TIME/CUT

Indiana Prison Newsletter

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IDOC WATCH

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This publication depends on the interest and participation of prisoners in Indiana and their loved ones on the outside. Please send us any of the following to the address below: responses to Time/Cut and its contents, helpful tips for navigating prison, sharing your experience, stratgies for building our collective power, and more. Please state explicitly if you'd like your contributions to be considered for future issues and if you'd like your name published with it. Time/Cut, PO Box 30253, Indianapolis, IN 46230 or timecutindiana@riseup.net.

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Excerpt from *Pleading Out: How Plea Bargaining Creates a Permanent Criminal Class* by Dan Canon

August 2022

Our process of disposing of criminal cases, which affects the course of thousands of American lives every day, happens at breakneck speeds. Each week, nearly every court in the country carves out a significant amount of time for so-called "rocket dockets" or "plea blitzes": procedures designed to secure as many convictions as possible in an hour or two. Most files are barely cracked and allegations barely read. Prosecutors offer a deal, defense attorneys counteroffer, the lawyers go back and forth until the price is right, and defendants plead guilty, all without anyone knowing much of anything about the case at all. The judge signs off on the agreement, a once-respectable person has been made into a criminal, and the whole case is over in a matter of minutes. It's no exaggeration to say that it takes longer to buy a used car in America than to buy twenty years of freedom.

"Fast justice" might not sound bad to many of us, but the consequences of this unyielding need for speed are dire. The last two hundred years of wheeling and dealing over freedom has slowly broken our justice system, divided up the working classes, and perhaps even ruined our democracy itself.

For one thing, bargaining over basic liberties plays out, day after day, life after life, in near-total darkness. Unlike trials, which are a matter of public record, plea negotiations happen in secret, often without the defendant knowing they are happening until the last minute. We don't see the facts of criminal cases (like whether the prosecution has enough proof or whether the cops followed the rules) because those facts don't matter if a defendant is just going to plead anyway. There are no juries, no appeals, and no time for questions. The lawyers who make the deals are not held accountable for the evidence they did or did not present, for the case they did or did not make on behalf of their clients, or for much of anything. We don't get to have a say in the punishment of someone who has wronged someone in our community because that's all worked out by lawyers before anyone—including the victim—gets a say. And we don't care what new criminal laws get passed because we never get a chance to see how those laws really work. The primary objective is to put a case out of its misery as quickly as possible. There is no time to stop and examine the fundamental fairness of the thing, or lack thereof. Everyone must get on to the next charge, the next defendant, the next plea. And the supply is infinite; in America, everyone is always guilty of something.

Plea bargaining also gives the government unfettered power to micromanage lives. Given that plea bargains are the default way of disposing of most criminal cases, it stands to reason that they are primarily to blame for the nearly seven million people who find themselves under the control of our justice system today. Sometimes this control is obnoxiously intrusive, as in the case of those who must report to a probation officer every month, have their whereabouts constantly monitored with an ankle bracelet, or frequently urinate into a cup. Sometimes the control is grotesquely overreaching, as in the cases of people who have been made to attend church or get a vasectomy as part of a plea agreement. And sometimes this control is total, as in the case of the tens of thousands of Americans who find themselves spending months or years at a time in the hell of solitary confinement. But in almost all cases this control is a result of a backroom deal between lawyers, one that will never be questioned by a court, the community, or even the accused.

A plea-driven system also serves to perpetuate divisions among people who share common woes and who might otherwise unite for a common purpose. As we'll see, when plea bargaining began in the 1830s, the ruling class was trying out a number of tactics with the goal of dividing up America's ever-growing working class before it got big enough to take over. A central idea of this book is that plea bargaining was one of those tactics, and one that was wildly successful. Long before political actors were using social media to create divisions between people of the same socioeconomic status, the criminal law was doing the same work. Criminal punishment segregates people who are under state control, through incarceration or parole, from everyone else. But it goes deeper than that. The criminal law, by its very nature, downgrades the status of whomever it's applied to. No matter how low you are, you can always go lower by being branded a criminal. Because of the speed and insatiable appetite of its justice system, America now finds itself with a massive and ever-growing number of people relegated to its criminal class, the lowest stratum of all. Although this class itself is nothing new, it is plea bargaining that has allowed its membership to skyrocket in the last century.

Lillington, NC: 16-Person Hunger Strike Announced at Harnett Correctional

ItsGoingDown.org

August 2022

Report on hunger-strike kicking off in Lillington, NC. The following is a statement from sixteen of the participants in the strike.

On August 30th, sixteen prisoners housed in the SC-S 24 building of Harnett Correctional, in Lillington, NC went on an indefinite hunger strike. A supporter received the following statement, signed by all sixteen participants, with the request that it posted and spread online to make their grievances known. Stay tuned for future calls to action!

In the meantime, supporters can call the Warden of Harnett CI, Cathy Judge, at 910-893-2751 to express their support and concern for the hunger strike.

To Whom It May Concern,

On August, 30th 2022, those of us housed in SC-S 24 building will partake in a hunger strike due to our current living conditions. Inhumane conditions here consist of black mold, asbestos, and bug infestations. Presently there's no air conditioning, running hot water, sprinklers, emergency call buttons, or safety instruction to notify where exits are located. The cell doors are 1900s outdated manual doors that lack any type of emergency release, if the door is disabled. Due to their being no rec cages, offenders spend their one-hour rec time in full restraints.

Some offenders are housed behind a four-inch thick metal door without the proper necessities to correspond with family and loved ones. Offenders are being targeted, assaulted, and tortured. Staff are using mental health offenders that are under the influence of substances as confidential informants (CIs) to target us, affecting our release dates. These same mental health offenders are allowed to file false PREA [Prison Rape Elimination Act] allegations against other offenders, and remain in population while the accused are placed in restrictive housing until an investigation is completed. Yet staff continues to the use the same CIs after proving the allegations are false. However, if that same offender were to accuse an officer of a PREA they'll place the offender in restricted housing while the officer remains on his post.

Case managers have no say in anything concerning offenders. They side with officers and other staff members in every situation. Case managers don't honor the point system, set in place to determine an offender's custody level. The FCC never disagrees with any recommendation against any offender. For example, SRG officer Lt. Palaez uses FCC to have offenders demoted when she can not validate allegations against them, due to new policy and procedures put in place that prevent SRG staff from labeling someone a security threat without merit. Offenders coming from close custody facilities are always targeted, and most receive infractions within their first 90 days of arrival at Harnett CI.

These are some of the many issues we would like to highlight and bring awareness to outside sources and family members of those being housed at Harnett CI in Lillington, NC. I am here at Harnett and can honestly say and state I've witnessed, heard, and experienced these issues and claims, which is why I'm participating in this hunger strike. During this course of actions I will not be indulging in any acts of violence or actions that pose a threat to the facility or any staff. May my signature serve as my participation in this hunger strike for awareness purposes and demonstrate that I was not threatened, coerced, or bribed into signing.

[sixteen signatures alongside DPS number]

Chicago: Movement Forces The Release Of Chicago Police Torture Survivors

By Fight Back News
PopularResistance.org
August 2022

Chicago, Illinois – A series of victories was won in the past month by the movement to free survivors of torture and wrongful conviction at the hands of Chicago Police Department. Clayborn Smith, Marcellous Pittman, Juan Hernandez, Rosendo Hernandez, Arthur Almendarez, John Galvan, Eruby Abrego, Jeremiah Cain, David Gecht and David Colon have all had historic judgments in their cases.

In the case of Clayborn Smith, a decision by the Illinois Appellate Court authored by Justice Cynthia Cobbs reversed the decision of Circuit Court Judge Alfredo Maldonado, finding that Detectives Kenneth Boudreau, John Halloran and James O'Brien had tortured Clayborn Smith into his confession. They granted him a new trial.

In turn, Judge Maldonado found, in the case of Marcellous Pittman, that his tortured confession at the hands of Halloran and O'Brien was inadmissible. Marcellous Pittman also had the charges against him dropped by the state's attorney's office. Within the written decisions by each of these judges, it was laid out plainly that these detectives with a history of torture are not credible and should not be called as witnesses.

Justice Cynthia Cobbs in the Clayborn Smith case stated in her decision "the defendant has produced sufficient evidence of a pattern of physical abuse by the detectives in question" referring to Detectives Boudreau, Halloran, and O'Brien. And Judge Roberto Maldonado stated in his decision in the Marcellous Pittman case that his ruling called into question the credibility of Halloran and O'Brien's denials.

These decisions come after years of campaigning by the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR)'s Campaign to Free Incarcerated Survivors of Police Torture, Mothers Activating Movements for Abolition and Solidarity (MAMAS), and the Chicago Torture Justice Center to free survivors of police torture and wrongful convictions and hold torturing officers accountable.

In October 2021, CAARPR began to pressure the Cook County State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) to take action on 409 cases of torture and wrongful conviction, detailed in a comprehensive report that can be found on the Chicago Alliance website.

CAARPR presented the CCSAO with nine demands. These included that their office move to vacate convictions for all those framed, tortured and wrongfully convicted, especially in cases involving detectives with a pattern and practice of torture; that cases involving Jon Burge's Midnight Crew, of which Boudreau, Halloran, and O'brien were a part, be reviewed and

the related convictions vacated; and that the CCSAO publicly state that they will cease calling detectives with established records of torture as witnesses. These recent rulings directly reflect the campaign's demands.

Another demand of this campaign was for the CCSAO to "Provide information on the status of their promised comprehensive review of Guevara's cases. Rapidly complete the review and vacate all convictions in which Detectives Reynaldo Guevara, Joseph Miedzianowski, or Ronald Watts were involved."

Reynaldo Guevara is a former homicide detective who secured dozens of convictions by framing mostly Puerto Rican and Black young people. According to the report, "Over 50 individuals have accused him of coercing confessions through physical or psychological torture or through manipulating witnesses to obtain convictions. Many of them were juveniles at the time of their arrest."

Cook County Judge Obbish said Guevara "has now eliminated the possibility of being considered a credible witness in any proceeding" due to the evidence against him and his refusal to testify. This is a judgment that is now being applied to other torturer cops such as Boudreau, Halloran and O' Brien.

The leading force behind the effort to free survivors of Detective Guevara has been the organization Innocent Demand Justice(IDJ), which is led by Guevara survivors themselves as well as family members like Esther Hernandez, who has been fighting for the freedom of her two sons, Juan "Poochie" Hernandez and Rosendo Hernandez since their wrongful imprisonment in 1997.

Alongside MAMAS, CAARPR and CTJC, IDJ mobilized rallies for court dates, hosted phone zaps, pressured elected officials, met with the state's attorney's office, researched Guevara thoroughly, and spoke out in the media. These organizations demanded justice for all of Guevara's victims, meaning immediate release, charges against Guevara, and reparations for those tortured.

On Friday July 15, the Hernandez brothers were released with all charges dropped against them. This came as part of a wave of exonerations of Guevara survivors, including Eruby Abrego, Jeremiah Cain, David Colon and David Gecht. The release of these survivors, and the decision by the state's attorney's office to not re-try them for these baseless charges, are a result of the movement to free torture survivors and the wrongfully convicted.

Esther Hernandez, responding to her sons' release, saying "I can't even explain how I feel right now, I'm so joyful." She added, "As I come to these other cases, I see them come home, I'm like 'Oh my God, our day is coming.' I get happy every time I see somebody come out, an innocent man coming out of prison."

In addition to survivors of Boudreau, Halloran, O'Brien and Guevara being released, two survivors of Detectives Victor Switski and John Hanrahan were released the following day. John Galvan and Arthur Almendarez were wrongfully convicted in 1986, after Hanrahan and Switski tortured them into signing confession statements to a crime they didn't commit. The detectives told them that they would be able to go home after signing these confessions. They made many attempts to file motions for their witness confessions to be suppressed and quash the arrest. They were sentenced for life without parole with Galvan being sent to Stateville and Almendarez to Hill prisons. New evidence emerged of police coercion, and after 35 years, their case was finally vacated by a Cook County judge.

Detectives Hanrahan and Switski were also mentioned in CAARPR's CFIST Report on the Pattern and Practice of Torture within the Chicago Police Department. The CFIST report not only clearly demonstrates a long pattern of abuse by crooked officers, but how innocent lives will continue to be lost and harmed, the victims and their families.

"This long pattern of abuse will not stop unless community control of the police is established and all wrongfully convicted prisoners are given immediate release," said Kobi Guillory, at a rally outside the Cook County Jail in response to this wave of decisions. These victories in the Campaign to Free Incarcerated Survivors of Police Torture and Wrongful Conviction are a sign that the powers that be are responding to the demands of the survivors, families and activists who continue the fight for justice.

Indiana State Prison Law Library Access Blocked for Many

By an correspondent at ISP
IDOCWatch.org
May 2022

Only about half of the computers in the [ISP] law library actually work. It has been this way for at least 5 years. The prison refuses to make those computers useable. Deputy Warden Dawn Buss refused to repair the computers stating it was because of covid, even though they needed fixing way before then.

The server switch would go down randomly, which required someone to manually reset it. During this downtime, the work that the inmates did on the computers would not always be saved, causing lots of difficulty and frustration. Now the switch is not coming on anymore, even manually.

This led to the decision to close the law library down indefinitely, including access to copiers, books, typewriters etc. They refused to distribute passes to these resources at all.

All saved work is pretty much in limbo and inaccessible which prevents inmates from finishing work on their cases. Before the closure, inmates had a very hard time acquiring passes to the law library, Sometimes causing inmates to miss deadlines on submitting needed information to the courts for their case.

As of Sunday evening, they resumed sending out limited law library passes, but they still have not repaired the server so that the computers can be used. Those computers are essential for the inmates, as a lot of them have resorted to handwriting their cases which is very tedious and time consuming.

Police Departments Spend Vast Sums of Money Creating "Copaganda"

Alec Karakatsanis
BlackAgendaReport.com
July 2022

US police departments spend tens of millions of dollars every year to manipulate the news, flooding the discourse with "copaganda." These aggressive tactics give the public a distorted view of what public safety means, what threatens it, and how to solve it.

This article was originally published in the Economic Hardship Reporting Project .

In May of this year, I testified at a hearing in San Francisco where city leaders questioned the police department's funding and use of public relations professionals. That funding was heavier than you might expect.

According to police department documents provided to the County Board of Supervisors, budget items included a nine-person full-time team managed by a director of strategic communications who alone costs the city $289,423; an undisclosed number of cops paid part-time to do PR work on social media; a Community Engagement Unit tracking public opinion; officers who intervene with the families of victims of police violence and who are dispatched to the scenes of police violence to control initial media reaction; and a full-time videographer making PR videos about cops.

San Francisco is not unique. The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department has forty-two employees doing PR work in what it calls, in Orwellian fashion, its "Information Bureau." The Los Angeles Police Department has another twenty-five employees devoted to formal PR work .

Why do police invest so much in manipulating our perceptions of what they do? I call this phenomenon "copaganda ": creating a gap between what police actually do and what people think they do.

Copaganda does three main things. First, it narrows our understanding of safety. Police get us to focus on crimes committed by the poorest, most vulnerable people in our society and not on bigger threats to our safety caused by people with wealth and power .

For example, wage theft by employers dwarfs all other property crime combined — from burglaries, to retail theft, to robberies — costing some $50 billion every year. Tax evasion steals about $1 trillion each year . There are hundreds of thousands of Clean Water Act violations each year, causing cancer, kidney failure, rotting teeth, and damage to the nervous system. Over 100,000 people in the United States die every year from air pollution, five times the number of all homicides.

But through the stories cops feed reporters, the public is encouraged to measure a city's safety by whether it saw an annual increase or decrease of three homicides or fourteen robberies — rather than by how many people died from lack of access to health care, how many children suffered lead poisoning, how many families were rendered homeless by illegal eviction or foreclosure, or how many thousands of illegal assaults police committed.

The second function of copaganda is to manufacture crises or "crime surges." For example, if you watch the news, you've probably been bombarded with stories about the rise of retail theft. Yet the actual data shows there has been no significant increase. Instead, corporate retailers, police, and PR firms fabricated talking points and fed them to the media . The same is true of what the FBI categorizes as "violent crime." All told, major "index crimes" tracked by the FBI are at nearly forty-year lows .

The third and most pernicious function of copaganda is to manipulate our understanding of what solutions actually work to make us safer. A primary goal of copaganda is to convince the public to spend even more money on police and prisons. If safety is defined by street crime, and street crime is dangerously high, then funding the carceral state leaps out to many people as a natural solution.

The budgets of modern police departments are staggeringly high and ever increasing , with no parallel in history , producing incarceration rates unseen around the world. Police and their right-wing unions (which have their own PR budgets) want bigger budgets , more military-grade gear , more surveillance technology, and more overtime cash. Multibillion-dollar businesses have privatized nearly every element of these bureaucracies for profit, from the tasers and AI software sold to cops to the snacks sold at huge markups to supplement inadequate jail food. To obtain this level of spending, they need us to think that police and prisons make us safer.

The evidence shows otherwise. If police and prisons made

us safe, we would have the safest society in world history — but the opposite is true. There is no link between more cops and decreased crime, even of the type that the police report. Instead, addressing the root causes of interpersonal harm like safe housing, health care, treatment, nutrition, pollution, and early-childhood education is the most effective way to enhance public safety. And addressing root causes of violence also prevents the other harms that flow from inequality, including millions of avoidable deaths.

The insistence that increased policing is the key to public safety is like climate science denial. Just like the oil companies, the police are running an expensive operation of mass communication to convince people of things that aren't true. Thus, we are left with a great irony: even if what you most care about are the types of crimes reported by police, those crimes would be better reduced by making our society more equal than by spending on police and prisons.

Powerful actors in policing and media both manufacture crime waves and respond to them in ways that increase inequality and consolidate social control, even as they do little to actually stop crime. Copaganda not only diverts people from existential threats like imminent ecological collapse and rising fascism, but also boosts surveillance and repression that is used against social movements trying to solve those problems by creating more sustainable and equal social arrangements.

Hearings like the one I testified at in San Francisco are needed across the country. Local councilmembers should scrutinize the secretive world of police PR budgets, because the public deserves to know how police are spreading misinformation. It is possible to achieve real safety in our communities, but only if we end the copaganda standing in its way.

Fighting from Inside

By Charlotte Rosen

In April 2018, people incarcerated at Lee Correctional Institution, a maximum-security prison in South Carolina, leaked a gruesome cell phone video to CBS News after a series of fights left seven people dead and at least seventeen others in need of outside medical attention.* According to an imprisoned witness of the riot, guards refused to intervene as "prisoners' bodies began stacking up" and did not return for hours, leaving the incarcerated to fend for themselves. One leaked image showed three dead bodies amassed, as if they were "roadkill," against a prison fence.

At a press conference the prison admin istration blamed this "mass casualty event" on warring gangs and an influx of "contraband" — namely cell phones — which supposedly allowed imprisoned people to "continue their criminal ways from behind bars." But, as those imprisoned at Lee contended, it was the prison administration who incited violence. The administration encouraged fights, repressed prisoner-led efforts to de-escalate tension, and stoked racial and cultural divides between prisoners. Cell phones, people imprisoned in the South Carolina Department of Corrections told the independent outlet Shadowproof, were framed as the central problem so that guard neglect and abuse could go unrecorded in the future.

In response to this vulgar display of state-sanctioned violence, Jailhouse Lawyers Speak, a collective of imprisoned people organizing for prisoners' human rights, called for a national prisoners' strike. In several states, incarcerated people participated in work stoppages, sit-ins, boycotts, and hunger strikes over a period of nearly three weeks. The strike — and its corresponding list of ten demands for men and women in federal, immigration, and state facilities — received international media coverage, with outlets foregrounding organizers' calls for improving prison conditions, reinstating federal voting rights, and ending the regime of modern-day slavery that forces imprisoned people to work for minuscule pay. But there was one item on the list that received little attention: the demand for Congress to repeal the Prison Litigation Reform Act, or PLRA.

Little known to those not involved in prisoner-rights work, the PLRA went into effect in 1996 and creates significant hurdles for any incarcerated person who hopes to legally challenge the conditions of their incarceration. In the decades leading up to its enactment, thousands of imprisoned people across the country filed civil rights suits alleging unconstitutional conditions and treatment. Only a small number of these suits made it past motions for dismissal. But these prisoner suits profoundly challenged an emergent but not-yet-settled carceral state. Some prisoners' petitions resulted in rulings that entire prison systems were unconstitutional. They also led to federal courts assuming management of state prisons and jails, placing limitations on bulging prison populations, ordering the release of prisoners, and even shuttering certain prisons. These suits created substantial complications for state and local legislators and correctional administrators: they shone a public spotlight on the otherwise-obscured brutality present in the nation's prisons and jails; they forced reforms and placed limits on the unfettered growth of prisoner populations; and they undermined the tough-on-crime ethos required for justifying neoliberal social policies and the upward transfer of wealth. At a moment when popular support for imprisoned people was fading and law-and-order politics was becoming increasingly ubiquitous, prisoners' legal activism posed a meaningful threat to the growth of the prison nation.

On paper, legislators passed the PLRA to halt what congresspeople erroneously called an epidemic of "meritless" prisoner-initiated lawsuits clogging court dockets. But the law's effect — crushing imprisoned people's access to the courts and limiting the federal courts' power to remedy heinous prison conditions, especially via population control orders — was to severely narrow a key terrain of struggle for imprisoned people fighting not only for relief from abusive treatment and

inhumane conditions, but also against the expansion of an intensifying regime of racialized mass imprisonment. The history of prisoner litigation, then, is important both for its insights into shifting trends in civil rights litigation and for making sense of how the contemporary regime of racialized mass incarceration came to be.

For much of American history, the notion that the courts would recognize and sanction judicial review of imprisoned people's constitutional rights would have seemed far-fetched. Since at least the 19th century, the American court system repeatedly concluded that imprisoned people's claims had no standing in American courts. In *Ruffin v. Commonwealth* (1871), the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that prisoners were "civiliter mortuus" — civilly dead — and "slaves of the state" who lacked constitutional rights. This legal codification of prisoners' dehumanization, along with the federal courts' general hesitancy to intervene in matters deemed the jurisdiction of the states, justified a judicial tradition often referred to as a "hands-off" approach to prisoner rights. This tradition continued well into the 20th century.

The courts' hands-off attitude appeared ironclad until the early 1960s, when an organized group of Nation of Islam prisoners launched a series of political and legal challenges against prison administrators. In his history of Muslim prisoner litigation, Those Who Know Don't Say, the historian Garrett Felber writes that "Black prisoners saw the courts as a breach in the walls, which allowed them to express their claims before the world outside." Inspired by the innovation of Martin Sostre, a revolutionary organizer and jailhouse lawyer incarcerated in New York state, imprisoned Muslims filed claims based on Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act of 1871, which allows individuals to sue the government for civil rights violations. Pairing their legal tactics with direct actions such as hunger strikes and taking over solitary confinement units, they sought rulings that would deem religious and other constitutional deprivations civil rights violations, making them eligible for a variety of forms of legal redress and relief.

Imprisoned Muslims faced a wave of losses in lower courts but soon secured a few critical gains. Their efforts came to a head in July 1962, when Thomas X. Cooper, a Black and Muslim man caged at Illinois's Stateville prison, filed a pro se suit (suits where individuals represent themselves without an attorney) charging that prison officials had unconstitutionally barred him from practicing his religion. Specifically, Cooper alleged they denied him access to a Koran and other religious works while he was placed in highly restricted solitary confinement after participating in ongoing protests and tussles with guards. As with scores of other Muslim prisoner suits, Cooper initially hit a roadblock in the federal courts: the district court denied his petition — a decision upheld by the Seventh Circuit, which cited "Muslim beliefs in black supremacy and their reluctance to yield to any authority" as a "serious threat" to maintaining "order in a crowded prison environment." But in *Cooper v. Pate* (1964), the Supreme Court contended that Cooper's claims deserved a federal court hearing based on their merits, even as they refused to rule on those merits. It was a historic victory. One year later, as the historian Toussaint Losier has detailed, the same district judge who had dismissed Cooper's suit ruled that Cooper should, in fact, have access to the Koran, religious advisers, and Muslim services. These decisions enshrined the civil rights of imprisoned Muslims and imprisoned people generally across the nation, even as Cooper himself remained incapacitated in solitary confinement; notably the district judge's ruling refused his release.

Cooper marked the beginning of a new and powerful prisoner-led struggle in the courts. Across the country, incarcerated people filed a flurry of suits against prison overcrowding, guard brutality, poor medical and mental health care, racial discrimination, lack of religious freedom and disability access, faulty or nonexistent grievance systems, and more, forcing the state to confront the racial fascism present in prisons and jails across the country. Between 1970 and 1995, prisoner civil rights filings in federal district courts increased from 2,245 to 39,053, or from approximately six to twenty-five filings per one thousand prisoners. By 1993, prisons in forty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands had at one point been under some form of comprehensive court order to remedy overcrowding and reform unconstitutional conditions. As the National Conference of State Legislatures wrote in a 1985 report, "It is simpler to name the states that have not had the courts intervene in the operation of their state prison systems" than to name those that had.

At the same time as imprisoned people were beginning to exercise their legal rights, a looming but not-yet-determinate carceral future was emerging. Growing fears about rising crime, the widespread belief in the futility of the rehabilitation of "criminals," and white racial resentment against Black urban uprisings and the ascent of Black Power movements fueled support for tough-on-crime policies that expanded the carceral state. Beginning in the 1970s, a combination of expanded federal funding for local police, harsh sentencing and parole laws at the state level, and the intensification of a rhetoric that conflated Blackness with criminality produced a spike in incarceration rates. According to data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of imprisoned people in state and federal correctional facilities increased 720 percent between 1970 and 2010, jumping from just under 200,000 people to over 1.6 million. While Black people in America had always faced disproportionate imprisonment, the number of Black imprisoned people rose sharply and unequally in the late 20th century, with Black people constituting majorities in state and federal prisons despite being a minority population.

Although tough-on-crime politics theoretically assailed the very concept of prisoner rights, the retributive policies central to the law-and-order project also unwittingly created conditions that strengthened prisoners' claims of unconstitutional confinement.

As states militarized police, passed mandatory minimums, eliminated or restricted parole, slowed executive clemency, and endorsed other tough measures, state prisons and local jails — some of which had been built nearly a century earlier — were suddenly filled with unprecedented and unsustainable numbers of imprisoned people. While not a new problem in corrections, prison overcrowding became endemic, making already bad and abusive conditions worse. It became commonplace to hear reports of two and even three incarcerated people crammed into cells "a little larger than a ping pong table," as was reported at Stateville in 1977. A 1983 *New York Times* investigation interviewed state prison officials and found that imprisoned people were "sleeping on floors" in eighteen states. By the end of 1986, thirty-two state prison systems and the federal prison system were operating with population levels equal to or more than their highest reported capacity, which is always the most generous accounting of a prison's available beds. The state's desire to punish, in other words, dramatically out-paced their actual capacity to do so, providing imprisoned people new grounds on which to file suits against prison officials and state governments.

Prison overcrowding magnified already appalling conditions, prompting imprisoned people to launch new and bolder legal challenges against the burgeoning prison nation. After a 1962 US Supreme Court Case, *Robinson v. California*, affirmed the applicability of the Eighth Amendment prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment to state governments, incarcerated people, lawyers, and sometimes even federal court judges increasingly sought to apply the Eighth Amendment to the entirety of a correctional facility's conditions of confinement. The stakes of such a strategy were high: it was one thing for a prisoner to win an individual habeas corpus suit or constitutional protection against a discrete policy or form of mistreatment; it was another to deem the entire operation and administration of a correctional system unconstitutional. Such a decision could heighten public awareness of the structural violence of imprisonment and make it possible to reverse the appalling increase in prisoners that tough-on-crime policies wrought through population reductions, prison closures, and major institutional reforms.

As law-and-order politics ascended nationally, edging out once-mainstream support for prisoners and their resistance movements, prison litigation offered a formidable arena for incarcerated people to counter the seemingly inexorable expansion of racialized state repression. In exposing the unsustainability of carceral strategies, prison-conditions litigation authorized antiprison discourse and tactics and undermined the legitimacy of tough-on-crime politics and carceral institutions. The ability to secure court rulings that affirmed the unconstitutionality of a given state prison system — or, as was often the case, to negotiate a settlement requiring the state to make court-mandated reforms — served as a trouble some hurdle for carceral stakeholders wishing to imprison with impunity.

One of the first landmark cases challenging prison conditions began in 1965 in Arkansas; as with elsewhere in the South, the state's prison system operated through Jim Crow–style racial terror and labor exploitation. A vestige of the Southern plantation, Arkansas's Cummins Prison used a trusty system, whereby imprisoned people were assigned to guard other imprisoned people, often on the basis of race. Under the supervision of these prisoner-guards, imprisoned people were forced to work in fields for six days per week, often for up to ten hours per day. They lacked proper clothing and food and were subject to brutal whippings at the whim of prisoner-guards. At the time, Arkansas's prisons were so overcrowded that ten or more people shared tiny cells with a single toilet, which could only be flushed from outside the cell. Media investigations exposed the prison's frequent use of corporal punishment, including electroshock and forcing incarcerated people to stand for a long time on a teeterboard.

In response to these conditions, jailhouse lawyers — imprisoned people who teach themselves the law and assist fellow prisoners in navigating the legal system — filed several petitions contending that the superintendent of Cummins was violating their constitutional rights. In 1970, Chief Judge J. Smith Henley packaged the petitions into a class-action suit that prompted a review of the entire system. He found that the "totality of conditions" in Arkansas's prisons were unconstitutional and ordered immediate remedies under the oversight of the federal courts. "For the ordinary convict," Judge Henley wrote, "a sentence to the Arkansas Penitentiary today amounts to a banishment from civilized society to a dark and evil world completely alien to the free world, a world that is administered by criminals under unwritten rules and customs completely foreign to free world culture."

In finding the "totality of the conditions" unconstitutional, Henley also implied that the problem was systemic, rather than simply the result of individual bad actors. This not only enabled him to deem a wide array of harms to be Eighth Amendment violations but also gestured further toward the potential for prison-conditions litigation to challenge the overall practice of incarceration.

For the next twelve years, the federal court supervised Arkansas's prison system and ameliorated some of its most horrific practices. Throughout the course of the litigation, Judge Henley proved extremely active in his oversight, making a point of visiting the state's prisons, which both generated publicity for the case and signaled his commitment to pursuing remedies to unconstitutional practices. In one of Judge Henley's most substantive orders, *Finney v. Hutto* (1976), he offered a meticulous assessment of the Arkansas prison system that highlighted a number of continuing problems the state needed to address to bring the prison into constitutional compliance. Notably, Henley found that the prison system's sentencing of imprisoned people to indeterminate periods of punitive isolation and administrative segregation, where they were

crowded into windowless cells and fed a diet of inedible "grue" — a four-inch square of mashed meat, potatoes, syrup, and other ingredients — was "unreasonable and unconstitutional."

In 1978, the US Supreme Court not only affirmed Henley's opinion regarding the prison system's unconstitutional solitary confinement practices, but made clear that the Eighth Amendment restriction on cruel and unusual punishment applied not only to "physically barbarous" punishments but also to harmful prison conditions. The opinion signaled a monumental declaration of the court's willingness to understand imprisonment as, if not outright unconstitutional, then at least "subject to scrutiny under Eighth Amendment standards." It also affirmed Judge Henley's extensive involvement in matters of prison administration, paving the way for other federal court judges to order and oversee major remedies to unconstitutional prisons and jails.

Even as punitive politics rippled through-out American institutions, imprisoned people's legal activism coerced the federal courts to open up powerful ground for prisoners and their allies to limit and even reverse the growth of prison and jail populations. To be sure, the courts would never rule a state's right to imprison someone for committing a crime unconstitutional on its face. But imprisoned people's vigorous legal challenges made a compelling case that the realities of confinement in the United States rendered imprisonment unconstitutional. Court-mandated remedies could lead not only to serious improvements in correctional administration but also to prison releases or limitations on prison admissions. At just the moment when carceral policy makers were conspiring to make mass racialized criminalization and retributive justice the norm, prisoner-rights litigation launched a powerful assault on the legitimacy and expansion of corrections in the United States.

The most extensive prisoner conditions case of the era developed in Texas, beginning in 1972. While imprisoned in the state's Eastham prison plantation, David Ruíz filed a handwritten pro se petition in federal court citing medical neglect, overcrowding, and the use of "building tenders," or prisoner-guards, as evidence of sanctioned brutality by the Texas Department of Corrections. The tender system in particular was so agonizing, he wrote, that it prompted imprisoned people to self-mutilate — a means to express their desperation, protest their torture, and tactically secure their removal from solitary confinement, as Robert T. Chase explains in We Are Not Slaves. Ruíz himself had self-harmed multiple times. His petition catalyzed an interracial, statewide campaign by prisoners who drew on Black Power and Chicano movement analyses to challenge the state's routine violation of their human rights and mass incarceration more broadly. Using a mix of strategies that included legal testimony, preparing and filing petitions, prisoner work strikes, and letter-writing campaigns, Texas prisoners forced the courts and the broader public to confront the horrors of the Lone Star State's prisons.

In December 1980, Judge William Wayne Justice handed down a 249-page "damning indictment" of Texas's correctional department. "It is impossible for a written opinion to convey the pernicious conditions and the pain and degradation with which ordinary inmates suffer within [the department's] walls," Judge Justice wrote in his conclusion.

> *The gruesome experiences of youthful first offenders forcibly raped; the cruel and justifiable fears of inmates, wondering when they will be called upon to defend [against] the next violent assault; the sheer misery, the discomfort, the wholesale loss of privacy for prisoners housed with one, two, or three others in a forty-five-foot cell or suffocatingly packed together in a crowded dormitory; the physical suffering and wretched psychological stress which must be endured by those sick or injured who cannot obtain adequate medical care; the sense of abject helplessness felt by inmates arbitrarily sent to solitary confinement or administrative segregation without proper opportunity to defend themselves or to argue their causes; the bitter frustration of inmates prevented from petitioning the courts and other governmental authorities for relief from perceived injustices.*

Citing the tender system, overcrowding, understaffing, and poor medical and mental health care, the judge ruled the state's prison system unconstitutional and mandated far-reaching reforms. He even attempted to bar the Department of Corrections from building large prisons and instead significantly shrink its prison system by constructing smaller-scale prisons closer to metropolitan areas. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the order, even as it upheld Judge Justice's ruling that Texas's prisons were unconstitutional. But the intent of *Ruíz*, as Chase writes, was always to "reduce the size of the prison population to stem the growing tide of mass incarceration."

While many prisoner-initiated civil rights and class-action lawsuits focused on Southern states, where the legacy of slavery and lack of professionalization made state prison systems especially brutal, prison litigation was not geographically confined. In *Harris v. Philadelphia*, imprisoned people in Philadelphia's prison system, which was nearly 70 percent Black, filed a pro se class-action suit alleging that overcrowding violated their constitutional rights. In 1986, choosing to settle rather than go to trial, the city agreed to reduce their population to 3,750 or face a court-ordered admissions moratorium that would force them to turn away individuals accused of nonviolent offenses when the prisons exceeded this number. A wave of prisoner petitions in Colorado from the notorious Colorado State Penitentiary culminated in *Ramos v. Lamm* (1979), in which prisoners and the Colorado ACLU alleged that conditions in the state's correctional system — including overcrowding, censorship of prisoner mail, and limits on access to counsel and employment — constituted cruel and unusual punishment. Judge John Kane issued a memorandum opinion

in 1979 that ordered the prison to be closed entirely.

"The law is a tool of class domination and . . . racial domination," Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote in *Jailhouse Lawyers*, "but it can sometimes be wielded against that domination by those who make themselves adept at its use." The criminal legal system remained an unspeakably violent and racist terrain, responsible for disproportionately Black, brown, and Indigenous prisoners' incapacitation and civic degradation. But strategic pressure in the courts had the power to break centuries-long judicial precedent, expand constitutional protections for imprisoned people, and prove a nimble vehicle for instituting material limitations on the nation's transformation into a penal state. Federal court consent decrees, or court-approved agreements brokered between plaintiffs and defendants outlining an enforceable plan for reforms, placed pressure on states to reduce overcrowded populations, fix ghastly health and food services, improve infrastructure, implement due-process procedures, and more.

Particularly notable was the potential of prison-conditions litigation to spur decarceral remedies amid an otherwise rabidly punitive political culture. In the early years of mass incarceration, addressing apparently rising crime through the expansion of correctional systems was not a foregone conclusion. Even as fearmongering around crime and rising prison populations stoked calls for tougher punishment, state legislatures and the public were not immediately eager to spend public funds on more prisons. Imprisoned people, prison reformers, correctional administrators, and legislators alike frequently argued that states could not build their way out of the crisis. Prison-conditions litigation, and the pressure from federal courts to remedy overcrowded and inhumane prison conditions, enabled experiments with prisoner-release and early-parole policies and with prison population caps, all of which helped to remove people from correctional institutions or prevent them from entering them in the first place. Advocates anticipated that such litigation might also discourage the building of more prisons and prompt decarceration due to the high costs of judicial review and of new prison construction.

It is unsurprising, then, that prisoner suits posed serious problems to state legislators, correctional administrators, and law enforcement officials invested in tough justice. Allowing these lawsuits to proliferate and continue to gain favorable rulings in federal court endangered the profitable myth that prisons and jails were lawful or rehabilitative institutions needed to protect society from dangerous criminals. Relatively easy access to the courts provided imprisoned people a stage to publicize their grievances and a wider audience to hear them Their lawsuits opened tightly guarded prisons and jails to public and political scrutiny, ensuring a regular stream of outside judicial observers and other visitors. They also tangled up state resources, forcing the state to constantly invest time and money both in defending their constitutionally dubious practices and in adjusting correctional systems to meet constitutional standards. So long as the federal courts had the power to order expansive remedies, especially orders related to limiting or reducing prison populations, the legitimacy of law-and-order politics would contain frail edges for prisoners and their allies to productively exploit.

Despite its earlier facilitation of prisoner-rights litigation, the Supreme Court struck the first blow against the potential for imprisoned plaintiffs to win civil rights suits. In *Bell v. Wolfish* (1979), the nine justices overturned a lower-court ruling that a federal jail in New York City had violated prisoners' constitutional rights by doubling up on cell capacity; they also reprimanded federal courts for becoming "increasingly enmeshed in the minutiae of prison operations." This struck a heavy blow by effectively legalizing prison overcrowding, which had previously served as compelling evidence of unconstitutional prison conditions. In *Rhodes v. Chapman* (1981), the high court similarly overturned a ruling that "double celling" of sentenced prisoners constituted cruel and unusual punishment. In doing so, the court limited the application of the Eighth Amendment in prison-conditions cases, specifically regarding the constitutionality of prison overcrowding, and reallocated power to prison administrators, once again curtailing prisoners' constitutional rights. As Justice Lewis Powell, a Nixon appointee raised under segregation in Virginia, wrote in the majority opinion, "The Constitution does not mandate comfortable prisons."

These and other doctrinal changes forged by the Supreme Court did not entirely eliminate the flow of prisoner-rights cases, nor did they dissuade federal courts from engaging in wide-scale institutional reform. District Judge Norma Shapiro, for example, oversaw court-mandated prison population controls in Philadelphia's prison system well into the 1990s, provoking ire from punitive local and law enforcement officials who smeared the court's intervention as undermining the city's efforts to get tough on crime. In 1994, the Philadelphia councilwoman Joan Krajewski called the court-ordered releases of imprisoned people an "outrage" and demanded that Judge Shapiro resign, but was ultimately powerless over the judge's decisions. "I don't know if it takes an act of Congress, an act of the president's office or what, but this woman is definitely doing a disservice to the citizens of the community," Krajewski proclaimed. Her words echoed a common racialized trope that court oversight of prisons and jails, and specifically the mandates that the city reduce its prison population, threatened public safety by releasing supposedly dangerous criminals back onto the streets.

It would, in fact, take an act of Congress. With prisoner-initiated civil rights suits continuing to proliferate, the state attorneys general and district attorneys who found prison litigation antithetical to cracking down on crime launched an all-out legislative attack. Both the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) and the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) drummed up panic around a so-called crisis of prison litigation and federal court intervention. "The

almost continual intervention and interference by federal courts in prison litigation has had an adverse effect on our ability to protect our communities," the NDAA wrote in a 1995 letter to Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, who was then chairman of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. "Court orders stemming from the unwarranted intrusion by federal judges," the letter continued, "has resulted in the release of dangerous criminals back to our city streets; has resulted in the squandering of scarce resources to meet the whims of self-designated monitors; and has usurped the authority and responsibilities of locally elected officials." The NAAG focused their disdain more on "frivolous" prisoner suits, which they claimed cost them $54.5 million annually. In 1995, Florida's assistant attorney general, Cecilia Bradley, stated that prisoners filed suits simply "to amuse themselves" or "for the pure expense it costs the state." Attorneys general from states as dissimilar as Arizona and New Jersey repeated these talking points in the press, alleging such suits cost taxpayers millions. Both the NDAA and NAAG worked with members of Congress to author bills that would eventually get consolidated into the Prison Litigation Reform Act. In September 1995, the Republican Senator Spencer Abraham introduced combined legislation that sought to bar imprisoned people from filing suits, restrict federal court judges' ability to order remedies in prison-conditions cases, and empower states and correctional administrations to terminate unwanted federal court oversight of prisons and jails. Frivolous prisoner lawsuits, he argued, "[tied] up enormous resources" and led to "murderous early releases," all the while overindulging prisoners who "should not have all the rights and privileges the rest of us enjoy." His legislation sought to "return sanity and state control to our prison systems."

Claims that prisoner litigation disproportionately clogged court dockets with frivolous suits were entirely fabricated, reliant upon what the legal scholar Margo Schlanger called in a *Harvard Law Review* article "stylized anecdotes and gerrymandered statistics." As evidence of meritless prisoner claims, pro-PLRA politicians frequently referred to Kenneth Parker, whose suit allegedly concerned the texture of some peanut butter he had purchased from the prison canteen. Parker had sued, they said, because he had received a jar of creamy peanut butter rather than the chunky he had requested. But Parker actually filed the suit because the prison failed to remove the $2.50 charge from his account after he had returned the jar. Parker was not the victim of an imperfect meal; he was the victim of theft. Despite the inaccurate rendering of the case, the example got picked up by the media and spread far and wide, contributing to coverage that, along with testimonies from state attorneys general and district attorneys hostile to prisoner litigation, gave the impression that all prisoner suits were vain, burdensome, and wasteful.

Similarly unfounded were claims that the oversight of prisons and jails by federal judges constituted "judicial overreaching" and led to an inundation of dangerous criminals on the streets. Supporters of the PLRA, for instance, cited spurious assertions that Philadelphia's court-enforced population controls fueled violent murders in the city. But violent crime had actually declined in Philadelphia after the population limitations took effect. Among those who were released, rearrest rates mirrored those of individuals diverted from prison under the city's diversionary programs. Court reports suggest that 54 percent were not even convicted of the crimes for which they were initially imprisoned.

Some Democratic legislators raised concerns about the proposed legislation. Senator Ed Kennedy warned the PLRA would "strip the Federal courts of the ability to safeguard the civil rights of powerless and disadvantaged groups." But the manufactured concerns about trivial suits and federal overreach had generated too much momentum, ushering the PLRA through both houses of Congress. On April 26, 1996, President Clinton signed the PLRA into law. With the stroke of a pen, the golden era of prisoner-rights litigation, already beginning to lose its luster, was perilously weakened.

Even at the time, imprisoned people and their supporters understood the devastating impact the PLRA would likely have on prisoner rights. As *Prison Legal News* wrote shortly after its passage,

> *As we come up on the 25th anniversary of the Attica uprising this September prisoners find themselves in essentially the same situation they did then: without adequate recourse to the courts or other forums in which to seek justice and equitable relief. It was the Attica uprising, with its attendant 43 deaths, that marked a turning point in the courts' until then, largely "hands off" attitude towards the constitutional rights of prisoners. To the extent that history repeats itself first as tragedy then as farce, Congress appears to have forgotten why the courts got involved in prison conditions to begin with.*

The barriers mounted by the PLRA were vast and specific, ensuring maximum enfeeblement of the once-dynamic realm of prisoner litigation.

First, the PLRA erected innumerable obstacles for imprisoned people seeking to bring forward and settle or win lawsuits regarding the conditions of their confinement. Specifically, to receive a monetary award, the PLRA placed the burden on prisoners to prove that they experienced "physical injury," discounting nonphysical forms of harm. An imprisoned person placed in long-term solitary confinement who only experienced extensive emotional and psychological distress could be deemed not entitled to monetary damages. The PLRA's new "exhaustion" requirement also forced the small class of people who could seek damages — those who had been physically harmed — to prove that they had tried all administrative remedies within their correctional institution before filing a federal court suit. If they made one mistake navigating their institution's convoluted prison grievance system, their case

was dismissed. If they had three cases dismissed due to being "frivolous, malicious, or fail[ing] to state a claim upon which relief can be granted," they were required to pay their filing fee up front, rather than in more manageable installments. The filing fee is $350, an enormous sum for most incarcerated people. For the small few who made it over these hurdles, the PLRA then made it difficult to find a lawyer by decreasing the fees that attorneys could earn from prisoner-rights cases. And if all this was accomplished, and they found a lawyer, they still had only made it to court; there was no guarantee they would win.

Once in court, imprisoned people would find that the PLRA also severely limited a judge's ability to order relief and uphold consent decrees. Most damningly, the PLRA empowered defendants (normally state officials and/or corrections officials) to move to terminate court-ordered remedies immediately if they were not "narrowly drawn." They could also move to end mandated relief just two years after a judge ordered it, undermining the courts' power to mitigate conditions long-term. As if this was not enough to disable the courts, the PLRA included even more specific restrictions on the courts' ability to impose "prisoner release orders": orders requiring a criminal punishment system to release prisoners, usually to remedy prison overcrowding. In short, the PLRA not only broadly limited federal judges' ability to order remedies; it also constrained the ability of the federal courts to decarcerate.

At a time when legislators on both sides of the aisle were doubling down on tough sentencing, ballooning prison populations to new and horrific heights, the PLRA's damage was extensive. Between 1995 and 2012, filings by imprisoned people took a nosedive, dropping 59 percent even as the number of imprisoned people in the nation increased by 135 percent. Numerous state and correctional defendants also terminated consent decrees that governed prison conditions. As Peter Sierra recently wrote while imprisoned at the California Correctional Institution, the PLRA requires "inmates to all but jump through a hoop engulfed in flames to file a [Section] 1983 civil lawsuit or a writ of habeas corpus to protest staff misconduct or prison conditions." It's little wonder that fewer imprisoned people are able and willing to take that leap.

To be sure, prison litigation has not entirely disappeared in the post-PLRA climate. In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Plata* that California's panel of three district judges was correct in ordering the state to reduce prison overcrowding by the end of 2013. At the time of the ruling, California's prison system was well over capacity; the system was built to house around eighty thousand people but held nearly double that number. Overcrowding exacerbated already inhumane systems of mental and physical health care in the prisons. In his majority opinion, Justice Kennedy quoted expert testimony from a former prison system medical director who found "extremely high" rates of "possibly preventable or preventable deaths" — between 2006 and 2007, a "possibly preventable death" occurred once every five to six days — and appeared to offer a firm rebuke to decades of antiprisoner legal decision-making and policy making. "A prison that deprives prisoners of basic sustenance, including adequate medical care, is incompatible with the concept of human dignity and has no place in civilized society," he wrote. But Brown v. Plata is the exception that proves the rule: the order by the three judges to reduce the prison population was the first since the PLRA's passage, in 1996. On the whole, the PLRA's ruthless hamstringing of prisoner rights and federal court oversight of prisons and jails perilously weakened once-valuable tools for slowing the growth of the prison nation.

Even in cases where judges handed down firm rulings regarding the unconstitutionality of prison conditions, the ultimate effects of prison-conditions litigation were always mixed. As is clear from the steady expansion of prison populations and new prisons in the late 20th century, judicial intervention ultimately failed to stop racialized mass imprisonment. Because federal courts had no jurisdiction over other arms of the criminal punishment system — such as the criminal courts, the legislature, or probation and parole boards — it was diffi cult for judges to order and lawyers to push for front-end measures that arguably would have been more radical and effective, such as reducing policing or abolishing mandatory sentencing. More problematic was the fact that court orders to remedy unconstitutional and overcrowded prison conditions were, in the end, just orders, and securing compliance from intransigent policy mak ers proved difficult. After a ruling or settlement was reached, imprisoned people were often reduced to little more than disempowered spectators, while judges, special masters, and lawyers made compromises that dictated the enforcement of court orders — and imprisoned people's fate. Population reduction orders often applied only to "nonviolent" prisoners and did not always mean unmitigated release; states could merely transfer prisoners to jails or place people on intensive and often just as criminalizing parole. Further, by codifying a set of standards considered "constitutional," prison litigation and federal court interventions normalized what Schlanger has called "lawful prisons," creating the false impression that prisons and jails can ever be ethical institutions and legitimizing legislators' continued pursuit of harsh sentencing and parole policies.

In another cruel twist, many prison officials welcomed prison-conditions litigation because it could just as easily push state legis lators to augment correctional budgets and construct new prisons, rather than result in their dismantling. Correctional administrations and prison guards profited handsomely from being able to use the threat of litigation to force bigger budgets, justify tighter security over prisoners, and hire additional personnel. Many of the correctional systems that underwent wide-scale institutional reform simply mutated into more modern, technically constitutional forms of administrative violence, replete with heightened surveillance, extreme racialized repression, and supermax cells.

Even modestly decarceral reforms in the face of overcrowding crises faced a torrent of law-and-order backlash, often with the aid of sensationalized, cherry-picked, and racist media coverage of crimes committed by individuals freed by release mechanisms. In her study of *Costello v. Wainwright* (1975), in which incarcerated people in Florida challenged overcrowded conditions, the sociologist Heather Schoenfeld details how state policy makers eventually translated a court order to mitigate overcrowding into a directive to build more prisons after conservative politicians and victims' rights groups accused the state's early release program of endangering public safety. Similarly, in Philadelphia, the *Philadelphia Daily News* openly collaborated with the district attorney's office to pillory the prison population controls ordered by Judge Shapiro, creating a spurious narrative that the *Harris* releases fueled violent crime in the city. The pressure eventually led Judge Shapiro to eliminate the court-ordered population controls while the city moved ahead with building more prisons. In the end, carceral institutions emerged from the golden age of prison litigation more powerful, well-resourced, and organized than before. From this perspective, the realm of prison-conditions litigation may seem ultimately inconsequential, if not harmful to the project of decarceration.

But the sobering aftermath of prison-conditions litigation should not minimize the importance of upholding imprisoned people's access to the courts. During a period when the expansion of the prison system appeared inevitable, prison litigation created opportunities for imprisoned people and their allies to make the horrors of the United States' carceral future legible. They also pushed judges and government officials to not only end some of the most torturous penal practices but also to impose limits on prison populations, demonstrating that decarceration was possible and that mass imprisonment was not, in fact, the only way to deploy state resources in response to harm. That their efforts were frequently usurped by carceral legislators and prisoncrats does not prove that these openings could not have been exploited by stronger, prisoner-led social movements to demand more decarceral solutions.

When Jailhouse Lawyers Speak made repealing the PLRA the third demand of their 2018 prison strike, they did so because imprisoned people's freedom to file civil suits in federal court offered a critical venue for contesting and occasionally remedying a litany of abuses fundamental to imprisonment. The tactic also offered an elevated platform for publicizing the gruesome, anti-Black, and constitutionally specious realities inside the US penal system — which more than a few imprisoned people have argued are tantamount to that of a concentration camp — and for finding ways to channel state power in the service of destroying this pernicious institution. While the 2018 prison strike mobilized thousands of prisoners and broke into the mainstream, receiving coverage in outlets such as Vox and the New York Times, their demands remain unmet. But the call to repeal the PLRA has not gone entirely unnoticed. Democratic Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley's People's Justice Guarantee, which she introduced in 2019 and reintroduced in 2021, includes a provision that would repeal the PLRA.

Prison litigation alone was never, nor will it ever be, abolition. Even the most well-intended prisoner suits remain susceptible to cooptation or destruction by powerful carceral institutions and a host of punitive individuals and organizations invested in protecting them. As imprisoned Muslims knew back in the 1960s, litigation is not so much a silver bullet but a tactic to be pursued alongside mass political organizing and disruption, mutual aid, and principled anticapitalist and antiracist struggle. Should the PLRA be abolished, prison litigation can once again be used, as the executive director of the Abolitionist Law Center Robert Saleem Holbrook recently wrote, as a "conduit for resistance . . . a tool to aid in [oppressed peoples'] liberation." Th e history of prison litigation suggests that for such suits to achieve meaningfully decarceral ends, abolitionists must pair legal action with mass community mobilizations to pressure judges and lawmakers to enact decarceral remedies and to shut down the inevitable tough-on-crime backlash that will follow. Such eff orts must also include organizing across bars, rather than the lawyer-led processes of suits past — imprisoned and criminalized people hold essential insight into whether court-ordered reforms are truly decarceral and whether or not policy makers are actually enforcing them, since they feel its relief. Repealing the PLRA would move us toward an abolitionist horizon by striking against the vicious, dehumanizing logic at the heart of the carceral state: that the nation's colossal carceral apparatus is the only thinkable response to harm, and that imprisoned people are undeserving of rights and care and should be routinely subjected to premature death.*

** This article is indebted to a growing and interdisciplinary scholarship on prisoner resistance, prisoner litigation, and US carceral state history, especially works by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Dan Berger, Robert Chase, Justin Driver, Garrett Felber, Malcolm Feeley, Emma Kaufman, Anne K. Heidel, Toussaint Losier, Mona Lynch, Melanie Newport, Judith Resnik, Edward Rubin, Margo Schlanger, Heather Schoenfeld, Giovanna Shay, Martin Sostre, and Susan Sturm.*

US Police Terrorize People Throughout the Country, Activists Say Nothing New

By Natalia Marques
PeoplesDispatch.org
July 2022

Throughout July, police in the United States have unleashed countless acts of violence on the people in the country. In this month alone, US police have killed at least 52 people. The release of security footage to US media has further exposed the negligence of the police response to the Uvalde mass shooting. Videos on social media have shown the brutality of police in Akron, Ohio towards those protesting the police murder of Jayland Walker, especially as some of those protesters were

family members of other victims of state violence.

Yet, many activists have pointed out that US police often structure their statements to conceal wrongdoing. When law enforcement acknowledges a police murder, for example, they label it as an "officer-involved shooting". Many times, the media regurgitates the same political line, effectively using the passive voice to obscure who was killed, and who was doing the killing. "Anchorage police investigating officer-involved shooting at Centennial Park" reads a headline after police open fire in a homeless encampment. "Identities of the three police officers involved in shooting released" reads another after two troopers and one officer shot and killed a man armed with only a knife.

Even finding out the identities of victims of police terror from law enforcement can be difficult. 15 out of the at least 52 people killed by police in July are labeled as "unidentified".

Therefore, it remains important to keep track of the myriad incidents of state violence that plague the people of the United States. Especially as police try their hardest to keep their crimes out of the headlines.

Cops shoot Robert Adams in the back as he flees

On July 16, at around 8 pm, police responded to reports of an armed man in a parking lot in San Bernardino, California. Police pulled into the parking lot in an unmarked car, and upon seeing Robert Marquise Adams with a gun in his hand, got out of the car and rushed towards him, with their weapons pointed directly at him.

Robert did not respond by using his gun against officers. It will always be unclear if he even knew these men running towards him were police, or civilians intent on murdering him. A surveillance video shows Robert running for his life, before officers shot him several times in the back, killing him.

Responding to the murder, San Bernardino police state that, "Officers briefly chased Adams, but seeing that he had no outlet, they believed he intended to use the vehicles as cover to shoot at them…Fearing that bystanders' or the officers' lives were in danger, one of the officers fired his gun, striking Adams."

The video makes it clear that only a few seconds lapse between officers getting out of their car and Robert's murder, giving Robert time for little complex judgement apart from fleeing from his life. It is also important to note that US police have access to a myriad amount of nonlethal weapons that can be used to stop someone in their tracks, such as tasers. Activists are asking why the first response of San Bernardino police towards someone running in the opposite direction is several bullets to vital organs.

Cristian Alcaraz, a local organizer in the greater Los Angeles Area, told Peoples Dispatch, "I think the murder of Robert Adams is like the many shootings by police in LA County and the surrounding counties: outright executions of Black people."

"The police pulled up on him in an unmarked car, guns drawn, and rushed him. Robert ran from the dangerous situation the cops created like any person would. There wasn't any danger there until the cops showed up, and Robert was punished for daring to run away from unidentified men with arms running towards him," Alcaraz added.

In their response, San Bernardino police made little direct acknowledgement of Robert Adams as a person. "It is unfortunate that our efforts to keep the community safe through proactive police work occasionally results in encounters with armed felons," they said.

Albuquerque police murder a child by fire

On July 6, the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) killed 15-year-old Brett Rosenau in a SWAT-team "standoff" that led to a family home engulfed in flames.

APD claims to have been pursuing 27-year-old Qiaunt Kelley for several crimes, including a parole violation, when he barricaded himself inside the home of Sundra Coleman, alongside Brett, who was innocent of any crime. APD's statement following the incident reveals that they knew that Brett was inside the home when they threw tear gas canisters into the house, causing the fire that eventually killed the child. An autopsy revealed that Brett died from smoke inhalation.

"Kelley fled from detectives and barricaded himself inside the home. A second individual, later identified as Rosenau, followed Kelley into the home," reads the police statement.

The statement continues, "At one point, a man believed to be Kelley, opened the back door of the home and lay on his back as officers monitored his actions. He ignored officers' commands to stand up. He eventually sat in place. Officers used a noise flash diversionary device to get Kelley to follow commands. But he retreated back into the home, shutting the door."

Officers did not move to arrest Kelley, even as he lay on the ground.

Police also claim that the tear gas and other chemical irritants they used to lure Kelley out of the house were "designed for indoor use to minimize the likelihood of igniting a fire, and no fires have been reported over the many years they have been used in Albuquerque." And yet, tear gas canisters have caused fires on numerous occasions. According to activists, it is worrisome that APD seems to be unaware of the risks of their own weaponry.

> The crazy thing about this article is that it extensively quotes the cops, and those quotes reveal that the cops knowingly burned an innocent child to death

— Hemry, Local Bartender (@BartenderHemry) July 17, 2022

The Albuquerque branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation stated, “On July 7, 15-year-old Brett Rosenau was murdered by Albuquerque Police Department officers using a fraudulent arrest warrant to launch an all-out racist assault on a family home.”

“APD officers needlessly threw tear gas and flash-bang devices into the home every 30 minutes for five and a half hours causing a catastrophic house fire, then waited 40 minutes before calling for assistance from Albuquerque Fire Rescue,” the statement continued. “Due to the inferno that resulted from APD’s aggression, Brett died of smoke inhalation and the family home was destroyed.”

Brett was visiting Sundra Coleman’s son when the SWAT-team raid began. Coleman has now lost her family home, passed down from her mother, along with one of her dogs, which perished in the fire.

“If any of our actions inadvertently contributed to [Brett Rosenau’s] death, we will take steps to ensure this never happens again,” said APD Chief Harold Medina.

Negligence of Uvalde cops is fully revealed

On May 24, a gunman opened fire in an elementary school classroom in Uvalde, Texas, killing 19 children and two teachers. Soon after the shooting, Peoples Dispatch covered the ineptitude of the police in Uvalde, who waited over an hour to apprehend the shooter while children were shot and bled out inside two adjoining classrooms. But a July 17 report shared with the Texas Tribune, as well as surveillance footage shared by the Austin Statesman earlier this month reveals a deeper extent to their fatal negligence.

It was originally thought that 19 police officers responded to the shooting, yet the new report reveals that the number was 376. Despite this high number of personnel, surveillance footage shows how police idled for one hour and fourteen minutes after arriving at the scene, before finally breaching the classroom and killing the shooter.

At one point, several police who had congregated in the hallway outside of the classroom ran from gunfire, despite being protected with tactical gear and carrying massive weapons themselves. Stills from the footage have circulated social media, especially those where police idle in the hallway, checking their phones or using hand sanitizer while children cower or bleed out inside the classroom.

Most gunshot victims die from blood loss, so in these cases, time is of the essence. A training manual used by Uvalde police reads, “A first responder unwilling to place the lives of the innocent above their own safety should consider another career field.”

> Uvalde cop checks phone with tough-guy punisher skull background while kids are being murdered a few rooms over. I wonder why Uvalde PD thought this footage would be embarrassing? pic.twitter.com/79ur5QxdVy
> — whoffster (@WhiffWhaffWhoff) July 12, 2022

Immediately after the shooting, Texas Governor Abbott claimed that, “[Police] showed amazing courage by running toward gunfire”. Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw claimed that cops “immediately breached [the classroom], because we know as officers, every second’s a life.” Both these statements have been revealed as lies.

Family members of police brutality victims arrested in Akron

Peoples Dispatch previously covered the protests that rose up in Akron, Ohio in response to the gruesome police murder of Jayland Walker—and the subsequent state repression of those protests.

The people of Akron rose up early this month in outrage over the shooting of Jayland, who was shot over 60 times by police. On July 4, a patriotic holiday for the US, roughly fifty people were arrested at a protest after the mayor declared a 9 pm curfew. Police deployed chemical weapons such as tear gas against protesters.

When people came out in protest again on Thursday night, July 7, police once again arrested and brutalized protests. On this night, those arrested included Jacob Blake Sr., father of Jacob Blake who was paralyzed after Kenosha, Wisconsin police shot him. Also arrested was Bianca Austin, aunt of EMT Breonna Taylor who was shot and killed in her sleep after Louisville, Kentucky police entered her home on a “no-knock” warrant.

> Full video on my TikTok or IG. Akron Police just assaulted and arrested Jacob Blake Sr. Mr Blake has been transported to a local hospital. #freejakeblake #freepressure pic.twitter.com/MbDcVVLlig
> — jolly_good_ginger (@jollygoodginger) July 7, 2022

Jacob Blake Sr., who has several health conditions, was hospitalized following his arrest. He was charged with rioting, resisting arrest, failing to disperse and disorderly conduct. Blake Sr.’s brother, Justin Blake, told The Journal Times, “They were there to unite the community and family and to get justice, before they were attacked…He wasn’t resisting arrest, he was leaning on the fence for a respite. He’s handicapped.”

Denver police carry out a mass shooting

On July 17, police in Denver opened fire on a crowded street with little to no provocation, injuring 6 people. Officers claim to have been responding to an alleged fight perpetrated by 21-year-old Jordan Waddy, who allegedly pulled out a gun and pointed it towards officers. In response, police opened fire.

Although police later claimed that Waddy “posed a significant threat”, there is no evidence that he fired his weapon at all during the incident.

This shooting is a part of three shootings carried out by Denver police within only one week, the other two resulting in the death of those shot by police.

—

Police in the United States receive a vast arsenal of leftover military equipment from the US government, which itself has the largest military in the world. And yet, incident after incident indicates that police have a lack of responsibility necessary to wield deadly weapons, often resulting in disastrous consequences. When it might in fact be necessary to use deadly force, as in the case of Uvalde, police show unusual hesitancy.

Mass movements of the people of the US have questioned the militarization and overfunding of police departments. As more and more incidents of police brutality and negligence are reported, such questioning of the role of police can only grow.

—

Police have thus far killed at least 52 people in July alone. These are their names.

Robert Marquise Adams, 23, San Bernardino, California
Unidentified, Chandler, Arizona
John Todd Bigham, 53, Amarillo, Texas
James Robert Frazier, 50, Georgetown, South Carolina
Unidentified, Denver, Colorado
Stephen Blossom, 35, Newport, Maine
Unidentified, Vinton, Texas
Trent William Millsap, 27, Westminster, California
Maurice Hughes, 45, Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Unidentified, Modesto, California
Matthew Hyde, Hollywood, Florida
Unidentified, Ontario, California
Unidentified, Denver Colorado
Unidentified, Hancock County, Illinois
Unidentified, Salinas, California
Romayne Manuel, 31, Grand Prairie, Texas
Unidentified, Harris County, Texas
Malachi Lavar Carroll, 20, Henrico County, Virginia
Unidentified, Salem, Oregon
Andrew Tekle Sundberg, 20, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Mark Evers, 65, Clearcreek Township, Ohio
Thomas Cromwell, 27, Mason, Ohio
Madeline Miller, 64, Flossmoor, Illinois
Dillon Walker, 31, Cave City, Kentucky
Malik Williams, New York, New York
Raoul Hardy, 60, New York, New York
Unidentified, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Jaime Rodriguez, 42, Long Beach, California
Roderick Brooks, 47, Houston, Texas
Shane Netterville, 28, Fargo, North Dakota
Rafael Estevan Ramirez, 26, Marietta, Georgia
Felipe Guerrero, 36, Los Angeles, California
Jasper Aaron Lynch, 26, Mclean, Virginia
Ehmani Mack Davis, 19, Detroit, Michigan
Jerry Lee Esparza, Beeville, Texas
Matthew Scott Jones, 36, Bradley, West Virginia
Chanin Emil Mayfield, 32, Toccoa, Georgia
Reginald Humphrey, 31, Los Angeles, California
Juan Carlos Bojorquez, 15, Glendale, Arizona
Trevon Darion Hull, 21, Port Neches, Texas
Unidentified, Martin County, Kentucky
Unidentified, Wilmington, California
Miguel Gallarzo, 46, Las Vegas, Nevada
James Parks, 44, Warner Robins, Georgia
Glenn Nisich, 57, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Bryan Humble, 63, Chaparral, New Mexico
Unidentified, Denver, Colorado
Michael Moore, 75, Sacramento, California
Unidentified, 30, Huntington Park, California
Jesus Rodolfo Torres, 30, Los Angeles, California
Jada Johnson, 22, Fayetteville, North Carolina
Brett Rosenau,15, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Corruption Around Every Corner: Updates on Anti-Repression

By a correspondent at Westville CF
IDOCWatch.org
June 2022

Back on February 17, 2022, I was removed from population at Miami Correctional Facility after being found guilty on a battery charge where the alleged victim Zachary Bonta, a white prisoner, was never hit by me.

I was found guilty, sanctioned, and sent to segregation for 180 days, and fined $100,000, with many other deprivations. The days spent in the (RHU) segregation unit were some of my worst days. Back there if you’re not careful, you can lose days and lose yourself in the process. From February through June I would be poisoned, starved, and came close to my death, losing over 50 pounds. The food sent to RHU was being laced with rat poison, racine, psychological mind-altering medications, and animal faces.

I became depressed, wanting to let my loved ones and supporters know what was happening to me. But, I was alone, not wanting to die in that unit. And you not having a clue what happened to me. Caused me to remain silent up until now. I began to panic some days, knowing that all my outgoing phone calls were being recorded and listened to. I have since learned that I was the test subject of a chemical/psychological experiment.. I was never asked if I wanted to participate in these experimental

games.

My appeal on the battery charge overturned the Class A Battery, which was dropped down to a Battery B-212. They removed the $100,000 restitution penalty. They gave me time served. Instead of releasing me to General Population, they put me in for a statewide transfer.

Before all this shit ever happened, per the negotiated settlement on a recent lawsuit, I should have been transferred to New Castle Correctional Facility. A series of episodes occurred over a 2-3 week period as my anxiety kicked in. I caught or was served four additional new conduct reports that on the surface, appear to have altered the course of my life, and my fight for my freedom.

I am appealing each conduct report because the hearings were all held without me [which goes against IDOC Disciplinary Policy]. I just received guilty verdicts on Friday June 24, 2022.

On May 24, 2022, I was transferred to the Westville Control Unit (WCU) from Miami Correctional Facility. The conditions here are extremely deplorable and filthy. I have never seen such bad conditions existing at WCU [fka the Maximum Control Complex]. All of my property, hygiene, and like $300 in food was intentionally stolen/given away by the unprofessional staff to some so-called prisoner elements who are obviously agents of the prison officials at Miami Correctional Facility.

When I was sent to segregation on February 17, 2022, I packed up my entire cell. So, I know exactly what I had. Now that I am at WCU, I can assess everything that is missing. I will have a lawyer prepare a federal tort and/or civil complaint to try and recover everything they stole from me. They left me with nothing. The medications being put in my food caused me to start forgetting things. I also began to almost sabotage my relationship with my beautiful Black "Queen Penny Kennedy." I tried to convey to her on multiple occasions what was happening almost everyday. But now I am sure she has somewhat of a clue of what all occurred in my life since February 17, 2022.

To my surprise and delight, on June 6, 2022, the Federal District Court of Southern Indiana (Terre Haute) made a ruling against the defendants in my lawsuit, denying their motion for summary judgment . They were given until June 27, 2022 to abandon their allegations that I failed to exhaust my administrative remedies as an affirmative defense. The federal judge stated that he was putting them on notice that on that defense issue they had lost. They were put on notice to come up with another argument or lose the case. I am confident there will be no new defense, which means they must prepare to set up a negotiation/ settlement conference.

Puerto Rico's Colonial Government Collapses

By Jose (Papo) Coss
OrinocoTribune.com
August 2022

For the first time in its history, the people of Puerto Rico are seeing the total collapse of the island's colonial administration, mainly due to the open corruption of the two traditional parties, both of which promote integration into the United States and/or the permanence of the colonial regime.

At the moment, all basic public services such as health, education, housing, and security are practically dismantled, impoverishing the majority of the population, despite the funds allocated by the US authorities. Public funds are diverted to fraudulent corporations, controlled by members of the corrupt political parties and their families.

It is estimated that more than $10 billion have been looted during the last decade alone by officials and business people linked to the New Progressive Party (PNP) and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), bombastic names that try to disguise submission of power to the US in exchange for financial benefits.

Both PNP and PPD leaderships are neoliberal and intermediaries of big US capital, specialized in the culture of public corruption that has put more than 400 people in jail in the last decade. In fact, two former governors have already been accused by the US courts in Puerto Rico, since the local judicial authorities look the other way.

Due to this atavistic robbery, in 2016, former US President Barack Obama imposed, in a dictatorial manner, a "fiscal oversight" board that controls the government's finances to guarantee payment with exorbitant interest to the powerful Wall Street bondholders. Hence, that odious debt is privileged above all the essential services for the people, which has led to the current collapse of the colonial administration.

This situation led to the closure of half of our public schools, the most essential educational service for our children and youth. The same was done with public health, which had already been partially privatized. Likewise, in the case of the public university, 50% of its budget was cut, which has caused massive emigration of the social group that represents the best knowledge, talent and hope that the country has.

Historically, nearly six million Puerto Ricans have been forced to leave their nation to seek better living conditions, and there are just under three million left in the Puerto Rican archipelago. The objective of the empire is to displace the Puerto Rican community by billionaire Americans, who little by little have been buying our best lands and facilities.

As a result of this serious political, economic and social crisis, crime has skyrocketed to levels never seen before, with daily

murders by armed drug gangs. These thugs roam openly and commit crimes in broad daylight. In truth, the people of Puerto Rico are in the midst of a civil war among groups of drug traffickers who have no respect for the value of life.

Given this whole alarming situation, the credibility of the PNP-PPD leadership is in free fall, and broad sectors of workers have taken to the streets daily to protest and propose solutions. For this reason, the two colonial parties historically supported by the USA lost almost half of their voters in 2016 and 2020.

Everyday there is more awareness in Puerto Rico of the need to unite all the political and social movements in struggle, including the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Citizens' Victory Movement (MVC), which since 2020 has become the third largest political force in the country and the second in the capital of San Juan.

Currently, a legal offensive and street mobilizations are being planned to repeal the ban on electoral alliances, which was opportunistically approved by the PNP-PPD shortly before the 2020 elections. For the first time, a left-wing electoral front could defeat the PNP-PPD, the two parties which, with the backing of the USA, have taken turns in administration for decades.

Despite all the adverse circumstances, the people of Puerto Rico are in resistance. Just as we defeated the attempts to culturally assimilate us and the constant persecution of our independence movement, we will have to take advantage of this collapse of the colonial government to advance towards decolonization and social justice.

Puerto Rico reels from Fiona as hurricane plows into Dominican Republic

By Nicole Acevedo, Marlene Lenthang and Tim Stelloh
From NBCNews.com
September 2022

Puerto Rico was reeling Monday after Hurricane Fiona dumped more than 2 feet of rain on the island, killing at least one person and leaving most of it without power.

Fiona plowed into the neighboring Dominican Republic as a Category 1 storm, prompting warnings of flash flooding and forecasts of up to 20 inches of rain in the country's eastern section, the National Hurricane Center said.

National Guard troops carried out hundreds of rescues, and about 1,500 people had been evacuated to shelters and safer ground, The Associated Press reported.

Images of the Dominican Republic posted on social media showed downed trees, devastated homes and a collapsed bridge.

"It destroyed everything," a resident told Reuters. "Everything has been affected. It all has to be rebuilt, all this."

The storm was forecast to strengthen to a major hurricane later Monday or Tuesday, with winds topping 111 mph, on its way toward the Turks and Caicos Islands, the hurricane center said.

Earlier Monday, Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi told reporters that the U.S. territory needs help with first responders and that New York Gov. Kathy Hochul has already vowed to send 100 to assist.

Puerto Rico has four warehouses stocked with enough food and water to last during the emergency response phase, Pierluisi said, emphasizing that humanitarian aid may be needed once the island enters its recovery stage.

The governor hopes to have an initial estimate of damage after tropical storm rains dissipate Tuesday, a process necessary for Puerto Rico to request a formal disaster declaration that would free additional resources to help it with recovery efforts, he said.

President Joe Biden declared a federal emergency on the island Sunday, allowing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to step in with response resources.

Most of Puerto Rico's nearly 1.5 million power customers remain without electricity. By Monday afternoon, about 100,000 customers had had their electricity restored, according to Luma Energy, the company in charge of power transmission and distribution in Puerto Rico.

A 58-year-old man was found dead Monday afternoon after he was dragged by currents from the river La Plata in the town of Comerío, Telemundo Puerto Rico reported.

Pierluisi said two other people who died in shelters are believed to have passed away from natural causes; however, officials are waiting for the Institute of Forensic Sciences to confirm that.

A 70-year-old man from the town of Arecibo died from fire-related injuries after a generator he was using exploded. Emergency personnel said the man tried to refuel his generator while it was still on, causing the machine to explode.

Heavy rain left an "unprecedented accumulation of water in some areas," Pierluisi said; the most affected are towns in the mountainous region in the center of the island, as well as in the southern region.

Palestinian prisoners halt mass hunger strike after Israel 'ends punitive measures'

By Shatha Hammad
From MiddleEasteye.net
September 2022

At least 1,000 Palestinian prisoners suspended their hunger strike on Thursday after Israeli prison authorities acquiesced to their demands to reverse harsh measures imposed across prisons for months.

The Supreme National Emergency Committee, which manages the prisoners' protests, said in a statement that Israel "realised that the prisoners are ready to pay every price for their dignity and rights.

"And that behind them stands a people and a resistance that is willing to pay all costs in order to support its fighters in the occupation's prisons.

"That is why the enemy decided to stop its unjust decisions and arbitrary measures…and respond to their demands."

The announcement came hours after the prisoners launched the strike as part of a series of escalating steps they have adopted since February amid the Israel Prison Service's (IPS) continued failure to respond to their demands to reverse measures taken against them following the escape of six prisoners from the Gilboa prison in September 2021.

The punitive measures included limiting yard time, increased restrictions on prisoners serving long sentences - especially those serving life sentences who are put in solitary confinement - and the constant transfer of prisoners between prison facilities, which leads to a state of instability inside jails.

Escalation

The striking prisoners had formed the Supreme National Emergency Committee, composed of all-Palestinian factions in jails, to approve and manage protests.

"We are entering a new stage of confrontation with the jailer, by officially announcing the dissolution of organisational bodies in all prisons in a step of rebellion against the [IPS's] decisions as a last stage before initiating an open hunger strike," the committee said in a statement on Saturday.

The dissolution of organisational bodies was aimed at forcing Israeli authorities to deal with prisoners as individuals and not through the organisations representing them.

There are currently 4,550 Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons - including 175 children, 32 female prisoners, 730 administrative detainees, and 551 serving life sentences - according to the Palestinian Prisoners Club.

Prisoners started their action against the IPS on 22 August in various Israeli prisons, with steps that included refusing meals and security check lineups. On 29 August, the prisoners committed to wearing the IPS uniform at all times inside the cells and in the yards, indicating their readiness for a confrontation with prison authorities.

Strike for basic demands

Qadri Abu Bakr, head of the Palestinian Authority's prisoners' commission, told Middle East Eye that most of the demands are related to daily human needs that prisoners have been denied since last September, including electrical appliances, some food items and cleaning materials.

The demands also relate to the isolation of a large number of prisoners, the frequent and sudden transfer of detainees between prisons, restrictions on family visitations, and appropriate treatment for ill prisoners.

Abu Bakr said the Palestinian Authority had reportedly been working on shedding light on the issue internationally, while prisoners' institutions had also prepared solidarity activities that would be organised in most Palestinian cities.

The IPS had informed the prisoners that the measures taken had been decided at a political level and would be resolved there. However, despite the prisoners' continued demands, the Palestinian Authority has not shown serious movement to either pressure Israel or push the issue internationally.

Amani Sarahneh, a Palestinian Prisoners Club spokesperson, told MEE that the collective hunger strike was a continuation of previous protests taken by prisoners since September 2021, following the IPS's formation of a committee to punish prisoners, mainly those carrying out long sentences.

Since then, prisoners have taken a set of actions to rebel and disobey the new regulations imposed by the IPS.

"Lately, the IPS has stepped up its operation of transferring prisoners between cells and between prisons, and informed them of their intention to continue with these measures," Sarahneh said.

Earlier this year, the IPS falsely promised an end to these measures, leading to the hunger strike.

Sarahneh said that the IPS's goal of moving prisoners to various cells and between prisons was aimed at breaking their organisational structure, limiting their stability within the prison and making it difficult for their families to visit.

"The prisoners of the Islamic Jihad movement are among the prisoners who face the most complications inside the prison, especially after the escape of the six prisoners in September 2021," Sarahneh said.

‘Minimum dignity’

Most of the escapees from Gilboa were Islamic Jihad members, which led the IPS to retaliate by imposing harsh restrictions on the group’s prisoners, including isolating them from other inmates and transferring senior figures to other prisons.

“During the past two years, we have witnessed violent break-ins into prisons, and an increase in the violence used to repress prisoners... and we have a real fear that the repression will escalate in the coming days,” Sarahneh said.

Dirgham al-Araj, a former prisoner who spent 20 years in Israeli prisons, told MEE: “The goal of the hunger strike is to demand the restoration of minimum dignity by improving living conditions.”

Araj was released from prison in 2019 and participated in several collective hunger strikes in prisons in 2004, 2011, 2012, and 2017.

Araj said that difficult living conditions in prisons were the main motivation that led prisoners to go on hunger strike, a strategic action only taken by the prisoners after exhausting all their attempts to negotiate with the IPS.

Araj added that after the Second Intifada, which lasted between 2000 and 2005, prisoners began to demand improved conditions, with the number of Palestinians in Israeli jails reaching 10,000 at one point.

Araj, a professor of the prisoner movement course at Al-Quds University, said that hunger strikes proved successful in the past when they earned popular support. He said that the 1992 hunger strike was the most successful, as it took place in all prisons alongside widespread demonstrations and marches in most occupied West Bank cities, which put pressure on Israel.

“Moving the street means a great economic and security cost to Israel and will put pressure on it in many ways,” he said.

“Therefore only the Palestinian street is capable of making the prisoner strikes successful.”

Prison Labor - Alabama Inmate Protest Leads to Work Stoppages

By Heidi
From endfmrnow.org
September 2022

Incarcerated persons inside major correctional facilities throughout Alabama organized a worker strike Monday to demand changes to the state’s sentencing laws and parole system. According to Alabama Department of Corrections staff working inside Limestone Correctional Facility in Harvest AL, inmates refused to show up for work details inside the kitchen, and “brown bag meals” were delivered to the facility Monday morning.

According to those sources, who asked not to be identified fearing retaliation from supervisors, the bagged meals were made by inmates at the nearby Decatur work release facility. ADOC officials would not confirm those details. Images of meals containing a single piece of bread, a small amount of applesauce and a pint of milk were posted to social media, allegedly taken and shared by state prison inmates.

Outside the prison walls, inmate advocates held their own protests in solidarity. At the “Break Every Chain Rally,” a few dozen protesters gathered Monday morning in Montgomery, where they said they protested throughout the day, then hold a vigil for the inmates who are “suffering violations to their civil rights due to overcrowding and mental and physical abuse,” according to one advocate.

“The state of Alabama is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis due to Eighth Amendment violations. This crisis has occurred as a result of antiquated sentencing laws that led to overcrowding, numerous deaths, severe physical injury, as well as mental anguish to incarcerated individuals,” the protest’s organizers wrote on a flyer delivered to the ADOC office. “This humanitarian crisis led to the Department of Justice filing suit against (Gov.) Kay Ivey and ADOC yet, nothing has changed or gotten better only worse.” Alabama is currently under a federal judge’s order to hire thousands of new correctional officers and improve conditions inside the prisons.

Protest organizers are calling for lawmakers to make the following changes:

- Repeal the habitual offender law, which requires longer sentences for people convicted of multiple crimes, including life sentences for those convicted of a Class A felony after three previous felony convictions
- Make the “presumptive standards” retroactive immediately
- Repeal the drive-by shooting statute, which allows prosecutors to charge someone with capital murder if they are in a vehicle when they fatally shoot a victim
- Create a statewide conviction integrity unit to investigate possible cases of wrongful incarceration
- Create mandatory parole criteria that will guarantee parole to all eligible persons
- Streamline the review processes for medical furloughs and early release of elderly inmates
- Allow juvenile offenders to become eligible for parole after 15 years served, instead of the current 30-year requirement
- Get rid of life sentencing without the chance of parole

Alabama’s prison system, plagued by violence, sexual assault,

drug use and death and suffering from severe understaffing and overcrowding, was deemed unconstitutional by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2020.

In Contempt #20: Black August, Running Down the Walls, Prisoner Hunger and Work Strikes

From ItsGoingDown.org
September 2022

Black August
Every year, imprisoned revolutionaries observe Black August, a month of study and struggle marking the anniversary of a number of important dates in the history of Black Liberation, but particularly the deaths of George and Jonathan Jackson. This year, an online project, Black August Solidarity Cypher, has been put together, allowing comrades on both sides of the prison walls to connect. See their introduction page and "how this project works" to learn more, or check out their instagram page.

Week of Solidarity with Anarchist Prisoners
While Black August is observed in the US, internationally, the dates of 23-30 August are marked as a week of solidarity with anarchist prisoners, commemorating the date that Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. This year, events for the week took place in Tristán Narvaja, Uruguay, Koblenz, Germany, London, UK, Newcastle, UK, Dresden, Germany, Dublin, Ireland, Moscow, Russia, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Warsaw, Poland, Leipzig, Germany, Lübeck, Germany, Tbilisi, Georgia, and Vienna, Austria. Anarchists in Poland also wrote graffiti and dropped a banner, and anarchist prisoners Toby Shone, Juan Flores, and Juan Aliste have all published statements for the week.

Running Down the Walls
The Anarchist Black Cross Federation's annual Running Down the Walls fundraiser will be taking place in mid-September. Events are planned for Chicago on September 10th, Philadelphia on the 11th, Austin and Richmond on the 17th, Portland, New York, Lowell and Pomona on the 18th. Statements in support of the event have been published by Dan Baker and Oso Blanco.

Prisoner News
Anarchist prisoner Eric King has now been transferred to a "supermax" unit, USP Florence ADX. Despite being found not guilty at his recent trial, and being eligible for release in the relatively near future, he is now being held at a prison designed mainly for violent prisoners serving life sentences, including a number of inmates convicted of charges related to Al-Qaeda activity. For context, Julian Assange's lawyers were able to delay his extradition to the United States by pointing to the likelihood of him being sent to Florence, which persuaded a judge to block the extradition, and the US government had to issue a guarantee that he would not be sent to a supermax before the extradition could go ahead.

The fight to win compassionate release for long-term Black/New Afrikan liberation prisoner Dr Mutulu Shakur continues. The Final Straw Radio just broadcast a new interview on the campaign, which was also recently covered on Democracy Now.

Lucasville Uprising prisoner Keith Lamar/Bomani Shakur recently fought a successful hunger strike over phone access. Kite Line Radio recorded an interview with him discussing the situation, and his support campaign wrote:

> HUNGER STRIKE SUSPENDED!
> Keith sends his heartfelt love and appreciation to all who called in, wrote messages, shared his situation, and/or held space for him in their prayers and meditations. He felt the collective love!
>
> Warden Bowen came and talked to him and brought a technician from GTL to his cell to test the signal and repair it. Keith has agreed to suspend his hunger strike on good faith for now with the agreement that he will log his calls and report back to the warden any issues he still has after this, if any. If after 10 days the tablet is still giving him difficulty, the warden has agreed to give him the cordless phone back. Keith feels this is a reasonable compromise. He will be satisfied with a reliable way to call family and media as he fights for his freedom this next year. That's what he wanted to begin with.
>
> Please suspend calls to the prison for now… and thank you all again for your support!

In another piece of good news related to Lucasville prisoners, Greg Curry, who recently carried out another hunger strike after being sent to solitary confinement, has now been returned to general population. You can write to Greg at:

Greg Curry #A213159
Toledo CI
PO Box 80033
Toledo OH, 43608

In Austin, Texas, a rally is being organized for November 21st, demanding freedom for the Chicano anarchist political prisoner Xinachtli/Alvaro Luna Hernandez, and commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the death of Ricardo Flores Magón, the legendary Mexican anarchist who died in USP Leavenworth in November 2022. Contact Central Texas ABC at twitchon@gmail.com for more information.

Lore Blumenthal, a George Floyd uprising defendant from Philadelphia, has now been released.

Albert Woodfox of the Angola 3, who spent almost 44 years in

solitary confinement, has passed away at the age of 75.

It's Going Down has published updates on the situation of Fidencio Aldama, an indigenous Yaqui political prisoner held by the Mexican state who's just had an appeal denied, and Miguel Peralta, a former anarchist political prisoner who's now facing a new arrest warrant.

Current Case

The repression against Asheville mutual aid organizers continues, as a grand jury has now indicted all 16 of the defendants charged with "felony littering". On a similar note, the NYPD recently carried out a violent raid against mutual aid organizers and homeless people at Washington Square Park.

The International Antifascist Defence Fund is currently helping with the legal costs of an antifascist facing charges related to a confrontation in Portland, and have a report on the case of someone facing a month in jail and an $8,000 fine for graffiti during the George Floyd uprising in Los Angeles.

Phone/Email-Zaps

The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee has called for a phone/email zap demanding the release of two Washington prisoners who were sent to solitary on trumped-up charges, as well as another for Texas anarchist prisoner Julio "Comrade Z" Zuniga, who is currently receiving needed treatment and will be in danger if sent back to the Darrington Unit. North Carolina revolutionary prisoner Joseph "Shine White" Stewart is still being held in solitary without access to property, including his medication, and supporters are calling for a phone zap to get him transferred out of state.

General Prison News

A new documentary has been produced about the Pendleton 2, two Indiana prisoners given extremely long sentences for challenging a white supremacist guard gang. You can find more about the fight to free the Pendleton 2 here.

In one high-profile story, two Pennsylvania judges involved in the "kids-for-cash" scandal have now been ordered to pay $200 million in compensation to some of the many children they sent to for-profit prisons in exchange for kickbacks.

Immigrant detainees at two federal detention centers launched a strike. As Labor Notes wrote:

> At two federal detention centers in California, more than 50 immigrant workers are on strike over unsafe working conditions and low wages.
>
> "We are being exploited for our labor and are being paid $1 per day to clean the dormitories," said strikers at a central California detention center in a June statement received by public radio station KQED.

Detained workers, known as "housing porters," participate in a supposedly volunteer working program while locked up. They use their earnings to pay for the exorbitant cost of phone calls and commissary items like dental floss and tortillas.

"They are compelled to do this," says Alan Benjamin, a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council who heard directly from striking workers during a call with the labor council. "It's not voluntary; it's compulsory work, without proper sanitation and equipment."

"The mold is terrible," adds Benjamin. "People are getting sick, one after the other."

Long-time prison organizer Kevin "Rashid" Johnson has published a new article describing how he and other prisoners have faced serious medical neglect from the prison system.

The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee have a new post about the issue of prison mail surveillance and censorship.

In Texas, Jason Walker has published a new article with important advice for prisoners on how to protect themselves during a violent cell extraction, and a former prisoner has now won over $27,000 in compensation after a 2007 incident where a Polunsky Unit guard paid a gang to beat him.

Prisoner resistance continues at the Jefferson City Correctional Center in Missouri, where a guard is now suing over a July attack by an inmate. The same prison also saw a larger-scale uprising in May.

Acts of prisoner resistance logged by Perilous Chronicle during August include an escape from Concordia Parish Correctional Facility in Louisiana, a riot and attack on guards at Coxasackie Correctional Facility in New York, an escape attempt at Morgan County Jail in Alabama, a protest by ICE detainees at Richwood Correctional Center in Louisiana, an escape from the Alcorn County Jail in Mississippi, a riot at the California Correctional Institution, an uprising at the Orleans Justice Center in Louisiana, a protest at the Erie County Jail in Ohio, a hunger strike at the Rhode Island Maximum Security Prison, an attack on guards and escape from the Lincoln County Jail in Washington, an uprising at the Ottawa County Jail in Oklahoma, a hunger strike among ICE detainees at the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility in New York, an escape from Chester County Jail in Tennessee, and a hunger strike at Harnett Correctional in North Carolina. The statement on It's Going Down also has contact details for how supporters can show solidarity with the Harnett hunger strike.

Abolitionist Media Projects

True Leap Press is running a fundraiser so they can afford to carry on sending reading materials into prisons. Scalawag Magazine has just published an article on the growing

incarceration rate among women in Texas, along with one on how research on prisons has only covered the male population. Truthout has published an essay by Kwaneta Harris, who was forced to work in Texas prison fields.

The San Francisco Bay View continues to publish prisoner writings on a regular basis, including an article on deadly heat conditions in Virginia prisons, a report on racist abuse by staff in the California prison system, and reflections on the tradition of Black August. The Bay View will be hosting an event in San Francisco on September 16th, celebrating the 90th birthday of the paper's founder, Willie Ratcliff, and launching new projects to keep the paper alive and thriving.

The Prisons Kill site has published a new report on the successful struggle to free Prakash Churaman from Rikers Island. Mongoose Distro has online copies of the first few issues of IB 64, a new mini-zine produced entirely by Pennsylvania prisoners.

Recent episodes of Kite Line Radio have included one on a mass transfer of Illinois prisoners due to a black mold problem, Keith Lamar on his recent hunger strike, and a two-part interview with former Black Liberation prisoner Zolo Azania.

International
It's Going Down has published an interview with Tameio, a solidarity fund for imprisoned revolutionaries in Greece. You can donate to their fundraising campaign here.

Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails have begun a mass hunger strike.

The International Antifascist Defence Fund are working with a woman trying to escape the Philippines after her colleagues were massacred by government-backed forces.

ABC Moscow continue to support anarchists and others resisting Putin's regime. As well as holding a public event for the international week of solidarity, they are working with defendants facing charges for arson attacks against government buildings such as Vladimir Zolotarev and Igor Paskar. Network case defendant Victor Filinkov has won some victories against the prison system's attempts to punish him with additional trumped-up disciplinary charges.

Siberian punks and anarchists continue to face new charges over both anti-war actions and clashes with right-wingers. Autonomous Action are fundraising so they can keep sharing vital updates from the anarchist movement in Russia.

In the UK, trials connected to the Bristol Kill the Bill riot are still continuing, with one defendant being given a 14-month sentence, while another managed to beat all the charges against her. There's also a major trial coming up in October, where defendants from the Palestine solidarity movement are facing charges of burglary, criminal damage and blackmail in connection to alleged actions against the Israeli arms company Elbit.

Haiti: The Ransom is Still Being Paid

By Robert Roth, Haiti Action Committee
SFBayView.com
June 2022

On May 20th, The New York Times published a meticulously documented series entitled, "The Ransom," detailing the devastating impact of the so-called "Independence Tax" enforced by France in 1825 on the world's first Black republic. As The Times reported, Haiti became the only place where the descendants of enslaved people were forced to pay compensation to the descendants of slave owners. With the first payment to France, Haiti had to shut down its nascent public school system. As the billions of dollars paid to France and then to U.S banks like Citicorp multiplied, Haiti's economy disintegrated.

The Times series comes nearly 20 years after the administration of then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide formally demanded $21.7 billion from France as restitution for the funds extorted from Haiti. Aristide's initiative was a key factor in France's cooperation and support for the U.S.-orchestrated coup that overthrew his democratically elected government. Mainstream media at the time, including The New York Times and The Washington Post, treated the demand as "quixotic" and a publicity stunt, as their reporters wrote one article after another demonizing the democratically elected Aristide administration, thus helping to lay the ideological justifications for the 2004 coup d'etat.

We do not anticipate self-criticism from The Times for its past reporting. Hardly. But as Times readers study the new series, they will hopefully demand to know more about the ways in which the U.S. and France continue to exploit Haiti's resources, dominate its political life and prop up the tiny, violent and corrupt Haitian elite that now rules the country. And they will hopefully call for an accurate accounting of the powerful Haitian grassroots movement that continues to fight for democracy and true sovereignty.

Take for example the recent uprising of Haiti's factory workers. On Feb. 17, 2022, thousands of Haitian garment workers, their families and supporters, filled the streets of Port-au-Prince to demand an end to starvation wages and horrific working conditions. The workers demanded a wage increase from 500 gourdes per 9-hour work day (approximately $4.80) to 1,500 gourdes per day (approximately $14.40). As the demonstrations continued throughout the next week, Haitian police fired on the crowds with tear gas canisters and live ammunition, killing a journalist and wounding many other protesters.

The garment strike came in the midst of double-digit inflation in Haiti, with the prices of food, fuel and other commodities soaring. To make matters worse, the government of de facto prime minister Ariel Henry recently announced that it would end fuel subsidies, leading to even higher prices. Workers chanted, “You raised the gas but didn’t raise our salaries.”

The strategy of the Henry government was classic counterinsurgency: Denounce the militancy of the protests, unleash police repression to terrorize the demonstrators, and offer a modest wage increase (to 770 gourdes a day) to quell the uprising. In numerous interviews, workers expressed their outrage over the government response, pointing out that the cost of traveling to and from their factory jobs alone took up 40% of their daily wage. Add to that the cost of food and housing and you have a daily fight to survive.

Who benefits from this sweatshop labor? Garment factories in Haiti supply T-shirts and other apparel to corporate giants like Target, the Gap, H&H Textiles, Under Armour and Walmart. Check out the label on your T-shirt. It may very well read, “Made in Haiti.”

None of this is new. During the dictatorial reign of Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier in the 1970s and 1980s, garment factories supplying U.S. companies set up shop throughout Port-au-Prince, while the government unleashed terror campaigns against labor organizers and any grassroots opposition.

In 1991, during Aristide’s first term as president, he was set to raise the minimum wage, when a U.S.-organized coup toppled his government only seven months into his presidency. In February of 2003, during his second administration, Aristide doubled the minimum wage, impacting the more than 20,000 people who worked in the Port-au-Prince assembly sector. The Aristide government provided school buses to take these workers’ children to school as well as subsidies for their school books and uniforms. In addition, his government launched a campaign to collect unpaid taxes and utility bills from Haiti’s wealthy elite. None of this sat well with Haiti’s factory owners, who played a key role in the U.S.-orchestrated 2004 coup d’etat.

The coup fast-tracked the implementation of the U.S.-imposed structural adjustment program, known in Haiti as the “Death Plan.”

Haiti is still living with the grim effects of that coup and the subsequent foreign occupation that enforced it. The coup fast-tracked the implementation of the U.S.-imposed structural adjustment program, known in Haiti as the “Death Plan.” Nowhere was this more apparent than during the aftermath of the catastrophic 2010 earthquake, which killed over 300,000 Haitians and left millions more under tarps and tents.

Shortly after the earthquake, then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton traveled to northern Haiti, declaring that “Haiti is now open for business,” as she hailed the inauguration of the Caracol Northern Industrial Park, now a key center of the garment industry and a target of the current labor protests and strikes. State Department cables obtained by Wikileaks revealed that Clinton and the State Department, along with USAID, were pressuring Haiti’s government to block any hike in the minimum wage, arguing that this would be detrimental to the development of the export sector. A series of compliant and corrupt Haitian regimes, selected and propped up by the U.S., have facilitated this plan, taking their cut along the way.

The ongoing battle of Haiti’s garment workers for survival and dignity is part of the broader popular movement in Haiti. The workers who are in the streets of Port-au-Prince return home at night to communities like Belair, Cite Soleil and Lasalin that have been targeted by Haitian police and paramilitary death squads, who have besieged them with massacres, kidnappings and gang rapes aimed at silencing their opposition to the current government.

The garment strike came just days after the term of de facto prime minister Ariel Henry officially ended on Feb. 7. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians demonstrated for months their opposition to the continuation of this regime, which they rightly classify as illegitimate, a creation of the so-called Core Group (the United States, France, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Canada, the EU, the UN and the OAS) that controls Haiti’s politics.

Numerous grassroots organizations, including Aristide’s Fanmi Lavalas Political Organization – the people’s party of Haiti – have called for a transitional government to end corruption, stop the repression, respect the rights of workers, stabilize the economy, and set the stage for free and fair elections. Yet the State Department has doubled down on its support for the Henry regime and has insisted that it supervise new elections. This would simply lead to one more stolen election designed to keep the ultra-right-wing PHTK (Skinhead) party in power.

In the midst of the disaster that the U.S. has helped to foster in Haiti, the Biden administration continues its unconscionable mass deportation of Haitians, with the numbers now exceeding 25,000 since Biden’s inauguration. Remember those horrifying images of border patrol agents whipping Haitian migrants last September? Now comes the news that those images have been memorialized in racist “challenge coins” being passed around by border patrol agents, proudly depicting those same attacks.

In the month of May alone, the Biden administration loaded up 36 planes to deport 4,000 Haitians. They return to the worst spate of kidnappings in Haiti’s history, where paramilitary groups have targeted with impunity everyone from market vendors to medical workers and teachers.

Only a fundamental change in Haiti of the kind envisioned,

articulated and fought for by Haiti's powerful grassroots movement, can reverse any of this. And the U.S. government, as it has been so often, is the biggest obstacle that stands in the way.

The ransom is still being paid. And reparations are long overdue.

Protests Erupt Across Haiti Against Hike In Fuel Prices

By Alex Johnson
wsws.org
September 2022

Haiti's capital city Port-au-Prince and other major cities reached a new level of turmoil this week as a result of mass protests against Prime Minister Ariel Henry's pledge to end fuel subsidies and raise gas prices. The crippling price hike comes after weeks of growing political opposition among Haiti's working class to the US puppet regime headed by Henry, the warring gangs representing rival sections of Haiti's kleptocracy and the nation's business elite.

Amid spiraling inflation and rising costs, the government announced Sunday that the price of a gallon of gasoline would rise from 250 gourdes ($2) to 570 gourdes ($4.78), while diesel prices would go up from 353 gourdes per gallon ($3) to 670 gourdes ($5.60). The price of a gallon of kerosene would rise from 352 gourdes ($3) to 665 gourdes ($5.57).

Thousands of demonstrators have blocked traffic throughout the capital with rocks and burnt tires, metal gates and other items. Video footage showed protesters targeting several banking institutions and others were filmed seizing hundreds of pounds of rice from a warehouse run by one of Haiti's biggest import companies. US media outlets have sought to slander the protesters as "looters" and championed police repression to quell the rebellion.

Anti-government protests had been building since last month when hundreds of workers descended on the capital demanding the resignation of Henry, a longtime asset of the US ruling class who was placed in power by the so-called Core Group, led by the ambassadors from the US, Canada, Germany, France, Spain, the EU and Brazil, amid a reshuffle of the government after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in July 2021.

This week's protests came on top of weeks of unrest caused by a slew of problems that have deepened the nation's economic crisis and the social devastation felt by millions of its toiling masses, including the devaluation of the local currency coupled with higher food prices, a lack of US dollars and the increasing shortages of gas and propane. Another central demand of the protesters is the ousting of Henry, whose regime has been mired in political criminality and scandals, the most notable being the widespread belief that he and other figures helped orchestrate Moise's assassination with the assistance of American intelligence.

The administration has claimed that its widely opposed austerity measure is needed to clamp down on inflation, which hit a 30.7 percent rate increase in July compared to 2021, and because the government could no longer afford to subsidize fuel, on which the government spends $400 million annually.

It is far more likely that Henry's effort to deepen mass impoverishment is not aimed at combating inflationary pressures but to broker future parasitic deals with lending agencies and financial institutions. In June, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) for Haiti to track its financial records and serve as a prerequisite for loan authorizations.

The IMF's report lamented the substantial sums the government was pouring into fuel subsidies and that this sector was absorbing at least one-third of Haiti's domestic revenues. The statement blames central bank financing as the reason behind spiraling inflation, noting, "Satisfactory performance under the SMP could lead to an IMF-supported program under a multi-year arrangement that would require approval of the IMF's Executive Board." What lies behind the SMP and Henry's clampdown on fiscal deficits is a desire to line the nation up for yet another round of debt and plunder by imperialist finance capital.

The ending of state subsidies will prove disastrous for millions that suffer from chronically low wages. The decades since the fall of the US-backed "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier dictatorships have seen American administrations, both Democrat and Republican, reconstruct Haiti into a vassal state protecting the investments and profits of US companies lured by starvation wages. In the face of large-scale demonstrations for higher pay in February, the government increased the minimum wage by 54 percent to less than $7.50 per day, which is far less than the still meager $15 per day that some workers had demanded.

The massive earthquake in 2010 plunged the nation deeper into poverty and the only response since on the part of Haiti's venal political elite has been to act in the interest of US multinational corporations and Haiti's oligarchy. Gilbert Bigio, Haiti's

sole billionaire and head of the industrial conglomerate GB Group, presides over a virtual monopoly of the Haitian steel market while the average Haitian steel worker is paid around 34,000 gourde ($300) a month. Dozens of American garment and textile companies generate mountains of profit from the unlivable wages workers receive in Haiti's sweatshops.

The social upheaval has intersected with immense political instability wracking the country, as Henry heads a de facto dictatorship since the government failed to organize presidential elections after his term ended on February 7. The political crisis and protest movement has evoked concerns among the imperialist powers, above all the United States and Canada, that the demonstrations could lead in a revolutionary direction while foreign policymakers are questioning Henry's ability to suppress opposition.

Susan D. Page, a former special representative of the UN secretary general in Haiti and former head of the deadly United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) operation, floated the notion earlier this month that Henry's ruling coalition of the Musseau Accord be replaced by another layer of equally privileged and corrupt bankers' politicians and journalists that comprise Musseau's arch rival, the Montana Accord.

In an article published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Page referred to the Montana Accord as "a broad group of Haitian citizens [which] has coalesced to form a roadmap to the restoration of democratic norms without the interference of foreign powers. For the United States, working in greater partnership with such organizations … could help restore Haitian confidence."

Page's comments echo a piece written by former National Endowment for Democracy (NED) vice president George Fauriol, which was published by the Washington think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies in February.

Highlighting the "near collapse of Haitian public authority," the article is a road map for regime change. Fauriol lauded the Montana Accord for generating "a plausible transition formula out of the crisis" and establishing ties with a political coalition made up the Protocole d'Entente Nationale (PEN), a coalition of some 70 political organizations and groups.

The protest movement has also triggered renewed calls from Caribbean political officials that Washington and the other imperialist powers intervene in Haiti through another colonial-style military intervention paralleling the United Nations "peacekeeping" forces that were deployed under the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) after the 2010 earthquake. In a meeting this week with Vice President Kamala Harris, US lawmakers and leaders of the Organization of American States, Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader warned that Haiti's crisis was approaching "a low-intensity civil war."

Another component of the crisis is the acceleration of gang violence organized by the notorious G9 Family and Allies gang, which is run by former policeman Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier. Cherizier has longstanding ties to a section of Haiti's bourgeoisie represented by the Haitian Tèt Kale Party (PHTK), which includes the Clinton-backed puppet regime of former president of Michel "Sweet Mickey" Martelly and Moise, the latter being notorious for unleashing such forces in violent crackdowns against popular opposition to his presidency.

Over the past several months G9 has routed Haiti's frail security forces and police, seizing control of significant chunks of territory including much of the shantytown of Cité Soleil. The gang wrested control of the city after significant gun fighting against G-Pep, the next largest gang federation in the country.

Although posturing as opponents to Henry and claiming to lead a popular "revolution" in response to the Moise's assassination, G9 has been utilized to crush opposition and consolidate power for Haiti's business elite. Earlier this month, Cherizier's G9 led a violent assault in Cité Soleil, where resistance has broken out in the face of extreme repression and where several local activist groups have organized mass protests.

Christella Delva, a 17-year-old student protester, was killed by the gang with a bullet to the head, while two young Haitian journalists, Tayson Lartigue and Frantzsen Charles, were also killed by G9 while returning from an interview with the parents of Delva.

The ubiquitous gang violence and kidnappings along with the entrenched corruption of Haiti's ruling class serve as components for maintaining capitalist rule in Haiti, whose chief headmasters, US and European imperialism, have for decades utilized such forces to enforce a climate of brutal social inequality, political oppression and squalor. The demand of Abinader for a "peacekeeping" intervention is part and parcel of US imperialism's continued domination of Haiti, which can be traced back to the 1915-34 US occupation and the series of bloody invasions and violent dictatorships directed against Haiti's insurgent working class.

After a massive nationwide rebellion deposed "Baby Doc" Duvalier's dictatorship in 1986, the CIA orchestrated the overthrow of theologian-priest Jean Bertrand-Aristide in the early 1990s, while Washington used Haiti's army and remnants of the Duvalier's Tonton Macoutes paramilitary as its principal instruments for terrorizing the population. Upon returning to power, Aristide's pledge to carry out piecemeal reforms while accommodating imperialism did nothing to prevent the US, Canada and France from kidnapping the former president and transporting him on a plane destined for the remote Central African Republic in 2004.

In the face of demands for new elections, a warning must be

made that in countries of belated capitalist development such as Haiti there is no section of the national bourgeoisie that is capable of or willing to wage a revolutionary struggle against imperialism that is needed to secure the elementary democratic and social aspirations of the workers and toilers.

No illusions should be held in Aristide and nationalist parties such as his Lavalas, which itself carried out IMF and World Bank demands for "structural adjustment" policies, inundated Haiti with US goods and privatized profitable government-owned companies. Aristide headed a regime that for the masses of Haitian workers meant further destitution and the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs.

Aristide has continued this role since the coup, as he met with Henry at the former's Tabarre home as part of the prime minister's efforts to form an alliance with several middle-class groups and enlist their efforts to derail social opposition. Two weeks prior, Aristide hosted Helen La Lime, the former US ambassador to Angola and current special representative of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), at his home, revealing the deep ties the Lavalas leader maintains with imperialism.

The Haitian working class masses must sever all its ties with nationalist forces and establish its political independence from all factions of the national bourgeoisie while leading the oppressed masses in a revolutionary struggle for socialism in unison with workers throughout the Caribbean, the Americas and globally.

Iranian Anarchists on Protests in Response to Police Murder of Mahsa Amini

From ItsGoingDown.org
September 2022

Black Rose Anarchist Federation speaks with members of the Federation of Anarchism Era, an organization with members in both Iran and Afghanistan, about the recent uprising in Iran.

On September 13th, 2022, 22 year old Mahsa Amini was arrested by an Iranian Guidance Patrol (also known as 'morality police'). Mahsa was arrested in Tehran for not abiding by laws relating to dress. Three days later, on September 16th, police informed Mahsa's family that she had "experienced heart failure" and had fallen into a coma for two days before passing away.

Eyewitness accounts, including that of her own brother, make clear that she was brutally beaten during her arrest. Leaked medical scans indicate that she had experienced a brain hemorrhage and stroke—trauma induced injuries which ultimately led to her death.

In the days since these details were revealed publicly, mass demonstrations have broken out across Iran decrying Mahsa's murder at the hands of the police.

To better understand this rapidly changing situation, we conducted a very brief interview with the Federation of Anarchism Era, an organization with sections in Iran and Afghanistan.

This interview was conducted between the dates of 9/20/22 and 9/23/22.

Black Rose / Rosa Negra (BRRN): First, please give a brief description of the Anarchist Federation of Era.

Federation of Anarchism Era (FAE): The Federation of Anarchism Era is a local anarchist federation active in so-called Iran, Afghanistan, and beyond.

Our federation is based on the Synthesis Anarchism, accepting all anarchist tendencies except nationalist, religious, capitalist, and pacifist tendencies. Our many years of organizing experience within extremely oppressive environments like Iran have led us to develop and utilize insurrectionist organizational tactics and philosophy.

We are an atheist organization, viewing religion as a hierarchical structure that is more ancient and enduring than almost all other authoritarian systems and much too similar to capitalism and other authoritarian social structures enslaving humanity today. Class warfare, from our perspective, includes warring against the clergy class who rob us of our freedom and self-autonomy by defining the sacred & taboo and enforcing them by coercion and violence.

BRRN: Who was Mahsa Amini? When, why, and how was she killed?

FAE: Mahsa Amini, know by her family as Zhina, was an ordinary 22-year-old Kurdish girl from the city of Saghez (Saqez) in Kurdistan.

She traveled with her family to Tehran to visit families. On

September 13th, while with her brother, Kiaresh Amini, the morality police or the so-called "Guidance Patrol" arrested Mahsa for "improper hijab." Her brother tried to resist the arrest, but the police used tear gas and beat Kiaresh as well.

Many other arrested women witnessed what happened in the police van. Along the way to the police station, there was an argument between detainee women and police officers. Mahsa Amini was one of the girls protesting their arrest. She was saying she was not from Tehran and should be let go.

The police used physical violence to shut all the detainee women up. Mahsa was beaten as well. The eyewitnesses said the police officers hit Mahsa's head hard to the side of the police van.

She was still conscious when she arrived at Moral Security Agency, but the other detained women noticed that she looked unwell. The police were completely indifferent and accused her of acting. The women kept protesting to help Mahsa get the medical attention she needed. The protests were met with violence from the police. Mahsa Amini was beaten severely by police again and lost consciousness then.

Police then took notice and attempted to revive her by pumping her chest and raising and massaging her legs. After those attempts failed, the police attacked other women to confiscate all cellphones and cameras that may have recorded the incident.

After much delay and finding the lost keys to the ambulance, Mahsa was taken to Kasra Hospital.

The clinic which admitted Mahsa Amini claimed in an Instagram post that Mahsa was brain dead when she was admitted. That Instagram post was later deleted.

On September 14th, a Twitter account with a friend working in Kasra Hospital told the story that the police threatened the doctors, nurses, and staff not to take any pictures or video evidence and to lie to Mahsa's parents about the cause of the death. The hospital, being intimidated, complied with the police. They lied to the parents that she was in an "accident" and kept her on life-support for two days. Mahsa was declared dead on September 16th. Her cause of death from the medical scans, leaked by hacktivists, shows bone fractures, hemorrhage, and brain edema.

BRRN: Did Mahsa's identity as a Kurd play a role in her arrest and death?

FAE: Undoubtedly, being a Kurd in Tehran played a role in Mahsa's eventual death. But, this is a reality all women in Iran experience. We don't need to look far to find video footage of the morality police beating and forcing women into police vans, throwing women out on the street from a moving car, and being harassed by Hijabi women for their "improper hijab." Those videos show just a tiny fraction of the hell women experience in Iran.

Mahsa being with her brother on the day of her arrest was not random happenstance. In Iran's patriarchal society, women should bring a male relative, whether a father, husband, brother, or cousin, along with on their business to ward off the morality police and discourage any surly individuals in public. Young couples can't be seen too close to each other in public or risk being beaten and arrested by the morality police. Relatives needed to have documents as proof of their claims to the police. Arresting women for lipsticks and nail polish was a reality many of us millennials in Iran remember vividly.

The threat of acid attacks for "bad hijab" is another nightmare women endure in Iran.

Patriarchy and religious autocracy affect all women.

BRRN: How did the Iranian people learn of Mahsa's death? What was the initial popular response?

FAE: As we elaborated earlier, there were too many eyewitnesses. No amount of threats could have stopped the story of Mahsa's death from leaking.

It is worth mentioning the doctor attending Mahsa and the photojournalist documenting Mahsa's condition and her family in distress, were both arrested, and their current status is unknown.

The initial response was outrage. People were already sharing Mahsa's story from September 14th. The outrage was not yet strong enough for protests and revolts. People still thought Mahsa was in a coma, and there was hope for her recovery. Then, She was declared dead on September 16th.

First, there were small protests at Kasra Hospital, which were scattered by the police. The sparks of the current uprising were lit in Saghez, Mahsa's hometown.

BRRN: What is the scale of the current demonstrations? In what areas of the country have the demonstrations been concentrated?

The situation is very dynamic and changing exceptionally rapidly. At the time of writing this, the flames of the uprising have set 29 out of 31 provinces of Iran on fire. One of the characteristics of this uprising is that it spread to major cities across Iran, such as Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Ahvaz, Rasht, and others fast.

Qom and Mashhad, the ideological strongholds of the regime, have joined the uprising. Kish island, the capitalist and commerce center of the regime, has also revolted. This is the most diverse uprising we have witnessed in the last few years.

On September 23rd, the syndicalists are planning a general strike in favor of the protests.

The regime has an armed demonstration planned on the same day. A lot is happening.

BRRN: How has the Iranian state responded to these demonstrations?

The regime's initial response was less brutal than we experienced before. One reason is that they got caught off-guard. They didn't expect this strong response. The more important reason is that Ibrahim Raisi is at the UN. The lack of senior authority figures, publicized story of Mahsa and protests, and the pressure on the government being watched by the international community have stopped the massacre for now.

Don't get us wrong. Police killed and injured many people from day one of the protests. Some among them were 10 years old children and 15 years old teenagers. But, we experienced November 2019 when the regime massacred many thousands of people in 3 days.

In all the previous uprisings, the police were not directly the target of the ire of people. Not this time. They are the baddie this time, and people are out for their blood. This wears them down physically and mentally, which we take as good news.

Right now, Saghez and Sanandaj are experiencing ruthless suppression. The regime has brought tanks and heavy military vehicles to suppress the uprising there. There are many reports of live ammunition being shot at protestors.

The protests are still going. The police cars are being flipped. The police stations were scaled and burned down. We just need to arm ourselves by looting their armory. Then, we enter another phase of revolt altogether.

BRRN: Is it accurate to call these demonstrations feminist in character?

FAE: Yes, Absolutely. Like all other uprisings, there were developments and movements beneath the surface.

It can be said that the recent crackdown on the Hijab and increased brutality of the morality police started in response to Iranian women's spontaneous, autonomous, and feminist self-organization. Earlier this year, women in Iran began to black-list and boycott people and businesses, such as cafes, that strictly enforce the Hijab. The movement was decentralized and leaderless, aimed at creating safe spaces for women and members of the LGBTQ community.

That brutal oppression culminated at this moment where women are at the forefront everywhere, burning their scarves and beating down cops without Hijab. The main slogan of the uprising is also "Woman, Life, Freedom," a slogan from Rojava, a society whose ambitions are based on anarchist, feminist, and secular ideology.

BRRN: What political elements (organizations, parties, groups) are present in the demonstrations, if any?

FAE: Many organizations, parties, and groups attempt to appropriate or influence the protests for their benefit at every uprising.

The majority of them ran into an unscalable problem during this uprising.

First, The monarchists. Reza Pahlavi, the deadbeat son of so very dead previous Shah of Iran, an individual being propped up by stolen money and media networks outside Iran, called for a national day of mourning amidst public outrage and initial protests instead of using his resources to assist the revolt. People finally saw him for the charlatan that he is. "Death to oppressors, whether Shah or Leader," was heard all across Iran.

Then, MEK or Mujahedin Kalq. MEK has an ideological problem with this uprising. They are a cult whose women members are forced to wear red scarves. Their origin story is from combining Marxist and Islamic ideologies, hijacked by Marxist-Leninists before 1979, to the cult in service of capitalist and imperialist states today. Yet, the women in Iran are burning their headscarves and Quran. They have no say in this political climate.

Then, there are communist parties who despise Rojava and always speak ill of it. Their debunked and rusty class analysis doesn't help them win hearts here.

With all their talks and propaganda of being proponents of secularism and feminism, they didn't even have one slogan geared toward women's liberation. And their ideology prevented them from chanting "Women, Life, Freedom." They had nothing to say, so they shut up. Thanks to that, their presence is much weaker in the protests today.

The Anarchist movement is growing in Iran. This uprising, being leaderless, feminist, anti-authoritarianism, and chanting Rojava slogans, led to anarchists, affiliated and unaffiliated with the federation, having a strong presence in this uprising. Unfortunately, many have been arrested and injured as well.

We are working to realize the anticapitalist potential of this movement. Because the Islamic Republic is a death cult and religion, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism are its ideological pillars. For us to live, we need to be free; and that can't be done without women's liberation at the forefront.

BRRN: In solidarity. Thank you for your time.

FAE: Solidarity.

Freedom For Political Prisoners In Colombia

From ItsGoingDown.org
August 2022

The following is a fundraising call for the hundreds of political prisoners from the 2021 uprising in Colombia, initiated by a collective of groups in the so-called U.S. and Colombia. Donate here.

Changes are afoot in Colombia, and the inauguration of President Gustavo Petro and Vice President Francia Marquez on August 7 marks an important shift away from decades of right-wing rule.

However, more than 300 people accused of participating in the 2021 uprising remain locked up and/or are facing harsh sentences on trumped-up charges. The months-long uprising played a huge role in creating the conditions for the election of Petro and Marquez by exposing the failures of neoliberal capitalism and the determination of people to resist state violence.

We founded the Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective to support them.

Background:

In April 2021, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in Colombia to demand change. They rejected decades of state violence and capitalist reforms that deepened inequality. Over the course of three months, the largest uprising in Colombian history spread to over 800 municipalities throughout the country. The demonstrators fed one another, provided free health care, opened libraries, toppled colonial monuments, and held concerts at the newly formed Resistance Points behind the barricades.

The state responded to this popular expression of freedom with brutal force. The numbers cannot account for the totality of the violence, but they do provide a haunting insight into the scale:

- More than 40 people were murdered by state forces:
- More than 100 people were forcibly disappeared.
- More than 25 people were subjected to sexual violence by police forces.
- Thousands more were injured.

It bears repeating that the United States government has provided Colombia with approximately $11 billion in primarily military aid over the course of the last 25 years.

Even after the activity on the streets faded, the state continued to persecute and prosecute the people it believed to be involved in the demonstrations. Authorities are trying to discourage future resistance movements by condemning the participants in the 2021 uprising to long sentences. The dismal conditions and overcrowding in Colombia's prisons aggravate this explicit form of intimidation and repression. For example, on May 31, 2022, a prison fire in Tulua (Valle del Cauca) killed over 50 people, including one political prisoner from the uprising.

Our Work:

We formed the Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective to struggle for the freedom of all political prisoners from the uprising, and we need your support!

The money raised from this campaign will directly support political prisoners from the Resistance Points in Cali – the epicenter of the uprising.

The funds will be used for the following items:

Legal fees associated with the pro bono defense of political prisoners of the uprising in Cali;

Humanitarian support for the families of the political prisoners;

Commissary for incarcerated political prisoners.

To highlight one of the cases, Carolina Montaño Cuero is a political prisoner. She is a black mother and nurse in her early 20s. Throughout the uprising, she was a spokesperson at the Paso del Aguante Resistance Point and struggled to advocate for her community. She is currently facing a fifty-year prison sentence based on false claims that she murdered a police officer, and her trial is quickly approaching. Despite maintaining her innocence, she has been held in pre-trial detention since October 2021. Like Carolina, five other people from the Paso del Aguante Resistance Point face similar charges for the same crime.

Our campaign is based on more than a decade of collaboration with social movements in the region. We are working directly with pro bono lawyers, resistance points, and local organizations.

The Freedom for Political Prisoners of the Uprising in Colombia Collective consists of the following organizations and collectives:

In the United States:

- Black Alliance for Peace
- National Lawyers' Guild – San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
- Woodbine

In Colombia:

- Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
- Punto de Resistencia del Paso del Aguante
- Trabajo y Justicia – Grupo Jurídico, Cali Colombia

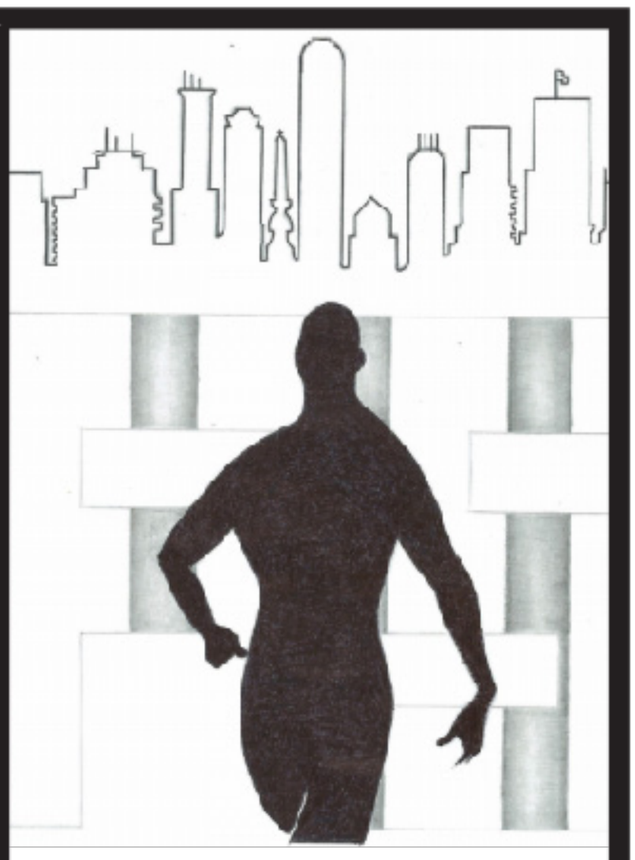
For more *prisoner advocacy & prison abolition*, check out:

Green Star Families

Green Star Families of Indiana on Facebook

KITE LINE

KiteLineRadio.org



FocusReentry.com

Prison Legal Support Network

w/ Indiana NLG

IDOCWatch.org/prison-legal

SupportPrisonLives.org

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