

THE ABOLITIONIST

WINTER 2018

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

ISSUE 28: ORGANIZING AGAINST FASCISM

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We hope that this issue of The Abolitionist Newspaper finds you in strong spirits. This year has been tumultuous, marked by blatant threats and attacks from the Trump regime as well as the extreme right wing forces that he has emboldened. But more importantly, 2017 has seen an enlivening of people demonstrating their steadfastness, resistance, and power. In the face of intensified racism, sexism, transphobia, and imperialist war-mongering, communities mobilized, rallied, engaged in direct action, and developed rapid response networks to ensure strong self-defense against attacks by both state and vigilante forces.

Importantly, and also in direct response to Trump's victory, activists, organizers, scholars, and community members everywhere sprang into action to put together events, analysis, and resources with the goal of equipping us with the best tools to fight back in this moment. From developing toolkits to Know Your Rights resources, organizations built on long-standing alliances while creating new ones to bring mass political education and self-defense information to the widest range of people. In this issue of the paper, with the theme of Organizing against Fascism, we draw on the great wealth of the material that has been created and distributed. In doing so, we seek to compile key pieces of news and information, while ensuring that what people are creating and doing on the outside is shared across prison walls.

The pieces in this issue are aimed at sharpening an understanding our current political moment, equipping us with the knowledge of what our movements for abolition and liberation are up against. While we have seen just the beginning of a Trump presidency's disastrous consequences for people in the US and all over the world, we know that he is not exceptional. In a talk hosted by The Center for Political Education and transcribed here, Tarso Luis Ramos articulates the political forces and conditions that have led to Trump's electoral victory, showing that the current rise of the right wing is a global phenomenon not specific to the US. Ramos offers us much needed and lucid context of how we must think strategically if we are to defeat this threat in the long haul. And yet with so much at stake, a photo essay and interview with Lara Kiswani by Brooke Anderson and Pete Woiwode illustrates just one example of powerful resistance when people mobilized by the thousands to the San Francisco Airport's International Terminal to demand – and successfully achieve – the release of Muslim immigrants detained under Trump's Muslim Ban.

While acknowledging the danger of the most visible and egregious acts, equally as dangerous is the quieter, more subtle creep of fascistic, harshening policies. In "Trumpism and the Magnitude of Mass Incarceration," David Stein reminds us that the vastness of the prison industrial complex today was not put in place overnight, but was built as a result of incremental steps – "prison by prison, mandatory minimum sentence by mandatory minimum sentence" – encouraging anti-imprisonment organizers to think creatively about forming broad alliances with all those who will be harmed by the Trump regime. Longtime political prisoner and freedom fighter Herman Bell writes to us about the need to center the struggle of political prisoners in our day to day organizing, as it represents the crucial sacrifice that many have made for all our resistance movements.

We humbly offer this issue of The Abolitionist with the goal of providing a greater sense of understanding, analysis, and hope – especially in this seemingly grim and dangerous period. As always, repression breeds resistance, and it is the willingness of people to struggle, to fight back, in ways both big and small, that gives us the drive to continue fighting for a world without imprisonment, policing, surveillance, or oppression.

**In Solidarity,
The Abolitionist Editorial Collective**

THE ABOLITIONIST
c/o CRITICAL RESISTANCE
1904 Franklin Street, Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

On U.S. Political Prisoners

BY HERMAN BELL

In the first few months of 2017, Critical Resistance wrote to a number of US-held political prisoners requesting written responses on the struggle of political prisoners against increased state repression. This is a response by Herman Bell.



SOPHIA DAWSON

Your thoughtful words and warm greetings prompted me to express, as requested, a few thoughts on US political prisoner (PP) support work and alternatives to imprisonment.

How do organizations work to support PP's and simultaneously work to abolish the prison industrial complex? First, it's crucial that people are educated on US political prisoners, and that PP's not be regarded as a label or slogan, or as a poster or category, but as passionate, caring human beings—devoted social activists imprisoned by the state to punish and silence them for their advocacy in the social justice struggle, including humane treatment of the earth, the environment, and all living things on the planet.

These are people you know—some of whom you know personally and who should be widely known and revered by freedom-loving people everywhere. They are not martyrs. They have no wish to be thought of as such. Their bodies bled in the streets, were frequently soaked by water cannons at demos, and as with others, desperately gasped for fresh air outside choking fogs of tear gas. Separated from wives, children, friends, and community; sentenced to unimaginable prison time and unrelenting suffering. Militant? Yes! Rational? Yes! Staunch advocates for social justice? Yes! These are people you should want to know and support. And the greatest support you can give them is to demand their freedom or release on parole.

Supporters may come to realize that they are seeing themselves in these PP's, and if seen in this regard, whatever is done to relieve their plight, to free them, becomes fixed in the social consciousness. People draw strength and inspiration from that, from being part of something that is noble and good—especially

from being part of the fight to rid the world of human suffering and deprivation. The writer Eduardo Galeano noted that: "The world, which is the private property of a few, suffer from amnesia. It is not an innocent amnesia. The owners prefer not to remember that the world was born yearning to be a home for everyone." And so people have reason to resist the present social arrangement.

**"Despite their power and beauty,
words without deeds are useless.
People have to demand change."**

With few exceptions, US PP's are not well known or represented in US society (and US corporate media, as expected, totally ignore them except to report an obituary or legal setback, like parole denial). This, on the one hand, is a continuation of state-controlled media to silence dissent and protest, and on the other, is an illustration of ineffective PP education and support work for their release. Appeals for support and demands for PP's release should always be in the forefront of any progressive public address, rather than—as is typically the case—at the end, or sometimes not at all, or as an afterthought in closing remarks. Though the prevailing social climate offers hope.

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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.

Abolitionist Editors

Maria Boyer
Jay Donahue
Aida Gorbani
Mohamed Shehk
Carrie Smith
Yesenia Solarzano
Marlene Ramos

Spanish Edition Editor

Luigi Celentano

Contributors

Kali Akuno
Brooke Anderson
Todd Ashker
Annie Banks
Jesus Barraza
Herman Bell
Arturo Castellano
Robert Chan
Sophia Dawson
Milton De la Cruz
Mujahid Farid
George Franco
Katie Garth
Kayrock
Ruthie Wilson
Gilmore
Voltaire Guray
Nicholas Lampert
Dylan Miner

Sitawa Nantambu
Jamaa (S/N Ronnie
Dewberry)
Mariame Kaba
Lara Kiswani
Abraham Paulos
Eduardo Sarmiento
Akiba Solomon
David Stein
Jason Lee Sutton
True Leap Press
Pete Railand
Tarso Luis Ramos
The Center for Political
Education
Pete Woiwode

Translators

Scott Campbell
Mariella Castaldi
Luigi Celentano
Maria Isabel Jeronimo
Cruz
Jim Eitel
Leah Furumo
Nina Iskrenovich
Andrea Salinas
Claudia Saucedo
Gabriel Torres

Layout

Kate Hudson
Santos LaRose

Statement of California Prisoner Representatives on Second Anniversary of *Ashker v. Brown* Settlement

BY SITAWA NANTAMBU JAMAA (S/N RONNIE DEWBERRY), ARTURO CASTELLANO, TODD ASHKER, AND GEORGE FRANCO

October 14, 2017 marks the two year anniversary of the approval of the Ashker settlement. We celebrate our victory in the Ashker case, in which virtually all of the over 1600 prisoners then languishing in indeterminate SHU were released to General Population. This victory was achieved through three hunger strikes and the non-violent legal and political action of thousands of California prisoners, their families, supporters, and their attorneys.

However, unfortunately our general monitoring is due to run out after two years unless the Court grants an extension. We believe that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is still engaged in constitutional violations that deny prisoners due process and seeks to put us back in the hole, for many, indeterminately under the guise of Administrative SHU. Our attorneys will seek an extension of the agreement due to CDCR's systemic violations of the constitution. We don't know what the court will do, but we do know that prisoners and their families have to reenergize our human rights movement to fight against the continuing violations of our rights. Examples are:

- CDCR's continued misuse of Confidential Information to place prisoners back in the SHU, particularly with bogus conspiracy charges;
- The lack of out of cell time, programming and vocational programs in Level 4 prisons. The last letter of CDCR stands for rehabilitation, and there is almost no rehab programs and opportunities in the level 4 prisons. They function like modified SHUs;
- The denial of parole to lifers and Prop 57 prisoners who have clean records simply because of old, unconstitutional gang validations and CDCR's illegally housing us in SHU for years;
- The turning of the Restrictive Custody General Population Unit which was supposed to be a GP unit where prisoners who had real safety concerns could transition to regular GP, into a purgatory where the only way out is to either de-brief or die;

- CDCR promulgation of new regulations which gives the ICC discretion to put people back in the SHU, allows for many prisoners to be placed in the future in indeterminate Administrative SHU, or to be placed in the RCGP on phony safety concerns.

We must stand together, not only for ourselves, but for future generations of prisoners, so that they don't have to go through the years of torture that we had to. We need all prisoners – young and old – to make our collective outcry public to ensure that the victory that we have won is not reversed by CDCR behind closed doors. Ultimately, we are the ones who are responsible for leading the struggle for justice and fair treatment of prisoners. That is why we entered into the historic Agreement to End Hostilities, and why it is so important that the prisoner class continue to stand by and support that agreement. We cannot allow our victories to be nullified by CDCR's abuse of power, and may have to commit ourselves to non-violent peaceful struggle if CDCR continues on its present path.

We need everyone- prisoners, their families and the public – to send comments on CDCR's proposed regulations to staff@aol.ca.gov, send emails and letters urging Gov. Brown to sign Assembly Bill 1308, make sure that prisoner complaints about unfair treatment are publicized, and to work together to rebuild our prisoners human rights movement.

We cannot let CDCR increase its use of prolonged solitary confinement either by misusing confidential information to place prisoners in SHU on phony conspiracy charges, or through increasing the use of Administrative SHU. As the Supreme Court stated over one hundred years ago in the 1879 case of *Wilkerson v. Utah*, it is "safe to affirm that punishment of torture... and all others in the same line of unnecessary cruelty are forbidden by that [the Eighth] Amendment." The admired historian Howard Zinn noted the application of that decision to the modern SHU: "All we need then, is general recognition that to imprison a person inside a cage, to deprive that person of human companionship, of mother and father and wife and children and friends, to treat that person as a subordinate creature, to subject that person to daily humiliation and reminder of his or her own powerlessness in the face of authority... is indeed torture and thus falls within the decision of the Supreme Court a hundred years ago."

Trumpism and the Magnitude of Mass Incarceration

BY DAVID STEIN

Originally published on February 16, 2017 in Black Perspectives, the digital publishing platform of the African American Intellectual History Society, found online here <http://www.aaihs.org/trumpism-and-the-magnitude-of-mass-incarceration/>. This version has been slightly edited by The Abolitionist.

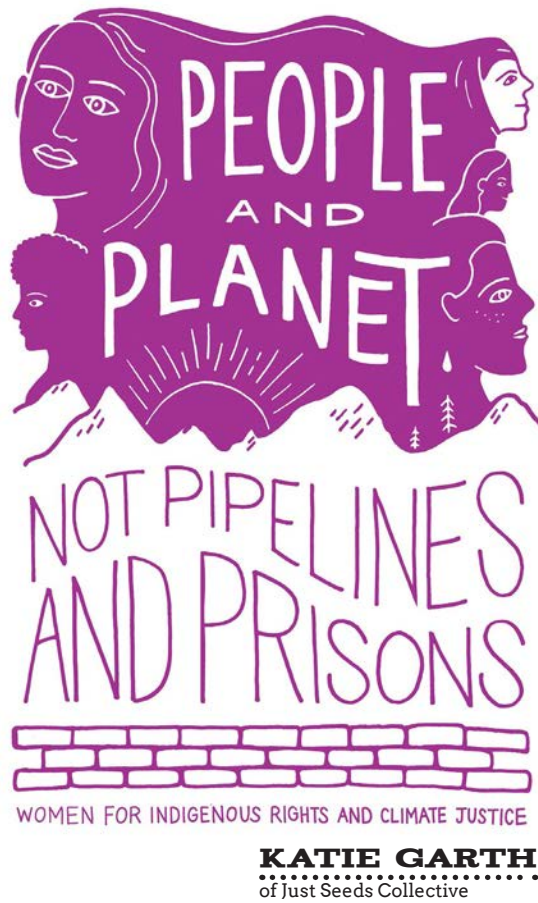
On Thursday, February 9, 2017, President Trump instituted new executive actions, which affirmed his campaign vows to emphasize "law and order." When it comes to surveillance, policing, and imprisonment, the new Trump presidency promises an uptick in the government's repertoire of repression. With ascending resistance, the president is developing a new balance between coercion and consent from which to govern. And at some point, these quantitative changes can meld into wholesale qualitative ones.

Mass incarceration developed through contestation and accretion across diverse jurisdictions: prison by prison, mandatory minimum sentence by mandatory minimum sentence. Considering this lesson, on April 12, 2008, geographer and leading anti-prison scholar-activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore asked me a question that I have been considering ever since: "Why aren't there more people in prison?" The question reminds us that every dollar in a police budget is important. Answering it compels one to push past common tropes in the discourse about imprisonment. It looks beyond interpretive traps that lurk in moralistic appeals; these often emphasize the seeming contradiction that in the "land of the free" there are so many people in cages. Gilmore's question forces us to look askance at those who would suggest that prisons are simply factories in a narrow circuit of labor exploitation (since fewer than 6,000 of the more than 1.5 million people in prison are working for private companies). Another 60,000 people work in "correctional industries," like UNICOR, that sell products to the government. In addition, 700,000 imprisoned people do what Craig Gilmore has called, "the reproductive labor of the prison"—contributing

to the daily maintenance of the institution through cooking, cleaning, and other such jobs.

This characterization disturbs theorizing racism as an incurable disease, where mass incarceration is only the latest symptom—"slavery to Jim Crow to mass incarceration." Rather, it prompts an understanding of racism as a system of contested and evolving power relations. Gilmore's question suggests that the urgent task to consider is: "How racism is able to articulate politically in this way?". What institutions and people have been able to constrain its force? What institutions and people have been able to catalyze its violent expressions?

Reading our president's plan for his first 100 days



gives these questions renewed urgency. His legislative agenda promises policy that will further extend racism and state violence. He calls for the "Restoring Community Safety Act." The act pledges "increasing funding for programs that train and assist local police." In short, this is a replay of the plans developed in the mid-1960s under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). The LEAA and its funding to states and municipalities was crucial to growing the system of mass incarceration. Although most imprisoned people are in state prisons, federal funding for new policing initiatives and to support state prison construction was instrumental for the growth of mass incarceration. Our president is also seeking to increase the punishments for immigrants charged with unlawful reentry via a renewed version of "Kate's Law." His proposed "End Illegal Immigration Act" increases mandatory minimum sentences for immigrants who re-enter the U.S., and even more so for those with prior convictions.

The deeper causes of mass incarceration are many, but on a proximate level, we know how the "massification" of mass incarceration occurred. The "Iron Law of Prison Populations," posits that flow into prison and the length of stay in prison are the two most important factors to growing the prison system. Both of these elements increased since the 1960s, alongside prison construction. Thus, many activists and scholars have argued that reducing mass incarceration requires: (1) decreasing police contact (thereby slowing the flow of the policing to prosecution to plea-bargain to prison conveyor belt), and (2) reducing sentence lengths across the board (thus cutting one's length of stay). The challenge is how to change the policy paradigm whereby policing and imprisonment are considered all-purpose solutions to social, political, economic problems. Under our new president, this challenge will grow.

This comes after years of optimism and struggle around policing and prison reform, and efforts to eventually make imprisonment obsolete. Gilmore's question occurred after the years of prison growth had slowed. The average annual increase of people in prisons from 1980-1994 was 8.4%, and 7.2% for jails. The average annual increase of imprisoned people from 1995-2001 was 3.8%. From 2000-2008, the average annual increase was 2.2%. By contrast, from 2007-2014, there was an average annual decrease of .5%. For the first time in my lifetime, more people were leaving prison than entering. But this period also witnessed buildups of surveillance and widespread use of electronic monitoring for criminalized people and

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Facing the Right: A Conversation with Tarso Luís Ramos

This article was transcribed from a recording of an event held by the Center for Political Education on May 2, 2017. Many thanks to CPE for allowing us to reproduce it here.

Public Research Associates (PRA) was founded by people back in the 1980's, largely in response to Ronald Reagan's election. That was an election some of you will remember and some of you have heard about. It was an election of somebody who was thought of as almost an impossible right wing candidate. People really didn't think that he could take power. The forces that were organizing for his election, and of course he had been governor of California, so folks in California were more likely than other to know his political history and trajectory before he became president – but the forces that came before and helped elect him, were really new on the scene.

The Christian right, which is something we all talk about now, was a totally new phenomenon. Conservative evangelicals had largely been apolitical – they had not been a part of the political process. They sort of retreated from political life back in the twenties in response to the Scopes Monkey Trial. They were these newly activated constituencies that were widely regarded not only by activist on the left, but also by social scientists and academics, as kind of just irrelevant. These were folks that were kind of crazy, kind of fringe, who couldn't possibly have an impact on the national culture of politics. Then Reagan was elected, and a political coalition that called itself the New Right really rose to prominence, and set in motion a set of policies and politics that really transformed the country. So in many ways, what we see now in the election of Donald Trump is the ultimate culmination of policies and trajectories that have been with us now for decades. So in some ways, Trump is a rupture, but in other ways, there are strong continuities.

So, PRA was founded back in 1981 by a political scientist and activist by the name of Jean Hardisty, who had a sense that not all was well with the direction of the country, and anticipated that shift toward right wing politics and decided that it was important. This was a radical break. This was at a time when most people, on the left, really thought that there was a possibility for revolutionary transformation in the United States. The idea that "Well, wait a minute, we have to focus on what the right is doing," was really a divergence from how most people were thinking. And so Jean created a new kind of movement organization, a research center – think tank if you will – that was movement facing. Its role was to analyze, interpret, and understand these right wing currents, this organized opposition to social justice movements, to liberation movements, in order to better inform movement organizations and think about how to adjust our tactics and strategy in light of these changing political conditions. And that's been the mission of PRA for the last almost 36 years.

And so, I'm very proud, sometimes intimidated to take on the role of guiding this institution into what we all must admit is a very treacherous period that we're all living in now. So that's enough about PRA. A quick note about myself, specifically, what I think we're going to be talking about tonight, I come by my politics and my preoccupation with authoritarianism very honestly. I was born in Brazil. I grew up in the states because my family had to flee a military dictatorship that ushered in a period of terror, state terror, and persecution of left movements and the general population. It's why I grew up with stories of those who didn't get out, those who didn't survive. My parents were involved in editing the first editions documenting torture by the regime. I grew up with stories of narrow escapes, and I now have kids of my own. And I started some telling some of these stories with them when they were very young. And I didn't do that imagining these stories would be stories about survival skills for the future, rather than stories about the past. I see it as my responsibility, now all of our responsibility, to avoid that scenario.

In the spirit of International Workers Day, which was just yesterday, what I thought I would do is pull back from the United States for a minute. All of us have been thinking about and talking about Trump, and that takes up a lot of our time. It's a lot of the noise that we receive on a daily basis. But I want to step back and suggest to all of you that we are experiencing a global political and social realignment towards the right wing, towards autocracy, and in some cases towards authoritarianism. The United States is unique in all kinds of ways, but it is in many ways a manifestation of these shifts. This election in the United States was neither the first nor is it likely to be the last shoe to drop in this kind of global realignment.

One has to be careful about generalizing this to causes because different national contexts are quite different. Dynamics are quite different across the globe, but whether it's the parliamentary coup in Brazil last April, whether it's the recent region elections that consolidated power for Modi in India, whether it is the rise of Duterte, basically the death squad leader in the Philippines who's the president there. These are trends that we're seeing everywhere. The surge of the far right in France has led them making it to the final rounds of the presidential elections that will occur this Sunday. The emergence of neo-fascism – and that's not a label I'm putting on them,

it's self-identified neo-fascist parties in many countries in Europe – in Hungary, Poland, and other places. This is a global trend, and the United States is part of that. We're not leading that, but we're a part of that.

In some cases, the foreign policy of the United States is contributing to the conditions that make this possible, just as United States domestic policy has contributed to the conditions that are making this possible. I'm going to suggest that one of the dynamics here is the global crisis created by neoliberalism. The economic and social crisis created by neoliberalism has created, by which I mean a combination of austerity economics – a set of policies that have created incredible debt for the states that had eliminated social responsibility as a prime directive for government, and slashing the social welfare state. Austerity programs that have directly undermined and attacked democratic expressions of work organizations and other formations. So by neoliberalism, I mean this kind of package of policies has created such economic and social insecurity, and actual either frozen or depressed standards of living for masses of people, creating a social crisis and a crisis of the legitimacy of the state. We're

experiencing that crisis of the legitimacy of the state in the United States. Those are conditions that create opportunity, they create a vacuum, for change. In many cases, unfortunately, it's right wing forces that have been best positioned to capture that crisis, and so these crises are turning over the state into the hands of the right wing.

By the right wing, I also don't just mean one thing. There are different constellations of forces in different places and different methods by which this transfer of power is taking place. In some cases, such as in the United States, it's through an electoral process (not that we can call it truly democratic in the case of the electoral college, and the conditions of elections where certain people were disenfranchised formally or informally). But nonetheless, the United States is quite different from the more crass

seizure of power in a country like Brazil where the right wing realized couldn't win an election, not even a little one, and so have pursued other means of capturing the state. Nonetheless, it's resolving the crisis, including the severe economic crisis, that created the opportunity for that kind of seizure and transfer.

So the United States is within this context, within this system, and it's not entirely clear that what will come out of the other end will be anything like a democracy. It's our job to make sure that it is. I think it's fair to describe the situation in the United States as an oligarchy with some characteristics of a democracy, with some form of a democracy, but with such levels of concentration of wealth and of power is actually creating a different set of dynamics and forces.

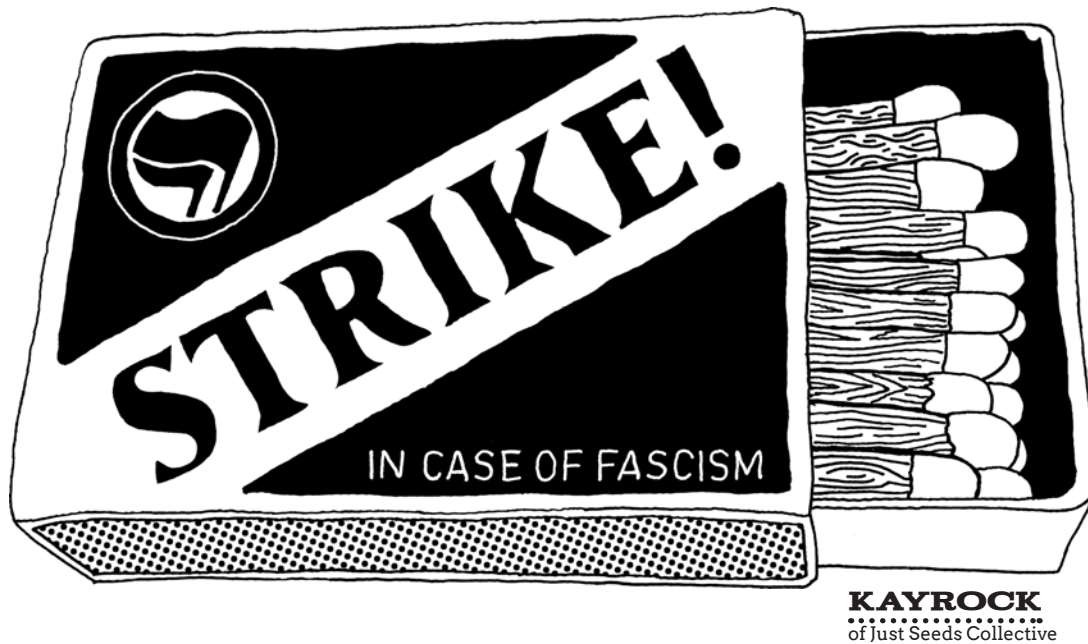
I had a chance to recently meet with social movements in Brazil and spend some time there. I went almost directly from there to Spain where I had a chance to meet with

“We are experiencing a global political and social realignment towards the right wing, towards autocracy, and in some cases towards authoritarianism.”

social movement folks from the global South, and folks who were fighting against the rise of Le Pen in France and other kinds of conditions. It's quite sobering to hear about the conditions that social movements are fighting under in many parts of the world. Some of these are characteristics that are not going to be entirely unfamiliar in the US. As a result of the coup in Brazil for instance, social movements are under direct attack from both the state and from vigilantes. The number of assassinations of movement activists is just stunning. Special units have been set up within the state apparatus to actively persecute and criminalize, and legal action has been brought against the largest social movements, such as the landless workers movements and affiliated movements that have been against mega projects and dams. So that kind of direct repression of social movements is not entirely new of course in the United States – it's something that's growing as well – and similarly, from both vigilante and state vectors.

There are a couple things I want to shift a little bit and then talk about political conditions in the United States. Let me just preface this part by saying, PRA considers an important part of our work to be enriching and helping to update the power analysis that progressive left forces use to consider what we're up against and how we move. Just as I suggested that back in 1981 when PRA was created by Jean Hardisty, there was a really incorrect assessment of the constellation of the forces inside the United States that was driving a lot of organizing work. I think that we are in danger of, even after Trump's election, misreading the moment now. This is not to claim authority over an understanding of this moment, but I do see PRA's role is contributing to a collective process of reevaluating the moment and conditions we're against, so that we can hopefully choose a course, or a set of courses, that has the best prospect for progressive change. That's the spirit with which I now delve into some of this.

Unlike the situation in Europe or other countries like Brazil that have a more parliamentary system, which is to say a truly multi-party system, the far right in the United States does not have its own party. You have neo-fascist parties across Europe who have been sending members both into their local parliaments, but also into European Parliament, in an attempt to take down that project. In the United States, the far right, by which I mean the avowing white supremacist right, whether it's neo-Nazi, Klan, white nationalist, or alt right – which is a strange hybrid between white nationalist and hyper-misogynist – they don't have a political party. As much as we might think the Republican Party is their party, they certainly have not seen it that way. And so an innovation, if you want to think of it that way, of the Trump campaign was to invite those people into a party. Mostly they were pursuing a non-electoral set of strategies, and their vision of a fascist or neo-fascist future for North America didn't in fact involve seizure of the state. They've more imagined that the neoliberal state is unviable – which we might agree – is likely to collapse, and they've been preparing for what they might build in the ashes of that. These are folks like Richard Spencer. It's much more a notion of federated set of ethno islands, regions that would federate both across North America and with their brothers in white struggle in Western Europe. They didn't really have this project of seizure of state power, and then Trump's campaign came along. So Trump brought in the far right as a coalition, as an electoral partner, and actually forced reevaluation among some within that movement – including Richard Spencer who is beginning to run for congressman in Montana –



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- Invest in People, Not Police and Prisons
- Our Passion for Freedom is Stronger than Their Walls
- Toward Liberation
- 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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Oakland, CA 94612

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Don't Just Fight, Build!

BY KALI AKUNO

This article was originally published on March 27th, 2017 on Akuno's blog, *Navigating the Storm*.

I work with Cooperation Jackson, based in Jackson, Mississippi, which comes out of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the New Afrikan People's Organization. I bring up both the local and national groups to give you a sense of the broad movement I'm coming from, and also the more specific work going on in Jackson. That's important because I believe we have to be rooted somewhere firmly on the ground in order to have a base on which to stand, and from which to organize.

After Trump was elected, it took two or three weeks for many people to get out of the fog. There are some losses that we're going to take in this next period under Donald Trump. We have to get ourselves mentally prepared for that, and do the organizing that is necessary to withstand the assault against what little democracy has ever existed in this country, as they try to take us back to the sixteenth century.

Don't be confused about what the Republicans are really trying to do. Part of it is about profit. But they also want to make sure that those who were supposed to stay in their respective places get back in those places. And that's virtually everybody, once you really think about it. Being white is not necessarily going to protect you.

If you can engage in actions, engage. If you can't, that's OK, there will be other times. The question really is, at some point we can't just mobilize, we've got to start organizing. After the first 100 days, people need to sit down and come up with a plan or we are all wasting our time and we are going to be summarily defeated.

We have to develop a serious program and that starts with dialogue—amongst us. On a national level, we have to develop what I call a framework of ungovernability. Fundamentally, that means not giving any legitimacy to Trump, and more importantly, to the neo-confederates, who I would argue are actually far more dangerous than Trump himself.

We've got to get ourselves profoundly more organized than we are now. And we are not an organized force. Let's not kid ourselves. With the unions, with our political parties, we're not even as organized as we were twenty or thirty years ago. And by organized, I do not mean creating a great Internet platform.

We need to be so organized that you can call me, give me two days, and I can move fifty people, and put them in action on the ground in my community. That's the level of organizing that I'm talking about. We've done it before. And we can do it again. It's not magic; it's just a bunch of hard work.

I hear people say, "I can't believe what's happening." But what's happening now has been happening to indigenous people and black people all along. The older I get, the more appreciation for my people's history and culture I have, and what my ancestors did to survive this bullshit. I am seeing that more and more as a vital piece we can't overlook.

I'm glad people have woken up. But understand that it can get worse, and we have to get prepared for that. We don't yet have a serious conversation between what is left of organized labor and what is emerging as the cooperative movement in this country. We aren't in deep enough conversation with each other about how as workers we're going to shape our own future.

A big part of Cooperation Jackson is based on black reality. Ain't nobody creating no jobs for us. Those days are long since past. In Jackson, Mississippi, I think the real unemployment rate is easily over 50 percent. I can knock on almost any door in a black, working-class community, any day of the week, and there's an able-bodied adult, typically, who will answer the door. Any time of day. That gives you a real sense of what I mean by a deep level of unemployment.

That is a challenge, but it's also a great organizing opportunity.

You have some time and energy. Can we use that to do something collective in our community? Can we bring your skills, time, energy, resources, and talents together with other folks under similar circumstances and transform our reality?

It takes a lot of convincing of people. But we are starting to see some results, getting people to just start doing small things.

Let's pull together some time and energy to fix the cars and bikes in the neighborhood, to deal with our city's transportation crisis. Jackson has a few public buses. But we don't have much of a public transportation system. If you don't have a car, you can't get a job or go to the grocery store, and there are a lot of people in that situation.

But that's an opportunity also for us from an organizing perspective, because it helps us to put people in relationship. I have a car, I have some time. You know how to fix cars, you have some time. Let's work together and we can create a mutually beneficial system.

How do we create our own kind of cooperative cab company? We are looking into that on a deeper level—how that would fulfill not just a transportation need but a social need in our community.

Rather than see the limitations, we are seeing there's more space from the decay of late capitalism to actually do some things to push back and start seizing the means of production. That is a big part of our project in Jackson. We call it organizing for "community production."



KALI AKUNO
cofounder of Cooperation Jackson

The city is in profound debt. We are faced with the threat of losing control of our water system. Our public education system is going to be seized this summer by the state—primarily through the orchestration of state-mandated testing that has changed the goalposts every year to produce the outcome the Republicans wanted.

Our governor is very close to Trump. The Tea Party basically runs our state. Our governor is a member of the Tea Party. There's a Tea Party supermajority in the legislature in both houses, and also within the state court system. So we've been living under the kind of one-party rule that the whole country is now experiencing for six years. We've learned a few lessons that perhaps we can impart.

Our governor says President Trump has promised he can do some things for Mississippi that the Army Corps of Engineers has spent twenty-five years saying are impossible. He's been bragging and boasting since the Inauguration that they're going to create a whole new water system for Rankin County, which is a predominantly white, working-class county and one of the bases of white reaction in Mississippi.

It's right next door to Jackson. The county only has 140,000 people. But they're going to build a whole new water system for them. They don't even have the density to pay for the system that will be created.

It's pure politics: Jackson receives much of its annual revenue from the sale of water to the greater metro area. So if you take water away from us, basically you destroy the ability of the municipality to function.

The state is also planning to annex a critical part of the downtown area, where 60 percent of the jobs in the city of Jackson are located in this new district that they're creating. They will turn that over to the state. And then they want to flood a good portion of downtown Jackson to create a lake, and a casino district.

The long-term objective is to break the political back of

Jackson, which is 80 percent black. State Republicans and the Greater Jackson Chamber of Commerce believe they can take Jackson back politically if they're able to reduce its current black population to between 60 and 65 percent.

If they are able to reduce the city's black population to that degree, they will have the power to both split and dilute the black vote. So this is all part of a long-term, coordinated plan and strategy. It gives you an example of what organization looks like. We need to get to that level of coordination, strategy, and organization. Their side can do it, and our side can do it.

The Democratic Party is not going to save us. We've got to organize something different. It may use some remnants of that old structure, but we've got to organize something new to reach the vast majority of those who are oppressed, exploited, and excluded in this society.

It's going to take a lot of hard work. But we have to remember that all of the Tea Party folks and Trump only represent a minority from this point forward. That is all they can ever represent. That doesn't mean they can't rule effectively as a minority. Look at South Africa to understand how a minority can effectively rule an overwhelming majority.

But if we organize in a different way, there's a profound new majority which is largely black and brown that we can tap into. That majority is more than willing to be politically engaged, but it doesn't see electoral politics as the only viable way, or even the most expedient way, to address their real life circumstances.

And so we must think outside the box, those of us on the left, instead of just trying to channel most of our energy into electoral fights.

What are the other things we have to build? How can we actually build power in our communities and organize people to exercise that power? People's assemblies are one way, cooperatives are another. But that's not all.

I would argue that we should give as much time to the building as we give to the fighting. And we must give equal time to actually sitting down in our communities, having meetings with our neighbors, whether they agree or disagree with us. And constructing a real political and viable program going forward. If we don't, Trump is going to be the least of our concerns.

This is a hell of a time. I think we should embrace the fluidity of the time, and not be afraid of it. If, like me, you consider yourself a socialist, it would have been hard to believe a few years ago that we could publicly identify ourselves as socialists in so many places. But that space is now open, and it's one we need to seize. We can't let this moment pass or fade. Because there are millions of people out there looking for alternatives.

This is a very fluid moment. It may look bleak. But in the end, the other side has a few economic things, levers they can pull which shouldn't be underestimated. But we know they must resort to force to keep this thing together. And that's a losing strategy. So let's seize the time and opportunity. Don't be weary. Get to work.

Kali Akuno is a co-founder and co-director of Cooperation Jackson. Kali also served as the Co-Director of the US Human Rights Network, the Executive Director of the Peoples' Hurricane Relief Fund (PHRF) based in New Orleans, Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, and was a co-founder of the School of Social Justice and Community Development (SSJCD), a public school serving the academic needs of low-income African American and Latino communities in Oakland, California.



Image of an anti-fascist march confronting a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, VA on August 12, 2017

What to Expect, and What to Do About It: The View From in Here

BY ROBERT CHAN

There's long been an intersection between immigration, incarceration, and sentencing, and Donald Trump's policies will only worsen that. The past 30 years' PIC expansion is now repeating on a new front and will increase the carceral population through the further criminalization of undocumented immigrants. We know this because it's already happened in previous years.

Trump's rhetoric about deporting 2-3 million "criminal aliens" is actually an old hat; there was a similar focus in the Obama administration, and back then, more than 60% of those deported were swept up for misdemeanors, traffic violations, or just border crossings. What's new is that now, with Trump, the upwards penalty of 20 years for unauthorized border crossings will more frequently be exploited to maximize the catch of sweeps. Certainly, this will coincide with an uptick of arrests at the local level, as the feds lean on regular police to use the "Secure Communities" program, which links local law enforcement to the databases of the Department of Homeland Security, in order to cross-check all arrestees for their immigration status.

This surge of new arrestees will first pass through county jails and state prisons, providing extra revenue for those places that rent out existing space to ICE, and also providing fresh fodder for a PIC push to resume construction of new carceral bed space. As undocumented immigrants are transferred into ICE custody, their swelled numbers will give the same excuse for expansion to GEO Corp., CoreCivic (formerly CCA), and others in the private prison hegemony that Trump has publicly expressed support for.

Such monetary inducements may hamper recent years' reforms in scaling back the PIC as Trump's net-widening furnishes "many, many jobs" through hiring thousands more human-catchers and thousands more turnkeys.

Also, Trump's allegations about fraudulent votes against him will no doubt impede efforts to restore voting rights for the millions of people with convictions, while emboldening those who oppress our communities through gerrymandering and voter ID restrictions. In trying to reduce our voting power, Trump and his cohorts seek to pave a path for a retrograde U-turn in policies, including going back to the heyday of the PIC boom of the 1990s.

But we don't have to accept this. We don't have to stand still. We can resist and prevail if we work together. First things first, we must establish community networks in all of our neighborhoods for our immigrant brothers and sisters. Children separated from their parents should have a safe place to stay with stateside relatives and friends; we can build houses of refuge by coordinating with our many allies in sanctuary cities.

Also very important, we must continue running "know-your-rights" workshops so that undocumented people know what they will face in the worst case scenario of deportation. Those picked up by ICE are often transferred to detention centers in remote locations, far away from resources and people who could help. Coupled with a severe lack of due process and no meaningful representation during mass group hearings, it's very difficult to put up an adequate defense.

Here in California's state prison system, we've drawn on the experiences of our undocumented comrades who have survived ICE custody before. They are sharing their knowledge of the deportation process with us so that we can ready first-time incarcerated immigrants. We also provide ESL study groups to equip people with the skills needed to overcome the language barrier and come out of ICE proceedings with some kind of humane result.

Among the general population of prisoners, we stay up-to-date on current events by sharing articles from periodicals like The Abolitionist, Prison Legal News, The Nation, Mother Jones, and California Lifers' Newsletter.

We know that Trump's pick for the next U.S. Supreme Court justice will be detrimental for all of us in how important case law is negatively decided on a range of societal issues, including policing and imprisonment. That's why here, on the ground-level, we're urging our fellow prisoners to speak out and write, to let their voices be heard. Now is the time to stand with our free-world allies as they daily protest Trump's latest ugly declarations and executive orders. In our thoughts and in our prayers, with our hearts and with our words, we stand with the oppressed and all progressives fighting for social justice.

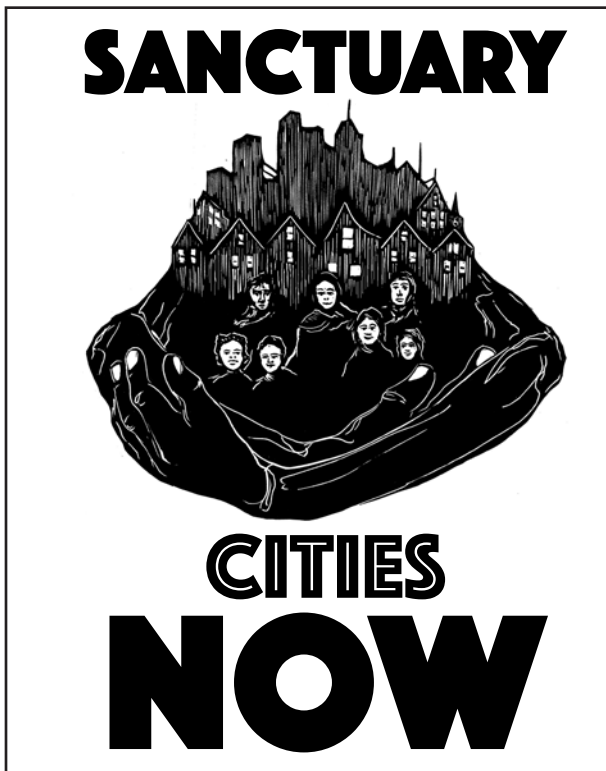
Never before have I been so surprised and inspired by the outpouring of unity that is coalescing in the sea of courageous people stepping up against tyranny. We incarcerated, have more friends out there than we may realize, organizations like Critical Resistance, Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), The Other Death Penalty Project, Human Rights Watch, Campaign to End the Death Penalty, Fair Chance Project, Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), and CSU-LA's Words Uncaged. They could all use our voices in the fight, and by sharing our views and experiences, we raise political awareness and ultimately prepare for the next battleground - the ballot box. In two years, we have to get everyone out there to take back those congressional seats.

In the meantime, there are also elections for local district attorneys - they're important both in the regular course of policy decisions and also in cumulatively shifting statewide trends regarding the PIC.

Other states may not be as progressive as California, but still, we stand in solidarity with our imprisoned comrades throughout the nation in urging them to speak truth to power in this political moment, now, more than ever. Together, we can prevail!

Robert Chan is currently imprisoned at California State Prison - Los Angeles County. He can be reached at:

Robert Chan, J-30838
CSP-LAC
PO Box 4430
Lancaster, CA 93539-4430



PETE RAILAND
of Just Seeds Collective

Honoring Rose Braz

"The international abolitionist movement owes a greater debt to Rose Braz than can ever be adequately acknowledged. Rose has always modeled the dedication, compassion, and humility that distinguish our very best social justice leaders. I consider myself one of the many who have been profoundly inspired by her example. Wherever there is struggle, resistance, and dreams of a better future, Rose's spirit and legacy will be secure."

- Angela Y. Davis

With tender spirits and heavy hearts, we at Critical Resistance bid farewell to one of our co-founders and long-time leaders, Rose Braz, who braved a long fight with cancer and passed away peacefully on Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017.

Rose's contributions to Critical Resistance (CR) and the movement to abolish the prison industrial complex are immeasurable; neither CR nor the international modern-day abolitionist movement would exist as powerfully as they do today without Rose's tireless work. When Angela Davis put out the call to "do Critical Resistance!" at the end of the first CR conference in Berkeley, CA, 1998, the phone kept ringing for "more Critical Resistance" and it was Rose who answered. Part of the original conference planning committee, she became the organization's first staffer, making real the struggle to move beyond the prison industrial complex (PIC).

Inspiring, seemingly unstoppable, and a fierce movement builder, Rose laid an indelible foundation for CR and the broader movement against the PIC. With sharp media and strong campaign organizing skills, Rose was a driving force behind the Delano II campaign, which halted the gargantuan 20-year prison building boom in California and integrated environmental justice and anti-prison approaches for the first time.

The brilliant legal attack against the proposed Delano II prison highlighted how the habitat of the endangered Tipton kangaroo rat would be compromised by the construction of "a prison that wasn't needed" and created space for statewide grassroots organizing. Her fierce messaging and coalition-building power put the California prison regime on its heels, burst the mainstream bounds of the term environment, and amplified the environmentally toxic and racist

ROSE BRAZ



impacts imprisonment has on our communities. (We recommend this article by Rose and Craig Gilmore, "Joining Forces," which lays out with nuance what has become a primary strategy in fighting new jail and prison construction.)

Her key leadership grew CR into a national organization and force for abolition. Through these fights, Rose played an instrumental role in co-founding the now 70+ member-strong Californians United for a Responsible Budget, and the Coalition for Effective Public Safety, two coalitions that have resulted in thousands fewer people being imprisoned. She advanced abolition when it was almost-taboo and emboldened our movement, joining Justice Now at the forefront of the fight against women's imprisonment in 2006 and supporting the CR-NYC and the Community In Unity coalition defeat jail expansion plans in the Bronx in the same period. CR was honored and privileged to have her on staff for 13 years and through four national conferences.

With her long history and unparalleled spirit in the fight against South African apartheid, working to abolish the PIC, uplifting internationalism, and protecting our environment, "Rose was the heart and soul of every liberation movement she joined, piercing the armor of the oppressors with her thorns and comforting those in pain with her soft petals."

In just a few days after her passing, countless memories have been shared, with the most common reflection being that "Rose was one of the most important mentors in my life." Her legacy will undoubtedly live through present and future efforts, seeding the way to a more beautiful, enlivened abolitionist struggle and liberated world.

With Love and Solidarity,

Critical Resistance

PHOTO ESSAY

As You Digest the SCOTUS 'Muslim Ban' Ruling, Don't Forget About This Major Win

Interview by Brooke Anderson and Pete Woiwode.
Photography by Brooke Anderson.
Introduction by Akiba Solomon.

This piece originally appeared on Colorlines.com on June 27, 2017

Yesterday (June 26), the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) upheld the travel limits in President Donald Trump's executive order colloquially known as the "Muslim ban." The first version of the order restricted people from seven Muslim-majority nations from coming into the United States for 90 days and suspended the U.S. refugee program for 120 days. In early March, after several district court injunctions, political tumult and a "no" vote from a U.S. appeals court, Trump issued a nearly identical order naming six Muslim majority nations instead of seven. District courts again blocked the order but the Supreme Court overruled them.

As organizers challenge the SCOTUS decision, it's a good time to take a look back to January 28 and 29, when thou-

sands of protesters descended on airports around the country demanding the release of detained travelers. At the heavily militarized and surveilled San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Arab and Muslim organizers led thousands to shut down the airport's international terminal.

Although the rapid mobilization and handmade signs gave the protests an appearance of spontaneity, what ultimately made them successful was decades of deliberate community organizing, leadership development and movement-building led by Arab and Muslim organizations and their allies. One of those organizations is the Arab Resource Organizing Center (AROC). We interviewed executive director Lara Kiswani in early May about the unprecedented direct action at SFO.



AROC's Lara Kiswani addresses protesters gathered at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) on January 28, 2017.

Kiswani: "Arabs have always faced targeted repression by the U.S. government. That's why we started providing direct legal services to immigrants after 9-11, recognizing the need for services provided by our own people, and [creating] a way to be active in shifting the conditions that force people to need those services to begin with. We've also organized our community around issues of war, militarization, and racism—everything from our campaign to Stop Urban Shield, to pushing for Arabic to be taught in public schools, to SFO Shutdown, which we saw as a war on our communities." *Photo Brooke Anderson*



The Brass Liberation Orchestra plays for hundreds of protesters still at SFO at 1 a.m. on January 29, 2017.

Kiswani: "The visceral impact of the first [executive order] on Arabs and Muslims was different than what we'd seen before. People heard that families were being stopped at the airports, and within a few hours, hundreds turned up at SFO. Within a half hour [organizers] had an emergency meeting, decided that we had to provide some leadership, put out a call to action and activated the Bay Resistance text alert system. Those hundreds of people in front of SFO turned into thousands. We began organizing the mass of people, coordinating with the lawyers, and setting up systems and structures to decide how to escalate." *Photo Brooke Anderson*



Thousands of demonstrators stream into SFO on the morning of January 29 to demand the release of detained immigrant families.

Kiswani: "As hours passed late into the evening our families were still being detained and they were not getting access to attorneys even though attorneys were there ready to support, defend and represent them. So our two demands were to let the lawyers in, and to let the people out. Hours passed and the lawyers weren't being let in and the people weren't being let out so, we decided to escalate. We knew we would have to show up again in the morning. We didn't just want to flood the airport for the sake of showing symbolic support. Our strategy was to shut down the International Terminal and disrupt business as usual." *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



A line of riot police blocks the entrance to Security Checkpoint G at SFO.

Kiswani: "Before shutting down terminals, we [told] our folks, 'Listen: We're going in, but you all stay out.' But then everyone went in—not just who had privilege but immigrants, undocumented folks, everyone targeted by Trump was in there participating in a direct action to shut down an international airport. That was wild! We thought "Ok, the playing field has shifted. The stakes are higher and folks are willing to really put their bodies on the line. People did get beat up. One of our AROC leaders in was beaten. The cops were violent and escalating, so our job was to de-escalate and make sure that less people got hurt and more people got safe and ultimately that our people were freed that day." *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Using the People's Mic—a bullhorn-free call and response that boosts communication in a crowd—researcher and blogger Taliah Mirmalek waits to hear that her message has reached protesters in the back.

Kiswani: “Doing political education wasn’t planned, but when we’re under this type of government and people are willing to put their bodies on the line in ways they haven’t before, it’s also time to push politics in a way we haven’t before. It was the leadership of mostly women of color who were running SFO at that time putting forward unapologetic politics. It was important not to shy away from [talking about U.S. imperialism]. At some point we realized that we had thousands of people listening to us and repeating what we were saying on the People’s Mic. There were folks there who didn’t necessarily share our politics or understand our communities, but everyone was there to stand for each other.” *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Children lead chants as they blockaded an escalator at the SFO International Terminal.

Kiswani: “SFO was a really convenient location for a long day of protest. We had clean bathrooms and charger stations [laughs]. But it’s also that we controlled the space. People set up buffets and served sandwiches, called their friends to bring more water, stepped up to take care of children and elders, and played a security role. It wasn’t chaotic. There was no mess. People stayed for hours afterwards just cleaning the airport. We thought of everything because our people thought of everything. Folks did not go ask the cops what we needed to do. They asked us. At some point we looked at each other and said, ‘We just shut down the International Terminal and this is a place we’re all scared of every time we have to walk through here.’ It was surreal.” *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Dalit activist Thenmozhi Soundararajan (far right) chants alongside three Sudanese women as they tell their migration story to the crowd.

Kiswani: The SFO shutdown wasn’t [all] about Arabs or Muslims at that time. The spirit inside the airport was that folks were defending each other, fighting for our collective liberation. ...It was important not to homogenize the Arab region or the Muslim Ban and to highlight those most invisible, especially those from North African countries. Most people did not understand the Muslim Ban as an attack on people of African descent as well. It was important to allow all those stories to come to the surface. *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Oakland Palestinian poet Lubna Morrar performs spoken word for the crowd.

Kiswani: “We made it a point to never talk about the Muslim Ban without also talking about all the other executive orders, the first being those against indigenous people of this land, and also against the Latinx community, the policing of Black people. We have to mobilize our bases to support other communities and to understand how that is inherently connected to their own freedom and liberation.” *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Critical Resistance members Mohamed Sheh and Lily Fahsi-Haskell face the crowd at SFO.

Kiswani: “One unifying thread throughout [our political education] was imperialism. If you create the space for our migrant communities from the Arab world and North Africa to talk about their migration stories, imperialism will inherently come up. It has to because that’s what happened. It’s like ‘I’m here because I was forced to migrate here because of war and militarization.’ It’s often far-fetched for others, but not for our people because our region has been the most recently devastated by colonialism and imperialism. It’s the contradiction of being forced to come here because of wars started by the United States then being told you can’t come back to the U.S. And we didn’t just talk about Arabs or Muslims. We didn’t make it about the victimization of our community or the good versus bad immigrant. It was about the collective liberation of all oppressed people.” *Photo: Brooke Anderson*



Supporters of detained families react to news of a temporary injunction against the ban.

Kiswani: “We transformed an entire section of the airport in ways that were really beautiful. We started to realize: ‘This is what self determination looks like!’ Even what emerged organically still came out of intentional organizing and long-term relationship building. Many organizations came out, contributed and worked with us to make that shut down, and ultimately, the win, possible. It wasn’t a revolution, but it felt like a transformation. We were able to really live out the values that we always preach about, the ones in our slogans, chants, and statements.” *Photo: Brooke Anderson*

The Hard Road to Abolition // Strategies to Win

This piece is an excerpt of an event organized by Critical Resistance that featured a discussion with Mujahid Farid, Director of Release Aging People in Prison (RAP), Ruthie Wilson Gilmore, scholar, organizer and a cofounder of Critical Resistance, Mariame Kaba of *Survived and Punished*, and moderated by Abraham Paulos, former Executive Director of Families For Freedom. The public event was held in New York City in September 16, 2016.

Abraham Paulos: So Ruthie is going to break down the history of abolition and then we are going to go into the discussion a bit more.

Ruthie Wilson Gilmore: Alright so I'm gonna break it down; So I started by talking about abolition as a form of consciousness. I came to think that way not so much alongside my comrades with whom I started/cofounded Critical Resistance, long before 2001, in fact 1997, became an organization in 1998, and became a bigger thing in 2001, but I got to thinking about consciousness is what abolition is by studying closely the work of my recently departed great mentor, Cedric Robinson, the author of crucial texts such as "Black Marxism," "The Anthropology of Marxism," "Forgeries of Memory and Meaning," and "Black Social Movements."

So, this unfinished liberation that we're all talking about tonight is unfinished from what? What is the history of abolition? It is, exactly, the history of the abolition of slavery but it's also the abolition of the idea that somehow pre-capitalist forms of exploitation have not persisted throughout the entire capitalist system, but more to the point, that racial thinking has not shaped the capitalist system throughout its entire existence. And when I say racial thinking, I'm not saying Black and White. Don't be beguiled by the fact that you're listening to a Black person, into thinking that when she says "race" she means Black or Black and White, because I don't mean either. But I do mean the sense that those who have the power and the authority to determine who gets what and how organize vulnerability according to criteria that produce categories of people who are sacrificable as "other." As a result - and this is something I learned from Cedric, not something I made up myself, Cedric Robinson - the ground on which capitalism grew, the ground from which it grew was a ground which was shaped, tilled, plowed and watered, completely, completely saturated with racial thinking between and among people all of whose descendants might today be white. This is what we learned. There is no capitalism anywhere on the planet, even if no white people are involved, that is not racial.

So then abolition becomes, for me, something that has three components that are essential to it. It's an analytical disposition, right, that has part and parcel in it the necessity to pay really close attention to what people say and do, to what their relationships are in the world rather than presume that we know, categorically, that certain people in certain places and certain relationships are for or against the project, is the first thing. The second, is that it has an agile organizational imperative. All of us have found organizations, we do it all the time, it's necessary. It's impossible to be an abolitionist without making organizations over and over and over again. And the third, [it] has to have system-changing outcomes.

So this history of abolition in the current period, the second history that my brother laid out, is one that the first Critical Resistance conference in 1998 had launched out into the popular culture and the popular world to see if it might work, to see if it might be a way to change how we think about the criminal justice system, to think how we think about the entire totality, from police on the streets to judges in the courts, to people in cages, to the 70 million or more people who are documented not to work, to live, to go to school, so forth, because of felonies and other convictions and so forth. So we put that together with the concept prison industrial complex, to ask people to think: one, a totality, and two, that it could not be reformed within its own logic, but

rather that it would have to come apart.

I know there are some people in the audience that have been members of, or are currently working with, an organization called Make the Road. If abolition is a form of consciousness, historically it has also become this incredible road that we've all met on. Like, we didn't know each other before, but we met in this road, and we met on this road that we make by walking it, by walking it, and it's the most exciting and thrilling thing imaginable almost 20 years, 18 years after that first Critical Resistance conference. To think about abolition as something that is tied exactly to the ending of unfreedom in the form of slavery, but that ending of unfreedom, tied as it is to the necessity for structural inequality that is the precondition of capitalism valorizing itself, means that abolition has an ambition, has an ambition that says, if the prison industrial complex can't be fixed by reworking it within its own logic, then by definition, the world has to be different.

Mariame Kaba: There's no way to follow up on that, except, except to say I brought something, because this is something a friend of mine sent to me. I collect things, I say that - collecting - rather than hoarding or other kinds of things that mean people say to me, I collect things and a friend of mine on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Attica rebellion and uprising, sent me this old copy of "Off Our Backs". It was a specific issue that the put out in September of 1971 and I'm going to show and tell something. This part is a poster that they made that I don't think you can probably see but that's okay. It's a poster about an event, a protest they were doing at Alderson prison on October 2nd of 1971, so a few weeks after the Attica uprising, but in the back of the kind of handout or pamphlet that people put together they had a series of demands that had been put together by the women prisoners of Alderson kind of in solidarity of the Attica brothers. And also were kind of, sort of talking about a whole series of other kinds of things around prison and, you know, but there's an editorial that "Off Our Backs" publishes and it's called *How Many Lives* and I just want to read one short section of it since Ruthie was talking about the history of abolition and where do these ideas perhaps come from. One part of it is, it begins with:

How many years of people's lives must be lost, hidden, and brutalized before we see that prisons must be abolished? How many Atticas, San Quentins, and Aldersons will it take until we realize that our society has created these monstrous institutions out of fear - fear of human freedom, cultural differences, loss of capitalist property - the ethics of our society have been distorted by this fear and are then imposed by non-white people, poor people, young people, and women to make survival and experimentation crimes...

To abolish prisons, we may have to develop "reforms that carry within them contradictions that will make it hard to achieve them without drastically changing prisons' black prisoners' unions with collective bargaining power, ending detention before conviction, a national prisoner monitoring system, open door policies, viable alternatives to incarceration. But whatever approaches are used, the goal should be prison abolition. To have no alternative at all would be better than to continue the present reality, and we can't wait for the ending of racism, sexism, and poverty in this country before we begin tearing down the walls, it may be in our own self-interest.

And I thought to myself, like, you know, which women's, feminist-focused magazine is putting that out in the world in 2016? Right, like that's just not happening, and it was happening in 1971 in its own way with its own language and its own logic and so people have been thinking about the end of prisons in particular for a very long time, you know back to the Quaker days, you know people were already saying this is not working. It needs to change, or end, or be transformed. And in this case it needs to be abolished. So I just always think it's really important for us, as we're thinking about where we are today, to focus on what happened before. And what's been happening is that we live in such a present tense moment that sometimes people are too busy focusing on, like, everything that happened is just new, and it actually isn't, and if we looked back a little bit, we'd probably be further along than we currently are. If we took some time to think, we'd probably be much better off than we currently are. So I just wanted to bring that into the conversation, both because it was great that I got this in the mail, um and like, it's added to my quote collection, um, but also to point to the history, as important and something to keep in our minds as we move forward.

Abraham Paulos: How does abolition work today? We see a lot of movement, right, we see a lot of changes happening. And how does using abolition, whether it's a strategy, an approach, or a concept, a what-have-you. How is abolition playing out in the field today? I think this is sort of a question we want to start off with.

Mujahid Farid: Yea I'll start off. From my view, I have some concerns about the way I'm seeing it playing out, getting back to the point of ideas and history. Now I've asked myself, why would it be necessary for the country that holds itself as the "greatest democracy to ever be created on the face of the earth" to relegate a person when they are convicted of a crime to the status of a slave? Not a second class citizen, not a temporary punishment, but then and hereafter, the status of a slave. And of course, while that may have had some racial underpinnings, I agree with Ruthie that some of the ideas were much bigger than that, because when you look at the 70 million people, today, that are slaves, a large amount of them are white people. And I'm questioning whether people really understand the significance of that.

And so I'm concerned when I hear abolition - abolition

Continued on next page



MILTON DE LA CRUZ
an imprisoned subscriber of *The Abolitionist*

SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and art (in English and Spanish).

Ideas for Articles and Artwork

- Examples of current prisoner organizing
- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to help keep yourself and others physically and mentally healthy while imprisoned
- Updates on what's happening at the prison you're in (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, punishment, and prison
- Experiences of life after imprisonment
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue

What to Submit

- Articles should not be more than 1,500 words (about 5 handwritten pages)
- Letters should not be more than 250 words
- Empowering artwork that will print well

How to Submit

- If you want your name and address printed with your article, please include it as you would like it printed. If you do not wish to have your name or address included, please let us know that when you submit your piece
- If possible, send a copy of your submission, not the original

Writing Suggestions

- Try to write an outline before you write the piece. Ask yourself: does the first paragraph tell the reader what the article is about? Do the middle paragraphs support and strengthen the main argument. Does the last paragraph have a conclusion and some suggestions for action?
- Even if writing is difficult for you, your ideas are worth the struggle. Try reading your piece out loud to yourself or sharing it with someone else. Doing this might help you clarify the ideas in your submission.

Send your submission to:

The Abolitionist (c/o Critical Resistance)
1904 Franklin St., Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

movements that singularly focus on the abolishment of prisons when I'm concerned about any kind of iteration of a "slaveocracy." Whatever form that the slave-makers can present it to us in. We have seen chattel slavery, connected to the prisons, to the expansion of the prison system. And we can, perhaps, see other iterations of "slaveocracy," even if we bring down the prisons. So I think that the conversation needs to be on a much broader scale, including the historical aspects of what's going on here, the ideas, and um, to keep that up front.

Ruthie Wilson Gilmore: I think in keeping with the importance of keeping it broad, even though we're also trying to do things every minute in the places where we live and work and play and pray – it has something to do with, something I mentioned a little bit earlier. That is the importance of having an agile, you know, pretty flexible, agile – like young Simone Biles – organizational imperative to sort of figure out where anybody or any set of relationships, any resources, any vulnerabilities, and also any strengths are in the totality that is the prison industrial complex, which again is not just the buildings, heinous though they are. And then to think about how the organized and the not yet organized might be interested by an argument that demonstrates the slope built by the slave-ocracy, if you find that image powerful, the slope unto which people who might not ever wind up in cages find themselves anyway. This is the point.

So I'll give you a couple examples of what I mean, concretely. So, when in California we started organizing to try and stop the 23rd prison from being built in that state, we used my research and found out where the state was likely to build it, and we rolled out to these towns, in rural California, and started talking to people who would talk to us, we took out little ads in their weekly newspaper saying "if you're not happy about the prison call this number," and established a number that was only a voicemail machine. I mean these are the kinds of things we did, to find the six or seven people in any given town that were not all that excited about having a prison there. Many of these people, of course, were "not in my backyard" types, whose view was "we don't really care there's going to be a prison, we just don't want it here," but everywhere we could find one or two people for whom the idea, even though they didn't put it this

way, of putting other human beings in cages was troubling. And that was the trouble we wanted to light on fire. So we, for example, found that people in one of the counties in California who had been stopping prisons over and over again on a "not in my backyard" platform, finally realized that "not in my backyard" was not going to cut it, because every 2 years either the federal or state prison state system would show up again and say "well we really want to build one here." So they started thinking systematically about what was happening somewhere else, where people, young people, not so young people, were being processed in an industrialized way through the courts and sent into the prison system. So they became, as it were, in a very rough way, abolitionists, just because of the persistence of their own opposition. These are more people that, if they walked onto the stage in this room, you would say "oh, a couple of abolitionists in our midst!" but there they were.

Environmental Justice was another big object of struggle in California's Central Valley and there were many many many, again small organizations, town by town, that had come together to fight against pesticides, for clean water, against dirty air polluted by incineration of toxins like dioxin, and so forth. And so people who had an environmental justice perspective took maybe 20 minutes to understand how a prison in their town would also constitute an environmental harm. Young people in this region, hearing that there were people called abolitionists, were talking to their parents and their teachers wanting to know what on earth we meant, and they tried to hold our feet to the fire and say, "well isn't it true that if somebody hurts somebody they should pay the price?" and we say, "well what should the price be, and wouldn't it be better if nobody got hurt?" So we had this whole discussion, at the end of which these young people said that for them, the greatest environmental hazards that they understood to threaten them were police, prisons, and pesticides. So these are just some examples, I could tell stories all night about the ways that thinking the totality and thinking every aspect of it opens the opportunity either to reach already organized people, or to start organizations that reach more people.

ANNIE BANKS



"Another world is possible" 2017

From the Inside Out: A S.A.G.A. To Remember

BY JASON LEE SUTTON

What is a saga? It's a historical struggle. It can be said that history is filled with saga after saga. Which ones stand out the most? Do you remember any sagas in your life? Do you understand what it takes to build up a powerful movement for change, called a saga? I fully understand this. It is quite clear to me, like a rain-soaked cell window that was hard to see out of, until the sun came out of the clouds.

After 24 years of existing as a political prisoner, and witnessing numerous forms of resistance against the prison administration, I know struggle, and I know a saga when I see one. I'm so familiar with saga, that I decided to start one, where I was previously housed in "The Concrete Mama." The Washington State Penitentiary.

Quite naturally, I named the group S.A.G.A. It stands for "Straight and Gay Alliance. It's designed as a support group for its members, and the local community as a whole. This was done, due to the fact that at one time or another, we were all considered and labeled "outcasts" in one way, shape, or form.

We were different from our peers, out of fear, not truth, which caused many to feel pain, unfortunately.

We were picked on for allegations, not facts, or at

least distortions of the truth, or because we decided to love the same gender, or be intimate with the male/female form. It was time that this ended. We said collectively, "No more, it ends here!"

So, a bunch of us (both straight and gay) got together, put our hostilities aside, and united under a simple flag, or truth. That is, we sought to change the inner prison culture of intolerance to tolerance, from chaos to order, from hatred to peace, and focus our collective strength at defeating those who brought this culture of violence upon us. One day at a time, we fight to challenge the prison industrial complex, and the warped mentality of the prison administration.

We have risen to a new level of thought, which has opened our eyes to deceptions all around us. All of this reminds us of being in the matrix. I'm sure you remember the movie "The Matrix."

After the group was formed, all of a sudden, I was transferred to another facility. Strange. We will still find it difficult to reach out to people who build up this support group. We are in touch with the organizations "Black and Pink" and "Beyond These Walls." But more is needed. If you would like to help our S.A.G.A, you can reach me, indirectly, at: (email) sarahjoanyoung@gmail.com or at beyondthesewallsLGBT@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration. Until we meet again, I remain in the Struggle.

Jason Lee Sutton is imprisoned at Clallam Bay Corrections Center, and can be reached at

Jason Lee Sutton, #730954
Clallam Bay Corrections Center
1830 Eagle Crest Way
Clallam Bay, WA. 98326-9723

DECOLONIZE
BLACK NO BAN
LIVES NO WALL
MATTER NO WALL
SMASH PATRIARCHY
NI!+ STAND UP
FIGHT BACK
NOT 1 MORE DEPORTATION
RESIST
SOLIDARITY
MNI WICONI

JESUS BARRAZA
of Dignidad Rebelde

about whether conditions have actually changed in the United States such that you might be able to launch a kind of neo fascist electoral project.

So Trump is a rupture in some significant ways, but the truth is that in the United States, the far right doesn't have the power base either to elect a president or to govern. So as much as many of us have decried the involvement and senior positions of people like the former head of Breitbart News and any number of more junior staffers within the current regime, the fact of the matter is that's not a government base. There's not enough personnel even of a senior level within that movement to really be a consolidated lot. So do they have the influence? Yes. Does Trump and this regime pander to them? Yes. And we'll come back to this, but in some ways they're more significant and dangerous in terms of Trump's proclivity to govern from the street as well as the normal channels of power. And so we'll return to that in terms of a vector of threat and violence that we have to contend with. But in terms of the power bases, Trump cut some really important deals to get elected, and one of the most important that he cut was with the Christian Right. A movement that he does not represent in any way, shape, or form, and who they consider as profane a figure in politics as you can imagine. He has not been with them on any of their core issues. He's been on the other side, historically, on many of them. He is a problem. I mean if this is not an election that any of us have prepared for, then it's likewise the case this is not the scenario the Christian Right, that the Kochs, that any of the major power bases with due forces on the right had anticipated. Trump is a surprise to all of them as well. But Trump couldn't deal with the Christian Right, and brought Mike Pence – who is a major, considerable figure, a leader within the Christian Right, and someone with very practical governing experience, which is something that Trump doesn't have – into a formal coalition. I mentioned that because a couple of the sectors of the right that had gained most, both in terms of power and in terms of prominence, the alt right and the Christian Right are also among the most misogynist of the movements on the right.

I want to introduce this notion of misogyny, and one of my colleagues, Alex DiBranco, recently published a very important piece theorizing the role that misogyny plays within the right wing right now. I recommend you read it, it's not behind a paywall, you can find it on our website politicalresearch.org. I want to build on some of the insights that Alex brings on the ways that misogyny is not just a question of sexism, but a motivated and animating force within right wing forces. In its own way, I want to say that misogyny is a critical element to authoritarianism. If we look around at other historical examples of authoritarianism, it's difficult to find an example where there isn't what we might contemporarily call hypermasculinity, a kind of nationalist aggressiveness. The push towards militarism both in terms of domestic security forces and aggressive foreign policy militarism are all pregnant, if you can excuse that metaphor, with tremendous misogyny.

Often we talk about sexism, even structural sexism, in this country as if it was a secondary or tertiary kind of issue – that at the heart of it, it's not what mobilizes politics. I think there might be a particular suspicion about talking about sexism and misogyny in this moment out of a sense "oh, people are bringing it up purely out of a sense to defend Hillary Clinton. So this is a partisan issue." I think we need to rethink that. I think



VOLTAIRE GURAY
Espading (Cane Knife)

Guray is an artist, youth activist and recently released political prisoner in the Philippines whose art speaks of the dark and surreal conditions under which political prisoners are subjected to daily. He is active in the call for the end of fascism against those organizing and mobilizing in the struggle for freedom, justice, human rights, and progress to uplift the people of the Philippines.

we need to think about misogyny as something that is much deeper than the personal failings of the 45th president we all know as a serial sexual assailant. There is something deeper that's happening to our culture, so I wanted to identify that.

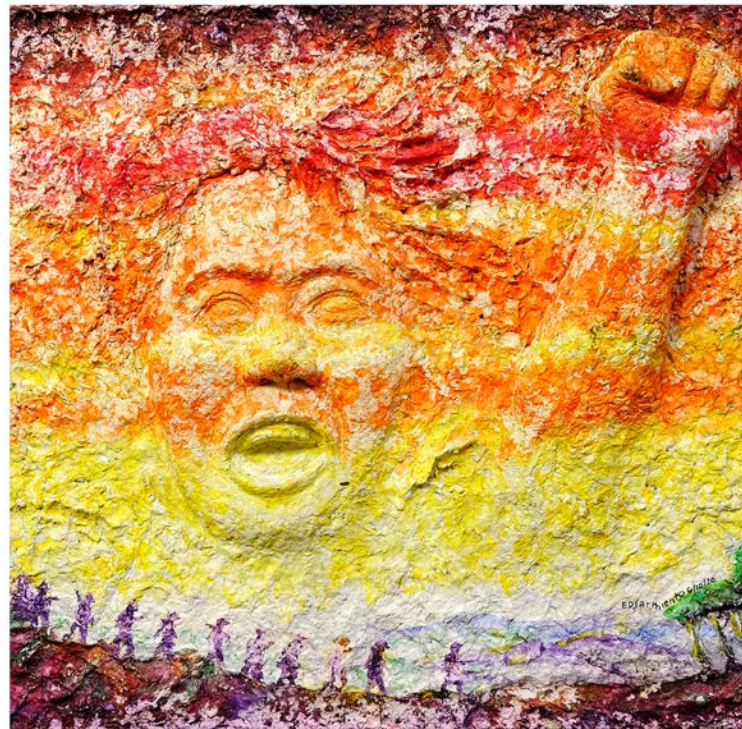
Related to that and drawing some threads across the U.S. situation and what's happening in other parts of the world – and continuing with the theme of trying to introduce some questions that I think are not in the center of our current political conversation about Trump and authoritarianism – I want to introduce the question of the Christian right, and about the religious right more generally. I work with a lot of folks doing labor organizing whether in the context of unions or in the context of un-unionized workers, whether it's worker centers, or worker formations. I've worked with a lot of folks who are really focused on concentration of power in the hands of major corporations, which is certainly a feature of politics in the United States and more globally. In my conversations, there is often a sense that the Christian right is a really unfortunate thing, but it's actually not part of our fight. And I want to suggest that not only is it a part of our fight, because if we're leftist and we're progressives, the persecution of LGBTQ people and the attacks on women's full human rights and bodily autonomy are part of our fight. But even if we're thinking in much more schematic ways, I want to suggest to you that the religious right has been the handmaiden of neoliberalism around the globe – because economic elites have not been able to create a mass electoral base on a program of giving them more of our money. That is just not a winnable politic. So the religious right has created a mass base for a politic that has delivered into power a political class that is aligned with the program

"Neoliberalism is perfectly compatible with authoritarianism. It may in fact need authoritarianism at this point, as its model has come to exclude so many"

of neoliberalism, even where there are some tensions and contradictions. The program of the Christian right wants a strong and interventionist state in ways that say Paul Ryan's way, or even more to the right, the Koch brothers' way, don't particularly want. On the other hand, the Christian right, and to some extent the Catholic right, are happy to be the recipients of the outsourcing of government services. So if the state is no longer providing services, they're happy to be the ones to receive those funds to provide social services. Even in that process of downsizing of the state, the Christian and Catholic right are playing a very fundamental role.

I want to pull back from these pieces to talk about the dynamic of Trumpism itself in terms of what's happening at the state level and maybe what's happening on the ground. So as I mentioned earlier, Trump is certainly not our first right wing president. Ronald Regan was pretty awful. If you look at the team, the sort of cabinet positions that Ronald Regan filled, were pretty awful. They were fairly similar – there's even some overlapping personnel from then to now, if you can believe it. But there was a lot that was different then, compared to now. The main thing in my view is that there was much more of that stood in the way of that agenda. First of all the state apparatus hadn't been so badly weakened as it is now, after forty years of neoliberalism and neoliberalist policies. But our movements are a lot weaker. The trade union doesn't have the power that it had in the 1980s. Mainline churches, social justice churches, don't have the kind of status and power that they had. The liberation movements in the United States that drew such energy from the decolonization movements in the South are really in a different place today. The anti-war movement is much weaker, in part because of its demobilization under Obama – something we have to deal with now as this administration prepares for war. There is a lot less standing in the way.

The right has claimed so much more political real estate. Ronald Regan had to contend with a Democratic congress. Ronald Regan resided over mass legalization [of immigrants]! We put out a piece the day after the election, and because it's an occupational hazard because this is our job, we had to do some of the thought experiment of what if Trump was elected. We didn't have the luxury to think, "well, he's not going to be elected." So we talked to a bunch of people, we thought a lot about it. We tried to do our best figuring and so night of the election, we were halfway through, and we thought "okay so this is what's going to happen." One of the things we suggested is that the threat to human/civil constitution rights we face in the United States as a result of this outcome is more severe than anything certainly in the living generation that we



EDUARDO SARMIENTO
Padayon (Move On)

Sarmiento is a peace consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), an umbrella organization fighting for national freedom and democratic rights of the people. He was illegally arrested in 2009 without warrant and convicted in 2013 for trumped up charges of illegal possession of explosives. Not only was the evidence against him planted by the police and military, but his arrest was also in violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees that protected NDFP peace consultants from arrest to participate in the peace talks with the government. Under the Duterte regime, the peace talks have been suspended under the guise that the NDFP is now categorized as a terrorist organization.

have in the United States – and possibly it's more severe than anything we've seen really since the time of backlash against Black Reconstruction. Just in terms of the concentration of power and the fragility of democratic institution, the full throatedness of white supremacy as an emanating political factor in this moment. So you know, these are some really stark times. As I bitterly joked to someone that very week about how we have to begin organizing for the elections in 2020, my retort was "Yes, we have to make sure that they happen." I don't think that's a question at this point, but I think we have to have a sober reflection on just how far towards the abyss we've come.

We're really at a precipice, and as I said earlier, it's a global precipice. Naomi Klein writes about disaster capitalism. As we saw going back to the time of Regan, the playgrounds for neoliberalism were with the authoritarian regimes. It was with Pinochet's Chile. Similarly, neoliberalism is perfectly compatible with authoritarianism. It may in fact need authoritarianism at this point, as its model has come to exclude so many – how do you maintain order when you've even given up on the model of supporting predatory capitalist systems through consumerism? If you're not even going to offer that much, what is there beyond investing in domestic and foreign security forces?

These are precipitous times. Trump's proclivity to govern, not only from the hall of power, but also from the streets, is something we really have to pay attention to (if you even call what he does governing, that's a whole other discussion and we've been fortunate that he's not good at it). This is a point I particularly like to reinforce in blue cities, liberal cities: San Francisco, Boston, New York, and other places. It's easy to not really have a sense of what's happening on the ground in most of this country. When people say to me, "We have to have a network of rebel cities," my response is, "That's great, but you know, I'm not interested in an archipelago of social justice experiments surrounded by an ocean of reaction," because we know there's climate change and the tides are rising, and I don't think that's a good scenario for us. It's important to acknowledge that just as there is death squads and vigilante violence attacking social movements in places like Brazil, we're looking at an upsurge in vigilantism in the United States. We're working with rural groups in places like Oregon, where if you go to a public meeting and speak your mind in defense of a public library, you're liable to get shot down by someone in camouflage fatigues toting a long barrel gun. This is part of a political reality that we're dealing with at this point in the United States. Conditions are pretty severe and we see similar kinds of patterns if you look at the voting patterns with the national front in France, we see an incredible divide – the growth of the far right in exurban and rural areas. We know that Trump picked up tens of millions of votes at a time when there was tremendous voter suppression – tens of millions of votes in rural and exurban areas. Those are divides that we have to be very serious about, and think about how we leverage whatever power we have in urban areas. Not just for ourselves in an act to sort of reinforce these bubbles, to try to create a bubble of sanctuary, but to think about how to leverage that for the people who have been abandoned to wastelands of reaction. That's a real dynamic.

I want to maybe conclude with some observations before we have an animated discussion about solutions and responses, how we can help, and what we can do. I want to have just a couple of notes about what's happening at the federal level. And my apologies, I've been out of the country for a couple of weeks so I'm sure there

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are all kinds of recent developments that I'm not fully attuned to. The tenuous coalition that Trump has – and it's super tenuous, in part because he ran against a lot of it in his campaign – is held together by the promise of opportunity. They've captured so much real estate. There is so much opportunity that they've got to be able to cut some sort of a deal here. If you're Paul Ryan, you're thinking "this guy [Trump] wants to spend tens of millions on stuff for military and other things that I don't particularly want to do. But if in the process, we can bake in the elimination of federal commitment healthcare, if in the process we can gut public education, if in the process we can gut all of these things forever, if we can make permanent changes to the infrastructure, then yeah maybe we can cut a deal." But they've had a very hard time doing it.

I think there are two forces maybe more than anything, aside from frankly the incompetency in terms of experience with government, that have contributed to this. One is the incredible organizing that's happened by liberals and from the left. The immediate response to the Muslim Ban, the incredible organizing that's happened during the recess period, has stiffened the spine, at least with fear if nothing else, of the Democratic Party to avoid capitulation that seemed almost inevitable. That's a really significant victory for us. It may not feel like a victory, it doesn't move us in the direction that we want to go, but it's a firewall. It's been incredibly important. We have to take credit for it, don't sell that short.

The second is pressure from the right flank, and I think the Koch's have done more to avoid dramatic spending on: a southern border wall, on fifty-four million dollars to the military (where we still might get a quite bit more there), massive spending on border security (domestic policing forces, starting with the border is what that means) – than the left has been able to achieve. The faction fighting, the divisions and the wedges within the right itself, between those who actually want to see a state project and those who don't want a state project is very significant. It's not a wedge we get to drive particularly, but it buys us time. It buys us more time than I thought we were going to have, and we have to be very judicious about how we use that and not squander it.

Right after the election, I talked to probably many of you and certainly to many others about this precious period of time we have between the election – the sort of mass egress called the "earthquake" of the election, and the "tsunami" that would begin once Trump took office. This was not a time to rest and say "we'll go figure out what to do that next year." This was a time to lay plans, a time that you never get again. Well, we haven't exactly got an extension, but the disagreement on the right has created some openings and conditions for us to really think about, not only the resistance that most of us took those three months planning for, but what are the opportunities for some offensive fights that strengthen our defense, that improve our morale – we really need to improve our morale – build some skills, and begin to incorporate some of the tens of millions more people who were available to us on November 9th, than had been available to us on November 7th, 2016. So let's take advantage of some of the disarray on the right to move forward beyond the defense, and to build some offensive capacity, to expand and turn it more outward rather than inward in terms of the political education we're viewing in spaces like this and others. I'm mostly looking forward to having a conversation with you all about some of those opportunities. So if that was a sobering lead up, I'm hoping we get to think about a transition to the "What then must we do" part of our conversation.

Tarso Luís Ramos is Executive Director of Political Research Associates, the go-to source for research and analysis on the U.S. Right Wing for social justice movement organizers. Tarso has studied and fought the Right for 25 years, contributing extensive work on anti-immigrant, armed militia, anti-environmental, and Christian Right movements – as well as on the ideology of post-racialism.

The Center for Political Education (CPE) is a resource for political organizations on the left, progressive social movements, the working class and people of color. The CPE's approach is non-sectarian, democratic, and committed to a critical analysis of local, regional and global politics. We believe that movements are strongest when their organizing and activism are grounded in historical knowledge, strong theory and rigorous analysis.

AUGUST COMMUNIQUÉ

BY TRUE LEAP PRESS

True Leap Press is a radical publishing collective based in Chicago, Illinois. We support the intellectual struggle and advocate for the building of mass-based projects for antiracist, anticapitalist, and antipatriarchal political education. Our collective encourages any-and-all forms of resistance against global anti-blackness, white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. We also aim to facilitate the growth of a progressive political consciousness that is deliberately antipatriotic and against all forms of (white) U.S. nationalism. In the coming years, we hope to increase our number of publications, establish infrastructure for printing and distribution, and grow our capacity to work across prison walls. Our current (soon to be print) publication is entitled PROPTER NOS. It offers a platform for Black and radical antiracist theoretical and cultural work – such as poetry, short essays, experimental writing, artwork – and will also increasingly serve as a source of commentary and analysis from imprisoned activists and "grassroots" abolitionist organizations.

Referring to the collective sense of "We" that inspires the mobilization and identity formation of a People, the Latin phrase "Propter Nos" is the title we chose for our first publication. This is because we believe that one of the central tasks of building consciousness amongst colonized, imprisoned, working class, and poor peoples is to build spaces where a core set of political principles can be cultivated amidst the contradictions and antagonisms inherent to revolutionary movement building. In case the reader is wondering, the phrase "principles" refers to the "fundamental grounds on which a human being, organization, movement, cause or concept stands. Its basic aspects are expressed in terms of rules, codes, ethics, [and statements] of philosophical truths, which explains all examined natural, social and universal spheres, and/or guides human thought and actions to transforming the human world for the benefit of human being."

True Leap Press believes that establishing a clearinghouse for the formulation of a vision of mass resistance among differently situated antisystemic communities of struggle is a necessary (and urgent) task in the present moment of white nationalist resurgence and patriotic liberal counterrevolution. We therefore obstinately oppose the mythology of U.S. exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, and do not presume that American liberal democracy is an inherent "good." Instead, we hope PROPTER NOS will serve as a forum for works that invigorate a different sense of common political consciousness, one rooted in the historical experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer movements mobilizing against the white capitalist civilization and nation-building project of the United States.

The works included in each volume of PROPTER NOS loosely operate in accordance with the Black Liberation Army's principle of "unity-criticism-unity." This concept refers to the "process of the members

of a group, unit or organization united on a set of principles and objectives to struggle internally, behind closed doors among themselves." This process is carried out in practice by working together with comrades, "observing and analyzing each other's errors, and then offering constructive criticism to each other to correct errors and overcome any shortcomings." The unity-criticism-unity approach is meant to "strengthen each other and thus advance the group, unit or organization" towards its revolutionary objectives. This type of practice also means remaining open to forming larger strategic networks and fronts. By labeling an insurgent collaboration "strategic," we simply mean a relationship formed between two or more groups organizations on a purpose that is contingent on the short- or long-term goals of participant groups. Such "networks" and "fronts" – if conducted in a principled manner – hold the potential for facilitating the creation of dynamic forms of insurgency that operate simultaneously on different scales, across multiple institutional sites, and amongst a broader formation of insurgents working towards their own unique political ends. We also urge differently situated groups, units, organizations, and movements to not only engage in such strategic relationships and joint processes of reflection, but also to approach mass political education and the art of movement building in a way that maintains a critical awareness of how we are all complicit (albeit to varying degrees) in the ritualized and programmatic violences that constitute American social and gendered racial formation. This is a principle developed over the last two decades by the national antiviolence organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

Our publishing collective is itself aligned by a shared understanding of the U.S. regime of policing and imprisonment as a fundamentally anti-Black regime of physiological, psychic, and cultural violence that is traceable to the epoch of plantation slavery. We are quite deliberate in our efforts to maintain a political line that works critically and reflexively in collaboration with "above-" and "underground" organizations in the movement to abolish domestic warfare and the prison industrial complex. Our intention here is to support intellectual and cultural work that is directly connected to and relevant for the project of abolition. If, as abolitionists have argued for decades, the racial carceral-policing regime is not only a domestic military apparatus but a rigorous cultural production, then our enemy-in-struggle is also the mythologies, norms, and collective sense of "We" that has driven the last five-hundred-years of white settler land-ecological conquest, racial chattel slavery, (proto)genocidal warfare, and empire.

For print copies of PROPTER NOS, please send a request by snail-mail to: True Leap Press, P.O. Box 408197 Chicago IL, 60640. We try to respond to mail as quickly as possible, but during our editing cycles and around certain deadlines our replies might be slightly delayed. We thank you for your patience in advance and hope to continue facilitate the dissemination of sharp criticism and analysis for the road ahead. To download PN in digital format please visit our website: <https://trueleappress.wordpress.com/>.

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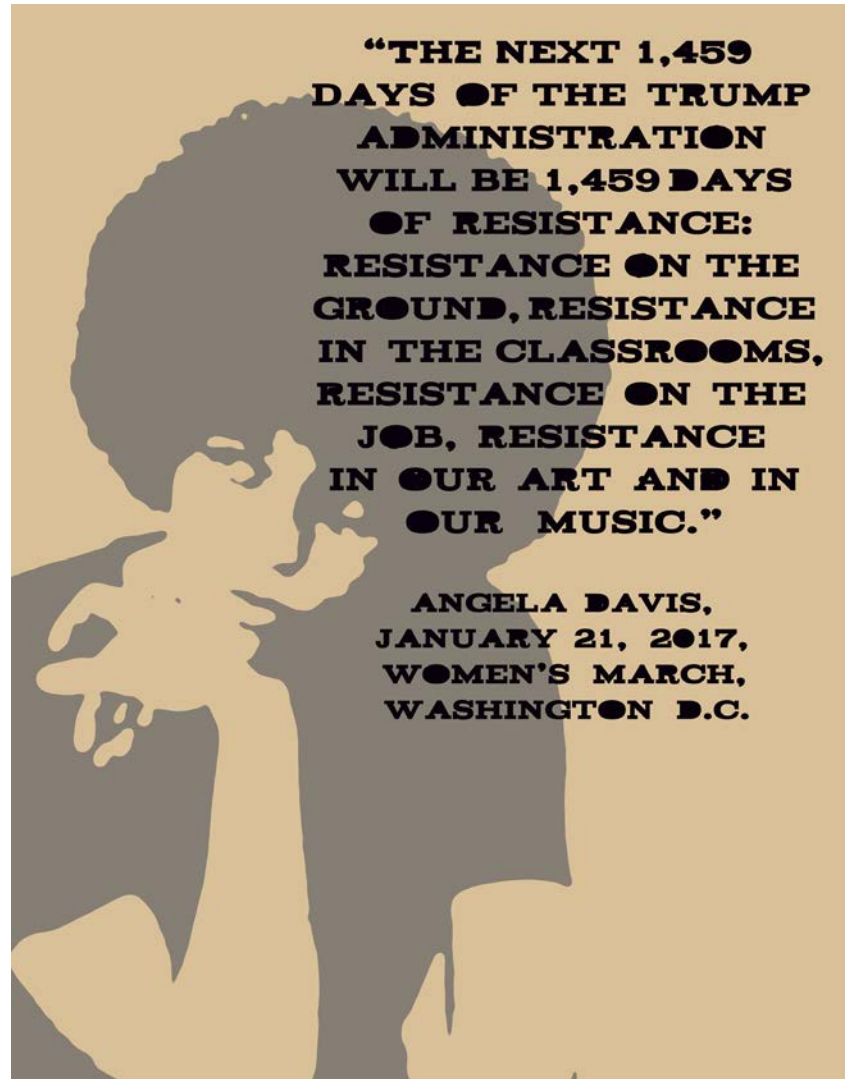
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workers. Nonetheless, that prisons had ceased to grow at the same rates as during the 1980s and 1990s provoked optimism that perhaps decarceration was on the horizon. Such optimism was dashed on election night.

With deepening criminalization impending, what kinds of alliances can be fomented? Like many people over the past few weeks, I have turned to the analyses of two key thinkers on right wing ascent: Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall. In "Some Aspects of the Southern Question," Gramsci argued for the necessity of bringing together the communists in industrial Turin and the peasantry of southern Italy, who had historically been treated as "biologically inferior beings." He called for a struggle to create class cohesion against these hierarchical social and geographic divisions. What might understanding our current conjuncture mean for composing necessary political alliances? For example, Mike Pence has specifically targeted and criminalized pregnant women. What kinds of political strategies can be forged between reproductive justice and anti-imprisonment groups? More than 65 million people have been criminalized at some point in their lives. The threats of criminalizing new behaviors that hold great social legitimacy offers an opportunity to steer away from notions of procedural justice and, provoke a critical assessment of the process of criminalization itself. Can a collectivity of those who have historically been criminalized and those likely to be criminalized provide a guide to new social movement formations? Can the coming multiplication of sites of antagonism map a new coalition? If so, it is up to us to use it. Hall reminds us that "majorities have to be 'made' and 'won.'" The building of such a collectivity will be necessary for those who want to ensure that Gilmore's 2008 question does not mark an interregnum between prison building booms.

The construction of alliances and dominant blocs—revolutionary and reactionary—are always unstable. "If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you're not in...a coalition," related Gilmore in her book *Golden Gulag*, citing the wisdom of the great singer and activist Bernice Johnson Reagon. The day after the election, I had closed my "History of Mass Incarceration" lecture with Reagon and her comrades in Sweet Honey In the Rock singing "Ella's Song." "We who believe in freedom cannot rest," they reminded us. The next day, I held extra office hours for students who sought further discussion, contextualization, and emotional and moral support. One student relayed how the election night protest on campus was similarly inspired by a song. Frustrated and fearful as the results rolled in, my student asked a friend to go get food. As they strolled across campus, they put YG and Nipsey Hussle's "FDT" on their boombox. Suddenly, more and more people were following behind. And the protest was on. In dissenting moments such as these we can glimpse the necessary alliances. They can be catalyzed by an ephemeral moment: the late-night snack search can elicit a protest. But spontaneity will not save us. Trumpism has constructed its own motley bloc of contradictory fractions. We must build ours.

David Stein is a Lecturer in the Departments of History and African American Studies at University of California-Los Angeles. His first book, *Fearing Inflation, Inflating Fears: The Civil Rights Struggle for Full Employment and the Rise of the Carceral State, 1929-1986*, will be published by University of North Carolina Press. He co-hosts and produces "Who Makes Cents?: A History of Capitalism Podcast" with Betsy Beasley.



NICOLAS LAMPERT
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When dissidents outside the US speak of PP's (their own and those in other countries), seldom, if anything is ever said of US PP's, and on the rare occasion when it is, it's so vaguely expressed as though to suggest it's of no significant concern. This especially speaks to ineffective domestic PP education and organizing support work. PP support work is an integral part of the social justice struggle against racism, poverty, discrimination, hunger, police violence, mass-imprisonment, prison warehousing, and crony capitalism.

Thus in calling for prison abolition and alternatives to imprisonment, a coherent alternative model would help illustrate (through use of skits, workshops, teach-ins, songs, art, and the like) so that people may see the sense of it for themselves. Suffering is not inevitable; alternatives are possible. Show how prisons are human warehouses where people are numbered and commodi-

fied like products on the shelf in a supermarket with unlimited space for more. Expose how the capitalist system (the exploitation of man by man for profit) has failed to meet basic human needs. As Comrade George Jackson observes: "The only way the exploiter can maintain his position is to create differences and maintain deformities." Show how diverted prison resources can be more productively used in education, job training, housing, health care, community programs, etc. Despite their power and beauty, words without deeds are useless. People have to demand change.

Vested interests—including the courts, police, prisons, and all the local supply services whose livelihood depends on this arrangement—ain't gonna roll over and play nice simply because a new, humane, and more efficient alternative to imprisonment has been introduced.

Vested interest has a way of protecting itself and will use any and every means to discredit and destroy this alternative use of vital resources and humane treatment. The fight for it reveals alternatives, exposes contradictions, and is therefore worthy to undertake.

All power to the people and free all political prisoners!

Herman Bell is a former member of the Black Panther Party and has been imprisoned as a political prisoner for 44 years. He has Bachelor of Science degrees in psychology and sociology, and a Masters degree in sociology. Herman is also a co-founder of the Victory Gardens Project, an eight-year grassroots enterprise that worked to effect radical social change and economic independence through food production.

