

THE ABOLITIONIST

FALL 2012

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



WALL IN PALESTINE
PHOTO: ALESSANDRO

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Thanks again for supporting *The Abolitionist*! In this issue we examine the ways surveillance limits our communities' capacities to act in liberatory ways. As we know, surveillance is an integral component of the prison industrial complex. Equally as important is our ability to confront surveillance in order to create a society in which people are free of constant tracking and cataloging as a means of driving them into cages or turning their homes and neighborhoods into virtual prisons. This issue seeks not only to document the terrifying sophistication of surveillance systems, while offering examples and spurring dialogue about how to abolish them.

While the topic of surveillance spans a vast variety of issues and sectors, the pieces in this installment of *The Abolitionist* offer some points of entry for understanding the topic. From how it is used to limit funding of political organizations, to its role inside Security Housing Units (SHUs), the authors and artists featured in this issue of *The Abolitionist* help us think about both the impacts of surveillance, and means of resisting those impacts. In these pages, we will see the socio-economic costs of surveillance as well as the history of surveillance used against our organizations and our responses to that pressure. While not directly addressing surveillance, we are also excited to bring you Letters to *The Abolitionist* in response to past issues of the paper, and two authors, David Gilbert and Eric A. Stanley in dialogue via reviews of each other's books.

Walking the fine line between caution and paralysis takes patience and care. We hope that the sampling of perspectives offered here provides new insights and information and generates energy and a renewed commitment to fighting for a world free of the fear and mistrust on which surveillance depends.

In struggle,
The Abolitionist Editorial Collective

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ISSUE 18: SURVEILLANCE

Watching the Olympics

Understanding and Resisting Surveillance of Mass Events

BY ISAAC ONTIVEROS & RACHEL HERZING

These days, systems of surveillance are astoundingly complex, pervasive, and have extraordinary reach. Understanding surveillance helps us understand technologies that provide the connective tissue between policing, militarization, imprisonment and detention, border control, immigration, urbanization, and transnational capitalism. Keeping tabs on where people go, how they get there, whom they go with, and what they do is key in maintaining the state's power and control.

In *Discipline and Punish*, French philosopher Michel Foucault traces the history of imprisonment and explores how Western societies began to define order in relationship to how they punished and imprisoned people. Foucault also discusses how these definitions of order, in turn, were used to discipline different strata of the population, whether they were prisoners, workers, or children. One of Foucault's significant contributions to current understandings of how power and control work, is his analysis of how the logic of containment and violence perfected in the prison was extended back out into wider society.

Modern philosophies, theories, techniques, and technologies of surveillance have largely been developed and perfected in prisons, settings in which nearly every aspect of life of people in prison was watched, categorized, documented, catalogued, and regulated and in which the idea being stripped of freedom of any kind is intertwined with the of being overseen, at all times. What gets tested and honed within prison walls then flows back into society at large and again back into prisons in a continuous loop. The core of surveillance explored by Foucault rests on the idea that surveillance functions most effectively when it is as pervasive as possible, when everyone is certain that they are somehow being watched at all times, and when the feeling of being watched is deep seated and coerces us into acting accordingly to stay in line.

Over 50 percent of the world's population now lives in cities. And as our populations swell in smaller and smaller spaces, surveillance is increasingly used to monitor and

control people's activities. Similarly, the threats of people consolidated in limited geographic spaces for mass events—large gatherings such as demonstrations, encampments, and sporting events—tend to trigger mass surveillance. Mass events employ a high concentration of existing surveillance technologies. They are sites for the development and implementation of new technologies. Even as they are by definition not permanent, mass events are sites of legalization and normalization of a culture of surveillance. They extend and expand the criminalization of populations labeled as threats by the state. Mass events generate incredible profits for security firms and companies that produce surveillance and other policing technologies. Finally, and, maybe most importantly, mass events generate a high potential for violence by government and private entities employing the surveillance tools in law enforcement.

The use of police and military surveillance at large scale protests and demonstrations is something that probably won't strike too many readers as surprising, even as the intensity of surveillance and its relationship to the militarization of policing is truly disturbing. Demonstrations and encampments from Tahrir Square in Cairo, to Occupy Oakland, to protests against NATO in Chicago have been met with intense surveillance in the form of video cameras, undercover agents, informants, aerial observation, phone taps, digital communications interception, and the confiscation of computers and cameras. For readers familiar with the history of state counterintelligence programs, you know that the information gathered through these surveillance methods may then be used to target leaders, disrupt the public's ability to know about and participate in political events, instill fear, suspicion, and spread lies, coordinate violent crackdowns, and otherwise neutralize political demands, and impacts. When it comes to state repression of political mass mobilization, surveillance is a very important tool.

But in thinking about surveillance as a tool of state repression, it might be less obvious

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

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

Letters to the Editors

CR a Chara,

I’m writing after reading the printed interview with Eugene Thomas, issue #15. In his interview he mentioned the ultimate sacrifice of Bobby Sands and 9 other Irish political prisoners made 30 years ago during a drawn-out hunger strike.

It’s sad to say that 30 years later the same issues that caused these brave men to sacrifice their lives still remain unresolved and are still being fought for.

Men and women are still fighting British occupation in the British occupied 6 counties of Ireland (sometimes called “Northern Ireland”), Irish families are still being subjected to the same fascist and bigoted actions of British Colonial Police and Armed Forces. A lot of people think this was “squared away” with the Good Friday Agreement. Sadly this is not the case.

As the men and women of Ireland continue the fight for National Liberation the Brits are up to the same dirty tricks, putting them in prison for vague charges that amount to merely being vocally opposed to British Imperial rule of their homeland.

Today Irish POWs are subjected to the same treatment the prisoners of ‘81 were subjected to. Constant and degrading invasive strip searches, physical abuse, verbal abuse, psychological abuse, 23-hour lockdown, loss of “good time,” little to no educational opportunities, little recreation, refusal of visits with family and legal counsel.

The British have again tried to classify and treat the POWs as common criminals and again the British are being resisted. The prisoners are “convicted” in special no jury courts, with little to no evidence, where the only “evidence” needed in most cases is the word of a senior police official. The POWs are housed in a special high security section. A lot of special attention for mere “criminals.”

Recently two members of Republican Sinn Fein, Cait Trainor and Sean Moloney, were arrested by British Forces for refusing to condemn armed resistance in an interview. Also recently arrested was Marian Price, 32 County Sovereignty Movement Secretary, and Chairperson for the Irish Republicans Martin Cory has been held in jail for 15 months now with no charges. Why? For attending marches, rallies, and demonstrations. In Magherry Prison Irish POW Damien McLaughlin has been beaten and forcibly strip searched 10 times during the month of February.

Not only is it the prisoners who suffer the wrath of bigoted British jailors, but the prisoners’ families as well. Families coming to visit are routinely harassed, verbally abused with bigoted remarks, strip-searched and followed home, and have their cars torn apart in a “search.”

Irish POWs are currently on strike, suffering beatings, resulting in broken limbs, broken noses, sprains and massive bruising, forced and violent invasive strip searches and lockdown. The prisoners seek to end degrading treatment, the repeated invasive strip searches, freedom of movement and freedom of association, among other things.

To find out more you can visit <http://www.release-martin-corey.com>; <http://www.rsfi.ie>; <http://www.32csm.net>.

Moran buiochas for your time.

Do Chara,
MICHAEL O’CUIR, FCC FORREST CITY, AR

My Friends of *The Abolitionist*,

Hey, howdy, n’ Hello. First off, I want to say “Right on!” for y’all’s happenin’ *Abolitionist*! Hell yeah!

’Bout time for us to get some help! I dig what y’all got goin’ on! Keepin’ us informed on a lot of issues and also exposin’ some of the slimy shit the systems are trying to pull!

I am really proud of the fellas in Georgia [Issue #15]. That was some koolness! Hope it got some things changed for real! Too many times the system likes to just plan to implement changes! Kind of like that slimy word that gives the prison systems plenty of time to do nothing and get smooth away wiff it. What word, you say? “Temporary!”

“The inmates are being “temporarily” housed in tents and will get moved into the building as soon as possible.” That “temporarily” bullshit let the Arkansas DOC house 120 inmates in a building only designed for 60 by using bunk beds! That sucked big time! ADC got away with that slimy shit for 9 years!...

This bit of wisdom be true! There is nothing as frightening as ignorance and stupidity in action.

So folks, please put me on y’all’s mailing list and please keep up the Great Happenins!

Loving kindness and compassion,

ROY TESTER, TUCKER CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, AR

Dear Editor,

I sincerely believe that Marilyn Buck’s physical departure [cover story Issue #15] from this hypocritical society only two weeks after their so-called freedom was what her enlightened spirit longed for. Her sentient spirit didn’t want to stay much longer, just enough to say goodbye to those whose love for her is genuine and sincere...

Her legacy has nurtured out spiritual growth... She has outgrown her earthly garments for the more appropriate grander being she is, was, and will always be. A true, enduring individual that continues from life to life...


Sincerely,
DAVID LEWIS, DOC MCI SUFFIELD, CT



ART BY MICHAEL WORTHAM
CORCORAN, CA


YOUR CELLPHONE, SURVEILLANCE DEVICE

The best way to avoid cell phone surveillance? Don't use a cell phone. But since for many of us convenience outweighs the risk of being tracked, here's how to reduce your risk.




WHERE YOU ARE

If your phone is getting a signal, your carrier knows where you are. ("Off" mode is just a software setting, so take the battery out to make sure your location isn't still being transmitted.) The global positioning system (GPS) in smartphones is another way someone can locate you.




SECURITY BASICS

- Use a pre-paid SIM card, and dispose of it often.
- Routinely delete the information on your phone. Check the settings on the phone to see if you can set it to not store call logs and outgoing SMS (text messages).
- If your conversation is sensitive, don't discuss it on the phone and consider taking the battery out of any phones in your vicinity.
- Turn the phone off and remove the battery when possible. Move the phone to places that it can be established you are not at so that all activity on the phone is not linked to you.
- When texting, be as un-specific as possible.
- Do not store sensitive contacts, and consider using encrypted SMS, MMS (instant messaging) and email messages to prevent viewing of messages in transit, and to stop saved messages from being easily readable. (CryptoSMS, available free at Cryptosms.org, is one example of encryption software.)



PURCHASING RULES

- Buy your phone somewhere away from home so the seller will be less likely to identify you.
- Don't use a credit card, or give a traceable email address.
- Avoid places likely to have surveillance cameras, such as malls and large chain stores.
- Don't give your real details. Check whether you have a legal obligation to provide any details at all.
- Get the simplest phone you need—this may also help protect you from viruses and spyware that are more likely to affect higher-end smartphones.
- Don't buy a phone with a deal that locks you into a contract. Get pay-as-you-go, even if it's more expensive.
- Don't register the phone.



ON BUGGING & EAVESDROPPING

Bugging is unfortunately hard-to-detect, especially if bugging software is installed on the phone. Likewise, it is possible for mobile carriers to turn your phone into a recording device, but there's little you can do to prevent this. Change your phone and/or SIM card often if you're concerned about bugging or eavesdropping.

Check out mobileactive.org for more information.

Infographic created with research by Mobile Active's Melissa Loudon.

Infographic created by Renee Perry www.ReneePerry.com

Continued from page 1, "Olympics"

for us to think about other mass events, ones that seem less political and more about fun and games. Take the Olympics for example. Aren't they simply a time when masses of people gather to be awed by the physicality and triumphs of athletes from all over the world, coming together in a spirit of lively competition? No doubt we have all sorts of different reasons why we might be enchanted and excited by these sorts of sporting events. Whether we are sports fans or not, the magnitude of events such as the Olympic Games grabs our attention.

Upon the writing of the article, as many as 500,000 are people expected to attend the Summer Olympic Games in London in this year with roughly 2,000,000,000 expected to tune in to watch on television. No doubt the Olympics are big business. Host cities spend billions of dollars on construction, promotion, and advertisement in order to court event attendees who spend hundreds or thousands of dollars to attend the games. In turn, sponsors such as McDonalds, Dow Chemicals, and Coca Cola make millions and millions of dollars in exclusive sponsorship deals.



2012 LONDON OLYMPICS
.....
MASCOT
.....

At the same time, this year's Olympics are also seeing the largest mobilization of England's military power since World War II. Pre-games estimates are staggering, with a mobilization of: 12,000 police officers, 13,500 military personnel (more than England currently has deployed at war in Afghanistan), at least 20,000 security guards, 1,000 U.S. security personnel (including FBI agents), and 300 M15 (English counterintelligence) agents. Britain is also mobilizing an aircraft carrier, surface to air missiles, unmanned drones, and fully armed military jets in its security measures. A key element of this massive militarization of the Olympic Games will be a vast arsenal of surveillance tools including countless video cameras, scanners, biometric ID cards, check-points, face and license plate recognition devices—all coordinated by state of the art control centers. legal codes are being reinterpreted and instituted to allow greater police power. The entire Olympic zone will be surrounded by 11 miles of electrified fence.

The public relations machine put to work by British officials assures the global community that this level of militarization is necessary to keep the Games safe from potential security risks. They have identified everyone from "soccer hooligans", to the IRA, to "Islamist terrorists" as potential threats. The intense display of militarized might creates an interesting logic, forcing people to feel safe by reminding them that this level of muscle is necessary to keep nebulously defined, but highly dangerous threats at bay. They forget to mention the people they have displaced to build new stadiums, the people they are sweeping up to make invisible during the games, and the people they are suggesting their neighbors should be afraid of. By imbuing their public relations campaigns with fear mongering and the logic of safety through militarism, the British Ministry of Defense continually reminds Londoners and Olympics Games attendees that their acceptance of and obedience to the security protocols being imposed is non-negotiable. Not accepting it equals a threat to the Games. Threat, in turn, is understood as hostility which, in turn, must be met with a military response.

As urban theorist Stephen Graham has noted, this sort of logic perpetuates an ideology of control,

creating a vicious cycle that is also very profitable for collaborations between countries, cities, and security firms. As Graham states:

So-called "homeland security" industries – a loose confederation of defense, IT and biotechnology industries – are in bonanza mode. As this post 9/11 paradigm is being diffused around the world, the industry – worth \$142 [billion] in 2009 – is expected to be worth a staggering \$2.7 [trillion] globally between 2010 and 2020.

While there is much money to be made in selling surveillance and security technology and personnel to ensure the smooth functioning of mass events such as the Olympics, the effects of the elaborate surveillance apparatuses put in place for

the events outlast the closing ceremonies. Graham points out that while millions of dollars of construction sit decaying after the Greek Olympics of 2004, millions of dollars of surveillance technology—as well as the extended legality of the use of the technology—are working overtime. In fact, surveillance technology from the 2004 Summer Olympic Games was put to use in shutting down militant protests of masses of Greek residents against the austerity measures imposed on working people when the country went bankrupt. No doubt, much of the surveillance technology employed during this year's Games will be incorporated into London's landscape as England prides itself on being at the forefront of state of the art security.

London, for instance, is the capitol of the same country that has been bragging about its leadership as a surveillance society, with over 4.2 million closed circuit television cameras installed—about one per every 14 people. London is also a city known for tracking its residents through cell phones, license plate tracking systems for vehicles, and scans as shoppers enter stores. Connected with increased militarization of its law enforcement and adoption of suppression style policing, Britain has effectively declared war on its residents, with a particular focus on people of color, immigrants, poor and working class people, and youth. One need only remember

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Networking Rebellion

Digital Policing and Revolt in the Arab Uprisings

BY IAN ALAN PAUL AND DAVID ZLUTNICK

On January 25th, 2011, demonstrations erupted in cities across Egypt. Eighteen days later one of the world’s most-entrenched dictators was forced from power.

In the Egyptian uprising, digital technologies were used as both a catalyst for the revolution as well as a tool of repression. The events in Egypt, like others of the so-called “Arab Spring,” is complex, nuanced and deeply entangled with the various forces who have a stake in the region’s geopolitical future. A look at the Egyptian security forces’ efforts to police the uprising with the aid of digital surveillance and censorship technologies shines a particularly strong light on the intersection of the former (and most-likely current) regime’s interests and those of the US government, as well as U.S. private contractors. This also provides an example of the increasingly dangerous terrain in which these new channels of communication place activists.

An online revolution?

We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world. —Tweet from an anonymous Egyptian activist

When the first “Day of Anger” was organized in Egypt following the Tunisian uprising, word was largely spread across the country by a series of Facebook event pages. Because Egyptian television and radio were state-controlled, the internet became a means to publicize the demonstrations and evade state censorship. As a result, the Egyptian and other Arab uprisings have largely been described as a series of “Twitter” or “Facebook” revolutions. Implied by these descriptions is that these American-based social networking websites have manifested as a force for global democracy, allowing repressed peoples to find each other and network in ways which were previously impossible or too dangerous under authoritarian regimes. While it’s undeniable that social networking was a prominent tool in the uprisings, it is an oversimplification to say it was the catalyst in the mobilizations and overlooks the conditions and access of the majority of Arab participants.

Actually there were real limits to the reach of these technologies. As one Egyptian organizer reflected on why mass text-messaging and flyering was utilized over simply online organizing, “Reaching working-class Egyptians was not going to happen through the Internet and Facebook.” And while the initial calls for protests may have come from tech-savvy middle-class activists, it took millions to overwhelm the security state and bring down Mubarak. For these numbers to reach the street more traditional forms of networking and organizing took place.

In many instances it was not the technology of activists that brought people to the streets, but that of the Mubarak regime. On January 28th, 2011, internet and cellphone services were cut in a desperate attempt to stop the escalating protests. But the consequences of this action actually increased mobilizations. As Yale graduate student Navid Hassanpour wrote in his study, “Media Disruption Exacerbates Revolutionary Unrest”:

The disruption of cellphone [sic] coverage and Internet on the 28th exacerbated the unrest in at least three major ways. It implicated many apolitical citizens unaware of or uninterested in the unrest; it forced more face-to-face communication, i.e., more physical presence in streets; and finally it effectively decentralized the rebellion on the 28th through new hybrid communication tactics, producing a quagmire much harder to control and repress than one massive gathering in Tahrir.

In fact, it’s hard to believe the Egyptian uprising would have succeeded had organizing been limited to online social networks. The real key to its success was the expansion of involvement to other actors such as the country’s militant industrial labor movement or the Muslim Brotherhood’s rank-and-file activists—two of many such groupings not known for their use of digital technologies.

Censorship, Surveillance and Policing in the Arab Uprisings

While digital censorship may have in some ways catalyzed Egypt’s protests, it doesn’t mean there were not dire consequences for activists. Surveillance and the resulting detentions of those perceived as central organizers of the uprising along with widespread censorship of news and communication formulated one of the key strategies of repression employed by Mubarak’s regime. The decision to cut off communication technology could have just as easily had disastrous effects on mobilization had people not used alternative means of organization. The authorities’ ability to so easily disable these services was as a direct result of access to sophisticated Western technology. Likewise, many organizers were quickly arrested—or worse, disappeared—in the days following the initial demonstrations, largely thanks to digital surveillance technologies operated by the government and supplied by U.S. private contractors.

While the U.S. government eventually lent its support to the pro-democracy protests, its longtime support for Mubarak and its massive aid to the Egyptian military highlighted the hypocrisy of U.S. foreign policy. This was only made increasingly clear when the surveillance and monitoring of activists by security forces was largely made possible by technology provided by U.S. contractors under the tacit approval of the U.S. government. Most notably, the company Narus—started by Israeli security experts, and now a Boeing subsidiary—had sold the Egyptian government what are known as “Deep Packet Inspection” devices, which allow for monitoring and recording internet traffic including e-mail, web-site visits, online chats, as well as text messages.

Additionally, Deep Packet Inspection enables geographic location and tracking. Now-famous Egyptian activist Wael Ghonim—a Google employee who set up one of the largest Facebook pages for the “Day of Anger”—was arrested on January 27th for his online activity, and imprisoned for eleven days before an international campaign resulted in his release. His arrest and many others resulted directly from government tracking of online data enabled by surveillance technologies supplied by companies like Narus.

Meanwhile, Elsewhere in the Region... The Surveillance Industry Thrives

While the U.S. government was quick to champion certain uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa as a triumph of democracy it has failed to acknowledge its complicity in the repression of activists in countries where the uprisings have failed, most notably Syria and Bahrain. In these instances we see two very distinct types of assistance coming from the U.S.: willing and unintended.

In Bahrain the crackdown on protesters was willingly supported by the U.S. in the forms of decades of military aid, tacit approval of direct Saudi military assistance, and conscious diplomatic silence on human rights abuses. Also significant were repressive technologies supplied by Western companies such as the German-Finnish partnership of Nokia Siemens, which is also a player in Egypt. This backing of the Bahraini monarchy was seen by the U.S. as a strategic gamble to maintain a government friendly to its interests in the region.

In Syria, however, U.S. complicity in the crushing of protests is a bit more ambiguous, and may have actually weakened a desired outcome. While it clearly fears what might follow the stability of the Assad dynasty, there is definitely no love lost between the U.S. and the Iran-, Hezbollah-, Hamas-, etc.-allied regime. But like in Egypt and Bahrain, Assad’s security services have relied on surveillance to monitor, arrest, and assassinate dissidents, especially in the early phases of Syria’s uprising prior to its militarization.

And that is where NetApp, a Sunnyvale, California-based tech company enters the picture. As detailed in Bloomberg’s excellent “Wired for Repression” series, which examines complicity between Western tech companies and authoritarian regimes, NetApp storage hardware and software is being used in a Syrian Internet surveillance project that was headed by Italian company Area SpA. Also involved is U.S.-based Blue Coat Systems Inc., whose technology filters websites. Separately, technology from the Irish company Cellusys Ltd. is currently aiding Syrian cellphone companies in blocking text messages.

The interests of these companies, however, have not necessarily matched those of the Obama administration, which has responded to the above by instituting new sanctions against those providing information technology to Syria (as well as Iran). But much of this technology is already in place, and deals between contractors and authoritarian states serving US interests are still perfectly legal, with no sanctions on the horizon.

Much of the security technology purchased by repressive regimes is sold at the Intelligence Support Systems expo, organized by the company TeleStrategies. Jerry Lucas, the president of TeleStrategies, denies companies have any responsibilities when it comes to how their products are used:

The surveillance systems that we discuss in our seminars are available all around the world. Do some countries use them to suppress certain political statements? Yes, probably. But it’s not my job to sort out who are the good and bad countries. That’s not our business, we’re not politicians.

It’s estimated the global industry for mass surveillance now brings in over \$5 billion annually. This privatization of state surveillance projects across the globe has allowed for the U.S. to both publicly support the democratic uprisings against dictatorial regimes while also profiting off of their suppression.

Digital Resistance and Solidarity

While the Egyptian government attempted to use digital technologies as a way to repress the uprisings, networks of activists from around the world quickly mobilized in solidarity with the pro-democracy movement. Egypt’s decision to shut off Internet access in the country was unprecedented, and it was the first time in history that an entire country disconnected itself from the Internet. Telecomix, a decentralized organization of Internet activists, quickly organized to provide free fax numbers and dial-up internet access to activists in Egypt so they could publicize the events and demonstrations occurring across the country. Telecomix also plays a key role in exposing the business ties between repressive regimes and Western technology companies, most recently in Syria.

While uprisings and revolutions will always be about physical bodies in public spaces, technologies still remain an important tool in transmitting information and spreading news of repression. For example, in Syria, where attempts to organize protests on social networks were quickly hindered, information technologies have

been important avenue for communicating with the outside world. The Tor Project, a free piece of software that allows users to anonymously connect to the internet and evade state surveillance, has been critically important in allowing activists to avoid identification and repression. The Tor Project, like Telecomix, is organized through the cooperation of programmers and activists from across the globe in hopes of assisting people’s movements. Having learned from earlier examples of surveillance and repression, Arab activists are using software like Tor with increasing frequency in order to hinder attempts to quell access to information and communication.

Like all technologies that came before them, digital-information technologies both provide activists with opportunities to communicate and network while also enabling new modes of repression, censorship, and surveillance. Whether these tools help or hinder global social movements and uprisings will depend on the participants’ understanding of these assets, and their abilities to adapt to efforts of state policing and control.

Interested in learning more about protecting yourself against online government surveillance and censorship? Visit the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Surveillance Self-Defense Project at <https://ssd.eff.org/>

Ian Alan Paul is a writer, artist and programmer living in the Bay Area of California. His work can be found online at www.ianalanpaul.com

David Zlutnick is a documentary filmmaker and video journalist living and working in San Francisco. His work can be found at www.UpheavalProductions.com



TAHRIR SQUARE, CAIRO
NOVEMBER 25, 2011
PHOTO:
HOSSAM EL-HAMALAWY

Nothing to Lose But Our Chains

Organizing Under Surveillance

AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHANTI ALSTON AND MASAI EHEHOSI, WITH MOLLY PORZIG

In exploring the role of surveillance as a cornerstone of the prison industrial complex (PIC), The Abolitionist wanted to examine it through its history, how it has been used and continues to repress struggles for liberation and self-determination. We interviewed two long-time revolutionaries and Critical Resistance members, Ashanti Alston and Masai Ehehosi, to outline some of this history as well as their own experiences organizing under surveillance for more than 40 years.

A lot of people have very different definitions of surveillance. Can you explain what surveillance means to you?

Ashanti: It's really important that people have a historical understanding. We have to always deal with what surveillance meant when there was this European conquest of the African continent—capturing and enslaving millions of Africans over to what became the United States; setting up slave ports and always having to have people keep an eye on those you've captured and on possible opposition to your quest to conquer the world. The whole system of slavery is one that is constant surveillance, as it is part of the mechanisms of conquest. When have colonized people not been under surveillance?

It's important to understand what that means for those of us who are still victims of that original surveillance that came with the conquest of our people that we still have not been able to get off our backs yet in 2012.

Masai: That relates to how I see surveillance—it's continuous. Years ago when Ashanti and I first started working together, we started to be surveilled and have been ever since. One of the definitions of surveillance is the continued observation of a person or group, especially if they are from one perspective doing something "illegal". Revolution is always illegal to the oppressor since the independence struggle began. Independence is always considered illegal; just struggling for a just society is always illegal to the oppressor. If we're talking about anything to cause real change, then we're also talking about surveillance.

How has surveillance changed over time? What tactics have been used, how have they developed and how are they used now?

Masai: There's always a greater use of technology to evolve more serious surveillance as time goes on and more advancements are invented. A lot of people who are targets or potential targets help a lot more now with surveillance than before, in the sense of smart phones, Facebook, [credit] cards and things that we do every day and we just don't think about as surveillance. It may not be a thing where someone is visually seeing us, but our movements, actions and choices are being tracked. We contribute to it. We just don't think there's any other way.

When I used to work for the health department as a Communal Disease Control Investigator, we would ask people questions about their relationships, their

lives, lots of private things. This was over 20 years ago and even back then a lot of people didn't really realize what was going on. They would just give up information—about who partners were, gave network information and so on. Some the government already had, but a lot they didn't. They then could make links of people based on information one person gave.

In terms of technology like cameras, some of those things that we got now couldn't have even been done openly twenty years ago, because people would challenge it, but now people are accepting it. It comes back to the level of organizing that people are actually doing, because obviously a lot of the time people don't actually feel safe, so they rely on the system's tools either directly or indirectly. Some of us aren't doing the organizing that we should be doing in the community that will actually make people feel and be safe. There's a reason why they don't feel safe—they're buying into the propaganda, and we're supposed to counteract that.

Ashanti: Technology is doing a hell of job, and those of us who want to challenge it have to think of how to do this differently. There's an evolution of these agencies of conquest, but I keep focus on the role of the police, government, agencies, government programs, non-profit organizations, religious institutions, neighbors, business, media—all of these things are here to surveil or to create the conditions whereby the people that rule this country can keep the people under control, abiding by the law or rule. In some ways, things have changed drastically and in other ways not, because the key groups of people are still under this specific surveillance. This system does what it's supposed to do to maintain white supremacy. I want people not to be naïve in what we face when we say we want to change this world. This reality and the history behind it, calls for abolition, not reform.

One example is a young activist brother in Cleveland, Ohio, saw them cameras up in the neighborhood and he also knew people in the neighborhood were calling for cameras because of the level of crime. He was trying to explain to everyone what those cameras really meant, but it fell on deaf ears. So he took it upon himself to actually start knocking them cameras out, regardless of what people thought. After so many generations of conquest, even those most impacted by the system begin to call for their own surveillance, repression. This tells you what the new challenge for those of us who say they want change. How do we get people to see that

EVERY AGENCY IN OUR COMMUNITIES USES SURVEILLANCE WHETHER YOU'RE GOING FOR A JOB, GOING TO THE HOSPITAL, FOR A PLACE TO LIVE, OR YOU NEED FUNDING. THESE ARE THE HARD TRUTHS WE HAVE TO ACCEPT IF WE SERIOUSLY WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD. WHEN WE ACCEPT THIS, WE SEE WE CAN ACTUALLY BRING THIS THING ON. ONE OF THESE GENERATIONS WE'RE GOING TO ACTUALLY BE FREE.

some of the very things that they're asking for from government are not in their best interest?
How have you seen the surveillance of particular communities shift or intensify over time, specifically in terms of surveillance of immigrant communities, Muslim communities, and young people?

Ashanti: I'm from Plainfield, New Jersey, and Plainfield's a small town. It has a small police force, which may have contributed to the rebellion there in the '60's, when Black folks were able to get weapons and run the police out. It wasn't a magical thing, it was just doable and it was done.

In the mid 70's to mid-80's when I go to prison and came out, there was a large increase in the numbers, sophistication, as well as the resources that the police departments have access to in terms of technology, weaponry, and military training. Police forces were recruiting soldiers involved in imperialist wars to become police officers. That was a big change for me to see.

Things were so different from before we were captured and imprisoned, but we still came out with that same can do attitude. I don't care how large the police get. I don't care how terrified my people get. We have got to figure out how to get people to say, "No! We do not accept this occupation army!" I know we haven't figured it out yet. But the idea is still valid that we must be self-determining and nothing should stop us from being that. We are up against a consciousness in our communities that really has been convinced that we cannot win, we must accommodate.

Masai: I agree we can do it, and I think sometimes folks don't really want to acknowledge surveillance, so long as they're struggling for certain things and it's going to happen. I think they tend to gloss over it. For those who consider themselves to be leadership or politically aware, I think there's an obligation to study what has happened and what is happening.

I come from the New Afrikan community, so what I see happening now is nothing new. It's what I would have expected. People often assume when talking about the Muslim community that we're talking about this whole different category of people or region of the world--of what we call the Middle East--and we sometimes forget a large number of Muslims actually are indigenous. If in fact we as Muslims are doing what we're supposed to be doing, that is strug-



MASAI EHEHOSI

gling against oppression, being heavily surveilled comes with it.

In the Muslim community, some folks speak in opposition of policies of the U.S. government and face serious charges and disappearance. People haven't said anything other than what they felt. The U.S. government doesn't really make an attempt to come up with any evidence or anything. In many cases the U.S. government agents in fact initiate the plots, provide equipment, and when folks voice opposition, they're hit. It has had a way of making those folks in those communities skeptical of saying anything.

Ashanti: When I was living in New York, very conscious South Asians that were dealing with a lot of immigration issues were being picked up and kidnapped to so-called detentions. All of this caused intense powerlessness in terms of being able to stop government agencies in coming and just snatching them up. The state used all kinds of flimsy pretenses. Even some of them have been in the United States for decades. That pushed us to confront the issues that were going on in immigrant communities.

After 9/11, in Brooklyn, folks of color—Black and Latino—were attacking who they thought were Muslim. The Desi community got involved and they contacted Critical Resistance (CR) and Liberation Action Network out of Hunter College, asking for our help. It made us confront repression of oppressed people acted out on other oppressed communities, as well as the many different oppressions that happen within the same communities. Muslim communities and immigrant communities are so vulnerable especially because in many ways they're being scapegoated for so many things. If you are their comrades, you got to figure out how to be in mutual solidarity, if possible providing protection from the government and corporations and from ignorance within oppressed communities acted out in pathological patriotism towards other people deemed to be different or the new enemy.

Continued on next page, "Interview"



ASHANTI ALSTON
PHOTO: PM PRESS

Can you talk about the NYPD surveillance of Critical Resistance in relation to a document released earlier this spring that revealed some surveillance the NYPD has been doing around the U.S.?

Ashanti: CR was very active, doing a lot of really concrete grassroots work and trying to raise this consciousness around the need to get rid of prisons, to get people really thinking about abolition and how it could be meaningful for them. As we had an office [in Brooklyn] and we were doing programs out of there, we noticed certain individuals started to get harassed more. We've always assumed the phone was getting tapped. It really came to a head when some of us went to the first Anarchists of Color Conference in Detroit. Coming back, we wanted to raise some money to help pay for some the costs. The police used that fundraising activity to vamp on us. They used the excuse that someone reported a minor drinking alcohol on the sidewalk. The next thing you know, a small army of police are bursting in through the door, and there's chaos. They ended up arresting a bunch of people. We knew the reason was because CR was building a foundation in the community and was helping to coalesce other organizations around this idea we do not need prisons. It didn't look good for the police to just let this go, so somebody gave the order for them to shut us down.

CR made it through and was able to be stronger. A reason why we survived was because people came to each other's aid—from protecting each other during the assault and getting pepper spray out of people's faces, to taking care of people's emotional trauma, to the work of jail support and getting the message out. CR broadened its work. People from many different organizations and communities were coming to the office to help. In a sense it's like what Mao said: when your enemy attacks you, you must be doing something well. Things were coming

I KNOW WE HAVEN'T FIGURED IT OUT YET. BUT THE IDEA IS STILL VALID THAT WE MUST BE SELF-DETERMINING AND NOTHING SHOULD STOP US FROM BEING THAT. WE ARE UP AGAINST A CONSCIOUSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITIES THAT REALLY HAS BEEN CONVINCED THAT WE CANNOT WIN.

together, because we knew concrete programs or ideas had to be the things that we organized around and not all the abstract stuff.

How has surveillance (or the fear of it) shifted the culture or practice of organizations and how has that impacted the work?

Ashanti: I want people to understand that as they are getting this from two individuals who have been doing this work for like 40 years or more, and we ain't won yet. In the last 10 to 15 years, young folks know more than what we knew. They read more. More information is available. What I see is that they're still or even more afraid to take risks when it comes to action whether its organizing or even doing those activities that require secrecy. People are looking at the consequences and they're not taking the strategic risks. They're doing actions and organizing in the kind of activism that is safe. I see it within organizations I've been a part of and it saddens me, knowing how bright these younger generations are and how energetic, but how they limit themselves in terms of so much they can do but it takes risks.

I know folks want to be as free and happy as we do. But if you cannot accept the system is going to come down on you, that very knowledge keeps you within a certain confine of what you do, and we're going to keep perpetuating. How can you be free if you just do safe stuff? No matter how much people want to glorify the '60's, especially the Panthers, people will not take them other steps to entrench themselves in the kind of organizing we did and begin to move on other extralegal organizing we had to do for our very survival. Therefore, a lot hasn't changed in 40 years. Some good signs come up, but once the first group of people gets arrested or hurt, we're back to nothing happening. We can still win if we prepare and take risks.

Masai: I know there's a lot of fear amongst folks, but I don't think it's necessarily among the young, and it's not just fear holding us back. I think, especially among younger folks now, people think it's a legal struggle and that holding demonstrations will change things. Even the masses at these demonstrations that get a little unruly—I can relate to them, but as far as organizing and doing the things that need to be done, I just don't know if they know what's really necessary. The prisons are filling up. We have more control units now than ever and the folks in them ain't even being heard out here. To think we can just keep petitioning is bullshit to me.

For example, enough of us out here don't know the role gang units or gang related charges play on the inside. Not only is it hard for certain reasons to organize due to the guards and whatever, but also organizing itself is deemed a gang related activity. When prisoners do attempt to organize they're thrown into the gang units. How those units work is in order to get certain things that you may need or to be released into general population in the prison, you have to name somebody as part of gang. I know CR has played a major role in supporting the hunger strikes that came out of Pelican Bay in California, running the media team, connecting with prisoners and family members and what not. I did similar work connecting with folks in these units when I worked at American Friends Service Committee, so I know a major challenge is struggling through the prisons control over communication and letters being used with surveillance to put more people in the gang units and to stop the organizing. We know from these situations that it's about organizing, that's all gang activity really means. It's not about things being negative it's about what poses a threat to the system.

What lessons have you learned that you think could strengthen the work that is happening now and that needs to happen?

Ashanti: As somebody who's come out of CR, I understand abolition to require knowing the weapons they used to capture Africans have evolved today—the same shackles; those slave forts became prisons, and those same armed forces are there to control people so American life can keep on going. You've got to raise all issues that made this empire possible. We need to acknowledge our differences while being willing to do whatever is necessary to bring the monsters of imperialism down, whether we are Panthers, Zapatistas, struggling in other parts of the world, even the Arab countries. We cannot just confine to nonviolence as if we're not trying to take anyone down. For those of us at the bottom, we're watch-

ing the physical and spiritual devastation of our people every day.

Understanding the prison industrial complex, we're not only dealing with something that includes the physical structure of prisons but also what that imprisonment really does-- imprisoning our entire communities. Every agency in our communities uses surveillance whether you're going for a job, going to the hospital, for a place to live, or you need funding. These are the hard truths we have to accept if we seriously want to change the world. When we accept this, we see we can actually bring this thing on. One of these generations we're going to actually be free. We're here. Masai, myself, Kai Lumumba Barrow—we're here, so this is intergenerational. Everything that we have learned we are making available with the hope that kind of intergenerational collaboration continues.

Masai: When people get involved with PIC abolition, if they're serious about their involvement, I don't need to tell them certain things to do. If they're serious about it, they're going to run up into it. Back in the '70's with the [Black Panther] Party, radicalizing folks wasn't the words of the Party or other organizations, but it was participating in the programs in the community. Our work had an effect on them, so when the police started to shut down the breakfast programs and other programs, the community came out. They didn't immediately rise up all the time, but they came out and they saw and understood why it was happening. I didn't need to explain who are enemy was.

People need to read up on things like COINTELPRO and they need to do the work. If people have studied their history, and you are serious about this, then you know back in the day we were very serious about all this and still are. I know it was called being underground but I used to think of it as being above ground. We weren't talking about supporting prisoners we were talking about liberating prisoners. Ashanti and I spent time and we actually left a lot of folks behind. When we were inside, folks inside were being politicized and we were working in there. The revolution didn't stop for us. People were being trained to go back outside. We got out and it was like the revolution had stopped.

Is there anything else you want our readers to know?

Ashanti: I know it's harder inside, and it's gotten harder. Prisoners today are dealing with a different phenomenon. The prison administration created madness inside

the prisons by manufacturing the growth of prison gangs, the flux of drugs, etc. That consciousness that was there during the revolutionary prison movement with George Jackson—that's not there anymore, but there are individuals inside doing that Malcolm X transformation. They are trying to find themselves and be relevant, but they don't get the support. A lot of people don't know about them. I think those inside that are moving that way are getting the consciousness that they can play role, and they should continue to do that. Folks on the outside should figure out ways to support them, because some of them want to be a part of something that's giving their life new meaning. So can we send them money, hook them up with other resources, go visit or get a lawyer on to help get them out? We on the outside got to keep finding ways to reach and connect with them. Prison is a microcosm of what we got out here, and there are definitely street organizations out here that we have a hard time reaching. That challenge can't stop us. We got to brainstorm; we got to be creative.

For those in Pelican Bay and beyond in every prison: keep writing, learning, bonding with each other, and trying to create those revolutionary spaces you can use to survive and grow. Hopefully at some point we can begin to connect these struggles again like in the late '60's and early '70's when the revolutionary prison movement and movement on the streets were solidly connected. We have to work towards that again.

Ashanti Alston is a former member of the Black Panther Party and soldier in the Black Liberation Army, for which he was a political prisoner and prisoner of war for a total of 14 years. Since that time he's been working with political prisoners building revolutionary movements mostly in the New York area. He has been a member of Critical Resistance and was CR's Northeast Regional Coordinator. He has also been a part of The Institute for Anarchist Studies, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Student Liberation Action Movement and Anarchist People of Color.

Masai Ehehosi is also a former prisoner of war both as a member of the Black Liberation Army and as a citizen of the Republic of New Afrika. First and foremost, he is a Muslim now. Masai is a founding and current member of Critical Resistance.

Molly Porzig is a member of Critical Resistance, Oakland, and is an editor for The Abolitionist.



California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s Secret Surveillance Program

Pelican Bay’s Communication Management Units

BY KIJANA TASHIRI ASKARI

The commission would have very broad powers. It could investigate anyone. It would create a public perception that whoever is being investigated by the commission must be involved in subversive or illegal activities. It would give the appearance that whoever they are investigating is potentially a traitor, disloyal, or a terrorist, even if all they were doing was advocating lawful views.
–Odette Wilkens on the House of Representatives passing of the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007

The primary purpose of the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act was to neutralize “homegrown terrorism and violent radicalization” by establishing a national commission, a center for study, and collaboration with other national governments. Unbeknownst to many in Babylon, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) operatives have secretly relied upon a surveillance program that we captives in Pelican Bay State Prison’s Security Housing Unit (PBSP-SHU) collectively understand as a “communications management unit” (CMU) based upon its purpose. CMUs operate alongside a similar objective and use similar tactics as the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act: to neutralize people deemed a threat to the status quo through intensive surveillance, control and torture.

It was not too long ago that George Bush Jr. launched a propaganda campaign through the public media, declaring the U.S. government does not have any direct knowledge or any formal involvement in operating secret prisons for purposes of engaging in illegal surveillance operations and torturing individuals they have identified as being “enemy combatants”. As soon as this campaign was initiated, several reports began surfacing in the media that forced Bush and his crew to shift their stance on this previous denial. As these news reports became more revealing, these fascist pigs began acknowledging the existence of secret prisons that were and remain in operation throughout the international regions of the world in countries which have established cordial relationships with the U.S., such as Israel, Turkey, Yemen, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Romania, Poland, Thailand, and Afghanistan. U.S. government agents attempted to also shift the blame on the aforementioned countries as the ones solely responsible for operating these illegal activities.

Although the U.S. government’s adamantly denies any complicit involvement in the operation of secret prisons, the personnel that operate these secret prison programs are actually trained by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which has an extensive history in human rights abuses through its many covert infrastructures, such as the School of the Americas. This shouldn’t surprise anyone as lies, deceit, and extensive militarized collaborations between government and business interests are rooted in the construction and maintenance of this corrupt government.

Moreover, scrutiny was raised surrounding the Act’s vague definitions of “violent radicalization” (defined in the Act as “the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change”) and “homegrown terrorism” (defined in the Act as “the use, planned use, or threatened use, of force or violence by a group or individual born, raised, or based and operating primarily within the United States or any possession of the United States to intimidate or coerce the United States government, the civilian population of the United States, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives”). It was revealed that the individuals who were targeted for placement in these secret prisons were individuals who allegedly had a significant amount of influence in their cadres of resistance (as is the case with PBSP-CMUs).

Security Housing Units

In 2006, we prisoners became aware of another prison that has been secretly operating within the confines of the SHU at PBSP. The hunger strike California prisoners launched in July 2011 was in protest of and, in turn, exposed the inhumane and torturous living conditions we have been subjected to while housed in solitary confinement for the past 10 to 40 years. The SHU is already a prison within a prison, as prisoners placed there are kept in windowless, 6-by-10 foot cells, 22 to 23.5 hours a day, for years at a time. Numerous people have been isolated in the SHU for 20 years or more. SHUs were originally created in the U.S. in the 1960s in an effort to repress political organizing, especially among prisoners of color. Putting prisoners under complete surveillance all the time including not even being able to communicate to anyone without the prison administration knowing, SHUs are designed to prevent prisoners from building collective strength or power and from organizing with each other.

During the beginning of our strike, prison intelligence agent and Institutional Gang Investigations (IGI) Lt. Dave Barneburg announced in an interview with KIEM (Channel 9) that the CDCR decided to move all influential prison gang leaders/members at Pelican Bay to the short corridor of D-facility, in housing units D1 thru D4, for the purposes of “monitoring, disrupting, [and] neutralizing”, their ability to “communicate with other alleged prison gang members as it makes it easier for [the CDCR] to control and maintain surveillance on their criminal operations.” PBSP’s CMU had been operating for 5 ½ years before being revealed to the public!

According to the American Friends Service Committee website, “prisoners can be placed in these units for many reasons: as punishment, while they are under investigation, as a mechanism for behavior modification, when suspected of gang involvement, as retribution for political activism or to fill expensive, empty beds, to name but a few.” The leading reason for placement in the SHU is gang validation. The validation procedure used by the CDCR employs criteria to identify gang members such as tattoos, reading materials, using certain language in correspondence such as Tio (uncle in Spanish), and associations with other prisoners which can amount to as little as a greeting. The CDCR has used participation in the hunger strike to validate prisoners as gang members, demonstrating that gang validation is used to repress prisoner organizing for human rights and dignity.

Allegations of gang activity made against the captive prisoner class in Pelican Bay’s CMU are clearly subjective, arbitrary, and based on innocuous activity. It is purely a way for the CDCR to dehumanize prisoners and justify the ways they torture us. Any logical person would at some point have to begin questioning the fact as to how the CDCR can continue to house a human being in the tor-

turous living conditions of solitary confinement for 10 to 40 plus years simply because that human being told another human being “good morning” or “happy birthday,” or because the Prison Intelligence Unit operatives disagree with that person’s political beliefs!

Due to CDCR’s secret surveillance program operations, I was persecuted for my political beliefs. The prison administration confiscated some of my outgoing mail referring to Black August, on the grounds that it was promoting gang activity. I ended up filing a Section 1983 civil lawsuit on the matter to which the court ruled that Black August does not promote violence and that PBSP-CDCR officials have been utilizing a ‘race-based’ approach to say that the cultural history of New Afrikan Black people is gang related.

Raising concerns

Pelican Bay’s CMUs have several facets to their machination apparatus that ensure the crucible of their surveillance objectives on so-called gang activity. This unfortunately also entails the criminalization of prisoners’ families, friends, and loved ones in the free communities via arbitrary allegations of gang activity also void of any actual criminal activity. This criminalization is paired with the fact that no criminal charges or indictments have ever been manifested as a result of these bogus allegations. These contradictions parallel the concerns related to the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act including:

A) Whenever we CMU prisoners send out mail, every page of our mail is stamped with the words “Pelican Bay State Prison—Housing Unit #” on each page so that the origin as to where the mail was sent from can be monitored. In the event that our families, friends, or loved ones should send us some mail that prison intelligence operatives deem to be gang related, the prisoner and the family member, in the community are then accused of gang activity and then restricted from writing to each other for an entire year or more.

B) The CDCR has changed the type of telephone system that we prisoners use in the SHU/CMU visiting rooms when our families and loved ones come up to visit us. The new telephones are electronically wired and thus we CMU prisoners have come to the conclusion that the new SHU/CMU visiting room telephones are bugged with listening devices. Since the installment of these new telephones, there has been a rapid increase in the number of prisoners and their families who have been arbitrarily accused of gang activity that result in both the prisoner and the prisoner’s family members being placed on visiting restriction for a year or more. If this has happened to any member of the community, while writing to, or visiting with a prisoners housed in Pelican Bay’s SHU/CMU, I would strongly urge you to file a citizen’s complaint, which you have a right to do, pursuant to California Penal Code Section 832.5; and California Code of Regulations Title 15 Section 3291 (b) and 3391 (d) in order to clear your name of these bogus allegations, and have your ability to write/visit with their prisoner restored.

C) CDCR’s intelligence operatives use a process called “the inactive gang status review” based on the false premise that a prisoner is being considered for release to general population mainline housing. However, it is actually a method they utilize to coercively extract information from prisoners every six years. In July of 2011, this happened to me when two intelligence operatives approached my cell door and threatened me with a cell extraction” if I did not participate in the inactive gang status review process. I told these fascist pigs that I am not eligible for such a review due to recent documentation of allegedly being involved in gang activity. Additionally, the court has ruled that the inactive gang status review process is not mandatory, as the process does not accord any due process protections.

In general, the only way for a prisoner to be released from the SHU/CMU is to “debrief”, or snitch by giving up information regarding another prisoners’ gang status or affiliation.

Understanding SHUs as communication management units within the context of fascist legislation like the Homegrown Terrorism and Violent Radicalization Prevention Act demonstrates that the War on Terror is fought both abroad as well as at home, and is intimately connected to the state’s domestic war on gangs. Hence, it would be irresponsible for us as a community to sit back and ignore these contradictions of Pelican Bay-CMU as it is our duty to expose fascist corruption, whenever it rears its ugly head! All power to the people who do not fear real freedom!

Kijana Tashiri Askari is a New Afrikan Black Political Prisoner and a class representative of the Pelican Bay Human Rights Movement, by way of the 2011 hunger strikes that took place throughout California’s slave camps (eg. “Prisons”) and abroad. Write to him via: s/n Marcus Harrison H54077/ P.O. Box 7500/D3-122-SHU Crescent City, CA 95531. www.myspace.com/dare2struggle or tashiri@gmail.com.

Kijana has also written two pamphlets called “Evidence of Corruption, Genocide and Neocolonialism within Pelican Bay’s Communications Management Units (CMU),” which further elaborates upon the illegality and the socio-cultural ramifications of Pelican bay’s CMU; and “From Self-Destruction to the Reconstruction of Self,” which offers a perspective about his revolutionary transformation. Both pamphlets are free and available to prisoners by writing to: South Chicago ABC Zine Distro c/o Anthony Rayson, P.O. Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430.



Fertilizer for the Grassroots

BY INGER P. BRINCK

The backyard of the house in which my partner and I reside in Oakland, California is covered with weeds and the soil is hard, dry, and sandy. Wanting to bring life to the yard, I took some of the soil to a local nursery and asked what I should do. A friendly staff person looked at my bag of dirt and jokingly asked, “Are those your cat’s ashes?” Fortunately, not! All I needed he said, were some supplements – some organic matter to liven up what had been neglected for a long time.

The Francis House Center – the largest homeless-serving agency in Sacramento, California, is the enlivening organic matter for tens of thousands of people who struggle daily. Named after St. Francis of Assisi, who committed himself to a life of poverty and service to others, the Center has been affiliated with the Catholic Church since its founding over 40 years ago. In recent years, the Center received as much as \$10,000 in one year to provide critical services such as emergency housing to people in need.

BY SHARING OUR RESOURCES, WE CAN ENSURE THAT THESE CRITICAL ORGANIZATIONS DO NOT HAVE TO RELY ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THAT OUR PRECIOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT IS NOT SPLIT APART.

Yet, because the Diocese of Sacramento does not approve of the personal beliefs of their new director, Reverend Faith Whitmore, the Diocese ended their decades of funding for the Center in March 2012.

Reverend Faith Whitmore joined the Francis House Center as Director in April 2011. Two years earlier, in May 2009, she gave the invocation at a protest in Sacramento after the Supreme Court upheld Proposition 8 – the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage that California voters passed 52 percent to 48 percent. She said, in part:

God of us all, known by many names and experienced through many faith traditions, we are here together, confident that we are all created in your image which is expansive and imaginative enough to include gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and straight with all hues of skin colors and body shapes and sizes.

In addition to backing same-sex marriage, Reverend Whitmore has openly supported a woman’s right to have an abortion. The Chancellor of the Diocese, Kathy Conner, said in an interview with CBS News of Sacramento that the Diocese will not support an organization who’s Director publicly expresses opinions the church opposes.

Guilty by Association
Reproductive justice and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people are two of the defining wedge issues in the social justice movement, and the Catholic Church uses these issues to divide the grassroots social justice movement and isolate and punish the organizations that support reproductive and LGBTQ rights. To help accomplish this, the Church employs a “guilty by association” strategy to guide its funding, which includes surveillance, isolation and punishment.

In the spring of 2011, when I learned about what the Catholic Church was doing to grassroots social justice organizations, I reached out to Jon O’Brien, the Executive Director of Catholics for Choice. I learned that the Catholic Church has been clamping down harder on organizations that receive funding from Catholic entities to ensure they do not participate in any activities that the Church deems immoral – directly or indirectly. O’Brien suspects that their grip will grow tighter and tighter and indicated that the Church builds dossiers on organizations as part of their surveillance.

The experience of the Francis House Center reveals all aspects of the Church’s guilty by association strategy: they essentially conducted a background check on Reverend Whitmore, then simultaneously punished and isolated her and the Francis House Center. It doesn’t matter that Reverend Whitmore hasn’t linked her personal support for reproductive and LGBTQ rights to the Francis House. What is true for feminists is also true for the Catholic Church: the personal is political.

Much of the Catholic Church’s grantmaking is done through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), which was established in 1969 in response to a mandate by U.S. Catholic Bishops to “... to bring good news to the poor ... release to captives ... sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free.” (Luke 4:18) The CCHD has long been a stable source of funding for many grassroots social justice organizations that have very small annual budgets. With grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year, a CCHD grant can sometimes represent a significant portion of an organization’s total budget. For these organizations, a CCHD grant can make or break them.

A key ingredient of the “guilty by association” strategy is monitoring the membership of grassroots organizations in coalitions, which are critical to advancing social justice. Small grassroots groups working individually cannot necessarily garner big wins for social justice, but when they come together in coalitions their collective impact can be huge. Breaking up coalitions, then, is a great way to weaken the social justice movement. When a grantee of the church does not explicitly take a stand in support of reproductive or LGBTQ rights, but is part of a larger coalition that does, they are at risk of losing their funding.

Surveillance, Isolation and Punishment
A coalition that has recently been targeted is the California Partnership (CAP), a statewide network of over 100 grassroots social and economic justice organizations. In 2007, CAP held meetings across California to discuss Propositions 4 and 8. Proposition 4 sought to require parental notification prior to a minor having an abortion and Proposition 8 established a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.

CAP collectively decided to use their organizing muscle to oppose both propositions even though their membership does not focus on those issues. CAP’s willingness to stand in alliance with reproductive and LGBTQ rights provided a significant source of grassroots support for those movements, as CAP’s members represent tens of thousands of constituents across California. This kind of cross-issue/cross-community alliance building is required to achieve lasting social justice and it is exactly what the Catholic Church is breaking apart.

Since CAP’s opposition to Proposition 4 and 8, they and several of their members have been punished by the Catholic Church. Nancy Berlin, the former Executive Director of CAP, said that she had been holding community meetings in churches in the San Bernardino Diocese for several years. After the 2008 election, the Diocese called to say she was no longer welcome in their churches. Nancy thought she had a good relationship with the Diocese – she is a woman of faith and member of a women’s faith group. When the Church representative, who Nancy had known for several years, called to prohibit her from holding any further meetings at the Diocese, she ended the call by hanging up on Nancy. Nancy was heartbroken.

That was just the beginning. Nancy and her staff began receiving calls from some of their members. Those who were funded by their local dioceses or by CCHD were being questioned – one organization was called into the Church on the annual CCHD collection day and asked to justify why it had worked in alliance with CAP to support reproductive and LGBTQ rights. Some of CAP’s members who were pressured by the Church decided to forego their funding in order to continue supporting reproductive and LGBTQ rights; others discontinued their alliance with CAP so they could continue receiving funds from the Church. According to Nancy Berlin, severing those partnerships creates tension among grassroots organizers on the ground. With a line being drawn in the sand, some groups won’t work with others – even when they have an opportunity to join forces on a campaign of mutual interest – such as worker’s rights.

The Church monitors the activities of not only their grantees but also the organizations that their grantees work with. One of the Church’s allies, the American Life League (ALL), which is self-described as, “the largest grassroots Catholic pro-life education organization in the United States,” monitors CCHD grantees’ activities and affiliations. In Octo-

ber 2011, they published an analysis of CCHD grants and found that of the 218 organizations that were funded by CCHD in the 2010-11 grants cycle, 54 were either directly or indirectly engaged in activities that support “abortion, birth control, homosexuality, and/or Marxism.”

Not surprisingly, the California Partnership, which opposed Propositions 4 and 8 and whose membership included some organizations funded by CCHD, was on the American Life League’s list of offending organizations. Another group, Centro Campesino, which is based in Minnesota and works to improve the lives of migrant farmworkers and their families, was defunded by CCHD for distributing condoms. The New York City AIDS Housing Network became ineligible for CCHD funds after they learned that the Housing Network distributed condoms and held a vigil for transgender people. The list goes on.

Growing the Grassroots
A large number of Catholics oppose the Church’s stance on abortion and homosexuality. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 48 percent of Catholic adults in the U.S. believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases and 45 percent believe it should be illegal in all or most cases. In addition, 58 percent believe homosexuality should be accepted by society whereas only 30 percent believe that it should not.

Grassroots organizations are often supported by members of the communities in which they operate. Across the U.S. this includes over 28 million Catholics who support abortion and 34 million who believe homosexuality should be accepted. With this much support for reproductive and LGBTQ rights within the Catholic community, it should become increasingly difficult for the Church to prevent grassroots organizations from reflecting the positions of their fellow community members and joining in partnership with their peer organizations.

With the Catholic Church depleting funds for grassroots organizations, other sources of funding are needed. The Women’s Foundation of California has been working with a group of foundation funders to find ways to support the courageous grassroots organizations that have lost or risk losing faith-based funding when they join in alliance on reproductive and/or LGBTQ rights. In addition, the fact that institutional funders can withdraw their support abruptly and pull the rug out from underneath an organization shows how important it is for grassroots groups to diversify their revenue streams. Fortunately, the media attention that resulted from the Church pulling funds from the Francis House Center resulted in grassroots donations from all over the country, which is a sign of hope.

In addition to these grassroots donations, Catholics United for the Common Good recently established a fund that they describe on their website as an “alternative donation site allowing people of faith to donate directly to charities whose funding is threatened by far-right pressure groups within the Church”. These efforts are the fertilizer for the grassroots – the enlivening organic matter that nurtures partnerships across issues, communities and faiths.

Grassroots social justice organizations are very much the backbone of the social justice movement. They provide enlivening organic matter – not just for the community members they serve, but the social justice movement as a whole. They raise awareness on neglected issues, they separate truth from lies, they educate, organize, train, lead and give voice to and shine lights on people, communities, issues and experiences that are silenced and neglected. And, they often take tremendous risks to bring us all closer to achieving true social justice. Institutions and individuals have a role to play in supporting these important groups – sharing with them our own kind of fertilizer: time, money and talents. By sharing our resources, we can ensure that these critical organizations do not have to rely on the Catholic Church and that our precious social justice movement is not split apart.

Inger P. Brinck is Director of Programs at the Women’s Foundation of California. She is Board Treasurer of Strategic Actions for a Justice Economy in Los Angeles and an Advisory Board member of the Groundswell Fund, a national public foundation that invests in reproductive justice.

Continued from page 3, “Olympics”

the violent police responses that ignited and fueled last summer’s uprisings in London to have a sense of what happens when these tools are put to work.

Surveillance is a key element in policing, imprisonment, and warfare. It is also intimately linked to the maintenance of the ruling economic and social order. But, as is always the case, people are resisting. Mass protests persist and grow despite surveillance-assisted crackdowns. Activists across the globe have developed ways to use technology sometimes related to surveillance—social networking websites, cell phones, text messaging, etc.—to work around the clamp downs. Similar technology was also used in the spontaneous uprisings in London last year. Organizations such as the Newham Monitoring Project will be hitting the streets during the Olympics to monitor police and take complaints during the games. Across the Atlantic organizers are already busy building organizing networks to resist increased surveillance and security violence in preparation for

the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro—a city where police were responsible for 15-25% of all murders in 2010 alone, and where special police forces have been created to “pacify” the favelas in preparation for these mass events.

So while we watch feats of amazing physical strength, agility, and endurance this July, we must also ask what the Olympic Games reflect about the global environment in which we live and what they contribute to that environment. At what price is this spectacle unleashed and what will it leave in its wake? How may we imagine these international settings as opportunities to build international solidarity, strengthen international networks, and tear apart the growing drag net of surveillance ever encroaching on our liberation and self-determination?

Isaac Ontiveros and Rachel Herzing are members of Critical Resistance Oakland.

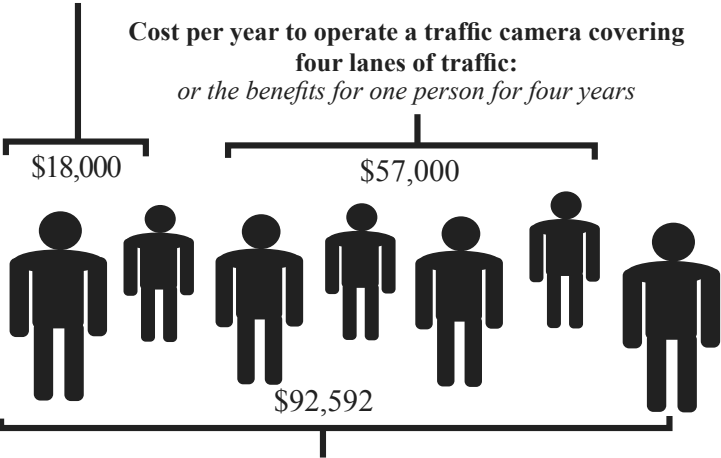


SURVEILLANCE VS. SOCIAL SECURITY



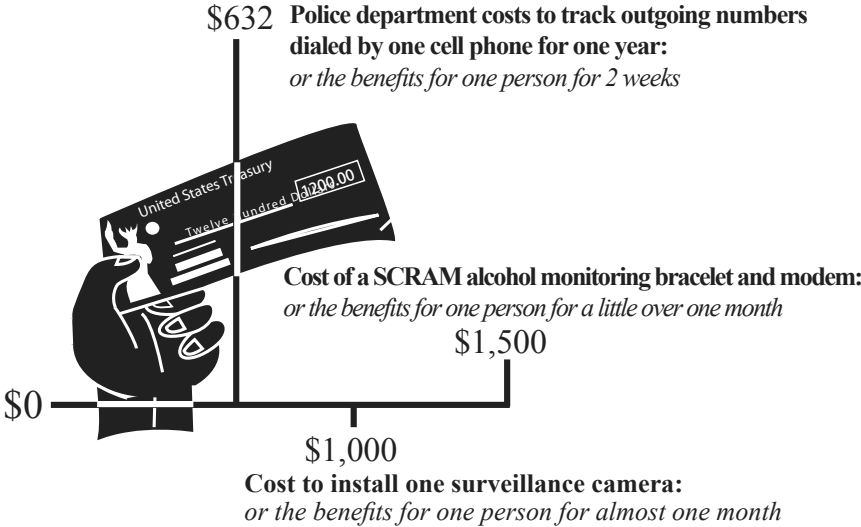
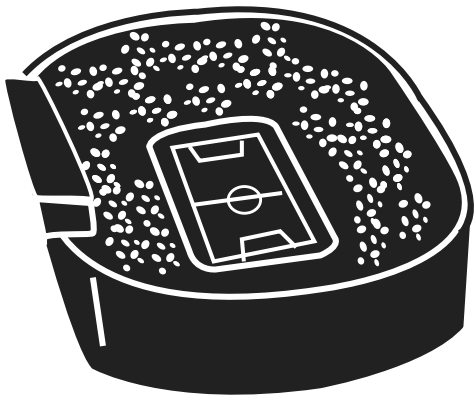
Even as the costs of government surveillance rise, politicians and interest groups are making moves to cut basic services, putting the security of the state before the security of the people. Below, the price tags of surveillance in the U.S.—and how many people these funds could help support (based on the average national unemployment benefit pay out of \$1,200 per month).

Cost to install a camera surveillance system on a city bus:
or the benefits for one person for one year and three months

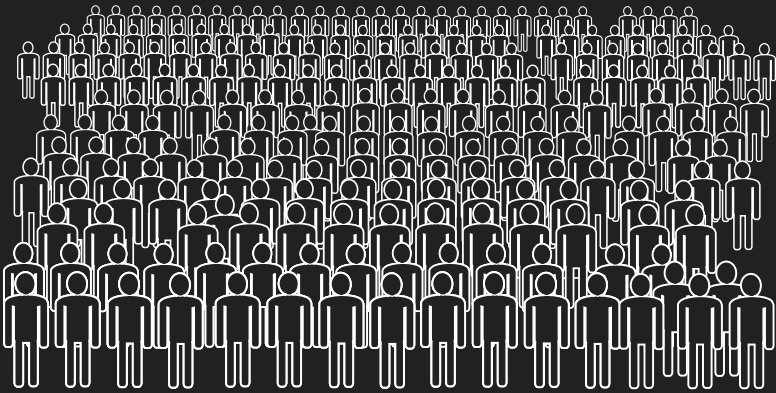


Typical average annual salary of a Drug Enforcement Agency Special Agent with four years' experience:
or the benefits for one person for six and a half years

Since 2001, the amount provided to the states of New Jersey and New York through the federal High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program that spied on Muslim and other groups, including Critical Resistance:
\$135 million
or the benefits for one year for 9,375 people

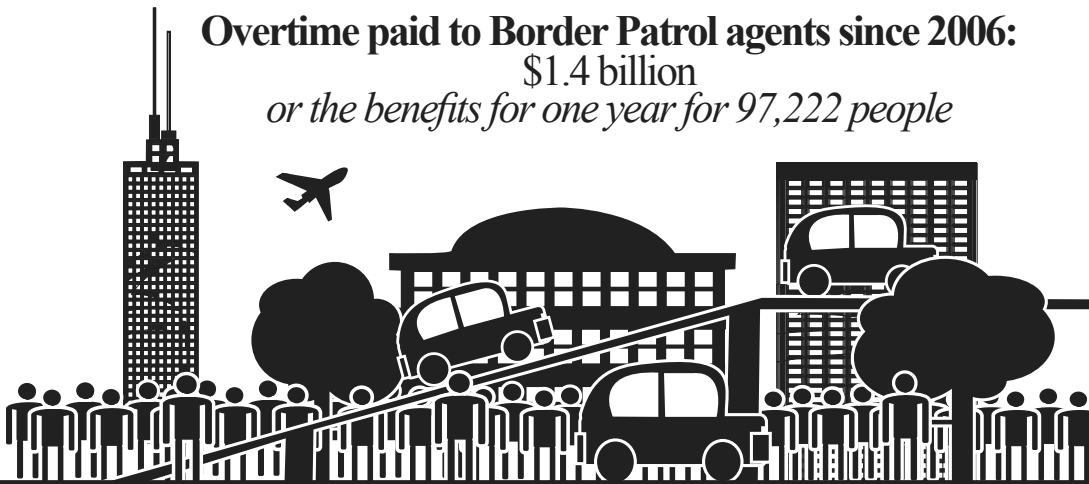


Amount the Department of Homeland Security paid defense contractor General Dynamics to monitor the internet for criticisms of the Department, in 2012:
\$11.4 million
or the benefits for one year for 792 people



Cost to operate one U.S. customs and border control unmanned air drone, per year:
\$18.5 million
or the benefits for one year for 1,285 people

Overtime paid to Border Patrol agents since 2006:
\$1.4 billion
or the benefits for one year for 97,222 people



*SEE ABOLITIONISTPAPER.WORDPRESS.COM FOR SURVEILLANCE COST SOURCES.

INFOGRAPHIC BY OLIVER SPIRES
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Credit card type: _____

Credit card number: _____

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☐ Yes, please send me email updates!

Email address: _____

SURVEILLANCE
1900S TO PRESENT

COMPILED BY
KAMAU WALTON

Palmer raids in cities across the U.S. in November 1919 and January 1920: targeted political radicals mainly of German, Russian, Italian and Irish descent through mass arrests, beatings, interrogation, and deportation of over 500 individuals.

General Intelligence Division (a division of the FBI), started a fingerprinting index system that also collected fingerprints from state and local law enforcement agencies as well as “non-criminal” fingerprints, compiling the largest collection of fingerprints to date with over 15 million on file.

First helicopters used by police units following World War II.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) established via the National Security Act and charged with coordinating U.S. intelligence activities, connecting, assessing, and sharing intelligence related to national security.

Project Echelon: an automated global interception and relay system operated by the intelligence agencies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand which intercepts everyday communications including phone calls, e-mail messages, Internet downloads, satellite transmissions indiscriminately, then distills desired information through artificial intelligence programs.

COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program): established to infiltrate, surveil, and destroy groups deemed threats by the government, including the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam, the U.S. Communist Party, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and Puerto Rican Liberation groups. Tactics included discrediting targets through psychological warfare; smearing individuals and groups by planting false reports in the media and using forged documents; harassment; wrongful imprisonment; and violence, including assassination.

The Citizen’s Commission to Investigate the FBI breaks in to an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, removing thousands of documents related to the FBI’s ongoing counterintelligence program. Many of these documents are printed in various publications, and are credited with revealing COINTELPRO to the public.

Trail of Broken Treaties: Caravan of American Indians starts on the West Coast ending in Washington D.C. with a 2 day occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs during which activists confiscated documents related to reservation lands. Activists were allowed to leave without charges due to a large number of federal infiltrators planted in the organizing group.

FBI agents sought out information on Soviet-bloc nationals from librarians during the Cold War. In response, librarians who were contacted were mostly hostile, uncooperative, and spoke to the press about the contacts which generated substantial negative publicity for the FBI.

In the wake of the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings, President Bill Clinton signs into law the **Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act** which expands the government’s capacity to electronically surveil individuals and groups deemed “terrorists” or other domestic groups suspected of being a “threat to national security”.

California starts using **CAL/GANG**, a database comprised of information cops take on “field interview” cards when they have contact with someone they think may be a gang member. The information is entered into the CAL/GANG database often with a picture of the person. The majority of the entries are youth of color.

USA PATRIOT ACT is signed into law. Section 215 of the PATRIOT ACT allows the FBI to obtain an individual’s book borrowing and internet use records without any constitutional “probable cause” standard and places a gag order on librarians preventing them from notifying patrons that their records were turned over to the FBI. In response, librarians have started to post warnings, shredding sign-up sheets for computer terminals, and removing records of book borrowing once books are returned.

Founding of **Anonymous:** a “hacktivist” collective that uses digital technologies to interfere with spying and surveillance efforts by hacking into websites.

Launching of **Wikileaks:** Media organization who publishes information related to government and corporate misconduct.

American Civil Liberties Union challenges the **National Security Act** which authorizes the monitoring of phone calls, Internet activity (Web, e-mail), text messages, and other communication involving any party believed by the NSA to be outside the U.S., even if the other end of the communication lies within the U.S. without a search warrant. The challenge was denied by U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Activists lock themselves in U.S. Border Patrol offices in Tucson, Arizona to protest **Senate Bill 1070** and the militarization of the Mexico/U.S. Border.

1919-1920

1924

1940s

1947

1947—present

1956—1971

1971

1972

~1980

1980

1997

2001

2003

2006

2006—2008

2010

Exodus 2012

BY D’ANDRE MOORE

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a microcosm of society. The “all-seeing eyes” have proven effective behind the walls and prison security and surveillance measures have slowly integrated into society at large. Like ants, the prison security cameras have crawled into the schools and the restaurants and onto the sidewalks everywhere.

With each passing day, free people are being force-fed an acclimation agent so that they will accept invasion of privacy as a fact of life. Television programs such as *Big Brother* and *Candid Camera* have assisted in conditioning human minds to grow more comfortable with being observed from afar by absolute strangers.

No one can deny that cameras have played their role in solving “crimes”. A common argument for the use of surveillance is that it deters crime and helps to clear the innocent. However, there are also countless incidents that involve cameras infringing upon people’s rights. People who object to this are sometimes labeled criminals, and if this policy were a movie, we’d have to call it *COINTEL-PRO Reloaded*.

It is never wrong for the people to demand their dignity. It is never unjust for a mother to shout: “Let my people go!” It is never criminal for the slave to refuse to build the very pyramid from which the overseer will oversee him/her. And it is always the duty of every abolitionist to cast his/her rod in order to defeat an oppressive system.

Some say: “I don’t care if they put a camera on my street or bug my phone or track my movement; I don’t commit criminal acts anyway.” That sounds good now, but if a group of lawmakers ever decide to make it a felony to discipline your child, or engage in sex out of wedlock, or even support a woman’s right to choose, those same forms of surveillance will be used to prosecute many good parents, lovers, and friends.

The powers that be will try to convince you to have your children fingerprinted in order to keep them safe. They’re tempting parents, asking them to turn their own children into burnt offerings so that they can be consigned to the tyrants of the law.

The information collected through surveillance can be misleading. Although its supposed purpose is to tell the true story in situations in which no witness is present, a security camera will often tell the opposite story. A video feed may show Prisoner A exit the restroom with clenched fists. Next Prisoner B exits the restroom with a bloody nose. The first conclusion drawn would be that Prisoner A assaulted Prisoner B. However, the footage does not show what transpired in the restroom. Perhaps Prisoner B attacked Prisoner A, who acted in self-defense.

There is a concerted effort underway among law enforcement circles to convince the “free” world that all citizens are to be their brother’s keepers and peepers. They are to be walking, talking cameras and microphones and 9-1-1 buttons, constantly observing each other, always being suspicious of one another, ever ready to report the next person’s transgressions. “All crime affects you” is their mantra. “Hate thy neighbor; love thine own power to tell on him/her”—call it McCarthyism for the new millennium.

The worst form of demagoguery is manifested in anti-immigrant propaganda. Along the U.S.-Mexico border one sees surveillance on steroids as the U.S. Border Patrol, along with the military, play their war games. All their high-tech gadgets are employed and deployed to prevent the impoverished laborer from ever reaching American soil. Pure xenophobia is covered with the rouge of terrorist threats and exaggerated tales of drug cartels commandeering American cities. But when that excites but fails to incite, the masses are warned with the battle cry, “They’re coming across the border to steal your jobs!” And so all the king’s pawns rally to the frontline of narrow-mindedness. These ultrapatriotic minions will then vote for the politician they can create in their own image, the one who promises to build them the tallest border fence, the largest prison, and the deadliest police force. They elect for themselves a modern day pharaoh to worship. Little do they realize, along with their pharaoh and all his policies will come eight plagues of destruction. These will pass over the people being oppressed and strike all those who supported the oppressor and his policies. These plagues are all evident in society today, and they are all the result of the security culture we find ourselves trapped in.

IT IS ALWAYS THE DUTY OF EVERY
ABOLITIONIST TO CAST HIS/HER ROD IN
ORDER TO DEFEAT AN OPPRESSIVE
SYSTEM.

1. higher budget deficits
2. a stagnant economy
3. more expensive and complacent labor pool
4. less civil liberties and more police brutality
5. richer defense contractors and poorer taxpayers
6. more prisons and less jobs
7. a police state
8. a snitch nation

These eight plagues are no match for a united front of abolitionists all demanding deliverance.

The time has come for us to make our exodus out of the land of excessive surveillance. It might take 40 years, but serfdom in surveillance city is a dead-end street, while the long march through the wilderness will inevitably take us to the Promised Land. Arise and warn. Resist. Combat the powers that be. Our time is now. Exodus 2012.

D’Andre Moore is a 40-year-old shaper in the Earthseed Movement. His roots are in East Oakland, California. He studies Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, Portuguese, Hindi, Urdu and Russian. He can be contacted at: D’Andre Moore #104067, Cibola 6F21, POB 8820, San Luis, AZ 85349.

USA’s Prison Industrial Complex Moves South of the Border

BY NASIM CHATHA. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE (AFGJ.ORG)

The United States today uses an extensive and unprecedented form of imprisonment and policing as social control of its most marginalized communities. It is a unique culture of incarceration: no other country locks up their population to the same degree that we do, nor has so perfected imprisonment as a tool of innocuously perpetuating racial division.
—Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

Led in large part by William R. Brownfield, the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the U.S. is aiding Latin American countries to build “a new penitentiary culture”; a complete package to becoming more completely “American”, involving new prisons, new imprisonment style, and new community policing strategies. The US has long been heavy-handed in its involvement with Latin America, where for decades it has backed right-wing militaries to protect its financial interests and fight alleged threats of communism, and also created “development” programs for exactly the same reasons. This militarized relationship was maintained until the present through military bases, partnerships and free trade agreements. In the past several years, US military influence is seeping anew into Mexico and Central America, this time nominally in order to combat drug violence and reduce drug trade.

Within the past five years, the U.S. has been implementing programs directed at building or reshaping prisons and increasing community policing in Mexico, Honduras and the rest of Central America. The Merida initiative, which began programs in 2007, is the main agreement that funnels billions of U.S. dollars into Mexican President Felipe Calderón’s drug war. The plan mostly sends Mexican police military equipment bought from private U.S. contractors, but also has an important imprisonment aspect: the plan, as William R. Brownfield notes, is “multi-pronged”.

“In one of our more innovative and successful programs,” he says, “the State Department is working with the State Corrections Training Academies in Colorado and New Mexico, and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons, to provide training and technical assistance for all levels of corrections staff” in Mexico, says Brownfield. This accompanies an increase in the number of Mexico’s federal prisons from six to twenty two, which Brownfield likes: these “will greatly relieve the state facilities of severe overcrowding”, although he says nothing of the massive increase in police activity, domestic militarization and warfare that will increase convictions. His gratuitous approval in an article actually about the programs of Plan Mérida suggests that the U.S. exerted heavy sway in the creation of these new prisons. In a very similar plan enacted in Colombia ten years earlier, where the U.S. *did* explicitly build new prisons, the increased capacity lead up to an exponential increase in arrests and incarceration.

Another of Plan Mérida’s successful programs in Mexico, William Brownfield states, is a massive criminal database that the U.S. has helped build called Plataforma Mexico, a component of which is supervision of emergency hotlines and centers for victims of crimes. According to *La Jornada*, the Mexican government awarded 29 sweetheart deals to private contractors to build the database. The paper also calls the database “failed and onerous.” The Mexican government organization ASF (Senior Auditor of the Federation) says that Plataforma Mexico does not provide follow up information on any of the emergency calls or police station visits, which makes it useless for protecting citizens.

Plan Mérida has also helped Mexico develop a voice and fingerprint tracking system, which in combination with Plataforma Mexico suggests that the U.S.’s “security” style of branding certain people as permanent criminals is moving south of the border. Another component of Plan Mérida is sending investigation equipment and training police officers to use it, especially around Mexico’s southern border. These largely illegal road and highway checkpoints are operated by a confusion of the military, police or both. They nominally seize drugs but also serve to track the movements of autonomous or indigenous groups and suppress political dissent.

The prison projects do not stop at Mexico, but continue south into the entirety of Central America under the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). CARSI is “a new security initiative sponsored by the United States, which is pressuring the weak states of Central American to assign their local armed forces to the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime,” notes André Maltais, a Canadian journalist. Training prison guards is a central component of the program’s security management in all the countries involved. Central America is an important region geographically for the U.S., especially for its rich natural resources. “While the [leftist guerrillas of the ‘80s] have disappeared, drug trafficking and violence, in addition to being profitable businesses for the U.S. banks and security industry, are now excellent pretexts for a permanent Pentagon military presence in the region.”

William R. Brownfield visited Honduras in March this year, where he committed U.S. money to another “multi-pronged” program. The U.S. has been increasing military and police financing for the illegal government of President Porfirio Lobo since the military coup in 2009. This support has funded Honduras’s ongoing state repression against democracy activists. As the U.S. embassy report illuminates in bullet points, the new prison program will operate through CARSI. The plan includes anti-gang programs, a model precinct program which will be launched at a police precinct in Tegucigalpa, and a model prison program. The most “innovative” parts in this plan are the ones which involve previously civilian institutions: the U.S. ambassador Lisa Kubiske said “He’s going to show that... we have good relations as much with the people who apply the law as with the military side.” Brownfield aims to follow the program of either Mano Dura or Super Mano Dura, both of which are anti-gang initiatives which failed in El Salvador, according to *La Prensa*. Says Sonja Wolf writing for

Sustainable Security, Mano Dura resulted in massive gang incarceration, and “confinement in special prisons allowed gang members to strengthen group cohesion and structure”.

CARSI is very similar to Plan Colombia, enacted more than a decade earlier, in that it increases U.S. military presence in the plan’s respective region; so similar that the Colombian Armed Forces provide training to Central American police and military officers through CARSI. Colombia has been in a state of turmoil for most of the past century due to an intense ongoing political, social and armed conflict, culminating in the 47 year old conflict between the Colombian government and paramilitaries with the Marxist-Leninist insurgent group, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia). The broader armed conflict also includes insurgent groups such as the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), as well as private armies of narco-traffickers.

In 2000 their Minister of Justice signed “The Program for the Improvement of the Colombian Prison System” together with the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Anne Patterson. The agreement and ensuing “improvements” went largely unnoticed and unreported. However, USAID and the U.S. Federal Bureau of



ART BY THE BEEHIVE DESIGN COLLECTIVE
BEEHIVECOLLECTIVE.ORG

Prisons funded and advised a project to construct and/or redesign as many as 16 medium and maximum security prisons, leading to a 40% increase in prisoner capacity.

The U.S.’s overall involvement in Colombia was justified as part of the international War on Drugs. Nominally, the new prisons (an initial 4.5 million U.S. dollars were spent) that resulted from this program were built to lessen overcrowded conditions at the previous maximum and medium security institutions. However, more prisons have not apparently improved conditions but instead have been filled; arrests have outpaced the newly built holding space. The prison program may have motivated a surge of arrests, or at the very least were positioned to receive the resulting prisoners. In addition, the new prisons are more militarized; greater blurring the lines between the civilian police forces and the military.

According to the Colombian Coalition Against Torture, “It is of serious concern that Colombia’s prisons are increasingly militarized. Indeed, the majority of prisons visited ...are under the command of high-ranking members of the military and police forces, either retired or active, and lack the skills necessary to manage a prison.” At least five of the sixteen prisons were run by graduates of the notorious School of the Americas. The program in the end was no improvement, but instead an expansion of the role of the prison in social control.

Colombia’s notorious new prison, La Tramacua, with its filthy and violent conditions, has held scores of Colombia’s thousands of political prisoners and is known for using torture: currently, the Colombian prison system holds 9,500 political prisoners, the great majority being held for nonviolent resistance and political opposition. The prison population has grown by over 57% since 2000 while the population has grown only by 14%. In addition, the strange phrase “New Penitentiary Culture” used by the Colombia prison program, so captivating when it leads one to reflect on the nature of the culture we send abroad, was also used by the Dominican Republic’s attorney general Radhames Jimenez Peña in an announcement that six new prisons were being built: “We are beginning a new penitentiary culture in the Dominican Republic,” he said. Likely there is U.S. or Brownfield influence there as well, seeping quietly into the phrases that make it into press releases.

THE “WAR ON DRUGS” DECLARED BY THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION WHICH LED TO CURRENT INCARCERATION PRACTICES HAS NEVER BEEN CONTAINED WITHIN THE US’S BORDERS; ALL THE INTERNAL VIOLENCE IS MIRRORED, AND IN SOME WAYS AMPLIFIED AND DISTORTED, IN MUCH OF THE REST OF THE AMERICAS.

country’s prison programs; while the Colombia program was initiated, he was ambassador to next-door neighbor Venezuela, and then inherited the prison program when he became ambassador to Colombia in 2007. We can expect more arrests and less true security in communities after the new prison programs are implemented. Moreover, the prison program in Colombia also accompanied the U.S.’s international War on Drugs, a clumsy practice when decreasing drug flow is concerned, but excellent for maintaining military presence in an area and for niche U.S. business interests like military suppliers. In Colombia the militarized and expanded prison system was an important tool for stifling dissent; the

The pattern set in Colombia twelve years ago is significant to understanding how the newer security and prison agreements will develop in Mexico and Central America. The most obvious reason to expect similar results is William Brownfield, who has been central to the development of all of these

Continued on page 14, “Border”

Why Not to Disappear

BY JAYDEN DONAHUE

Frank M. Ahearn with Eileen C. Horan: How to Disappear: Erase Your Digital Footprint, Leave False Trails, and Vanish Without a Trace (Lyons Press, 2010)

We live in a digital age: the age of social media where everyone seems to have a Facebook account or uses Twitter or Google Plus or countless other online tools, some useful for our work, and some not. I expected to read *How to Disappear* and find good, politically grounded tips on how to create safe spaces, free of surveillance, particularly by police or other government agencies, while still being able to use the host of online networking and data sharing tools available. I have to say, I was disappointed on a number of fronts.

The author spends the bulk of the book describing how to disappear, as the title suggests. Ahearn is clear to point out, multiple times, that he is not in the business of helping or suggesting that people do illegal things. He is clear to state that you should take care of personal debts prior to disappearing, that he does not recommend stealing someone’s identity, nor does he condone illegal tactics used by other skip-tracers such as extracting banking information. His approach to disappearing is three-pronged: misinformation, disinformation, reformation. Misinformation involves finding all of the information that is available about you in the world and altering in some way. So, you might call your bank or phone company and claim that there is a misspelling in your name or change your address in some small way. Disinformation involves fabricating information and creating bogus trails for people to follow. You might actually travel to a different city and find an apartment for rent and then set up false utility accounts under your name. Then you could go to an open house and express interest in buying so that the real estate agency runs a credit check in your name in this city. Finally, reformation involves

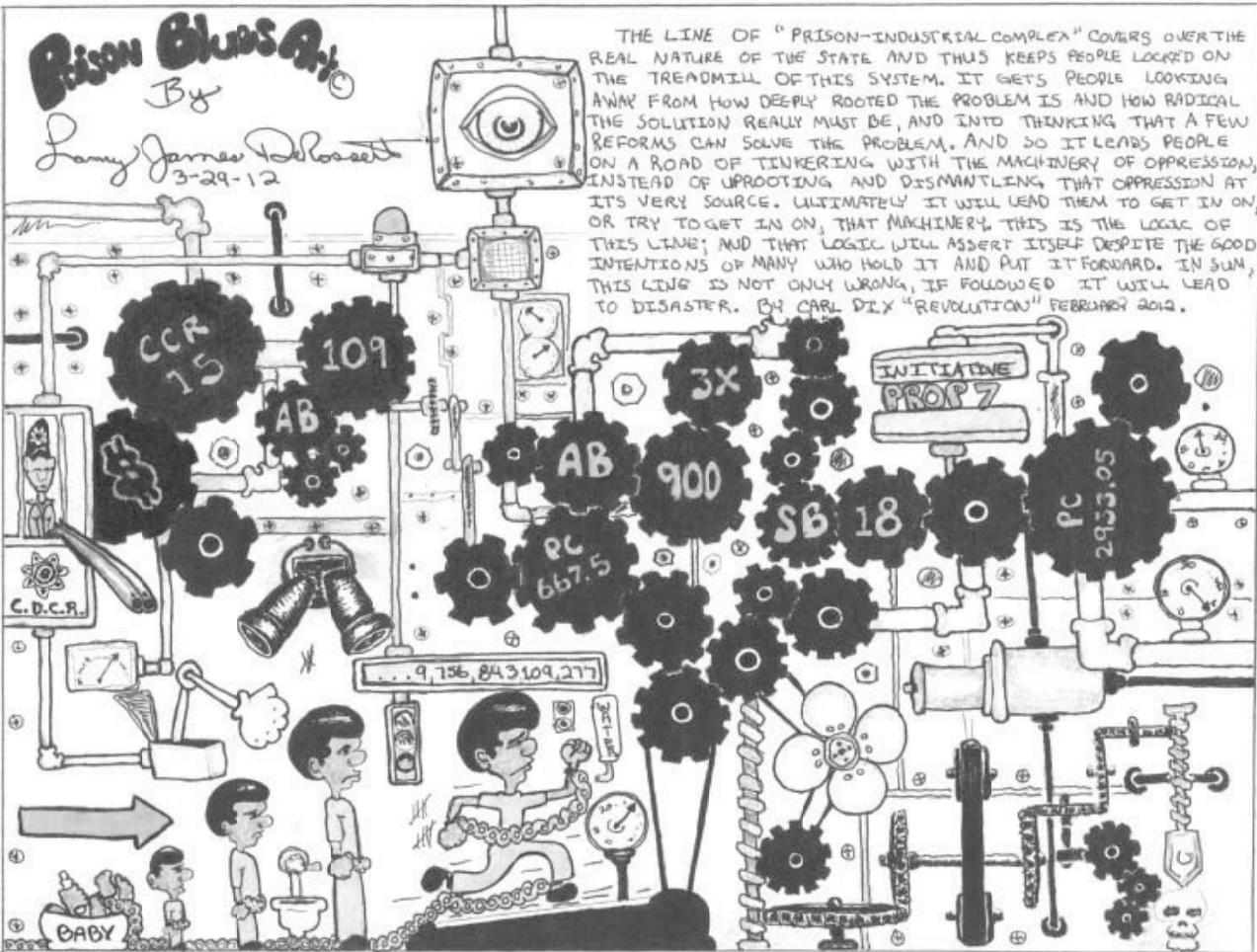
THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION IN HOW TO DISAPPEAR IS THAT WE DON’T WANT TO DISAPPEAR AT ALL. RATHER, WE WANT TO FIGHT THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX’S TOOLS OF DISAPPEARANCE AND DEVASTATION.

actually moving to a new place and starting a new life. Ahearn suggests, or rather requires, that you must always use pre-paid credit cards (or pay cash), pre-paid cell phones, set up multiple mail drop boxes with private postal companies and use multiple and sometimes temporary email accounts to remain safe. He suggests only paying bills online and using secured and public wireless connections so that your information is less traceable.

The author’s tips for using social media are perhaps more applicable to the work of Critical Resistance or other radical organizations and communities. He recommends that if you must use social media, that you create a new and anonymous email address for that purpose and that you use a pseudonym or perhaps a misspelling of your name. He reiterates that it is important to trust no one on Facebook or other social media sites and to use phone or regular email to communicate with family. Finally, if you for whatever reason must list a telephone number or mailing address, use one of your mail drop boxes or a JConnect number, which is a virtual phone number from any city of your choosing which allows you to collect voicemail via email.

Ahearn’s strict rules about protecting your private information also bear some heeding. Being careful about with whom you communicate online is an excellent tip. The anonymity of the internet means you never really know who you are talking to, and that someone might be a cop or a federal agent. He also points out that we are surveilled in so many ways that we don’t even recognize as surveillance these days. Grocery stores and pharmacies offer us discount cards connected to our addresses where our purchases are monitored. Gyms link our membership cards to photos that are scanned every time we enter. Even library cards are linked to personal information. Ahearn’s main point is to be conscious of when, where, and to whom you are giving personal information and to avoid giving as much as possible. Most businesses do not need your phone number or email, let alone a social security number, so it is your prerogative to refuse divulging that information.

And now for the critiques... I should have perhaps read the jacket cover before thinking about all of



the possibilities this book could offer. The author, Ahearn and his colleague, Horan, run what is known as a “skip-tracing” company. Skip-tracers are hired by everyone from credit companies tracking people who owe money to the stalkers looking for their evasive targets. While it seems that Ahearn perhaps steers clear of the more nefarious of business engagements, he has no qualms about informing the authorities when something seems fishy, especially if you happen to be a person in an abusive relationship. Moreover, he uses language and tactics that are alienating at best and at worst, sexist and red-baiting. Part of a skip-tracer’s box of tricks when trying to locate someone is to “pretext,” or to call establishments such as phone or other utility companies, credit card companies and the like and pretend to be the individual in question; whether that is to discover information such as an address or to make changes on behalf of a client such as an address or name change. He states more than once that it’s easier to cajole an older woman company representative with a false personal story about grandchildren or the like than a man. Additionally, he used the word “commie” at least once to describe people we should be wary of.

My most strident critique of Ahearn’s work is both his lack of political focus and his focus on the individual when it comes to avoiding and evading surveillance. *How to Disappear* offers little, if any, connections to political organization or radical politics. His libertarian focus, nearing obsession, on using prepaid credit cards, cell phones and other tactics requiring significant financial capital suggests a complete disregard for fundamental material conditions that most of us struggle with on a day to day basis under capitalism. His brief section on “How to Disappear on a Budget” (which covers all of ¾ of a page), recommends concentrating on misinformation, which costs next to nothing, but then saving up money to be able to do the rest, including hiring a professional like himself.

Perhaps the most salient critique I have of *How to Disappear*, is the book’s focus on individualism. Most of Ahearn’s strategies require distancing, if not complete alienation, from one’s family and community. For instance, you will need to contact loved ones only at certain times, using phones to which they cannot return a call or email accounts which you then discard. One of the most important lessons radical organizations and communities have learned in recent years, in the wake of continued attack by the state using surveillance and other covert operations, is that by creating a united front, by becoming closer, by knowing who your neighbors are and who is attending a political meeting are our best defenses. Engaging in political education and fostering unity in organizations so that we know that when the FBI comes knocking, because they will, that we aren’t talking and we don’t consent to this search is paramount. When harm happens in our communities, rather than hiding and running to the cops, we have a political imperative to create mechanisms that both protect those being harmed and hold creating harm accountable while ensuring that it’s less likely for that harm to happen again in the future. The fundamental

contradiction in *How to Disappear* is that we don’t want to disappear at all. Rather, we want to fight the prison industrial complex’s tools of disappearance and devastation, and create thriving, sustainable communities in which all of us are present.

By way of conclusion I return to the concepts in the book that I do think are useful for political organizations. First, awareness of surveillance as a fact does nothing to dismantle the systems that it serves or to build a world in which we truly want to live. I want to know what we are going to do about it. To me, as a member of a political organization, this could mean creating an organization-wide, anti-surveillance plan in which we collectively participate. This could mean having a strict policy on what information is given out to office equipment companies, having a strong new-member process to avoid being open to government infiltration, or using secured and encrypted email and server platforms.

Finally, I think we can find the greatest strength of *How to Disappear* in the critique and analysis of the book. Ahearn does a really great job of examining the breadth of surveillance that exists in our world. So, surveillance is not always directly connected to or initiated by law enforcement, but information about even the most minute details of our lives is collected by all kinds of agencies, businesses and individuals. Most times we are not even aware of what we have given up. This is particularly true for social media outlets. We might think we are showing our support for a friend by “liking” their camping photos on Facebook and suddenly ads for outdoor equipment are appearing on a sidebar. If you think about it, this is just another way that capitalism, for which the prison industrial complex is both a weapon and an overall logic, is becoming further entrenched. This kind of “participatory surveillance” creates an environment in which we unwittingly shore up the defenses of the PIC even as we seek to overcome the alienation it causes.

Jayden Donahue is a member of Critical Resistance Oakland through which he participates in the Bay Area Coalition to Stop Political Repression (BACSPR).

2 More Free Online Resources

Surveillance Avoidance How-To
Tactical Technology Collective and Front Line’s **Security in a Box** (<https://security.ngoinabox.org/en>) has none of the unfortunate language choices of Ahearn’s book, and offers great guides and advice on how to remain anonymous on the web, protect files on your computer, and destroy sensitive information.

How the Government Watches Us Digital Security for Activists, by Riseup (https://zine.riseup.net/assets/digital_security_for_activists.pdf), gives an analytical look at blogging, email, and other tech, and how governments and other entities are using them to thwart social movements.

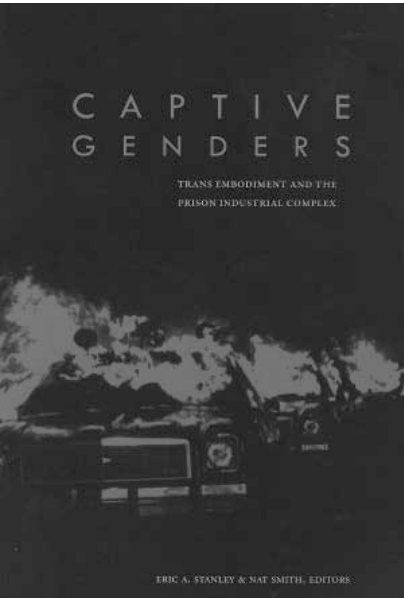
Transforming Society

BY DAVID GILBERT

Nat Smith and Eric A. Stanley (eds.), *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (AK Press, 2011)

Even though it was over 30 years ago, I remember well the anxiety about entering the penal system: how would I fare in this harsh new world of repression, of regimentation, reputedly rife with violence? For me, for many of us, the saving grace was solidarity from other prisoners as those already established helped us learn to navigate these rocky shoals. But what if you’re someone who faces an extra dimension of hostility from the guards, with many prisoners joining staff in abusing you—not for anything you did but just for who you are? That’s the situation for many transgender and queer prisoners. The isolation, disdain, and violence can be vicious and incessant. This isn’t just a problem for trans/queer (T/Q) prisoners; it’s an important issue for all of us. Every time we join the dominant powers in society in mistreating others, every time we miss a key dimension of how this anti-human system rules over us, we undermine our ability to resist and to work for strong and supportive communities that can provide the sane and humane alternative to the punitive and damaging prison industrial complex (PIC).

Now we have a wonderful new weapon both for deepening our understanding of the system and for building solidarity in *Captive Genders*, a collection of essays edited by Eric Stanley and Nat Smith.



This razor sharp, double-edged sword argues effectively both that prison abolition must be central to T/Q liberation struggles and that T/Q self-determination is essential to abolition. The PIC helps produce and physically enforces the gender binary, rigidly defined by birth genitalia rather than self-determination, while attacks on T/Q people divide prisoners and reinforce the repressive powers of the state. For both prison activists and T/Q advocates, all of us need to be “... firmly grounded in the interests, experiences, and agency of the most marginalized within our communities ... ” (53). We need to be conscious, as Yasmin Nair reminds us in this volume, how racism, poverty, lack of health care, poor education and limited job prospects affect millions of us in this country.

In this book, “trans/queer ” (T/Q) is used as an umbrella term. “Trans” includes all those who express gender differently

from the way it is traditionally assigned at birth--whether as transgender, transsexual, cross-dresser, androgynous, or any other challenge to the strict gender binary and stereotypes. “Queer” refers to people whose sexual desires, identities and practices don’t conform to heterosexual norms. The prison industrial complex, with emphasis on the “complex,” encompasses the political and economic forces of repression and control: prisons and jails, immigration holding centers, juvenile detention centers, “secure” psychiatric wards, prisoner of war camps, street policing, and the many means of state surveillance and harassment.

Captive Genders is emphatically not about liberal reforms such as passing “hate crimes” legislation. As Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade argue forcefully in their essay, such laws strengthen the repressive institutions while misidentifying the problem as a “few bad apples,” individual bigots. But instead, the problem is endemic to a system based on racism, patriarchy, state violence, and capitalism. And for T/Q people it’s not just a question of discrimination but more basically of their very life chances and life spans. T/Q people are more likely to be disowned by their families, kicked out of school, rejected for jobs, denied entry into gender-defined shelters or treatment centers, and unable to get appropriate medical care. These realities often force people into the underground economy, which piggybacks on police bias to make them highly vulnerable to harassment and arrest. And where the various oppressions intersect, people face situations. For example, transwomen of color are subjected to extremely high rates of assault, murder, and imprisonment.

Once inside, prison can become hell. Kim Love recounts how she was regularly raped by a deputy sheriff during her stay in county jail. Then, once in a California state men’s prison, a captain assigned her to be the “wife” of a gang leader, as correction officers (COs) provide such sexual access to keep influential prisoners placated. Needless to say, Kim had no say in this forced union, in reality three years of serial rapes, beatings, and abuse, which played out the worst values and practices of male supremacy. On the other hand, transmen in women’s facilities, as the interviews summarized by Lori Girshick explain, generally don’t have problems from women prisoners, but face all kinds of harassment from the COs.

Oppression takes a toll, including a tragically high suicide rate. But the T/Q prisoners who speak out in this book have strong survival skills, remarkable resilience and a sense of humanity that are impressive and inspiring. The spirit is aptly captured by this quote from Audre Lorde, “Within the war we are all waging with the forces of death, subtle and otherwise, conscious or not—I am not only a casualty, I am a warrior.” (141). *Captive Genders* opens with the seminal Stonewall Rebellion of June 1969, when sexual and gender outsiders in New York rose up against police harassment and brutality, and the book ends with a Resource List of organizations that fight for T/Q people and against the PIC. Kim Love herself, now out of prison, is a dedicated activist in the Transgender, Gender Variant, Intersex Justice Project.

As several essays (e.g. S. Lamble’s) make clear, the path to T/Q self-determination is not the one advocated by some predominantly white and middle class LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) groups: assimilation into the mainstream. Instead the only direction for achieving fundamental change is to join with all of the oppressed—based on racism, elitism, sexism, homophobia,

Armed Affect: Revolutionary Love and the Politics of Care

BY ERIC A. STANLEY

David Gilbert, *Love and Struggle: My Life in SDS, the Weather Underground and Beyond* (PM Press, 2012)

Born at the end of the long 1970s, I often find myself looking to that decade with a somewhat politically dangerous sense of attachment. I cannot help but be endlessly inspired by the numerous anti-colonial and Black liberation struggles, the women’s and gay liberation movements, and the massive student and prisoner organizing of that period of history. Living now in what feels like an extended lull in radical politics in the U.S. (even with the Decolonize/Occupy movements both flourishing and conceding), it’s hard not to nostalgically long to know what it feels like to fight against empire as a part of an international and truly massive movement.

This is not to suggest that this work or our collective dreams for another world have vanished. Today, many of us do continue to organize and rewrite those traditions within our narratives. However, the raw power and urgency often articulated by those that lived these years seems to have been evacuated in the present and replaced by more protracted visions and constricted possibilities. The revolution that many then believed was “right around the corner” in the U.S. has yet to come, or perhaps it is on the way, just much more slowly, and in a different form than was once thought.

Longing for another era is of course much easier than living in that time. But luckily we have records of this collective history that can inform how we struggle differently today. David Gilbert’s new autobiography, *Love and Struggle: My Life in SDS, the Weather Underground and Beyond* offers a chronology of those explosive years, and more importantly, a personal, and oftentimes emotional account of the wins and the many losses of those times. Gilbert, possibly more than most others who have written about that era from the inside, offers a necessary and productive foil to my naïve understanding.

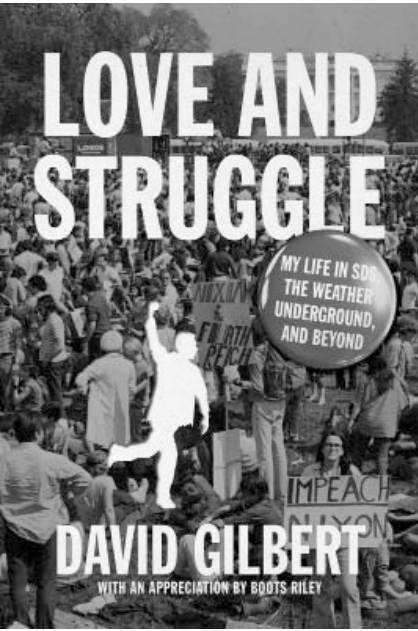
From his jail cell at Auburn Correctional Facility in upstate New York, Gilbert begins his story with his youth in the suburbs of Boston, Massachusetts. Looking back, he gleans his own history for traces of what and when his otherwise white, middle-class upbringing was transformed into a commitment to undoing systematic oppression. He attempts to understand his own political growth—from the ends of the Civil Rights era to his arrival as an undergraduate at Columbia University in New York City as the war against Vietnam began to escalate. The book follows his life from aboveground community organizer to underground freedom fighter and ends with his eventual imprisonment in 1981. He intentionally does not write about his life in prison.

In the chapter “The 1960s and the Making of a Revolutionary,” Gilbert details his early college years where his activism and analysis intensified. In 1962, he joined CORE (Congress on Racial Equality) and began working with the Columbia chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a group which organized primarily on college campuses against the Vietnam War. He states, “My turning point from ardent protester to throwing my whole life into stopping the war can be marked with an issue of *Ramparts*.” (45) Unlike other alternative media of the day, *Ramparts* included explicit, full-color photographs of Vietnamese children burned by napalm. He cites the “emotional impact” of those photos to be the lever that propelled him into a full-time organizer.

While both his personal history and the political sketch he offers are well articulated and important, I find the tone of his writing to be a vital intervention into the otherwise austere way the history of the U.S. radical left gets retold. This tone is supported by a deep commitment to self-reflexivity as he continually mines for missteps in his, and our, history. For example, rather than writing his story, then concluding with some compulsory comments on “women”, Gilbert offers a powerful critique of the ways the left helped produce a culture of misogyny that, like the larger world they were resisting, silenced women, reproduced the gender binary, and protected a kind of middle-class whiteness. He does offer some thoughts on queer liberation, but this thread could be more developed. Importantly, he undoes the often-used alibi that these practices were simply “symptoms of their time” he works to unpack how and why sexism was so ubiquitous, including his own active and passive participation in it.

As an example of how sexism functioned, even under the guise of fighting for women’s liberation, he argues that women were “central and critical” to the anti-war movement as both “workers” and “instigators and strategists.” (56) Then, according to Gilbert, almost all the visible spokespeople for the movement were men, which erased the centrality of women. Gilbert shows the contradictions of organizing and not simply a seamless narrative—he reminds us that *how* we are struggling is often as important as *what* we are fighting for or against.

Another crucial moment in the radicalization of Gilbert, or at least an event that would eventually alter his life, was the infamous split that happened at the June 1969 national SDS convention held in Chicago. While the intricacies of the split are both well documented and contingent upon who is offering that documentation, in short the split indexed a larger tension in the U.S., white student left between an analysis that suggests class was the major factor in op-



Both reviews continued on next page

“Transforming Society”

transphobia, ableism—to transform society. At the same time, T/Q liberation adds an essential dimension to prison abolition, not only in counteracting a division among prisoners but also in showing how the strict enforcement of the gender binary and stereotypes—the pressures for men to always be “macho” and for women to appear “weak”—limit everyone’s humanity.

Prison abolitionists aren’t just advocates for a narrow sector of the oppressed, prisoners. Even more, we are for safe, healthy, self-determining communities that have the resources needed to flourish. The criminal justice system works totally at cross-purposes to that vision. On one level the punitive approach promotes more harm and violence, while the costs of prison drain off public funds needed for positive programs. But the contradiction is even more fundamental. The war on crime and the mushrooming of incarceration—the U.S. prison population is now eight times what it was in 1973—has been the spearhead for turning back the advances by the Black liberation movement and the many other struggles for social justice it helped inspire in the 1960s and early 1970s. The Julia Sudbury essay is particularly good at sketching the history of Black struggle, (and Stephen Dillon’s relates the heightening of repression to the imposition of brutal neoliberal economic policies throughout the world). That overwhelming counterattack is a central reason we are so limited today in having strong community organizations that can serve as examples of effective alternative solutions to crime. The answer to our weakness cannot be to strengthen the very forces that ravaged and undermined our communities. We need to do the very opposite: build strong movements and develop solidarity among the oppressed.

Some of the worst conditions prevail in immigration detention centers, where medical neglect has been scandalous. Victoria Arellano was a transwoman from Mexico who had a job and also volunteered at a drug and alcohol facility in Los Angeles. She was HIV+ but maintaining good health with her medications when she was arrested on minor charges and then sent to an immigration detention center in San Pedro in April, 2007. There, denied her AIDS medications, she developed a high fever and vomiting—but still did not receive the needed medical care. Her death after two months of detention, at the age of 23, is unconscionable.

There was another dimension in this tragic situation—the response of her fellow detainees. These men regularly bathed her face with wet washcloths to try to bring down her fever and at the same time assertively demanded the needed medical care. Reportedly at one point 80 detainees refused to line up for count and instead loudly chanted, “Hospital! Hospital! Hospital!” Let’s take heart from those men in San Pedro and work full-heartedly for unity among the oppressed, to end the PIC, and to instead develop safe, healthy, self-determining communities for all of us.

Order *Captive Genders*, edited by Nat Smith and Eric Stanley at akpress.org, or by writing to: AK Press, 674-A 23rd Street, Oakland, CA 94612. (Prisoners receive a 30% discount!)

David Gilbert is a political prisoner, author, and mentor. In addition to *Love and Struggle*, *David* is also the author of *No Surrender: Writings from an Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner*, a book of essays.

“Armed Affect”

pression which was supported by Progressive Labor, and on the other side was the Revolutionary Youth Movement, who argued that class cannot be understood without an analysis of racism and sexism (this antagonism still figures forcefully today). The convention ended with the walkout of many delegates.

This split lead to the creation of the Weathermen, later renamed the Weather Underground, a clandestine organization dedicated to militant direct action, namely bombing buildings with precautions as to not harm anyone as a way to expose the violence of U.S. imperialism both domestically and around the world. Reluctant at first, Gilbert eventually joined a Weather collective and headed underground.

While many others have written about living underground in the U.S. and of the Weather Underground in particular, Gilbert’s account brilliantly oscillates between the intensity of living underground—evading police, obtaining and using fake IDs, building bombs, and then the monotony of everyday life—trying to find under-the-table work, months of planning for a single action and perhaps most vividly the isolation from being cut off from your former life. While Gilbert offers insight on how power worked “inside” the underground, he writes with what I see as a deep sense of ambivalence. Not a political ambivalence, but with an honest and retrospective analysis of what it felt like to live underground. The affective demission of the book also offer us much for thinking about the necessity of care, self care and care for others that seemed at time then and now to be displaced as “counter-revolutionary.”

“It is precisely because of our love of life, because we revel in the human spirit, that we became freedom fighters against this racist and deadly imperialist system.” These words are from Gilbert’s’ statement in court on September 13, 1982 after he had been arrested and charged in connection with the Brink’s truck robbery, an attempted expropriation done in solidarity with the Black Liberation Army, that eventually led to his imprisonment. These words encapsulate the spirit of his moving account of the pleasure and terrors of living a revolutionary life under the powers of a state that is intent on liquidating resistance at all costs. While Gilbert’s details of the Weather Underground and SDS fills in many of the gaps in those histories, his political commitment in offering us a tool for today is what makes Gilbert’s book a necessary read for all of us invested in systemic change. Even after serving over 30 years as a political prisoner, Gilbert writes with humility, clarity, affection, and even humor, as he reminds us that care—care for each other and for our movements--produces as much, if not more, radical potentiality than a bomb. Revolutionary struggle, yes, but love too, love and struggle, indeed!

Order David Gilbert’s *Love and Struggle: My Life in SDS, the Weather Underground and Beyond* at pmpress.org, or by writing to PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623.

Eric A. Stanley is the co-editor of *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex (AK Press, 2011)* and co-director, along with Chris Vargas, of the films *Homotopia (2006)* and *Criminal Queens (2012)*.

Continued from page 11, “Border”

newer prison plans in Mexico and Central America will likely serve this purpose as well. We can expect many more arrests in the affected countries.

Yet we can look beyond even Colombia into the origins of these new prison programs: the original model for all is of course of the United States. Our home-grown prison industrial complex has its roots in right-wing political campaigns of being “tough on crime” and warring against drugs. Drug sales persist freely, but ghettoized black and brown communities, victims of the decline of industry, are under constant police surveillance. In every city

exists a population of men with felony records who have no redemption in the eyes of society and much less access to employment. This is the nature of our “penitentiary culture” which we have now begun to export. Our prison industrial complex perpetuates the spirit of Jim Crow legislation, the system created to psychologically privilege poor whites in order to kill interracial class-based political alliances against the rich business class (Alexander). It thus suppresses broad political dissent, and also holds very explicit political prisoners, notably many Black Panthers, Indigenous activists, and Puerto Ricans. The “War on Drugs” declared by the Reagan administration which led to current incarceration practices has never been contained within the US’s

borders; all the internal violence is mirrored, and in some ways amplified and distorted, in much of the rest of the Americas.

What will happen in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean as a result of the new prison programs is uncertain. The native imprisonment cultures in these countries are currently no match to the divisiveness, scope and intensity of U.S.A., but are likely heading in that direction. U.S. prisons are part of the “multi-pronged” policing weapon against communities wherever they are. The building of new prisons, and the implementation of our noxious penitentiary culture, should be opposed both at home and south of the border.

SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

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

The theme for the next issue (#20) of *The Abolitionist* will be *borders*. Please send us writing or artwork related to **immigration and prison industrial complex abolition**. Unfortunately we cannot accept all of the pieces we receive. Any pieces we consider for publication will go through an editing process for both content and grammar. The deadline for submissions is December 7, 2012.

Ideas for Articles and Artwork

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

What to Submit

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

How to Submit

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

Writing Suggestions

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

Send your submission to:

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