

THE ABOLITIONIST

FALL 2018

FREE TO PEOPLE IN PRISONS, JAILS, AND DETENTION CENTERS • ESPAÑOL AL REVÉS

ISSUE 30: TEARING DOWN THE WALLS FROM BOTH SIDES

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue #30 of *The Abolitionist*! In this latest issue, we explore the different methods that people use to challenge the prison industrial complex (PIC), from a variety of different positions within and around it. Our ultimate goal is to highlight the *necessarily collective* efforts of people working across prison walls, and to learn from this record of practical experience. Martyred prison activist George Jackson relentlessly sought to explain the importance of building a multifaceted movement of resistance against imprisonment and policing. When asked in 1971 if a movement of this sort could be achieved, he replied:

A good deal of this has to do with our ability to communicate to the people on the street. The nature of the function of the prison within the police state has to be continuously explained, elucidated to the people on the street because we can't fight alone in here. Oh Yeah, [imprisoned people] can fight, but if we're isolated, if the state is successful in accomplishing that, the results are usually not constructive in terms of proving our point. We fight and we die, but that's not the point, although it may be admirable from some sort of purely moral point of view. The point is, however, in the face of what we confront, to fight and win. That's the real objective: not just to make statements, no matter how noble, but to destroy the system that oppresses us. By any means available to us. And to do this, we must be connected, in contact and communication with those in the struggle on the outside. We must be mutually supporting because we're all in this together. It's one struggle at base.

Such is the mission of *The Abolitionist* newspaper, and in this issue we aim to revitalize Jackson's specific challenge and charge. In the following pages, we bring forth the stories of numerous activists, organizations, intellectuals, and artists who are developing the type of networks that Jackson claims so necessary—a unification of isolated forces into a mass struggle to abolish oppression and transform society anew.

Members of the Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project (TGJIP) and Calls From Home radio show highlight the importance of communication between imprisoned and non-imprisoned co-strugglers and how a higher degree of communication can be achieved. In a speech transcribed by members of our collective, jailhouse activist Bryant Arroyo asserts why imprisoned and non-imprisoned people have a vital interest in environmental issues, and how we can work together across different punitive barriers in the struggle for environmental justice. Two leaders of the education program Humanities Behind Bars demonstrate how group-based study and mutual aid can convert prison education programs into key sites of struggle in our work toward PIC abolition.

In an interview with the Empty Cages Collective, we learn about the powerful, collaborative inside/outside efforts to abolish the PIC in the United Kingdom. An article on the Joint Imprisoned Workers Union in Argentina gives us insight into what our comrades in South America experience, as the authors express the ways in which labor exploitation transcends prison walls and demonstrate the importance of workplace organizing inside and out. Also, within these pages, imprisoned writer Quinnell Avery Johnson suggests how class action lawsuits can be used as a strategy for seeking justice, and shares a few ways that imprisoned and free world people can engage in such efforts together.

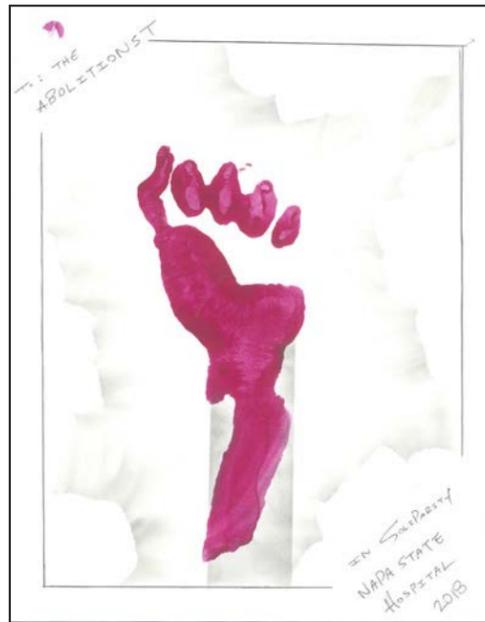
By highlighting these examples of inside/outside collaboration to bring the prison industrial complex to an end, we hope to demonstrate how much of what we must do is in fact *already being done*. The next logical step is thus to build upon past lessons of victory and failure and grow the strength and numbers of our movement today. In this issue, we introduce a new recurring section called "Abolition in Action" which provides brief news-takes and highlights on contemporary actions that people are taking worldwide to push toward the goals of PIC abolition. We are also excited to introduce our first "Kites to the Editor" section, where our readers provide insight, criticism, and general responses to content in the previous issue(s) of *The Abolitionist*. We encourage our readers to submit content to these new sections. Lastly, we present various poems and art pieces that that meditate on and aim to inspire collective work toward abolition through the mode of artistic expression. We hope that you enjoy and are inspired by this issue. All Power to the People!

**Forward Ever,
The Abolitionist Editorial Collective**

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Organizing Across Prison Walls is How We'll Bring Them Down

BY FELIX ROSADO AND LAYNE MULLETT



On June 6, 2015, around 300 people crowded into the Mosaic Community Church in West Philadelphia to launch a campaign to end death by incarceration (DBI) -- more commonly known as life without parole (LWOP) -- in the state of Pennsylvania.

The event was organized by four organizations: Decarcerate PA, Fight For Lifers, the Human Rights Coalition, and Right 2 Redemption (an organization based inside Graterford State Prison), as well as other incarcerated activists across the state. When we sent out invitations to the event we had no idea if people would show up, or just how strongly the call to end DBI would resonate in Philadelphia -- a city that has been devastated by incarceration, systematic disinvestment from public infrastructure, and high levels of violence.

The success of the launch event marked the beginning of a growth spurt for our movement. By June of 2016, we had a bill in the State House of Representatives that would make people serving DBI parole-eligible after 15 years. By October of the following year we had a companion bill in the Senate, and the ranks of the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration (CADBI) had swelled to hundreds of inside and outside members, with fledgling chapters and related projects taking off in several cities and towns across the state.

Due to the reactionary nature of state politics, we still have a ways to go before legislation to abolish DBI can become law, but the progress we have made is significant, and would never have been possible without deep collaboration between people inside and outside of prison.

People locked away in hundreds of thousands of cages across the United States are the front line in this struggle and have been leading the way for decades. At the same time, the resources, connection, and mobility of those on the outside is essential both for bringing that struggle to light and for amplifying its message.

Where we came from

On the inside, for too many decades, especially throughout the "tough-on-crime" (or rather, tough-on-poor-people-of-color) era and years of unchecked prison growth, efforts for freedom were bleak and mostly relegated to individualized quests for relief in the courts. We either gave up or hustled and hustled to be one of the less than 1% of appellants who get their convictions overturned. This kept our fights isolated and weak. It kept our loved ones and supporters on the outside isolated as well. But it's all we had, especially those of us fighting DBI sentences. Clemency was out of the question

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Interview with Empty Cages Collective (UK)

At the 2018 International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA) held in London, Critical Resistance was introduced to the UK based prison abolitionist organization Empty Cages Collective. We are grateful to share with our readers their solid analysis and actions aimed at bringing down the PIC.

Can you explain how the Empty Cages Collective got started?

The Empty Cages Collective was started in 2014 by two people, one who had not been long out of prison, and the other who had been doing ABC (Anarchist Black Cross) work for many years. At the time, we knew people who were actively supporting political prisoners and others doing detainee support (in immigration detention centres), but there was not a seemingly visible organized anti-prison movement in the UK. One of the things we did before launching was interview older organizers who had historically been involved in anti-prison work in England and Wales, including folks who tried to resist prison expansion over 10 years ago, those who had organized against prison labour back in the early 2000s, and people who had protested at deaths in prisons and police custody. They all said similar things about the lack of interest in prisoner support or anti-prison work, that it was hard to mobilize people which was very discouraging. However, overwhelmingly people thought the best groups to organize with were prisoner families.

And so we mapped all the people and projects that we could potentially build relationships with. We toured England, Wales, and Scotland doing workshops as part of our first 'Tear Down the Walls' tour. We howled for our pack and we found them, finally! It's now grown into a much larger group and project, and many people finally have a point of contact if they are interested in abolitionist struggles here on our Prison Island. It's taken a huge amount of work but we have a burgeoning movement here now with several active campaigns, solid local groups doing great work, and a prisoner union that is slowly growing.

Most of our readers are based in the US. Can you provide context on the development and current state of the prison industrial complex in the UK as well as resistance to it?

Compared to the United States, our prison system probably comes across as tiny. However, in a European context, we have the highest incarceration rate in Western Europe. The prison population is around 85,000 at any one time. However, across the broader incarcerating estate (detention centres, secure children's homes, etc) we are locking up more than 110,000 people, and there are more than 70 deaths per month.

Just under one-fifth of prisoners are held in private prisons run by three companies: G4S Justice Services, Sodexo Justice Services and Serco Custodial Services. However, many prisons have 'facilities' management contracts with large multi-nationals who are responsible for maintaining the prisons. One of these, Carillion, was awarded a £500 million contract in 2015 and recently went bankrupt. 'Custodial services' therefore are big money in the UK and this is a large factor influencing why our prison population has risen by 82% in the last 30 years. (Editor's note: Critical Resistance takes the stance that private prison companies and contractors are entities that benefit from the prison industrial complex and feed off its growth, but are not a major force driving its growth in the United States. The context of the PIC in the UK is different and these companies play a more pivotal role in the landscape.)

In 2016, the British government announced plans for one of the biggest prison building programs in generations: the construction of six new mega-prisons plus five new 'community prisons' for women. The Prison Estates Transformation Programme (PETP) aims to create 10,000 new prison places by 2020. Thankfully, the women's prisons have now been scrapped, and three of the mega-prisons have been delayed or rejected partly due to active resistance. Community Action on Prison Expansion (CAPE) have been resisting prison expansion since 2015 when the state was building one of the largest prisons in Europe in North Wales. Over the last three years, it has mostly focused on raising awareness about the PETP and supporting local groups to form and organize against prison expansion in their communities. CAPE has toured the breadth of the UK to inspire people to fight, as well as organized the No More Prisons conference in 2017 and multiple weeks of action and a large action camp in 2015 in collaboration with Reclaim the Fields, a constellation of anti-capitalist food growers from across Europe.

Other grassroots campaigns and struggles include those against the IPP sentence (explored in more detail below) and Joint Enterprise laws, which both target working-class communities, young people, and people of color and subject them to indeterminate and often life sentences. A group called Reclaim Holloway have also been fighting to prevent the capitalist development of a recently closed prison in London, demanding the site is used instead to build a Women's Centre in reparation for all of those harmed by HMP Holloway. The prison itself was occupied by Sisters Uncut, a feminist organization fighting cuts to domestic violence services. Queer communities have also been actively organizing and supporting trans prisoners following the deaths of three trans women in close succession in recent years.

We also have a branch of the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) established in Wales, Ireland, and England thanks to help from fellow workers in the United States. Extreme censorship has greatly impacted the group's ability to communicate with prisoners. However, union membership is growing slowly, and many support campaigns have been initiated for individual prisoners held in solitary confinement or facing parole, for example. There are also other local groups doing a mixture of organizing in solidarity with national campaigns, as well as local prisoner support by, for example, Bristol, Brighton, and London Anarchist Black Cross.

The UK also has an active movement against detention centres and the wider border regime, including a campaign to Shut Down Morton Hall, a women's detention centre in the Midlands, and to end deportations. As with the prison industrial complex on a whole, the UK's prison system is predicated on racial, class-based, and gendered violence. Black and minority ethnic groups make up 26% of the prison population, and around 18% are also foreign national prisoners. Britain's colonial past and neo-colonial present continues to influence who ends up behind bars. The state recently announced plans to build a prison wing in Nigeria to enable the deportation of prisoners. This comes two years after attempts to fund a new prison in Jamaica for the same purpose were rejected. The UK increasingly leverages 'aid' funding towards other governments to enable them to develop their repressive apparatuses such as by training police, developing criminal justice systems, and more. The British State is an expert in repression, policing, and imprisonment, and shares these skills with governments around the world. Prison abolition, to us in the heart of the empire, is an essential part of decolonization struggles.

We also want to honor that in the terrain of resistance in the UK are the prisoners who are fighting back every single day of the week, whether that is writing complaints or rioting behind bars. There is a long history of rebellion in British prisons, from hunger strikes to rooftop protests, and we want to make that as visible as possible and provide practical solidarity whenever we can.

What has been the primary function of the group? How does your group understand itself within the broader terrain of progressive-to-radical anti-carceral movements?

The primary function of the Empty Cages Collective has been movement building. We try to offer support and resources to new groups that are wanting to resist the PIC so that they can build their own autonomous groups and campaigns. We don't want to be some kind of group or vanguardist project that is organizing all these different campaigns with us at the centre. It's all about building this ecology of resistance.

We know a strong, effective anti-prison movement isn't going to arise overnight nor by itself – so we are dedicated to doing the best we can to make this happen.

We try to work in a horizontal and fairly informal way as a grassroots collective without staff, registration, or some of the other entanglements of the not for profit industrial complex. We share an affinity with each other and are dedicated to our goals and making things happen. A lot of people believe that resistance arises spontaneously or organically. However, for us and our friends in prison, we don't have time to wait. We know a strong, effective anti-prison movement isn't going to arise overnight nor by itself so we are dedicated to doing the best we can to make this happen. In terms of the broader terrain, we act as some kind of node in the bigger network: we help to radicalize people and move them in certain anti-prison and anti-state directions, we connect people to groups and projects, we support people to start new things, and we also act as a wider bridge to international movements by sharing global news on prison issues and trying to be present at international gatherings and events wherever possible.

We are definitely one of the most explicit anarchist and abolitionist collectives here. Many other groups operate within some kind statist paradigm by articulating the desire to downsize the criminal justice system but somehow keep the power relationship of the state intact. For us, prison abolition means destroying the state. It means destroying the society where prisons can exist. Compared to other groups, we are probably more strongly connected to these kinds of struggles across the world, and we like to create resources that are generative of these positions, asking these critical questions, and amplifying prisoner voices that are calling for revolutionary struggle.

What is IPP and how has it been resisted? What are the challenges of this resistance? Why is this resistance important?

IPP stands for indeterminate sentence for public protection—these sentences were introduced in 2005 as a way to keep people in prison indefinitely. The idea was that people would serve a set tariff and that after serving this, they would have a parole hearing every two years to de-

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Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. We believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, our work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the PIC. Because we seek to abolish the PIC, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope.

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termine if they could get out. The sentence comes with a life-long license which basically means if you put a foot wrong, you get

recalled back to prison. The impact of this sentence has been catastrophic. It was given out like sweets to working class people by Judges, and has effectively created a life sentence for minor crimes. More than 8,000 people were given the sentence and over 3,000 of them remain in prison years later. To give you a tangible example, we have known IPPs that got a 7 month sentence or making threats to kill when drunk who have been in prison for over 12 years, or another stole a mobile phone on a high street and was trapped in prison for more than 10 years.

Politicians admitted they had made a mistake, and the sentence was abolished in 2012. However, it was abolished retroactively which meant the thousands of people who were given an IPP are still suffering from its implementation. The UK has the highest prisoner suicide rate in the world, and this can greatly be attributed to this sentence. Many IPPs lose all hope and take their own lives, others abandon themselves to drugs, and a small few try to resist through whatever means possible. One collective that emerged in response to this brutal sentence is Smash IPP. It was started when a mother of an IPP prisoner asked a group of anarchists for help in South Wales—together they campaigned as hard as they could to free him (and were successful). The Empty Cages Collective have done their best to support Smash IPP and helped to organize a massive year of action in 2017 that embraced lots of different tactics. The group organized pressure campaigns for individual prisoners who were due parole, helping access better legal support and put pressure on certain state agencies such as Probation and the Parole Board. They took to the streets picketing probation offices and targeting the Justice Secretary and more. Many new people got involved through letter writing, demos, and other events that tried to illuminate this deadly sentence.

Resisting the IPP is important because it's one of the 'non-reformist reforms' that is essential to abolitionist struggle. It is a sentence affecting thousands of people

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and brings us in contact with both those in prison and those families whose lives are being ripped apart because of it. It is a way to highlight conditions in prison, the power dynamics of the state, and wider patterns of oppression in how the IPP was implemented on a structural level (in terms of targeting working class people and people of color). We recognise that there are many forms of indeterminate sentence and that getting legal reforms is a limited strategy. However, we know that we can also make demands of the state in a way that is anti-authoritarian and be empowering to prisoners and families impacted by the sentence, many of whom have never engaged in organized resistance before or accessed collective support to help cope with this daily hardship of the prison system.

One of the goals for the Empty Cages Collective is to "Continue to generate solidarity and mutual aid for individual prisoners through sharing their call-outs for support on our growing networks." Why does Empty Cages Collective see this as important? What tactics have been used to work toward this goal?

The Empty Cages Collective sees prisoner support as an essential part of all anti-state, anti-prison, and anarchist struggle. It's the heartbeat. For us having been in prison, and having people we love still behind bars, prisoner support is part of our collective survival. No matter how bigger-picture you go, or how much you want to focus on movement building or a grassroots campaign, prisoners need to be at the centre. It is all meaningless without actively building relationships with people behind the walls. Individual call-outs for support are always necessary, and we want to be able to leverage the power that is growing to support people when they need it most, whether this is getting them out of segregation or fighting for cancer treatment, for example.

We gain so much inspiration and ideas for strategy from reading publications written by so many incredible prison intellectuals from history. We can see from people's experiences in prison that the IPP sentence, for example, is killing people and also sustaining the PIC by

having so many long-termers in the system, so we know this needs to be a necessary focus for our organizing work. Our connection to people behind the walls means we can actually help initiate campaigns and projects that are really needed.

In terms of tactics, this might look like the equivalent of "phone zaps" whereby we ask people to contact a certain prison with a demand (such as getting the water fixed for a wing without drinking water, or getting someone out of segregation) or it might be a fundraising call, a day of action for a particular group, or simply asking people to write to someone that we know is struggling with their mental health and we want people to send them some TLC.

The other important aspect of prisoner support is that it creates a tangible impact—like you win someone's parole with them and they are reunited with their family or they get the life-saving health care they need, for example. When you are doing incredibly long-term organizing, having these small 'victories' are essential to help you keep going. We hope that one day we can destroy this whole system overnight as part of a larger revolutionary moment. However, we also know that creating radical change can't be some kind of delayed gratification. We need to take an offensive, we need to have liberating relationships and projects right now because freedom cannot wait for some magic conditions to appear.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your organizing?

We just want to honor one of our recently fallen comrades who contributed so much to the Empty Cages Collective—Anna Campbell. She left the collective to go to Kurdistan to help defend and learn from the revolution there. She was killed by a missile strike by the Turkish State in March this year. She would write to prisoners all over the world, she'd drive up and down the UK for actions and demos, and she'd constantly contribute ideas of how to increase our impact. We miss her every day.

Dark Noise

BY CHRISTOPHER EDWARD HENRIQUEZ

Blossoming nocturnal sounds
gloomy verb's pleasant nouns
conscience in collective vows
wise souls right here and now
how else will voices crowd
speaking fearlessly out loud
on relevant, pertinent issues
of unworthy presidential pistols
on nuclear codes and ballistic mistakes
of blaspheming god, defaming temples
on school shootings reversing sadistic mentals
of life to our planet's rich crystals.
Earthly natives resisting sour powers
organizing humanity by the hour
to salvage love, hats we'll devour
cultivating support so our families flower
poetical flaming colors, raining amazing showers

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KITES TO THE EDITOR

Response to "It's Not Police Brutality" by Dylan Rodriguez (Issue 29)

In his article, Rodriguez makes a number of assertions. The first is that the very notion of police brutality is indicative of a misguided paradigm founded on the base assumption that the purpose of police is to "serve and protect," thus leading to the logical conclusion—within such a framework—that brutality is but an aberration of this purpose, an aberration that must be, and can be, corrected. Rodriguez counters this paradigm by then asserting that the police are actually doing what the state wants them to do, which would mean their purpose is actually to control and oppress—often, fatally. Rodriguez then goes on to declare the role of police "inhuman," implying the role to be inherently wrong with no rightful place in society, and finally ending the article with a call for the abolition of police.

Okay, so here's what it looks like to me:

Rodriguez voices frustration at demonstrators who "go around hugging cops," but doesn't stop to substantively question why they do that or why they stick to such a "political script." Just complaining about them is not enough. If we want to win the reformists over to the abolitionist cause, we should try to understand what things look like from their eyes. The demonstrators who "go around hugging cops" obviously have their reasons for doing so. If Rodriguez is so curious about it, why not just ask them? Most likely, the demonstrators do agree with Rodriguez about the inhuman position and practice, yet perhaps the demonstrators are attempting to appeal to the human beings inside the uniforms, hoping to reach some of those individuals whom Rodriguez described as struggling with "the consequences of inhabiting that inhumanity." If this is the case, it seems more like a tactical approach rather than they necessarily "love cops."

It's also possible that some demonstrators are unable to envision a world without police, because of the interpersonal harm and physical violence people inflict on each other. In moments of candor, some may even privately admit to seeing a societal need for police. Observers like Rodriguez might argue that such a view is nothing more than socially constructed brainwashing foisted upon us by a capitalistic, racist superstructure that seeks to suppress and control unwanted swathes of the population. Certainly, that's a large part of it. But there's also more.

Many demonstrators come from troubled communities beset by what is commonly known as "crime." So even with all of the police's oppressive practices, there still lingers a sense that police are the only viable option for a neutral third-party regulator of interpersonal harm. This feeling is born from people's lived experiences in places where the harm is real and commonplace. At the same time, those experiences also invariably include being on the receiving end of police violence. So there's an inner turmoil, between not wanting to be beaten and possibly killed by the cops, while wanting their intervention if such violence is being dealt by other individuals (although ironically, by most accounts, in these cases the cops rarely do intervene on time or in the right way). Between these conflicting feelings, enough insecurity remains that it molds the mental construct—even of those who've been directly oppressed—into one which sees no alternative to police but that of chaos and danger.

—Robert Chan

Response to "Learning Together How to Fight" by Mariama Kaba (Issue 29)

I agree that precision in our analysis is the key to being effective and that we must have an agreed-upon design and strategy to prevail. There must be solidarity and unity in executing a strategy or it will almost certainly fail, and worse, we will not learn as a group from our failures or successes; better a fool with a plan than a genius without a clue as to what to do to. When a plan fails, we must learn why, and evolve in light of it.

Those of us who are imprisoned are isolated from the world and have limited access to resources and information. We have the means to communicate, but only after the person we are going to communicate with makes the required effort to reach out to us and establish that communication channel. We can email someone only after we have sent them an invite and they have accepted that invitation, for

example. Spam filters often put the invites into the junk-mail box. And, even after communication is established, the settings on the email server often reset to default settings, which stops all emails from being mailed to the intended receiver and halts the sending of all notifications. Therefore, the person on the outside must log onto the Corelinks (I believe) email-server and set mail-forwarding and notification back-up repeatedly, or the communication channel is essentially lost. To send mail via US Postal Service, the prisoner must have the person's zip code and address! There are people I wish to communicate with that I cannot, because I do not remember the zip code and have no means to look it up, despite having their address memorized. When an prisoner is moved, they are often stripped of all contact information. The outside must keep these channels open. The prisoner cannot do it.

—Brent Cole

General Response

Greetings to all abolitionist readers and Critical Resistance supporters. My name is Douglas Hopper and I'm being held hostage at the R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA.

For those of you who don't know me I'm what you might call "Silent advocate" from within the walls...I'm the guy who is on the front lines writing 602's, initiating legal actions, confronting the custody and Administrators when our rights are in jeopardy or placed at risk of future harm. However, I write this Kite with a heavy heart and disbelief in the lack of interest in today's imprisoned population, with respect to our precious rights that are slowly being withered away right before our eyes!

So, view this as you may, but I'm presenting it as a call to action to educate yourselves to your constitutional rights, explore what the PIC (Prison Industrial Complex) really means. Stop fighting amongst yourselves and start fighting for your rights. A lot has happened over the last several years (Prop 36, Prop 47, SB260 and the Elderly early release law, just to name a few). "No," it's not exactly what we were hoping for, but it's clearly a step in the right direction. There's been other amazing accomplishments that we can reflect on and gain strength from for future action. Take the Prison Law Office victories from Plata, Coleman, Perez, and Armstrong. And, who would have thought there would be an end to long term isolation in California's SHU program?

"Yes," there has been progress made over a great deal of time, but in my books, it's not sufficient, or happening fast enough! And I apply some constructive criticism here in my call to action, which I direct towards all our recognized Prison advocates, LSA (Life Support Alliance), PARC (Prison Activist Resource Center), the Coalition for Prisoner's Rights, and even Critical Resistance for their lack of attention to the massive problems we face on a day-to-day basis while behind these walls. Oh, I know most of the arguments as to why it can't or hasn't been done, like lack of funds, "that's not part of our mission statement," "we don't have the staff," and the list goes on...

Despite all this inaction, I plan to move forward with a new era in prison advocacy, one that works from the inside out. I am in the process of launching The Associates Network, which will be a non-profit organization aimed at fighting for prisoner's rights behind the walls rather than flying kites over the wall with whimsical messages as to what we can do given a certain set of circumstances, which never seems to work due to Green Wall tactics and Guard union financing. Let it be known, there's going to be a new Sheriff in town and it's going to be The Associates Network!!! All I can say at this point is for the imprisoned population to remain patient as we are in the process of establishing our executive staff, our non-profit certification and drafting our "Call to Action" policies & procedures. Once those pillars are in place and we have fortified our location, we will begin to distribute our newsletter and launch our campaign to remove rogue guards and eradicate corruption! Coming to a concrete warehouse near you.

—Douglas Hopper

Want to submit a Kite to the Editor? See our submission guidelines on page 8.

Continued from page 1, "Bring Them Down"

after one individual released in 1994 went on a crime spree, reversing the outcome of a gubernatorial election and altering the politics and policies of the DOC for a generation (and counting). The odds of getting a legislative life raft were slimmer than hitting the Power Ball.

Outside supporters and activists groups, much smaller in number than today, were eager to advocate on our behalf, but not necessarily *with* us. Members of these well-meaning organizations and committees communicated with inside folks and occasionally came to visit with groups, mostly at Graterford, the closest and most accessible prison to Philadelphia. They'd walk away from these encounters feeling good about having fulfilled their obligation to provide a seat at the proverbial table to those they're fighting for. But, in the end, day-to-day decisions about direction, strategy, and action were made away from those tables.

In 2012, about a dozen men at Graterford founded Right 2 Redemption (R2R) in an attempt to change the course of the decades-long fight to end DBI in PA through parole eligibility. We decided early on that we needed to radically shift the approach, narrative, and language around the issue. But we couldn't do it alone. Not long after, we joined forces with three groups made up of inside and outside members—Decarcerate PA, Human Rights Coalition, and Fight for Lifers—to form the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration.

Others serving DBI across the state also helped drive this shift towards bigger movement building. When the outside organizations who would eventually become CADBI first met to discuss the possibility of a joint campaign, our conversations were guided by the words of three powerful organizers serving DBI sentences -- Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall, David "Dawud" Lee, and Robert "Saleem" Holbrook, who had sent a position paper for the meeting to help ground us in the ways this issue was grounded in a broader struggle for racial and economic justice. They write: "We struggle because we are fundamentally opposed to injustice and state repression, not because we are desperate for freedom. Every prisoner, regardless of their sentence, wants to be free, for freedom is the natural disposition of humans. As conscious and politicized prisoners however, we connect our freedom to the need to struggle against societal injustice. Therefore, if we were released tomorrow, our struggle would not be over, we would continue to struggle against all forms of oppression." We were also guided by materials sent by R2R, who powerfully express the idea that "this systemic negation of the human capacity for redemption is a crime against humanity."

It is from this place that CADBI was formed. Inside and outside members consisting of those condemned to DBI, our families, and fellow comrades in the struggle work together to accomplish this mission.

We definitely don't have a perfect model. We're constantly grappling with how to truly work in collaboration around decision making and implementation of our strategies and initiatives. While this process is far from seamless, we are learning and growing as we go. And while we can't speak for all inside-outside organizing happening in PA, we are reflecting on our own experiences working together to draw out some lessons we've learned.

What does inside-outside organizing look like?

I see incarcerated people participating and leading movements for social change by galvanizing 2.5 million American prisoners, 7 million American people under some form of parole supervision, tens of millions of their families and communities in cities affected by racist laws, militarized police, unjust courts and for-profit state/federal prison systems, to lead a human rights prisoners' movement to totally transform America as we know it.

— Kerry Shakaboona Marshall

Respect the leadership of those inside. Those of us with our "chestnuts in the fire," as R2R member Kempis "Ghani" Songster likes to put it, are taking the lead. As more and more of us are realizing that our individual struggles for freedom are inextricably tied to collective liberation, we are coming together to demand change that will affect all.

Empower and support the loved ones of incarcerated people to take leadership. Families and loved ones of those serving DBI are a powerful bloc, especially when they have access to supportive spaces to share their experiences and expertise.

As more and more of us are realizing that our individual struggles for freedom are inextricably tied to collective liberation, we are coming together to demand change that will affect all.

For example, the mother of one of the authors mostly kept her son's incarceration and DBI sentence a secret for over two decades. But after being convinced to attend a CADBI rally at the state capital building for the second year in a row, she was interviewed by a reporter who went on to put the story and picture of her holding up a "FREE MY SON" sign on the front page of the local paper. Once "outed," and after the surprising and overwhelming support she received from the city, she thrust herself headlong into daily activism.

Since then, she has participated in nonstop forums, rallies, and other events, and has been active every day on social media. She mobilized community members for a well-attended CADBI forum in the city of Reading, and then helped organize three legislative visits with a State House candidate, State Senator, and State Rep. All were successful meetings, with two of the three agreeing on the spot to co-sponsor the bill and the other now moving in that direction. This kind of empowering collective action is the antithesis of scraping together money for lawyers and then waiting years for the next outcome.

Build real relationships and meaningful opportunities for collaboration. This is foundational to any organizing, and inside outside organizing is no different. In the words of incarcerated activist Kerry "Shakaboona" Marshall, "Inside-outside organizing in PA looks like a 'family partnership,' with people in prison and in society working together towards a common goal. It's prisoners and activists who were once strangers to each other creating familial bonds, supporting each other, and challenging the oppressor's system. This family partnership works on the basis of truth, justice, freedom, equality, and reciprocity."

According to David "Dawud" Lee, who has been an organizer behind prison walls for decades, "the work actually begins with building relationships with each other, because without that critical first step it is almost impossible to accomplish any goals. Next we need to discover what issues we find the greatest need to work on. I think that we must find folks with a common interest, and who are willing to explore creative ideas as we work towards building movements across the country."

We all need political education. In the words of Terri Harper, an activist and advocate serving a DBI sentence at SCI Muncy, "We attempt to challenge injustice first by educating ourselves on the intertwined systems that have control over our lives. That's familiarizing ourselves with the legislature and how it works. It's setting aside time to watch/read up on political battles and resolutions. It's also having a basic knowledge of DOC policy, so that any one of us can effectively hold the powers-that-be and ourselves accountable for word and deed incompatible to safety, understanding, redemption and

peace." Making time for this learning and knowledge-sharing, both inside and outside of prison, is critical for building a movement that is thoughtful and informed.

Work and power are shared. Through a variety of creative means, we collaborate on philosophy, strategy, and decision making, utilizing every available method of communication. We write, email, call, visit. Outside liaisons come into the prison for meetings. Inside representatives call out to gatherings and actions on the outside. Outreach for events is handled by both the inside and outside. Inside members speak at rallies and events via live phone calls or prerecorded statements. Major actions always have some avenue for inside members to participate, even though they can't attend physically. All members have a voice in decision making. It's hardly smooth but we find a way to make it work.

People in prison do the best outreach. From the beginning, CADBI's base-building strategy centered on an outreach model that bounced back and forth between inside and outside. Once an action is decided upon, folks on the outside make a flyer and send that flyer and any other relevant information to CADBI members and trusted comrades on the inside. Then CADBI members on the inside make copies and circulate that flyer both inside the prisons and reach out to friends and family members on the outside to tell them about the event. This outreach model ensures that people are learning about CADBI through someone they are already connected to, and are therefore far more likely to get involved.

Believe in your ability to make change. Says Shakaboona, "My advice to people who are trying to organize across prison walls is to be committed, exercise patience, keep your word, don't overwhelm yourself by doing too many projects at one time, be open-minded to engaging in the struggle in a multiplicity of ways, and don't have belief or faith in politicians and the state's institutions (i.e., laws, police, courts, and prisons), instead have a belief/faith in the 'power of the people' to change their circumstances."

Terri adds, "If I were to advise others in prison on how to organize, I would sum it up by telling them to educate, share, receive and get active, as activity leads to added connections, and that IS organizing. The only other thing they must do is PLAN"

Where do we go from here?

Prison walls are designed to confine and separate people, not just physically, but spiritually and emotionally. As Clinton "Nkechi" Walker -- an incarcerated poet serving a DBI sentence -- writes for the LifeLines Project, "If it takes a village to raise a child then I am absent of that village, otherwise neglecting my responsibilities and letting down those little ones that need my knowledge." We feel every day the weight of that absence, loved ones who are not home, not able to do their work in the community.

And at the same time, this absence is not the totalizing force that the state might like it to be. For we are not absent from each other when we struggle together, when we build community, family, and movement together, when we strategize, argue, and plan together, when we work together to bring people home.

Collaborating across prison walls is strategic, in that it brings to bear the immense capacity, analysis, and creativity of those who are locked down and locked out by the prison industrial complex together with those on the outside. It lessens the burden of people who for too long have shouldered the weight of their loved ones' incarceration alone and in the shadows. Fear and shame are being replaced with realization that they are not alone, that their neighbors, coworkers, fellow parishioners are also doing time on the outside. Eerie silence is morphing into an increasingly loud roar that can be heard inside prisons and state capital buildings.

As we chip away at the walls—together—we're building bonds that transcend and will outlast our mission. We're building bridges and pathways to the kind of society we want to live in. And it's making those walls feel just a little less concrete—until the day they come crumbling down.

Felix Rosado is cofounder and co-coordinator of *Let's Circle Up*, a restorative justice project based at Graterford State Prison. Originally from Reading, PA, he has been fighting a death by incarceration sentence since 1995. He also co-coordinates the *Alternatives to Violence Project* and is a member of the *Inside-Out Graterford Think Tank*. In 2016, he earned his Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree from Villanova University. He is an advisor to Decarcerate PA, as well as to Eastern State Penitentiary's *Prisons Today Exhibit* and *Returning Citizens Tour Guide Program*.

As a member of Right 2 Redemption (a founding organization of the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration) and *LifeLines*, he seeks to end the practice of caging humans until death.

Layne Mullett is founding member of Decarcerate PA and the Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration, and a co-creator of *LifeLines: Voices Against the Other Death Penalty*. She has been active in social justice movements for over

a decade, organizing against gentrification, austerity, and the prison industrial complex, and working for the freedom of political prisoners. Her writing has been published in the journal *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, in the anthology *Life During Wartime: Resisting Counterinsurgency*, and in the forthcoming book *The Long Term*. Layne currently serves on the Community Advisory Board for *Critical Resistance*. She lives in Philadelphia.



#KeepPJHome: Abolitionists Against the Deportation Crisis

This year has proven to be a uniquely dangerous year for Southeast Asian Americans facing deportation. On April 3, 2018 the largest deportation of Khmer Americans resulted in over 43 families being torn apart by the U.S. government. This was a deliberate message from the state to the Cambodian American community that it has no problem destroying the social fabric of Southeast Asian families. In the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. military occupied, terrorized, and carpet bombed the sovereign nations of Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. To date over 600 Cambodians have been deported back to Cambodia, over 16,000 have received deportation orders, and a total of 16,000 Southeast Asian refugees will be forced to leave the country. These deportations have largely remained hidden from the public eye, as many of these stories do not fit the “good immigrant” narrative that liberals can easily rally behind.

Many Southeast Asians—and Cambodian American refugees in particular—have deportation orders simply because they committed a “crime.” In this situation, the state relinquishes the refugee’s right to maintain residence in the U.S. They not only experience civil death like other imprisoned people but suffer complete removal from the country altogether. Because many find it difficult to advocate for the freedom of those who commit alleged crimes, a blind eye is turned on such individuals impacted by incarceration and deportation. But what if the conditions of our lives ask us to commit crimes? What if committing a crime was innate to our survival? How can we understand the conditions of poverty, refugee resettlement, and racism as a *criminalization process*? These questions inform the crucial argument that no one deserves to experience poverty, racism, refugeeism or the violence of capitalism. As PIC abolitionists, we must demand the freedom of all criminalized people.

A case that highlights this type of abolitionist work is the #KeepPJHome campaign, an ongoing grassroots campaign that demands the freedom and unaltered stay of Borey “PJ” Ai. Importantly, this campaign does not only focus on PJ’s individual case but is organized with the larger goal of challenging incarceration and deportation more generally. The campaign first began as a project to free PJ from prison (#BringPJHome) and has since become the #KeepPJHome campaign, fighting against his deportation. Organizers in Asian Prisoner Support Committee (APSC) and I launched the #BringPJHome campaign in November of 2017. We were notified that ICE was going to launch a full fledge attack on the Southeast Asian community—specifically the Cambodian community—in what would be the largest ICE raid in Southeast Asian American history. Many of us volunteered in San Quentin State Prison and other California prisons and knew recent parolees that would be affected. PJ is a prisoner we worked with and love that recently paroled out who could potentially have been deported along with those picked up in these raids.

PJ was only 14 when he was incarcerated. He was sentenced to life at San Quentin State Prison and is notoriously known as one of the youngest prisoners to enter this adult facility. PJ is also a Cambodian refugee. He was born in a refugee camp and resettled in America in the mid 1980s as part of the U.S. Refugee Act to accept refugees from Southeast Asia. His family resettled in America after the U.S. bombings in Southeast Asia gave rise to the Khmer Rouge, a civil war that resulted in the genocide of a quarter of the Cambodian population. His resettlement to the United States as a refugee was riddled with challenges from the get-go. Like many refugees from Cambodia, PJ’s family did not speak English and suffered from the traumas of displacement and war. They resettled in Stockton, CA where the conditions of life were no better than the war-stricken country they escaped from.

At the time of PJ’s family resettlement, the U.S. was perfecting its own methods for subverting a wave of

anti-racist and anti-war movements, which in part gave impetus to the prison industrial complex we know today. Between the late-1960s and 1980s, the U.S. began to criminalize and incarcerate people at exponential rates as a means to subdue mass uprising and maintain its imperialist control of the planet. PJ’s family resettled at a time where there was a hyper-militarization of police, cutbacks to social services, a “war on drugs,” a “war on poverty,” and the largest prison expansion project the world has ever seen. The circumstances that forced PJ’s family to resettle were the very same conditions that predetermined their fate, appearing always already as “criminal” in the white nation’s eye. Surviving extreme poverty, racism, and state terror became targeted criminal acts.

On January 17, 1989, Cleveland Elementary School, a school with predominantly Southeast Asian refugee children from Vietnam, and Cambodia, experienced a school yard shooting. The perpetrator was Patrick Edward Purdy, a white American citizen who is said to have held deep resentment toward Asian immigrants for “taking American jobs.” PJ was a student at Cleveland Elementary School when the shooting took place. PJ later recalled not wanting to go back to school and feeling unsafe after the shooting. It was in

framework that sought justice and liberation for all incarcerated and detained people.

Outside of ICE Detention walls, we, as #BringPJHome organizers, launched Pack the Court campaigns at all of his ICE hearings. We wrote letters to our district assembly members. We wrote letters to the Governor. We took “vacations” from work to advocate for PJ in Sacramento. We mobilized students from California colleges and universities. We mobilized with his family. We tried everything and anything that we believed would get PJ free. We love *all* the men we’ve worked with inside the prison system, and we love PJ. We were determined to stop his deportation because we knew if we could make the case that he didn’t deserve to be deported, then we could make the case that *nobody* should be deported. We launched #BringPJHome knowing it would be a long shot, but we were determined to fight for his freedom.

In talking about Southeast Asian detainees, PJ exemplifies the material conditions that lead so many to be incarcerated and then detained in ICE detention. He says: “Looking back now, big ‘ol influx of Southeast Asians coming to prison during the ‘80s. Why? Why so many all of a sudden, trauma passed on from generation to generation. We grew

up in prison, most of us. We woke up, and find our way out of prison. Now we are sitting in ICE serving time again being separated from our families. So for me, what is most special thing is family. My whole life, just trying to find a family, trying to be a part of family.” PJ’s remarks demonstrate how the root of justice, liberation and consciousness lies something more—love. That in the pursuit of belonging and family is love, and it is love and struggle that will lead us to freedom. On May 10, 2018, after all the organizing, advocacy, and mobilizing, PJ was finally released from ICE detention. We were ecstatic. We didn’t know if it was due to our community organizing or if it was because ICE decided to release PJ on a whim, but we would take this as a win for us, for the community, and for PJ’s family. After 20 plus

years of incarceration and then ICE detention, PJ finally took his first breath of freedom. After 20 plus years of seeing her son behind bars, on the weekend of Mother’s Day, PJ’s mom finally got to hold her son.

PJ is still “deportable” and we are still working to remove his deportation order. We as #BringPJHome organizers, now known as #KeepPJHome campaign organizers, are currently seeking a governor’s pardon as it is the only way to grant him a permanent stay here in the United States. His current status as an almost-free person (someone who is not currently incarcerated or in an ICE detention center) can be attributed to the organizers and advocates who saw that his freedom was a necessary step towards the freedom of all imprisoned people with deportation orders. This campaign was a pinnacle moment in the Cambodian American community and the anti-deportation movement at large. This campaign provided a framework and praxis that allowed us to work beyond the good immigrant and bad immigrant narrative, and shed light on the compounding effects of poverty, racism, and refugee resettlement. It proved to us, outside organizers, that in a perfect world without U.S. imperialism, poverty, and racism, we wouldn’t have to be fight for PJ. The conditions in his life would not have been set up for him to be criminal, if those systems of violence did not exist. We were determined to demonstrate that we can work towards the abolition of all those systems. PJ’s campaign exemplifies the necessity of fighting for all incarcerated and deportable people.

Nate Tan is an organizer with Asian Prisoner Support Committee and helped lead the #BringPJHome campaign.

Editor’s Note: On October 16, 2018, PJ received a recommendation for a governor’s pardon, achieving a crucial step towards his freedom.



that feeling of unsafety that survival became essential for him. PJ joined a gang as a response to the violence in Stockton, which resulted in him committing a crime that landed him in prison at the age of 14. He became the youngest person to be sentenced to an adult prison in California history.

While imprisoned, PJ took the necessary steps to demonstrate “rehabilitation.” During his time in prison he completed his GED, became a state certified rape and crisis counselor and certified domestic violence counselor, and earned his Associate’s degree in Liberal Arts. In July 2016, after serving 20 years behind bars, PJ was granted parole on his first try. Immediately after his release, however, he was sent to an ICE detention center where he would wait for an order of deportation. He had become part of the many Cambodian individuals now at the mercy of the deportation machine.

We called in with PJ from ICE detention as other Asian American grassroots organizations demanded the deportations of Cambodian Americans come to an end. Other Asian American advocacy groups constantly called and contacted their representatives demanding that they stand up for PJ and the other folks impacted by incarceration and deportation. On the inside of ICE detention, while we were fighting for PJ’s freedom, PJ was working with the newly rounded up Cambodians in the ICE detention center he was being held at. He worked with other Cambodian Americans to re-open their cases and fight their deportation too. PJ encouraged other detainees to keep fighting and to keep their spirits up and made sure to connect people inside facing deportation with attorneys and resources that resulted in some of the detainees winning a stay here in the United States. PJ looked out for his community with unrelenting support as detainees inside and supporters outside were demanding the right to stay with their families in the United States. People involved with his campaign began to develop an abolitionist consciousness and

Bryant Arroyo Speaks at the Yale Environmental Forum

Bryant Arroyo is an incarcerated environmental activist serving life without parole at SCI Frackville in Pennsylvania. He is the first "jailhouse environmentalist" and, throughout his time on the inside, has dedicated himself to organizing in the struggle against toxic prisons and environmental racism. The following are selected excerpts from a speech Arroyo gave at the 2018 Yale Environmental Forum this past February, recorded and first broadcast in full on Prison Radio in March 2018. Thank you to Bryant for granting us permission to publish it.

As we struggle to put people and not corporations in charge of our lives and governance who seek real and sustainable victories toward that goal, it is vital that we link our descent, our strategies, and our vision to their roots. Alexander Meiklejohn, a thoughtful student and teacher on matters of the constitution and the first amendment, was right when he suggested that we underestimate the task of using our minds, and I would add, our hearts, to which we are summoned by our plan of government.

Where these roots must play a critical role is in clarifying if we are to celebrate true, rather than false, victories.

The first is associated with how we take things and how we listen to our habits of noticing our caring, reading, and commenting. We can learn and we can teach only that for which our receptors are tuned. If we tune our minds and our hearts rigorously and radically, we have a chance of bringing just and democratic betterment. But if we are tuned imprecisely, the hard work of learning, teaching, planning, organizing, mobilizing too often ends in the suffering of things rather than genuine change.

The second to which roots and rigor must be brought to bear is in the kind of strategies we design into our campaigns against corporate power. These strategies need to reflect an understanding of the current rule of law that puts we the people, subordinate to the propertied few, organized into corporate forms. They must reflect our commitment to reversing that law. In addition, our strategies and actions must make the case for redefining what corporations are and what they do, rather than merely reducing the damage from what they do wrong.

The third to which we must bring critically fundamental thought and feeling, relates to our vision of what is possible for us to propose, that people have the capacity for two inclusive, democratic self-governments to place ourselves within a world view and set up assumptions wholly contradictory to the patriarchal world view that brought us our present earthly and human predicament. We must, therefore, incorporate into our learning and our political work at every level this large kind of contextual understanding. Without the opportunity to effectively engage this conversation, people will flounder, will be highly skeptical that anything better is possible from us human beings...

Of course, I should not pretend to consider any matter for wonder that the actual ordinary case has excited discussion among the community of environmental activists, lawyers, law students, scientists, and law professors. It would have been considered a miracle had it not, especially under the circumstances through the desire of the powerful political forces within the township of School—county and Eastern region—Baron, John W Rich Jr. to keep the unprecedented successful protest defeat of 902 inmates, bringing the 800 million dollar coal gasification plant to a complete halt from the public.

At least for the present, through our endeavors to the effect, this isolated account made its way without any exaggeration through the local newspapers of Pottsville Republican and Morning Herald—former Prison Legal News—and now currently Criminal Legal News, Socialist Viewpoint, Workers World, Washington Post, Thinkprogress.org, Prisonradio.org, Fighttoxicprisons.org, and most recently was invited by Mr. Jamison Maley, a teacher at a private school called Haverford whom is currently studying to get his Masters degree in Environmental Ethics.

And now, I am here today at the prestigious, Ivy League University of Yale.

Please allow me to reintroduce myself. I am a bilingual Puerto Rican incarcerated for the past 24 years under a gross miscarriage of justice, by the name of Bryant Arroyo—the first jailhouse environmentalist to crush the corporate giants. In 2013, I had the fortuitous opportunity of meeting Mumia Abu-Jamal upon being released from the segregated restricted housing unit to general population. As fate would have it, Mumia ended up becoming my neighbor, a resident on the same block. Here I stood, with one of the most famous political prisoners in the world. Prior to meeting Mumia, I knew quite a bit about him, being a well-respected author of several books wherein I had the vicarious thrill to read. As an example: *Black Blossoms*, *Live from Death Row*, *Jailhouse Lawyers*, *We Want Freedom: Life in the Black Panther Party*.

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. Block-out sessions and walks in the yard, we built on many years of our experiences as jailhouse lawyers. As

CALL FOR PAPERS *The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism*

Introduction

The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism will provide the leading 'one stop global abolitionist textbook' for the 21st century that will reflect key abolitionist thought and help set the agenda for local and global abolitionist ideas and interventions over the coming decade. It will consist of 35-40 chapters (5,000-6,000 words each) working toward the systemic and systematic dismantling of penal structures and processes, and toward social living that is grounded in relationships that take into account the needs of all. The editors of this global-centered project seek contributions from all around the world that (a) engage and further abolitionist practice, study, politics and theory, (b) examine abolition empirically, theoretically, historically, culturally, spatially, or rhetorically, and (c) are situated within or at the interstices of critiques of ableism, capitalism, hetero-normativity, militarism, patriarchy, state power, racism, settler colonialism, and xenophobia.

Call for Papers

The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism aims to reflect on the global emergence of penal abolition and to highlight its vibrancy and dynamism around the world today. There are, of course, cultural and geographic variations of meaning to 'penal abolitionism.' Viewing their work as curatorial, the editors seek to reflect this plurality of meanings, and understand the term as operating on at least four levels: (a) as a social movement directly engaged in resisting and contesting penal logic, policies and practices, (b) as an intellectual project that provides a way of understanding the world, (c) as a coherent set of ethical and political values shaping daily lives and interactions, and (d) as a form of strategic engagement with existing power relations (such as white supremacy), promoting both a critique of the present but also a vision of a better and more just future. In an age of a globally entrenched penal logic, we invite a comprehensive and wide ranging collection of papers that will provide a platform for promoting the ideas of penal abolitionism and a site for sharing the abolitionist work of people working in diverse arenas and geographies.

Penal abolitionism is not just about pulling down walls and deconstructing penal logic. It is also about building a more just world. Toward that endeavor, the editors welcome chapters which will empirically or theoretically discuss a variety of themes, such as:

- Voices from the inside and hyper-surveilled communities: words from the caged, silenced, and marginalized.
- Social movements and organising for abolition (voice of grass roots and non-academic abolitionists): abolitionist priorities now.

- Critique and resistance to the penal nation-state (including punishment outside of legal processes): setting the parameters of abolition, i.e. what is to be abolished and why.
- Critique pseudo-abolitionist alternatives, such as carceral feminism and revenge-oriented "restorative" justice schemes (e.g., Gacaca, Rwanda).
- Rehabilitation of traditional justice mechanisms (e.g. cultural rites vs. the procedural rights of the abstract individual) in the post-colony realities of imperial forces and control (e.g., USA military bases, military-industrial complex, economic mining, etc.).
- Theoretical and political perspectives: the diversity of abolitionist thought and tradition.
- Geographical horizons (abolitionism around the globe): contributions from six continents on the history and current state of local abolitionism.
- Building radical alternatives: abolitionist alternatives and visions of the future.

Abstracts

Abstracts should be in the range of 400-500 words and must be accompanied by a brief biography. Early submissions are welcome. We encourage submissions from people who are/have been in prison (or punitively victimized), community organizers, graduate students, activist-scholars as well as junior and senior academics. Invitations to submit a chapter will be based on a review of the abstracts received. As editors we welcome a rich diversity of abstracts and promise further labor to ensure all abstracts that meet the submission criteria and cannot be included in this volume are helped to reach a publication outlet.

Papers: DUE JUNE 1, 2019

Papers must contain original and unpublished work and be in the range of 5,000-6,000 words. Written to appeal to activists, community organisers, practitioners, students and scholars across a wide range of disciplines, papers should be straightforward, user-friendly, and jargon free.

Please send all inquiries and communication regarding *The Routledge International Handbook of Penal Abolitionism* to:

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we got acquainted with our compatible interests, I felt quite comfortable with Mumia's sense of equanimity and really calm, cool demeanor. Although I am really circumspect in meeting new people, I explained my ordeal to Mumia John W. Rich Jr.'s plan to build this insidious toxic coal gasification plant 300 feet from the center point of the yard at SCI Mahanoy. Mumia was awestruck and somewhat perplexed. Being a prolific journalist and author, he exclaimed, "Man, I couldn't ever have some up with such an unprecedented story like this. And yet, here I am speaking to the first jailhouse environmentalist on the globe." Right after that, he wrote the piece entitled "What's A Jailhouse Environmentalist?"

Again, sometime in 2017, inmates at SCI Fayetteville took an unprecedented stance by signing and sending a formal objection letter to the US Department of Justice protesting and objecting to the building of an exorbitant \$444 million dollar federal prison, proposed to be built on a toxic mine site in Letcher, Kentucky. Many of the PA prisoners at SCI Fayetteville received a small postcard acknowledging our protest by the United States Department of Justice. This was the first time ever in history where Pennsylvania state prisoners civilly, non-violently, and collectively protested on behalf of federal prisoners to stop the building of a federal prison in Letcher, Kentucky.

The new layer allows the public to overlay the locations of the country's 6,000-plus prisons, jails and detention centers with information about environmental hazards like superfund sites and hazardous waste sites. Something the nonprofit human rights defense center has been pushing for as part of its campaign for the EPA to consider prisoners with an environmental justice context. For the prison ecology movement, which addresses issues at the intersection of environmental degradation, it could be a game changer.

On January 18th, 2018, workers were notified by the Department of Corrections stating that the entitled "Florida Prisoners Strike" was confiscated from inmate

Julio Ortiz FC 8863. The PADOC (PA Department of Corrections) has provided: workers were within 15 working days to appeal the denial stating that if the denial was not overturned the January 18th, 2018 issue would not only be refused to Ortiz and other prisoners, but also, *Worker's World* would be automatically placed on the state-wide ban list, banning all inmates in the PADOC from receiving *Worker's World*.

This creates not only a chilling effect but also invokes a dangerous precedent that will ensure a trickle-down effect to other publications like *Bay View*, *Socialist Viewpoint*, *Criminal Legal News*, and so on. I believe that the reason they are taking away the "Hobson's choice" is to literally take away the rights of prisoners to expose facets of racism, inmate abuse, and staff corruption, amongst other things. This is the fox caught in the hen house, and there is simply no way that the appeals stand to be won by *Workers World*, especially when the appeal system is designed and promulgated by the Department of Corrections.

To take away a man or woman's story is to take their viable means of communication, meaning their first amendment rights to free speech and the media. As Gary Snyder has encouraged us, in the practice of the law, to be truly free, one must take on the basic conditions as they are—painful, impermanent, imperfect—and then be grateful for the impermanence and the freedom it grants us. For in a fixed universe, there would be no freedom. And with that freedom, we improve the campsite, teach children, and oust pirates.

Finally, by no means or a stretch of one's imagination has this legal odyssey been anything but easy. Some may view their prison experience as nothing less than a waste of time, if not a state of absolute despair. Or, as Oscar Wilde once wrote in *The Ballad of the Reading Gaol* (1898), "The villous deeds, like poison weeds, blossom well in the prison air. It is only what is good in man that wastes and withers there."

But I say to you, today, that the good in man or woman shall not waste or wither, as we continue to battle the corporate beasts.

Words Across Walls: Discussing Modes of Communication with TGIJP and Calls From Home

Shared organizing across prison walls comes with its own unique difficulties, especially with regard to maintaining networks of communication. Relationships between imprisoned and non-imprisoned people are stifled at once by logistical obstacles, as our mode of speaking is limited primarily to written rather than electronic mail, and by repressive political forces such as surveillance and arbitrary censorship. Yet in spite of these conditions, people continue to develop novel ways of connecting with each other across concrete, razor wire, and steel. Recently, The Abolitionist spoke with Kelly Lou Densmore from Transgender Intersex Justice Project in San Francisco, CA and Amelia Kirby and Elizabeth Sanders who are involved with the Calls From Home radio show produced at WMMT in Eastern Kentucky. This article was compiled through their responses.

The Abolitionist: Can you give some background on your respective projects? What exactly is the work that your organizations do? What are some of your underlying goals of this political work?

Transgender, Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP): *Stiletto* is our bi-annual newsletter or magazine and has been in existence for ten years. Our readership is TGIJP members inside prisons, so primarily Black transwomen, other trans and gender non-conforming people, and anyone in the broader sense of the TGIJP community. We send it to those in prison for free and then also to some of the closest community members on the outside. We also bring it to events and provide it to people who come by office. All of the writing is for members inside with the main goal of getting info inside prisons. There are about 1,500 people who are currently on our mailing list. Additionally, every Tuesday we have a volunteer mail night where we respond to letters from people who are locked up. Through that program we probably send in several hundred more annually.

The content always includes an update on the organization and a motivational message from the Executive Director of TGIJP, Janetta Johnson. She wants to make sure that people know that we are thinking of them and that they are not alone. It is a very loving and kind message that kind of serves to embrace our community. We always have a section on positive news around trans people, like if there is, for example, a political win such as a trans person getting elected to office or winning trans inclusion in Medicaid. We include this because the dominant narrative around trans lives, particularly Black trans lives, is negative on so many levels. We also feature a cultural component through poetry, stories, and artwork. We accept submissions year-round and sometimes will republish stories from Black Lives Matter or Black and Pink. Our submission and editing process is pretty relaxed. We usually chose articles that are about current or powerful issues that will resonate with our members. *Stiletto* is very interactive in that we include questions to solicit information from our members on the inside. We want to hear about people's living situations or updates on issues with obtaining commissary items. People write us back and we respond to those letters during our mail night. This is also an important component of our "Legal Corner" column. We provide updates on legal patterns and changes in California and nationally and get feedback from members about how those patterns and changes are playing out

in the prison where they are locked up.

Calls From Home (CFH): *Calls From Home* is a call-in radio show on WMMT, a community radio station in Eastern Kentucky in the coal fields of Appalachia. It was started in 2001 as a part of a broader project that was originally called *Holla' to the Hood* and became *Thousand Kites*. There were multiple strands of community-based media production happening around the issue of the prison industrial complex, particularly the use of prisons as rural economic development, so that was kind of the impetus for the project. WMMT is housed at Appalshop, which is a community media arts organization based in Kentucky in the coal region. By the time *Calls From Home* was really up and running, there were eight prisons in the WMMT listening area, which includes state and federal prisons in Western Virginia (Red Onion, Wallins Ridge, Keen Ridge, and Big Sandy). WMMT is volunteer run, so there is a wide variety of programming.

At the time that *Calls From Home* emerged, Amelia Kirby had been working with collaborator Nick Szuberla on the documentary film, *Up the Ridge*, which focuses on the construction of prisons as economic development and really looks at the consequences of using prisons in that way both on the places where the prisons are being constructed, but, more importantly, the lives of people who are put in those prisons and their families and extended communities. They were using every tool they had at their disposal to explore stories connected to that narrative. At WMMT, there was a hip hop and R&B show on Monday nights that was followed by a Southern rock show, and both of these shows had cultivated audiences inside prisons. We knew this because people were sending letters and making requests, and the DJs who were doing those shows really embraced that and were really receptive to it. When it was announced that the hip hop show DJ was leaving, Amelia and Nick took over that time slot as a way to maintain the connection with the station's audience on the inside. At the outset, we focused mainly on receiving letters and doing requests and shout outs. One evening, the sister of someone who was listening inside one of the prisons called the station and asked if we could put her on the air to do a shout out to her brother. We had this moment of clarity when we realized that the radio signal goes straight through the wall in the way that the phone system and letters cannot because of the various barriers to those forms of communication.

The Abolitionist: How is your program a communication tool for inside/outside organizing? Do people on the inside use your program to self-organize?

TGIJP: This is our organization's main form of communication with people inside. Things are happening politically and socially on the outside could impact our people on the inside, but they have limited access to that information, so we try to lift the barriers to access through *Stiletto*. A reader will see something in an issue about Black-led organizing, for instance, and will write back about how that is seen or plays out

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FREEDOM ES FIRME: Unlocking Xicano Expressions

CURATED BY MICHAEL MUSCADINE AND GREG MOROZUMI WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF TAMAYA GARCIA AND GEORGE GALVIS

The art in this collection is rooted in Xicano culture and is a reflection of the realities and lived experiences of our relatives who have lived through the madness of the streets, addiction and separation from family and their barrios. Each piece tells a story of love,

pain and resilience, the good, bad and ugly in someone's life whether it's memories of cruising the boulevard, the longing for physical intimacy with a lover, or missing their family. You will see expressions of their hurts, their wounds, and their healing. Their art is visual poetry - listen through the eye in your heart, not the eye in your mind, feel and walk through their life experiences, their hopes and fantasies, and learn what makes them smile and what brings sadness. Smile now, cry later.

The indigenous images you see on several pieces speaks to the return of ancestral teachings and native pride. Images of La Virgen de Guadalupe, the cross, and praying hands not only highlights their faith and spiritual path, but also shows their resistance to letting the system and years gone by break their spirit.

Art provides a creative outlet to our relatives and allows

them to have meaningful connections and exchanges with the outside world even behind enemy lines (the prison industrial complex). Many of the pieces in this exhibit were made for a wife, a daughter, or a son to have a way to hold each other close in their memories. It's how many continue to parent their children and maintain a relationship even behind bars. Many of these artists sell their art to support their families and it is the only means for monetary contribution to the households they left behind. Consider your purchase of the art as a means of supporting family connections inside and out.

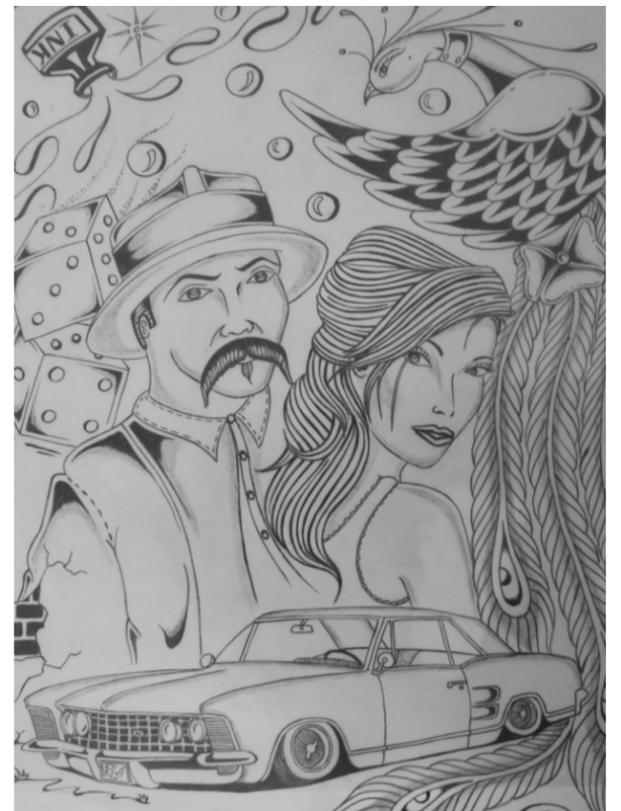
We want to thank the following artists for sharing these pieces and trusting us to exhibit them with honor and pride. Artists: Erick Roman, Ernest "Pelon" Lupian, Frank Alejandrez, Joe Garcia, Looney, R. Borrelli, Sergio Rangel of Treetop, Victor "Animal" Cervantes and other artists who asked to remain anonymous.



VICTOR "ANIMAL" CERVANTES



FREEDOM ES FIRME
UNLOCKING XICANO EXPRESSIONS



SERGIO RANGEL-TREETOP

Continued from page 7, "Words Across Walls"

behind prison walls. In this way, we are in direct dialogue with people's critical theory on current events. TGJJP's legal and policy agenda is entirely based on the needs of people inside. The impetus for SB310, which allowed access to name and gender change for trans people in jails and prisons, came from people responding to questions in the Legal Corner column. The work that we prioritize and take on is directly informed by the responses that we receive to *Stiletto*.

CFH: The force of hearing the actual voices of people who are being impacted by the prison industrial complex; on their family lives and the ways that they are able to maintain connections with their loved ones as well as the consequences in peoples lived experience at the emotional level is a really potent way to humanize what is happening at the systemic level. One year, we decided to do a non-denominational holiday special during the Christmas season. Appalachia is a very Christian region and we felt that people would be at their most receptive around messages of compassion at this time. At this point, the state of Virginia was contracting with multiple states, and private prisons were also functioning in the region, which meant that there were prisoners in the listening area who were from Hawaii, the Virgin Islands, Connecticut, and all over the country that had no chance of seeing their loved ones in person. We did a big outreach push and got a huge turnout with a three-hour show of wall-to-wall calls. One of the ways we recognized the impact of this particular show was an interchange with an angry caller who had phoned in at the beginning of the show and made comments such as "this is sick," "you shouldn't be doing this," and "these people don't deserve this." After the show, he called back to apologize and said that he understood the value of the program. This was a huge affirmation that we were on the right track. In addition to being a really critical service for people who were trying to stay connected, this was also changing the narrative about who is in prison and what it means to be a prisoner.

Calls From Home has been used as an organizing tool in other ways as well. For instance, Appalshop has a popular education curriculum about prison expansion in central Appalachia and in particular prisons as economic development in that region, and we use audio from families and letters from people inside writing into the show to contribute to the multi-media narrative of the curriculum. In 2012, there was a hunger strike at Red Onion State Prison and one of our listeners who was in prison there was able to call in and read off the demands on the call. Even though that strike was eventually broken through various repressive and brutal tactics on the part of the administration, this was an unprecedented way of being able to have direct prisoner to prisoner communication to connect people from different prisons. Most recently, the ACLU of Virginia launched a campaign to end solitary confinement, and we aired an interview with the ACLU to get that news out. We also have ongoing open lines of communication with our imprisoned listeners to engage with people around the content and the development of the program as well as to find out what issues they want to hear more about or are of interest and importance.

The Abolitionist: What are some of the challenges that your experience, both infrastructural and ideological?

TGJJP: *Stiletto* ends up being highly censored by prison administrations and many are rejected. We don't currently track which prisons are strict about content. Additionally, people get moved or transferred constantly,

which makes it hard to keep on top of our database clean-up process. As an organization we have an internal lack of capacity to deal with that issue. Another challenge is deciding what art and poetry to include in each issue because there is so much good stuff. It's really hard to let people know that their piece wasn't chosen.

CFH: We are very lucky to be working with a WMMT and Appalshop that are very supportive. Communication with prisoners is very much part of their values, and the people who are locked up in the region get to be part of their listening community. One challenge, though, is just the structure of the program as all volunteer. This sometimes means that we pay inconsistent attention to the letters that come in based on what else is going on or that the volume of the letters prevents us from giving them all the same attention. Ideologically, we definitely get push back from the state. Two of the prisons where we have the biggest listening audiences, Red Onion State Prison and Wallins Ridge State Prison, were at one point ready to shut the whole thing down and used the excuse that somebody had sent a coded death threat and endangered the life of a prisoner. They were going to go through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which was going to threaten the ability of WMMT to exist. We worked with the station to figure out a response and were able to negotiate a compromise to run the show on a delay, so that we would record the calls and then play them back an hour later. This worked out better for us structurally, though we wouldn't give the prison administration credit for this mind you, as it meant we got a lot more calls on the air. We continue to get occasional calls from the Virginia Department of Corrections, but we have a commitment to protect people's information and to keep the show on the air.

The Abolitionist: How does this work build leadership of imprisoned people and uplift their self-determination?

TGJJP: Because our policy agenda is directly connected to the responses that we get to *Stiletto*, we are putting many of the decisions about the policy strategy and direction of the organization in the hands of our members. This means that trans women of color who are in prison, a community which is historically marginalized subjected to extreme state violence, is getting to drive the policy and legal work of this organization.

CFH: In the beginning, we did not have the mission of uplifting prisoner's self-determination as an articulated goal. There was, and continues to be, a very clear power differential in terms of us on the outside, how we are able to engage with the project and how people on the inside are able to engage. This is not an open line of communication for the most part in that the broadcast is not a dialogue. It is a tremendously mediated space, and, in many ways, we struggle with feeling like we are not the right people on the end of that phone line. We always made it a central value that it was a collaborative process within this set of limitation. Part of that is expanding and trying to blur the sense of rigid divisions about the narrative that we were getting as a community in Appalachia. The state has a very intense propaganda campaign around the construction of prisons in this region that includes the narrative that these prisoners are not human, that the people who are going to be locked up here are the worst of the worst. Part of the work that we do is making space for the human voices of the people who are both in and affected by the prisons, including people working in the prisons and who live near them, to lift up the notion that the net of consequences and ripple effects of incarceration are harming this vast array and terrain of people.

KITES TO THE EDITOR

Send us your reflections!

The *Abolitionist* is looking for Kites to the Editor that we will publish in each issue.

These are short notes expressing our readers' direct responses to articles and art in previous issues of the paper. We are looking for opinions, reactions, disagreements, contributions, or general thoughts on our content.

Some approaches writing a Kite to the Editors:

- Elaborate on something that you agreed with and explain why you agreed with it.
- Elaborate on something that you disagreed with in an article and explain why you disagreed with it.
- Relate an article to other things you have read, watched, heard or experienced.

Send submissions to the Kites to the Editor section to:

The *Abolitionist* Paper
Attn: Kites to the Editor
1904 Franklin #504
Oakland, CA 94612

Kelly Lou Densmore is the Legal Director and Staff Attorney at Transgender Intersex Justice Project. She is a white, cis-gender, queer femme, born and raised in the Bay Area. Kelly Lou has been a dedicated organizer for racial and economic justice, prison abolition and queer liberation ever since her teens. After graduating from Golden Gate Law School in 2013, Kelly Lou has been using her lawyering skills to support social movements. She fights hard to bring our loved ones home from prisons, jails and detention centers.

Amelia Kirby is an Appalachian activist, cultural worker, and small business owner. Most recently, she worked as the communications and development coordinator at the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, a nonprofit law firm providing free legal work for people impacted by the extraction industries of the Appalachian coalfields. She worked for eight years as a media producer at community media center Appalshop, where she cofounded and codirected the *Thousand Kites and Holler to the Hood* projects, as well as the documentary film *Up the Ridge*.

Elizabeth Sanders is co-General Manager of WMMT. She was raised in eastern Kentucky and remembers coming to Appalshop as a kid for a Roadside performance in the 90s and became a volunteer programmer at WMMT in 2010. She serves on the Executive Committee of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, is a member of the STAY (Stay Together Appalachian Youth) Network, and was selected to be part of the 2014 cohort of the Young Climate Leaders Network.

How People on the Outside Can Support the Political Work of People on the Inside

BY STEPHEN WILSON

Here are 10 things they can do for us:

1. Organize and struggle with us, but allow us to be the authorities on our own experiences.
2. Don't speak for us. We can speak. When we cannot, due to repression or threats from prison officials, use your freedom and privilege to amplify our voices and advance our issues.
3. Be accomplices. Put yourselves out there for us. Attend rallies and speak out against the PIC. Organize call-ins to prisons. Show up at courthouses. Disrupt. Disrupt the PIC.
4. Whenever you organize, strategize, or confer, make your spaces inclusive and accessible. Take note of who's missing. Find them, invite them, and include them. If they don't come to you, go to them. Often, those who are missing are our families and our friends.
5. Remember, we don't have Internet access. The latest news is not just a click away for us. Create offline publications (newsletters, magazines, journals, letters) to keep us informed and educated. Provide platforms for our voices.
6. Employ an intersectional analysis. Identity does not equal experience. We are all prisoners, but we experience imprisonment differently. The experiences of an able-bodied, straight, cisgender male is very different from those of a trans/queer, disabled woman of color. Many of us struggle under multiple oppressive structures, but prevalent ideas of prison center upon able-bodied, straight, cisgender males. Broaden your understanding of who is affected by the PIC and how.
7. Financially support activists behind the walls. Everything costs money in prison. Many know how the PIC extorts us and our families. In Pennsylvania, prisoners

make about \$0.19 an hour (4 to 6-hour shifts, 5 days a week). A bar of soap costs \$0.85. For many prisoners, a day's wages won't buy a bar of soap. So how can we afford books, journals, writing supplies or postage? Sending a letter costs 3 hours' wages! A little support goes a long way. If inside activists' views and ideas are to be included, if our experiences are to be centered, you have to support our efforts at studying, organizing, and communicating with you.

8. Learn what really happens in here. Don't assume. Oftentimes, reforms are pushed, and their ultimate results adversely affect prisoners. The PIC is adept at morphing demands for reform into measures that further oppress prisoners. Before and after campaigns and initiatives, solicit the views and experiences of prisoners.
9. Join us in advancing issues that truly create safe communities. For example: increased school funding, community mental health clinics, universal health insurance, living wages, community substance and alcohol treatment programs, transformative justice programs, decarceration and decriminalization efforts. This way, when we are released we'll have less chance of returning to prison.
10. Take care of yourselves. We need you. This fight is for the long term. We need you struggling alongside us and our families for the duration. Create and find joy in the struggle. Find time and space to rejuvenate and recalibrate. Be good to yourselves. Breathe.

Stephen Wilson is a currently incarcerated, Black, queer writer, activist and student. For over two decades, he was active in the Ballroom community and work as an HIV-prevention specialist and community organizer. His work and practice inherit teachings from prison abolition, transformative and racial justice, Black feminist theory, and gender and queer liberation. Specifically, he works to end cycles of poverty and incarceration that have plagued his community. He works to expose and dismantle the prison industrial complex and to build a world in which we deal with harm without caging or exiling other people.

Humanities Behind Bars: Toward an Abolitionist Praxis in Prison Education Programs

BY MEGHAN G. MCDOWELL AND ALISON REED

In 2016 we began a weekly reading group at a jail near Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. As activist-scholars, abolitionists, and new residents of Norfolk we wanted to build inside-outside alliances, leveraging our position as professors to redistribute the resources and capacities of the university toward more emancipatory ends. However, we were (and are) wary of replicating college-in-prison programs that mimic the ideology, practices, and goals of the neoliberal carceral state. These programs are often selectively championed by universities and prison officials on two fronts. First, college-in-prison programs are said to be important for reducing recidivism. Second, and relatedly, the curriculum prepares imprisoned people for reentry into a world where they will properly abide by, rather than disrupt, the racial order and rule of capital. As a counterpoint to neoliberal college-in-prison programs, and born of a refusal to let these institutions have the final say, to borrow Greg Burris's language, we wanted to try to develop a program committed to abolitionist praxis; a program that does not fetishize the space of the jail, but does position the jail as a site of study. Here, we follow Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's definition of "study" as a method to make visible and disarticulate the forms of anti-relationality that implicitly guide teaching expectations in the neoliberal university (The Undercommons 2013).

Out of these desires Humanities Behind Bars (HBB) came into being. HBB draws inspiration from inside-outside programs across the country, particularly Humanities Behind the Walls at Arizona State University/Perryville Women's Prison. Our work is rooted in community organizing and collective study with formerly and currently incarcerated people and their loved ones. Taking leadership from and centering the voices of incarcerated students is integral to HBB's abolitionist praxis. For example, weekly sessions begin with an organizing meeting between students and instructors. Students scheme and dream about future actions and directions of HBB, including course offerings. All classrooms remain social justice-oriented: from the reading group the coauthors facilitated, which began with The Hunger Games as a Trojan Horse to pose questions about survivability under global racial capitalism and insurgent knowledge production, to Reed's "Soundtracks of Struggle: The Poetics & Politics of U.S. History," to Kole Matheson's music production class, where students record original lyrics and beats featured on the SoundCloud he maintains for the program (soundcloud.com/humanitiesbehindbars). Members of HBB's Teaching & Advocacy Team also support inside students in their legal cases, and advocate for currently and formerly incarcerated people through our legal defense and bond fund: Tidewater Solidarity Center, of which we are a cofounder and affiliate with our partner, the Tidewater Industrial Workers of the World. HBB organizes a range of programming on the outside, including letter-writing, political education workshops about the prison industrial complex, and a film series. We understand our outside programming as contiguous with jail programming.

"False Teaching" in Prison and Higher Education

Every week, before going through security, HBB volunteers pass a sign that reads "Jail/Public Safety," an unwelcome reminder of the violent contradiction of how state protection means safety for some and brutality for many. Out of sight, out of mind is a privileged disposition toward the prison industrial complex unavailable to the massive number of people whose communities are targeted for incarceration and whose fates are linked with its death grip, from juvenile detention to probation and parole. Thus, HBB understands the carceral as not just a built structure, but rather the governing logic of U.S. society and its institutions, including K-12 and higher education. HBB members have developed a critique of the university that is organized by the concept "false teaching." First theorized by a jailed student, false teaching describes the deliberate, systemic omission of social identities and movement legacies that pose a challenge to the dominant order from the U.S. educational apparatus. False teaching, as this student explained to our study group, means instruction on "what power wants you to know."

Too often the uncritical celebration of prison education programs run by universities and other so-called "outreach" programs eviscerate notions of the collective good, replacing it with individual acts of "benevolent" charity. While we certainly believe that educational institutions should be in relation with adjacent communities, strategic "outreach" without meaningful exchange and (re)distribution of resources, incorporates the language of community into the neutralization of a power imbalance. In other words, the mere existence of justice-oriented programming in universities and prisons does not demonstrate a genuine investment in social transformation, but often a hierarchical relationship of care between community and university wherein the university gets falsely lionized as public servant. In the case of education in prison programs,

specifically, the neoliberal university capitalizes on the strategies of prison abolition, but not the broader vision, a holistic transformation of society—to build social relations and concepts of justice not dependent on violent masquerades of crime and punishment. Another issue in prison education programming is that only certain incarcerated people qualify for "program privileges," so we follow nationwide prison strike efforts to expand "rehabilitation" programming, and in particular allow access to those currently banned from that programming after being slapped with the label of "violent offender"

narratives, and activate—through their artistry and activism—abolitionist visions that replace control, coercion, and cages with deep forms of care, mutual aid, and community self-determination.

In this vein, Humanities Behind Bars understands that part of dismantling the prison industrial complex is building up life-affirming alternatives. Being situated at a city jail (the largest and most overcrowded in the state), rather than a maximum-security prison, for example, and only being allowed to work with those awaiting trial for nonviolent offenses, presents unique opportunities. Due to our relative lack of surveillance in the classroom, we can openly discuss abolitionist ideas. Rather than seeing education as an end in and of itself, a neutral product in the consumerist marketplace like any other, HBB recognizes that a prison education program should also be a political education program on the outside, a collective pool of resources for reentry, a legal defense and bond fund, and a creative community of artmaking and sharing. While this is an ambitious project that joins many others in a long history of struggle, the abolitionist fight against the prison industrial complex demands that we work capaciously every day to bring another world into existence.

HBB also strives to push against the model of educational programming that operates under the guise of anti-recidivism efforts that endeavor to "redeem" prisoners, presumed guilty. Leaving unaddressed the foundations of the prison industrial complex, liberal reform efforts pathologize communities rather than examine systems that perpetuate suffering. Instead, we recognize that a prison education program must also be a community-based reentry program that builds infrastructures of care based on self-determination and mutual respect. Our non-permanence, our very strategic and tenuous "partnership" with the state, makes the program always on the edge of getting shut down. However, as the formerly incarcerated Resident Poet & Artist of HBB, Derek "DJ" James, always affirms, the threat of extinction just means we're doing it right.

In short, the organized disorder of the jail, and the relative autonomy of HBB, makes it easier to, in the words of one jailed student, "hold light in a dark room," contrasting the physical and psychic conditions of imprisonment to spaces where "the imagination becomes real." This juxtaposition of harsh material realities against the possibilities of other worlds-within-worlds powerfully demonstrates the abolitionist ethos of fugitive counter-ethics.

Pitfalls: A Self-Assessment of HBB

As a collective, HBB is vulnerable to the uncritical celebration of prison education and other so-called "outreach" programs that we noted earlier in this piece. We have found it vital to create regular meeting spaces to discuss interactions with our strategic partners (the jail and the university), and brainstorm ways to navigate their expectations without sacrificing our ethical commitments. In recruiting new members to facilitate classes at the jail, too, we have found it imperative to bring them into the fold of our political education program and community organizing efforts, to avoid HBB volunteers replicating models of education from the jail and university that we explicitly oppose. Yet, we understand that teaching can also be a process of learning, so we do not demand that new members be seasoned activists. Reflexivity, and allowing room for growth through self-consciously reflecting on past missteps without getting mired in them, is central to our Teaching & Advocacy Team ethos. However, we do require new teacher-members to participate in an orientation that introduces them to our teaching ethics and abolitionist program vision. A ruthless critique of everything existing, including ourselves, does not mean replicating punitive, exclusionary, and elitist (anti)social organizational models, but rather creating room for reflecting on how to make the program better for everyone. This includes critical examination of: racially gendered power dynamics, between instructors and students, for example; infiltration and co-optation of HBB spaces; and finding a balance between reducing immediate harms and our broader commitment to building a world where jails are an impossibility.

Moreover, HBB is not formally funded. Rather, we rely on community support to fund this work. On the upside, our program is not beholden to the objectives of outside funders, nor to liberal sympathies that might push the program to adopt the very forms of benevolent paternalism we seek to avoid. At the same time, as we expand we have considered moving toward becoming a nonprofit for practical reasons of sustainability and fundraising possibility. Ultimately, we imagine a world where education—for social transformation, not

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JOHN E. SANSING

(Jailhouse Lawyers Speak Press Release 2018). The university reveals its own hypocrisy by making it difficult to impossible for formerly incarcerated or convicted students to enroll in or obtain employment from the very same institution that may have touted their college-in-prison "service to the community."

Possibilities: Fugitive Counter-Ethics and the Jail as a Site of Study

Fugitive counter-ethics is a concept we've developed to describe our pedagogical praxis. Informed by a long history of insurgent social movements, fugitive counter-ethics speaks to, on the one hand, a commitment to exposing how and why the neoliberal carceral state scapegoats certain groups of people for what are, in effect, complex social, political, and economic problems (Gilmore Golden Gulag 2007). This praxis, explicitly abolitionist in its formulation, grates against the educational status quo of training students to be better capitalists by emphasizing study over and against instruction. As opposed to a neoliberal education, critically conscious study proposes another mode of thinking about justice-oriented pedagogy that is collective, collaborative, and non-hierarchical. Practicing study as an expression of fugitive counter-ethics in the classroom puts an emphasis on creating spaces for mutual transformation and deep teaching against hollow forms of "diversity" or "representation" that replace analysis of entrenched realities of racism with myths of its heroic defeat. Study, after all, should be about ego-shattering exposure to history rather than complacent comfortability and genocidal erasure.

Ultimately, we imagine a world where education—for social transformation, not capitalist assimilation—is available to everyone.

While neither the university nor the prison were designed for radical study, HBB seeks to facilitate spaces for thinking and being together in struggle. Against the dangerous logic of "empowerment" as a substitute for structural change, we analyze the root causes of the prison industrial complex. In its insistence on incarcerated social life over and against state-sanctioned death economies, fugitive counter-ethics looks to how prisoners theorize their own lives, write their own

ABOLITION IN ACTION

Palestinian Liberationist Ahd Tamimi is Released from Zionist Prison

Palestinian Youth activist Ahd Tamimi was finally freed from her imprisonment by the Israeli settler government. Although thousands of Palestinian children remain in Israeli prisons and detention facilities, her release was met with great joy and celebration from the Palestinian people.

Robert Seth Hayes wins Parole! Another PP/POW Free!

Imprisoned since 1973, Black Panther political prisoner Robert Seth Hayes (age 69) was released on parole. He joins a short list of long-term political prisoners, who after spending decades in prison for their political actions and beliefs, are, through tremendous struggle, finally being granted parole. Unfortunately, there is still a long list of political prisoners that remain to be set free.

Week of Action for Criminalized Survivors of Domestic Abuse and Violence

From August 6-12, the #FreeThemAll National Week of Action demanded the immediate release of ALL criminalized survivors of domestic abuse and violence incarcerated in the United States. A coalition of groups and individuals conducted a week-long public education campaign, sharing updates, information, stories from survivors, and ways for everyone to take action on a variety of fronts, including: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Criminalization; Arrest and Pre-Conviction; Trial in Criminal Court; Post-Conviction (parole, commutations, and pardons); Immigration and Deportation and the Criminalization of Survivors on Loved Ones, Families, and Communities. Events were held in Sacramento, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and elsewhere.

Updates on the Nationwide Prisoner General Strike

The Nationwide Prison Strike, beginning August 21 and lasting until September 9, made quite a stir, yet has been largely ignored by state officials from both the Democratic and Republican Parties. Interestingly, there has been tremendous visible support on the outside for this strike, with flyers, banner drops, graffiti tagging in major cities in solidarity with the strike, and rallies sprouting up outside of prisons and jails around the country. The IWW's Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, Free Alabama Movement, and the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement have been key organizations involved coordinating this strike. A central tool for outreach efforts has been social media, but word also was able to spread in places where access to the internet and news media are prohibited. Please encourage your friends and loved ones on the "outside" to learn about the strikes, and urge them to keep you updated by any means they can. It has been reported that lead organizers on the "inside" are facing serious issues of censorship and heightened repression. Hopefully there is substantive follow through in such instances. Please keep an eye and ear out for cases of retaliation and abuse. It also must be acknowledged that any substantive movement to abolish the prison industrial complex will be rooted in revolutionary community organizing and not led by middle class / de-classé whites. People who advance their political status or activist career on the backs of prisoners should be exposed for what they are: opportunists and traitors of the mass struggle.

Native activist Red Fawn transferred to Texas

On July 11, 2018, Native activist and water-protector Red Fawn was sentenced to 57 months in prison under the terms of a non-cooperating plea agreement. After short stays at Stutsman County Correctional Center (Jamestown, North Dakota) and the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City, Red Fawn has been transferred FMC Carswell, in Fort Worth, Texas. This is apparently where she will be imprisoned, at least for now. Her current address is: RedFawn Fallis #16358-059, FMC Carswell PO Box 27137 Fort Worth, TX, 76127.

#NoCopAcademy Campaign Reveals the Opportunism and Treachery of Chicago's Black Caucus

An hour before the Civilian Office of Police Accountability released body camera footage of the June 6 police shooting of 24-year-old Maurice Granton Jr., activists from Black Lives Matter, BYP100, and other groups confronted black council members about their support of the fascist Chicago Police Department and its endorsement of Mayor Rahm Emmanuel's proposed \$95 million police training facility in Chicago's west side. Local grassroots organizations GoodKidsMadCity and Assata's Daughters also interrupted remarks by 34th Ward alderman Carrie Austin that very same day. This past summer, direct action efforts, mostly led by local Black youth, have proliferated in every neighborhood throughout the city. Widespread protest and outrage continues to grow in response to the Mayor's proposal.

Prison Legal News brings its fight against censorship to the courts

The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals (AL, GA, FL) upheld the state of Florida's decision to ban *Prison Legal News* on the premise that it contains advertisements for "prohibited" services. Such services include pen pal relations, three-way calls, and the selling of stamps. Experts are concerned that the ban may establish a dangerous precedent, enabling similar actions by other states. *PLN* will be filing a petition for Supreme Court review of the Florida decision. In spite of unprecedented levels of censorship in the mail of US prisoners, there are several Books-Through-Bars programs and inside-outside newsletters that continue to flourish.

CURB Lobby Day in Sacramento a Success

Californians United for a Responsible Budget and members of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners visited the CA state capitol to request the commutation of every person imprisoned on a Life Without Parole Sentence. Participants then visited with state assembly members and urged their support for SB 1393 to restore "judicial discretion" to the absurd 5-year sentencing enhancement for prior serious felonies.

Abolish ICE Movement Heats Up

Calls for the Abolition of ICE have lately materialized in three different ways. First, there is the popular liberal movement to abolish the ICE label, yet simply transfer its function to a different yet no less repressive governmental organ. Second, there is the Occupy ICE iteration of the ICE-abolitionist discourse which has brought in or renewed the commitments of a lot of people to struggle against the police state. Third, there is an organizational network, most notably spearheaded by Mijente, whose principles and approach to organizing provides an example for what an anti-racist and anti-violence movement could truly look like. Recently, they organized a mass convergence

in San Diego demonstrating against border imperialism and the prison industrial complex.

Antifascist Protests in Empire's Capital

A multi-racial antifascist crowd, including the militant Black queer feminist organization Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) filled D.C. streets in opposition to the 2nd Annual Unite the Right rally. While the far-Right garbed in Swastikas and Klan-apparel bares little in comparison to the scope and scale of violence wrought by the US military and prison industrial complex, the event was remarkable for many in the level of "privilege" and entitlement to public space these US nationalist groups both enjoy and unquestionably presume, as they spewed their racist, sexist, and homophobic hatred under the armed guard of the police.

Black August Remembrance, Black August Resistance

Social media has been a central source of building collective knowledge and preserving the memory of those who came before us in the struggle. It appears interest and participation in Black August activities has been gaining traction once again in the public discourse. This is possibly the result of decades of organizing in the prison struggle, as well as recent transformations and advancements in Black revolutionary consciousness. Malcom X Grassroots Movement, most notably, but thousands of people have partaken in activities such as film viewing parties, letter writing groups, and other educational forums. Los Angeles and New York City this year had the most abundant and widely publicized of these events.

CDCR Elite Meet with Ashker Class Reps to Discuss the Government's Negligence to Abolish the Practice of Solitary Confinement

Four CA Hunger Strike and *Ashker v. Brown* Class Representatives formally met with CDCR to address the continuing solitary conditions that violate the Ashker lawsuit settlement agreement. Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity network writes: "the four prisoner hunger strike representatives will be present in the courtroom, an historic presence." Concomitant with the hearing was a large rally organized by local prison activists.

Prison Rebels Facing ODRC Repression

Anarchist Black Cross Pittsburgh reports: "Ahead of the 2018 National Prison Strike, the State of Ohio has launched an intense campaign of repression against prison rebels Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan, Greg Curry and Sean Swain. Imam Hasan was transferred to the hole on July, 27, 2018 and began a hunger strike the next morning to protest a conduct report signed by ODRC Bureau of Classification Chief Brian Wittrup. The conduct report referred to his receiving information about the upcoming National Prison Strike. Imam Hasan ended his hunger strike on Aug 8, 2018. That same day prison rebels held a spontaneous work stoppage at the Ohio State Penitentiary to protest the prison's abusive conditions. In response, an ad hoc coalition of outside supporters organized a phone zap. Days later, Hasan went before the Serious Misconduct Panel (SMP). After violating his constitutional right to due process, the ODRC found him "guilty" of all charges. He faces a one-year phone restriction and transfer to 'Extended Restrictive Housing 3.'" Given the circumstances, Hasan says his spirit is "up to par."



Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity and supporters rally on August 21, 2018 in front of banner that reads "End All Forms of Solitary Confinement."

The following poems are excerpted from Mercedes Eng's second book of poems, *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes* (Talonbooks, 2017).

Carole is

Jessi's mama
now a ghost mama
whispering into the ears
of the fertile red nation

plant seeds in the ground
and in the womb
ground zero for a revolution

she reads in the 2013 census report that since 2006
the Indigenous population increased from 3.8% to 4.3%
of the colonial nation
and she dances

knowing there are even more babies
ones who avoided becoming state stats
like Kanahus's freedom babies
unregistered babes taken to the woods
knowing this she dances
and she puts her back into it

Carole researches
Group 4 Securicor (G4S)
the biggest private security group by revenue
the third-largest private employer
in the world

Carole learns
about G4S regulating prisons in Palestine
regulating security check points in American schools
regulating the U.S.–Mexico border

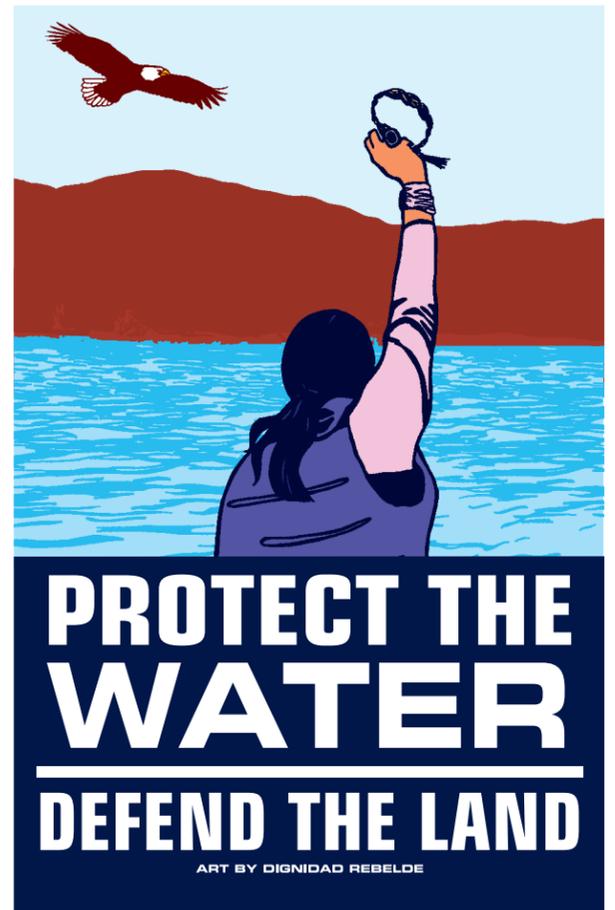
Carole laughs and cries
when she reads on the company's website:
In more ways than you might realize,
G4S is securing your world

Carole weaves
a G4S-resistant security blanket
big enough for all the babes of all the red nations

Carole swims
up Wedzin Kwah then lies on the roof
of the healing centre at the Unist'ot'en camp
to work on her spectral tan

Carole flies
north to the Lax U'u'la camp
at Lelu Island, the Flora Banks
where she lies with the salmon who rest
in the estuary's eelgrass beds
making ready for their transition
from fresh to sea water
meditates on Bruce Lee and his one-inch punch
and being like water
then starts weaving a net to capture G4S execs
puts on headphones to speed her work
raps along with Nicki: first things first I'll eat your brain

*Mercedes Eng is a mixee writer of Chinese-migrant/
settler descent, teaching and learning in Vancouver,
unceded Coast Salish territories.*



MELANIE CERVANTES
.....
"Protect the Water"

Continued from page 9, "Humanities Behind Bars"

capitalist assimilation—is available to everyone. While formalizing such study no doubt has material benefits, such as earning college credits toward a degree, our program takes seriously the practical work of grassroots reading groups and the organizing work those groups are geared toward. Of course, education alone is insufficient to bring about transformation; HBB thus links spaces of study to sites of action within broader social movements.

Conclusion: "It's a Jail Out There"

Despite, or perhaps in spite of this terrain of (im)possibility, we come together to read, reflect, exchange ideas; to plan, plot, and make sense of ourselves. A prison education program can be abolitionist in orientation or not, and we strive for the former through daily action. At HBB, we believe that political education and interpersonal relationships are two of many ways to build people power in the long and ongoing struggle. In the space of the jail, the prefiguring of alternative forms of collective social life provides blueprints for social transformation in the future and spaces of spiritual freedom in the present. Such spaces are individual and relational; interpersonal relationships provide the basis for building people power in the struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex. While often dismissed as "soft" (i.e. feminine) within a masculinist framework, transformative relationships remain central to dismantling a spiritually bankrupt society. Ultimately, we work for a world where HBB and related programs do not exist, because neither institutions nor the general public would consent to human caging.

Following the Black Radical Tradition, fugitive counter-ethics urges us to see our freedom as relational, which is to say, no one is free while others are in chains. How can we use the jail as a site of study? How can those of us on the outside act as accomplices to those on the inside? One possible, though often imperfect route is to forge alliances between inside and outside students that are defined not by paternalistic notions of service, community, or democratic engagement, but by fugitive counter-ethics: improvisation, self-determined action, and the development of critical consciousness. With that, we plot; we study; we account for, and are accountable to, the queer, Black, Brown, Indigenous, poor, and rebellious bodies ghosted by the state. We turn to fugitive thought for insurgent practices of safety, justice, and freedom and we do our damndest to be disloyal to the racial order, the rule of capital, and the project of the neoliberal university itself.

Alison Reed is an assistant professor of English at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, where she co-founded and directs Humanities Behind Bars (humanitiesbehindbars.org).

Meghan G. McDowell is co-founder of Humanities Behind Bars. Meghan teaches Justice Studies at Winston Salem State University and organizes with the North Carolina Women's Prison Book Project and Inside-Outside Alliance.

Origins and Current Situation of SUTPLA, The Joint Imprisoned Workers Union

The Joint Imprisoned Workers Union (SUTPLA—Sindicato Unido de Trabajadorxs Privadxs de la Libertad Ambulatoria) was created in July 2012—more precisely, on July 13—as the first ever union of imprisoned workers of the world. Since its inception, it has implemented a wide range of measures (strikes, sit-downs, "batucadas," refusal of food, hunger strikes, dry hunger strikes) in conjunction with a submission of demands via legal means. One of the initial conquests by the union has been the almost full employment of its foundational unit inside the prison. That is, out of a stable prison population of 1,700 prisoners, previously of which only about 300 were actually working, 1,400 prisoners managed to get the right to work through the efforts of the union.

They have been involved in different actions with the aim of achieving the enforcement of their rights; for instance, the creation of round tables with the Department of Corrections (to personally convey in clear terms the prisoners' demands and see to it that consensus decisions with the prison authorities are found and implemented). Along with these round tables, the union also managed to access the rounds of prison wings to speak with the prisoners and learn first-hand about their situations.

The current situation of Argentine prisons is quite complex. On the ground, prisons are environments of torture and repression, of vulnerability of rights. Nevertheless, the legal framework offers certain guarantees, which constitute the basis from which work is done, attempting to make the only right that is being denied is that of liberty. In this sense, the section of the current Bill of Sentence Execution (Ley de Ejecución de la Pena), which encompasses the lives of those imprisoned in the federal system, sets forth that work must be considered a right and that the state must guarantee its access, respecting the labor laws that govern the "medio libre" ("free medium," a legal figure that allows those prisoners about to regain freedom to, not only strengthen their familial and social relations, but also engage in work, access housing, administer personal documents, etc., as a first stage of a psychological preparation for their eventual life on the outside). Moreover, it also specifies that, were this work be done for companies, the salary earned should be that collectively agreed by the corresponding union. For other tasks (those governed by the state), a minimum, adjustable living wage must be guaranteed.

It is necessary to underscore how essential it is for those behind bars and their families to be able to count on a living wage. On the other hand, we should mention also that not all those who are imprisoned can access work, and that those who do not always enjoy a salary. And, when they do, often times this salary does not represent nearly the amount it should. Among many of the activities that prisoners engage in in prison we may find carpentry, aluminum carpentry, mechanics, electrical engineering, detergent and alcohol gel production, shopping bag production, kitchen duties, and cleaning of the penitentiary.

There exists a stark contrast between the realities of the Devoto Jail (where this union emerged) and the rest of the facilities across the country. Here operates the Devoto University Center (CUD—Centro Universitario Devoto), where the University of Buenos Aires carries on the UBA XXII Program, which offers university studies inside the prison. The CUD is quite significant as a hub for organizing, where both education and work are promoted as fundamental pillars in the process of transformation of individuals. The visibility held by this unit, due to its location in the capital of the country, allows it a greater circulation of the demands and struggles of those engaged in it. Attempts to replicate this union experience were made in other units, but despite the immediate solidarity and dissemination of the demands (when the causes deserve it), the same degree of union organizing development is yet to be achieved.

As an aside, we must mention the existing differences between units for women and units for men. For instance, the resources allocated to the former are much more limited, since imprisoned women receive less visits than imprisoned men. In turn, there exists a very old conception of role played by women's prisons. Women, in the perspective of "morals and good manners," not only have committed a crime, but have

Continued on page 12, "SUTPLA"

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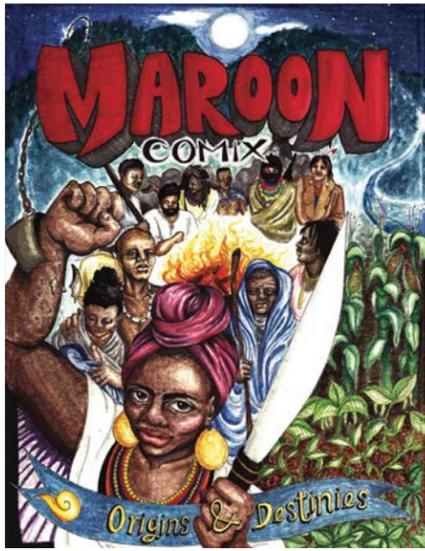
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REVIEW: Maroon Comix

BY ROBERT CONNELL



From the beginning of European colonization at the dawn of the 16th century to the success of legal abolition in the 19th century, Maroons rejected and sabotaged powerful systems of enslavement across the Americas. Maroon struggle, an intercontinental form of resistance against slavery that saw countless captives escape their imprisonment, even resulted in the formation of new rebel societies. Whether in Canada or Chile, and all points between, the most violent and dehumanizing forms of racial capitalism could not extinguish the irrepressible human drive for freedom. Maroon struggle still resonates in the present-day, and in our current volatile times, as oppressive hierarchies in the United States are challenged by Black Lives Matter, Native American direct actions such as Standing Rock, and a country-wide prisoners strike underway as I write this, it is little wonder that such historical legacies of resistance are experiencing a resurgence of interest.

As a marker of this political ferment, *Maroon Comix*, a collaborative piece of activist art coordinated by Quincy Paul with the support of many talented illustrators, makes a timely contribution to the discussion on how we get free. Built primarily around the writings of former Black Panther and longtime political prisoner of war Russell "Maroon" Shoatz, *Maroon Comix* tells the story of the Maroons. In this, *Maroon Comix* touches on all the major historical origins of the Maroons, including the multi-racial collaborations between enslaved Africans, their indigenous allies, and white indentured servants. The comic also identifies the major sites of Maroon struggle, such as the Great Dismal Swamp, Jamaica, Suriname, and Brazil, while, putting enslavement and Maroon communities into a broader political economic context.

Yet, it is the connection made between Maroons as a historical phenomenon of resistance and present-day revolutionary struggle that makes the narrative content of *Maroon Comix* stand out from the more academic treatments of the subject. Indeed, in a similar vein to Neil Roberts' book *Freedom as Marronage*, *Maroon Comix* positions the Maroons as an embodiment of a distinct practice of freedom accessible to all, linking various liberation struggles across space and time from Tanzania to Cuba, Rojava to Philly and beyond. Prefigurative politics, "building a new world in the ruins

of the old," and decentralized organization, symbolized by a hydra, are centered here as fundamental aspects of Maroon social formation that can help guide current movements. This is a compelling point, and even though the creators of the comic acknowledge that it is only a beginning, the call to learn what we can from the Maroons is well-taken given their surmounting of impossible odds against more powerful enemies.

Perhaps inevitably, however, the *Maroon Comix* blend of agitprop and historical summary glosses over and romanticizes some of the very history that it begs us to examine. Maroons always faced considerable opposition from their former captors, proportional to the grave physical and ideological threat they posed to the master-slavers, and the sad truth is that few Maroon groups that we know of survived long enough to see abolition. Those that survived their wars against enslavement and ensuing assimilation still struggle today for survival against resource extraction and state efforts to curtail their autonomy in places such as Jamaican and Suriname. As such, it is a perplexing lapse that *Maroon Comix*, in seeking to popularize and broaden the Maroon legacy of resistance, ignored the fact that the direct descendants of historical Maroons themselves are still fighting high stakes struggles.

Another glossed-over aspect of the history is that Maroon societies were constantly faced with difficult choices, and sometimes had to come to terms with their enemies as a strategy for survival, a dynamic that cannot possibly be captured by such binaries as "treaty-Maroons vs. fighting-Maroons." In the words of historians João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "let [the Maroons] be celebrated as heroes of freedom but what we celebrate ... is the struggle of men and women who, in order to live in freedom, weren't always able to act with the certainty and coherence normally attributed to heroes." These issues aside, *Maroon Comix* stands as a moving annotation of Maroon history and a needed call to arms, urging readers to follow up with the resources provided at the end of the comic while adapting the spirit of Maroon struggle into their own transformative politics and strategies for collective survival.



Robert Connell is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis. His work researches contemporary Maroon politics of autonomy and environment in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Continued from page 11, "SUTPLA"

also violated their mandate as women. The tasks assigned to them have are the least "productive" and tend to be related to "the realm of the female," namely, embroidery and Spanish card-making, when not limited purely and exclusively to cleaning duties.

One of the greatest difficulties of advocating for union rights in prison is that, unlike the free medium, those gains achieved by the workers do not become guarantees; rather, they must be constantly defended. For example, recently (August 16-17) a strike was launched in Devoto Jail (which consisted of not showing up to work sites) due to a delay in wage payments, coupled with the current month payment being also in jeopardy. According to the Labor Contract Law, workers ought to be paid on the fourth working day of each month. Due to negotiations carried out by the union and the Federal Department of Corrections (SPF—Servicio Penitenciario Federal), an agreement was reached whereby that date would be honored each month (which did not use to happen before). In view of this failure to comply with the agreement, it was decided in an assembly to implement forceful measures, which were widely complied with and had favorable results. The ensuing negotiations were a success, and we were informed that the salaries had been deposited and could be withdrawn beginning on August 21.

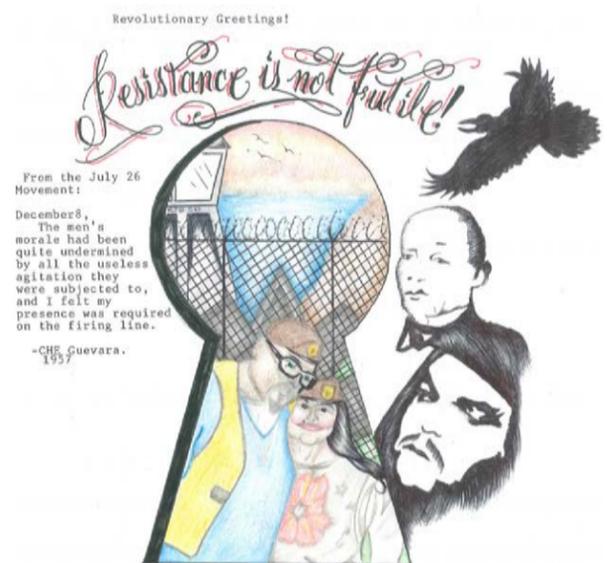
Many times, demands go beyond the sphere of labor. This is underlined by another peculiarity that characterizes this union: individuals living and working in the same environment. Thus, even though the original organization gathered them around the cause of labor rights (which, nonetheless, continues to be the main trigger for action), they mobilize around other causes, like access to education or health. A major concern is the access to sources of employment after regaining one's liberty. The stigma of those who have a criminal record diminishes the chances of obtaining formal work, which leads to recidivism as means of life. Therefore, among those projects propelled by the union we may find the development of joint co-ops (between prisoners and individuals of the free medium, like relatives) in the areas of textiles, waste recycling, and graphics.

Sindicato Unido de Trabajadorxs Privados de la Libertad Ambulatoria
August 21, 2018.

You may contact the union through the following means:
Telephone: Centro Universitario Devoto (Mon-Fri 9 to 6) 00 54 11 4648-3530 y 00 54 11 4546-0689
E-Mail: sutplaoficial@gmail.com
Facebook: @Sutpla-oficial

Mr. G. Anthony Topote
EJD A-3 162-L/480 Alta Rd.
San Diego, Ca., 92179

June 18, 2018



Sincerely,
Mr. G. Anthony Topote/G27171 P.P.
ANTHONY TOPOTE

CALL FOR CONTENT

Send Us Your Work!

Fall 2018 marks 20 years since the inaugural conference, "Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex" in Berkeley in 1998. Since that time, the notion of ending our reliance on prisons, policing, and surveillance as solutions to social, economic and political problems has sparked fires in the imaginations of people around the world.

We are seeking content for our upcoming issue of the Abolitionist on the theme of "20 Years of Strategy and Struggle to Abolish the Prison Industrial Complex." In this issue, we will reflect on the last 20 years during which CR has helped build a critical understanding of prison industrial complex and abolition. We will look at how CR has inspired individuals, organizations, and communities to take creative and practical steps to build this liberated future. We will also celebrate our victories, from successfully stopping the construction of new jails and prisons from New York to Los Angeles to ending the use of racist gang injunctions in Oakland. Additionally we want to look to the future of the movement, particularly in this critical political moment: where we go from here and where we have to redouble our efforts. We are accepting content in the form of writing, poetry, and visual art. Some prompts that you may use for inspiration:

- Describe specific pieces of analysis or tools that CR has produced that have helped you organize inside prisons or jails? What have they helped you achieve?
- Reflect on your relationship with CR. How has CR supported you?
- What steps does the movement to abolish the PIC need to take now to get closer to winning? What role do you see CR playing in the next 20 years of the movement?
- What steps would you like to see CR take to better include the voices and actions of imprisoned people in our future organizing?

At your earliest convenience, please send submissions to:

The Abolitionist Paper
Attn: Call for Content
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Dissipated families
Are smaller, weaker enemies.
Sky-rocketing ruling subsidy,
Uncle Sam roaring
"Dear mothers lean on me."
The wide eyed children wondering,
"Where is daddy?"
Prison.
A tenure of tenancy,
Crippling the people,
Lets add addictions to technology
A weapon to substitute the Natural Family Bonding.

Anthony B. Smouse
4/24/18

The Prison Abolitionist Imagination: A Conversation

BY JACKIE WANG

The late Mark Fisher once famously said that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. The same could be said about prisons: it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine a world without prisons. And yet the modern prison as it currently exists in the United States is a fairly recent invention. Although penological debates about competing systems of punishment and rehabilitation raged in the North in the early nineteenth century, by the end of the Civil War, physical penitentiaries were uncommon in some frontier states. Florida—which now has one of the largest prison systems in the U.S.—had no *physical* penitentiaries at the end of the Civil War and had to create its penal system from scratch.

Yet at this historical juncture prisons have become thoroughly naturalized. Imagining and working toward a world without prisons—which is the project of prison abolition—would not only require us to fundamentally rethink the role of the state in society, but it would also require us to work toward the total transformation of all social relations. A project as lofty and ambitious as this is easy to dismiss as unrealistic, utopian, impractical, naive—an *unrealizable dream*. But what if—instead of reacting to these charges with counterarguments that persuasively demonstrate that the abolitionist position is the only sensible position—we instead strategically use these charges themselves as a point of departure to show how the prison itself is a problem for thought that can only be unthought using a *mode of thinking that does not capitulate to the realism of the Present*? Can the reenchantment of the world be an instrument that we use to shatter the realism of the prison?

What follows is a series of questions—conversations with revolutionaries, dead and alive, on death, dreams, the struggle, and the phenomenological experience of freedom.

There are moments I want to enter. Will you follow me there, to the place where the breathing walls quietly exhale a low freedom song?

1

THE PRISON IS OUR SHADOW

You, not I, are the loser. He who lives on depriving others of light drowns in the darkness of his own shadow. You will never be free of me unless my freedom is generous to a fault. Then it would teach you peace and guide you home. You, not I, are afraid of what the cell is doing to me. You who guard my sleep, dream, and a delirium mined with signs. I have the vision and you have the tower, the heavy key chain, and a gun trained on a ghost. I have sleepiness, with its silky touch and essence. You have to stay up watching over me lest sleepiness take the weapon from your hand before your eye can see it. Dreaming is my profession while yours is pointless eavesdropping on an unfriendly conversation between my freedom and me.

—Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*

The poet-prisoner haunts the guard, who becomes a prisoner of his paranoia. The profession of the poet is dreaming. The profession of the jailer is to contain. The poet is the one who makes the light. The guard is the one who takes it. *He who lives on depriving others of light drowns in the darkness of his own shadow*. Will the ones who built the nightmare also drown in it?

The prisoner knows the true meaning of freedom while the guard knows only how to police this freedom.

What does the jailer give up when he becomes an instrument of the state?

Does the jailer remember what it means to love, to grieve, to rub the muscles of freedom or borrow the bird's example?

They cannot annihilate what we carry in our hearts and minds: This vision of an elsewhere, or the memory of a bird. How many poets and revolutionaries discovered freedom in a cell?

2

THE STARS SEEN FROM PRISON

In September 1971 the prisoners of Attica rose up, took the prison, and carved out a small space of freedom: a temporary liberated zone from which they could observe the stars.

Despite the sense of foreboding, there were moments of levity and, for some, even a feeling of unexpected joy as men who hadn't felt the fresh air of night for years reveled in this strange freedom. Out in the dark, music could be heard—drums, a guitar, vibes, flute, sax, [that] the brothers were playing." This was the lightest many of the men had felt since being processed into the maximum security facility. That night was in fact a deeply emotional time for all of them. Richard Clark watched in amazement as men embraced each other, and he saw one man break down into tears because it had been so long since he had been "allowed to get close to someone." Carlos Roche watched as tears of elation ran down the withered face of his friend "Owl," an old man who had been locked up for decades. "You know," Owl said in wonderment, "I haven't seen the stars in twenty-two years." As Clark later described this first night of the rebellion, while there was much trepidation about what might occur next, the men in D Yard also felt wonderful, because "no matter what happened later on, they couldn't take this night away from us."

—Heather Ann Thompson, *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*

In the cracks of the prison, something bloomed. A field of wildflowers imposed on a night sky. Blood was coming. Joy and dread mingled there, infusing the air with a powerful sense of rapture and uncertainty.

What exalted frequency was discovered that night, then lost, when Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered the police to put down the uprising?

Blood was coming. The new world never arrived. How terrible it must have been for W. E. B. Du Bois to realize he had mistaken *dusk* for *dawn*, that darkness would follow and not the radiance of a new day—his people's strivings rendered crepuscular. The dream of liberation collapsed in a heap of bloodstained rubble.

Blood was coming. The drumming would not last. The prisoners would be punished for daring to glimpse the stars.

Will those who have constructed this Hell ever wonder—*What was it all for?* The subordination of all life to these systems that hem us in. *Why cover the sky?*

3

THE DIALECTIC OF DREAMING

Dreams and reality are opposites. Action synthesizes them.
—Assata Shakur

Before Assata Shakur was liberated from prison, her grandmother and family came to visit her, bearing a dream: "You're coming home soon," her grandmother said. "I don't know when it will be, but you're coming home. You're getting out of here. It won't be too long, though." She went on: "I dreamed we were in our old house in Jamaica ... i was dressing you ... putting your clothes on." Assata's grandmother was known for her prophetic dreams—they came when they were needed, but it was ultimately the responsibility of the recipients of the visions to make them real, not only by believing in the veracity of the prophecies, but by acting so as to give them flesh.

When Assata returned to her prison cell, she could not help but dance and sing. She writes, "No amount of scientific, rational thinking could diminish the high that i felt. A tingly, giddy excitement had caught hold of me. I had gotten drunk on my family's arrogant, carefree optimism. I literally danced in my cell, singing, 'Feet, don't fail me now.' I sang the 'feet' part real low, so i guess the guards must have thought i was bugging out, stomping around my cage singing 'feet,' 'feet.'"

When we act in accordance with the prophetic dream, the dream comes to directly constitute reality.

4

THE RHYTHM OF REVOLT

Sometimes I don't know what to tell you, or how to end.

For some time I have been thinking about how to convey the message of police and prison abolition to you, but I know that as a poet, it is not my job to win you over with a persuasive argument, but to impart to you a *vibrational experience* that is capable of awakening your desire for another world.

A couple of years ago I saw the Black Arts Movement poet and activist Sonia Sanchez speak. I was moved by the way she paused whenever she experienced vertigo and spontaneously started singing as a way to find her rhythm after nearly passing out.

In a haiku Sonia writes:

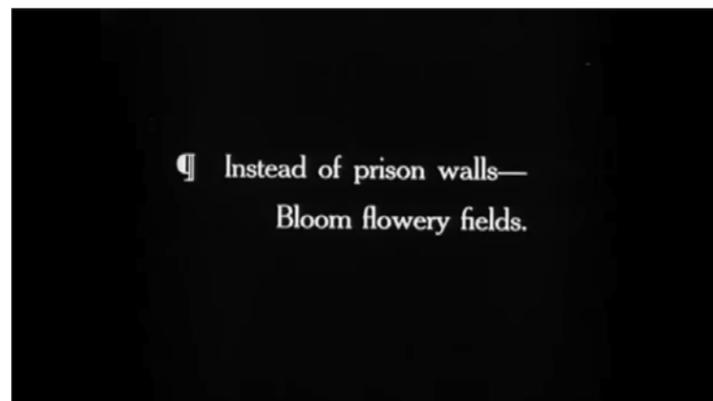
without your
residential breath
i lose my timing.

Our bodies are not closed loops. We hold each other and keep each other in time by marching, singing, embracing, breathing.

We synchronize our tempos so we can find a rhythm through which the urge to live can be expressed, collectively.

And in this way, we set the world into motion.

In this way, poets become the timekeepers of the revolution.



Jackie Wang is a student of the dream state, black studies scholar, prison abolitionist, poet, filmmaker, performer, trauma monster, and PhD candidate at Harvard University in African and African American Studies. She is the author of *Carceral Capitalism* (Semiotexte/MIT Press), a number of punkzines including *On Being Hard Femme*, and a collection of dream poems titled *Tiny Spelunker of the Oneiro-Womb* (Capricious).

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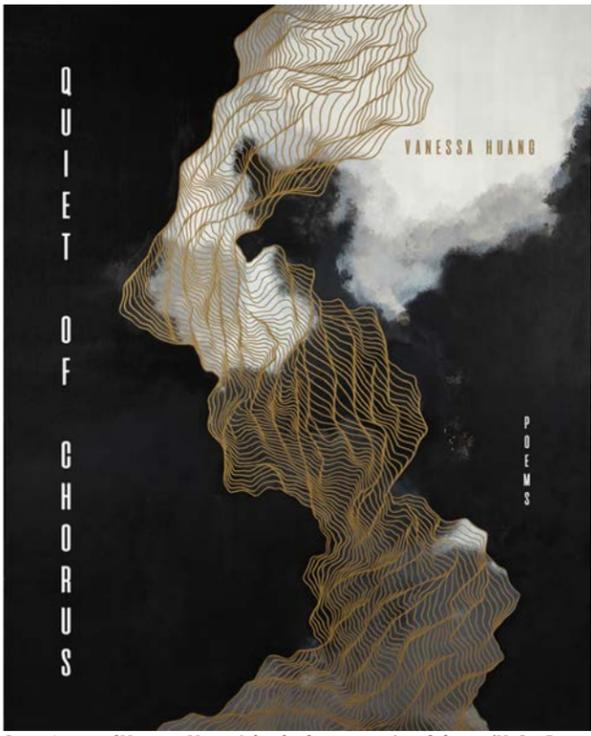
Name _____
Mailing Address _____

Billing Address (if different) _____

Please charge my credit or debit card.
Credit card type: _____
Credit card number: _____
Expiration date: _____
CVV: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____
(please complete all fields)

I have enclosed a check payable to Critical Resistance.

Yes, please send me email updates!
Email address: _____



Cover image of Vanessa Huang's book of poems, *quiet of chorus* (UpSet Press, 2018)

Born in Berkeley and home in diaspora from California and Taipei to Atlanta, New York, and Tianjin, **Vanessa Huang** is a multimedia poet, artist, and cultural worker whose practice inherits teachings from the prison industrial complex abolition, gender liberation, and intersecting social justice movements. For over 15 years, Vanessa has worked to shift cultural narratives and strategies based in fear, violence, and exploitation towards realities centering love, vision, and transformation.

Whispersound for lost and stolen

*the revolution did not come. Fred Bennett was missing
we learned he'd been found: ashes, bones, a wedding ring
but later there was Assata's freedom smile*

*then I was captured, locked into a cell of sewer water
spirit deflated. I survived, carried on, glad to be
like a weed, a wild red poppy,
rooted in life*

—Marilyn Buck, "Wild Poppies"

Where is the monthly snow, handwritings
of yesterday? Where do the contraband
folds of letter pray? Where have they moved
the fields of killing? Where have they
hidden our angels of embalmment, ceremony
of the dead? Where is the voice each ash
and bone, song of kidnapped ovary? Where
is the thankful one, her memory moon's
old laugh line? Where is exile's red wild
poppy, its blade of grass, its quaking bone?

Kundiman

of music that wakes us,

—Illya Kaminsky, "Author's Prayer"

If I speak for Melissa I must speak
for L N and youth we do not name
Assata Mumia each name ears have fought
to know

Andrea's Osage names stolen inside the chanting
each stolen who's let me hear their heartdrum
each patience in prayer for one kiss with truthsong
all spirits and lovers who carry song
without sound
and still dance

Yes I live now the quiet fightdrum
Melissa Melissa Melissa still chanting
You shouted your name for memory still chanting
Melissa far and close still chanting
L N and youth still chanting
each purple flower each return still chanting
Melissa Melissa Melissa still chanting
blank license plate still chanting
Assata Mumia and MOVE still chanting
all hiding in Quezon City still chanting
Melissa far and close still chanting
each who's lost home country still chanting
Andrea's Osage neighbors still chanting
each ghost still not safe to name chanting

Let us be this fightdrum still chanting
each *Kuya*, help me still chanting
each decline to comment still chanting
Melissa's camera memory still chanting
ghost of dead lovers still chanting
showing signs of torture still chanting
medicine for this break still chanting
language evaporate at gunpoint still chanting
stretch and pull each mask still chanting
each door forced open each left ajar still chanting
each stomach caressing ground still chanting
each muscle fight back still chanting
Melissa's *Flame to the Body* still chanting
each *Foot that Bleeds Black* still chanting
each *Incipient Wing that can't fly* still chanting
military gone to hide still chanting
each inch tape each knotted blindfold
still chanting
each handcuff's clasp still chanting
temperature their rifles still chanting
each bomb each fire each time still chanting
each death and resurrection still chanting
Melissa's compas inside still chanting

each rib each palm stronger than cages
still chanting
each breath you stole for rest each whisper
campaign still chanting
each poem speaks later each truthsong before
Night Comes still chanting
each window sky each freedom found
in village arms still chanting
each knowing eye each kind gesture still chanting
each movement til empire fall each rest in love
still chanting
gathering this rebel heartdrum still chanting
all this music poetry still chanting

Yes you live Melissa
song of truth rising
your music still chanting

for Melissa Roxas, 2009

An Interface for Politically Minded Prisoners

BY: QUINNELL AVERY JOHNSON III (AKA CHASE STAR THE GOD)

During the Civil Rights era, the C.I.A. worked in concert with other law enforcement agencies to counter, stifle, and snuff out any leftist activists, or activism they deemed was a threat to the status quo. The leftist activists that the C.I.A., in collaboration with other law enforcement/intelligence agents, had a hand in monitoring, sabotaging, and ultimately assassinating include, but are not limited to: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the prolific Tupac Shakur. To counter, and eventually dismantle the Black Panther Party and other nationalist organizations, the F.B.I. created the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which employed the vast resources of the C.I.A. and other law enforcement agencies. No tactic was morally beneath COINTELPRO when it came to accomplishing their insidious agenda. Many of the things done by law enforcement/intelligence agencies during the Civil Rights era would have caused mass pandemonium if done in today's society. For example, in 1969 the Republic of New Afrika (a Black nationalist organization and movement founded in 1968) was attacked by the local police while holding a convention at Reverend C.L. Franklin's New Bethel Church in Detroit, Michigan. The police fired 800 rounds of ammunition into the church, then held 150 people incommunicado, only for exercising their First Amendment constitutional rights. Read "The F.B.I. War on Tupac Shakur and Black Leaders," for more on this topic.

Afeni Shakur, mother of the late great Tupac Shakur, and former female leader of the New York Black Panther Party, is a great example of how effective a civil lawsuit can be in bringing about a political change. As one of the 21 New York Black Panthers that were imprisoned in New York City on April 2, 1969 on bogus, trumped-up charges, Afeni was locked up for approximately 10 months before being found not guilty at trial. Many accredited Afeni's *propria persona* work at trial for getting herself, as well as the 20 other Black Panther members, off at trial. Upon being released from jail, Afeni continued her activism. With the assistance of Mutulu Shakur and his adopted brother Lumumba Shakur, who was a leader of the Black Panther Party's Harlem chapter, Afeni worked on a historic lawsuit against the New York police, which gained the broadest restriction on any cities' police intelligence activities.

In our current era, there has been great public outcry and protest over the widespread instances of police brutality that have been, in many cases, videotaped and circulated ubiquitously throughout social media and other outlets. Despite the record number of people becoming aware of the vicious atrocities being carried out by racist and unscrupulous law enforcement agents, the truth is these government sanctioned murders and brutality have been occurring virtually at the same rate historically, if not more, than they have been occurring in this very day and age. The biggest difference is, due to our era's social and technological advancements, these injustices have attributed a more omnipresent dynamic.

In contrast to all the uproar and attention that police brutality has been generating in today's society, the violence that has been occurring in county jails and penitentiary settings have for the most part gone unnoticed, or been ignored. Only until a government informant posing as a prisoner recorded, via smuggled cellphone, Los Angeles sheriff deputies in the act of brutalizing prisoners, did the public become aware of the unconstitutional practice that has been going on for decades inside of the Los Angeles County Men's Central Jail. I myself, having experienced brutality at the hands of both the Los Angeles county jail sheriff deputies and correctional officers, know just how prevalent violence inside jails really is.

Due to the conditions of being imprisoned, it can be very difficult for an apolitically-minded prisoner who has experienced violence to correspond and correlate with other political minded prisoners who may have experienced similar violence--in an effort to bring about awareness and change by forming class action lawsuits, to contact media outlets, etc.

I propose the idea of an interface that allows politically minded prisoners experiencing constitutional violations while imprisoned to unite with each other, as well as other politically minded individuals in the free world, in an effort to facilitate change. One of the vital components of this interface will be the politically minded in the free world, as they are able to maneuver without the impediments that imprisonment presents. One person can be more easily silenced or disregarded; yet there is strength in unity and numbers.

Currently I am working on a Penal Code 1983 civil lawsuit that I filed myself while incarcerated to address the injustice and constitutional violations I experienced while incarcerated in the Los Angeles county jail. I look at my lawsuit metaphorically as a drop in the bucket of political change. They say nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream. I'd say it's about time to wake up and put that dream into action.

Quinnell Avery Johnson is imprisoned in California. He can be reached at:

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- Freedom
- Self-actualization, Self-determination
- The People United Will Never Be Defeated
- No New Jails!
- Bring Our Loved Ones Home
- Stronger Communities are Possible
- Build Solidarity and Power with Imprisoned People
- Healthcare, Not Policing!
- Political Education and Study Builds Power

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Critical Resistance
Attention: Artwork
1904 Franklin St #504
Oakland, CA 94612

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