

# The Abolitionist

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*Español al Reves*

## *Moving in from the Margins*

### *Critical Resistance reports back from United States Social Forum*

by Reggie Gossett and Mayaba Liebenthal

In few words: we were all over it. From taking a programmatic role in the planning process, to mobilizing people from all parts of the country, hosting multiple workshops, and having prison industrial complex abolition addressed on a plenary, CR played a key role in the 1st ever United States Social Forum (USSF) held June 27-July 1 in Atlanta.

#### *Theory and Action*

As abolitionists, our work exists on many different levels of knowledge, theory and action. These levels, when they connect, can transform society and build self-determined communities. Developing the transformative justice/community accountability track with other organizations formulating liberatory approaches to violence, such as Generation 5, INCITE!, Creative Interventions, Sista II Sista, and others, the idea of PIC abolition came to the forum within a broader context and was presented in a holistic way. Much of this (and more) was coordinated with the great help of CR Oakland chapter organizer Nat Smith, who took an informal yet essential role in coordinating CR's role in the Forum, handling a lot of the logistics and managing outreach for CR's upcoming 10th anniversary.

Our interconnected programmatic role was repeated throughout our involvement. CR chapters from around the country joined with other organizations in delegations and caravans heading to Atlanta. CR New York City (CRNYC) and CR New Orleans (CRNOLA) had similar experiences of being participants in larger contingents. CRNYC went down with other organizational members from the "Another Politics is Possible" delegation while CRNOLA was a part of the Gulf South delegation and integral in developing the Gulf Coast Resolution for the forum. The USSF provided CR chapters the chance to convene with many organizations and tracks, speaking to the importance of intersectionality and complexity of abolition and the inevitability of CR's commitment to movement building.

Though integrated into the larger forum, CR maintained and increased visibility throughout the week. Taking a seat as one of the plenary speakers, Kai Lumumba Barrow, successfully inserted abolition so thoroughly into the plenary that both the moderator and audience chanted it several times before it closed.

CR hosted 3 workshops including, Abolition 101, State of the Movement, and Post-Katrina New Orleans, Rebuilding of a Police State.



Individual CR members were on various panels and workshops throughout the forum, including a workshop that addressed visions for dismantling Male Supremacy organized by the Catalyst Project, and dramatic reading: "Say What?!" Lies of the federal government told about Hurricane Katrina. This visibility helped build support for the CR10 anniversary celebration next year.

#### *Centering The Movement, Transforming The Vision Of Justice*

One important point to highlight was the degree that CR and other organizations doing similar work were able to build the momentum and address the concept of putting people most impacted at the center of work. We successfully expanded conversations of abolition, connecting our mission with a broader vision.

Far too often abolition is perceived to exist in an untouchable abstract future, not action we can take now in our everyday lives. This gap between possibility and present echoed in the proceedings of the Forum. The other world that is possible doesn't effectively engage with the world that is right now, in the US on mass. This contradiction is present in our abolitionist movement and the broader movement.

On a certain level, we saw a lack of praxis, a lot of amazing, yet generally not strategic action, information consumption, and lateral growth. While it is necessary to build stronger networks, the possibility of the future eclipsed the necessities of the present. For example, during the USSF the Supreme Court basically overturned Brown vs. the Board of Education, and what did we do? Nothing. Not only should we have seen that one coming, but we should have also been ready to move to action. As powerful as the forum was, as a movement we are still waiting. In this vacuum, what

role does PIC abolition play?

The glass might be three quarters empty, but the liquid in it is very pretty. Our collective struggles are getting stronger. The Forum was an important step in building a common language, shifting ideas, and bringing people to the table that have the experience of being negatively affected by the PIC but not necessarily an analysis of why. Unfortunately, while we build political power we are still being steamrolled by a juggernaut of injustice. It's okay, blame Reagan. And while understanding the past we look to our present and our future. And both are filled with questions.

In a conversation following the State of the Movement workshop CR members Nat, Kool Black, Kai, and Melissa discussed where the movement is and where it is going. This is a brief account of the conversation: 10 years into the movement we still have a lot of question. But how do we actually envision going forward? Is a mass movement what we need? What would this mass movement look like? Can we "win", given that abolition isn't something we can "win" in the traditional sense of other movements?

Given that abolition is not a set of policy reforms, but rather, a vision of social transformation, a process, what are the benchmarks? We need to be careful not to be stuck in past models of social movements, and be open to envisioning something new/different.

Going forward, we need to identify key strategic goals, understanding we can't do everything (i.e. stop expansion, build alternative models, build leadership among heavily impacted folks). We should revisit the result from the exercise we did at the CR National Retreat 2006 around vision, but also engage in a much deeper conversation around vision, goals, and strategy through the 10th anniversary process, with ourselves, and with other organizations and movements.

While recognizing our successes and failures, we keep these questions and goals in mind. CR continues to move forward towards realizing the mission: abolition.

## THE ABOLITIONIST

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# From The Abolitionist Collective

**In** an interview given just before he was murdered, George Jackson—Black revolutionary and theoretician—spoke of the strategies, objectives, and greater connections to worldwide liberation struggles, of what was then (1971) called the Prison Liberation Movement. Jackson commented on this greater struggle and the solidarity between those imprisoned and those on the outside: “The point is, ...in the face of what we confront, to fight and win. That’s the real objective: not just to make statements, no matter how noble, but to destroy the system that oppresses us. By any means available to us. And to do this, we must be connected, in contact and communication with those in struggle on the outside. We must be mutually supporting because we’re all in this together. It’s all one struggle at base.”

Of course, over 30 years later, a major element of the struggle to abolish the prison industrial complex is still the struggle to stay connected, in contact, and in communication—using these connections, to build a base and collectivity from which to destroy the system (the systems!) that oppresses us. As we wrote in the last issue of *The Abolitionist*, the prison industrial complex is like a web—keeping us entangled and apart. By keeping in contact, inside, outside, and through the wire, by being in constant communication, we can build a clearer understanding of the complexity of what we are up against, as well under-

stand how our diverse struggles can be related. With these useful and powerful understandings and connections, the shackles that keep us isolated and in disarray may be destroyed and replaced with vibrant ties that keep us bound together.

In this issue of *The Abolitionist*, we’ve tried to create a venue to build connection and communication between those on the inside and those on the outside and also between people working



in different parts of the abolitionist movement. Further, we have struggled to institutionalize this communication by establishing some new ongoing sections. To this end, we are proud to feature a column by political prisoner Marilyn Buck called Vicissitudes. Marilyn engages us with the relationship between women prisoners and the recent jailing of millionaire Paris Hilton. Free Battered Women and Habeas Project offer us the first installment of their regular section where-in they give us a historical contextualization of their organizations. Similarly, Youth Against

Youth Incarceration (YAYI) also lay out their platform and up the voices of youth against the PIC. We also offer some news briefs and a general introduction to our new regular section on the struggles of Political Prisoners. And finally, you will find an installment of a new feature: Ask the Abolitionist, where we think about the issues of accountability, safety, and justice.

Along with these new, regular sections, we’ll find ourselves informed and on point with such ongoing columns as Coming Home, Testing the Borders, and Critical Condition. Also, Edgar Pitts talks about the effect of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act on prisoners’ human rights, while Jordon Flaherty give some analysis on the appalling new post-Katrina police drama, *K-Ville*. Riding along side are also timely reports on the work of PIC abolitionists at the US Social Forum, and the vicious police rampage against immigrant rights marcher on May Day in Los Angeles.

As always, we want to stay engaged with you, the communities that make up our readership. This publication is only as important and the connections it helps to foster. Please feel empowered to send in your original pieces of writing or artwork. We can’t print everything, but we try to stay in communication and struggle hard to stay connected

## FREE BATTERED WOMEN AND THE HABEAS PROJECT WORKING FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE, AND HEALING FOR INCARCERATED SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

***This is the first installment of a new section by the Habeas Project and Free Battered Women. Below, they describe the organization and their approach to working with imprisoned survivors of domestic violence.***

### ***Who we are***

As part of the movement for racial justice and the struggle to resist all forms of intimate partner violence against women and transgender people, Free Battered Women works to end the re-victimization of incarcerated survivors of domestic violence. Through community organizing, parole advocacy, public education, media campaigns, and policy work, we work as part of a statewide movement to free survivors of intimate partner battering from prison who have been imprisoned for crimes related to their experiences of being abused.

Free Battered Women came about as a result of organizing efforts of imprisoned domestic violence survivors in 1991. Survivors at the California Institution for Women joined with supporters outside prison to launch a clemency campaign (e.g., reduced sentences or pardons) to seek freedom for survivors who had killed their abusive partners and were serving life sentences.

Because clemency and parole were not effective in getting domestic violence survivors serving life sentences out of prison, advocates went to the California legislature to try to bring survivors’ cases back to the courts. This led to the passage of Penal Code §1473.5, which allows some domestic violence survivors to challenge their conviction if expert testimony on domestic violence was not introduced when their cases originally were prosecuted (see eligibility criteria

below). The California Habeas Project works to implement this law, and is a collaboration between Free Battered Women, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, the California Women’s Law Center, the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office, and the University of Southern California’s Post-Conviction Justice Project. Part of our work includes recruiting, training and supporting a network of dedicated volunteers committed to increasing justice and freedom for imprisoned domestic violence survivors.

### ***Why Do We Work With Imprisoned Domestic Violence Survivors?***

The vast majority of the over 11,000 people incarcerated in California’s women’s prisons survived physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse by an intimate partner before

they entered prison. Hundreds of abuse survivors are serving life sentences for their responses to this abuse. Many survivors are arrested after defending themselves and/or their children from abusive partners; being forced by their partners to commit or confess to crimes; and being held responsible for their abusive partner’s violence against their children. We also know that a lot of trauma survivors turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with the abuse, and then get caught up in the legal system on drug-related charges, prostitution charges, or for economic crimes. Once convicted, these abuse survivors find themselves going from a prison created by their partners to one run by the state, where tactics of control used by prison staff mirror the abuse they experienced at home.

Many of the survivors we work with never

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photo by Rose Braz



*This fall the Fox network is slated to present a new television show called K-Ville. Set in post-Katrina New Orleans, K-Ville promises to highlight the heroism of New Orleans cops even as daily reports continue of intense police repression, profiling, and violence. According to promotional materials for the show:*

From writer and executive producer Jonathan Lisco (“NYPD Blue,” “The District”) comes a heroic police drama set in New Orleans. Two years after Katrina, the city is still in chaos. Criminals roam the streets with AK-47s, many cops have quit, and the jails, police stations and crime labs still haven’t been properly rebuilt. But the cops who remain have courage to burn and a passion to reclaim and rebuild their city.

*The picture painted by the Fox executives offers a sharp contrast to the context laid out in the following piece by Jordan Flaherty. If you tune into K-Ville this fall, we hope you will bear some of what follows in mind and remember that New Orleans is just one environment in which policing represents some of the most intense violence with which we are faced each day in the United States. -Eds.*

by Jordan Flaherty

**Since** at least the 1950s, and shows like *Dragnet*, Hollywood’s representation of cops has been as heroes, as brave, as a thin blue line protecting the good people from the bad. The Seventies saw radical criticisms of police make it into the mainstream, and films like *Serpico* and *Chinatown* shone a light on police corruption and brutality. However, the Seventies also saw the rise of a new kind of hero – Dirty Harry played by Clint Eastwood – the cop who was brutal and perhaps corrupt, but ultimately sympathetic.

Audiences could no longer believe the old clean-cut images of cops – there were too many front-page stories of police violence and corruption – but it was still necessary to maintain the public perception that cops are necessary. The new generation of cops on film and TV – refined and popularized by stars from Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon* to Dennis Frantz in *NYPD Blue* – was that of a troubled, violent, flawed, but ultimately sympathetic hero. Yes, they broke the rules, but ultimately the rules were the problem. These cops would torture people based on a hunch – but, they were always right. The person they tortured would always end up being guilty, and they would always get information from torturing them that they would not have gotten otherwise.

This justification was developed in Hollywood, and then perfected years later by the Bush Administration, who made explicit the arguments that films like *Die Hard* had implied – we need cops (and soldiers and federal agents) to break the rules. In fact the rules are the problem. There are “good people” and “criminals,” and we don’t need to worry about how the “bad guys” are treated. Further, the job of keeping us safe is necessarily dirty, and the police will need to break some rules to do their job right. “Tough on Crime” politicians like Rudolph Giuliani as Mayor of New York also contributed to this environment by discarding decades of reforms and practices meant to give opportunity for rehabilitation, and pushing for more police, more prisons, and more arrests.

Into this environment comes the Fox cop drama *K-Ville*, set in New Orleans. The publicity material for the new show explains, “Two years after Katrina, the city is still in chaos...many cops have quit, and the jails, police stations and crime labs still haven’t been properly rebuilt. But the cops who remain have courage to burn and a passion to reclaim and rebuild their city.”

Like all Hollywood products, this show is about making money first and foremost, capitalizing on the wild popularity of new-generation cop shows like *Law and Order* and *CSI*. But it also falls perfectly into an agenda of explaining and forgiving brutal police behavior. In fact, it takes one of the nation’s most notoriously racist, violent and corrupt police forces, and explains away their harmful acts as the natural result of the trauma of Katrina and its aftermath. When the cops on this show torture – and early publicity for the show indicates that they do – it is because they are good people who have been pushed too

hard. It makes us empathize with them and not, for example, with their victims, who are seen as deserving of whatever punishment they receive.

### ***Demonized and Policed***

The reality is that the police, glamorized on *K-Ville*, are a part of the disaster the people of New Orleans have faced, not part of the solution. In the months after Katrina, while New Orleanians wanted to return and rebuild their city, they got “security” instead. Hundreds of National Guard troops, as well as police forces from across the U.S. and private security forces including Blackwater, Wackenhut and an Israeli company called Instinctive Shooting International began patrolling the nearly empty city.

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As has been widely reported, the town of Gretna, across the Mississippi from New Orleans and part of Jefferson Parish, stationed officers on the bridge leading out of New Orleans blocking the main escape route for the tens of thousands suffering in the Superdome, Convention Center, and throughout the city.

And as the *LA Times* reported on September 16, 2005, “little over a week after this mostly white suburb became a symbol of callousness for using armed officers to seal one of the last escape routes from New Orleans - trapping thousands of mostly black evacuees in the flooded city - the Gretna City Council passed a resolution supporting the police chief’s move. ‘This wasn’t just one man’s decision,’ Mayor Ronnie C. Harris said. ‘The whole community backs it.’”

From the initial images broadcast around the world, demonizing the people of New Orleans as “looters” and “criminals,” the public perception of New Orleans’ people has been shaped by bullying and “tough on crime” rhetoric, exemplified by Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco bringing in National Guard troops shortly after Katrina with the words, “They have M-16s and they are locked and loaded...These troops know how to shoot and kill, and they are more than willing to do so if necessary, and I expect they will.” This public perception, validated by *K-Ville*, was no doubt a big cause of so-called “Katrina Fatigue” – the idea that the nation has run out of sympathy for the people of New Orleans. Why feel sympathy for a city of thugs?

### ***The Disaster Before the Disaster***

Louisiana has the highest rate of imprisonment in the country—816 sentenced prisoners per 100,000 state residents. By comparison, Texas comes in a distant second place with 694 per 100,000. If Louisiana were a county, it would have

the highest imprisonment rate in the world. The racial disparity in both arrests and sentencing is striking. Although African-Americans make up 32 percent of Louisiana’s population, they constitute 72 percent of the state’s prison population.

The New Orleans city jail, generally known as Orleans Parish Prison (OPP), was, pre-Katrina, the eighth largest jail in the country, made up of several buildings located in Midcity New Orleans. The population of the jail was predominantly people from the city’s many low-income communities and communities of color.

Mary Howell is a civil rights lawyer who has been active in defense of prisoners from OPP for years. “In 2004, 80,000 people came into OPP as arrestees,” she explains. “Very few were eligible for rehabilitation programs. This prison has mostly been warehousing people. We’ve suffered under a policy where the city builds a huge jail that is then required to be filled with human beings, or else it’s a waste of money.” According to a pre-Katrina report from the Metropolitan Crime Commission, 65% of those arrested in New Orleans are eventually released without ever having been charged with any crime.

New Orleans’ public defense system is in such poor shape that Orleans Parish Criminal District Court Judge Arthur Hunter recently complained, “indigent defense in New Orleans is unbelievable, unconstitutional, totally lacking the basic professional standards of legal representation, and a mockery of what a criminal justice system should be in a Western civilized nation.”

### ***Local Resistance***

On May 9, 2006, Robert Goodman’s brother was killed in an encounter with the New Orleans police.

For Goodman, who was born and raised in the schools and prisons of Louisiana, the primary crisis of New Orleans is a discriminatory and corrupt criminal justice system. “Every time a Black child is born in Louisiana, there’s already a bed waiting for him at Angola State Prison,” he declares.

In New Orleans, 95 percent of the detained youth in 1999 were Black. In 2004, Louisiana spent \$96,713 to incarcerate each child in detention and \$4,724 to educate a child in the public schools. “When I went to prison, I was illiterate,” Goodman said. “I didn’t even know anything about slavery, about our history.”

Goodman is now fighting to change that system, as part of a grassroots organization called Safe Streets Strong Communities. His family has organized protests, and reached out to others in their community to build a movement. The New Orleans chapter of Critical Resistance has also been organizing at the grassroots, fighting for amnesty for those who were caught up in the post-Katrina policing. These are the truly compelling stories of criminal justice in New Orleans post-Katrina, yet you can be sure that these local voices will be among those that ***K-Ville*** will not air.



# Critical Resistance

## Survey Results

Dear Friends and Allies,

*Thank you so so much for answering the Critical Resistance Survey!*

*Critical Resistance (CR) is a national grassroots organization whose mission is to end the use of imprisonment, policing, and surveillance as “solutions” to social, political and economic problems. As you know, we always seek to be guided and led by those most impacted by this crisis: people who are or have been in prison, family members, and survivors of police violence. That’s why we asked for your input about the issues you see as most important, the issues you would like us to work on in the future, and the issues you would like to join us in working on.*

*We would now like to share the results of the survey with you. Attached are those results, which we will use to guide our work as we move forward. Each of our chapters and our national organizing body will use the results to help guide our future work. And we will include the results in our starter packages for individuals interested in starting CR chapters.*

*We recognize that all of these issues are important and we also recognize that we cannot work on every issue and the results do not include everything we could take on. Nonetheless, we truly appreciate your insight and input and will use this information as we move forward to fight to end the prison industrial complex.*

*With much thanks and in solidarity,*

*Rose Braz and Pilar Maschi  
for Critical Resistance*

### Who filled out the survey

- 187 or 72% are people currently in prison
- 80 or 31% have or have had family members in prison
- 68 or 36% have been in prison, jail, juvenile detention or the youth authority
- 59 or 23% are concerned community members

**Many people reported selecting the issues they did because these issues personally affected them or their families.**

### There was a wide variety of proposed strategies offered including:

- ‘Building community involvement is the most important thing’
- ‘Coalition building and committees to work on these issues via meeting and working with the coalitions and legislature’
- ‘We should work with state legislators and have a huge conference or protest until they listen’
- ‘Meet with prisoners and their families to understand the real story’
- ‘Teach people how they can be active in political change and how to empower themselves. People need to feel like they can make a difference’
- ‘Hands on tactics: protests, media committees Talking to prisoners and families’
- ‘raise public awareness’
- ‘Prisoners need better Vocational programs when they get out of prison or jail
- deprogramming the fear that was implanted into society where anyone with a conviction is looked at like a disease.’
- ‘Education, drug rehab programs, and working with former prisoners and their families’

### Top 10 Issues Identified in Order

- 158 or 61% - Gain parole for those serving life sentences with the possibility of parole
- 142 or 55% - Reduce the number of people in prison through changes to sentencing laws or decriminalization
- 111 or 43% - Stop the construction of new prisons
- 110 or 43% - End barriers to employment for people who have convictions
- 104 or 40% - Increase support services for people coming home from prison
- 91 or 35% - Abolish “Three Strikes” laws
- 90 or 35% - End the criminalization of mental illness
- 88 or 34% - Reduce prison spending by reducing the number of people in prison and closing prisons and re-invest funds in education or social services
- 77 or 30% - Close super max prisons
- 74 or 29% - End geographic restrictions on where people on parole can live

### Remaining Issues in Order:

- 71 or 28% - End the criminalization of drug use
- 70 or 27% - Shorten lengths of parole
- 70 or 27% - End policies that result in people in prison losing custody of their children
- 68 or 26% - End the policy that bars people with certain connections from public housing
- 60 or 23% - Remove police from public schools
- 59 or 23% - Make imprisonment a human rights violation
- 57 or 22% - End the criminalization of homelessness
- 53 or 21% - Fight the detention of immigrants
- 52 or 21% - End the criminalization of self defense related to intimate partner violence gender and sex based violating
- 46 or 18% - Abolish civil commitment –imprisoning people after relapse under civil statutes
- 42 or 16% - Close prisons
- 42 or 16% - Ban the prosecution of youth as adults
- 42 or 16% - Fight deportation of those convicted of criminal offenses
- 38 or 15% - End the criminalization of sex work
- 33 or 13% - Stop racial, religions and transgender profiling
- 32 or 12% - End policing practices that target and occupy low-income communities of color
- 22 or 9% - Decrease local budgets for police equipment and hiring



# Policing the Movement:

## *Reflections on May Day in Los Angeles*



*In recent years, May 1st, International Workers Day, has become synonymous with demonstrations highlighting the undeniable connections between labor in the United States and ever-increasing repression for people seeking to enter this country permanently or temporarily from outside its borders. This May 1st, demonstrations for immigrant rights in Los Angeles were met with overwhelming police violence as cops surrounded people marching, fired rubber bullets into crowds and physically beat participants in the march as well as bystanders.*

*In what follows, Austin Delgadillo, of Critical Resistance Los Angeles talks with Los Angeles-based Copwatch members about what happened that day in MacArthur Park and the implications of the events for work against policing in L.A. and beyond.*

*CR: Austin Delgadillo*

*CW: Copwatch Members*

*CR:* Can you give some background on what happened on May 1st and what the fall out has been for anti-policing work in Los Angeles?

*CW:* People started getting together around 2:00 at different rally points around Vermont [Street]. Each group was going to march to MacArthur Park and have an action.

From the get-go it was lively, the people were happy, and everybody was feeling what they were there for. But then you could see from the very beginning all these cops were posted up all over the spot. They had the bike patrol. They kept riding back and forth and there weren't even that many people there to begin with. At 4:00 we marched through MacArthur Park and along the way we saw that scene. We saw they had set a big cop headquarters, but they were all over just waiting. Everywhere you looked you saw nothing but cops with batons. The motorcycle cops had their shotguns out.

*CR:* Are you saying they blocked off public space and private property around different points around the park?

*CW:* Yeah, there [were] parts on Alvarado [St.] where they didn't let people walk regularly on the sidewalk. They were trying to divert the march, which had permits to march just on one side of the sidewalk. And [the cops] were trying to rush people into the park from the very beginning. They were trying to get everybody there quick.

We walked through Wilshire [Blvd.] and Alvarado [St.] and it was cool; people were walking from park to park to check out what was going on. The next thing you know, the cops start fucking with people. They came in with their motorcycles with the sirens on, with their batons out, and they were pushing people with their motorcycles and they didn't give warning. There were women and children and there were elders. They didn't care. [The cops] were just trying to pump the community to do what they wanted [them] to do. So they started bringing out lines and lines of cops and everywhere you looked you could see these fools were surrounding us. They were everywhere.

*CR:* Was that the Metro Squad?

*CW:* [They] were in riot gear and you couldn't tell who they were because they had no identification. The first thing they did was hit the people across the street in front of Botánica del Pueblo. They just rushed it. There was a hotdog vendor; they threw her shit all over the floor. They pushed people and people started telling them, "What are you doing? This is police brutality. You're attacking the community."

Around 6:00 everything started getting intense. I saw crowds of people running and even falling.... And then you could hear rubber bullets being shot. You know, we're still walking in and the cops are telling us, "You've got to leave," and they're pushing us around another corner, but at the same time you're hearing all these shots and all these people screaming.

*CR:* I remember, they started beating on people way before they gave a disperse order. When they did give it, it came from a helicopter; you couldn't really hear it too well...it was high up, only over one portion of the park. It was in English, so again, people are trying to figure out where to go. I [saw] a lot of people trying to help each other, but [we'd] turn around and run straight into police.

*CW:* When the cops [were] saying to evacuate the park there were still people who weren't sure what to do because they had their cars parked in the park so they [couldn't] leave because they [had] their cars there but [the cops] were not letting them go in.

*CR:* I remember, too, there was a homeless man who was sleeping and as they were sweeping through the park they woke him up by kicking him and beating him. What do you think the motives are of the police behavior? Is it a unique thing to Los Angeles or is it something that is inherent to the system of policing in this whole country?

*CW:* It's inherent. LA is a unique place because it has a really long history of uprising and implementing harsher laws because of crowds of people of color gathering together. Now you can't even walk with more than 3 people or you're considered a gang, so it's like everything has to do with the history of uprising, you know?

There's part of the [Los Angeles Police Department] LAPD that wants to work even closer

with immigration. They [already] help coordinate the [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] ICE raids, they help intimidate the community as agents of immigration, but there's a part of LAPD that wants to work even further. Because Los Angeles is a sanctuary city, they're not supposed to ask where people are from, but they saw a march where people [were] standing up, [and] the cops didn't care. They were like fuck it, we're gonna punk 'em. That's what their terrorism training goes into. They view peaceful communities as terrorists.

We know those fools had been training since 8:00 in the morning, so by the time they came through, they were happy to be doing everything they had been practicing. That was their live training. People were scared for their lives because all you heard was the popping, and it was non-stop. You looked down the street and all you saw was the little rubber bullets....

*CR:* A lot of times they try to cite these situations as examples of a broken system, or a few bad apples or some errors in training, but if we saw them there since 8:00 am training all day and planning and being prepared, to me it's no accident what happened. It seemed planned and it definitely seemed like the dangerous thing to them that day was oppressed people being together and loving each other and being united.

*CW:* What we saw on May Day was in big part also brought in by gentrification. MacArthur Park is a gathering point for people. That's where people go chill and relax and it sits right between downtown L.A. and the Willshire area. They're currently trying to develop it and they're setting up commissions and programs and activities, and they don't have the community in mind. It's a different crowd they're trying to attract.

*CR:* The media seem shocked that they got treated as protesters on May Day. In terms of the role of the media, they want this special, separate treatment but they also want complete access to the scene where they just film and be "objective." What should the role of mainstream media be in situations like May Day? What should they be doing to help support social change, or is that not a role for mainstream media?

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# NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN PRISON GROWS: BIGGEST INCREASE SINCE 2000

*After six years of slowing growth rates* in prison and jail populations, Bureau of Justice Statistics figures for 2006 showed the largest increase in the number of people in prison in 7 years. As of mid year 2006, one in every 133 US residents was in prison or jail.

The report showed that 6 out of 10 people in prison and jail were Black or Latino, and that nearly 5 percent of all Black men were in prison or jail.

The report also showed that one out of every five new people sent to prison in the United

States were in California, where numerous proposals to reduce prison sentences and change parole policies, were rejected by California legislators who recently voted for a multi-billion dollar prison expansion plan.

## **Other important findings of the BJS report include:**

- Ten states exceeded the national imprisonment rate, led by Louisiana (835 per 100,000 residents).
- Between 2000 and 2005, the number of

new commitments to state prison increased by 20.3%, and the number of parole violations resulting in a return to prison increased by 14.1%.

- The number of people in women's prisons rose almost twice as fast (4.8%) as the growth of the number of men imprisoned (2.7%).

- The rate of local jail population growth slowed from mid-year 2005 to 2006, but still increased by 2.5%.

- The number of people in jails expanded along with jail capacity at about an equal growth rate between 1995 and 2006.

## **MAYORS CALL FOR NEW U.S. DRUG POLICY**

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) made history in June when it passed a resolution calling for a public health approach to substance use and abuse. The resolution was sponsored by Mayor Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City.

The resolution proclaims the war on drugs a failure, and calls for "a New Bottom Line in U.S. drug policy, a public health approach that concentrates more fully on reducing the negative consequences associated with drug abuse, while ensuring that our policies do not exacerbate these problems or create new social problems of their own."

The resolution endorsed greater access to drug treatment such as methadone and other maintenance therapies, elimination of the federal ban on funding sterile syringe access

programs, and prevention policies based on needs assessed at the local level. Resolutions become the official policy of the USCM.

## **GAYS AND LESBIANS ALLOWED CONJUGAL VISITS IN PRISONS**

Facing the threat of a lawsuit, California's prisons will now allow conjugal visits for some gay and lesbian prisoners. The move comes after passage of a 2003 law that gave domestic partners many of the same rights as married couples.

Facing a complaint from a prisoner in a Vacaville prison and pressure from the

American Civil Liberties Union, CDCR has begun to allow overnight visits for prisoners with registered domestic partners and is slated to adopt permanent regulations later this year. The change will allow gay and lesbian prisoners the same rights as others, who are eligible to spend up to three days with family members in living areas—usually trailers—on prison grounds.

The new regulations will add domestic partners to a list of family members, including spouses, siblings, and grandparents, who can visit overnight. The corrections department is finalizing new regulations before submitting them to the state's Office of Administrative Law, which will provide the final approval.



## **SAN QUENTIN DEATH ROW EXPANSION FACES ANOTHER CHALLENGE**

A plan to build new death row cells at San Quentin would be put on hold while alternatives are studied if new legislation co-authored by Assemblyman Jared Huffman and state Sen. Carole Migden becomes law. But a spokesperson for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said they intend to "go forward with this housing facility at San Quentin."

Since the Legislature authorized \$220 million for the death row expansion in 2003, the cost estimate has increased by 53 percent, despite a reduction in the number of cells planned to 768. Because Schwarzenegger did not include the needed \$117 million in his budget for the coming fiscal year, the Legislature must approve additional spending.

The new bill, AB 1743, would direct the Bureau of State Audits to complete, by April 2008, an evaluation of alternative scenarios for housing prisoners with a death sentence while retaining the lethal injection chamber at San Quentin. In the meantime, the bill would prohibit the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation from spending additional money on expanding death row at San Quentin.

## **CA: PRISON POPULATION CAP LAWSUIT MOVES FORWARD**

In a June 27, 2007 court hearing, U.S. District Court Judges Lawrence Karlton and Thelton Henderson both seemed likely to issue an order creating a three-judge panel to determine whether to impose a prison population cap in California. The judges did not issue an order at the hearing, but are expected to rule soon.

At the hearing, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) argued that with the passage of AB900 – which will build 53,000 more prison and jail cells—the state was addressing overcrowding and urged the Court to deny the motion to create the three judge panel. The Judges appeared to reject that argument, with Judge Karlton stating that the question is whether the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is making enough progress in its efforts to fix its constitutional problems; "The answer is no," Karlton said.

If the motion is granted, the first step would be for Karlton and Henderson to create the three judge panel. That panel would then need to decide that overcrowding was the primary cause of inadequate care for sick and mentally ill prisoners, and that public safety would not be compromised by a population cap before they could set a number for the prison population. It is also possible that if the three judge panel does decide to set a cap, CDCR will appeal that decision. In short, early releases could be ordered, but this likely would not occur for some time.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency recently issued a report reviewing 14 studies of state and county early-release programs and found no increase in crime rates or the rate at which those who were released early returned to prison.

*Critical Resistance*, as part of Californians United for a Responsible Budget, joined a Friend of the Court brief, in this case, arguing in favor of an early release order.



# *In Memoriam—Harmon Wray*

On July 24, 2007, Harmon Wray died from complications caused by a massive stroke. He was 60-years-old. Wray was a friend, mentor, leader, and example to many of us fighting against the prison industrial complex. Best known for his tireless work among faith communities, Wray's knowledge and compassion were felt through his teaching and preaching across a multitude of movements, from the abolition of the death penalty to restorative and economic justice.

Harmon Wray spent decades actively engaged in congregations and organizations throughout Tennessee including Nashville Justice Network, Penuel Ridge Retreat Center, Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing, Restorative Justice

Coalition of Tennessee, Coalition for the Defense of Battered Women, Tennesseans for Handgun Control, Tennessee Hunger Coalition, Dismas House of Nashville, and as an instructor at

Vanderbilt Divinity School. Wray also acted as the Executive Director of United Methodist restorative justice ministries and as the coordinator for ministries with the poor and marginalized.

Recently The Abolitionist had the pleasure of featuring an important book he co-wrote with Laura Magnani, entitled: *Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Justice System* (Issue #6, Summer 2007).

While Harmon will be missed as vital voice for prisoners and for alternatives to imprisonment and punishment, we will also miss his wisdom, wit, tenacity, patience, and limitless compassion. For many of us, he will continue, even in his death, to be an important model for how to live our politics daily. We'll miss you, Harmon.

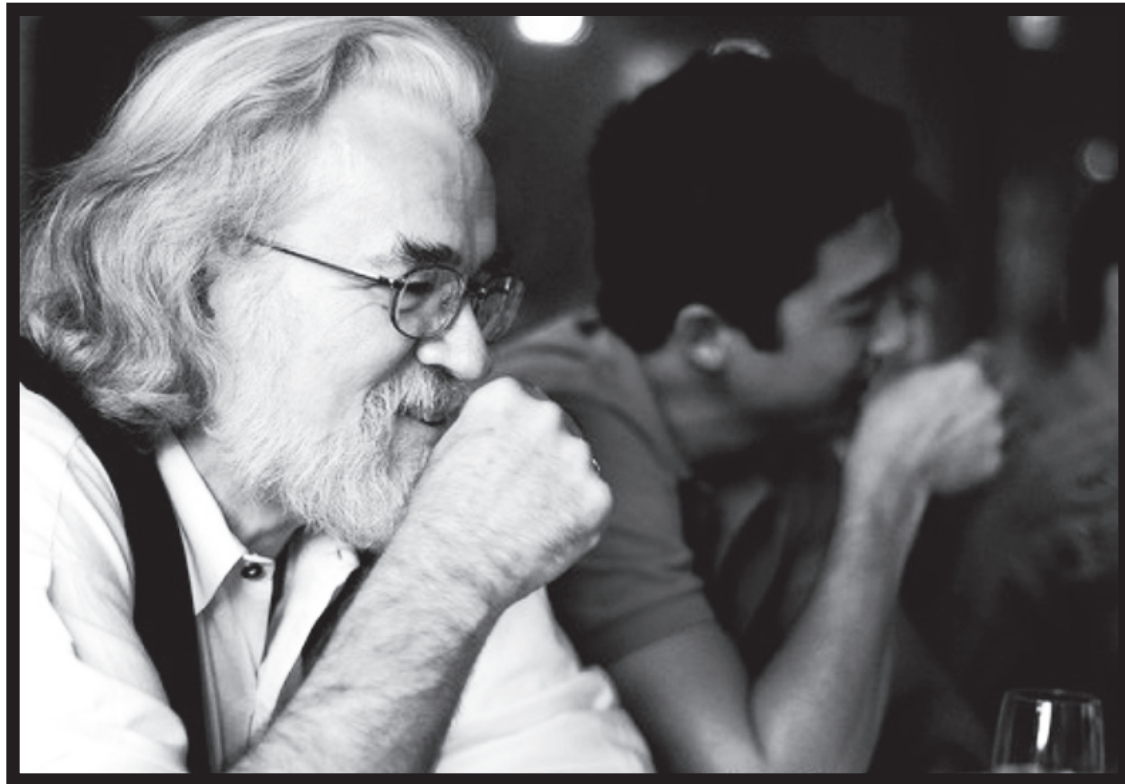


photo by Judy Greene

## *CRITICAL CONDITION* *Walkin' with Norwalk*

**During winter months it is common to** catch a cold, mostly due to increased crowding indoors, which increases disease transmission. Prisons are constantly crowded, regardless of the time of year, and communicable diseases are easily spread. The outbreak of Norwalk virus at San Quentin last winter is a good example of how quickly an infectious disease can spread inside, and the obstacles to containing outbreaks.

The symptoms and effects of Norwalk virus, also called norovirus, are very easy to recognize. Individuals with the virus will become suddenly sick, at first feeling nauseous, followed by stomach cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea. Some people get a slight fever and dark brown urine. Vomiting and diarrhea continue for more than three days can cause dehydration, which means that a person does not have enough water in their body. Severe dehydration is dangerous and can cause death.

Usually people can recover from Norwalk virus within a couple of days on their own if they can consume enough liquids, but if this is not possible, or if their immune system is weakened, special medical attention is needed. Ongoing vomiting is especially dangerous for people on regular oral medication, because the constant vomiting does not allow people to get the meds into their system. If you or people around you are experiencing ongoing vomiting and diarrhea, you should request medical attention.

You can check people's heart rates to determine if they are dehydrated. Anyone's heart rate should not be more than 120 beats per minute. It is very easy to check your own or someone else's heart rate. Place your pointer and middle finger on the blood vessels on either the neck, just to the left or right of the Adam's apple, or on the blood vessels on the inside of the wrist, just below the base of the thumb. You only need to press your fingers to the neck or wrist lightly to feel the heartbeat—don't press hard! If you don't feel a pulse, move your fingers around the area slowly until you feel a regular beat. Count the number of heartbeats in one minute. You can use the second hand of a clock, or have a friend count from 0 to 60 seconds. You can also

count the number of heartbeats in ten seconds and multiply that count by six—either way will work. Report the person's heart rate when requesting medical attention. This may help improve chances of getting medical attention, and hopefully shorten the time you/they have to wait.

### ***Avoiding Infection***

It is a generous and caring act to take care of sick friends, but be careful to avoid touching vomit or feces—both are infectious and contain the virus. If you do come in contact with vomit or feces, or are caring for a person with norovirus, be sure to wash your hands often and do not put your hands in your mouth. People become infected by either eating food or liquids or touching objects contaminated with norovirus and then placing their hand in their mouth. Lack of hand washing is the most common way the virus is spread. You can prevent getting norovirus by washing your hands after going to the bathroom and before preparing and eating food.

Winter is the season for Norwalk virus. Outbreaks are mostly found in nursing homes, schools, jails, and prisons. Last winter's outbreak at San Quentin, however, was due to more than poor baseline prison conditions and crowding. Prisoners were sick for at least a week with stomach and intestinal problems before the spreading illness was diagnosed. By the end of that week, about 150 people in North Block had become ill. Three of the four dorm blocks in H unit also had full outbreaks. The virus even reached East Block, where prisoners are on constant lock down, and have very little contact with anyone. For three to four weeks the prison was on lockdown, but not a complete and strict quarantine. Intake and the reception center were also closed. In all, over there were over 800 cases of illness, about fifty of which were among staff. The outbreak ended in mid January. There were no hospitalizations or severe cases, however uncomfortable the virus made people.

There were several difficulties that arose in containing the outbreak and treating prisoners. First, it should have been treated as an outbreak at the very beginning. Treating the symptoms at urgent

care and sending people back to their units helped spread the virus. Secondly, there were disagreements about how to treat the outbreak. Physicians wanted a swift and complete containment to treat people who were ill and keep others from getting sick. Prison officials had other priorities, like keeping laborers in the kitchen, laundry, and sewer plant and not overcrowding local jails, and only allowed limited containment.

A contributing factor to the spread of the virus was the classification of bleach as contraband. Bleach is the only thing that will kill the norovirus on surfaces and by banning it, prison officials failed to take an easy and simple infection control measure.

An obstacle to treating the virus was the over and underreporting of illness. In some parts of the prison, prisoners pressured each other to not report illness in order to prevent confinement through quarantine. In other blocks, prisoners over reported illness. Medical staff noticed this, and increased quarantine time after symptoms ended from 24 hours to 48 hours in order to ensure that people were absolutely not infected at the end of quarantine. Not reporting illness will not prevent quarantine. If anything, reporting illness and getting treatment will help people feel better quickly, prevent spread of the virus, and keep the time of confinement, or quarantine, to a minimum.

What illnesses are common in your prison? How have you been treated/not treated? Have a medical question? If you have any questions or want information about diseases, from the Norwalk virus to HIV to Valley Fever, drop me a line.

***In Love and Solidarity,***  
***liz***

Send your thoughts, questions, or feedback to:  
Critical Condition  
c/o Critical Resistance  
1904 Franklin St. Suite 504  
Oakland, CA 94612



# Ask the Abolitionist



Dear Readers,

*As all Critical Resistance members know, asking and answering tough questions about abolition is key to being part of the movement to end the prison industrial complex. Since this is something we do with each other all the time, we thought it might be fun (and potentially useful) to engage those discussions in a public forum like this one. And what better format than the tried and true “Dear Abolitionist!”*

*Please help make this dialogue a lively and fruitful one by sending questions, responses to questions, responses to the responses—you get the idea. No question is too big or small.*

**Just send to:** Dear Abolitionist  
c/o The Abolitionist  
Critical Resistance  
1904 Franklin St., Suite 504  
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Abolitionist,

*I am a resident of New Orleans who has been working in the public school system for more than seven years. Since the storm, we have seen a dramatic increase in drug dealing and gun violence in my neighborhood as young people have returned to the city without parental supervision and without access to education or job opportunities. Through my friend, a juvenile Public Defender, I have learned that due to limited capacity and resources in the courts many who have been arrested post-Katrina are going through the court system without being charged and are coming back to the streets feeling like they are able to “beat the system.”*

*While I agree that prison is not the best solution for our young people, I do believe we need to have high standards for them and that they need to be held accountable for making people feel unsafe in our community. I often feel at a loss of what to do when I am up against such massive structural and increasingly, neighborhood violence. Please help.*

Dear Reader,

Thank you for kicking off this column by raising such an essential question—the question of ACCOUNTABILITY. One common reaction to the concept of abolition is a fearful picture of wild “anarchy” and vigilante-ism, a society without law or accountability. On the contrary,

abolitionists embrace the idea of accountability as a core component of alternative or transformative models of justice. The only catch is, as with all other concepts, we feel the need to complicate “accountability” just a little! After all, the idea that if someone does something wrong, they should be held accountable is often a driving force behind popular support for the prison industrial complex.

In your letter, you express concern that the state has been failing to prosecute young people and thereby failing to deliver a sense of accountability either for the young people who walk away without consequence for their actions, or for the rest of the community that is impacted by their actions. I would agree, but consider the possibility that even when it prosecutes the current system fails miserably to deliver accountability.

We have been conditioned to accept punishment as a substitute for accountability. In the current criminal justice system, young people who cause harm in their neighborhoods may be forced to pay a fine, complete community service hours, or serve time in prison. They are accountable only to the state. The fine they pay is not used to repair the abandoned building on their block, nor to start up an after school program that will help protect children in the neighborhood from drugs. Similarly, the community service hours they put in will not likely be located in the community where they caused harm, nor will it

be linked to the kind of harm they caused (i.e. if they were involved in gang related violence, their service hours will not be used to plan a “peace summit” for youth from different high schools). And if they end up doing time in prison, they will contribute absolutely nothing to the repair of the community in which they caused harm. So, while there is a consequence for their actions, they are not really held accountable to the neighborhood in which they caused harm.

Going further, we suggest that true accountability has many parts, and should flow in all directions. First, there is the accountability of individual people to one another. There is also the accountability of groups of people to other groups and individuals, and vice versa. For example, in a broader model of accountability, society as a whole would be responsible to see that the basic needs of individuals and groups of people are met. In the experience you share from your neighborhood, there should be ways to hold young people truly accountable to you, your neighbors, and to each other, but there should also be ways for you, your neighbors and the broader society to be accountable to them.

What is the neighborhood doing to ensure their basic needs are met? And if the City of New Orleans, the State of Louisiana, or the United States government is going to hold young people

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

## Policing the Movement (continued from page 5)

**CW:** Well, it's control, but I don't know why they beat them up. There has to be a reason why they beat them up. They're trying to make it seem like it's not their team when it is.

I always see Fox 11 News rolling with the cops.

**CR:** On their news segments?

**CW:** Yeah. I was at a protest and all these riot squad police came and with them came Fox 11, so I don't know what that is, but...the mainstream media unfortunately doesn't share the voice of the people, of the general public. The mainstream media [are] not there to get the news. They're there to prove a point, so they're looking for certain things they want to show when it's convenient and they're the same problem [as] the cops. They send in white fools that don't live in the community and don't know anything about the community and they send other privileged people that have nothing to do with the area they're reporting on and they come and ask ridiculous questions. They ask people who are getting beat why... they ask questions that are out of line and they don't understand.

They got good footage, but it wasn't intentional.

No one expected that to happen, especially the reporters, because they come in and see themselves as the outsiders that are just going to get the story. When they realize they're up for being victims, too, for being brutalized that turned a switch on them saying, “Damn, I guess I'm not better than anyone else. I have an education, I'm a reporter and I'm here talking about the problems with these people.” But when [they're] getting attacked it's like, “What the... you're not acknowledging me as a real person.” I'm glad that they got beat, too, because it wakes everyone up. It's like, damn, no one is free from it.

**CR:** On the news on May 2nd some organizers used a media strategy of saying that youth or anarchists incited the police violence and that they wanted to work with the police. What are your responses to this kind of strategy? Most of these organizations have since apologized to people, at least indirectly, but what kind of repercussions does that have that those things were put out to the media?

**CW:** Those groups aren't really representative of the communities they claim they represent. They're there to benefit from their positions,

and if they're looking for power they're willing to make deals with anybody. They're willing to come out there and side with the devil just to get air time.

**CR:** Are there any examples or experiences that people have had that might speak to that?

**CW:** Scapegoating anarchists when the cops came immediately in riot gear for a riot they planned. So how can you say—you who represent the community, who work for the community—you want to work with the same people who are brutalizing and beating your people? Those so-called leaders don't lead anybody, but they claim to and the media put it out to try to pacify the people. But the people who were there know.

Right now we're just trying to keep up people's minds on what May Day was and keep informing the people, not letting them forget about it because the media and the police state just try to wipe it out or say ‘we're sorry’ or ‘we'll make it up to you.’ We're trying to get brothers and sisters who were brutalized, to file a case so we can get back at them at least in some way and let them know we're not just going to let that happen and forget about it.



# Immigrant Rights and Power: Transforming Social Justice, Dreaming A Different World

by Arnaldo García

The unprecedented and massive mobilizations of immigrant communities during 2006 expressed a different type of community-based power that altered the political terrain of the U.S. While this political momentum seems limited to calling for legalization and ending the criminalization of immigrants, it reflects a new phase in the struggle to transform the relationship between citizens and non-citizens, as workers, communities and nations on the basis of transnational justice and equality.

These political movements reflect, in part, the demographic revolution underway since the mid-1990s, which has transformed the color and composition of the U.S. The new immigrant communities, as well as the “old” communities of color and working class, are the result of profound neoliberal restructuring that has changed how national and international economies function and make profits. This involuntary community of communities is the basis and need for a democratic revolution of sorts to accommodate current global reality. The 2006 immigrant community mobilizations, along with the struggles and demands of other communities of color, can help us imagine a new democratic revolution, where citizenship, voting rights, and the sovereignty of the U.S. could be redefined for a more peaceful and equitable world.

As a political force that has been growing for decades, the immigrant rights struggle was deepened by this new community-based surge, broadening and challenging the possibilities and landscape of social justice everywhere. While almost every progressive movement and political organization—even those rooted in the immigrant rights

arena and communities of color—was surprised by the size and energy of the 2006 marches, many found reaffirmation of their basic values and dreams at the sight of millions of predominantly Latino and working class immigrants of color taking to the streets, calling for what amounts to a new form of citizenship and deep justice across borders.

## The PIC Meets The CIC

In December 2005, the notorious Sensenbrenner bill was passed in the House. Among other very dangerous provisions, the bill would have made it a felony to be undocumented and to assist, hire, minister to, or provide services to the undocumented. This bill’s passage was a significant trigger that fueled the community mobilizations of the following months. Immigrant communities were tired and angry with the enforcement-only direction of the previous and pending “immigration reform” legislation.

Yet, in spite of the breadth of the mobilizations and their political significance for the future of the country, Congress, along with a growing number of state, county and local governments and officials continued proposing and implementing repressive legislation and policies. Fueled by U.S. government practices, laws and policies, the anti-immigrant movement also continued growing as Minute Men chapters—an amalgamation of armed

vigilantes, white separatists and hate groups—opened throughout the U.S. This new mix of anti-immigrant forces does not leave citizens, especially citizens of color, off the hook and directly impacts their rights.

On December 12, 2006, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) carried out the “Swift” raids, one of the largest immigration sweeps to date, clamping down on immigrant workers in meatpacking plants across six states. ICE charged workers with identity theft and fraud for using false social security numbers, a felony.

As President Bush announced during his January 2007 State of the Union address that he would seek a guest worker program and more border security, immigration raids continued around the country. In just a matter of weeks ICE arrested over 13,000 immigrants.

On one day in February, ICE agents went into a neighborhood in Richmond, California, with six arrest warrants but ended up detaining 119 immigrants. Later, in Southern California they picked up over 700 workers in one sweep alone. Acting with impunity, ICE or *Migra* agents come into a community, create a disturbance, causing panic and “probable cause” and pick up individuals who react to their threatening police presence. Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the DHS, testified before Congress that a guest worker program and stepped-up enforcement resources were the solutions.

*While almost every progressive movement and political organization was surprised by the size and energy of the 2006 marches, many found reaffirmation of their basic values and dreams*

So who benefits from the anti-immigrant laws and climate? For one, “the companies that have been building and running private prisons around the country,” the New York Times reported earlier this year. “By the fall of 2007, the [Bush] administration expects that about 27,500 immigrants will be in detention each night, an increase of 6,700 over the current number in custody. At the average cost these days of \$95 a night, that adds up to an estimated total annual cost of nearly \$1 billion.”

This is where the prison industrial complex meets the “citizenship industrial complex,” when the Department of Homeland Security’s Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), decides very deliberately when and how to publicize their immigration raids, weighing in on the immigration reform debate by terrorizing immigrants and communities of color.

Nicole Colson, writing for MostlyWater.org states, “If current trends continue, one out of every three Black men and one of every six Latino men

born in the U.S. today will go to prison at some point in their lifetime.... Immigrants and women are also increasingly ending up behind bars in the U.S. According to statistics released by the Justice Department last year, between 1995 and 2003, convictions for immigration offenses rose by 394 percent. Between 1980 and 2005, the number of women in state and federal prisons jumped by 873 percent—from 12,300 to 107,500.”

These trends will continue to worsen. Started in



2005, new prisons for immigrants will be built at a rate of 8,000 new jail beds per year through 2010. During this same five-year period, the number of interior immigration police will be tripled and the number of Border Patrol agents doubled. These provisions and budgets, as well more measures further undermining the rights of the foreign-born, were at the heart of the “National Intelligence and Terrorism Prevention Act”—signed into law in December 2004 by President Bush—and the REAL ID Act, passed as part of the Iraq war budget in May 2005. Under the “Secure Fence Act”, which became law last September, almost 700 more miles of border walls will be law. When Bush signed the “fence” law he immediately provided funding to start building the first 200 miles.

Even while Congress has not been able to agree on so-called comprehensive immigration reform that includes some kind of “legalization” program, these piecemeal laws and policies illustrate that there is clear bipartisan agreement on jailing and deporting immigrants, including continuing the militarization of immigration and border control as the way to solve the “illegals” problem. Indeed, the latest bipartisan comprehensive proposals, including the STRIVE Act (Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy, H.R 1645) and the most recent “great compromise” in the Senate, propose to deepen the militarization, jailing, and policing of immigrants where they live, work, worship, study, or play, while only offering guest worker programs and the possibility of years overcoming obstacles and waiting in lines to apply for a modicum of permanent residency.

## Immigrant Rights at the Crossroads

The injustices and abuses heaped upon immigrants, especially the undocumented, however different from those suffered by citizen communities of color, poor and working people, intersect and are almost indistinguishable from each other. Why? Immigrants are also people of color, who live, work, worship, study, and play in the same spaces and places where other impoverished and working-class communities co-exist. While

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



*In issue 6 of The Abolitionist we asked some guiding questions for letters, opinions, articles and artwork. We asked: What are the biggest barriers that people coming home from jail or prison face? What strategies could we use to break down those barriers? Below is a response from Lydia Erickson at CCWF and thoughts from a member of The Abolitionist editorial collective.*

by Lydia Erickson

The biggest single barrier is the absence of coordinated resources. A person getting out of jail or prison needs to have one place to go to find all of the help they need—housing, employment, transportation, medical care, psychiatric care, drug and alcohol counseling, immediate financial assistance, clothing, food, and understanding. Ideally, it should come from the parole office, which would encourage parolees to report in a timely fashion to get the help they need. That would drastically cut violations, absconding, and recidivism.

Each parole office should have a specialist for each area of need: a social worker to provide public assistance and immediate aid; a counselor

to determine rehab or social service needs; a psychologist or psychiatrist to give a parolee a safe place to talk and to evaluate their psychological needs; a nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant to triage medical needs; an employment specialist to assist with job skill development and finding employment; and a supply agent to provide immediate supplies of clothing and food, as well as supplies to get the parolee started, such as writing materials, hygiene items, bus tickets, kitchen ware, and clothing. Even two or three days of supplies could give a parolee hope, and help deter them from making a bad decision in order to eat.

The answer can be very simple, but we must have the fortitude and foresight to implement

it. Startup costs for a program with coordinated resources could be steep, but the long-term benefits will be well worth it, and, over time, the societal costs would be greatly reduced. The first line of contact should be the parole officer, who has the responsibility of making sure their parolee sees the specialist(s) who can help them. Each specialist would require at least one assistant to keep the paperwork flowing. The specialists, in turn, would provide support for the parole officer, allowing them to concentrate on the job of supervision. This would ensure more compliance and more successful parolee discharges. Everyone would win in such a system, but society overall would win the most, resulting in a better world for us all.

**Response by David Stein for The Abolitionist editorial collective**

*Lydia Erickson raises important suggestions for lifting the barriers for people coming home from imprisonment. One specifically stands out: what could a system of post-imprisonment look like that was not reliant on surveillance and control, but rather health and safety?*

*An additional question to raise is, what are some strategies we can utilize that don’t rely on the parole office for support? What are some strategies for “making power” as Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s describes (The Abolitionist, Issue 6, page 13) that can be applied to the barriers of imposed by (post) imprisonment?*

**FREE BATTERED WOMEN AND THE HABEAS PROJECT**

*(continued from page 2)*

had the chance to explain how the abuse they survived from their intimate partner was relevant in their case. If this information had been known at the time their cases were prosecuted, it’s possible that they would not have been charged with the same crime, convicted, or sentenced so harshly. This may be especially true for those convicted before courts allowed expert testimony on domestic violence in criminal cases, but it also applies to a lot of survivors who are being convicted today. We believe in survivors’ rights to tell their stories, and to have this information be considered when deciding whether to lock people up and separate them from their families. We have witnessed the various ways that the courts exploit dangerous myths and misconceptions about domestic violence in charging survivors with crimes. In particular, women of color, transgender people, queer folks, immigrants, and poor people who are domestic violence survivors are repeatedly and systematically disbelieved and discounted, and thus are further violated by people within the criminal legal system. Our work supports processes that allow survivors to tell their stories, to be believed, and to have their truths matter when it comes to the essential question of their freedom.

Second, we understand that prisons mirror the dynamics of intimate partner battering, and thus we see prisons as a form of state violence that anyone working to end violence in our communities must also resist. Intimate partner battering (or domestic violence) is a pattern of intimidating, coercive, and controlling behaviors used in order to gain or maintain power over one’s intimate partner, which

may or may not be established or reinforced by physical and/or sexual violence, and where one’s feeling of entitlement to having power over others plays a key role. The survivors we work with talk about the many ways tactics of control are used by prison staff against people in prison (and in jail, immigration detention centers, youth detention centers, and other countries around the globe) parallel the tactics used by their abusive partners to gain and maintain power over them. As Ellen R., a survivor incarcerated at Valley State Prison for Women, explains:

*In prison you are told when to sleep, when to get up, when to eat, what you will eat and how much you may eat, when to go to work and which way you will walk to get there, what clothes you must wear and when to return home. If all these activities are not done exactly as ordered, you will be punished...In an abusive home all the rules above apply. The one difference is that most of the punishment is physical abuse, where in prisons most of the punishment is verbal abuse. Of course I do not feel that there is much difference between the two, one just heals faster than the other.*

*...If a woman lives in a home that is like a prison and the prison she is sent to is identical to the abusive home she just left, where does the cycle end? Sadly, we can all figure out very quickly what the answer is...we must stop taking domestic violence victims from one prison and place them in another. Remember, the problem is not going away, just because you cannot see us.*

Despite the recognition of the ways in which prison mirrors the dynamics of battering, domestic violence survivors inside prisons consistently engage in individual and collective acts of resistance to these forms of coercive control committed by the state, and work toward individual and collective healing, despite living in conditions that are extremely detrimental to their healing. Any healing that survivors manage to do while imprisoned happens despite the violent, abusive, and controlling conditions in prison and truly are acts of resistance.

**How Our Work Impacts The System (Or, Our Vision Of Abolition)**

We believe that the work of Free Battered Women and the California Habeas Project impacts the prison system and works toward prison abolition in a variety of ways. We do, however, recognize that there is an inherent contradiction in utilizing the legal system as a strategy to challenge the injustices perpetuated by that very system. To this extent, we work towards abolitionist reforms, using multiple strategies to confront the immediate injustices of the system and to bring us closer to a world where prisons are unnecessary. These strategies help us to remedy fundamental injustices and to achieve our goals of promoting freedom and healing for domestic violence survivors.

**Decarceration**

One primary way that the Habeas Project and Free Battered Women’s work impacts the prison system is by working towards decarceration, or getting people out of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



# FREE BATTERED WOMEN AND THE HABEAS PROJECT

(continued from page 10)

prison. We believe securing survivors' release and reuniting them with their families and other loved ones is a vital piece of promoting healing from the effects of incarceration and other sources of trauma. Also, getting people out of prison is an important part of limiting state control over people's lives. Since 2000, 26 domestic violence survivors serving life sentences have been released from prison. Some of these victories came about through survivors working in partnership with volunteer legal teams to file successful habeas petitions, while other survivors were released on parole with the support of concerned community members from throughout the state calling for their release.

## ***Bringing Attention To The Social Context In Which "Crimes" Are Committed***

One of the most pressing injustices of the criminal legal system is its failure to recognize the way in which unjust social conditions push marginalized people towards the prison system. A more thorough understanding of this social context encourages people to view prisoners with compassion rather than apathy. It also highlights the fundamental ways in which prisons target already vulnerable communities and serve state interests in maintaining social control and racial and economic hierarchies. In this vein, the Habeas Project and Free Battered Women push the criminal legal and parole systems to consider the full context of domestic violence survivors' lives leading up to their arrests and convictions.

## ***Community Responsibility***

By challenging people and the legal and parole systems to consider the full context of events leading up to acts that are criminalized, we also promote deeper understanding of the ways that the larger community also shares responsibility for an individual's acts of harm against their partner or other community member (whether that individual is an abusive partner or a survivor of battering). By this, we mean that it's important

to highlight the ways in which communities—especially institutions allegedly designed to protect and sustain the community, like the legal system, health care system, child welfare system, and even non-profit organizations—contribute to conditions that lead to individual acts of violence and other harms.

For example, many domestic violence survivors with whom we work repeatedly talk about the multiple strategies they used to try to protect themselves and their children from their abusive partner's violence and coercive control, yet because of various institutional barriers to help, these outlets failed to keep them safe. The media and other community institutions promote safety strategies such as fleeing to emergency shelters or family's homes, calling the police, obtaining civil protection orders, seeking medical attention, and/or calling crisis hotlines as the solution to safety, without recognizing the ways in which those strategies may actually increase survivors' risk of being harmed by their abusive partner, and/or may be harmful in and of themselves.

Two examples of how institutions fail to protect survivors of battering are the way in which undocumented immigrant survivors may not be able to access assistance from civil court in obtaining a protection order because of language barriers. Or, especially in the context of increased immigration raids, undocumented immigrant survivors may have a very realistic fear that any help from the system might lead to her or her abusive partner's deportation. Similarly, women of color, transgender, and/or queer survivors may not see the police as a source of safety or protection because of the way in which police surveille, arrest, and commit violence against their loved ones and other community members. Survivors who are women of color, immigrants,

transgender, queer, poor, have physical or psychological disabilities, live in rural areas, and/or otherwise experience forms of oppression are systematically disbelieved, blamed for their partner's abuse, verbally abused, denied access to resources, and, all too often, subjected to physical and sexual violence when they seek protection from abuse.

***The Habeas Project and Free Battered Women push the criminal legal and parole systems to consider the full context of domestic violence survivors' lives leading up to their arrests and convictions.***

By drawing attention to the community's shared responsibility for crimes, we draw attention to the role of community institutions in failing to provide necessary social conditions that allow for communities' self-determination

and to be free from processes of criminalization. In this light, institutional practices and public policies that systematically deny people of color, poor people, immigrants, formerly incarcerated people, and others access to quality education, health care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, methods for healing from the effects of trauma, living wage jobs, and other necessary economic, social, political, and artistic support networks are seen as connected to processes of criminalization.

## ***Challenging Us Reliance On Prisons As A Solution To Violence***

Another way that we seek to impact the system is by advancing the growing national critique—led by women of color and immigrant women over decades—of the over-reliance in the U.S. on using the criminal legal system to address domestic violence. Over the past ten to fifteen years, increasing amounts of federal and state dollars have been spent on reforming law enforcement and prosecution policies to arrest and prosecute more people who batter. Some unintended consequences of these policies are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

*The light is the only sun I see.  
Its smile brings many faces, but  
The shine took over.  
A blind person could see this light.  
A man approaches, only to talk and walk.  
He had a walkman for me.  
He looked like I knew him from somewhere  
The music of jazz went past me.  
A woman went past me holding the sun.  
I only began to take notice of these things.*

*There was a song I used to sing.  
Misty Blue came to mind by D. Moore.  
The light of the sun looks at me.  
The look of sickness.  
There was no harm for the sun.  
Read my newspaper with the sun  
The light seems jealous, but that's not all right.  
I only want a friend I could call my own.*

By Joseph Williams



Illustration by Chris Krych



# THERE ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE UNITED STATES

by Patricia Hemphill and Isaac Ontiveros

**Part of the abolitionist struggle is the** recognition of the ways the prison industrial complex is used to wage war against liberation movements in the United States. This struggle also highlights the overall oppressive nature of prisons in the US as they tear families and entire communities apart—crippling the ability of people to control and organize their own lives.

There are at least 100 prisoners in the US whose imprisonment and unusually lengthy sentences are related to their politics and the political nature of their activities. Many of these prisoners were active in liberation struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. These include people active in Black liberation, Indigenous liberation, Puerto Rican independence, to name only a few. Included also are many people working in solidarity with these movements.

Many political prisoners are the victims of the US government's vicious Counter Intelligence Programs. Many have been locked away for decades. Political prisoners are often subjected to extreme conditions while locked in prison, including harsh treatment by prison officials as well as being kept in isolation from other prisoners as well as the outside world.

When the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci was imprisoned for his political activity by the fascist Musillini regime, the state prosecutor said, "For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning." Part of the strategy of the state is to disappear prisoners. We see this starkly in the case of political prisoners. The purpose of caging political prisoners is not only to "punish" those engaged in political struggle against the state (and/or its ruling interests) but also to isolate and cut off the ties between committed fighters and the communities they come from and are working in solidarity with. The imprisonment of committed political activists is an attempt by the state to stop their brains from functioning and to destroy their history and the history of their movements. Indeed the US Government claims that there are no political prisoners in the United States.

Historically the struggle to support and free political prisoners has been a focal point for many social movements. The relationship between imprisoned activists and the communities from which they come helps to keep strong the politics and sense of history that helps forward liberation struggles. While in the US there is a general gap in knowledge of the existence of political prisoners, and thus support for them, these imprisoned women and men, are by no means alone. There are thousands of people in the US committed to acting in solidarity with political prisoners—working so that their histories and struggles will not be forgotten, organizing the struggle for their freedom.

In this section of the Abolitionist, we hope to offer a space, however small, to highlight political prisoners' struggles and to draw connections between the imprisonment of political activists and the political nature of the entire prison industrial complex. We also hope to draw attention to the connections between the movements to free political prisoners and the movement for the abolition of the prison industrial complex.

We offer below several news briefs that highlight the nature of political persecution in the United States and how the prison industrial complex both bolsters and is bolstered by the smashing of dissent and liberation struggles. By keeping

informed of the developments of these cases, we can find entry points from which to support folks who have found themselves in the sights of state persecution. We can also work to understand the relationship between seemingly disparate struggles—combating the divide and conqueror techniques of state repression.



drawing by Brother Shabazz

## The San Francisco 8

The fight to free the San Francisco 8 continues as bail hearings for Ray Boudreaux were held in San Francisco June 18 through the 21st. Though the main purpose of these recent proceedings was Boudreaux's bail reduction, testimony in court introduced larger issues that will no doubt be present as this case moves to trial. The defense argued that documents and records produced by the prosecution against bail reduction largely rely on information extracted through torture. In this move, the defense is setting an important tone, making it clear that no aspect of this case can be removed from the illegality of the torture methods used by the government. The prosecution's strategy in these hearings was to exploit the blatant criminalization of the men by characterizing them as a threat to public were they to be released on decreased bails. Witnesses and experts, including UC Santa Cruz professor Craig Haney, debunked these notions by making it clear that these community elders posed no specific danger to any community and the prosecution's attempt to depict these men as desperate and dangerous was not based in fact. As for now, the men have to sit and wait on any further move towards their freedom, the remainder of the bail hearings have been postponed until August 6 when Judge Moscone returns from vacation.

[**Update:** Since this piece was written, six San Francisco 8 defendants, Francisco Torres, Hank Jones, Harold Taylor, Ray Boudreaux, Richard O'Neal, and Richard Brown, have been released on bail. Although eligible for parole, neither Herman Bell nor Jalil Muntaqim have been released. -eds.]

## Developments in the case of Mumia Abu Jamal

On May 17, 2007, oral arguments began in new developments in the case of Mumia Abu Jamal, perhaps the nation's most well known political

prisoner. Abu Jamal has been held on death row now for over 25 charged with the murder of police officer, Daniel Faulkner. In several cities around the nation and in countries around the world, thousands of people organized on May 17 to show their support for Mumia, to demand a new and fair trial, and look forward ultimately to his release.

This new set of appeals in Mumia's case are to determine whether or not Abu Jamal will receive a new trial. Mumia's legal team, led by Robert Bryan, is hoping that this hearing will offer them the opportunity to finally present evidence demonstrating that open racism in the jury selection and judicial misconduct and racism on the part of Judge Sabo, the presiding judge, permeated through Mumia's original trial. In a revealing moment this April, the District Attorney filed an unprecedented motion requesting that the entire Third Circuit Court be removed from this case. This, a preemptive attempt to block any grounds for the defense's future appeals, was shut down at these arguments. Mumia's case in some ways has come to be symbolic of this country's treatment of political prisoners and its virulent attack on leaders of Black liberation movements. Many will be watching, waiting, and organizing in the next few months as they await the decision on whether or not Mumia will receive a new trial.

## "Terrorist Enhancement" in Earth Liberation Sentencing

This spring, several earth and animal liberation activists received prison sentences in connection with the destruction by arson of private property related to commercial animal exploitation, genetic engineering facilities, and large scale logging enterprises. Daniel McGowan, Nathan Block and Joyanna Zacher were all sentenced to roughly seven-and-a-half-year prison terms. Another defendant received a shorter sentence, while several weeks earlier, several more "cooperating witnesses" received sentences ranging from several years to upwards of a decade.

The arrests, trial and sentencing of these activists stems from Operation Backfire, a massive coordinated effort of several federal agencies, grand jury proceedings, and the arrests of over a dozen activists. The Federal Government has labeled those involved in animal and earth liberation activities as the number one "domestic terrorist" threat. Indeed, during sentencing, the state enacted a "terrorism enhancement" to the sentencing guidelines. The use of the "terrorism enhancement" provision in the sentencing of McGowan, Zacher, and Block, as well as several of the cooperating witnesses, bulked up sentencing by labeling aspects of their charges as acts of terrorism.

In a statement issued on June 5, 2007, the National Lawyers Guild said, "The use of a terrorism enhancement in this case effectively punishes an act of arson more harshly on the basis of the viewpoint that motivates it; as such, we believe that it is intended to crack down on environmental activism more generally, by raising the fear that any misstep could lead to prosecution as a terrorist." We can see the implications for this broad and sweeping provision being extended beyond the easily isolated animal and earth liberation communities and being employed against other activists and movements. Indeed, the "terrorism" rhetoric has been liberally used by the state in reference to the case of the SF8. We also note the state's defacto recognition of the political nature of the prosecution and sentencing of these activists by legally, and officially, labeling and convicting them as terrorists.



# Justice Now : An Open Letter To The Governor

Dear Governor and California Legislature,

I am currently imprisoned at the Central California Women's Facility. I'm writing you because in all the "prison reform plans" in Sacramento these days, everyone seems to have forgotten the most important people: those of us in prison who will have to suffer the consequences of your proposals.

This marks a sad year for our communities' futures. Ignoring over 3,300 of us currently imprisoned in California's women's prisons who have written policymakers opposing prison expansion – and bypassing democratic voter approval – the California Legislature has rolled through a 53,000-bed prison deal, the single largest prison construction deal in U.S. history.

Thousands of people in women's prisons, like myself, have taken a stand against expansion of California's prison system in any form, including the 53,000 bed prison deal and an additional 4,500 women's prison beds leadership is continuing to push in our name, in spite of our work with advocates to successfully remove them from their legislative vehicle in AB 76.

Much of the reasoning and justification used by academics and legislators to advocate for an additional 4,500 beds in women's prisons has referenced our "needs." No one has stopped to ask what we need or want, even if they do care.

The absence of our input leads me to believe that your proposals are not truly aimed at helping us—they are merely a ploy to make prison expansion agreeable when Californians have consistently voted it down.

History has proven time and again that if you build them, you will fill them. This has worked so well that you can no longer manage the existing prison system, but you still want to build. While you and your predecessors created us to be what and where we are, you are so lost on where to put us, and don't know where we came from or how to fix the beginning of our problem.

The criminal legal system is built on fear and prejudice. Economic bias results in poor kids like myself filling a severely disabled juvenile system where we are tossed from bed to bed with no love or support to speak of. Out of this broken system comes broken and ostracized human beings.

Today I'm a 30-year-old mother of four boys



serving 10 years in a dehumanizing prison system where no one acknowledges that we are human with the same emotional and intellectual needs as any other. I have to fight for every positive bit of growth I can get. No one offers it. I have to forage through tons of garbage to find it.

I have to fight to keep my sons from becoming victims of this system so that they may have a better life. I have to fight for my health so that I can live on to see them succeed. Their father is dead. Their mother has been deemed violent and unfit for "society." What are their chances? Because of your sentencing laws, I have no chance to return home to mother and nurture my children, even though the prison considers me a "model inmate."

In last fall's gubernatorial race, in attempt to outdo the Governor's prison expansion proposals, Angelides claimed 171,000 people were released early to scare people. It's a lie and a form of prejudice that keeps so many of us in prison.

This is not a game. When your term limits have come and gone, we will still be here with our families, fighting to survive the consequences of your legislation.

Please explain to my children why you're scared of me even though you've never met me. You're scared for your safety. But have you come to talk with women who have served 15, 20, or more years because they got tired of being beat up? Have you come to talk with someone who got 30 years to life stealing food to feed a baby on a third strike? You don't know what it is that you're scared of.

I'm not safe, nor are my children. Where's their mother to hold them and say that everything will be okay? Who tells them they're safe? Who creates and ensures the future of all the children of all us in prison? Certainly not the juvenile justice system, where this all started.

California cannot afford this prison system, judging by the daily food issue we face. You don't know how resources are wasted around here. And what about wasted lives and families fallen because of your fear?

There is no time more crucial than now to stop being scared of and start caring about your neighbor. Start reaching out, not running away. Stop putting up walls dividing communities based on ignorance and prejudice. You have just enabled, without public hearings or voter approval, the next public hearing

If the state has identified 4,500 of us who should be released, we should truly be released. We need to return home with the resources and services in our communities,

independent of the prison system, to start creating another future for our children where we can all grow to our fullest potential.

Sincerely,  
Misty Rojo

*The absence of our input leads me to believe that your proposals are not truly aimed at helping us—they are merely a ploy to make prison expansion agreeable when Californians have consistently voted it down.*

## Testing the Borders (continued from page 9)

the majority of immigrants can "pass" as people of color they are not "passing citizens." Over 80% of all immigrants are arriving from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

The concept "immigrant" has entered the racial lexicon of the U.S. and rarely includes or is applied to white or European immigrants. So much that a new type of detection and detention, based on racial, religious, ethnic, and nationality profiling has become the way law enforcement now does business. It's almost to the point that if you can't pass for a white male Christian, you can be subjected to this new type of profiling and detention.

"Immigrant" means poor and black, brown, yellow, African, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, South Asian, Sikh. "Immigrant", for us, in turn, must become a new way of seeing nation, race, class, religion, and gender and its grassroots power and significance to propel an agenda that includes racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

The immigrant rights movement is not

just about legalization or stopping raids and deportation. It's also about worker rights, racial justice, community and economic development; it's against police brutality, militarization of immigration, and border control. It's about the rights of women, children, youth, farm workers, Indigenous people, and international solidarity.

### The Fuego Next Time

How interrelated are these struggles? In California one out of every four residents is foreign-born, including the current Governor. And one out of every eight foreign-born are considered undocumented, in transition, or out of status. In the City and County of Los Angeles, the Mayor's Office reports that one out of every three residents is Mexican. This means that everyone is related to or knows someone who is foreign-born—in their close-knit and extended families, among co-workers, at churches, and schools.

The lives and rights of immigrants and non-immigrants, especially people of color,

are interconnected and mutually dependent. The need to dialogue and develop a shared understanding and agenda about how the relationships between citizens and non-citizens, between communities of color and the foreign-born, need to be called into question and changed. The defiance of those who marched in 2006, who cannot vote, who usually do not understand or speak English, who are marginalized and subjected to cruel living and working conditions, who are more vulnerable to abuses and violations of their rights, should inspire us, give us more courage to stand up together, and not just dream a better world but fight to bring about its birth.

*A version of this piece originally appeared in the Southern California Library's 2007 special event reader: Without Fear...Claiming Safe Communities without Sacrificing Ourselves. This version re-printed with permission of the author.*



# YOUTH AGAINST YOUTH INCARCERATION

*This issue of The Abolitionist marks the introduction of a new regular section contributed by Youth Against Youth Incarceration (YAYI). In this first section, YAYI lays out a description of their history, vision, and work. If you have questions or comments for future sections by YAYI, please send them care of The Abolitionist.*

## Our Mission And Philosophy

YAYI is a youth-led movement committed to preventing imprisonment and recidivism by alerting youth to the issues that face their communities, educating them about their rights and the juvenile justice system, and empowering them to make changes in their communities. Our goals are to unite communities through collaboration with policy makers, law enforcement, formerly and currently imprisoned youth, and organizations that are concerned with juvenile justice, and to establish programs and resources that provide alternatives to incarceration and activate those programs and resources that already exist. We hope to involve youth and their families in their communities and to educate members of the juvenile justice system about the needs of youth.

## How YAYI Got Started

Inspired to help Bay Area youth stay out of jail and the juvenile justice system, fifteen students in an English class at Oasis High School in Oakland, California, founded Youth Against Youth Incarceration (YAYI) in January of 2006. The intent of this class was to research an issue that affected the student population at Oasis and use the data gained to develop a plan to do something about the issue. After several months of research and education about Alameda County societal issues which included speakers, internet and library data, focus groups, field trips to various organizations, readings, and interviews, we students decided to focus on youth incarceration and to call ourselves YAYI.

## Who The Members Are

YAYI is a group of young people who are committed to bringing about positive change in the juvenile justice system and the lives of youth in the Bay Area, particularly youth of color. We are passionate about wanting to see that all youth have equal opportunities to education, jobs, and services. We range in age from sixteen to twenty-two, are of various ethnicities and have lived in Oakland most, if not all, of our lives. We

are young, strong, dedicated students who are intelligent, creative, reliable, and supportive of our communities. We want to change the system because it is not working. We ask: 'If the justice system is truly about rehabilitation, why then are there so many who get sent back?' We have, in our own ways, 'been there, done that.' We have 'seen the system, been in the system, know it, live it and are it.' We are determined to make a change. While

YAYI is a youth-led organization and movement, we work with a number of adults who are also committed to creating positive change in the juvenile justice system and the lives of youth.

## What We See as the Problem

In our research, which has included personal experience and observation, we found that a disproportionate number of youth of color were being stopped by law enforcement, often treated disrespectfully, and then entered into the juvenile justice system. We determined that there are not adequate resources in our communities to provide young people with recreation, counseling, job training and opportunities, mental health assistance, and mentoring. We discovered that many of the youth were being held for non-violent infractions; that the intake process is inconsistent and a Risk Assessment Tool might or might not be used; and that, although educational classes were supposed to be part of each young person's daily agenda, there was a high absentee rate among teachers in "correctional" institutions. Because

gain information about the Juvenile Justice system from the perspectives of youth and organizations that work with youth, YAYI members held a forum at Oakland City Hall last spring and have gone to several high schools. We have advised Mayor Ron Dellums, Supervisor Keith Carson, and The Juvenile Justice/Delinquency Prevention Commission (two YAYI members currently serve on this Commission) on the needs of young people, and have gone to Sacramento several times to speak with legislators about spending money on

*Our youth are being tried for crimes as adults, for impulses they don't yet know how to control or manage on their own.*  
- Omar, age 18

education and resources, rather than the prison industrial complex. We have been on Channel 2, Channel 5, Univision, KPFA and KPOO Radio, informing the public of our concerns and our work.

## Current Plan

In April 2007, YAYI members spent two hours at the Santa Cruz County Probation Office with Chief Probation Officer Judy Cox and her two Assistant Chief Probation Officers, Scott Macdonald and Fernando Giraldo. Here we learned what the people in this office are doing to prevent youth from entering the justice system. One of us commented, "I never knew there were law enforcement people like you who actually want to keep kids out of jail." Later in the day we went to The Evening Reporting Center where we saw young people on probation who spent three hours a day there

in counseling groups, doing homework, eating dinner together, and engaging with mentors.

On that same day we spent several hours at Barrios Unidos, a grassroots organization dedicated to promoting peace and justice. The staff and volunteers at Barrios have "harnessed the power of culture and spirituality to rescue at-risk young people, provide avenues to quell gang warfare, and offer a promising model for building healthy and vibrant multicultural communities."

With that impetus and from the knowledge gained in the past year and a half and the recognition that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

we students live where we do and associate with youth who have been incarcerated or have been in the system ourselves, and because of high recidivism rates among youth, YAYI members know that the juvenile justice system as it now operates does not rehabilitate most youth in its charge. The system does not give them positive alternatives nor does it give them hope. It needs to change.

## What We Have Done

In order to educate ourselves, we have met with men, women and youth who

have been imprisoned. We have met with members of: The Alameda County District Attorney, Public Defender, and Probation Offices, Books Not Bars, Cop Watch, Community Justice Network for Youth, Education Not Incarceration, All of Us or None, The Disproportionate Confinement Initiative, Youth In Focus, The Coalition for Public Safety, United Playaz, Colored Ink, and Barrios Unidos and the Probation Department of Santa Cruz. To

*I was raised in a real community which gave me certain rules I abide by. Today I see youngsters who have no direction, and I want to provide them with a positive role model. I am trying to do what I do because I see families torn apart and I don't want to do that to my family. There is no reason to have young people's funerals every day, youngsters who never got to see, never got to touch, life. That's just too sad.*  
- Roland, age 17

*The members of YAYI recognize the value of the support and diligence knowledgeable adults can bring to us regarding the serious issues that are silenced everyday in our communities. We are asking for the guidance and encouragement that experienced adults can give us to end youth incarceration and recidivism.*  
- Amirah, age 18



youth voices and needs must be heard and met, we have decided to establish a place for young people and their families, similar to Barrios Unidos, probably in East Oakland. As we develop our plan, we are looking at certain programs we feel are essential to this center: character and image building, some form of cop watch, computer training, job interview training and placement, political education, family workshops, financial planning, visual and performing arts classes, counseling, re-entry, and forms of recreation. We realize we need to form partnerships with elders who will act as mentors and provide support, resources, expertise, and wisdom. We have brought some elders on board and are in the process of recruiting others. In addition, YAYI has become a work group of Critical Resistance, a national

organization working to eliminate the prison industrial complex, whose staff will train us in grant writing and the use of data to effect policy change.

The members of YAYI are currently developing a concrete action plan to establish the Community Center described above. We are determined to focus on this project and committed to working on it until it becomes a reality.

Luis Rodriguez, author and poet, writes in *Hearts and Hands, Creating Community in Violent Times*:

*There is an old saying that a culture is made around what we do with our young people.*

*This book is meant to help us envision and remake a culture around what our youth*

*have been feeling, saying, struggling, and dying for. Young people carry the dreams of the whole society. If we don't establish and maintain a space for those dreams, the community as a whole loses its dreams and their attainment.*

He later states:

*The social erosion stops at our door. To build from there, we're going to need a different ethos in this country. Not 'kill or be killed', which some youth take literally, but one that values and nurtures every child. One that teaches us to work for the decent survival of all, for therein lies our best chance for survival. An ethos that says we must place all our resources, all our institutions, at the disposal of one child, any child, crying out.*

As members of YAYI and the young people we represent, we are crying out. We urge the people of our communities, of our society, to listen to us, hear us and respond in deed to our cries.

*We need a place where we can go to take our minds off the violence and people dying all around us. - Deidre, age 17*

*As a youth I can see the destruction that's going on, and it's just not right. There are no opportunities and resources for us; and those who could help us, such as government or justice system officials, don't seem to care. The people with power are blowing smoke screens and seem to want to keep the system the way it is. Our teen center will provide alternative ways for young people to spend their time. It will change their perspective when they see that there is someone out there who does care. - Izak, age 18*

*We need a Center because people our age go through so much. You just don't know what we go through at home and on the streets. We need a safe place to be where everyone is doing something constructive. - Caroline, age 18*

## Liberty vs Property

by Edgar Pitts

Property or liberty? Which is most important? The very need to pose this question says a lot about the society we live in. Some things are supposed to go without saying, but in times of trickery, semantics, and exploitation, we find ourselves explaining the most basic things over and over again, and still fighting for that which the Declaration of Independence already conceded to be an "unalienable right:" Liberty.

Long before the Military Commission Act (MCA) of 2006—which forbids some habeas corpus review—the Clinton administration had already begun its assault on habeas corpus by signing the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) into law. The AEDPA so severely limits the access to habeas corpus review, and the court, that the only conclusion that could be drawn from it is that it is a booby trap. Before the AEDPA, a prisoner could have filed for habeas review at anytime. But once the AEDPA passed, prisoners were given a one-year time limit to file for review, which is impractical in cases where the prisoner is illiterate, too poor to afford a lawyer, mentally ill, or handicapped by the precarious nature of prison life—the majority of prisoners being subjected to these pitfalls.

The AEDPA is the domestic equivalent of the MCA, which forbids courts from considering habeas corpus petitions from aliens that are classified as enemy combatants. The only difference is that the MCA clearly states that it forbids Habeas review for some. The AEDPA gives a prisoner one year to file for habeas review knowing that most will fail to meet the deadline

for obvious reasons. Thus the intent of both acts is the same: To forbid habeas corpus review for all prisoners.

Even though it deals with human liberty, the AEDPA law doesn't even require that the prisoner be notified of the one-year time limit to file for habeas review. In forfeiture cases, the law requires that the person whose property is in jeopardy be notified by mail or by publishing a notice in a newspaper over a period of time. In one case, notice was required when one Toshiba Color Television was up for forfeiture. In my case, I'm serving a 49-year sentence for drugs that never materialized at my trial. After my direct appeal was final, I was never notified by the court, or by my lawyer, of the finality of my appeal and the meeting of the one-year time limit. I'm therefore being denied the right to challenge the constitutionality of my wrongful conviction, thus falling victim to the booby trap of the AEDPA, which places property above human liberty.

If liberty is a fundamental human issue, then the AEDPA and the MCA are inhumane legislations. And both are in direct conflict with the Declaration of Independence that held "liberty" to be an "unalienable" right. Thus to deny habeas review under the MCA for so-called "aliens," and to all prisoners, aliens or not, under the AEDPA, is unjust. A poor illiterate prisoner, in order to meet the time requirements of the AEDPA must learn to read, write, and become acquainted with the law in less than a year—something that is nearly impossible for the most studious of law students. The time requirements of the AEDPA are similar to the unfair tests that

were used in the Jim Crow South to prevent Blacks from voting.

Without liberty rights, prisoners have been reduced to mere property. At least that's the way we're being viewed and treated by the prison guard unions that advocate for longer sentences, and by the private prison businesses that lobby for more harsh laws. Accordingly, the MCA and the AEDPA compliment the goals and objectives of the prison industrial complex. Justice is not an issue. The issues are the \$100,000 that can be made in building a single cell for a new jail, and the \$2 million that can be made to keep a juvenile in prison for life. The poor, specifically Blacks, are still seen as property by those who own the most property and who believe they are at liberty to circumvent the human rights of the less fortunate.

These legislations are the building blocks for a society where poor prisoners will be entrapped by illegal and unconstitutional convictions with no venue to challenge such convictions, turning prisons into the repositories of cheap labor to be exploited by corporations. The MCA and the AEDPA, coupled with the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution—which justifies slavery as "punishment for crime"—leave prisoners as the property of the prison industrial complex: The Twenty-first Century Slaves.

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# Perspectives on Paris

*One of the major stories this summer for celebrity watchers and anti-prison industrial complex advocates alike, was the on again, off again imprisonment of Paris Hilton in the Los Angeles County Lynwood women's jail. From Hilton's release days after beginning her sentence, to her return to jail, to claims that she hopes to open a center to support women being released from jail, the white hot spotlight normally reserved for Paris Hilton's red carpet appearances was trained on the US criminal legal system and its role in race, gender, and class politics.*

*During Paris Hilton's three weeks at Lynwood, two imprisoned writers, Marilyn Buck and Dortell Williams, examined Hilton's time in jail in relationship to the broader US prison population. With a mix of analysis, sarcasm, and optimism, both writers re-focus our attention on those left to live in cages long after Hilton's release. Marilyn Buck's piece is the first of what we hope will be an ongoing column for The Abolitionist addressing issues facing women prisoners. We've printed the two pieces together here to offer two perspectives on this high profile case.*



## Vicissitudes

by Marilyn Buck

*"She got a harsher sentence* because she was a celebrity." So stated Loyola law professor Laurie Levenson concerning Paris Hilton's 45-day sentence for recidivist violations of her probation. I'm certain many other non-rich, non-white, non-celebrity women and men have received harsher sentences for much less flagrant probation and parole violations. Not to mention the hundreds of thousands of women, men, and children who have spent 45 times 10 or 45 times 100 days in jail or prison. In fact, 45 days is devastating and may even be fatal for prisoners who are lynched, murdered, beat, tortured or raped in less than even 5 days in "custody." Of course Paris hasn't had any of those "problems."

In reality, Hilton has had much less to fear. The jailers have treated her quite well, if not preferentially, at each twist and turn of this melodramatic episode. Other prisoners will also have done so. Most would, because we are decent human beings despite all sensationalist yellow journalism to the contrary. Prisoners are the U.S.A.'s #2 "fear factor" after foreign "terrorists."

A few prisoners adore Paris because she's a celebrity; if possible they have already asked for her autograph, have bent over backwards to make her stay pleasant, and hope perhaps for a lipstick or at least a story of "I met Paris Hilton, a famous person," that they will tell their family and friends if they ever get the opportunity. Many women prisoners hang on to dreams and fairy tales. Many don't think about the lack of democracy or the way Paris' rights and desires trample their own.

Paris is super thin but larger than the diminished lives the vast majority of women live. And while her time in jail was certainly "sensational," who really wants to identify with a poor Black woman left go to die in the hospital who called "911" because the hospital staffed refused to treat her; or with a Palestinian or Iraqi woman holding a bleeding child in the midst of devastation?

Or even with those other celebrities who go to jail; those who protest racism, immigration

detentions, the war against Iraq, or support workers' demands. None of them are Paris. Not Susan Sarandon, not Martin Sheen. Not even Angelina Jolie. Such celebrities are not the mesmerizing glittery-gold, indolent white American princess who flaunts her disregard for social and human value—in living color.

—the woman on the pedestal. As such she has no social consciousness. That would diminish her myth! She lives at the

expense of every working person worldwide who feeds her TV ratings. Her life force sucks away that of the rest of us.

### Interests Of Justice

Nevertheless, all the hoopla about Hilton does shine a light on "justice" in the U.S. Not a new one, just a higher-wattage, glitzier one. No new illuminations, just the same old shadowy business as usual. Still a fundamental social question is highlighted: What are the interests of justice? Perhaps, this question can be brought to bear. By its very nature, justice cannot be chained and bound to either punishment or to innocence and guilt, despite America's prestidigitator's efforts to conjure the contrary!

Many, including prisoners, may give the nod to the judge for "equalizing justice," even just a little bit. It might be that more than a few of her social peers did so too, being embarrassed by such flaunting of wealth and privilege with such impunity. It is intriguing that the judge did so. Why? Did he consider the thousands of not-rich, not-famous people who are summarily dispatched to prisons? Was he offended or incensed because she thumbed her nose at him and at any pretense that she might be subject to "THE LAW;" or, had he not done so, would there have been accusations of favoritism?

Should Paris have gone to jail? My sense of outrage at American injustice prods me to say "yes." But my sense of justice and the need to struggle for that declares "no." Paris drunkenly

stumbled into the prison charnel houses of America. She is not unlike her namesake, Paris of Troy who took Helen home. He didn't have a clue of what he had done. She doesn't either. Her going to jail does absolutely nothing to alleviate or even slow lengthening sentences and ever-expanding imprisonment for the "non-privileged." Hundreds of thousands have already paid enormous costs and suffered grievously and should be released.

Society as a whole has paid an enormous price to warehouse and permit slave labor, despite the profits to the few. And like Paris, many prisoners suffer serious medical or psychological problems arising from the dehumanization, abuse, worries about their children, families, and poverty. Anxiety drives many to despair. Stress and fear break down the human organism. No, her jailing does nothing to equalize justice. Serious community work among the targets and victims of the prison nation would do more.

However, since she is in jail, perhaps she will learn something. It won't be much. Not enough time or repression. And, she doesn't have to. She may come to think of this episode as another of her escapades—food for the interviewers and gossip-mongers. Likewise,

it seems improbable that she will change her future behavior and stop endangering other people's lives. Jail or prison doesn't make anyone better. It's purpose or intent isn't to lead anyone to

"the path of righteousness."

Meanwhile, far too many women prisoners will continue to sit in prisons, before TV screens captivated and starving for the glamorous life. They feel bad for her; don't wish her to suffer this indignity. She is the American princess and should not be tarnished. Most of the watchers know that there is no way in hell they'll get to be a princess. But they dream. Besides, what would be left but the daily grind of punishment that will never ever free women from the reality of class, race and national origin?

*Paris is super thin but larger than the diminished lives the vast majority of women live.*

*Her going to jail does absolutely nothing to alleviate or even slow lengthening sentences and ever-expanding imprisonment for the "non-privileged."*



# Paris Hilton: A Face for the Less Fortunate?

By Dortell Williams

*To many people across the globe*, Paris Hilton represents many things: from down-to-earth party girl, to high-maintenance fashionista—and everything in between. But who could ever have imagined that this white, super rich, high society, icon would become the tearful face for scores of marginalized, incarcerated, people of color? Yet that’s exactly what happened when Hilton was tossed in the clink for violating conditions of probation.

The health of the 26-year-old, social magnate immediately went south the minute the cell door slammed. In an extraordinary show of intervention, Sheriff Leroy Baca “re-assigned” her to home detention. Steve Whitmore, a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department spokesperson says, “She was released for an unspecified medical condition,” less than 72 hours after checking in. Let’s call it compassionate release—an occurrence rarely, if ever, played out for the average indigent prisoner.

Following loud cries of foul from the public, after less than 24 hours of freedom, the Simple Life star was plucked out of her cozy, 2,700 square foot spread and remanded back to a cold, 8-by-12 Los Angeles County Jail cell. Apparently, the no nonsense judge who sentenced her was put off by the sheriff’s unauthorized move. The judge had specifically ordered that she not receive home detention or anklet monitoring.

The Hilton Hotel heir reportedly wailed in anguish as she was lead back to the dungeon, the same wail that is often muffled for so many others by the ever-confining walls of poverty and misfortune. “Being in jail is by far the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do,” says Hilton in a statement—just 96 hours into her stint. She speaks for so many who’ve never been given a whisper of a voice.

For the cynical, Hilton’s sentence is too short for her to complain. With a little imagination one could

hear the taunts, “Woman up! Do the crime, face the time,” etc. But for those who actually value human life, and recognize it for the precious gift that it is, even a short interruption of one’s freedom is a serious matter. It takes but a moment to conceive a child, a one second scratch to win the lottery, or a simple turn to be at the right place at the right time to meet the love of your life. All of this is almost impossible while incarcerated.

Once inside, Hilton’s highly publicized nightmare awakened the world to the experience of millions across the nation, after she was thrown into the muzzled darkness of the inside. A potentially deadly darkness where staph (staphylococcal) infections and dangerous variations of hepatitis eagerly lie and wait for a host.

Hilton’s traumatic ordeal stems from a DUI arrest earlier this year—a misdemeanor. As a consequence, her license was suspended. She continued to drive, defying the law. She was sentenced to 45 days of which it was estimated she would do about half. A far cry from the 25-to-life sentence thousands of other misdemeanor offenders are forced to serve under California’s utterly wicked Three Strikes law. Imagine being sentenced to severe conditions of overcrowding, and flesh-eating or other inadequately treated diseases—for a misdemeanor. Still, Hilton’s temporary predicament speaks volumes for countless others forever entombed for little more than driving without a license.

In a press conference set to rebuff accusations of special treatment for Hilton, Sheriff Baca stated that he feared he could not adequately treat the celebrity. Though undisclosed, he felt that her ailment was of such apparent gravity that his only remedy was to let her go. However, TMZ.com’s Harvey Levin lent more insight by describing what appears to be a very common response to incarceration. “She’s despondent [and] she isn’t eating or sleeping. ...She’s teetering on the brink.”

Whatever the case, the fact that the sheriff of the largest county jail system in the world would admit that his medical facilities are inadequate is both telling and frightening. It makes one wonder if jails and prisons are the cure-all society bills them to be,

or if they’re really just breeding grounds for disease, mental illness, and centers of racism by fellow prisoners?

Though I wouldn’t wish the horrid experience of incarceration on anyone, who would ever have thought a smooth faced, fair-skinned socialite would come to represent the muted suffering of millions of primarily poor and pigmented people? Yet, in an ironic twist of fate, this is exactly what Paris Hilton has come to represent.

Once released, I’m sure we’ll hear much mre of Hilton, my hope is that she’ll start using her celebrity to speak more for the impoverished and less fortunate she so closely is forced to relate to during her temporary jailhouse journey.

Sources:

KABC news, Ch.7, June 7, 2007, Hilton released from jail.

KTTV’s Fox 11 News, June 8, 2007, Hilton remanded back to court and jail.

KCAL 9, June 8, 2007, Hilton remanded back to court and jail; Sheriff Leroy Baca justifies release of Hilton.

KTTV’s Fox 11 news, Hilton’s incarceration condition.

### Update:

During a press conference, renowned high profile attorney Gloria Alred announced that she would be representing an older, Black female who has a prosthetic leg, in a discrimination suit against the Los Angeles County Jail system. The charge stems from Pamela Richardson’s three-week stay at the massive jail where she received inadequate mental health care and her prosthetic leg was taken from her until her release. The charges leading to her arrest were dropped.- KABC, Ch. 7, June 11, 2007.

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## FREE BATTERED WOMEN AND THE HABEAS PROJECT

(continued from page 11)

that increasing numbers of domestic violence survivors are being arrested throughout the country for using force to resist their partner’s violence, as well as for other crimes.

Meanwhile, we also have come to understand that imprisonment is not an effective response even for those who have used violence in an effort to gain or maintain coercive control over others. When we lock up those who are abusive as a way of “holding them accountable” for their abusive behavior, and we put them into an environment where violence, the threat of violence, and other abuses of power and forms of coercion are used to control their behavior, then we replicate and reinforce the behaviors that we are allegedly trying to stop. We recognize that many people who are incarcerated for acting in abusive, coercively controlling ways are themselves survivors of severe trauma. Free Battered Women and the Habeas Project believe in the need to find alternative ways of challenging those abusive behaviors and supporting people to develop alternative ways of creating healthy relationships.

**Alternative Visions And Investment In Healthy Communities.**

By calling for decarceration, highlighting the importance of political context and community accountability for the commission of crimes,

and working towards alternative responses to violence, Free Battered Women and the Habeas Project aim to also bring forth radical changes in the meaning of state protection. We call for reinvesting in community needs that we know keep people out of jails and prison. Instead of prison, we want supports that truly create safe and healthy communities (like access to quality education for all, health care, drug and alcohol treatment, safe and affordable housing, social services, violence prevention and intervention services, and affordable transportation). We believe that investing in these institutions are what truly advances public safety and begins to address underlying social inequalities bred by institutional racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression– not locking people away from their communities.

**Capacity**

Despite the large number of individuals and organizations involved with the Habeas Project, it is a largely volunteer effort with a very limited capacity. Unfortunately, the Habeas Project is not able to offer legal assistance to prisoners seeking to file habeas corpus petitions who do not meet the criteria outlined in Penal Code § 1473.5. Nor is the Habeas Project able to refer prisoners to other attorneys for possible representation.

For more information about the California Habeas Project, write to California Habeas Project, c/o Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, 1540 Market Street, Suite 490, San Francisco, CA 94102 (please note that the Habeas Project’s capacity to respond to letters from people in prison who do not meet the criteria outlined in PC § 1473.5 is very limited).

Similarly, Free Battered Women is primarily a volunteer-based organization with a limited capacity to respond to letters from people in prison. If you write to FBW, please know that your letter will be read and is important to FBW members, but it may be quite a while before you receive a response (this is because domestic violence survivors in California prisons have said that they want FBW to focus on parole advocacy, public education, media campaigns, policy work, and movement building over responding to prisoner letters).

**For more information about Free Battered Women, contact:**

**Free Battered Women**  
**1540 Market Street, Suite 490**  
**San Francisco, CA 94102**  
**Tel: 415.255.7036 ext. 320**  
**Fax: 415.552.3150.**  
**www.freebatteredwomen.org**



# Coming Home : A Systematic Society By Shadow

*In the following piece, Shadow lays out some of the many obstacles to existing in a society so heavily controlled by state intervention and the good work some organizations (including “street organizations” such as Asociación Ñeta which often are not given credit for their social justice activities) are doing to make change even in the face of state repression.*

In a systematic society parents must balance disciplining their children with threats by ACS. In a systematic society the media captivate the minds of the adults as well as youth in the supposed pursuit of materialistic happiness. A systematic society encourages the detachment of teachers and their students, marginalizing them to just figures and stats. that creates a frigid and unwanted education for the youth.

It's a society that is clearly governed by the most economically fortunate who created a poor economic situation through systematic barriers for the lower class. Making the rich richer and the poor more enticed to spend their little income. A systematic society finds it more relevant to spend almost \$400 million to open a city jail instead of a school or to fund more grassroots youth and community empowering organizations. I can clearly say that the officials at higher offices in the administration of New York City have a different agenda than what they portray to the people of this city.

While school conditions in New York become more and more degrading. While systematic laws are created to increase the entrance of minorities into its jail system.

The system maintains minorities in a state of slavery, corrupting its nation's own 13th Amendment by creating cheap labor through government agencies meant to help the people in poverty. Also using job opportunity programs to have welfare clients work 30 hours a week to work for an income that is clearly way below minimum wage. Sending clients to work for a salary they never had and promising permanent jobs at the end of the year but instead are sent no paying ones. Job readiness programs but left with unpaid bills and an overrated lifestyle. Creating more and more situations so that minorities continue to search for a better way through crime, thus filling up the prisons and the city jails while the cries of the people go to deaf ears. Justice has a name.

Minority youth continue to suffer from instability due to lack of parents involvement. This situation is created because their parents either work too many hours to maintain the family or are incarcerated after suffering the consequences of having to choose between their freedom and the wellbeing of their families or themselves. This inconsistency becomes the key to our youth taking to the streets faster and

eventually becoming residents of the city jails and state prisons. Verily I said to you, justice now has a name.

Luckily, through all this hardship there are people who strive to bring some type of justice to our community. They form organizations that profit from helping the community by empowering the community unlike this systematic society that seeks benefits from the demise of our communities.

## **Bringing Justice**

Examples are religious denominations that endorse non-denominational programs and workshops to empower our youth and the adults of our community or street organizations that volunteer their time and use their misguided experiences to bring light to the injustice this systematic society has produced for our people.

Non-profit organizations like Critical Resistance engage issues for the community selflessly. Bringing information on the injustice the department of correction is currently under going against the communities of Brooklyn and the Bronx. Critical Resistance keeps its doors open five days a week so that the community can benefit from many resources for free. Resources like their wide collection of books which empower the minority community with information about cultural past and current struggles.

Misión San Juan Bautista (MSJB) is known for its success in empowering the youth of the Kelly Street area of the South Bronx by breaking a gang-related barrier within the Bloods, Crips, and Latin Kings. They put together a place called Peace Zone. Using basketball, cultural dinners and conflict resolution, Peace Zone has created one family from the diverse street families of its neighborhood.

The staff at Peace Zone has reached places with its process that other youth programs can only imagine. MSJB believes that attacking issues like the Bronx and Brooklyn Jail expansion could help prevent the youth from becoming residents of those jails in the future. MSJB understands that only through empowering youth and the adults in the lives of these youth, can the South Bronx community prevail against issues created by Martin Horn and the New York City Department of Corrections.

The Association Pro Inmates Rights otherwise known as Asociación Ñeta has come along way

from its misguided past. They have come out of the very ignorance that this systematic society thrives on and become the social, political organization of today. A division in its past set the Ñetas to a course of education, orientation and creating consciousness within its ranks in order to do the same for its community.

***Luckily, through all this hardship there are people who strive to bring some type of justice to our community.***

Now its goal is to educate, orient, and empower consciousness on the issues Martin Horn and the Department of Correction are undergoing in communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx. Through unity and love the Ñetas empower their communities to Fight, Share, and Progress while living in Peace and Harmony. Its principles help the organization makes its own people accountable through positive processes instead of using the law enforcement. With constructive criticism and conflict resolution the Ñetas have helped stop lots of situations from escalating within themselves and other street organizations. Bringing a true essence of peace between its members and the members of other street organizations.

Although the Ñetas do not consider themselves as a gang (as media portrays them), we believe that by empowering these so-called gangs with information of their origin and history, other street organizations can go back to being what they were created for: social, political organizations that help, empower and unite their communities to fight for a greater change in today systematic society.

The unification of these forces have certainly helped the communities they strive for in New York City. I have confidence that injustice has a new enemy for years to come.

***Fight, Share, Progress  
Live in Peace and Harmony  
Asociacion Ñeta  
Shadow***

## **Ask the Abolitionist** (continued from page 8)

accountable in court, how are they making themselves accountable to those young people? Where is the quality education? Where are the after school programs? Where are the mentorship and other support systems for kids who have returned to New Orleans without parents? Where are the job opportunities? I believe that accountability at all of these levels and in all directions might actually leave you and your neighbors feeling safer, and the young people in your neighborhood feeling more cared for and therefore responsible to the community they live in.

Before you dismiss me, dear reader, as a wizard of beautiful theories that cannot be implemented until we build a utopian society

that cares for its people, let me leave you with a few practical ideas for today. I'm sure you may already be talking to your neighbors about this issue, as well as some of the young people. What about organizing an informal gathering with those who are interested, maybe starting with the adults.

Maybe you could talk to them about this notion of accountability in both directions, and brainstorm some ways to reach out to some of the young people you're worried about. Maybe one of the adults knows of a job. Maybe another is connected to a community organization. Maybe you or another neighbor could then host a second meeting, where some of the younger folk would be invited, and try to begin

a dialogue about their needs and yours, and just build those relationships.

As you know, people are more inclined to treat each other with respect and kindness if they know something about one another. And if you're not a neighborhood organizer type, maybe you could reach out to the local chapter of Critical Resistance, or another community organization, that could help you in this process. Once your neighborhood is organized, please, let's all go together to every level of government and demand full accountability to all survivors of Katrina.

***In Solidarity,  
The Abolitionist***



# Resources

*For more about the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA):*

[www.usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/s735.htm](http://www.usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/s735.htm)

**California Habeas Project**

1540 Market Street, Suite 490  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-255-7036 ext. 320  
[www.habeasproject.org](http://www.habeasproject.org)

*For additional support with health care issues:*

**California Prison Focus**

2940 16th Street, #B-5  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-252-9211  
Email: [contact@prisons.org](mailto:contact@prisons.org)  
[www.prisons.org](http://www.prisons.org)

*For more information on California's Prison Expansion plan:*

**Californians United for a Responsible Budget**

1904 Franklin Street, Ste. 504  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510-444-0484  
[curb@riseup.net](mailto:curb@riseup.net)  
[www.curbprisonspending.org](http://www.curbprisonspending.org)

**Free Battered Women**

1540 Market St., Suite 490  
San Francisco, California 94102 USA  
phone: (415) 255-7036 x320  
[info@freebatteredwomen.org](mailto:info@freebatteredwomen.org)  
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**Immigration News Briefs**

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New York, NY 10012  
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**Justice Now**

1322 Webster Street, Ste.210  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Phone: (510) 839-7654  
[www.jnow.org](http://www.jnow.org)

*To see the trailer or get more information about K-Ville:*

[www.fox.com/kville/](http://www.fox.com/kville/)

*To see video coverage of the police attacks in Los Angeles on May 1, 2007 check out:*

<http://xicanopwr.com/2007/05/may-day-violence-at-los-angeles-macarthur-park/>

*For more on Mumia Abu-Jamal:*

**International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal**  
[www.mumia.org/freedom.now](http://www.mumia.org/freedom.now)

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC)**  
[www.freemumia.com](http://www.freemumia.com)

*For more on imprisoned environmental activists Daniel McGowan, Nathan Block, and Joyanna Zacher and their cases:*

**Civil Liberties Defense Center**  
259 E 5th Ave, Ste 300 A  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541.687.9180 ph  
541.686.2137 fax  
[info@cldc.org](mailto:info@cldc.org)  
[www.cldc.org/green.html](http://www.cldc.org/green.html)

**Portland Indymedia**  
[portland.indymedia.org/en/topic/greenscare/](http://portland.indymedia.org/en/topic/greenscare/)

**National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights**  
310 8th Street, Ste. 303  
Oakland, CA 94607  
510-465-1984  
[nnirr@nnirr.org](mailto:nnirr@nnirr.org)  
[www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)

*For more information about Asociacion Neta (in Spanish):*  
[enredos.net/tinta/?p=322pr](http://enredos.net/tinta/?p=322pr)  
[indymedia.org/news/2003/09/281.php?theme=1&l=es](http://indymedia.org/news/2003/09/281.php?theme=1&l=es)  
[asociacionneta.blogspot.com](http://asociacionneta.blogspot.com)

*For more on the San Francisco 8 case:*

**Committee for the Defense of Human Rights**  
P.O. Box 90221  
Pasadena, CA 91109  
[freethesf8@riseup.net](mailto:freethesf8@riseup.net)  
[www.freethesf8.org](http://www.freethesf8.org)

*For more information about the United States Social Forum:*  
[www.ussf2007.org/en](http://www.ussf2007.org/en)

**Bureau of Justice Statistics**  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/)

## SAVE THE DATE

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[cr10@criticalresistance.org](mailto:cr10@criticalresistance.org)



# Submit to The Abolitionist!

*The Abolitionist wants to hear from you! Do you have questions about abolition, strategies to advocate for prisoners, or useful resources? News or ideas about imprisonment, policing, surveillance or other aspects of the punishment system? Write us!*

*We accept:   -Short Articles (1500 words)  
                  -Letters (250-500 words)  
                  -Reproducible artwork (highly desired!)*

*Our criteria for pieces in The Abolitionist are listed below. Please note that we edit all submissions for content, length, and clarity. If you do not want your piece edited, include a note with your submission indicating that no changes should be made. Please also know that requests for no editing may result in your piece not being printed. Also, let us know how you would like to sign your piece. You can sign however you wish: your full name and address, initials and city, or anonymously.*

*We will do our best to respond to everyone, but unfortunately, we will not be able to respond to or publish every submission we receive.*

*If you are interested in being involved with The Abolitionist, let us know! Please forward us family and friends’ mailing and e-mail addresses that would like to receive or support The Abolitionist. Contributions, submissions, and stamps can be sent to:*

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

## CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSIONS:

### STRENGTH OF PIECES

- ★Is the piece clear?
- ★Is what the author is trying to say easily understandable?

### POLITICAL STRENGTH

- ★Are the messages communicated in the pieces PIC abolitionist or compatible with PIC abolitionism?
- ★Is the piece politically coherent? As with writing strength, we want to print pieces that are politically clear and make sense.
- ★We want to encourage dialogue and interplay between the different sets of voices represented in the paper, while staying true to our organizational politics and mission.
- ★We want the paper’s content to remain vital, so we don’t want to print pieces that are redundant or don’t contribute new ideas or angles to pieces we’ve previously printed.
- ★Pieces do not have to be about abolition, but they should not advocate for measures that will strengthen the PIC or include language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic.

### TYPES OF PIECES TO PRINT

- ★We hope to print a range of pieces—letters, creative writing, short pieces, dialogues, letters, essays, etc.
- ★We don’t accept pieces that are individual requests for legal support, money, or publicity from individuals that are not tied to some larger conversation or analysis.

### A Note On The Use Of The “@” In The Spanish Language Edition

By Rafael Mutis

In our efforts to be inclusive and to reflect our lived reality in our translation/interpretation work to Spanish, we are using the “@” to reflect words which normally refer to more than one gender. Spanish tends to be gender specific and, like many languages, tends to use male dominance in terms that are supposed to refer to all of us. This is not to say that the @ refers to only two genders, but that it transgresses the gender binary and sexism. Many anarchists use the @ this way, as do the Zapatistas, among others. We are happy to be using this concept, which helps us reflect our reality in language, in communication and in the work of translation/interpretation. This is certainly part of what we do as abolitionists!

### Contributors

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\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please charge my credit or debit card. Credit card type: \_\_\_\_\_
- Credit card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I have enclosed a check (Please write checks to Critical Resistance c/o Justice Now)
- ☐ Yes, send me CR Oakland's bimonthly calendar! Email address: \_\_\_\_\_