

The Abolitionist

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ISSUE #13

Free to People in Prisons, Jails, and Detention Centers

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ESPAÑOL AL REVES



POLICING:

Whose Streets?

Sitting Around San Francisco: Challenges to Quality of Life Policing

By Rachel Herzing

Many thanks to Lani Riccobuono, the Coalition on Homelessness, and standagainstsitlie.org for hooking me up with some good information.

In the past year, the San Francisco Bay Area has seen two new police chiefs come on the scene. George Gascon started in August in San Francisco and Anthony Batts began in Oakland in October. That both men worked in police departments in Los Angeles County between 2002 and 2009 is significant, as that period coincides with the William Bratton's tenure as chief of police for the City of Los Angeles.

Bratton's impact on policing in the United States has been tremendous. Bratton is one of the architects and biggest proponents of quality of life policing—an approach used by a vast number of jurisdictions across the country and exported to public and private police forces across the world. The approach is based Wilson and Kelling's

“broken windows” theory. According to Wilson and Kelling:

“‘Untended’ behavior also leads to the breakdown of community controls. A stable neighborhood of families who are for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened, become more rowdy. Families move out, unattached adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the corner store. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse. Fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocery; in time, an inebriate slumps to the sidewalk and is allowed to sleep it off. Pedestrians are approached by panhandlers.” (Wilson and Kelling 1982)*

The picture of decline painted by Wilson and Kelling, and the policing practices they recommend to stem that decline suggest a return to a pre-1960s arrangement, where the focus of policing was maintaining order rather than fighting crime. The broken windows approach relies on maintaining a sharp dichotomy between decent, law abiding community members and disreputable and criminal elements; between insider and outsider; between good and evil. In this formulation, lack of upkeep on houses and gathering in public spaces (especially by youth or “unattached adults”) signals not economic disparity or disparate access to resources, but instability, criminality and unpredictability.

Following this logic, Bratton's approach to quality of life policing involved heavy surveillance and arrest for “nonserious offenses” such as loitering, panhandling, public urination, and vandalism. The idea, tested out in the New York transit

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“Greed” by Roberta Loach

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

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Spring 2010 unveiled new developments on the side of humanist efforts to build a world that is in harmony with life & the Earth, while state forces continued to funnel energy and resources towards repressive institutions, continuing cycles of violence and harm. This edition of *The Abolitionist* presents us with stories from both sides of this struggle.

As the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) grows in strength-- tapping into new funding sources and new ways of marketing itself (News Briefs) -- budget cuts further erode an already frayed and unraveling social safety net. These developments continue to shape our experiences as people living and resisting on both sides of the prison walls.

On the outside, we see the incursion of quality-of-life policing efforts (*Whose Streets?*) and gang injunctions (The 'Safety Zone'), aimed to smooth the path for gentrification, while targeting already vulnerable populations including poor people, young people, people of color, queer and transgender people. Meanwhile, warfare against people indigenous to Turtle Island continues relentlessly in the California *Iron House*, as Native people continue to hold on to

ancient traditions as an active show of resistance and a practice in survival.

Issue 13 describes state cuts to human services and further discrimination against former prisoners and people with conviction history records who would want to apply to 'free world' jobs (*Attack on In-Home Support Services*), while our allies maintain crucial services for holistic transitional healthcare in places like Southeast San Francisco (*Critical Conditions*). Hope continues to rest in our ability to come together as communities of people who are targeted by the PIC, to teach ourselves how to take action to end violence in our lives (*Community Responds to Domestic Violence*) and to insist that we build alliances and advance a united anti-racist agenda to benefit all working class people and people of color (*Popular Resistance to State Violence: Part II*).

While the PIC continues to expand, as abolitionists we position ourselves to stand against further repression and to build the supports we need to achieve our collective liberation.

**In struggle & solidarity,
The Abolitionist Collective**

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

The Fear Mongering of Early Releases

By Dortell Williams

H-45771 / FAB2-206

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It amazes me to hear of all the fear mongering and panic spread in response to any talk of early prison releases.

History has proven repeatedly that early releases—releasing people who will get out anyway—does not culminate into significant crime spikes.

To illustrate, in 1963 the U.S. Supreme Court interpreted the Sixth Amendment, in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, as fulfilling the need to grant poor people accused of felonies the right to counsel. As a result, the 1,252 detained indigent Floridians who weren't afforded counsel were point blank released. Fear and hysteria were understandably rampant, yet 28 months later the FDC found their recidivism rate amounted to a mere 13.6 percent.

Furthermore, history has proven that the mass demonization of prisoners as "dangerous" is Politics 101. The facts: the vast majority of imprisoned people made a mistake and simply wish to peacefully do their time and stay out of the way. Likewise, the vast majority of prison guards are professional. In either case, if the bad apples ruled the system would completely implode.

Early releases here in California have proven no different. In the '70s, under Senate Bill 42, Governor Jerry Brown released 11,000 prisoners—the majority of them lifers—with no significant crime increase. Moreover, due to the same type of overcrowding the prison system is experiencing, the Los Angeles County Jail system has been doing early releases as a matter of course for over a decade.

Considering that we're spending 45 percent more on prisons than the university system, and that the state budget is still \$20 billion in the hole, I think early releases are long overdue. Just think, \$49,000 per prisoner, annually. That's almost a salaried teacher's pay. Yet we're keeping the prisoners and releasing the teachers!

Indeed, these prisoners are no more dangerous than singer Chris Brown, who pled guilty in a domestic violence case or film director Roman Polanski, who accepted a plea deal for statutory rape. However, these proposed felons are *non-violent*.

Sources:

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Fay Knopp and Jon Regeir, *Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists* (Prison Research Education Action Project, Syracuse, NY, 1976 & 2005), p. 39-41

Henry J. Steadman and Gary Keveles, The Community Adjustment and Criminal Activity of the Baxsrom Patients: 1966-1970, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 129 (1972) p. 304-310



Artwork by Seth Tobocman

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Please be sure to let us know if we have permission to print your full name and address along with your submission. See p. 14 for more instructions on submitting writing or artwork for publication.

News Briefs

Compiled by Raia Small

9th Circuit Overturns Washington's Felony Voting Ban

In January the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that in denying anyone convicted of a felony the right to vote, the state of Washington was violating the Voting Rights Act. The ruling was based on widespread evidence of racial discrimination in the state's penal system, where African Americans are nine times as likely to be in prison as whites and 70 percent more likely to be searched. This is the first court ruling that declares such voting restrictions to be in violation of federal law. As long as there is evidence of racial discrimination within the state penal system, this could potentially overturn all statewide prohibitions on voting by people with felony convictions, which exist in some form everywhere except Maine and Vermont.

Democracy Restoration Act Could Enfranchise People with Felony Convictions

In March, Congress began hearings on the Democracy Restoration Act, which would allow people with felonies on their records to vote in federal elections. A *New York Times* editorial stated, "Many of the laws disenfranchising former 'criminals' date back to the post-Civil War era and were used to prevent freed slaves from voting. These laws still have a significant racial impact."

The Boutique Prison Business Continues to Find New Markets

Italy plans to open the first transgender prison at Pozzale, outside of Florence, in a facility that is currently a medium-security women's prison housing only two prisoners with a 22 person staff. Unfortunately, Italian gay rights organizations celebrated the announcement, believing that the prison will provide psychological support for transgender prisoners. With its own library, recreation center, football pitch and agricultural land the Pozzale prison is in line with a growing trend of boutique prisons popping up internationally.

FBI Illegally Collected More Than 2,000 Call Records

The FBI illegally collected more than 2,000 US telephone call records between 2002 and 2006 by invoking "terrorism emergencies" that did not exist, or by persuading phone companies to provide records without a judicial order.

Los Angeles Cuts Civilian Jobs; Hires more Cops

While L.A. city government officials plan to cut 1,000 city jobs to remedy the \$200 million budget shortfall, they plan to continue hiring police officers. Mayor Villaraigosa wants to allow 2,400 current city workers to retire up to five years early in order to cut payroll expenditures, while hiring new police officers to replace those who retire or leave the force. The mayor is also looking to cut costs by using private contractors to provide

two members of the L.A. city council who signed the job cuts proposal maintain that police jobs must be reduced concurrently.

California Governor Proposes to House Prisoners in Mexico

In January, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger suggested that the state could cut prison costs by building prisons in Mexico and using them to house undocumented immigrants currently held in California prisons. Schwarzenegger predicted outsourcing CA prisons to Mexico would save the state \$1 billion that could be spent on higher education. His statement came as a surprise to his staff, and the \$1 billion figure he cited was unsupported by data. Donald Specter, director of the Prison Law Office, said, "It would be like the state of California having a separate island of its own government in Mexico. It just seems like that would be impossible."

Immigrants at Texas Detention Center Strike Against Conditions

Immigrants jailed at Port Isabel Detention Center in Los Fresnos, Texas held a hunger strike in February to protest inhumane treatment. It was one of at least three such strikes at the jail within the past year, and it coincided with the national day of action against Sheriff Arpaio, the Maricopa County sheriff who has enforced extreme anti-immigrant policies and humiliating detention conditions in Arizona. The Texas hunger strikers demand the suspension of immigration detention until comprehensive immigration reform is passed.

Obama's Spending Plan Increases Prison Budget

While states are cutting their prison spending to balance their budgets, President Obama's planned 2011 budget calls for a \$527.5 million increase in federal prison spending. Nearly half of the new funding is intended to accommodate the administration's plan to close the military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and move some of its prisoner population to an Illinois prison. The Justice Department also projects that federal prisons that now hold 213,000 people will hold 7,000 more by 2011.

Cell Phones Jammed in Maryland Prisons

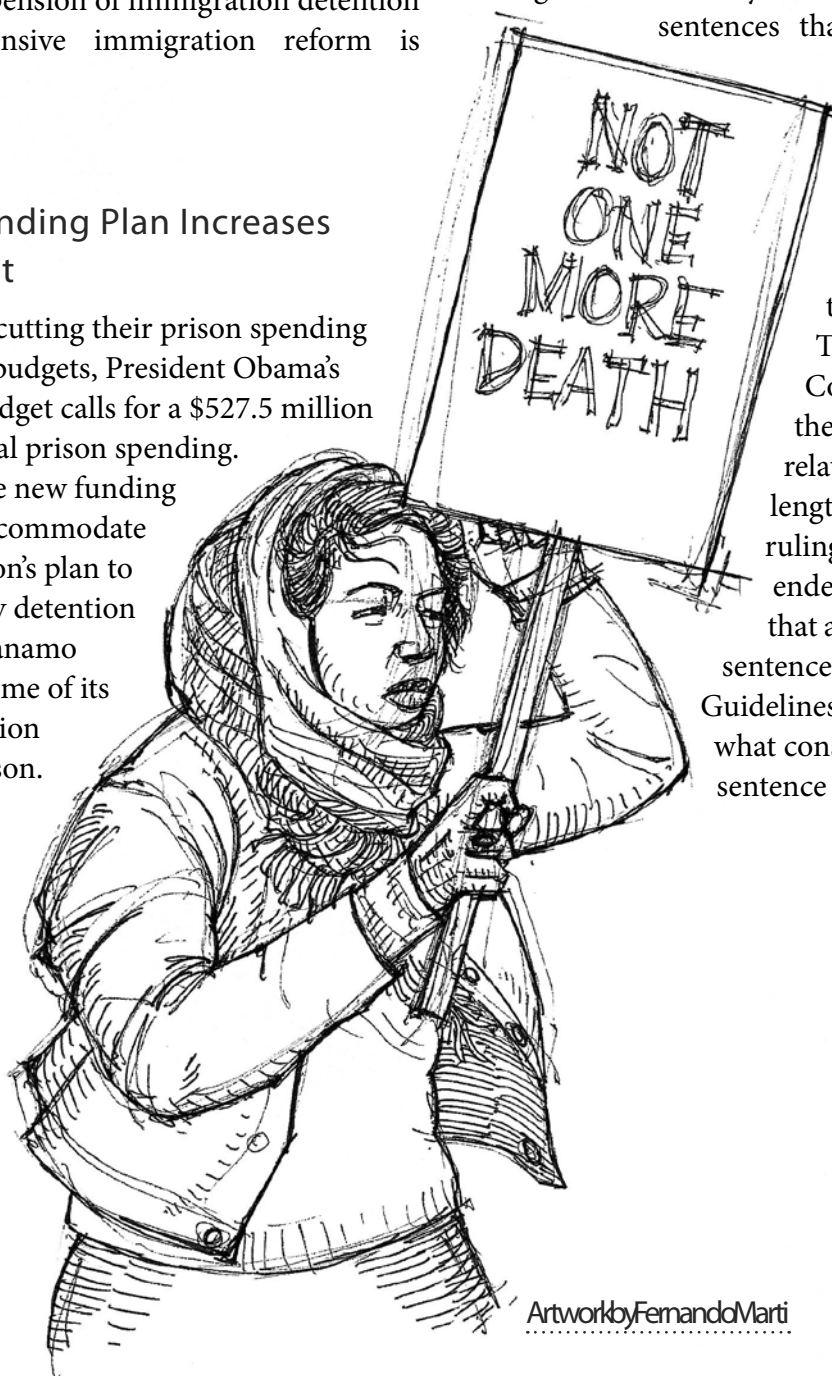
Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley has installed cell phone jamming equipment in at least one Maryland prison to prevent prisoners from using cell phones. The governor hopes to convince congress that cell phone jamming is an effective way to prevent prisoners from using illegal phones to commit more crimes.

Former Cop Pleads Guilty to Shooting Cover-up after Hurricane Katrina

In February, Lt. Michael Lohman, a former New Orleans police officer, pled guilty to participating in a scheme to cover up the shooting of six unarmed civilians by police after Hurricane Katrina. The shooting took place on September 4, 2005 on the Danziger Bridge in east New Orleans. Six police officers and one former officer shot six people, leaving two dead and four seriously injured. Immediately afterwards police arrested local resident Lance Madison, under the false allegation that he had shot at the officers first. Lt. Lohman confessed that he failed to collect evidence or talk to witnesses, crafted false reports, planted a gun under the bridge to corroborate police reports blaming Madison, and lied to investigators.

Black and Latino Men Face Longer Sentences

A new government study found Black men received sentences that are at least ten percent longer than those imposed on whites, while Latino men's sentences averaged seven percent longer than white men's. The US Sentencing Commission did the study to examine relative sentencing lengths since the 2005 ruling *US v. Booker*, which ended the requirement that a jury must impose a sentence within the Federal Guidelines range, leaving what constitutes a reasonable sentence undefined.



Artwork by Fernando Marti

cop force before the NYPD and the LAPD, is that cops can prevent the explosion of violence and other “serious offenses” by cracking down on these kinds of public nuisance infractions. While the practice certainly increases arrest rates, it also vastly expands the range of acts for which people can be arrested and fined as well as expanding the discretion of individual cops to enforce the policy. Additionally, quality of life policing has overwhelmingly targeted already vulnerable populations including youth, people with psychological and physical disabilities, queer and transgender communities, new immigrant populations, poor people and those without stable housing—in all cases disproportionately impacting people of color.

The new Bay Area police chiefs are each employing a range of practices and tactics that reflect their commitment to this brand of policing. In Oakland, Chief Batts has introduced a gang injunction in North Oakland that promises to make the path even smoother for the steam roller of gentrification in those neighborhoods [you can learn more about the Oakland gang injunction in this issue of *The Abolitionist*—see “The ‘Safety Zone’ on p. 5]. In San Francisco, Chief Gascon is promoting an addition to the San Francisco Police Code he claims will address street violence in neighborhoods such as Haight-Ashbury and the Tenderloin. The new measure, known as the sit/lie ordinance, would become Section 168 of the San Francisco Police Code. It would prohibit sitting or lying down on a public sidewalk, or on a blanket, chair, stool, or any other object placed upon a public sidewalk between the hours of 7:00 am and 11:00 pm in the City and County of San Francisco (Municipal Police Code 168).

The ordinance is the most recent in a long history of “anti-vagrancy” measures across the country. It recalls previous efforts including San Francisco’s 1968 MPC 20, which prohibited sitting, lying, and sleeping on the city’s sidewalks and was later repealed in 1979, and the current San Francisco police codes 22-24, that prohibit “willful obstruction” of sidewalks. The proposed sit/lie ordinance is also based on similar ordinances in Seattle, Houston, Los Angeles, and Portland. Even closer to home, the cities of Santa Cruz and Berkeley have already adopted similar ordinances. In all cases, the targets of the ordinances have been similar: young people, poor people, homeless and marginally housed people, queer and transgender people, and others who “don’t belong” in cities’ business districts.

That the Haight is central to conversations about the need for San Francisco’s proposed ordinance seems obvious given the policy’s foundation in quality of life policing. The focus on “maintaining order” in a neighborhood where gentrification efforts continue steadily and in an era marked by substantial cuts to HIV prevention services, substance abuse services, foster care, and transitional housing only adds insult to injury. If the goal of this type of policing is to suppress any activities or people who do not conform to Wilson and Kelling’s homeowner’s utopia, this ordinance is right in line.

Further, as the practice of this brand of policing has demonstrated consistently since it took off in the 1990s, profiling is central to application of the policy. Who is deemed disorderly, a nuisance, or a criminal is often based on people’s physical presentation, who they are associating with and whether or not they seem like neighborhood insiders.



Photo by Dina Boyer

Opposition to the proposed law has already been substantial and dynamic. Organizations including Coalition on Homelessness, Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club, Homeless Youth Alliance, POOR Magazine, the Alliance for the Haight-Ashbury and residents throughout San Francisco have spoken and acted against the ordinance. As long-time Bay Area economic justice organizer, James Tracy comments,

“The campaign to pass Sit/Lie exploits very real concerns Haight Street neighbors have around community safety in order to push through a measure that will harm many people who use public sidewalks. The behavior of a small group of people is being used to scapegoat many people who are guilty of nothing except for being visibly poor in a business district.

However, the grassroots campaign against Sit/Lie has cut through a lot of the fog of war against homeless people. By imploring all people to use the sidewalks for music, art, conversation, chess games and more they are showing a real vision of a vital inclusive urban life.

I’m certain that Sit/Lie’s proponents know that it is unlikely to pass the Board of Supervisors.

It will undoubtedly surface on the ballot this November as a tool for shoring up conservative turnout in the District Elections race.”

The resistance to the ordinance has spanned meetings at City Hall to the streets of San Francisco. For instance, people all over San Francisco participated in events on the city’s sidewalks on March 27 as part of “Sidewalks Are for People.” Local comedians did their acts lying down in the Sunset neighborhood, and coffee and tea parties, barbeques, sidewalk sales, and art making were just some of the activities neighbors used to express their opposition. They have been so successful that the last Saturday of each month will be dedicated to “Sidewalks Are for People” events until the proposal is defeated.

As ever, keep your heads up, your hearts open and the pressure on!

If you want to read the Sit Lie ordinance, the San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness has a line at: <http://www.cohsf.org/en/sitLie.php>

* Wilson, James Q. and George L. Kelling. 1982. “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety.” *Atlantic Magazine*, March: 29-38.

The “Safety Zone” Oakland’s Plan for Displacement Met With Community Resistance

By Savannah Kilner

with Maisha Quint and Jack Bryson

On the corner of 55th and Market in North Oakland, a placard commemorates the Black Panther Party for its initiative to install a stoplight where several young people were killed by cars. Instead of waiting for the city to respond, a group of Black Panthers stopped motorists and personally escorted children across the busy intersection until the installation of the traffic signal began on August 1, 1967. This is just one example of how street organizations, most often labeled “gangs,” have engaged in a variety of tactics to ensure community survival in the context of vastly inequitable distribution of resources.

Though the context has changed in many ways, communities across Oakland continue to experience lack of access to meaningful employment and education, quality healthcare and housing, creating the conditions that give rise to the formation of street organizations and economies. This intersection today sits in the center of a so-called “safety zone” associated with a gang injunction—a court-issued restraining order prohibiting alleged gang members from participating in activities within a sanctioned neighborhood. The injunction, filed by an Oakland City Attorney this March, puts restraints on peoples ability to move freely within and among their communities and neighborhoods. It also legally codifies racial profiling and criminalizes the day-to-day activities of young people of color. Only eight of the 70 people listed on the injunction have been notified. The “do not associate” provision, for example, makes being in a grocery store with someone else named in the injunction an arrestable act. This, along with a slew of “gang suppression” tactics the state has wielded as part of the project of “tough on crime” legislation, are tremendously costly and haven’t reduced “crime” rates at all. They exist within a climate of already violent, racialized policing across the city of Oakland.

In LA and San Francisco, among other cities, gang injunctions have consistently been filed in places that border gentrifying neighborhoods, displacing long-time communities of color and making way for “revitalization” projects that import neoliberal capital, raise property taxes and “protect” white homeowners and their property. North Oakland community members see this as a strategy, working in tandem with other forces, to displace communities of color from North Oakland and are fighting back.

I had the opportunity to speak with Maisha Quint, who works at Eastside Arts Alliance, a people of color-led cultural center with arts programming for youth; and Jack Bryson, an organizer who is active in the coalition that formed to stop the gang injunction, and whose sons were with Oscar Grant when he was executed by Oakland BART cops last January. Both offer important perspectives on how the proposed gang injunction will impact youth in Oakland.

The Big Picture

When asked about the history of street organizations and how they’ve been sites of resistance for communities targeted by state violence, Maisha explained that, “street organizations served the purpose of filling the gaps in resources that communities didn’t have, even more narrowly focused what families didn’t have. Some of the purpose of street organizations is to create a safety net for folks and to be able to offer some kind of stability and some alternate means of resources. Resources that our government was not only neglecting to give but was resolutely determined that these communities never have or build.”

How does this impact Oakland Youth?

As Jack explained, “There are no jobs, we’re in a recession, they took away all the programming. They have to provide, what’s left for these young men to do?” The city has an explicit agenda of raising property taxes and as Jack explains, “To me, North Oakland is like a middle class neighborhood. I think it’s a beautiful neighborhood and they’re trying to get the Blacks out.” Maisha went on to explain how the basic problems and lack of resources that gave rise to street organizations like the Panthers are still there. When asked about implications of the proposed gang injunction for Oakland youth, she lamented that, “It’s gonna be devastating for youth who already face sweeping criminalization, and how the school system and public housing are all intertwined and working in tandem,” speaking to the expanding scope of the Prison Industrial Complex across public sectors.



Community members demonstrate against the gang injunction in Oakland.

“The mandate is so sweeping and the level of authority that it gives to police and folks working in conjunction with the police is absolutely startling and so widespread... As it sweeps across Oakland, it’s gonna be hard for any young person of color in Oakland to not be affected by it.”

Jack goes on to say that “people who grow up in the community know how to deal with youth. But when you have police officers coming from out of town, police officers with no understanding of Black and Brown communities and Black and Brown culture, you put a gun in the hands of a racist cop. These gang injunctions just reinforce that power. These guys wear black t-shirts and blue jeans. It’s not a gang thing, it’s hip hop culture. These police officers don’t know the difference between a culture and a gang. You have these young men who grow up on the same block, go to school together kindergarten through high school. Now you’re saying they’re gang members because they might dress and talk alike and communicate in a way the cops don’t understand.”

Maisha explains the ways basic day-to-day activities for youth, let alone organized resistance, will be even further criminalized by the restrictions enforced by the injunctions. “The potential to lock up thousands and thousands of young people is just that explicit. Basic things, you could just be walking to school, you could just be in front of your house with a group of friends and all of a sudden depending on what you have on, who you’re standing next to, maybe just a cop whose already in our community having a grudge out for that young person. So it takes an already unjust system and just expands it. For us and for anyone working with youth, it really just requires another way of thinking about what can we really do to make them safe from this? And the first thing we have to do is stop it. Our young people of color in Oakland are already so at risk and so vulnerable for these predatory laws and predatory police and a predatory criminal injustice system.”

“We want to do another intensive know your rights workshop that’s actually focused on the gang injunctions because I think it merits a real intense time out and break for all of our young folks to know what’s happening. Even without that our Eastside young folks know that’s it’s just a continuation and heightening of the kind of racialized policing and profiling that already happens. Many of our young folks weren’t surprised after hearing about the gang injunctions, a lot of them felt like, ‘well, they already do that.’ And they have. Police have been doing this to a certain extent now it’s just legally mandated. Direct action around negotiating their safety is something we have to address in these know your rights workshops, without saying, ‘well just don’t ever leave your house, don’t go to work, don’t go to school, don’t leave your house if you have a house.’”

How Do We Create Real Safety in Our Neighborhoods?

When asked how communities create real neighborhood safety Maisha reflected that “in communities of color, no one has to tell us that police don’t make us safe, we know that and we see that historically. It’s not about educating folks around the criminal injustice system. That’s known. It’s providing resources for folks. Get people jobs, get people housing. Get people after school programs and schools that work. Get people after

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Iron House

By Robert Morales, P-27996

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A red-tailed hawk alights atop a cottonwood tree and, cocking her head, peers intently at a canvas-covered dome-like structure miles in the far distance. Seated within the willow lodge is a lone figure whose handsome, angular features are partly obscured by falling locks of tangled raven hair. With a dexterity born from years of practice, he deftly scoops a wooden dipper of water from a plastic bucket and gently pours it over a mound of glowing red rocks. A chorus of voices grunt in approval as the scalding steam slowly infuses the darkened interior with a stifling, penetrating heat. Within this loamy, musky darkness, barely audible, a gentle heartbeats begins softly pulsating from the center of a small hand-held drum, and this timeless beat... of vibrant creative energy is soon accompanied by a nasal chant lamenting the scorn visited upon this copper toned nation of men—the purification ceremony has begun.

The eons soon drift and time gently gallops across the vast, expansive plains of the universe. High above this softly spinning, sapphire orb, a falcon spies his prey and begins a magnificent dive. Our hydrogen leviathan sun is cresting some distant frozen horizon and from there it will engulf whole the African savanna...crowning majestic peaks of snow-capped mountains, splashing golden-fire across expansive prairies. A fawn-colored gopher will emerge from an earthen mound and chortle softly as the star blesses her loamy abode and all life will smile at this timeless, sacred dance of symbiosis. An immature golden eagle screams a greeting as a female black bear forages amid the verdant spring of renewal. Inside the willow dome, rolling immensities rise and fall within interstellar depths of being and in this musky-sage darkness, the universe, behind obsidian eyes, will look back upon itself and smile—a'ho mitakuye oyasin! All my relations! Open the door!

The purification ceremony is now over. The men who crawl from this willow womb will emerge wet, glistening and exhausted. Standing to their feet they morph from taut and muscular to slack and portly. These men, indigenous to Turtle Island, are reborn from the sweat ceremony, not free to roam the mountains, plains and Southwest deserts, not free men at all this band. These men are state prisoners and their ceremonial grounds are confined to a barren patch of dusty earth encircled by a heavy chain link fence topped with lethal rolls of taloned razor wire—coiled and wickedly glistening in the harsh California sun.

A gruff prison guard soon arrives to unlock the chained enclosure. The men silently file out to be counted one by one. Once the count is secure, this inter-tribal band will be forced to march deep into a rock-hard labyrinth of State terror, savage brutality and senseless dehumanization. These men who emerged moments earlier from the womb of their earth-mother, are captives of a sprawling, unwieldy bureaucracy resistant to change and deeply steeped in racism, violence and ineffectual management policies. Welcome to the Auschwitz of California—welcome to the blood-soaked fields of the Corcoran State Prison Complex.

Located adjacent to the Corcoran Complex is another monstrosity called the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF). This hyper-fortress, 170 miles north of Los Angeles, lies nestled

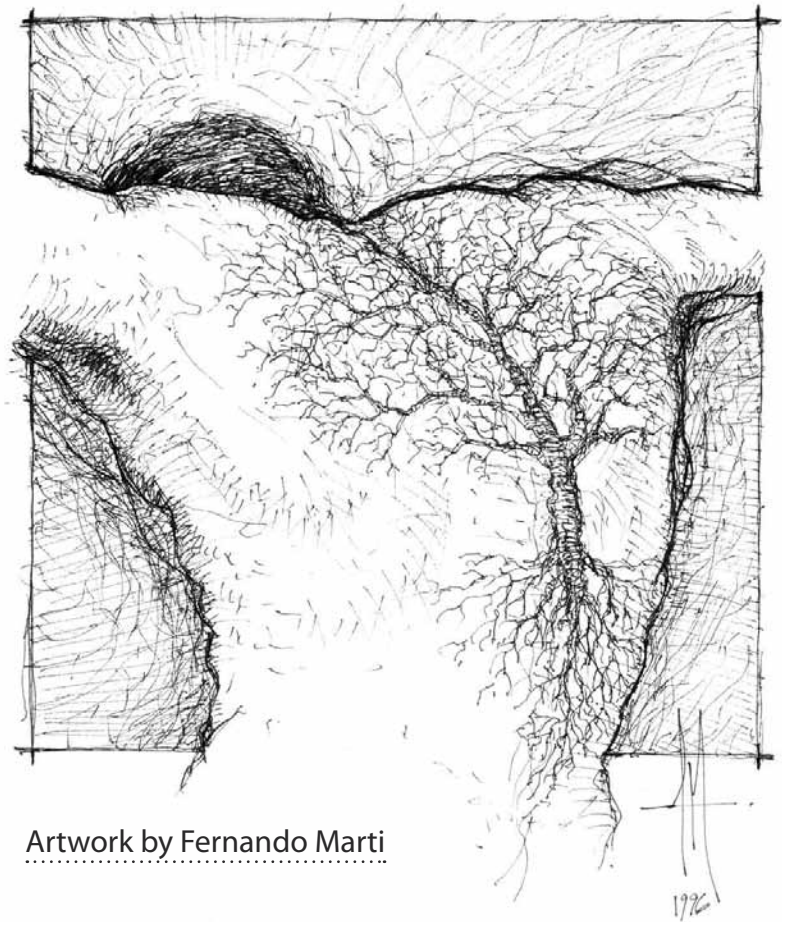
amid the fertile fields of California's Southern San Joaquin valley. This penitentiary was ostensibly created to house and treat violently assaultive prisoners suffering from addictive personality disorders. This well-meaning model of therapeutic intent was—like most models for progressive change—murdered in its infancy by the powerful prison guards union, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA). Lowered recidivism rates translates into minimal growth potential for these minions of the Iron City Industrial Growth Complex.

A weathered sign is all that remains of hope for progressive change as SATF has no supportive infrastructure to treat addicts. This prison, like most California prisons, is now used as a containment mechanism for gang members from the state's large urban centers. Swept up as collateral damage are convict dissidents who dare challenge California's totalitarian prison regime: political activists, religious radicals, dissidents whose fiery rhetoric is considered inflammatory and prison activists who raise their voices in opposition to the raw, abusive, iron-fisted tyranny of California prison administrators. Indian peoples too, are in this Iron House, we are hostiles and wear the label with pride.

Native American prisoners have long endured the brunt of the musket-fire aimed at the heart of Indian spirituality. Stormy Ogden is a resilient California Native woman whose ancestors are indigenous to the Central Valley basin. A member of the Tule River Yokut's Tribe, Stormy has endured firsthand the repressive tyranny in the Iron House. Stormy writes:

“Since the beginning of colonization, the Native people of these lands were imprisoned as a form of social control, which could only be described as deliberate genocide. With the increased attacks on Indian sovereignty and culture, imprisonment became the government's principal means of intimidation and punishment. With the enforcement of these “foreign” laws, Native people were soon locked up in many different forms of institutions, such as military forts, federal missions, reservations, boarding schools, and now in state and federal prisons. These prisons can be seen as just another part of the historically violent mechanisms of colonization. The Prison Industrial Complex is not new to the Native people of these lands, in fact it can be argued that it was built right through our ancestral lands and the very lives of the indigenous people of this continent.”

The warfare against America's indigenous people continues without relent in the California Iron House. Natives thrust into these hyper-fortresses are soon confronted with a grim reality as SATF is saturated with large prison gangs which many experts consider the most violent in the nation. These gangs have their origin in California's densely packed urban centers and are responsible for over 80% of the violence occurring in California prisons today. Native Americans who enter this matrix form a demographic representing less than 1% of the imprisoned populace. Most hail from



Artwork by Fernando Marti

rural reservations and small townships and lack the sophistication necessary for navigation on the complex waterways of a deeply pathological, hyper-masculine prison society. The shock of finding oneself immersed in such an elite paramilitary culture not aligned with a Native American axis can, regrettably, have tragic consequences for many of our people.

Native people are marginalized in California prisons. This deep sense of prison societal alienation can often lead to a cognitive dissonance which manifests itself in severe drug and illicit alcohol abuse. Many men young and old, cursed with casino funds, give vent to their suffering by engaging in fatal drug and alcohol binges, unable to withstand the crucible of stress, diminished sense of self, and tension inherent to the California Iron House.

The crux of the matter is that without a supportive infrastructure, Indian people are ill-equipped to survive the rigors of America's immense prison system. What is needed are sustainable Native program safety nets anchored deep to the edifice of timeless, indigenous medicine teachings and ceremonial rites. Sadly, the Corcoran State Prison Complex, which includes SATF, offers minimal support in our struggle to support and preserve cultural autonomy and an ethno-centric bearing.

This Native writer can cite a litany of abuses which have been visited upon the Native community at SATF, chief among these are: cultural insensitivity, careless handling of sacred artifacts and medicines, denial of monthly purification ceremonies, denial of Spring Equinox ceremonies for lodge renewal and rebuilding, denial of sacred tobacco and prayer pipe, denial of beading needles and other related essentials necessary for creation of spiritual artifacts—denied, denied, denied!

The willow poles used to frame our inipi (sweatlodge) now exist in a state of wretched neglect. They have seen five summers and year after year the Warden continually denies our request for lodge rebuilding. The lodge sits desolate on an arid and denuded patch of dry earth, its skeletal frame withered and grossly misshapen, bent and twisted like the promises that lie scattered across the collective psyche of all First Nation peoples.

Over 500 years have passed and the settler colony that is American still continues to backpedal on the implementation of treaties made with our ancestral relations. The willow lodge is a stark

reminder to all Indian people that we are still, to this day being oppressed, that we are still experiencing subjugation and that our inherent birthright to practice the Indigenous rites of the ancestors is still being trampled and ground into the historical dust of subordination.

Our medicine circle is a vital part of who we are as Native people. Our medicine ceremonies are integral to our autonomy, they foster and promote a culture of growth, of healing energies and of reconciliation tethered to restorative justice, wholeness, completion and honest human community. Our tribal artifacts and cultural icons are imbued with a deep spiritual significance which speaks to our interconnectedness with all of creation: totems, feathers, claws, animal skins and teeth, tobacco, sage, sweetgrass and cedar, all this resonates with a deep, intimate, esoteric meaning for Indigenous people.

The fact that we are forced to worship—through want and necessity—in an isolated area of the prison relatively insulated from prison regulations restricting access to: wood, fire, rake and shovel has raised the ire of management and custody who are openly hostile to what is viewed as an affront to their imperial authority. Custody in a prison such as SATF is nothing more than an ingrained mentality bent upon the suppression of all inmate mobility and prisoners exempt from this security mechanism, if only for a three hour period, often encounter fierce resistance from high and low ranking members of custody staff. That the religious rights of prisoners are protected

by a slew of federal and state statutes means little to the current administration of SATF. The Islamic community can well attest to the veracity of this spiritual repression, these devout, sincere followers of Islam are not even given the dignity of a prayer service. All efforts to petition the administration for Islamic services have been met with stiff resistance. The repression here is not endemic to SATF, on the contrary, this repression is occurring statewide and has culminated in a statewide class action suit alleging deprivation of spiritual and religious rights.

Ralph Martinez is a Native American prisoner serving a sentence in a Southern California prison. Ralph, an enrolled member of the Soboba band of Luiseno Indians is a sincere Red Road Practitioner who is currently being deprived of his Tribal ceremonial practices. Ralph has retained the services of Attorney David Dehnert, an Indian law practitioner who once served as in-house counsel for the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. Mr. Dehnert immediately sought declarations from Native prisoners statewide who would attest to the veracity of Mr. Martinez's claims and confirm the tyranny of state repression.

To date over 126 declarations have been filed representing 13 different facilities from throughout the state and the case was certified as a class action on March 1, 2010. Laura Wass, a courageous Native sister and Director of the Central Valley AIM office, has been more than instrumental in providing source documentation towards her vigil in monitoring the flagrant abuses occurring

frequently in the Corcoran State Prison Complex.

Far above the lush valley floor, in a grassy canyon lined with scrub oak and dotted with lively wildflowers sits a black bear who recently awakened from her place of medicine dreams. Across the craggy crevices of this canyon darts a flitting shadow of a sparrow-hawk which sends a meadow mouse scurrying for safety, and all is well in this place.

The people are now preparing to gather herbs and medicines from the bosom of an aged earth mother beloved. There is great excitement and creative energy hangs electric in the air. The people's drum is being refitted and the great power of the South is awakening... soon the Grandmother will burst forth in colorful, glorious praise of creation and my people, our people, the Indian people will sally forth to greet her in an ancient, timeless and sacred dance with no beginning and no end...

The Iron House is only a place and never a state of being. The greater part of ourselves, much like the aged oak and saguaro, lies buried, rooted deep in wisdom and perseverance, forever remaining unsullied by the tragedy of our collective history. Our lance has been thrust into the earth with this legal action. We thrust it in defense of a people, in remembrance of our ancestors. It is thrust here in defense of an entire culture, a way of life and it is here, in the silence of this sacred space, that we shall remain...

What's Weird About It?

By Jon Marc Taylor #503273

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Cameron, MO 64429

When faced with overcrowded penitentiaries the British government decided instead of spending hundreds of millions of pounds building more prisons, it would instead grant early release to 25,000 prisoners. Since that would take away the prisoners' "free housing," the government would provide transition expenses for "room and board" with which to live until their terms expired.

In America, the largest numerical and per capita incarcerator in the world, this announcement was labeled "Weird News." My question is why?

It is obvious that people who leave prison without jobs or places to live are unlikely to stay out of jail for long. The lack of such support is a major reason why two-thirds of parolees are rearrested before discharge.

In America, though, instead of providing effective preparatory or transitional assistance, substance addicted felons are barred for life from temporary welfare assistance. Moreover, a jurisdictional hodgepodge of hundreds of archaic laws can exclude ex-felons from a myriad of everyday jobs, making it ever more difficult for a parolee to find work.

Fifteen years ago, Congress obtusely expelled prisoners from the Pell Grant program, resulting in the closure of the majority of prison college programs across the country. All the while, everyone acknowledged that such training is

the most effective and efficient rehabilitative opportunity, with paroled graduates having the highest employment and lowest recidivism rates for all released prisoners.

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, reports the U.S. justice system is doing an inadequate job easing the transition of released offenders. During the first two weeks of freedom, for every major cause, the risk of death for ex-convicts is nearly 13 times that of the general population.

University of California at Irvine criminologist, Joan Petersilia, comments that this "highlights the critical period immediately following release, which corrections policy has not yet really focused on."

The death rates are a reflection of the poor, uneducated, and unhealthy prisoner population in general. More than seventy percent of those released have been diagnosed with drug and alcohol dependence, with the majority not receiving treatment while imprisoned.

Explaining the extreme spike in death rates, Dr. Clarissa Krinsky of the University of New Mexico Health Center, observes that release from incarceration "is a time of enormous social stressors. You're suddenly without a home, without a job."

Dr. Jacqueline Tulasky, a professor of clinical medicine at UC San Francisco, who studied the transition from prison to freedom, comments that lives could be saved by offering drug treatment, transitional housing, and other services to newly

released ex-convicts.

In many states, on the other hand, parolees are released immediately owing monthly supervision fees, and indebted for tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars for incarceration reimbursement expenses. So with little economically viable education or training, untreated substance abuse dependencies, being legally barred from numerous occupations, haphazard to sparse transitional support, and the burden of crushing debt, it's of little surprise so many fail to "adjust" to freedom.

The United States collectively spends sixty billion annually to incarcerate more than two million souls, releasing nearly seven hundred thousand a year only to have two-thirds of them recidivate within three years. The nation continues to incarcerate at one time or another the sixteen million strong caste of felons and ex-felons, while the rest of the world crazily seeks ways to reduce crime and save lives through prevention and transition policies.

In America we obviously know better. We divert limited public resources from education, infrastructure and social services to build ever more prisons instead of using that money to lower college tuition rates and provide health care for the uninsured.

Now that is weird!

Jon Marc Taylor, recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award, is a prisoner in the Missouri Department of Corrections.

“Community Responds to Domestic Violence”

A story from the StoryTelling and Organizing Project (STOP)

Introduction by Jay Donahue and Molly Porzig

It is critical in our work as abolitionists that we not only establish the shortcomings of the prison industrial complex, but that we also give voice to our dreams, desires, attempts and strategies we put into practice everyday. Providing evidence that this work exists, that abolition is not only possible but practical, the StoryTelling & Organizing Project (STOP) is a community project that collects and shares stories about everyday people taking action to end violence in their lives.

STOP collects stories of interventions involving family, intimate and other forms of interpersonal violence where the police or the state were not brought into the picture. Stories are “collected” by a trained volunteer through audio recording and transcribed into written word. Through community events, listening sessions and many other outreach strategies from Oakland, CA to Melbourne, Australia, these stories are used as part of workshops and educational materials to inspire different communities’ strategies for accountability and real, long-lasting solutions to violence. Much of our work for STOP surrounds encouraging and supporting people inside and outside of prisons to listen to or read these stories with their families, neighbors, cell mates, students, co-workers, and friends through our audio clips on our website (stopviolenceeveryday.org) or by

reading transcripts of the stories. These stories are a powerful organizing tool that empowers us all to tell our stories and to provide strategies to share, to use in bits and pieces, and to challenge and learn from.

Below is the transcript of a short segment of a much longer story that was shared for STOP describing a situation of domestic violence and a community response to that violence. While there will be some unanswered questions or “what ifs” in this story, we encourage you to focus on what the community members did do to intervene in this situation and what lessons we can learn from what they tried. What images stick out for you in the story? What tools or resources was the group able to use? What did this group of community members do that another group of people might also be able to do? Please write back to us with your responses and feedback:

Attn: Molly Porzig
The Abolitionist
c/o Critical Resistance
1904 Franklin Suite 504
Oakland CA 94612

“Two years ago, I was married to a man who I’d been with for ten years prior, and our relationship had troubles, had issues that people go through. Over the last year of our marriage, my former partner was going through training as a police officer, and at the same time, we had just relocated to a new state. And we were struggling with some large issues in the marriage, and things had gotten more difficult. And I just became increasingly afraid of someone that I used to feel really safe with.

I have three kids and, they were at that time, I guess, 10, 6, and 4, and they were, they were witnessing a lot of arguments, a lot of loud screaming, a lot of doors being slammed, a lot of, a lot of things that I felt were really unsafe for them to see. My home just felt more and more dangerous, more and more like I didn’t know what was going to happen. I saw him acting in very controlling ways that I hadn’t seen before. I felt scared to leave the house, I felt scared to come home, I felt scared to sleep in my bed. I think the, the last straw, I guess, came one night when I had gone to a friend’s house and my partner followed me, in his car. And when I arrived at my friend’s house, he pulled up and, got out of the car at the same time that I did, and was yelling and screaming horrible things at me, and I felt very afraid but I didn’t know what to do. I knew wherever I went he would follow me, so I decided I would go to my office, which was nearby, and it was night time so there wouldn’t be anybody there. I had a key to the building and he didn’t but I ran into my office and into the building, which he didn’t have a key to get into. But the whole time he was just screaming at me, just trying to get me to come with him, trying to get me to have a conversation with him. And then when I finally got inside, I waited for a few minutes and he left. So that was the immediate situation I was dealing with.

So I called a friend, who came and met me at my office, and she suggested that I call another friend who had a house I could go to while we figured out what to do, so that’s what I did. So when we got there, everybody sort of sat around in the living room and just reassured me that it was, it was, safe for me to be there, that they were welcoming of it, that they understood, you know, that I was at this point on the run from someone who was furious and had a gun and I still felt bad. I felt like

I was exposing people to something that I couldn’t control, something I was, you know terrified of, but I didn’t know, I didn’t know, what else to do at that point, and they were saying it was where they wanted me to be.

My friends asked me, are there some people that I could gather up, that I could call, that might be, you might like to have support from in this time. I guess I should say that being part of this, this community organization UBUNTU, which is committed to ending sexual violence, meant that we had a way of, of responding that I knew people would come together. I knew if I needed help people would come and talk to me and we could work it out together. So it didn’t feel like, it didn’t feel strange to meet, to call people and say, “Hey, I need, I need help, and that this is what’s going on.” And at the same time, experiencing these things in my home, felt like people would see me differently, people would judge me, people would think I was a hypocrite, people would think I was weak. And I remember being really troubled by that the first few days. But I got reassurances from, from folks that that was exactly what the point of the organization was, and that experiencing harm is not about being strong or weak, that experiencing harm just is, and that it’s what we choose to do about it. So, we made phone calls, and asked people to come over. We had 7 or 8 people come over and just started talking through what, what to do. Which at that point felt totally overwhelming, I was still on, “Is this really happening to me?” and, “What can I do to, I don’t know, make it okay?” Rather than thinking of anything beyond tomorrow, or, next week.

But I think my wants were something like: I want to be in my home; I want my kids to feel safe; I think I said, “I want _____ to leave.” I think those were basically it at that moment, and then we just brainstormed like what, what needs to happen right now in the next hour, in the next day, in the next week, for, you know, for those wants to happen, and we just, we walked through it so if I want, if I to be in my home, how do we make that happen? How do we make sure that that’s a safe space? And, I think one of the answers to that question was, at least in the, in the near future, having folks be there with me.

So we eventually set up a schedule. We put out an

email with a schedule for the week, and blanks for people to fill in, and, I was amazed that people did fill it in. And they did come by. They came by every day and they came and sat in my living room, and they brought food, and we just sat together. I, I was amazed at that. That was the one, that was how we got home to be a safe space for me again.

When we were thinking about whether to call the police or not, I did feel like I needed some help in calming the situation down, but I didn’t know what to do, because if I can’t call his, his, friends on the job, and I can’t call them in--it doesn’t seem right to call them in an unofficial way, because who knows what’s going to happen with that. And calling them in an official way doesn’t necessarily seem like it’s going to produce any certain results either. So we tried to think about who could talk to _____, then. And, I think we had figured out some people in the community that he could talk to, if he was open to doing that.

My mom talked to _____. And she was willing to deal with him. He was, he was totally raging, and for whatever reason she was not intimidated at all, and just was able to really to talk to h-, him really calmly.

I had people checking on me, people staying, during the daytime hours, sometimes overnight for the next week, and it just felt good. It felt so good to have this full house, you know, this busy house of people coming by, and, you know, people were playing with the kids, and we were making art in the kitchen, and someone was always making tea, and it felt not alone.

In terms of talking about successes, I guess the biggest one is that I did get all three things that I wanted, that I identified as wants to happen. That, my kids went through that time feeling safe; that, _____ did leave the house; that I was able to return home; and that all that happened in, in a fairly short amount of time. So in terms of success, I’d say, ultimately for me as a survivor, that, those were the most meaningful successes.

Another success in terms of communication was that, I think w-, we made a phone list immediately, that was one of the first things we did, so I always knew I had someone to call, and that people would call and check on me. Because at that time I think it

was hard, I was worried about people burning out, I was worried about people feeling overwhelmed by me and my stuff. So, the fact that I didn't have to constantly, hour by hour, be reaching out for needs to be met because we'd identified them beforehand and there were enough people involved that it felt like no one was carrying all of it, or more than they could. It certainly wasn't that things didn't feel hard, it felt, it felt really hard.

I think what was helpful was this wasn't an intervention where it was like, "how are we going to get _____ away from _____?" It was like, "how are we going to make sure that, that there's not harm happening in our community? How are we going to make sure that we've done our best to address that? And that the problem was consistently the harm. The problem was consistently the events or the behaviors, or the things that were harmful that were happening, but not him that was a problem. Not my choice to stay as long as I had that was a problem. But, but that was... not the relationship that was the problem.

That made it possible for me to feel like I could come into the space and say what I needed, which at that time really included not being someone who was perpetrating harm against him by engaging the power of the state, or by, you know, which whether or not it would have benefited me in that moment, could only have had negative effects on him. And then I got to make a decision about like what do I really need right now to do my work, to take care of my kids, to get through this day, to heal. You know?

We need to trust people to be the experts on their own lives and to take them seriously and have faith in people to set the course for working from harm to transformation. I think that comes from... best from people who are experiencing harm and have a vision for themselves about what they want. And to give people time to identify what that is and be willing to sit with the discomfort of not being able to rescue somebody in a, in a simple or quick way. I think that those values were ultimately the most healing for me."



Artwork by Erik Ruin

Continued from "The 'Safety Zone,'" p. 5

school childcare and mental health services. It's these basic things that people need."

"I really believe we need to start doing that neighborhood by neighborhood, community by community because it helps people feel a sense of community and helps engender this feeling of collectivity, community, and accountability. It's hard to be accountable to your community when everyone is over here grinding on their own, fighting for their own scraps, which is what capitalism makes you do. It's its purpose and that's very damaging because with lack of accountability becomes lack of trust becomes lack of community. When you have a community that is accountable to

each other and there's a trust for each other and there's a sense of protection, then the need for police becomes obsolete."

As Jack reflects on his involvement in the Oscar Grant Movement and the coalition efforts to end the gang injunction in North Oakland, he asks, "I'd be lost without the help of community. The rewarding part is people tell you to keep up the good work. Keep fighting for us. Keep fighting for justice."

WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED WITH STOP?

As part of Critical Resistance's collaboration with STOP, we are looking for participation from you and other people who are inside prison. We feel that this is particularly important because it works to make a chink in the walls of a system that thrives on silencing people's voices, cutting individuals off from family and community and taking away people's right to self-determination.

Tell your story of a community based or collective action that was taken to address interpersonal violence that did not involve the police, social services or child protective services.

Use a story to get ideas on how you can address harm in your community.

Make art inspired by a story. We are currently trying to make STOP visual and are collecting art work and creative ideas during a series of workshops in the Spring and Summer of 2010. The images that we gather will become part of a poster series to be used by STOP and our collaborators. Our first two visualizing events in Oakland and Melbourne listened to "Community Responds to Domestic Violence" (transcript above) and "A Small Story" (contact us for the transcript). We'd like you to be involved too by reading these same stories and sending us the art or images that they inspire. While you're reading this story, imagine how you could communicate what this community network did to interrupt violence via a poster or image? Please get back to us as soon as possible to learn more about how to help make STOP visual!

If you want to get involved, please write to :

Critical Resistance
attn: Molly
1904 Franklin St, Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612.

Hope to hear from you soon!

RESOURCES ON FIGHTING GANG INJUNCTIONS:

Oakland

stoptheinjunction.wordpress.com
stoptheinjunction@gmail.com

East Side Arts Alliance

2277 International Boulevard
Oakland, CA 94606-5003
www.eastsideartsalliance.com

Los Angeles

Youth Justice Coalition

<http://www.youth4justice.org/>
Located at Chuco's Justice Center
1137 E. Redondo Blvd.,
Inglewood, CA 90302
323-235-4243

¡La Policía, la Migra, la Misma Porquería! *Popular Resistance to State Violence: Part II*

By Mariana Viturro

Editor's Note: The first part of this article was published in Issue #11. Please let us know if you did not receive it.

The state and its enforcement agencies are not alone in upholding the US imperial project. The racialized notions of criminality give legitimacy to the use of force and also create a culture of racist fear and repression. As Gramsci writes in the *Prison Notebooks*:

“The ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion—newspapers and associations—which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied.”

Community institutions, organizations and spaces outside of the state apparatus, referred to as civil society, play a role in reinforcing and reproducing dominant ideology and repression.

During the height of the 2006 street mobilizations and congressional negotiations, the main rhetoric in the mainstream media equated immigrants to criminals, terrorists, and leeches of the country's resources, which rightfully belong to “hardworking Americans.” There was specific messaging targeted towards the white population to rally their support for the xenophobic hate speech and nationalist project. One would regularly hear that there was a Mexican invasion to pillage “our” resources and riches without contributing to society, without paying taxes, and threatening English as the “official” language of the United States.

White supremacist groups who are outside of the state apparatus took up arms to defend this white settler nation. For example, the Minutemen, a nationalist, white supremacist organization carried out recruitment drives, organized anti-immigrant actions and expanded their vigilante projects where they have been known to shoot people crossing the border.

Most importantly, analyzing civil society and its role in reproducing hegemony clarifies the contradictions within the immigrant rights movement and helps explain how some immigrant communities ultimately supported the economic interests and racist ideology of the state and ruling minority. During the many immigrant rights marches, the main slogans and rhetoric heard from the stage or written on picket signs included “We are not terrorists,” “We are not criminals,” “We are not a public burden,” and “This is a country of immigrants.” Instead of uniting against the unjust disappearances and detentions of Arab, Muslim and South Asian immigrants in the “war on terror,” or the police brutality and incarceration of African-Americans,

Latinos differentiated themselves from these communities and upheld the state's definition of “good” and “bad” immigrant or citizen. Instead of uniting with the African American community for economic and racial justice, Latino immigrants highlighted their work ethic and rejection of social welfare. At the end of the day, these tactics gave legitimacy to the state project of reproducing hegemony. This approach not only deepens divisions between communities of color, but also deliberately removes racism and white supremacy from the immigrant rights debate and fight. These messages also intensify the divisions within the Latino community itself, such as between documented and undocumented immigrants or those who have lived in this country for many years and those who are more recent newcomers.

The assimilationist and whitewashed slogans are more than mere rhetoric. They also reflect a strategy to appeal to the state and appease racist anti-immigrant sentiments in order to push forward a reformist immigration policy agenda. As the national organizations continued to lobby Washington for immigration reform, popular dissent was harnessed and directed towards an agenda that did not place economic and racial justice at the center.

Immigrants took the streets with a sense of class consciousness to challenge the state in solidarity with all other immigrants regardless of their status. They spoke out against the unjust repression imposed on their communities. They created a newly contested terrain with an opportunity for building power and a movement against racism and state violence.

Community Resistance & Power

Given the role that Latino immigrants play in the resurgence of the immigrant rights movement and as a workforce in the economy, they have a potential to be a radicalizing political force in challenging state violence

and racism. It is critical that the movement not resort to reforms and strategies that reinforce state repression and white nationalism and instead fight for an agenda inclusive of worker rights, civil rights and racial and social justice.

The immigrant rights movement must continue to demand full legalization and immigration reform, but do so without obstructing the radical potential of the immigrant working class. It must also respond to the increased repression and militarization of our communities while building strategic alliances with other communities confronting state violence and racism.

Given the main contradictions of the state—the need for a hyper-exploitable labor force contradicts the preservation of a white nation—the immigrant rights movement must place anti-racism and worker exploitation at the center of the debates on immigration. Alliances should be built with the African-American community in their struggle against economic dispossession and the prison industrial complex, with the Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities against increased repression from ICE, and with workers, employed and unemployed, for just solutions to the economic crisis.

In responding to state repression, the immigrant rights movement must take a two-fold approach. It must confront the state and its repressive laws and push for policy reforms that alleviate some of the conditions for immigrants while opening more space for resistance. An example of such a space are the Know Your Rights workshops offered by St. Peter's Housing Committee that support workers in keeping their doors closed to ICE. While we arm the community with their rights, we should also deepen the community's analysis of the role of the state, root causes of immigration, and white supremacy to build a conscious counter-hegemonic political force to challenge state violence.

Organizing campaigns for policy reforms provide an opportunity to positively impact the lives and conditions of immigrant communities. They also expose the contradictions of the state and its repressive apparatus, and provide opportunities for building strategic alliances with other movements. For example, St. Peter's Housing Committee's campaign for the City ID in San Francisco, won government-issued photo identification for all its residents regardless of their immigration status. Through this campaign an alliance was built between



Artwork by Favianna Rodriguez

the immigrant and transgender communities as they were both denied identification documents. The campaign ultimately reframed the concept of citizenship and political rights to be based on the municipality where people live and work.

Similarly, our efforts to reform and strengthen the San Francisco Sanctuary Ordinance have the potential to build an alliance between the immigrant rights movement and the movements against racial profiling, police brutality and the prison industrial complex. The Sanctuary Ordinance is primarily violated through the collaboration of ICE and the SF Police Department. Regardless of whether an undocumented immigrant is charged or convicted, the person will be handed over to ICE authorities and in almost all cases, deported. The demands in our efforts to strengthen the Sanctuary Ordinance cannot reinforce the hegemonic notions of criminality and instead should expose the state's racism and classism in its definitions of criminality and criminal activity.

Conclusion

With the Obama administration promising immigration reform, the immigrant rights

movement has an opportunity to carry out a different strategy. In order to win true immigration reform, we must ensure that our demands and tactics remain consistent with our analysis. This is particularly important given the current crisis in the economy and its impact on working class communities of color.

With the economic crisis and massive debt facing most states and localities, working class communities of color and immigrants in particular will be denied basic services as the state slashes their public spending. Unemployment and underemployment will continue to rise, divisions between poor communities will deepen, and anti-immigrant sentiments and attacks will increase unless key grassroots forces seek to build alliances and advance a united anti-racist agenda that will benefit all working class people and people of color. This means that immigrant rights cannot be divorced from worker rights struggles especially when we consider the immigrant labor force in agriculture, food production and service industries.

While we organize and put pressure on Obama to ensure just immigration reform, the

immigrant rights movement must also expose the repressive and racist state and society. The Obama administration is expanding immigration enforcement in the prisons and militarized security on the border. The immigrant rights movement must continue to build resistance to this repression and demand an end to detentions and deportations and a reallocation of government spending towards education, healthcare, housing, employment and other services as part of the demands for legalization.

This economic and political moment calls us to build a racial and economic justice movement that is grounded in the grassroots, that has a sharp analysis, that mobilizes the working class, and that is bold in its demands. The immigrant rights movement has the opportunity to build a conscious political force that can build solidarity with communities of color and the working class and advance the movement for true justice.

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Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers Co. New York, 1971.

CRITICAL CONDITIONS

Transitions Clinic

By Sarah Jarmon

The following is an interview with Juanita Alvarado, a Community Health Worker (CHW) at Transitions Clinic in San Francisco, one of the first health clinics of its kind in the country. The Transitions Clinic is a post-release medical clinic located in the San Francisco Department of Public Health's Southeast Health Center in the Bayview neighborhood. Launched in January 2006 by two UCSF physicians, the Transitions Clinic is a unique clinic with a holistic approach to healthcare, focusing on the whole patient, not just their medical needs. Juanita has recently joined the staff as a Community Health Worker.

What is Transitions Clinic?

The clinic is for patients with a history of incarceration and their families to get proper medical care, and to not go back to prison. Many people develop chronic diseases in prison that they have to deal with when they are out. At Transitions, they don't just get doctors. There are case managers, psychological services, and community health workers. We're putting the pieces of the puzzle together so people don't go back inside.

Why is the clinic important?

The former prisoners who come there develop a relationship with the doctors in a non judgmental way. Former prisoners have a hard time in the healthcare system sometimes because lots of doctors and other healthcare people don't understand their experience, and they are automatically judging them.

What do you do there?

I do outreach work at San Quentin, so that people who will be paroling to San Francisco know about the clinic. San Quentin is

overcrowded and people are waiting to get out. We do monthly classes. I go there and talk about my personal life story, give information on resources like housing, healthcare, benefits, and I tell them I will be at the PAC (Police and Corrections Team) meetings. We go to the PAC meetings at the Parole office on 12th Street in San Francisco and do the same thing. After the meetings, we do one one-on-ones and set up appointments at the clinic. We work with residential drug treatment programs, outpatient treatment programs, hospitals, and we do home visits.

The clients have a lot of questions. Sometimes they feel uncomfortable coming in there. I do a lot of active listening. As an advocate, I do social services, health services, and counseling all at the same time. We help guide people through applying for SSI and MediCal. We'll be expanding the clinic to more days soon, and a similar clinic is open in Alameda County. One of the founders, Dr. Emily Wang, is opening one in Connecticut. It's really exciting.

What got you to the clinic?

I come from a perspective of someone who has had family members in prison and have been in prison myself. I struggled a lot in my life. Eleven years ago I found myself in prison. I came back out to San Francisco afterwards. My life was a mess. I was searching and searching for help. I went to the Iris Center program. Then I went to school and became a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) for 8 years. But then I relapsed, and went to a program. I decided to go to the Community Health Worker (CHW) program at City College of San Francisco. When I did that, my teacher saw what my life experience had been. I went through the year-long intensive program. During that time, I took a course entitled, 'Health Impacts of Incarceration' with Donna Willmott. Donna made me feel comfortable. During the class I met Dr. Shira Shavit, the physician at the

clinic. She was doing an educational presentation regarding Transitions clinic and chronic illness in prison and its root causes. She was inspired by my story. I did a six month internship at Transitions and within 3 months they offered me the job.

How do you enjoy the work?

I love it. It allows me to be the person I am and to overcome the difficulties I've had in my life. I can be a good mother to my four children, and go back to work. I get a lot of inspiration from my coworkers and the clients. I'm giving back to the place I come from. You know, people need people. I can see that the clients love it. They say that it feels like it's a family, they feel connected, and that now they will get out and stay out. The clinic helps women feel like they are being respected. We accept families as a whole. We have SF Healthy Families onsite and we help reinstate MediCal. Even if someone gets off parole, we still see them.

How does the community benefit?

One third of all parolees coming back to San Francisco go to the Bayview neighborhood. Their family goes to Southeast Health Clinic already. By having Transitions in the Southeast Health Clinic, the staff can be better trained staff to deal with the issues facing people coming home. They can talk with people who understand and can meet them where they are at, and be patient with their frustration level sometimes. There is no shaming.

If you would like more information about Transitions Clinic and their upcoming plans, please contact them at:

Transitions Clinic
2401 Keith Street
San Francisco, CA 94124
415-933-4403
www.TransitionsClinic.org

The Attack on In-Home Support Services and Formerly Incarcerated Caregivers

By Molly Porzig with Linda Evans



Artwork by Erik Ruin

In the past two years, we have seen capitalism's inherent contradictions boil over in a worldwide economic crisis that is also a crisis of priorities: while effortlessly allocating money into bolstering institutionalized policing and imprisonment, at the same time that budget cuts annihilate public education and social services, and other resources needed for communities to live safe, healthy, meaningful lives. These cuts to social services are creating more obstacles for people released from prison to stay out of prison.

One example of the State of California's misguided priorities is a recent attack on In-Home Support Services (IHSS), a state program in the Department of Social Services. IHSS provides high quality individualized care by allowing people with disabilities and chronic physical problems to stay in their homes rather than being incarcerated in policed, surveilled and unaffordable hospitals or nursing facilities. Compensated as only part-time employees, salaries for caregivers run low, ranging from \$10-12/hour varying by county. IHSS provides in-home support services to over 440,000 low-income people throughout California, and much needed employment to a similar number of low-income caregivers (Egelko*). Rather than improving wages and working conditions for hard-working caregivers, and in turn strengthening the healthcare of hundreds of thousands of sick and elderly people, Governor Schwarzenegger has chosen to attack this social service by cutting its budget by millions of dollars and intensifying the screening process for those applying to be caregivers through discriminatory policies against former prisoners and people with conviction history records.

Since IHSS potentially provides necessary accessible and affordable healthcare for our elders and community members with chronic health problems (exemplifying the resources we need in order to build healthy and stable communities), it is no coincidence IHSS is one of the social services under attack from budget cuts and increased policing of working class people, particularly working class communities of color. Linda Evans,

a community organizer, claims that this is "another way that the state can create genocidal policies against communities of color." This discrimination against people with conviction history records reinforces policing and violates peoples' human rights.

Despite Schwarzenegger's plan, people are fighting back and defending their right to work. The *Abolitionist Collective* spoke briefly with Linda Evans, who has been working tirelessly on this issue. Linda is a former prisoner and current member of All of Us or None, a national organization of prisoners and former prisoners combating the many forms of discrimination we face as the result of felony convictions. The following is an interview with Linda Evans, conducted by Molly Porzig.

As a member of All of Us or None, you often work on struggles for employment and re-entry support for former prisoners. How is this particular struggle against what Schwarzenegger is trying to implement with IHSS related to the other campaigns you are working on?

A lot of people with convictions can't get jobs elsewhere and they have relatives who need care. The principle behind IHSS has been that neighbors and family members provide the best care, and should be compensated for giving that care to their family members, especially because most of them need employment as well. Because we have such a high rate of unemployment among formerly incarcerated people, and because this is one profession that hasn't been barred to us, it's an important struggle for us to make sure this program is administered with as open an application process as possible, with as much opportunity for formerly incarcerated people to be able to take care of their neighbors and their family members as possible. It also fits into our overall struggle against all forms of discrimination based on past convictions because it's exactly why people would be excluded from this employment, because of convictions that are not even necessarily job-related.

Specifically, how is Schwarzenegger discriminating against formerly incarcerated caregivers?

Schwarzenegger has tried to figure out every possible way that he could destroy the IHSS program, and most of his efforts discriminate against former prisoners.

Last year [AB 459] was brought for the state legislature and became law, requiring that all IHSS providers must undergo their own finger printing and background checks at their own expense. And anyone with certain felonies—child abuse, elder abuse, abuse of social security or other government programs, and fraud—which you could say were "job-related," would not get through the screening process. Now, the law is that everybody that's a caregiver has to go through background checks. He is now trying to change the list of convictions from four to fifty.

[Additionally], the new application for becoming an IHSS caregiver also says: "If you ever had a felony or serious misdemeanor conviction, you are ineligible to be a caregiver." So you can see that that was not in line with what actual law had been passed, right? It was a very sweeping and over broad implementation of that law that had been passed by the legislature, and effects so many people.

So people with so-called "job-related" convictions, like the ones mentioned, are automatically ineligible to be caregivers?

No, and this is a major point I want to get across. Even if a conviction is job-related, by federal law those convictions do not *disqualify* you. Job-relatedness means if your conviction is job related, it may be considered in your job search, or in your applicant pool, just like all other information you fill out in your application. It does not mean that that person should be automatically disqualified. We feel that the California laws and the way that Schwarzenegger is going after the IHSS program, with implementing the background checks, finger printing and changing the job application to automatically ban people from providing care, is actually in violation of federal law.

What have been the organizing responses to this threat to IHSS and how can people inside get involved?

On the outside we've been trying to pass resolutions by city councils and Boards of Supervisors, demanding the Department of Social Services adhere to the law instead of adopting an over-broad implementation. It's really the passage of those resolutions that people have gone forward with, mainly in San Francisco. It hasn't happened elsewhere because the law has been shifting so much that we really can't try to get Boards of Supervisors and elected officials to take a position against the law when you don't know exactly what the law is, or will be. We know it's happening though, so we're just trying to stay abreast of all the different tactics they're using to try to destroy this program.

The best way for people inside prison to get involved is to stay abreast of what exactly the IHSS [implementation] is going to be. Right now, we believe it's going to be implemented in the courts through a law, [...] but they should let their relatives

know that if they're a caregiver and they go to get a background check, it does not mean that they will automatically be disqualified from continuing their employment and from continuing to provide care for whomever they're employed by. I think that's important for people to communicate, and if they have relatives who are receiving care, tell them not to panic and be anxious.

I think the other main thing is that we [people outside] should try to keep people inside updated about what does develop in terms of Schwarzenegger's attack on IHSS. And there may be ways that they can express opinions of people locked up about their families' health, because that's who would be affected. *

How do you think these struggles are important pieces to building a movement to abolish the prison industrial complex?

I think that fundamental to building a movement that will really be able to abolish the prison industrial complex is people feeling powerful, people being stable enough in their communities to be able to have a big picture and take action and make decisions based on collective action. The reason All of Us or None engages in civil rights and human rights struggles at the level that we do, which is primarily at a reform level, trying to reduce discrimination, not fundamentally challenging the system of imperialism, for example, is because we know these are very clear barriers that people face in their immediate lives, and if they don't see any hope of conquering those barriers through collective action, certainly it's going to be difficult to think of toppling the prison industrial complex. We feel that the process of people becoming politically conscious and involved is a really crucial process, and talking about structural racism, and structural discrimination as far as a civil rights movement is a way that we engage people in the community in their own liberation, or at least, in struggling for political power regarding their own lives and the conditions of their own lives and communities.

Visit <http://www.allofusornone.org/> for an extensive list of resources for organizing and re-entry support, as well as books and reports on the prison industrial complex.

*Elgeko, Bob. "Schwarzenegger Loses Fight on Felon Caregivers" *SFGate*. Feb.12 2010. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/02/11/BAV61C06RV.DTL>

VICISITUDES

After 25 years in federal prison, Marilyn was released on parole on July 15, 2010. She died on August 3, 2010. Marilyn lived life to the fullest, not defined or confined by the prisons she spent way too much of her life in. Marilyn was an elegant person- elegant in how she carried herself physically, elegant in how she carried her spirit. She was a generous person, with a big laugh and a beautiful, wide smile. For all of her years of love and struggle for the human rights of her sisters inside and all oppressed peoples, we say with great love and respect, "Thank you, Marilyn." You were a gift, and will be dearly missed. Marilyn Buck, presente!



—Pam Fadem

Autobiographi

By Marilyn Buck

Post-war 1947
 born on the white
 side of the tracks
 Texas segregation
 civil rights preacher's child
 fled Texas with honor's diploma
 for UC Berkeley and free speech
 though I did not know then
 that's why I left

Vietnam war 1965
 what war
 are you fighting for
 make love not war
 college books tossed into a trunk in some
 room
 I've never seen since
 fires of internationalism called me
 a girl
 to enlist
 in the anti-war

war against Amerikka
 my own women's liberation on the line
 war in Amerikka
 war against the warmakers
 white-skinned haters
 capitalist consumers of human lives
 following the tradition
 Nat Turner John Brown
 Wobblies subversives
 resistance in the belly of the beast

clandestine war 1973
 captured by the killers
 spirit killers nationkillers
 a political prisoner
 enemy of the state
 terrorist and traitor
 white woman dangerous
 to white Amerika
 condemned to years
 and years of absence
 a lifetime

warmakers
 wait for its prisoners to die
 or go crazy
 or simply wither away into insignificance

I rest, a grain of sand
 significant on the beach head that meets the
 sea
 to face the storm
 I wage resistance
 to stay alive
 I learn to search out freedom in the breath
 my cells send out dendrites
 to absorb the world and its offerings
 I offer back
 poems
 and occasional grains of sand
 mixed into clay and fired
 into sturdiness

(Autumn 1999)

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A New Way of Life
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Los Angeles, CA 90087
332-563-3575

Justice Now
1322 Webster Street, Ste. 210
Oakland, CA 94612
510-839-7654

Prison Law Office
General Delivery
San Quentin, CA 94964

TGI Justice Project
342 9th Street, Ste. 202B
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-252-1444

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
1540 Market Street, Ste. 490
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-255-7036

California for Coalition for Women Prisoners
1540 Market Street, Ste. 490
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-255-7036 Ext.4

Prison Activist Resource Center
PO Box 70447
Oakland, CA 94612
510-893-4648

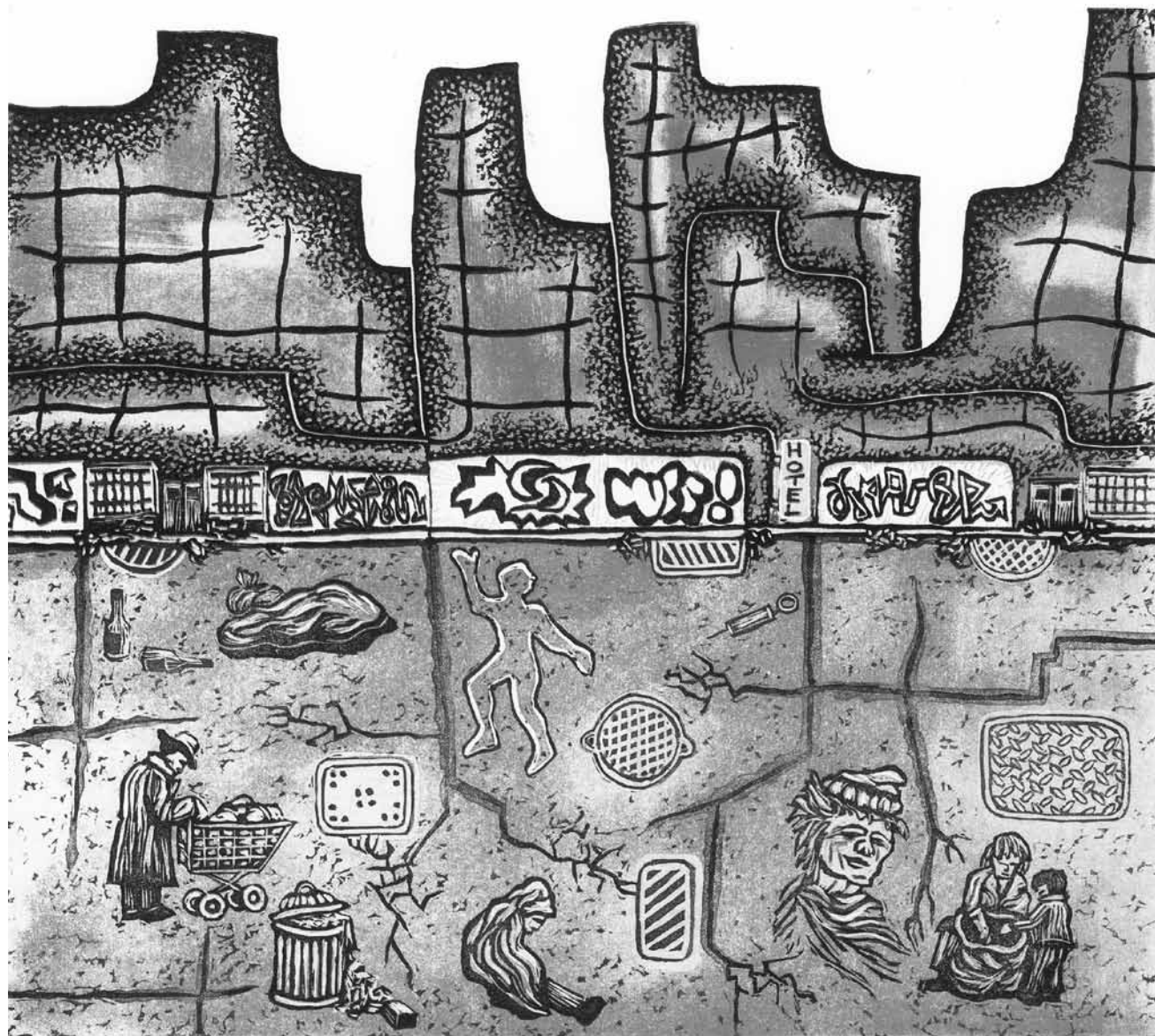
American Friends Service Committee
65 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103
415-565-0201
15 Rutherford Place, New York, NY 10003
212-598-0950

AK Press
674-A 23rd Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510-208-1700

The Other Death Penalty Project
(resource for lifers, passed along by Alfredo Gomez
in High Desert State Prison)
PO Box 1486
Lancaster, CA 93584

East Side Arts Alliance
2277 International Boulevard
Oakland, CA 94606-5003
Storytelling and Organizing Project
PO Box 24840
Oakland, CA
510-978-4014

St. Peter's Housing Committee/
Causa Justa
2301 Mission Street, Ste. 201
San Francisco, CA 94103



"City Scape" by Ed Gould

Send Us Your Writing & Artwork!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, biographies, and art.

Ideas for Articles and Artwork:

- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to remain physically and mentally healthy while imprisoned
- Examples of prisoner organizing
- Updates on what's happening at the prison you're at (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, punishment, and prison
- Experiences about life after prison
- Reflections on identity (for example: race, class, gender, family roles)
- Op-ed on an article published in recent issue

What to Submit:

- Articles should not exceed 1500 words (roughly 5 handwritten pages)
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- If possible, send a copy of your submission, not the original.
- Submissions will automatically be copy-edited for grammar and spelling.

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?

- Remember that writing is difficult for all of us and that your ideas are worth the struggle. Try reading your piece out loud to yourself or sharing it with someone else. Doing this will help you clarify your ideas in your submission.
- Have fun!

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