From the Margins, Building Power: Labor, Struggle, and Prison Industrial Complex Abolition

Interview with Isaac Ontiveros by Molly Porzig

Why is a strong labor analysis necessary for CR’s mission to build an international movement to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC)?

A n analysis of labor—the relationship between workers and the work they do, and the relationship between workers and the capitalist system—helps us understand the contours of what we call the prison industrial complex (PIC), and hopefully helps us build strategies, struggle, organization, and movement to overcome it.

If we understand the PIC as a dynamic where state violence is advanced and accelerated in the absence of the state prioritizing equitable access to things like housing, healthcare, employment, political representation—and where instead the necessities of racial capitalism, imperialism, militarism are prioritized—then we understand how deadly racial, gender, and economic inequalities hit hardest against working class people, especially working-class communities of color. If we imagine a line graph for the past 50 years or so, we’d see lines going steadily upward representing an explosion in rates of imprisonment, alongside a rise in prison spending. In the 1970s, around 30% of workers in the private sector were members of a union; today there are around 2 million—not including around 550,000 more locked in jails.

From my perspective, the labor movement in the US, like most progressive movements, is beleaguered. Less than 10% of workers in the US are in unions, and to decimate the rights of workers to form unions and build power. At the same time capital finds these advantageous grounds for rolling back rights for working-class struggles are critical to abolishing it.

What would you say the state of the labor movement is currently? What does this mean for PIC abolition?

From my perspective, the labor movement in the US, like most progressive movements, is beleaguered. Less than 10% of workers in the US are members of a union. A majority of US states are anti-union, so-called “right to work” states, permanently excluding the workforce based on their conviction records. At the beginning of the 1970s, around 30% of workers in the private sector were members of a union; now it’s less than 10%. At the beginning of the 1970s there were around 200,000 people locked up in state and federal prisons; today there are around 2 million—not including around 550,000 more locked in jails.

If we understand the emergence of the PIC to be a part of the violent counter-revolution against civil rights, Black and Brown power, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, democratic, and militant labor movements—movements having everything to do with creating a world that reflects the interests of working people; if we understand the PIC emerging amid the rise of the neoliberal period of capitalism that ushered in the destruction of all things public, disempowering unions on a structural level and global scale; if we look at what communities are most impacted by policing, imprisonment, unemployment, and political disenfranchisement, then we should have a pretty solid analytical basis for understanding the structural racial, gender, and class violence that swirl around and through the PIC. If we think about the crises and inequalities that the PIC emerged from and serve to manage today, then we can imagine how anti-racist, gender-liberationist, democratic, internationalist working-class struggles are critical to abolishing it.

“If we think about the crises and inequalities that the PIC emerged from and serve to manage today, then we can imagine how anti-racist, gender-liberationist, democratic, internationalist working-class struggles are critical to abolishing it.”

The authoritarian right, advancing at tremendous strength across the country (and the world) is seeking to use state legislatures, the congress, and the supreme court to further disempower the rights of workers to form unions and build power. At the same time capital finds these advantageous grounds for rolling back rights for workers who aren’t in unions, and to decimate
Letter from the Editors

Beloved Readers,

Greetings in struggle. We warmly welcome you to 2022’s second and final issue of The Abolitionist: Issue 38, exploring the intersections and possibilities of labor struggles and prison industrial complex (PIC) abolition. As we put this issue together, worker struggles grow mightier, as austerity and repression intensify towards exploited workers advocating for their rights and liberation. Inflation rises, the pandemic continues with zero protections for sick workers, and money continues to flow into imprisonment, surveillance, and policing instead of to the life-affirming and dire infrastructure our communities need. And yet, we know resilience and resistance are strong; there is so much to learn from the past and the present to shape the future.

This issue’s feature section includes a robust set of interviews with different organizers sharing analysis, reflections, resources and grassroots examples of labor struggles intersecting with PIC abolition. 38’s feature analysis is an interview with former Critical Resistance (CR) member Isaac Ontiveros assessing our economic and political landscape in the US and uplifting past and present organizing lessons to propel abolitionist strategy forward in 2022 and beyond.

This is followed by two reflective articles: one by currently imprisoned and returning author of The Abolitionist “Deep in the Heart of Texas,” Ricardo Vela, Jr and another by Mujeres de Frente on “feminist unionism” and the June 2022 Indigenous-led national strike in Ecuador. These pieces are accompanied by a round table discussion on union organizing, an overview and criticism on Southeast Asia labor movements by Burch’s letter to CR, and a look into Melissa Burch’s work with the Afterlives of Conviction Project challenging the rise of background checks for formerly imprisoned people.

To wrap up the feature section, we offer two resources. The first is a new guide by CR for imprisoned people to prepare for the job market upon release. The other is CR’s organizational analysis - or political line - concerning the 13th amendment and “prison is new slavery” argument, which we offer in this issue as an organizing resource to build more political unity across walls and cages for PIC abolition.

Three of our columns also speak to this issue’s focus on labor struggles. Stephen W. Ilson discusses CR’s political line of the 13th Amendment and prison labor for his column 9771 and includes a survey on work and prison he hopes all imprisoned readers of The Abolitionist will complete and send back to the editorial collective. Additionally, this issue’s Movement Highlights underscore a potential resurgence in the labor movement, both in the US and internationally.

In this issue we also grieve recent losses of some influential liberation fighters: we pay tribute to Mike Davis in CR Updates, and we honor Angela Davis political prisoner Albert Woodfox and independentista Francisco “Franky” Velgara Valentín in our Until All Are Free column. Please note, we cut the Abby Throwback reprint of this issue due to page limitations with our printing press.

Our first issue of 2023, Issue 39, will be printed in June and take a close look at a rising movement for reproductive justice. As ever, we invite all our readers to help shape the content of our newspaper by reviewing our submissions guidelines in our Call for Content on page 24 and submitting pieces for this issue or future issues.

As always, we hope Issue 38 fuels your spirit and your tools for resistance, collective liberation and self-determination. Onward,

Critical Resistance & The Abolitionist Editorial Collective

THE ABOLITIONIST

FALL 2022 • ISSUE 38

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

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THE ABOLITIONIST

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THE ABOLITIONIST

ISSUE 38

"The World Can’t Wait" by Roger Peet, Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative.
As opposed to most workers in the US, most police and prison guards work for the PIC. This includes those who face police violence along with the violence of structural violence, like policing and imprisonment. Obviously, there is much more to be done.

For PIC abolitionists, this means there is a fair amount of pressure put on us to come up with ways to impact the PIC, that there is eagerness among union members to think about how the PIC is impacting working people, as they are also thinking more about related social justice issues. Again, in the past couple years there have been absolutely massive uprisings centering around racist police violence—something abol- bituionists are talking about for decades. These uprisings have been led and peopled by millions of young working-class people of color who are living with the violence of precariously employed, lack of healthcare, unstable housing, and political disenfranchise- ment. In turn we see imprisoned people orga- nizations are at their strongest, they do the same thing: we still lack the unity that our enemies developed out of these struggles. Now, that’s the rosier side of the story. Our movements are still beleaguered, we are often working at cross purposes and attacking our- selves; we still lack the unity that our enemies have. Fascism is still on the advance, and able to experience: 

Continued on next page
For workers and for unions, even as they have some stronger allies in government than they’ve had in a long time, capital still runs rampant, still able to exert extreme influence over state pri-
orities in this country. This raging contradic-
tion between the interests of working people and the relative failure of those interests to be reflected socially and politically leaves us con-
fronting extreme social instability—whether that’s deep racial and gender inequality, environ-
mental crisis, housing crisis, health crisis, a lack of democracy, fascist, and of course as it relates to the violence of policing and imprisonment (To overlook these is to overlook the US, working people still have more than two million of their sisters, and brothers, and siblings locked in cages). People locked in women’s prisons who’ve been fighting pitched battles over their reproductive and health care, who were watching as children and other child-bearing people on the outside are having their reproductive and human rights stripped from them by the Supreme Court and vicious state legislatures. Again, this violence, along with attacks on the human rights of trans people, is going to impact working people most intensely—especially working people of color, especially working people of color who live in states that are also seeing their workers’ rights and political rights stripped from them. Again, these are situations that the majority of your readers are already living and struggling against.
I can’t help thinking about that quote by GL* Jackson:
“Settle your quarrels, come together, understand the reality of our situation, understand that the majority of people...are dying who could be saved, that generations more will die or live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act. Do what must be done, discover your humanity and your love in revolution.”

The authoritarian right’s program hinges on incredible violence targeting working class people—we see its rabid, overtly racist law-and-order politics; its attacks on reproductive or gender rights and its criminalization of healthcare workers, childcare providers, or teachers who would defend those rights; and its support for vigilante violence against political opponents of all types. Again, these are workers’ issues; they are prisoners’ issues, and they are abolitionists’ issues. I think it should be a top priority to defeat this threat at the ballot box where possible, and to also wage other struggles to defend against and beat fascism.

At the same time, it would be great for unions, abolitionists, and others interested in strug-
gling against the PIC to educate and mobilize one another at the intersection of their move-
ments. Continuing to dig into how “defunding” or “divestment/reinvestment” could work for working people, especially working people of color. Supporting strikes, organizing, and leg-
al battles led by imprisoned people and at the same time supporting strikes, organizing, and legal battles led by imprisoned people—and understanding both as working-class struggles. Continuing the powerful documentation of how this work against anti-prison activists, workers, and environmentalists. Defending migrant workers and peoples against state and vigilante violence. Building a revolutionary socialist, anti-racist, and colonialism. Forging ties with labor and so-
cial movements globally to both defend against repression of those movements, along with up-
lifting advances in places like Brazil where more pro-worker, pro-people, pro-environment, pro democratic movements are taking power.

The “reality of our situation” Jackson put it in grim, yet it does create some very ripper grounds for struggling together. It’s all through that through those struggles—wrought with contra-
dictions and uncomfortable choices—abolitionists, trade unionists, and everyone else have alot to discover and gain. 

*Editors’ Note: The author mentions a revolu-
tionary leader and imprisoned intellec-
tual of the radical prisoner movement in the 1960s-1970s. We chose to reproduce this figure to justify gang validation and other tactics of repression, the editorial col-
lective omitted this person’s full name and replaced it with his first and middle initials GL. Long live GL Jackson!

About the Author: Isaac Ontiveros is a former mem-
ber and former National Communications Director of Critical Resistance. He has written extensively as a writer and as a political educator in the labor movement.
Making A Living: Building New Worlds Against Punitiveism & the State

By Mujeres de Frente of Ecuador

In this piece, Mujeres de Frente (Women Up Front) from Quito, Ecuador talk about their vision of abolition as an anti-punitivist feminism focused primarily on the labor of social re-production. The term “social reproduction” is used to describe work that is required to sustain the systemically invisible labor of the feminized, racialized, and, as explained in more detail in the piece, hyper-criminalized. Mujeres de Frente organizers discuss the broader context of women and girls who are criminalized for minor “offenses”. As Keenaga-Yamahatta Taylor writes, in the South, “policing was more than simply keeping order; the police worked with those in power to provide a regular labor force to replace the labor that had been disrupted by slavery’s end.”

These nefarious arrangements between racial capitalism and the state, and still exist today, remain and honored in the names of many prisons in Texas. For example, the W F Ramsey Unit in Robinson, TX, “honors” the owner of the plantation on which the Ramsey Prison labor camp was first located. Although a few prisons have been renamed in recent years, the change is more cosmetic as long as forced prisoner labor still exists in Texas—actually, as long as aged humans are kept in Texas! Real change is possible only by smashing the cages and liberating all of us.

This new paradigm worked splendidly well for the racist capitalists and the state; not very well for caged and shackled, many of whom, after being kicked out of their communities, died humiliatingly and anonymous deaths, succumbing in their cells from overwork and abuse and mistreatment, not only the women who have been imprisoned and buried on the spot in unmarked graves. A recent and unremarked mass grave was located just outside the Central Unit in Texas. The island is one infamous example. How many more remain undiscovered? W ith the benefit of over 350 years of hindsight, we can see how the convict leasing labor system worked beyond their wildest dreams, laying the groundwork for the $80 billion PIC, the insatiable beast that devours generations of Black, Brown, and poor white women, men, gender-non-forming people, and children.

Although there really is no such thing as a human prison system, the state of Texas assumes a well-earned position of prominence in the “PICO Hall of Shame”: Not only did it pioneer much of the convict leasing, the only …

As I write these words in the aftermath of the Uvalde school shooting at Robb Elementary and the botched law enforcement response, a few comments are appropriate. Against the backdrop of so much pain, horror, heartbreak, recriminations, and loud shouts of “system failure”, I can imagine how difficult it is when I attempt to communicate my point of view. This was not a system failure at all, but the inevitable consequence of a fanatical gun culture in a state that built up and maintains a massive carceral system—one of the largest prison systems in the world, actually—yet has consistently failed to allocate resources that would truly make communities safer: Education, housing, food, and health care including mental health care. W hen we begin to analyze the “systems” that were designed by capitalism, it’s increasingly difficult to accept the official line of “system failure.”

The more you learn, the clearer it becomes: The system is not “broken” nor has it failed; in fact, it works very well for those who designed it. And I think it’s important to reaffirm a core abolitionist principle: W e cannot sit around and wait for the system to “work” or for it to be “reformed.” No, we must instead keep ourselves busy in the everyday work of dismantling systems of oppression, by changing how we think and act, as well as how we work together to change our conditions, so that we can build the world in which our communities can grow in health and freedom.

W ithout this important work, we will continue to hand over our power at each new crisis, and history will keep repeating itself in a never-ending cycle of tragedy and farce, as seen at the press conference in Uvalde in the hours after the shooting, when a well-known politician who many consider to be “the voice of the left” in Texas, the governor and his minions, saying this massacre was a direct result of the governor’s policies. At that, the right-wing neo-fascists went on stage, led by the clownish Ted Cruz, and all began to shriek and howl on the one hand, while calling for decorum on the other. They all deliberately and systematically work against the common good. As a Californian who roots in several generations deep in the red sands of South Texas and who feels a close kinship with the people of Uvalde, I say the time for decorum is over. W e do not remember the words of Lawrence Jenkins in the latest Abolitionist Issue #37—“It’s a war.”

“We must instead keep ourselves busy in the steady work of dismantling systems of oppression, by changing how we think and act, as well as how we work together to change our conditions, so that we can build the new world in which our communities can grow in health and freedom.”

Despite all the weapons aimed at us now, despite the savagery and butchery and genocidal actions taken to conquer us and destroy our will and clear us off the land, in spite of centuries of colonialism and white supremacist violence, along with more recent strategies and tactics developed and employed by the state against those who seek freedom as a fundamental human right; W e channel, direct, and reflect the light. True love is not the diamond but the light that passes through the diamond—We are the diamonds! W e channel, direct, and reflect the light. Like diamonds emerging from great heat and pressure, strong and beautiful, we need to conquer the power of love. W e advance in “clarity and power”, when we dismantle, change, and build, we do so in the firm belief that love is the most powerful force in the universe and an essential component of our vision for a world without prisons.

About the Author: Ricardo Vela, Jr. is a budding abolitionist behind the walls in Texas. He looks forward to hearing from readers and encourages feedback, criticism, ideas, and working. Write to him at: Ricardo Vela, Jr. #284340
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This reality has pushed us to understand that impossibility to access a home, the lack of food, the hike in prices, the not necessary to be out in the country to see the dynamics of corporate capitalism and the punished territories, that our struggle is about seeking a dignified life among the interstices of the cities, jumping like policing and other state actions, targets and preventing us from reproducing life with dignity, that our struggle is about seeking a dignified job in the streets (between the legal and the illegal, the legitimate and illegitimate). For these reasons, our reading of labor struggle goes beyond seeking a job; rather, it relates to seeking life in adverse conditions.

The focus of the capitalist system is capital accumulation, and the labor movement seeks to maintain this monetary relation. We are interested in going beyond money. We are interested in building relationships based on respect. We are not interested in working just because they pay us, because we are interested in building communities that resist racism, criminalization, and the logic of the state, into a democratic process that allows us to have our own voice and live in dignity, all led by those who suffer day in and day out.

To us, labor struggles are not only related to seeking formal jobs. Even though that is what classic sectors may say and the left may keep as its hegemonic discourse, our struggle transcends toward “making a living” in contexts of dispossession and punishment. We believe that it is no coincidence that it is precisely us, who work in the streets, who suffer persecution, criminalization, and impoverishment on the part of the state. The informal proletariat always had to adjust to the labor market’s aggressive dynamics, which are only considered for wealthier classes and social strata, and this precludes us from accessing dignified lives within our families and our communities. The idea is to do our work happily, because work would become an act of care and companionship, a collective endeavor, capable of building liberatory relationships and new possibilities, in fighting for work, pressing the state in respecting our value before the state, building communities that resist racism, criminalization, and the logic of the state, into a democratic process that allows us to have our own voice and live in dignity, all led by those who suffer day in and day out.

To us, it is essential to note that during our participation in the strike, we assumed the maintenance of the collection center, which allowed for the sustenance of our comrades during the days that spent the night in the university facility during the striking days. This work was required to sustain the material conditions of reproduction of the struggle. We stood as an assembly in the collection and distribution spaces to receive and distribute donations, with the aim of guaranteeing our comrades faster times of struggle. At the same time, we occupied positions as spokespersons, and several of our comrades took to the front lines so that we were not only at the rearguard of the strike, preoccupied with sustenance and care, but also at the forefront, exercising our political participation in the streets and other spaces.

It is worth noting that the strike also served to nurture alliances; the collection center was run through a collaborative effort between students and social movement activists, in particular with the participation of the transnational assembly. Sharing this experience allows us to recognize ourselves in diversity even more and overcome our own prejudices. These are individuals who lent a helping hand and taught us a lot; we are all people, and we should all raise our voices in this shared struggle, one that seeks the need to strengthen and acknowledged our experiences and open the way to the varied struggles of different organizations. The capitalist, racist, and patriarchal state affects us all.

ADDRESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LABOR, POLICING, IMPRISONMENT AND STATE VIOLENCE IN ECUADOR

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Our struggle is comprehensive and represents an attempt to stand out as a collective and sustain ourselves and each other so that, despite seeking a salary or a job, we are like wise reflect on the logic we want to leave behind. This means considering the needs of our fellow female comrades, organizing in assemblies and by consensus, and working together as we sustain each other and the care of our space, which every day we are building with mutual aid.

“The aim of the struggle is not just to be able to work in order to be exploited but to build a new model beyond money, through which our labor and effort would center on all that is necessary to sustain life within our families and our communities.”

About the authors: Mujeres de Frente is an abolitionist organization from Quito, Ecuador that works inside and outside women’s jails and struggles to build a community of reflection and care.
The Rise of “Criminal” Background Screening, Employment, and Impacts on People Looking for Work: An interview with Melissa Burch by Rehana Lerandeu

Editors’ Note: “Criminal records” is a general term describing the lists of arrests, convictions, and even allegations that would likely show up on various background checks. We use the term in this piece as it is used by employers and others. Further, as abolitionists, we want to encourage rejecting language that criminalizes people and acts of survival, language that defines people by harm they may have committed, punishment, imprisonment, and surveillance.

How did you develop an interest in criminal records and background checks?

When I lived in Los Angeles, I organized with CR against jail construction in the No New Jails Coalition, where I met Susan Burton, who founded a reentry program for women coming out of prison, called A New Way of Life Reentry Project. I began doing political education with the women at A New Way of Life and eventually joined the staff.

At A New Way of Life, I helped to establish a legal clinic in collaboration with UCLA Law School and its students to help people expunge their records. Many people weren’t eligible for expungement and started coming to us with general issues of employment discrimination—being unfairly and illegally denied jobs or promotion based on their convictions. That’s where, working alongside the law students and helping these challenges, people were having finding and retaining work based on their criminal records. I first developed an understanding of the nexus of employment and criminal records and the significance of employment for people coming home.

At A New Way of Life, we were also the hosts for a local chapter of All of Us or None (AOUON), the prisoner-led group that was founded in 2013 in California. They lobbied the state to pass Ban the Box laws, while CR’s Oakland chapter worked to “ban the box” by partnering with AOUON in the Bay Area to create the coalition Plan for a Safer Oakland. This was an incredibly informative and frustrating experience.

Now in 2022, Ban the Box policies have been adopted in hundreds of cities and counties all over the US—we no longer think of it as a big deal, but this was back in 2004–2005. When I worked in the city of Baltimore, there was a great resistance to the idea that we not ask about past convictions on job applications. From our perspective, this was a modest reform, but somehow it seemed unprecedented to folks. That’s where my intellectual curiosity kicked in. Furthermore, the reasons provided by the County Board of Supervisors for not adopting change were very unconvincing—they didn’t want to give people “false hope” by allowing them to get a foot in the door when they might later be denied. The board also pointed out that if they did this, they would have to pay for re-screening, that’s where my intellectual curiosity kicked in. Furthermore, the reasons provided by the County Board of Supervisors for not adopting change were very unconvincing—they didn’t want to give people “false hope” by allowing them to get a foot in the door when they might later be denied. The board also pointed out that if they did this, they would have to pay for re-screening, that’s where my intellectual curiosity kicked in.

What are the consequences for folks that are living with criminal records after a period of imprisonment?

Unfortunately, evidence shows that having a record generally, and especially after imprisonment, negatively affects both immediate wages and long-term earnings. Many people with felony convictions get hired into the lowest tier of the labor market—jobs paying the lowest wages, with few if any benefits and little job security. A record can also affect a person’s ability to move up—for example, sometimes people successfully get hired but have trouble advancing into higher-level positions.

There is also a huge range of people who are convicted and who go to prison, and differently situated people are impacted differently—the variations in experience are very important. For instance, some people had careers before being sent to prison, while others may have never had a job or have very little or spotty work experience. Some had careers that they can’t go back to due to occupational licensing statutes that prohibit people with felonies or specific convictions in certain professions. Some people are past middle age when they come out of prison, and their record may not even be the biggest barrier; it might be age discrimination, or the combination of the record plus being older. There’s plenty of evidence that suggests that Black people, especially women, with records, have a harder time finding work because of the double discrimination based on race and a record. People with sex-related convictions by far face the most difficult time of all.

Even with many different experiences of job seeking with records, there are commonalities. In our organizing and advocacy, we need to not flatten those differences or pretend they don’t exist.

How did “criminal” background checks become common in employment contexts?

The rise of record screening in employment is a deeply fascinating and complex story. Prior to the 1970s, a prospective employer would not likely have known about a past conviction. Only 50 years ago, record screening was rare in employment contexts and mostly used when applying to be a judge, cop, or some high-level position of public trust. That’s what a background check was for—not for every single job as is almost the case now. It’s important to remember that criminal records were first and foremost a tool of policing.

It’s important to unpack why and how we came to be in a situation where most employers conduct routine background checks. My goal is not only to build a chronology of who did what, when, but also how things have worked together, and to what effect. In order for records to be used effectively as discriminatory information, and for an employer to have that information in their hands to use in hiring decisions, we need to not only have access to databases, but also that these databases be available and widely shared, and 3) people have to be convinced of its value. The rise of background screening is a story of availability, capacity, and motivation. To think about these three factors through time we must consider three key trends that developed simultaneously in the late 1960s and continued into the 1990s that set the stage for widespread background screening.

In the late 1960s, police were expanding the scope and volume of the data they were collecting and using new technology to digitally integrate and automate their new databases. This investment in databases was linked to investment in other tools of policing in the late 1960s and early 1970s following urban uprisings across the US. Computers, electronic maps, databases, etc., were all tools meant to improve policing infrastructure and performance. Simultaneously, there was also a lot of buzz about police modernization and professionalization: That was the origin of this major push to integrate the records of prosecution, court records, correction records, arrest records into a nationally accessible database. Suddenly, a cop could stop someone in any given place and quickly be able to see someone’s prior conviction record, and could use even that information in their hands to use in hiring decisions.

A commission under President Johnson called for this integrated national information system to serve all the needs of police, courts, and corrections.

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[Note: Art for Afterlives of Conviction Project by Ana Holschuh]
Courts record data has technically always been available to the public, but up to the internet were basically unavailable since obtaining them required going to a courthouse and requesting information for a particular person. They were also limited by locality to records in your city or county—you couldn't get records outside the place you're not shared with agencies outside of law enforcement. In the 1970s, Congress began to chip away at keeping FBI records secret, and throughout these 1970s and 1980s, fundamental changes in the way people access records are basically unavailable since obtaining them. I'm trying to foster more of an analysis of records not just as a reentry issue but as integral to the PIC.

If there was like one wrench you could put in the cogs of "criminal" record screening practices where would it go?

M y wrench is an ideological one. The whole basis for the "criminal" background screening system relies on the notion that records reliably sort the world into the people who have done "bad things" and the people who haven't. We agree with the behavior someone was convicted of, and understanding of the use of records not just as a reentry issue but as integral to the PIC.

The events of September 11, 2001, dramatically accelerated the growing consciousness that background checks were a smart idea. These events prompted the single biggest surge in state-mandated background checks to be brought into the field of employment law, human resources (HR), and the background-screening industry into play. New congressional mandates for airport security personnel, airline workers, and truck drivers resulted in millions of new background checks and restrictions, and strengthened the idea that there were clearly identifiable "bad things" that could be kept out of one's organization by doing a background check. Professional HR organizations began to promote background screening as a best practice.

Throughout my research, I encountered many employers working to end the reliance on background checks, and not only into the lowest-level jobs. They're more invested in good employment practices where would it go? They're more invested in good employment practices. They're making changes to work with employees and not only into the lowest-level jobs. They're more invested in good employment practices. They're making changes to work with employees and not only into the lowest-level jobs. They're more invested in good employment practices. They're making changes to work with employees and not only into the lowest-level jobs. They're more invested in good employment practices. They're making changes to work with employees and not only into the lowest-level jobs. They're more invested in good employment practices. They're making changes to work with employees and not only into the lowest-level jobs.

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O nly one of the key indicators of getting out and staying out is a person’s ability to secure employment upon release. This tool is designed to support people awaiting parole to prepare for the job market once released. We debunk a few common myths about employment for formerly imprisoned people while providing helpful job seeking tips.

The data and recommendations in this resource are compiled from sources such as the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, All of Us or None, the National Employment Law Project, the Society for Human Resource Management, and various industry experts who supported the creation of this resource. If you have further questions about anything in this resource, you can reach out to rehana@criticalresistance.org, and write to her at CR’s national office.

**Myth:** **EMPLOYERS CAN ALWAYS DENY MY APPLICATION BASED ON A RECORD.**

**Fact:** While barriers to employment do exist for certain occupations and within certain industries, job seekers with records are not recommended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee (EEOC). The EEOC recommends that employers conduct some research and be transparent about their hiring process when assessing a job candidate’s record. This asks employers to assess the nature of the conviction, the time that has passed, and the nature of the job. Together they do not pose a “legitimate risk” the record should not be means for denying employment. For example, a Driving Under the Influence (DUI) 10 years ago would not pose a “risk” to a candidate being interviewed for a customer service role today. 

**Job-Seeking Tip:** In order to give yourself the best possible chance at securing employment, research the requirements for the industries you’re interested in and don’t go after jobs that have a primary function that is very related to your charges. For example, if you were convicted for data theft, don’t apply for a data-analyst role, instead apply for a customer service role. Or if you were convicted for theft, don’t apply to work the floor in a retail space, instead apply for a role in logistics.

**Myth:** **MOST LIVING-WAGE JOBS HAVE A BAN ON FELONY CONVICTIONS.**

**Fact:** While there is no national ban on employing workers with criminal records, many jobs that require an occupational license (i.e., barbers, dental hygienists, some teaching roles, etc.) do have bans on felony convictions, which makes it very hard for people to find meaningful, living-wage work. Many open roles for which workers are qualified don’t require an occupational license. The laws that protect the candidate from privacy violations and discrimination.

**Myth:** **ONCE I LAND THE JOB, I HAVE TO DISCLOSE MY RECORD TO MANAGEMENT AND MY PEERS.**

**Fact:** When you do make it through the interview process, and are hired and on-board, the Human Resources (HR) team that ran your background check may keep your results for between 1-5 years depending on their policies. However, those results must be kept in a locked compartment, must be kept confidential, and must be completely destroyed after the waiting period is over. Outside of the initial background screening process (if they have one) it is your decision to disclose your conviction or not.

**Job-Seeking Tip:** You want to share your manager so that they can support any conditions of parole/probation that could affect your work or share your history with a trusted peer who is helping you get acclimated. The important thing to remember is that your history is yours to share (or not) and should not be discussed without your consent, and sharing should not lead to additional monitoring in the workplace.

**Myth:** **A WORKER WITH A RECORD, I HAVE NO RIGHTS IN THE EMPLOYMENT PROCESS.**

**Fact:** Formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones from the grassroots organization All of Us or None (AOUON) have successfully won campaigns to “Ban-the-Box” in 37 states and 350 cities, which delays asking about a conviction history until later in the hiring process. This means that regions employers may not ask about your conviction history until your skills have been fairly assessed and a conditional offer of employment has been made. Progress has also been made on the federal level like the passing of the Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019 which went into effect in 2021. The law prohibits most federal agencies and contractors from requesting information on a job applicant’s arrest and conviction records until after conditionally offering the job to the applicant. Additionally, even after a job offer has been made, an employer must give written notice and receive permission from the candidate to run a background check, and the employer is bound to Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) laws that protect the candidate from privacy violations.

**Myth:** **CONVICTION, NO ONE IS GOING TO WANT TO HIRE ME OR BELIEVE I’LL DO WELL ON THE JOB.**

**Fact:** We are still in the fight to dismantle the stigma, stereotyping, and discrimination seen in employment for workers with records, but we are also in an exciting moment in our organizing for full rights and access to work for workers with records. In addition to an overall ideology shift happening, more and more employers are taking up bans, and see “chance hiring”, and we have achieved important policy wins. The Society for Human Resource Management has shared that “82% of managers and 60% of professionals think that the value new employees with records bring to the organization is as high as or higher than that of work without records.” All things considered, now is a better time to be a job seeker with a record and many efforts are out there to create ease in the process.

**Job-Seeking Tip:** Remember, good employers for formerly imprisoned people and people with records often think that the value new employees bring to the organization is as high as or higher than that of work without records. All things considered, now is a better time to be a job seeker with a record and many efforts are out there to create ease in the process.

**More Tips & Steps to Prepare for Job Seeking.**

1. **When you’re preparing for job interviews, find out the employer’s practices around considering criminal histories.** Many employers at the forefront of criminal justice reform are implementing “Ban-the-Box” policies and are committed to creating opportunities for formerly incarcerated people. For example, a 2021 study by the National Veterans Employment Center found that 85% of veterans with criminal records were still being hired at companies that were actively working to remove criminal justice barriers.

2. **Identify your strengths and skills.** One of the biggest perceived barriers for folks looking for work after a long stint inside is a “gap in the resume.” However, you can consider sharing all the things you’ve been doing during your period of imprisonment as transferable skills. Whether you have held jobs while imprisoned, or have been working on your education, or counseling personal projects, your resume has provided you with valuable skill sets for the workforce.

3. **What to do: You can choose to be fully transparent in the interview process, or list those skill sets as being employed by “The State of [whenever you spent time in prison].”**

4. As you’re searching for work, consider breaking up your goals into short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. Right when you get out, you might need to get easily accessible work quickly to start generating income and meet potential conditions of parole. Once
you have that, you can spend a certain portion of every week job searching for something more attuned to what you’d like to be doing in the medium term if you’re not already on that career path. Once you have a sustainable living wage job in the medium term, you can really set your sights on something you’d like to develop for a long term. Don’t be discouraged if it takes you a few years to get to where you’d like to be ultimately—everyone, especially incarcerated or not, is on an individual journey. Take one test at a time and don’t stop to where they want to be right away without a journey. Have patience with yourself and think strategically about how to sustainably meet your goals over time.

4. Look for jobs across industries and sectors, in and outside of unions. As you prepare to parole, you may be feeling stumped about what jobs to look for in the first place. Of course, your interests and skills set play a major role in what work you might be interested in, but it may also be worthwhile to think about what industries are accessible and growing in their labor force.

Potential industries to search for work in:

Healthcare - Healthcare support occupations are projected to grow the fastest of all occupational groups. Projected fast-growing occupations include physical therapists, assistants, home health and personal care aides, and occupational therapy assistants. This sector is projected to gain approximately 924,000 jobs, reaching a size of 4.6 million jobs in 2031, which would make it the largest occupational group in the economy. Demand for caregiving services and therapy services is expected to grow significantly over the next decade, in part because of an aging population, which typically has elevated healthcare needs compared to younger groups. Projected # of jobs (2021-2031): 924,000. Salary range: $48k-$86k.

Computer & Mathematical - The computer and mathematical occupations group is projected to experience much faster than average employment growth of 15.4% through 2031. Expected strong demand for IT services, including cyber-security services and cloud computing, will fuel demand for computer occupations. For mathematical occupations, expected robust growth in data and demand for data to be collected and analyzed are main factors behind strong projected employment growth. Three computer and mathematical occupations are featured among the ten fastest growing occupations: data scientists, information security analysts, and statisticians. In addition, software developers are expected to see the third-largest increase in jobs of any occupation over the 2021–31 decade. Salary range: $50k-$220k.

Green Jobs - Green jobs, or occupations with a focus on the environment, are projected to rapidly expand over the next decade with an above average growth rate of up to 50% for certain roles. These roles include environmental specialists, environmental protection technicians, environmental engineers, solar installers, and more. Projected # of jobs (2020-2029): 405,500. Salary range: $45k-$96k.

Manufacturing - These jobs typically require a high level of technical training or applied knowledge. Examples include computer numerical control (CNC) machinists, welders, and maintenance technicians. At the higher end of experience, some of these jobs require specific expertise and computer skills. Unlike the first category, these jobs cannot typically be filled immediately with someone of every week job searching for something more attuned to what you’d like to be doing in the medium term if you’re not already on that career path. Once you have a sustainable living wage job in the medium term, you can really set your sights on something you’d like to develop for a long term. Don’t be discouraged if it takes you a few years to get to where you’d like to be ultimately—everyone, especially incarcerated or not, is on an individual journey. Take one test at a time and don’t stop to where they want to be right away without a journey. Have patience with yourself and think strategically about how to sustainably meet your goals over time.

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and they wanted to organize and fight for their labor rights. The third reason was that the director of the National Penitentiary Service allowed certain programs to take form. I wouldn’t say that thanks to him SUTPLA happened, but at the same time he didn’t actively try to stop it. In 2013, 1400 out of 1700 prisoners were SUTPLA members. The situation was as good as it was back then, though. Victories are never definitive in prison: You gain something, but then you always have to keep fighting to keep it—otherwise someone will take it away from you. But the union is still working and fighting. This is possible because they were organized; they shared membership forms so that people could become part of the union and specified that people did not have to pay dues, which made more people more willing to sign up. There were two very different things about how the union worked: (1) They had representatives from every housing unit, and (2) they had walk-throughs, where a group of members would go to every unit and place of work and talk to everyone to let them know about the union. Back then there was the Argentine Workers’ Central Union (CTA), which gathered all the workers’ unions in one place. CTA had our back. Repression from guards still existed but one phone call from CTA would make them take a step back. Guards would spread rumors about the union so that people could be discouraged, but there wasn’t much that they could really do to prevent the union from moving forward when it was formed in 2012.

Finally, there’s a lot of prejudice in the labor movement. We need to understand how prison works, and there is a lot of intersectionality. Some prisoners are people of color, and many are indigenous people. Many activists in Argentina don’t seem to understand how prison works, really, and labor organizations are not inclined toward working cooperatively with SUTPLA because they think “the person who robs doesn’t want to work.” But there was a moment in 2015 when the Labor Ministry got together with several labor organizations from different unions to do an assessment of the labor situation inside of prisons. After our report a lot of people from different unions were eager to work together. But that’s how it’s called. Prison conditions still made this work so difficult with too much paper work that people got discouraged right away.

**What do you see as the role of labor unions in the struggle against policing, imprisonment, and surveillance?**

### Jessie, Chicago

The labor movement in Chicago is huge and it has a process named police. Given that, what does the labor movement have to do? We need to look at how much discrimination takes place in and on the prison. We also need to see that we spend so much and don’t get the outcomes we’re saying we want. We could look at Chicago, where every year people are saying that there are no changes, we are constantly fighting against getting killed. But we have a huge amount of money being invested in constantly increasing policing and violence has not really decreased. From that we know that policing doesn’t work. We know that former Mayor Rahm Emanuel closed so many mental health clinics; there is a direct connection between removing those services and the increase in violence or the continuation of violence within the community. The labor movement needs to be working more closely with the fundamental struggles of all those different struggles. It has to be much broader.

### Clarence, San Francisco

If we go back to 1886, with the first May Day and the Haymarket massacre, we understand the role of the police: They represent the law. The police have been the “gut squad” of the ruling class. When there is a labor dispute, the police come out to support the workers but in support of the bosses. People need to learn that the police are not a part of a working class. They may be working-class people in the police department, but when it comes to labor, police represent power and privilege—the bosses who want to maintain power and control—and then we talk about labor and why we should be opposing these police killings (which in many instances involve working-class Black people); people need to understand that the role of the police in the Black community is one of surveillance and containment. They’re not there to protect and serve us. That’s why we shut down the ports to commemorate George Floyd’s death.

“People need to be very clear that the police are not a part of the working class. They may be working-class people in the police department, but when it comes to labor, police represent power and privilege—the bosses and they are our class enemies.”

On the day of George Floyd’s funeral, all longshore workers laid down their tools for 8 minutes and 46 seconds—the same amount of time that Floyd was being killed by the police. On June 12, 2020, the ILWU shut down all 29 ports on the West Coast to commemorate June 4th, and demand an end to the racist violence that Argentinian laws related to imprisonment allow. For eight hours, there was no cargo moving from Vancouver, Wash. to San Francisco, Calif. Longshore workers are responsible for the loading and unloading of maritime cargo. The cars people drive, shoes people wear, food, phones, computers, and more. We’re the ones that make the goods available on supermarket shelves. Our labor is critical to the global economy, and when there’s a disruption like that, it is felt worldwide. Those are important lessons in terms of working with various organizations. We need more people to understand intersectionality. Across our struggles, whether they are about climate, women’s rights, or indigenous rights, we are part of a larger, social, international group. The union is supposed to speak for the entire working class. Killing Black people, killing Latino people, killing working-class people are all part of the same issue: It’s a working-class issue, and they’re not killing the ruling class.

### Ana, Argentina

In the 1990s, Argentina was experiencing an economic crisis and the unemployment rate was increased dramatically. Workers did not have unions at the time, since unions were traditionally associated with only certain types of jobs. Until the beginning of a new workers’ movement in Argentina, and it grew because working conditions were becoming more precarious every year. Now, in Argentina, sex workers have a union, unemployed people have a union, imprisoned people have a union, and most recently, the Union of the Workers of the Popular Economy was created. This is now the largest union in Argentina. Unfortunately, however, these workers and unions are surveilled and targeted by policing. As the welfare state grows, more and more people across the world—shrinks, people become more afraid and mistrustful, resulting in greater support for surveillance and policing because of the false belief that it will make people safe. The majority of The Abolitionist newspaper’s imprisoned readerships is located within the US. What lessons can US-based prisoners learn from prisoner-union-organizing work in Argentina?

### Ana, Argentina

It’s important to understand that Argentine laws related to imprisonment and the prison system are different from the US. In Argentina, we don’t have to fight the same legal fights, but, in some cases, we have to ensure that we have laws that are better to organize effectively for people’s rights. For example, Law 24,660 dictates various aspects of life in prison: What a prisoner has to do, like go to school or work (and they have a job), he or she is allowed to have contact with their families, etc. Unlike in the US, in the US, it’s in alignment with international human rights, whereas in Argentina, laws have to do with how prisoners are surveilled and targeted by the opportunities and resources every human needs. Since prisoners must live, work, and study all in the same place, the union has been a disruptive thing that prisoners used to do. The protests have to do with parole eligibility guidelines became stricter, and we had a huge fight to try to prevent this, culminating in hunger strikes. But, as you see, the fact is that they still are there. The parole is one place not only that they can fight for different rights, but it also means that the kinds of actions that SUTPLA members take do not only have to do with work.
Beyond “Sex Work Is Work”: An interview with Chanelle Gallant by Billy Ray Boyer

Please start by telling us who you are and how you find yourself in the landscape of abolitionist work and sex worker organizing.

I have been involved in the movement since 2010, mainly because I was a queer sex party organizer. The first party I organized was raided by the Toronto police, and then I was immediately an anti-police organizer! The day after the raid, I went to a general meeting at Critical Resistance. W e launched a human rights complaint against the cops and won one of the largest financial settlements against the police in Canadian history, leading to the first policy regarding searches of trans people by cops. At the time, we fought for really liberal reforms, like hiring more “gay cops” and introducing the first “sensitivity training” to a policing force. So I began in anti-police organizing that was focused on reformist goals.

A couple of years later, I started organizing with sex workers as a response to an ongoing massacre in Vancouver. I believe around 65 sex workers were killed over the course of a couple of decades. Dozens of the killings were attributed to one serial killer who was known to have friendly relationships with the local cops. I started organizing with sex workers out of sheer self-defense, as I saw that the fight for decriminalization was a matter of life and death. My family included sex workers, and I felt terrified that if sex workers couldn’t win decriminalization, it made them targets to be preyed upon in a variety of ways. My sister was dancing at a strip club when she was murdered and I was horrified that there was no safety net for poor women. Organizing with sex workers, I noticed the radical differences in the demands of a more socially accepted job. A lot of what people like about sex work are the ways that it’s not like other jobs, because it’s part of the informal economy and unregulated. Especially for people who can’t, or don’t want to, meet the demands of a more socially accepted job. A lot of sex workers are sick, neurodiverse, or they are disabled through things like chronic pain and mental health issues. There are a million ways that people’s bodies and minds don’t fit into capitalism. W hile sex work is a service for money, for some, sex work is more of a hustle or a way of survival that requires a lot of resources to all, rather than just to those who are recognized as paid workers under capitalism.

What are the limitations of wanting to be recognized as a worker under capitalism? What do you give up in the process of wanting the status quo definition of a worker to be applied to you? It’s really a strategy question. Recognizing sex workers as workers can provide more power to both the sex workers’ rights movement and the labor movement. In New Zealand, sex workers are recognized as workers under the social security act, which gives them the same workplace rules as other workers, as well as rights to recognition within the system to address the dangers faced by the people that the system is designed to attack.

People need to be able to sell sex safely in any context for any reason. This is similar to abortion or drug use. If you put any barriers in place, you’ll kill people. People are going to sell sex, and they’re especially going to sell sex under the most difficult, dangerous circumstances. They’ll sell sex in refugee camps, in prison, on the street, in disaster zones, and in conflict zones. Sex work policy needs to reflect that. All of those environments must be made safe for sex workers, and that’s actually where our advocacy needs to start.

The best sex work policy does not center formal labor recognition by the state. No policy around sex work should force people to interact with the state. Abolitionists can both recognize that sex work is work and not want it to be controlled by the state.

To complicate this question of “labor” even more, capitalism and jobs suck. A lot of what people like about sex work are the ways that it’s not like other jobs, because it’s part of the informal economy and unregulated. Especially for people who can’t, or don’t want to, meet the demands of a more socially accepted job. A lot of sex workers are sick, neurodiverse, or they are disabled through things like chronic pain and mental health issues. There are a million ways that people’s bodies and minds don’t fit into capitalism. W hile sex work is a service for money, for some, sex work is more of a hustle or a way of survival that requires a lot of resources to all, rather than just to those who are recognized as paid workers under capitalism.

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People need to be able to sell sex safely in any context for any reason. This is similar to abortion or drug use. If you put any barriers in place, you’ll kill people. People are going to sell sex, and they’re especially going to sell sex under the most difficult, dangerous circumstances. They’ll sell sex in refugee camps, in prison, on the street, in disaster zones, and in conflict zones.

The best sex work policy does not center formal labor recognition by the state. No policy around sex work should force people to interact with the state. Abolitionists can both recognize that sex work is work and not want it to be controlled by the state.

To complicate this question of “labor” even more, capitalism and jobs suck. A lot of what people like about sex work are the ways that it’s not like other jobs, because it’s part of the informal economy and unregulated. Especially for people who can’t, or don’t want to, meet the demands of a more socially accepted job. A lot of sex workers are sick, neurodiverse, or they are disabled through things like chronic pain and mental health issues. There are a million ways that people’s bodies and minds don’t fit into capitalism. W hile sex work is a service for money, for some, sex work is more of a hustle or a way of survival that requires a lot of resources to all, rather than just to those who are recognized as paid workers under capitalism.

What are the limitations of wanting to be recognized as a worker under capitalism? What do you give up in the process of wanting the status quo definition of a worker to be applied to you? It’s really a strategy question. Recognizing sex workers as workers can provide more power to both the sex workers’ rights movement and the labor movement. In New Zealand, sex workers are recognized as workers under the social security act, which gives them the same workplace rules as other workers, as well as rights to recognition within the system to address the dangers faced by the people that the system is designed to attack.
around the world demand decriminalization because it removes sex work from criminal codes or laws, often in response to a narrow range where some sex workers are permitted to work under strict state and employer control, which typically target larger categories of “illegal sex workers.” To have a legal sex worker, you must have an illegal worker.

Decriminalization removes legal penalties against sex workers. But legalization makes the state a key actor in sanctioning and governing sex work in the US has been regulated by law for centuries, because it has been seen as a sin and “violence against the Christian Family. Now imagine if a person had to obtain a license to engage in queer sex. That’s ridiculous and invasive right? But that’s legalization: people have to give up a lot of control over their sexuality to the state. Legalization is absurd.

Legalization spurs state-sanctioned violence against sex workers since some will have to work in some horrendous conditions in order to remain hidden or survive under the state’s radar. They are then made even more vulnerable to violence because it’s in these conditions that people prey specifically on sex workers.

Legalization actually creates criminalization. People often forget that in the US, the state of Nevada has legalized sex work in some of its small towns, and Colorado has a similar law. Even in such places, violence against sex workers is not reduced. People think that the police will leave sex workers alone. But the result is that policing is even worse in the neighboring counties where sex workers are not legalized. Even in Las Vegas, which has some of the highest prostitution arrest rates in the country, it’s not like legalization is a partial measure toward decriminalization. It can actually make things worse for sex workers.

How do human trafficking laws get conflated with protection and advocacy for sex workers?

Sex work often gets conflated with human trafficking or to protect workers in any way. While protecting sex workers, human trafficking laws are written and designed to criminalize sex work. People think this means that the police will be doing a good thing, but it’s actually a really slick move to say that slavery is over when it’s happening right now. It’s not. It’s been happening right now for decades.

The anti-trafficking sector masquerades as part of social services but, in reality, it exists to conduct surveillance on marginalized communities selling sex, share information with the police to advocate for further criminalization of sex workers and border restrictions against migrants, and increase police presence in working class communities of color.

Our society conflates sex work and human trafficking because the ruling class narrative envies labor exploitation, coercion, involuntary migration, and slavery as fundamental problems in the sex industry, when these are products of racial capitalism, white supremacy, and border imperialism. The panic and myths around human trafficking distract us from the true problem and instead blame sex workers, in particular migrant and racialized sex workers. It’s actually a really slick move to say that slavery is over when, yet, it happens. It’s bad working-class, sex workers of color in the sex industry, who are enslaving people.

The real problem of human trafficking is the forced displacement of tens of millions of people every year who must leave because their homes have become uninhabitable due to corporate, economic, and environmental policies. Once displaced, they are forced to take abusive, dangerous jobs where they have no access to safety, protection, or freedom—essentially in indentured labor.

There’s also a lot of overlap because all migrant sex workers are in violation of their immigration status—not necessarily because they don’t have the immigration status to be in the US or in Canada but because they were in an instance of human sex trafficking. Migrant sex workers work in every country on earth, and a high proportion of the world’s sex workers are migrants. Providing for their needs is the only way to save sex workers. Migrant sex workers need protection and advocacy for the global sex workers movement.

The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Prevention Act in the US, named after slavery abolitionist Frederick Douglass, defines sex trafficking as “a commercial sex act,” which presupposes so many things. It defines consensual sex, with no force or violence present, as slavery. It defines waged sexual labor as slavery. There’s a deep anti-Black sentiment in the idea that sex work is slavery and that criminalizing it is “abolition,” because those who will be the most criminalized by this law are Black and other racialized people.

It’s important to clarify that sex work is not sex trafficking. Yet, under current US law, they are considered the same, and the legal conflation of the two produces sex trafficking and violence. That’s how people end up being trafficked into the sex industry; they’re made “illegal,” criminalized, and trafficked. They are labeledAPI-161=0 as such according to their own identity: therefore, it is crucial to expose the systemic roots and structures that create them:— consequently, not only is it a lack of legal protection, but also because they are unable to work with their bodies. For sex workers, very basic rights and protection strategies are illegal for sex workers.

Many abolitionists don’t realize that when supporting anti-trafficking rhetoric and laws, they’re supporting these extremely pro-cop measures. The abolitionist movement should be flagging as being for women’s safety and the social good. Trafficking is the “Trojan horse” for a lot of expanded policing power and budgets. An example is a new anti-trafficking law that provided $300 million to police and gave them the power to conduct warrantless searches. Until a sex work organization raised the alarm, not one leftist organization or sex worker activist is isolated from broader movement strategies and advances. That’s the rallying cry that we need, in my opinion. Sex workers need to be in the forefront of the police abolition movement and on the forefront of challenging and abolishing the prison industrial complex.

About the Author: Chanelle Gallant has over 20 years of experience in movements for sex workers’ rights and racial justice. She is an activist, strategist, trainer, and reluctant writer. Her work has appeared most recently in Disarm, Defund, Disrupt: Police Abolition in Canada, Pleasure Activism, and Beyond Survival: Stories and Strategies from the Transformative Justice Movement. She is also a board member of Showing Up for Racial Justice.
Dispatches from the *Kauka: Pueblos en Camino*  
*By Vilma Rocio Almendra Quiguanas and Emiliano Roa Betancourt*

**Colombia** is a “genocidal democracy,” and its state model is based on violence against the people, so that power remains in the hands of elites in conjunction with transnational capitalist interests. Capital accumulation and value transfer to the (global) North lies at the expense and exploitation of Colombia’s impoverished people and nature. What’s more, the Colombian state model is also based on a police state—a corporate police structure—with electoral processes held at regular intervals almost uninterrupted—i.e., in a pattern of violence against the earth and its peoples. All states play the same violent role of dispossession and accumulation, and the Colombian state, like them all, does so in a bloody manner. The police exist to enforce the laws of “exploitation, exploitation, exclusion, and extermination,” thus guaranteeing profit to the powerful. In 1987, National Police of Colombia committed the “Portachuelo Massacre” at the town of Totoró, at the Cauca Department. (Kauka, in Nanmuy Wam, the language of my people, the Miské, means “the mother of the house” or “mother of the woods.”) There they murdered Ricardo Rojas M. Azabé, Hugo Sánchez M. Azabé, my father José Tomás Almendra—among the latter two were spilling the land demands from the Miské people. Crimes such as these have been committed for centuries. In the cities, they usually kill poor youth and mostly Black people, because the police structure is also racist.

We, the vulnerable, have suffered state violence for centuries at the hands of the police. Currently, they are at the service of transnational corporations, and transnational interests and, jeopardized, the government does the dirty work needed to keep up public force. It is not surprising, then, that these people try to make ends meet or stand up for their rights, and in the countryside, when people oppose the privatization and destruction of Mother Earth.

**The People’s National Strike**

In April 2021 the last straw in this territory called Colombia was the fiscal reform that levied taxes on the most basic items of the family shop and what the organization’s analysis of certain points covered, and people continued to be controlled, surveilled, imprisoned, and that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abolish any state, that every state is a police state, that all police enslave. We cannot abol
Molly: There’s been a rub in leftist and anti-prison movement building circles lately around the 13th Amendment, and equating prison with the 13th Amendment. As aristotle as a political organization has a particular analysis of these critiques, and sometimes there’s some tension internally and externally around it, bringing up the 13th Amendment debate and what imprisonment means. What we’re trying to figure out is, who are we engaging, with what people, how do we make sure that the organizations we’re talking to feel like they’re getting closer to freedom. We need to talk about how the material effect they have on imprisoned people, they don’t get anyone free. We’ve asked people why they support us, what do you really want? Sometimes people say minimum wage or more resources for the PIC. Instead of starving African Americans and former enslaved people we recognize people were able to win minimum wage, the prison system would find a way to take it from you, whether through prisoners having to pay room and board, cutting off calls or not giving you enough food, etc. What we need to do is starve the PIC, not give it more resources.

Molly: That strategy for abolition is something CR has been working for creating two decades ago. We call it our “shrink and starve” strategy, in which we work to develop campaigns and projects that chip away at the life, scope, power, and legitimacy of the PIC, from reducing the funding of policing, imprisonment, and surveillance to challenging the idea that the PIC makes us safe to reducing the tools, tactics, and technology the PIC can use to oppress our communities and reducing the scale of policing, surveillance, and imprisonment.

The biggest concern I have is that this perspective on imprisonment as the new slavery and the movement around the 13th Amendment don’t prioritize the real concern of imprisoned folks: creating pathways toward freedom and enacting decarceration. Repealing the 13th doesn’t decarcerate anybody. It goes back to your original point about the 13th Amendment being some sort of loophole, or about imprisonment being the “new slavery,” what gets lost in that liberal tendency to not struggle with one another is the fact that collective liberation can only be won once we abolish the whole PIC, not only prisons, and that, as an organizing strategy, must be achieved through principled struggle toward unity.

Molly: And while we could “agree to disagree” about the 13th Amendment offering some sort of loophole, or about imprisonment being the “new slavery,” what gets lost in that liberal tendency to not struggle with one another is the fact that collective liberation can only be won once we abolish the whole PIC, not only prisons, and that, as an organizing strategy, must be achieved through principled struggle toward unity.

Stevie: I agree with CR’s analysis and have shared it for a long time. The biggest problem I see with the “new slavery” analogy and the call around the 13th is that, as an organizing strategy, must be achieved through principled struggle toward unity. When I’ve talked with comrades inside and outside of prison about this, one of the debates we get into is around Ruthie Gilmore’s analysis, which CR as an organization also shares, that the goal of imprisonment is to incapacitate people, especially poor people or the working-class and communities of color. Ruthie calls it in her book Golden Gulag the “do-nothing-tery” bad idea that is just bad idea.

Stevie: First of all, Ruthie’s observation is correct, and it counters the now-mainstream narrative that says imprisoned people are forced to work behind bars for private companies or whatever. Actually, most of us don’t work. Most people locked up do not have a job. If you go to any prison anywhere, and you find that one third of the people there, work would that be a lot. That’s the max. Prisoners who work do the reproductive labor of the prison itself. That’s the first myth I break down.

Secondly, there used to be a time—I think up until the 1970s—when the prison system was experimenting with rehabilitation. Some prisoners would get access to certain skills so that when they got back out into the world they would be “better,” more “law-abiding and productive citizens.” Today, you’re brought into prison, and you are sat down. They have people sitting in cells for 20 hours per day.

There was a recent ACLU report that said there are 40,000 people in Pennsylvania’s state prisons. They said that 33,000 people are in Pennsylva nia work. I found out the DOC gave them that number, and it referred to people who were work eligible. In fact, Pennsylvania doesn’t have 6,000 people working inside prisons. They

Continued on next page
They’re taking time. Ruthie says it’s prisoners, people who were political prisoners how prisoners were getting politicized, and the to stop study groups inside. Study groups were for that very purpose to stop organizing inside, collaboration and collectivity. and severe. The purpose, again, is to repress organs; the psychological impacts are devastating also their families, breaking so many connec-
tions or point to the causes precisely . Sometimes do it in a way that doesn’t identify the connections or point us? And, luckily because CR is a multi-
egenerational, multi-geographic or racial, multi-generational, multi-geographic or
munity. Where do our organization’s political lineages

Molly: Right, because while prisons have existed longer, then, we’ve really entitled the boundaries in the 1970s to repressive revolutionary changes and movements. That incapacitation is multi-
ple, it’s about labor politics as a way to manage surplus labor from surplus populations; extracting time from people locked up and snuffing out revolutionary potential or the will to struggle toward unity and freedom. Those goals are achieved through isolation, sensory deprivation, and deskill.

Stevie: They deskill you so you can’t work to fight together! If you knew how to do this be-
forehand, you won’t when you get out of the hole. After three years in the hole, you’re gonna be messed up. You can’t do that work anymore, can’t connect with people and organize. Even if you’re not in prison, do 20 years in prison and you come home, you’ve been deskilled. Your ability to go home and to func-
tion takes a while to get that back. Some people never get it back.

It’s difficult to organize people coming home from prison labor unions. That’s because in prison everything that’s done collectively is punished. The idea of unionization becomes foreign and even scary to folks who have been inside. If you get out and you get a low-wage job and you and your coworkers start talking about how if you unionize, you could uplift everybody. But in prison you’ve been condi-
tioned not to think that way. Psychologically, you’re unable to think about or do what you used to do. You can’t do the folkore that’s been taken from you.

When the mainstream narrative highlights a certain cause, and we’re denied access to radi-
al research, tools, and history, when we then try to articulate what we’re experiencing, we sometimes do it in a way that doesn’t identify the connections or point to the causes precisely. Also when we’re living in conditions of impris-
Onment, we’re trying to survive all the time; it’s hard to think critically about it and do the work of this analysis.

Molly: That’s one of the reasons why I think what’s happening in America is so radical—how folks inside in Alabama, whether they do work or not, are using withholding labor or time as an organizing strategy rather than seeing it as punishment or to maintain capitalist disciplining by fighting for wages or equal treatment. Their demands are about getting out, not about get-
ing paid better.

Stevie: That’s what’s so bothersome about the mainstream media coverage of what’s going on in Alabama. They’re not asking for minimum wage, or better jobs; they’re asking for real hope and pathways to freedom. That’s what they’re asking for. When you’re asking for something, you’re challenging the real thing. Give us a role board; give us mandatory criteria for parole so we can get out of here. Their strategy is about us dying in the prison and then negotiate. The mainstream media is focusing on the conditions of the pris-
on, but we know that they’re bad already. That’s how they’re trying to get us to make prisons beautiful or humane. Get us out of prison. It’s important for us to highlight what they’re really asking for. The mainstream media is not spreading a narrative that is going to get people out.

Molly: Why do you think it is at stake if we stay misaligned around the 13th Amendment and “new slavery”?

Stevie: I think we need to make a distinction. Five states do not pay imprisoned people for work. That’s an anomaly in the US prison sys-
tem. Again, most states again don’t use prisoner labor, and, if they do, prisoners get paid. States that don’t pay prisoners are explicit. They’re not asking for minimum wage, or better jobs; they’re asking for real hope and pathways to freedom. That’s what they’re asking for. When you’re asking for something, you’re challenging the real thing. Give us a role board; give us mandatory criteria for parole so we can get out of here. Their strategy is about us dying in the prison and then negotiate. The mainstream media is focusing on the conditions of the pris-
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Molly: Why do you think it is at stake if we stay misaligned around the 13th Amendment and “new slavery”?
Share your responses to The Work and Us Survey, mail them back to CR at our national office and we’ll get them over to Stevie.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have a job?  
   a. Yes. If yes, what is your job title?  
      ________________________________________________
   b. No.

2. If you have a job, how many jobs do you have?  
   a. ____________________________
   b. ____________________________
   c. ____________________________
   d. ____________________________
   e. ____________________________
   f. ____________________________
   g. ____________________________
   h. ____________________________

3. Are you required to work?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

4. Do you want a job?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

5. Why do you work? Check all that apply. If you don’t work, why would you work?  
   a. Boredom  
   b. Forced  
   c. Money  
   d. Skills  
   e. Good time  
   f. Access / Legs / Movement  
   g. Other: ____________________________

6. What are the negative consequences of not working? Check all that apply.  
   a. Loss of recreation time / access to day room or yard time  
   b. Restricted access to commissary  
   c. Worse housing units  
   d. Solitary confinement  
   e. No income  
   f. No skills development  
   g. Doesn’t look good for parole  
   h. Other: ____________________________

7. Does your job keep the prison running?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

8. Do you have a correctional industries job?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

9. What type of job do you have? Check all that apply:  
   a. Food service / kitchen  
   b. Laundry  
   c. Maintenance  
   d. Electrician  
   e. HVAC  
   f. Welding / Carpenter  
   g. Painting  
   h. Door crew  
   i. Janitorial / Custodial  
   j. Yard  
   k. Clerk  

10. What are the primary ways someone gets a job? Check all that apply:  
    a. Apply  
    b. Assigned without application process  
    c. Based on who you know / relationship with guards  
    d. Other: ____________________________

11. On a scale of 1-5, how much do the following factors affect your ability to get a job (if you want one)? Mark 0 if not at all.  
    a. Age  
    b. Race  
    c. Gender Identity  
    d. Sexual Orientation  
    e. Relationship with guards  
    f. Relationships with other imprisoned people  
    g. Disability status  
    h. Skill  
    i. Time left in sentence  
    j. Conviction  
    k. Other: ____________________________

12. How long did it take you to get a job? Fill in numerical answer for one line.  
    a. ___________ days  
    b. ___________ weeks  
    c. ___________ months  
    d. ___________ years  
    e. Depends on the job  

13. What are common reasons someone is fired from a job assignment? Check all that apply:  
    a. Stealing  
    b. Breaking the rules  
    c. Problems with other prisoners  
    d. Problems with staff  
    e. Other: ____________________________

14. What are the day-to-day difficulties of your job? Please describe:  

15. How are workers compensated in your facility? Check all that apply:  
    a. Wages  
    b. Good time / earn time  
    c. No compensation  
    d. Other: ____________________________

16. If workers are compensated with wages, what’s the pay scale?  

17. If workers are compensated with good time / earn time, how much time do you get off your sentence per hours worked?  

18. Are you being paid for all the hours you work?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

19. Do you receive overtime pay?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

20. Do you receive idle pay if you are not working?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

21. Do you pay for copayas for medical services?  
   a. Yes  
   b. No.

22. How do you feel about jobs that keep the prison running (i.e., non-industry jobs like doors and locks, kitchen, groundskeeping, etc.)?  

23. Do you talk about your wages and work with other imprisoned people?  

24. Are there any efforts to organize among imprisoned people about labor issues in your facility?  

25. Do you see yourself as part of a larger labor movement?  

26. What would you tell outside allies to fight for when it comes to prison labor?  

27. Is there anything else you would like to share about jobs or working in prison?  

28. Background information (All Optional!):  
    a. Name (Feel free to use your first name only, pseudonym, or remain anonymous)  
    b. Age  
    c. Gender  
    d. Sexual orientation  
    e. Disability status  
    f. Race  
    g. Length of current sentence  
    h. Time served on current sentence  

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THE WORK & US SURVEY

1. Library  
2. M. Manufacturing / Correctional Industries  
3. Block / Tier work  
4. Other: ____________________________

 SHARE YOUR RESPONSES TO THE WORK AND US SURVEY, MAIL THEM BACK TO CR AT OUR NATIONAL OFFICE AND WE’LL GET THEM OVER TO STEVIE.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

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   b. No.

22. How do you feel about jobs that keep the prison running (i.e., non-industry jobs like doors and locks, kitchen, groundskeeping, etc.)?  

23. Do you talk about your wages and work with other imprisoned people?  

24. Are there any efforts to organize among imprisoned people about labor issues in your facility?  

25. Do you see yourself as part of a larger labor movement?  

26. What would you tell outside allies to fight for when it comes to prison labor?  

27. Is there anything else you would like to share about jobs or working in prison?  

28. Background information (All Optional!):  
    a. Name (Feel free to use your first name only, pseudonym, or remain anonymous)  
    b. Age  
    c. Gender  
    d. Sexual orientation  
    e. Disability status  
    f. Race  
    g. Length of current sentence  
    h. Time served on current sentence
The Abolitionist Issue 38

INSIDE-OUTSIDE FISHING LINE: Defending the Earth and Defeating the Prison Industrial Complex

By Bryant Arroyo and Richard Thomas

Fight Toxic Prisons

For issue 38 of The Abolitionist, Bryant Arroyo and Richard Thomas, noted imprisoned environmental activist, sat down for a visit to discuss the intersections between climate catastrophe, the prison industrial complex (PIC), inside outside solidarity, and major victories for environmental justice waged from behind the walls. We hope our readership enjoys this powerful discussion!

Richard Thomas: To start this conversation off, could you please say a little about yourself: Who are you and how did you get into prison abolition organizing?

Bryant Arroyo: My name is Bryant Arroyo, I’m Hispanic/Latino, 51 years of age and dubbed the first” Green Latin” by former Pennsylvania lawyer by the name of Abina Abu Jamal. When I first fell, I did a majority of my time in SCI Mahanoy in Pennsylvania. This was the first time that I encountered an environmental issue of a magnitude that was just totally unprecedented and I was not ready for. I encountered an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was available at the Law Library and it read like an apocalyptic nightmare. I learned that coal gasification plant was planned to be built only 300 feet from the center point of SCI Mahanoy’s yard. The project was backed by Pennsylvania anarcho baron John W. Rich, Jr.

The coal gasification plant was estimated to cost $860 million. $300 million was going to be paid for by the terrorist, abdicator, President Bush. I formulated an objection letter in protest of the coal gasification plant being built and mobilized, organizing over 902 prisoners on an individual and collective basis. Any time objections were to be made, they had to be individualized and had to be singular. If there were two or more signatures it would be construed as a petition. So, we circumvented their policy by individually and collectively making objections, it was a successful debacle against the coal gasification plant.

Through our actions, plans came to a total standstill and the plant cannot and won’t be built. That was my first encounter in the environmental roles of a prison abolitionist. This was in Schuylkill County, a rural area of Pennsylvania which holds three state prison facilities in the community: SCI Mahanoy, SCI Frackville, and SCI Coal Township.

Richard: Thank you for that introduction, Bryant. My name is Richard Thomas and I have been an organizer with the Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons (FTP) since 2013. FTP is a collective of anarchist grassroots abolitionist organizers primarily in the South. We work at the intersection of earth liberation, prison abolition, queer/trans liberation, Black/Black Indigenous liberation, and public health issues. We work directly with anti-carceral facilities and the impact of the carceral state on the environment. We specifically push for abolitionist and decolonial-centered approaches alongside strategies to provide mutual aid for communities most deeply impacted by the carceral state.

I got into abolitionist organizing after helping to put together the 2018 Fight Toxic Prisons National Convergence held in Pittsburgh. I worked closely with many grassroots organizers, activists, and community members who all helped me to deepen my own analysis of the relationship between prison industrial complex and the environment. That convergence helped lay a framework for strategies and networks that I continue to build up of today.

Bryant, could describe in more detail the relationshhip between environmental conditions and prison conditions?

Bryant: In my research as a jailhouse environmentalist, I discovered that the majority of prisoners, including both state and federal prisoners in PA, are built on what they call “mountains of anthracite” -- which is a kind of coal -- or on abandoned and toxic dumps or superfund sites. It is the design intent for those locations to build prisons instead of anything else. The government conspires so that these particular toxic areas will have some economic value for the rural hinterland and they allow communities to not only profit from, but also utilize the prison system to exploit and also, I say, create a genocide within our culture.

This is an open secret between the government and corporate raiders to build these particular prisons. Statistically, a majority of individuals either die in prison or have some form of cancer-related health issues, or when they’re released, they’re still living in their freedom as a result of spending years within these prisons that are built on toxic fund sites.

Richard: I think of prisons as a microcosm of the free world. All of the environmental hazards that we experience outside of the prison system are also experienced by those on the inside in a more acute way without any of the resources necessary to manage them. For example, massive overall temperature increase from global warming/climate change makes summer in a state like Texas (where I currently live) sometimes unbearable. However, I have resources like fans and air conditioning etc. to deal with the impact of veritable seasons. My comrades on the inside, especially in a state where over 70 percent of all facilities do not have access to air conditioning, feel the more of the brunt from environmental disasters and environmental harm.

The harm that our comrades on the inside feel is further enhanced by the inherent toxicity of the carceral state and all prison systems. Bryant has already highlighted that there are many prisons built on superfund sites, where military, biochemical, and nuclear weapons have been tested. Many facilities are built on cheap-er land which increases the probability of soil and water resources becoming contaminated.

The economic interest of federal, state, and local facilities are frequently prioritized over the well-being of incarcerated folks, which further denies our comrades access to resources that could help or mitigate the impact of environmental harm and thus worsening prison conditions. There is much more that could be said about the key role that incarcerated folks play in fighting the environmental conditions on the outside are mirrored but also amplified on the inside because of very intentional factors.

What are some examples of issues that you have worked on at this intersection, Bryant?

Bryant: Around 2018, Panagioti Tsoklas from Fight Toxic Prisons reached out to me with an address in W ashington, DC to write in protest of the proposed building of a Letcher County, Kentucky federal prison on a toxic mine site. It was on track to be the most expensive federal prison in the history of the US at $530 million dollars. Since these were successful federal protests against the coal gasification plant, I utilized the same blueprint while I was at SCI Frackville in Pennsylvania. So, I typed up a formal objection letter, mobilized with a few comrades and had those passed around to be signed. We ended up circulating around 200-300 formal objection letters in protest of the Letcher County federal prison. This was another historically unprecedented challenge, and also another victory. This was also the first time state prisoners from another state protested against a federal prison being built on a toxic mine site in another state.

Richard: I have worked on a myriad of issues centering environmental conditions and prison conditions. In Texas, a main issue has been better protection of inmates from extreme weather conditions. In the summertime, over the last several years, Fight Toxic Prisons has worked with Texas Prison Community Advocates and several other groups to push for central air conditioning for air conditioning in Every unit within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. We have also pushed for clean and safe drinking water and water quality monitoring in water systems. We have seen breakouts of H-pyli and other deadly bacteria transmitted through water.

“Also this was the first time state prisoners from another state protested against a federal prison being built on a toxic mine site in another state.”

We have dedicated many resources to developing a disaster response team, composed of abolitionist organizers from across the US who have expertise in different areas such as fundraising, tactical support, mapping, and rapid response organizing. So far, our team has focused on providing mutual aid, material support, and other resources for our incarcerated comrades during hurricanes. We have done phone zaps and direct actions engaging FEMA and pushed for more transparency and effective evacuation procedures during major storms, hurricanes and wildfires. We are in the process of developing more infrastructure to locate carceral facilities near hot spots and disaster zones for extreme weather conditions. Our aim with the disaster response team is to provide comprehensive support for our comrades on the inside and their communities before, during, and after an environmental disaster.

Can you talk about what has been the role of inside-outside solidarity in organizing at the intersection of climate justice and abolition, Bryant?

Bryant: For people on the inside - like myself - communication is the actual conduit to start getting organized and mobilized and work on the intersection of climate justice and prison abolition. In order to fight back, you have to become educated by getting with individuals that are doing this work. I think that’s key. And then you have to ask questions! Every question is important to gain traction in your participation in this movement and organizing. In order to challenge the corpo
Hello Awesome Folks,

I’m never a slave, Resisted being broken, So rate raiders destroying our planet. Fundamentally, the first step is for people to reach out to these particular organizations, like for example, FTP W hen I did the protest and formal organiz- ation of the 2016 petitions to stop the construc- tion of the coal gasification plant, the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund reached out to me. I knew nothing about them, but the only reason they reached out was because we had made the front page of the Pottsville Re- publican in 2006. We made waves, and that garner- ed the attention specifically from the Commu- nity Environmental Legal Defense Fund. Then the lawyers wrote to me and said that they wanted to meet with me at the visiting room.

Although I wasn’t organizing and mobilizing to attract the attention of such organizations, the protest was heard and it did not fall on deaf ears. That made a difference.

I think it’s critical we have alternate media and alternate means of accessing information and news. You have The Abolitionist, Workers World, The San Francisco Bay View, Prison Le- gal News, Fight Toxic Prisons, etc. These organi- zations provide viable means of communication that are always putting information out within and outside of the US. Access to all of these vital newspapers, periodicals, and magazines helps in mobilizing and organizing from within to get our voices heard.

Get in touch with Fight Toxic Prisons by writ- ing them at:

Fight Toxic Prisons
P.O. Box 15532
Fort W orth, TX 76110

You can connect with Bryant by writing him at:

Bryant Arroyo CU1126
SCI Coal Township
P.O. Box 33028
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

About the Author: David “Does Not Here” Annarelli is a father, musician, activist, political prisoner and contributing writer at the Prison Journalism Project [Prisonjournalismproject.net] As a journalist, he was the victim of an unannounced and unidentified police attack in his own home in the dark of night, during a mental health crisis. Write to David here:

David J. Annarelli #285367
A 138 Pocahontas CC
P.O. Box 33028
Pocahontas, VA 24635.

To Critical Resistance (CR),

I consider myself a hostage in the war on drugs. I’m serving ten years in Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) for prohibited possession of a gun. I would like to inform CR of the cruel and inhumane treatment that prisoners in ADC are subject to. Many medical and dental needs. M any people who have valid medical problems such as Hep. C or cancer are denied treatment. The dental procedure takes three months or more. ADC is being negligent to basic as well as serious medical needs. I just wanted to bring at- tention to this issue of prisoners being neglect- ed regularly. In other news, I would like to thank everyone at CR, and The Abolitionist, for the newspapers. It’s comforting to know that I’m not the only one who realized that prisoners are a waste of taxpayer dollars and are doing more harm to society than good. I’ve enclosed a very short story. It doesn’t have a political agenda, but it’s something I wrote to entertain myself while passing time away in this horrible, lonely, and boring place. Perhaps you can print it in one

Continued on next page
of the issues of The Abolitionist. If anyone at all would like to correspond, I will be grateful. I can be reached at The Abolitionist, 20 East 23rd St., no. 8A, New York, NY 10010.

Shirley Leslie, previously CR’s Development Coordinator since 2019, was hired as CR’s new Development Director. Member Rehana Le- randeau was also added as CR’s new Memberships Coordinator. Anastasia Franco was brought on as an intern to help expand the prisoner correspondence program.

CR NEW YORK CITY (CRNYC)

After focusing on rebuilding its organizing capacity, CRNYC held a relaunch event in October 2022. Over 50 people attended the event in Sheep Meadow in Central Park, and 36 signed up for CRNYC’s volunteer listserve, along with several interested in joining monthly prisoner mail nights. We shared updates about our ongoing campaign work to pass the Dignity Not Detention Act in New York state and to repropose a proposal to convert the presently defunct Long Island Correctional Facility into a jail for women, gender non-conforming, and gender-expansive people. During the event, participants also made posters and banners for CRNYC’s Dignity Not Detention campaign with Abolish ICE NY coalition.

Attendees also heard from organizers with Brooklyn Eviction Defense on their group interview published in Issue 37 of The Abolitionist on housing justice and PRG abolition.

CR PORTLAND (CRPDX)

CR is part of the Oregon Prisoner Coalition, collaborating on a new Your Rights tool for Oregon prisoners and a general resource hub for imprisoned people. Both tools will compile different accessible resources that exist in Oregon for imprisoned people, including materials on mental health resources and access, disability justice, resources for trans and gender non-conforming imprisoned people, and more! Stay tuned for these resources to drop.

CR OAKLAND (CROAK) & CR LOS ANGELES (CRLA)

CR’s campaign with Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) to close 10 prisons process, and CCC prisoners filed an amicus brief in May 2022 to demand it be expedited. Imprisoned organizers continued to resist after that was rejected, a public statement on August 23 calling for the court to “do the right thing” and shut the prison down. CCC is ordered to close by June 2023, and CR and CURB are now working to expedite the closure process.

CR CRITICAL RESISTANCE (CR) UPDATES & MOVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

CRITICAL RESISTANCE (CR) UPDATES

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PRISONER CORRESPONDENCE: CR’S PRISONER MAIL PROGRAMS & PHONE LINES

CR continues to correspond with thousands of people inside through chapter mail programs and a national phone line. CR members have been working to reinvigorate this work through orientation workshops and political education for members and volunteers, focusing on our remotely-run phone lines this year. Having stronger prisoner mail programs and phone lines has positioned CR to more effectively build relationships and strategize with our comrades inside jails, prisons, and detention centers.

Write to one of our chapters or give us a call at our national office:

Phone: (510) 444-0484
Volunteers and members take shifts from 10am – 6pm PST Monday – Friday.

CR Oakland
PO Box 22780
Oakland, CA 94609
Responds to mail from prisoners across US & internationally.

CR New York City
PO Box 3988
NY, NY, 10143
Responds to mail from prisoners across the East Coast & South.

CR Portland
PO Box 11055
Portland, OR 97211
Responds to mail from prisoners in Washington & Oregon states.
A new report says that nearly 50,000 prisoners across the US are caged in prolonged solitary confinement — conditions the United Nations (UN) considers tantamount to torture. Researchers at Yale Law School found something like 10% of those prisoners have been imprisoned in isolation for over a year. The UN special rapporteur on torture says such practices are prohibited under international law and can lead to severe and irreparable psychological and physical consequences.

November Mid-Term Election

Republican-led states are suppressing voting rights leading up to the November midterm elections. Black voters and Black-led organizations have hustled unprecedented voter turnout ahead of midterms. According to Democracy Now, LaTosha Brown of the Black Voters Matter Foundation says: “There are literally communities and people are literally fighting for democracy,” elaborating that organizing voters is “the winning strategy” despite the resolve of the “consulting class” to invest funds primarily in states with favorable election laws. Brown notes that it is critical for Black and Brown communities to support their local voting rights organizations and to vote.

Criminalization of Abortions & Reproductive Justice

In June, the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, ending nearly 50 years of the constitutional right to abortion. Throughout July, thousands protested the decision. Abortion funds across the US have come under legal and extra-legal attacks; The Texas Equal Access Fund has been a particular target for criminalization as their work becomes more urgent in one of the most restrictive states for abortion.

Some of the state legislation that criminalizes abortion and other reproductive and gender-based health decisions also deputize citizens to enforce these laws and police fellow community members, widening the PIC’s drag net. Even menstrual-cycle and birth-control tracking digital applications can be used in court against people seeking abortions. As always, these restrictions disproportionately target Black, Indigenous, poor and low-income, migrant, disabled, queer, gender-non-conforming and transgender people and their bodily autonomy.

In anticipation of the decision, Interrupting Criminalization released a toolkit in May, “Abortion Decriminalization is Part of the Larger Struggle Against Policing & Criminalization: How Our Movements Can Organize in Solidarity with Each Other.” This toolkit can be read and downloaded from CR’s website: criticalrace.org/resources/abortion-decrimini- nalization/

Railroad Workers United

In September, a massive railway strike was divested after workers reached a tentative new union contract with rail companies secured by the Biden Administration. Tens of thousands of railroad workers were prepared to strike and agreed to hold off while votes were tallied for several weeks after tense negotiations. A strike would shut down most railway service in the US and could have disrupted decades of economic and transportation backbone. Mike Strong, the longtime anti-nuclear activist and Catholic priest Mike Strong died at the age of 88. In 1980, he took part in the first Flowersharing action as activists brought 300 Soviet Electric Power Plants into our lives. Mike Strong was sentenced to 15 years in prison for his anti-nuclear activism.

New York

Chipotle Workers Win Millions

Chipotle has agreed to pay a potential $20 million settlement in a lawsuit brought by workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The fast-food chain was found in violation of the FLSA in May, 2022, as it paid its workers a lower wage than the minimum wage and failed to pay them overtime. The settlement is a result of Chipotle employees organizing and filing complaints to the city’s Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. Chipotle will also pay a $1 million civil fine to the city. This is the largest settlement of its kind in New York City history.

EAST COAST

Pennsylvania

Cari Kabat, Presente!

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WEST COAST

California

Reducing Sentencing

In August, the California Supreme Court ruled on People v. Strong. Mr. Strong was sentenced to life without parole as an accomplice to felony murder. The Court ruled that a pre-2015 special circumstance finding does not automatically bar his opportunity to petition for resentencing relief with California Senate Bill (SB) 437 and allows many people convicted of felony murder to get a sentence reduction. California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), Ela Baker Center for Human Rights, Felony Murder Elimination Project, Tawny Gebremirassa, and other organizations filed a friend of the court brief, Public Defender - Indigent Defense Improvement Division held a public celebration and virtual community info session to help folks learn how to support loved ones in the legal process.

Legislative Advance for CA Unions

The United Food Workers (UFW) launched a 24-day, 335-mile March for the UFW’s signature to support Assembly Bill (AB) 2183. After weeks of pressure from the community, celebrities, President Biden, and negotiations with UFW and the California Labor Federation, Gov. Newsom finally signed the bill into law. AB 2183 creates new ways for farmworkers to vote in union elections, including options for mail-in ballots and authorization cards submitted to the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board, in addition to the existing in-person voter process.

No Tech for Apartheid: San Francisco Bay Area

An employee at Google says she was forced out of the company last year for speaking out against a secretive project to provide artificial intelligence tools to the Israeli government and military. In her resignation letter, Ariel Koren wrote: “Google systematically silences Palestinian, Jewish, Arab and Muslim voices concerned about Google’s complicity in violations of Palestinian human rights — to the point of formally prohibiting speaking about working against the apartheid state and creating an environment of fear.”

No Tech for Apartheid then raised a call to action: “We’re heeding the call from over 1000 Google and Amazon workers to rise up against contracts to underwrite violence and extraction in the Near East. The workers propose to build solidarity and support for each other and to stand together to shatter the PIC, and will continue to do so forever propelled by the legacy of Mike Icke Davis. Craig Gilmore, Mike’s close comrade and CR Community Advisor, said: “In addition to the work he’s left us, he introduced thousands of people to each other, to new organizations, to new & old allies. He reminded us that none of us could have imagined...[Best in power] to a remarkably generous man.”

Mike Icke Davis, present!
Alabama is one of seven US states with the arrest of prisoners began refusing to leave their cells or rested to pro-bono legal defenses. Restoration Coalition felony charge with a penalty of up to five years in prison. The 20 arrested thus far each face at least one conviction could send them back to prison. Rights to people with felonies. However, due to a constitutional amendment restoring voting nearly two-thirds of Florida voters approved from voting with felony convictions, in 2018 the franchisement system has barred generations leading them to believe they could cast ballots. 20 people in August for year to catch voters in the act of “voting fraud.” Many who are formerly incarcerated. The Voter Repression features and triggers sea level rise along the coast. Myers jail even though the jail is in a mandatory evacuation zone. Storms are expected to intensify and undermine the country’s institutions. COVID denial, “democratic normality” after four years of Bolsonaro’s environmental destruction, raising fears that he and his allies will deny the test and was found 10 days later at a mortuary. Despite the government’s deadly crackdown. In Iran’s Kurdistan province, one group says at least 32 people in the region have been killed, another 1,500 injured and thousands arrested. Human rights groups say at least 385 in Iran have been killed so far in the protests. Workers at one of Iran’s major oil refineries went on strike in solidarity with the protests.

**Florida**

**Hurricane Ian**

In September, Hurrican Ian, a Category 4 hurricane, was one of the deadliest to ever hit Florida. The storm swept across Florida and South Carolina, leaving the worst damage to more than 300,000 people in the US. Among the hardest-hit areas were low-income communities of color like Dunbar and Harlem Heights in Lee County where officials said evacuation orders until the day before landfall. Even though not everyone had the means or ability to evacuate, millions of Florida residents were ordered to leave. Advocates and organizations including the Restorative Justice Coalition and Fight Toxic Prisons demanded the roughly 376,000 people caged in prisons, jails and detention centers throughout the state be included in the evacuation plan. The Lee County Sheriff’s Office refused to evacuate people from Fort Myers jail even though the jail is in a mandatory evacuation zone. Storms are expected to intensify as climate change warms global ocean temperatures and triggers sea level rise along the coast.

**Voter Repression**

Governor Ron Desantis’ new election police force is arresting people for voting, including many who are formerly incarcerated. The “election crimes” police squad was announced last year to catch voters in the act of “voting fraud.” In collaboration with local and state police, the newly formed office of Election Crimes arrested 20 people in August for alleged illegal voting in the 2020 election. The 20 arrested, despite prior convictions, were able to register to vote, misleading the authorities that they could cast ballots. A remnant of Jim Crow, Florida’s felony disenfranchisement system has barred generations from voting with felony convictions, but in 2018 nearly two-thirds of Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment to restore their voting rights to people with felonies. However, due to murky exceptions to the amendment, countless formerly imprisoned Floridians have struggled to determine their own eligibility, fearing voting could send them back to prison.

The 20 arrested thus far each face at least one felony charge with a penalty of up to five years in prison and thousands in fines. Florida Rights Restoration Coalition is connecting those arrested to pro-bono legal defenses.

**Alabama**

At the end of September, thousands of Alabama prisoners began refusing to leave their cells or attend work. Alabama prisons are considered the deadliest in the US and the Alabama Department of Corrections has been the target of a federal investigation since 2016. The state incarcerates at a higher rate than any other in the US (39% higher than the national rate), resulting in severe overcrowding and horrendous conditions. Only 648 people were granted parole across the state in 2021; the number of people granted parole has decreased from 836 people in 2019. Alabama is one of seven US states where prisoners are not paid for forced labor. In its fifth week, the action paused to allow ADOC to consider the prisoners’ demand for parole. Alabama prisoners have remained strong in the face of intense repression, including cutting food rations to starvation levels and in-carceration to prisoners who work outside, systematic beatings, and solitary confinement.

**Miners’ Strike**

Coal miners in Alabama have been striking for almost a year and a half for better pay and basic benefits. The group is organized with the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against W. W. Met Coal. The strike began in April 2021 and includes more than 1,000 miners; the impasse over a tentative agreement has been contentious and violent. The strike is a result of pay cuts during an ownership turnover of mines in Brookwood, booming steel prices amidst tariff-offs on Chinese steel, and an increase in mining due to prompt prompted by COVID-19 stimulus package. UMWA is now fighting a $133 million fine, in part for property damage during the strike.

**INTERNATIONAL**

**SOUTH AFRICA**

On August 24, the people of South Africa held a National Shutdown in protest of neoliberal policies of austerity and poverty. The Assembly of the Unemployed joined this protest.

The Assembly of the Unemployed joined this effort which calls for a monthly Basic Income Grant for all unemployed and the precarity information, services, and support of the 18-59; for the government to work with communities to ensure access to land and food security; raising the monthly Child Support Grant; initiating a government Wealth Tax; and restricting profit shifting and wage evasion which cost the country billions.

**PALESTINE**

**Hunger Strike Ends**

In the occupied West Bank, a 40-year-old Palestinian prisoner, Khalil Awawdeh, ended a hunger strike that he began on only days after over 170 days. Israeli officials agreed to release him in October. He has been held without charge by Israel under its so-called administrative detention program since late 2021. From a hospital bed Awawdeh proclaimed, “...This victory is a continuation of the victories that our Palestinian people have achieved.”

**West Bank**

Israeli forces raided and closed the offices of several Palestinian civil society rights groups in the occupied West Bank, six of which Israeli authorities designated as “terrorist groups” last year. The raids came as the UN condemned Israel for killing 39 Palestinians in recent weeks and 300 days after Israeli forces shot and killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while covering an Israeli military raid in the Jenin refugee camp. Defense for Children International Palestine is one of the organizations targeted as part of a multi-year campaign to delegitimize through criminalization the work of dozens of service-providers, legal, human rights and political groups challenging Israeli occupation.

**IRAN**

**Gender Liberation**

Women in Iran and around the world have been protesting the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, a Kurdish woman who died in police custody September 13 for allegedly breaking Islamic laws. These protests have been part of the largest wave of resistance to sweep the country since 1981. One month later, the death of 36-year-old Nika Shakarami ignited more public rage. Shakarami’s family says she disappeared after being chased by security forces for burning her headscarf during a protest and was found 10 days later at a mortuary.

Protests are spreading to more provinces in Iran despite the government’s deadly crackdown. In Iran’s Kurdistan province, one group says at least 32 people in the region have been killed, another 1,500 injured and thousands arrested. Human rights groups say at least 385 in Iran have been killed so far in the protests. Workers at one of Iran’s major oil refineries went on strike in solidarity with the protests.

**HAITI**

**Self-Determined Solutions**

The US and Canada shipped military equipment to Haiti after the US-backed Prime Minister Ariel Henry called for international involvement to combat “gang” activity. Thousands of people since August have taken to the streets protesting foreign military aid and occupation and demanding Henry’s resignation. Protesters are demanding a Haitian-led solution to the nation’s current humanitarian crisis, not the armed foreign intervention proposed by countries like the US and international humanitarian organizations.

**BRAZIL**

**From President to Prisoner to President Again**

Leftist presidential candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has won Brazil’s runoff election, ousting far-right fascist President Jair Bolsonaro after just one term. Though Lula won with 50.9% of the vote, Bolsonaro took two days to concede, raising fears that he and his allies will deny the election result.

Lula, a former metal worker, union leader, and two-term president who held office from 2003 through 2010, has been a leftist platform to uplift Brazil’s poor, preserve the Amazon forest, and protect Brazil’s Indigenous communities. His campaign is backed by a grassroots alliance that first formed as a mutual aid network in response to the pandemic. Lula’s running mate, former São Paulo Governor and left-wing leader Beto Zaidan, has called for international support to defend Lula’s election and ensure democracy.

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**ARGENTINA**

**Solidarity with the Mapuche People**

As part of an ongoing attack on the Mapu- che community, police in Arola, Neuquén, stopped to a roadblock on October 7, 2022, in Villa Mascardi (Río Negro, Argentina), with the arrest of seven women from the Lakwen Winkul Mapu community. Four of them—the M Achi (spiritual leader) Betiana Ayelén Colhuan, Martha Luciana Jaramillo, Romina Rosas and M aria Celeste Araújo G enuiml;—remained imprisoned. We e joi the demand for their liberation and stand in solidar- ity with the call to end the harassment of their communities.
In this issue’s political prisoner updates, we highlight news from late Spring through late Fall 2022 regarding a few political prisoner cases. This column is in no way a comprehensive list of all political prisoners. As a prison industrial complex (PIC) abolitionist organization, Critical Resistance fights for the release and freedom of all imprisoned political prisoners, regardless of whether recognized as political prisoners or not. We resist the use of imprisonment as a tool for political repression and control across our communities.

**Albert Woodfox:** Best in Power! M center of the Angola Three, who was imprisoned in solitary confinement for 43 years, died on August 4 at age 75. Woodfox was wrongfully convicted of the 1972 murder of a Louisiana prison guard and prisoner exercise officer, who was killed during a prison riot at the Angola State Penitentiary in 1972. Woodfox was only released in 2013 at the age of 69. Long live Albert Woodfox!

**Mutulu Shakur:** After 36 years of imprisonment, Dr. Shakur is finally coming home! A 72-year-old geriatric patient, former Black Panther, and community health worker, Dr. Shakur was granted parole in early November 2022. Given six months to live in May 2022, activists and supporters have been campaigning for his medical parole, gathering over 60,000 signatures in support. A former Black liberation fighter targeted by COINTELPRO, Dr. Shakur was a vital part of the Black Panther Party from its founding in 1966 to 1980, a revolutionary community health project at the Lincoln Hospital in New York created by the Black Panthers and Young Lords parties. Mutulu has been a pioneering champion of acupuncture for addiction treatment ever since. Mutulu will re-unite with his family and loved ones this December. Welcome home, Dr. Shakur!

**Lore Elisabeth:** Welcome home! After serving more than 26 months in federal detention for charges related to the 2020 uprisings against police brutality in Philadelphia, the community care worker is home free. Below is a message from Lore to her supporters published by her solidarity committee:

“IT’s Lore here! I am out of prison and safely in the arms of family! Thank you all for your two years of urgent work and generous donations that all built up to my liberation! These efforts sustained myself and my peers in FDC (the Federal Detention Center). You filled my heart, my hands, and kept my mind free. I look forward to bringing you all in for continued support of the disproportionately affected communities, primarily Black and Brown, and parents incarcerated right now. If you can, please continue donating to my commissary drive, and keep your attention and action focused here for upcoming ways you can support those on the inside. Your sweet support in the future will swell my big dreams for those who remain stonked. Thank you all for being a light for punished people who need love, heal, ing, accountability and liberation most of all. Please stay in touch with me on email (free-foores@protonmail.com), if you have even written to me please send me your address again, I’m excited to stay in touch!”

**Kevin “Rashid” Johnson:** The revolutionary, writer, artist, socialist activist and M member of the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party, who has been imprisoned for 32 years (of which have been in solitary confinement), was diagnosed with prostate cancer while he was still in prison. He was targeted and convicted of murder in 2002 and sentenced to life in prison in Georgia, challenging his imprisonment in 2019 on the ground of constitutional rights violated at trial. The Supreme Court declined to take his case. Despite serving a life sentence for a Georgia state offense, Al-Mamin is currently imprisoned at the United States Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana and supporters are calling for him to be transferred back to the custody of the state of Georgia so that he can effectively fight for exoneration.

**Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin:** Supporters of the former Black Panther’s leader, who is caged in a federal prison in Tucson, are calling for his exoneration. Al-Amin was a Black Panther’s leader and a former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s. He was targeted and convicted of murder in 2002 and sentenced to life in prison in Georgia, challenging his imprisonment in 2019 on the ground of constitutional rights violated at trial. The Supreme Court declined to take his case. Despite serving a life sentence for a Georgia state offense, Al-Amin is currently imprisoned at the United States Penitentiary in Terre Haute and supporters are calling for him to be transferred back to the custody of the state of Georgia so that he can effectively fight for exoneration. Supporters also are calling on the federal government to provide proper medical treatment as he has recently become legally blind due to denial of cataract surgery for three years. Free Jamil Al-Amin, free ‘em all!

**Free Leonard Peltier!** People to Contact:

Beth Cabell, Lead Warden
Phone: (804) 834-9567
Harold W. Clarke, Director of VADOC
PO Box 26963
Richmond, VA 23261
Phone: (804) 674-3000
docmail@vadoc.virginia.gov

Steve Herrick, Health Services Director
Healthservices@vadoc.virginia.gov
Phone: (804) 887-8138

**Anti-Line 3 Pipeline Anishinaabe Water Protectors:** A not guilty verdict was handed down for Indigenous water protectors in so-called M nnesota. The group was arrested while holding a prayer ceremony at the Mississippi River headwaters during Enbridge’s Line 3 Pipeline construction to assert their treaty-protected rights to protect sacred waters and all life that flows from it. A victory for Indigenous sovereignty!

**Free Leonard Peltier!**

**Chris “Naeem” Trotter and John “Butch” Cole:** Call to action! Also known as the Pendleton 2, Trotter and Cole are political prisoners from Indiana who were wrongfully convicted and extremely harshly sentenced to a combined 226 years in prison for leading the 1985 Pendleton Correctional Facility prisoner rebellion against white supremacist guard brutality. The state of Indiana appealing the block of Trotter’s sentence modification hearing. The judge can either side with the state or give him his freedom and the Pendleton prisoners are calling on the Indiana Prisoner Solidarity Network, over 740 prisoners are currently jailed and facing serious threats to their freedom, to demand back. Every year, prisoners and supporters of political prisoners organize solidarity events with Running Down the Walls. All funds go to the W archest, which go directly to political prisoners.

**Free the Pendleton 2!**

**Francisco “Tranky” Velgara Valentin:** The dedicated independentista, revolutionary so- cialist, and internationalist died in NYC on August 25 at the age of 78. He was a lifelong fighter for Indigenous liberation and unapologetic supporter of Revolutionary Cuba, stood with the Vietnamese revolution, gave his unyielding support to mass movements in Latin America, fought to defeat colonialism, and revolutionary formations in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora, and worked to free all US-held political prisoners. Free Tranky Valgar a Valentin, presente! Running Down the Walls is held in cities throughout the US and South America, with events supporting political prisoners and running the program. Visit linktr.ee/freedomcampaign for more information, and free the Pendleton 2! Other updates:

Francisco “Tranky” Valgara Valentin: The dedicated independentista, revolutionary so- cialist, and internationalist died in NYC on August 25 at the age of 78. He was a lifelong fighter for Indigenous liberation and unapologetic supporter of Revolutionary Cuba, stood with the Vietnamese revolution, gave his unyielding support to mass movements in Latin America, fought to defeat colonialism, and revolutionary formations in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora, and worked to free all US-held political prisoners. Free Tranky Valgara Valentin, presente! Running Down the Walls is held in cities throughout the US and South America, with events supporting political prisoners and running the program. Visit linktr.ee/freedomcampaign for more information, and free the Pendleton 2!
**CALL FOR CONTENT**

Help shape the content of *The Abolitionist*

Make your voice heard in our paper!

Submit content by writing a piece for either our Features section OR one of our columns

The Features section in *Issue 39*, to be released by June 2023, will focus on struggles for *reproductive justice*. *Issue 40*’s Features will focus on *control units*, and will be released in late Fall 2023.

Send us an essay, an article, research, a poem, a story, a play, a comic, art, a personal reflection, or questions on these topics for our upcoming Features sections!

- **Issue 39 Submission Deadline:** Friday, March 3, 2023.
- **Issue 40 Submission Deadline:** Friday, September 8, 2023.

There are many ways for you to shape the content of the paper, either by submitting a piece to our Features section or by supporting one of our columns. Check out all of the ways you can submit content for *The Abolitionist*:

1. **Write a piece for our Features**
   - Pieces in Features can be different functions of writing—including theoretical, to reflective or action-oriented—and they will all share a common focus, theme, or topic of consideration. Check the Feature focus for issues 39 and 40!

2. **Submit content for one of our columns**
   - Send a Kite to the Editors
     - Request to be an author of an *Inside-Outside Fishing Line*. Suggest a few topics you would like to discuss for the fishing line’s discourse.
     - Contribute a report or an update on organizing inside for our *Movement Highlights* column.
   - Write a poem or song lyrics that relate to the features or any other topic of your choice.
   - Make visual art to complement the Features section or one of our columns.
   - Create a political cartoon for our Features focus for either Issue 39 or 40, or work with us to become a regular political cartoonist for the paper.
   - Reflect on how you use *The Abby* in your study and share that reflection for our 9971 column, or send us your responses to “The W ork and Us” survey and write up a reflection on your relationship to labor for a future Kite.

Some approaches to writing Kites to the Editors:
- Elaborate on something that you agreed with in an article and explain why you agreed with it.
- Elaborate on something that you disagreed with in an article and explain why you disagreed with it.
- Relate an article to other things you have read, watched, heard, or experienced.
- Write a note to the editors sharing questions that you believe are timely and necessary in this political moment and that you would like answered by Critical Resistance.

Send submissions to the Kites to the Editors section to:
- *The Abolitionist* Paper
  - Attn: Kites to the Editors
  - P.O. Box. 22780
  - Oakland, CA 94609-2391

Please make sure you read our Submission Guidelines before working on a submission to ensure your piece aligns with how we decide what to print.

Send your submission to:
- *Critical Resistance*
  - P.O. Box. 22780
  - Oakland, CA 94609-2391

**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:**

SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ART WORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and artwork in English or Spanish.

**IDEAS FOR ARTICLES AND ARTWORK**
- Examples of prisoner organizing
- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to help keep yourself and others physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually healthy while imprisoned
- Updates on what’s happening at the prison you are in (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, punishment, imprisonment, and surveillance
- Reflections on life after or before imprisonment
- Creative or reflective writing with an abolitionist message
- Freedom dreams and imaginative pieces with radical politics
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue
- Reflections on how you’ve used the paper (in your conversations, work, study groups)
- Empowering, liberatory art of resistance and community power (and that will print well)

**LENGTH**
- Articles should not be more than 1500 words (about five handwritten pages)
- Letters should not be more than 250 words

**HOW TO SUBMIT**
- If you want your name and address printed with your article, please include it as you would like it printed. If you do not wish to have your name or address included, please let us know that when you submit your piece. Instead of your name, you can choose an alias, publish your piece anonymously, or use your initials.
- If possible, send a copy of your submission and not the original

**WRITING SUGGESTIONS**
- Even if writing is difficult for you, your ideas are worth the struggle. Try reading your piece out loud to yourself or sharing it with someone else. Doing this might help you clarify the ideas in your submission.

**Notes on Editing:**
- We edit all pieces for both content and grammar. We will send you a copy of the piece before printing it. As an abolitionist publication, we do not print material we find in some way perpetuates oppression or legitimizes the prison industrial complex. Given that institutional mail can be slow and purposefully delayed at times (or even disappears), please make note in your submission of phrases or sections you would like the editorial collective to print unedited if there are any.

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Name: __________________________
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- Oakland, CA 94609

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