit of the Americas to negotiate the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Building on a major wave of counter-globalisation protests that first erupted in North America in Seattle 1999, in Quebec City opposition to the FTAA was so widespread that politicians had a massive chain-link fence perimeter built – a perimeter that was rapidly torn down by protestors!

Prior to this pivotal moment, however, several smaller shoots were beginning to poke through the surface of calm in Quebec: 1) in 1997, Complexe G, which houses the Ministry of Education, was blockaded; 2) in 1998, a “commando bouffe” (food commando) was unleashed, where community activists went into the Queen Elizabeth Hotel and served themselves at the lunch buffet, bringing food to hungry people outside; 3) also in 1998, the Conseil du Patronat du Québec was occupied for three days. More recently, in June 2010, another big shoot sprang up, as Montreal activists were involved in the protests against the G8/G20 in Toronto. From our perspective, the Occupy Montreal movement that started in the Fall of 2011 following Occupy Wall Street, and the social justice mobilisation anchored in the on-going student strike, can also be seen as new shoots of this rhizomatic movement.

These moments of public protest represent a turning point in recent Quebec history for several reasons: 1) activists began explicitly targeting symbols of capitalism; 2) many people have been arrested with subsequent politicized

trials; and most importantly, 3) they signalled the emergence of an anti-authoritarian movement that is at the heart of what we are seeing today. Indeed, all of these shoots emerged from a shared root, a political culture – a way of thinking, doing and being – grounded in shared values and principles which can be defined according to three main characteristics.

First, we can identify an explicit critique of the root causes of the social problems that we are facing, be it poverty, lack of access to public services, racial profiling, homophobia, gentrification, environmental degradation and the like. This explicit discussion links all of these problems to systems of exploitation – capitalism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, heterosexism, etc. – that work together, reinforce each other, and disadvantage the majority of the world’s population. From the anti-authoritarian perspective, is it impossible to eradicate injustice unless these systems are all dismantled. This is precisely what we are hearing now in the streets when capitalism is named by the Occupy Movement as the source of the loss of our social services, and when students oppose tuition hikes because of the capitalist logic of the commodification of education.

Second, we find an explicit critique of representative democracy and the State, as well as experimentation with new types of political organization based on decentralised, horizontal direct democracy. This critique goes beyond denouncing corruption within traditional political institutions, and supersedes the notion that if we replace one political party with another, things will be better. It means that people who are directly affected by a political issue must be involved in the decision-making process on that issue. Anti-authoritarian activists believe that society is best managed closer to home, in smaller circles, in face-to-face deliberation that occurs in spaces such as general assemblies, consultas or spokescouncil meetings, through decision-making by consensus, and through implementation of decisions by member committees. At the core of this movement are two fundamental principles: self-determination and self-organisation. CLASSE is an excellent example—albeit not a perfect one—of this kind of organizing: general assemblies are held in departments, CEGEPs and universities, then delegates participate in weekly spokes-council meetings where they coordinate decisions and actions. There are no representatives, no presidents, no leaders, just people working together and experimenting with new, empowering, horizontal, and equitable social relations. People who speak to the media, though perhaps perceived as leaders, are simply spokeseople.

Third – last but not least – the movement isn’t constrained to one mode of expression but rather, we consider a rainbow of possibilities when it comes time to take action. This respect for a diversity of tactics, which has been at the heart of many controversial debates, is the result of over ten years of work by anti-authoritarians to get this principle accepted by mainstream social movements. This

principle does not rest on the idea that anything goes in any given situation, but implies that the debate about the legitimacy of various tactics must occur within the movement, and should be decided for each situation by the people taking action themselves. Certainly the media should not make this decision for us. Indeed, we have all witnessed on many occasions how the mainstream media, along with state politicians, tend to create an image of the “good” versus the “bad” protestor in an effort to divide and conquer. This strategy has been used again against the current student strike activists. However, for the first time, movement “leaders” – or spokespeople – for the most part, have not denounced tactics such as economic disruption, contributing to the maintenance of a certain unity and a strong sense of solidarity within the movement.

The political culture described above is not consecrated into a platform or rulebook. Its values and principles are organic, spontaneous, and constantly evolving. To return to the rhizome metaphor, what happens underground or unseen between moments of eruption of big shoots is what builds the strength and collective empowerment of these important moments. People are working every day, in their communities – based on neighbourhoods, workplaces, shared identities or even just friend groups – to consolidate a burgeoning organisational interface that forms an anti-authoritarian commons. In order to reduce dependency on the capitalist economy, the movement sets up self-managed autonomous “services” – based on a mutual aid model – to satisfy specific needs identified by communities, such as alternative media, bike repair, autonomous libraries, collective kitchens, or childcare collectives, to name but a few. To control the means of production, the movement organizes self-managed cooperatives such as restaurants, book publishers, information technology providers, organic farmers, electricians, etc. Finally, in order to reduce dependency on mainstream media and cultural institutions, the movement has its own journalists, essayists, and researchers, as well as its own information sites, communication networks, radio shows, zines and newspapers. It also creates its own cultural institutions, such as the anarchist theatre festival, cabarets, video-making collectives, music venues or silk-screening spaces. And, because one cannot separate the private from the public spheres of life, anti-authoritarian principles are also fundamental to how kinship is practiced in the movement: in collective houses, intentional communities, party networks, etc.

Digging below ground level, we can see the anti-authoritarian roots underlying and nurturing the many smaller and larger shoots that have begun erupting over the past ten years. We can see what the mainstream media and public opinion might not notice, such as the links between what otherwise may appear as fragmented groups and collectives is an organisational interface that prefigures the kind of political, social and economic institutions we are building not just for tomorrow but also for today. This anti-authoritarian commons is part of a political alternative based

on the two core principles of collective autonomy – self-determination and self-organisation – where people are taking things in their own hands instead of leaving them to a corrupt and disconnected corporate and state leadership. This is what is now happening in neighbourhoods all over Montreal where we hear pots and pans banging rhythmically in solidarity with the student strike and against the Liberal government, and where people are starting to organize in popular assemblies. These actions and assemblies are the spreading rhizomatic sprouts of alternative political institutions.

In 2001, we used to say, “It didn’t start in Seattle, and it won’t end with Quebec.” Perhaps now we might proclaim, “It didn’t start with Occupy, and it won’t end with the student strike.” The student strike has now evolved into a national and perhaps even international social movement that goes beyond the original opposition to the tuition hike. For this shoot to become a full-grown, mature, fruit-bearing plant – or even a wild forest! – let’s hope more and more people will engage in this politics of proximity inspired by an anti-authoritarian political culture.

Note

*1. The use of they/we in this paper indicates that we are making this contribution as participants in the anti-authoritarian movement, and, within this movement, as members of a feminist research collective called the Research Group on Collective Autonomy (Collectif de recherche sur l’autonomie collective or CRAC) that is documenting and analyzing the movement. Using a prefigurative participatory action research (PAR) methodology, we have interviewed 120 activists since 2005, in nine different groups and networks, each of which has participated or is participating in the production of a monograph, from writing to validation to lay-out and public launch.

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“Ordinarily, a person leaving a courtroom with a conviction behind him would wear a somber face. But I left with a smile. I knew that I was a convicted criminal, but I was proud of my crime.”

-- Martin Luther King Jr.

Solitary Confinement: Torture Chambers for Black Revolutionaries

aljazeera.com

“The torture technicians who developed the paradigm used in (prisons’) ‘control units’ realised that they not only had to separate those with leadership qualities, but also break those individuals’ minds and bodies and keep them separated until they are dead.” – Russell “Maroon” Shoats

Russell “Maroon” Shoats has been kept in solitary confinement in the state of Pennsylvania for 30 years after being elected president of the prison-approved Lifers’ Association. He was initially convicted for his alleged role in an attack authorities claim was carried out by militant black activists on the Fairmont Park Police Station in Philadelphia that left a park sergeant dead.

Despite not having violated prison rules in more than two decades, state prison officials refuse to release him into the general prison population.

Russell’s family and supporters claim that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) has unlawfully altered the consequences of his criminal conviction, sentencing him to die in solitary confinement – a death imposed by decades of no-touch torture.

The severity of the conditions he is subjected to and the extraordinary length of time they have been imposed for has sparked an international campaign to release him from solitary confinement – a campaign that has quickly attracted the support of leading human rights legal organisations, such as the Centre for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild.

Less than two months after the campaign was formally launched with events in New York City and London, Juan Mendez, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, agreed to make an official inquiry into Shoats’ 21 years of solitary confinement, sending a communication to the U.S. State Department representative in Geneva, Switzerland.

What the liberals won’t tell you

While the state of Pennsylvania has remained unmoved in this matter so far, some in the U.S. government are finally catching on. Decades after rights activists first began to refer to the practice of solitary confinement as “torture,” the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on the constitution, civil rights and human rights held a hearing on June 19 to “reassess”

the fiscal, security and human costs of locking prisoners into tiny, windowless cells for 23 hours a day.

Needless to say, the hearing echoed in a whisper what human rights defenders have been shouting for nearly an entire generation: that sensory deprivation, lack of social contact, a near total absence of zeitgebers and restricted access to all intellectual and emotional stimuli are an evil and unproductive combination.

The hearing opened a spate of debate: with newspapers in Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, Tennessee, Pittsburgh, Ohio and elsewhere seizing the occasion to denounce the practice as “torture” and call for a reversal of a 30-year trend that has shattered – at a minimum – tens of thousands of people’s lives inside the vast U.S. prison archipelago.

But as happens with virtually all prison-related stories in the U.S. mainstream media, the two most important words were left unprinted, unuttered: race and revolution.

Any discussion on solitary confinement begins and ends with a number: a prisoner is kept in his or her cell 23 or 24 hours per day, allowed three showers every week and served three meals a day. According to a report by UN torture rapporteur Mendez, prisoners should not be held in isolation for more than 15 days at a stretch. But in the U.S., it is typical for hundreds of thousands of prisoners to pass in and out of solitary confinement for 30 or 60 days at a time each year.

Human Rights Watch estimated that there were approximately 20,000 prisoners being held in Supermax prisons, which are entire facilities dedicated to solitary confinement or near-solitary. It is estimated that at least 80,000 men, women and even children are being held in solitary confinement on any given day in U.S. jails and prisons.

Unknown thousands have spent years and, in some cases, decades in such isolation, including more than 500 prisoners held in California’s Pelican Bay state prison for ten years or more.

Perhaps the most notorious case of all is that of the Angola 3, three Black Panthers who have been held in solitary confinement in Louisiana for more than 100 years between the three of them. While Robert King was released after 29 years in solitary, his comrades – Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace – recently began their 40th years in solitary confinement, despite an ongoing lawsuit challenging their isolation and a growing international movement for their freedom that has been supported by Amnesty International.

But all these numbers fail to mention what Robert Saleem Holbrook, who was sentenced to life without parole as a 16-year-old juvenile and has now spent the majority of his life behind bars, pointed out: “Given the control units’ track record in driving men crazy, it is not surprising that the majority of prisoners sent into it are either politically conscious