

TIME/CUT

Indiana Prison Newsletter

Issue 4 • Spring 2021

The New Afrikan
Independence Movement

Uprisings in Haiti & Algeria

National Shut 'Em Down
Demonstrations

The Loss of Tranell Nash

Reservations and COVID-19

Midwest Revolutionary
Abolitionist Movement

& more

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is a publication for Indiana prisoners and their family and friends. It includes news, thoughts, and helpful resources from inside and outside the walls and around the world. The articles in the publication do not necessarily reflect on its contributors, creators, or distributors. Its contents are for informational purposes only. Time/Cut does not provide legal assistance or romantic arrangements.

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Please write to us for a catalogue of other articles and texts related to surviving prison. This publication is free to friends and family of prisoners in Indiana. If you do not already receive it but want to, please write us and we will add you to our mailing list. If you wish to stop receiving it, write us and we'll take you off. **If your incarcerated loved ones would like to receive the inside version, please send us their address.** Thanks for reading!

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Twenty-Five Years After the Lucasville Uprising, Its Survivors Are Leading a New Prison Resistance Movement

*from TruthOut.org by Colleen Hackett & Ben Turk
April 2018*

This month marks the 25th anniversary of the Lucasville Uprising, the longest prison revolt involving fatalities to occur in the history of the United States. Survivors of this 11-day prisoner takeover of the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) have been active and inspiring participants in the present movement for prisoners' rights, gaining attention that was unavailable to them in 1993. In light of the growing momentum in prisoner uprisings, including the recent South Carolina prison riot that was the deadliest in the past 25 years, the Lucasville Uprising offers timely lessons on the interplay between repressive state forces and prisoner-led movements.

The Lucasville Uprising often gets lost in the retelling of prison rebellions because it occurred during the prison boom, a period of accelerating mass incarceration during which the widespread use of "three strikes" policies began, long-term solitary confinement grew into Supermax prisons, and prison construction and expansion skyrocketed.

Dan Berger and Toussaint Losier describe these years, from 1980 to 1998, in their new book *Rethinking the American Prison Movement* as a "largely bleak period for the prison movement ... splintering the elements that had made [it] a potent force," while prison rebels "found it more difficult to sustain the broad coalition that had been a key part of earlier phases of the movement." Unlike Attica and other uprisings occurring during the civil rights era, or the present wave of prison strikes, the state's narrative about Lucasville as a "dangerous riot" dominated coverage, overshadowing the political nature of the uprising and the prisoner's legitimate grievances. Lucasville survivors continue to struggle against this shadow today.

The Takeover at Lucasville

The first wave of prisoner-led resistance actions occurred during the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1971 Attica Uprising is perhaps the most well-known of those rebellions, often remembered for the scale and sheer horror of its final day. After four days of protest, state and local police forces retook the prison, fatally shooting 29 prisoners and 10 guards and staffers while wounding more than 100.

The Lucasville Uprising came after the end of the civil rights era of prisoner resistance, when uprisings, occupations and sustained stand-offs with the authorities were common, yet before the contemporary prisoner-led movement that has emphasized coordinated actions across prisons.

The uprising resulted from the imposition of repressive policies in the facility, dubbed "Operation Shakedown" by SOCF Warden Arthur Tate. This series of changes encouraged snitching, saw forced rivals cell together, strictly enforced arbitrary rules and tolerated zero dissent or complaints. This turned SOCF into a powder keg of simmering violence. When a group of Muslim prisoners took a stand for their religious freedom, this powder keg exploded. Prisoners attacked guards, unlocked doors and expanded the protest into an entire cellblock occupation and hostage situation.

Eleven days later, nine prisoners and one guard had been killed, but prisoner leaders managed to get the state to accept to a list of 21 demands in exchange for a peaceful surrender rather than repeating the National Guard raid that caused so much bloodshed at Attica. Instead, the state's revenge came after the surrender. Ohio indicted more than 40 prisoners, destroyed the bulk of physical evidence, and bribed or threatened some prisoners into testifying against those who led the negotiations, clearly violating the conditions of surrender they had agreed to. Five men were sentenced to death, and dozens more to long sentences — mostly on the basis of informant testimony, often before biased juries in communities that are economically dependent on prison jobs.

Ohio also overhauled its prison system and implemented highly controlled prison settings, a trend occurring throughout the US in the mid- and late-1990s. Officials advocated for the construction of Ohio State Penitentiary, a new Supermax prison outside of Youngstown, as a direct result of the Lucasville Uprising, where many of those convicted of uprising-related charges have now spent decades in solitary. In Ohio and elsewhere, prison regimes adopted long-term solitary confinement as a means to isolate prisoner leaders and quell any attempts at coordinated resistance.

Starting in 2010, prisoners disrupted that trend by organizing a resurgent wave of resistance actions across the US, despite their highly controlled environments, shutting down prisons and coordinating massive protests across Georgia, followed by California and Alabama, and then a nationwide strike on the 45th anniversary of the Attica Uprising on September 9, 2016. Since 2016, we've seen a continual increase in coordinated protests, uprisings and national calls to action that show no sign of stopping. A new era of prisoner resistance has begun, and the survivors of the Lucasville Uprising continue to play a major role.

Lucasville Survivors Continue to Resist

Less than a month after the 2010 work stoppages in Georgia, three Lucasville survivors on death row — Imam

Siddique Hasan, Jason Robb and Keith LaMar — started a hunger strike at Ohio State Penitentiary to protest their convictions and the inhumane conditions of their incarceration. These three prisoners had each spent 19 years in solitary confinement at that point, with no human contact, no access to legal resources and few opportunities to communicate with each other or the outside world.

The 13-day hunger strike was remarkable because they won. They successfully leveraged media attention and support, including the backing of Staughton and Alice Lynd. These renowned activist-lawyers and historians helped prisoners sue the Ohio State Penitentiary years prior, filed appeals for George Skatzes, another Lucasville death row prisoner, and wrote a compelling history of Lucasville. At the time, the Lynds were also in communication with prisoners resisting solitary confinement at the Pelican Bay Secure Housing Unit (SHU) in California. Hearing of the solidarity both during the 1993 uprising, in the Georgia work-stoppage and in this successful Supermax hunger strike, a core group of Pelican Bay SHU prisoners were inspired to start the first California hunger strike six months later.

The Lucasville survivors continued to struggle, engaging in multiple hunger strikes between 2011 and 2016, consistently defending and expanding the concessions they'd won during the first hunger strike. Whenever a hunger strike or work stoppage occurred elsewhere, the Lucasville survivors and their outside supporters would discuss it and try to reach out to the participants. Imam Hasan encouraged his supporters to push for national coordination at every opportunity, often finding other prisoners who were talking about the same thing. In 2015, after connecting with Free Alabama Movement prisoners, outside support networks grew strong enough to make that coordination a reality. Prisoners chose September 9 as a national day of action and put the call together as rebellions and strikes in Alabama and Texas demonstrated their timeliness.

Media Attention

In contemporary prison rebellions, one of the oft-stated goals for prisoner organizers is to gain greater attention from the media, especially in mainstream outlets. Because prisons are purposefully hidden from public view, and the punishments inside obscured by administrators, prison rebels understand the virtues of employing a “strategy of visibility,” to highlight their grievances and/or demands, according to Dan Berger’s 2014 book, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era*. Imprisoned organizers use a variety of tactics to express their political voices and create alternative civic spaces to combat the extreme social and physical isolation embedded in current prison regimes.

“It starts with the people’s support,” Greg Curry, another

Lucasville Uprising survivor, said over the phone, “and then the media amplifies the people’s support. I think the internet and the people’s support is the biggest thing, they allow us to be heard. And if not heard, at least allowed to be in a situation where we can’t be ignored.”

In the current wave of struggle, contraband cell phones and independent media have played major roles, allowing prisoners to release videos and statements depicting both the terrible conditions they endure and the acts of resistance in which they engage. Lacking this technology in 1993, Lucasville rebels had to use other innovative methods of communication.

The planned Muslim protest strategy at Lucasville was to barricade one cell pod and demand access to media outlets to air their grievances and bring more oversight from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction’s (ODRC) central office. When this action spontaneously expanded to the taking of a full cellblock and nine hostages, the prisoners’ desire for media attention shifted from an objective of the protest to a defense tactic.

Recognizing that coverage would prevent the Ohio National Guard from coming in shooting, the prisoners tried to communicate with reporters directly. They hung sheets out of the windows, came into the yard with an enormous white flag and rigged up loudspeakers. The state responded first by using helicopters to cover the prisoners’ voices, then by cutting electricity and water to the occupied block. It wasn’t until the body of correctional officer Robert Vallandingham appeared on the yard that the state accepted negotiating with the prisoners.

Through negotiations and the one-by-one release of additional hostages, the Lucasville prisoners won access to a news reporter, who would enter the facility to take statements and describe the situation. Later, they would also negotiate access to public radio and television addresses. This process allowed the prisoners to both disseminate their 21 demands, many of which were that the ODRC simply follow its own rules. The negotiations additionally exposed the prison to several embarrassments, including one hostage guard converting to Islam during the uprising — a Black man who worked at this white-staffed, rural southern Ohio prison and who went on to publicly criticize the administration.

Unfortunately, these remarkable events didn’t gain much exposure from the media establishment, which remained largely unsympathetic to prisoners’ concerns and well-being. It wasn’t until D. Jones’s *Shadow of Lucasville* documentary film came out 20 years later that the uprising received the kind of multimedia exposure that our current media environment would have produced immediately.

Instead, mid-'90s news outlets eagerly released unconfirmed reports of "bodies stacking up" in a bloody race war that prison authorities had expected, but that prisoner leaders actually mitigated. After the rebellion was over, this media establishment helped Ohio galvanize public outrage about the 10 deaths, particularly around the fatality of officer Vallandingham, creating a new spectacle to obscure the picture of SOCF that prisoner negotiators had exposed.

This experience helped Lucasville prisoners understand the complex relationship between mainstream, alternative and social media platforms, despite their decades of restricted access to most forms of media. Independent media coverage of the prison strike announcement and the concurrent actions in the South soon generated enough attention that mainstream media outlets were compelled to cover the story.

Since the 2016 nationally coordinated work stoppages, the alternative media landscape has grown and/or expanded to include more coverage of prison struggles and abolitionism. By strategically using these platforms, Lucasville survivors and others have been able to reach mainstream outlets even 25 years after the uprising to voice the injustices found in Ohio prisons and beyond. The more that prison rebels link their own struggles to different examples of oppression and resistance, the less able prison authorities are to dismiss or frame prison rebellions as anomalies.

Negotiating Demands

Prisoner-led movements are often faced with the challenge of issuing demands and holding the authorities to concessions. In Lucasville, the prisoners negotiated through the fences during the standoff, with the help of trusted civil rights attorney Niki Schwartz. They got the state to accept a 21-point agreement to reform the system and peacefully conclude the uprising — an agreement that prison authorities promptly violated, eroding their credibility and any motivation for peaceful resolutions to future disturbances. Upset by how he was manipulated by the state and the injustices faced by the prisoner survivors, Schwartz continues to advocate for them to this day.

Negotiation with unreliable and dishonest prison officials continues to obstruct progress of the prisoner-led movement today. In 2011, California strikers in Pelican Bay ended their first hunger strike when the state promised reform and conceded a few minor demands as a gesture of good faith. Prisoners had to resume and expand the strike repeatedly over the next two years because prison officials didn't follow through, eventually leading to the 30,000 participant rolling hunger strike from July to September of 2013. Two people died on hunger strike, pressuring California prison officials' to fulfill their promises. The

much larger and longer wave of hunger strikes ended not with concessions by the prison authorities, but with the prisoners winning a lawsuit. The limited gains of this lawsuit were significantly eroded within the first year.

Lucasville prisoners found themselves in a similar situation in 2013. Hasan, LaMar, Robb and Curry went on a hunger strike demanding access to on-camera interviews with media in coordination with the 20th anniversary Re-Examining Lucasville Conference. When the ACLU offered to file a lawsuit, the prisoners, like those in California, ended their hunger strike, moving their protest into the courts. The ACLU has backed out of the case after further review, but independent pro-bono attorneys continue to pursue it.

In Ohio, California and elsewhere, prisoners continue to struggle with a lack of good options when their reasonable humanitarian demands are stonewalled by prison officials. From 2011 to the present day, Lucasville prisoners have adopted a long view of struggle. By using numerous hunger strikes and rallying committed support, they've gained concessions from officials in writing, which they must defend through persistent daily interactions with staff. These imprisoned rebels have charted a course to attain gradual and progressive victories, which connects them with humanity, but they have yet to win anything like justice or basic human rights.

In a phone call with the Truthout, Robb describes this process as a long fight to assert prisoners' basic humanity: For people to actually see us for who we really are, and us being ourselves ... that's the power. Take away that stigma and disinformation ... because we've been able to do that, [we have] changed things. I understand why it's frustrating. It's aggravating. You have to be comfortable with who you are and realize what you are able to live with and not live with. ... Are you willing to die to be treated like a human being? I am. In a heartbeat. By any means.

State Retaliation

As described above, the state of Ohio broke the peace agreement and went after negotiators. While Schwartz recruited the best possible lawyers, the state used underhanded means to remove them. Informants were recruited and Anthony Lavelle, the prisoner Staughton Lynd believes was most likely to have actually killed the guard, testified against the other prisoner leaders. This is how prosecutors secured their death penalty convictions despite, as prosecutor Daniel Hogan later admitted in an interview with D. Jones, that we may never "know who hands-on killed the Corrections Officer Vallandingham." There is a massive amount of carefully presented evidence to suggest the re-opening of these cases.

For example, despite faulty informant testimony and manufactured evidence against death row Lucasville prisoner Keith LaMar, the courts denied him the same access to re-examine evidence that had been granted other Lucasville defendants, and rejected his appeal in the midst of the 2011 hunger strike. LaMar's words about the strike were being published online nationally at the time, leading supporters to suspect the decision was a form of retaliation. In a later hearing, a judge said LaMar's claim that the evidence against him was provided by informants who were coached and bribed with extra privileges was "meritless."

Hasan and the prisoner negotiators were careful to protect themselves. In a personal correspondence, Hasan said, "We know that throughout the history of prisoner uprisings, the prison authorities get very upset. They become very vindictive and they throw their own playbook out of the window. ... The prison authorities want to become the judge, the jury and the executioner themselves. So they jump on people, they kill people, they come up with excuses and they try to make false justifications as to why prisoners are injured. So we wanted religious leaders and the media to witness it so that we did not have to worry about being assaulted during the initial stages of surrender. In addition to that, we wanted people to be given medical treatment, because then you would have photos of how people were, most of them didn't have their faces busted or severe injuries. So if something happened to them after the fact, then it would be safe to say it was a result of retaliation."

Curry, Lamar and the hundreds of prisoners who surrendered on the yard the first night of the uprising had a different experience, even though they were outside when the uprising started. "We were ordered to line up and march into K-block's gym," LaMar describes in his book *Condemned*, "Where we were stripped naked and forced, with our hands now fastened behind our backs, to sit on the cold floor like animals." Later they were moved in groups of 10, still naked, into cells designed for one person and deprived of food for at least 24 hours. In that cell, William Bowling killed Dennis Weaver in a fight over sandwiches when food was finally delivered. LaMar's non-cooperation with investigators about this murder is what led to his targeting by prosecutors and death penalty conviction before an all-white jury.

Like LaMar, Curry was on the yard when the uprising started and surrendered the first night, but having refused to cooperate with investigators, he was likewise targeted. At a trial full of informant testimony and outright lies by prosecutors, the jury gave him life without parole instead of the death penalty. So guards set out to finish what the prosecutors were unable to do, promptly attacking Curry with harassment and confinement in a "sweatbox" cell with

no ventilation, food or air conditioning for an extended period of time. Curry attributes this retaliation to the state's desire to obliterate any sign of rebellion.

Lessons of Violence

Lucasville teaches us to expect the criminal legal system to work hand-in-hand with correctional officers' drive for revenge against prison rebels. Laws exist for purposes entirely unrelated to justice, and the utmost attention must be paid to the aftermath of any prisoner resistance action. For example, 16 prisoners were indicted for the single murder at Vaughn Correctional Center after the brief takeover in February 2017.

Nowadays, Hasan and Jason stress the use of nonviolent tactics, hoping that appearing sympathetic to liberal publics will protect prisoner rebels from retaliation, but this hasn't always proven to be true. Nonviolent marchers at Kinross Correctional Facility in Michigan report being hit with tear gas canisters point blank and hogtied in the rain for hours after their September 9 demonstration. Cesar DeLeon and LaRon McKinley were force-fed for more than seven months to break their hunger strike in Wisconsin. Kelvin Stevenson was nearly beaten to death with a hammer for participation in the nonviolent Georgia work stoppage. Countless other prisoners across the country have been transferred to the torture of long-term solitary confinement, deprived of food and harassed in forms more diverse than we can recount here. These are just the stories that escape correctional facilities and public records embargoes.

The survivors of Lucasville recognize that what matters most is the court of public opinion, which compels them to struggle for access to media, public support and widespread attention. Organizations such as the Anarchist Black Cross and the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee exist to support prisoners facing repression, amplify prisoners' voices and get their stories to the media. By building networks of support that focus on challenging state repression behind bars, supporters can help buffer against retaliation and reduce the legal consequences that prisoners face by participating in the movement.

These efforts at outside support are essential both to counter dominant prison narratives that demonize prisoners and to protect and encourage further resistance. In Imam Hasan's words,

"The fear that the prison authorities [put] into prisoners is preventing them from standing up and rising up to bring about corrective changes. Some people don't want to get involved because they understand the retaliation.... They might get abused, assaulted, beat with hammers, choked out, some prisoners get choked to

death — many things might happen. [For us,] the shift came about because people had the utmost respect for those involved in Lucasville, [knowing] we were ready to stand up and to take the necessary chances to bring about revolutionary changes. Lucasville rocked the state of Ohio, [causing] people throughout the state to take a

serious look at the kinds of deprivations that prisoners are experiencing.”



Letter to the People
by N.A.L.C. of Terre Haute

One of the very first obligations/task of a Revolutionary is to go among the People; the community, the masses of poor-wage slaves, the oppressed Nation, and learn from them. Meaning, as We attempt to educate them- transforming the colonial mentality into a revolutionary mentality, and before We can bring forth Programs for Decolonization We have to learn what the People of that particular area see as the core issue's that affect their day to day lives. As servants of the People, Our formations and the programs We intend to implement must be geared toward meeting the immediate needs of the community in which We serve. i organized the 1st annual 'Rebuild: New Afrikan People's Assembly' in my city of Terre Haute, in 2019. As We promoted the assembly for 7 months, brothers & sisters in their early 20's to elders in their 80's all raised a common issue - the gentrification and denial of access to Our community center : The Hyte Center, now known as The Booker T. Washington Community Center.

As I have mentioned on numerous occasions this is an issue that i take personally, not only because my grandpa was the architect and Vice Chairman on the original board of its founding members, but like so many others from multiple generations, i grew up in that building. i know why it was created, the purpose it served, and what it means to the New Afrikan community. For many people in Terre Haute, the People's Assembly was their first introduction to the New Afrikan Liberation Collective (N.A.L.C) and Our mission to instill self-determination into minds/homes within the community. i spoke to the People in attendance and told them that Our first task in Terre Haute would be to regain access, and or control of the center explained that it would take THE COMMUNITY to take back THE COMMUNITY CENTER, and through this work the oppressive forces working against us as well as the People would recognize the power of a community/nation when We educate, organize & mobilize together for Our common goals.

Following the assembly We reached out to the occupants of the center and described ourselves as a community based organization. We explained that N.A.L.C intended to utilize the classrooms in order to hold Nation Building courses, i.e, Political Education classes that would bring forth Community Reconstruction & Social Development programs. They told us that We would have to pay a \$25 an hour fee and a deposit each time. We refused to allow people from Outside of Our community to profit/capitalize from the FREE community work that We do in the community center they took from the People! We began organizing the 2nd annual New Afrikan People's Assembly for July 2020, one of the main focus points being to gain signatures for a Community Petition that demanded Free access to the gymnasium, classrooms, and soup kitchen. We had movement veterans from around the Nation travel to Terre Haute in order to help raise the consciousness of the People and link with other community formations that have also been vocal about the need to regain access/control of the Hyte Center. The following day before leaving Terre Haute six of Our comrades attended service at a local church to discuss the need for the People getting behind N.A.L.C's initiative to hold classes. The pastor of the church had access to the gym several nights a week already, and also has an organization that calls for community control including ownership of the Hyte Center. Several days after attending the service, Our comrade in Chicago Khaleed London of "The ReBuild Collective" received a phone call from this pastor saying that N.A.L.C would have free access to the classrooms, that I would need to draw up the programs. Around this same time a weekly

meeting was put together for community organizers, including my mom, dad and a comrade from IDOC Watch who traveled from outta town to discuss ideas and strategy surrounding the Hyte Center. We presented the group with the 5 initial Programs for Decolonization on behalf of N.A.L.C and FROLINAN. A second meeting was set for the following week where it was mentioned that the basis of that date would be meeting with members of law enforcement to discuss body cam's and other issues with police. My family refused to attend this meeting, seeing absolutely no reason for members of Our community to have a sit down with the colonial occupying forces. Also seeing this as extremely problematic, and bringing into question the politics and class mentality of these other individuals. I personally kept in contact with the pastor via weekly phone calls to work toward the two of Our organizations doing grassroots work and uniting with several newer activists in Terre Haute that had emerged that summer in the wake of the George Floyd uprisings. However, the community meetings fell apart due to these individuals/orgs all operating on Neo-liberal/colonial concepts and refusing to develop any kind of concept for Self-Determination or a concrete class analysis based on the dialectics of Our National oppression as New Afrikan/Black people. After numerous positive phone calls with the pastor that were very assuring and revolutionary in nature, he disclosed that he couldn't publicly work with N.A.L.C in fear of what the people "downtown" would think. Also adding that any unified front of individuals/orgs in Terre Haute to fight for the center would have to be led by his organization as the face, because he and his org wasn't following nobody. Asking me "Have you ever seen anything with two or three heads? It'd be ugly/scary, right?" This is another obligation/task of the revolutionary: to expose the People and the unconscious masses to these "class contradictions" that exist even within the black community. To raise awareness to "class struggle"/clash of views, aspirations, ideology and theory between members of the same oppressed Nation. In these early stages of struggle and a "new" movement developing, the People may find it hard to see the difference between the two because We both look like them, and both come across as "being for the People".

However, this class struggle that takes place in the mind of the oppressed individual is apart of the colonial mentality in which these individuals have yet to break the psychological chains of slavery that prevents them from taking a path to liberation and freedom that doesn't include the master/oppressors permission, or not using his rules and guidelines to go about obtaining social change. Most of these individuals have good intentions, and do truly believe that they are acting in the best interest of the people.

i can assure you that as a People suffering on an educational, economical, political, social, cultural level, and being kept in that caste of suffrage through the colonial security forces, i.e, police, military, courts, jails and prisons; While fighting to establish the right to control Our own destiny- the way to change that and overcome centuries of genocide & colonialism is NEVER going to be through settling for what the u.s government or "city officials" give us/approve of. Unless the New Afrikan community in Terre Haute comes together and DEMANDS what it is that We as a People believe We need in order to Rebuild Our community, then We will continue to depend on Our oppressors and its rigged system for Our every need. "The Booker T. Washington Community Center," a community liberation center that greets you with a wall to wall painted mural when you walk in of Malcolm X, Jamil Al Amin (H. Rap Brown), Marcus Garvey, Fredrick Douglas, among others showing them breaking chains that read "slavery"; As well as a young New Afrikan child with a shirt on that says "Its Nation Building Time"...is being leased out from the city to a euro-american(white) individual from outside of Our community for his own after school/youth program that is supported by the public school corporation. All that may be somewhat feasible if the city and its occupants recognized their privilege of having access to all the land, property and resources available in Terre Haute for their offices and programs. While the center is the only institution that We have in order to build and rebuild upon, therefore allowing ones to bring back Open Gym/Night League, Feed The People Program, and designate office or classroom space for community based organizations. There are countless athletic mentors and individuals, esp during a resurgence of social awareness and community activism that have something to offer the People, but We have no institutions to place the programs and do the work. In Feb 2021 We were finally able to have an in person meeting with the Director/ C.O.O of the

Center, my mom and dad were there to represent N.A.L.C and Our families historical connection to the building, as well as the non profit org "The Social & Cultural Development Fund" that i recently Founded with the help of my family and comrades.

We presented him with articles and pictures from the two Peoples Assemblies, the 5 suggested programs, and requesting access to the classrooms starting Feb 7th to host a group study for Jalil Muntaquims "We Are Our Own Liberators" Zoom classes. He expressed his only concern being some of the language used in my previous articles about regaining ownership, and worried that once in the door that We would force him out and replace him with the afore-mentioned pastor. We explained that We had already purchased land last year, We are in the process of raising the funding to open Our own building and that We only wanted access to the HYTE Center now to engage with the People and get the doors opened again for the community. We were told that they would have to move some things around with their schedule in order to accommodate Our use of the classrooms, and that he wanted to have another meeting in a week with us and the President of the Terre Haute NAACP among others. Since then he hasn't responded to any messages or emails from us. As We move forward and launch the "Land Fund" on the N.A.L.C website to raise the initial \$30,000 needed to get the building put up for the New Afrikan People's Center/ The Social & Cultural Development office, We must still come together as a COMMUNITY and act in the collective interest of not only ourselves but the younger generations that are coming up. We do this by implementing a community based steering committee geared toward a strategy in relation to the HYTE Center and other Land in the community. We will also be posting the Community Petition For Free Use Of The HYTE Center on the New Afrikan Liberation Collective (<https://www.newafrikanliberation.org/>), Prison Lives Matter (<https://www.supportprisonlives.org/>), and IDOC Watch (IDOC Watch).

You DO NOT have to be from Terre Haute to sign your name to the petition. The gentrification and denied access to Our institutions are a form of social and cultural genocide, this is a systematic issue that reaches far beyond the city of Terre Haute. Freedom and Independence is never just handed over to the People fighting for it from those who have stolen it. One of the fundamental reasons We as a people still remain 3/5ths of a human being, in a fabricated state of existence and identity based on "paper citizenship" that was forced upon us - and the colonizer has remained a global empire- is because We still refuse to collectively wake up from a Willie Lynch induced coma and realize that We have the power on so many levels to be in control of Our own destiny and direction if We stand up and move in solidarity. With that being said, We encourage ones from all over to support both endeavors with the HYTE Center and fund raising for the New Afrikan People's Center. We are one COMMUNITY and one NATION! But most importantly, remember: WE ARE OUR OWN LIBERATORS!!

Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald Passes on to the Ancestors

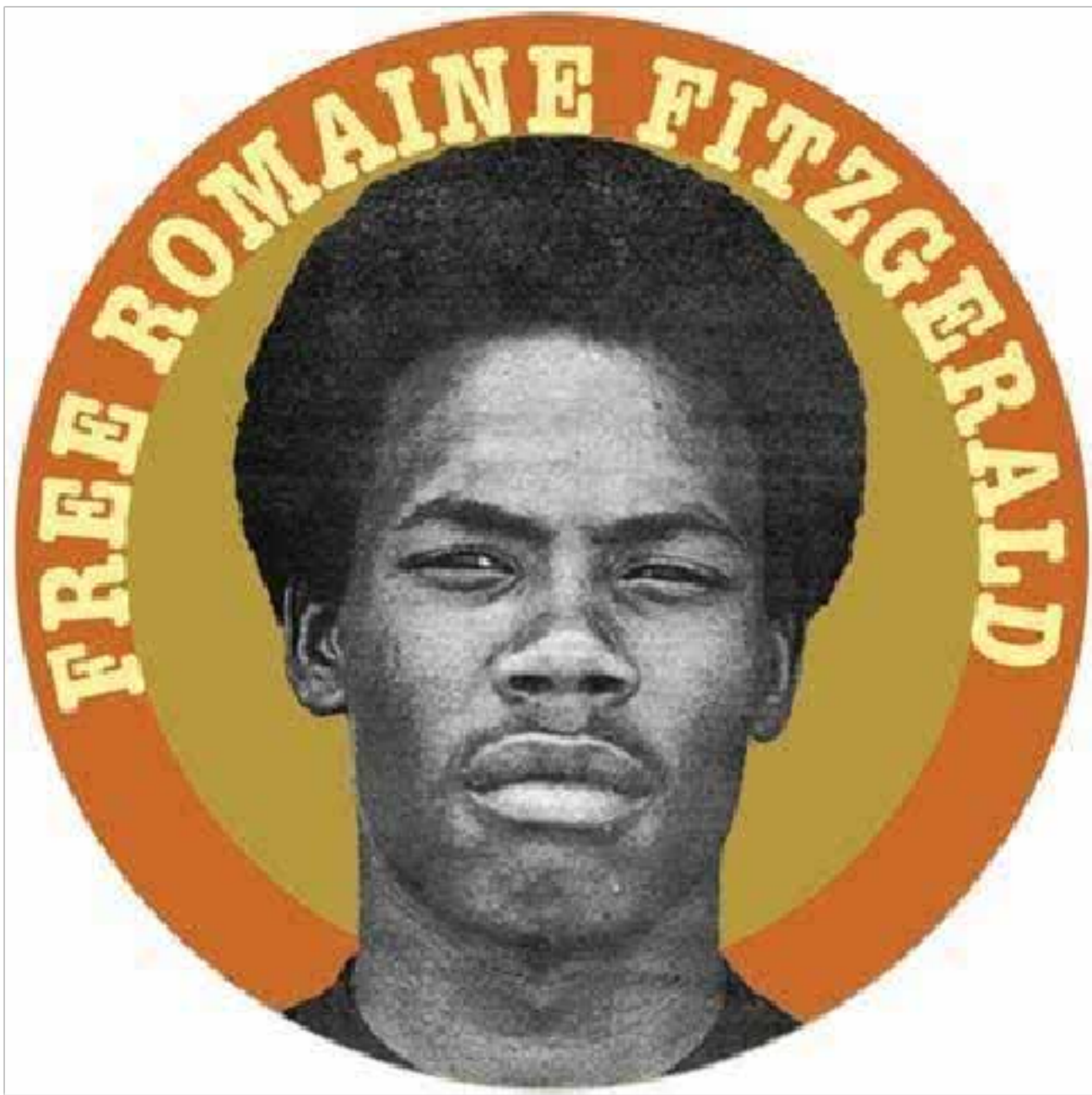
from Kuumbareport.com

March 2021

The sad news recently broke that Veteran Black Panther Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, perhaps the longest-held Political Prisoner in the United States, has passed on to the Ancestors. Another product of hard times, who had grown from a life on the streets to become a strong advocate and builder for Black Lives, has left us after 51 years in captivity, and those of us who have advocated for veterans of the Black Freedom Struggle are once again deflated by the news that we have failed another of our long-term activists.

The 360 Collective, an association of Veterans of the Black Panther Party, made the following statement over Facebook: We are saddened by the recent death of Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald, the longest imprisoned member of the Black Panther Party, the truest embodiment of revolution in the history of this country. Our hearts are with his family and comrades.

We encourage you to advocate for the release of the remaining members of the party still imprisoned today. You can offer support or learn more by visiting the National Alumni Association of the Black Panther Party Facebook page or on the web at NAABPP.org.



Secret of Black Panther Party Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald's Death Cause

A former member of the Black Panther Party, Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald's death cause is still shady after he reportedly passed away Monday (March 29, 2021).

Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, the longest-incarcerated Black Panther in U.S. history, entered the state jail as a young man when he was just in his teens.

He spent just two decades of his life on this side of the walls, and 51 years in a cage for fighting for the liberation of his people. RIP.

Born on April 11, 1949, Chip grew up in the Watts and Compton areas, in the community that was famous as South Central Los Angeles. Along with many Black men and women, where the civil rights movement influenced his future.

Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald's Death Cause Relates to his Health Condition

The 72-year-old great-grandfather previously suffered a stroke, was not in a good health condition, and was using a cane and a wheelchair for a while. Reporters were asking, "he is not a risk to anymore. So why is Chip Fitzgerald still in prison?"

In the 1960s, the Black Panther Party was being organized in cities all over the country.

Fitzgerald was one of those young Black men interested in joining this community, although anti-war protest and inner-city riots, Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald, entered the Black Panther Party for answers and respected its founders as role models.

More about Romaine 'Chip' Fitzgerald's Sentence

After being arrested, the young man pleaded not guilty to the charge of the attempted killing of a CHP officer. Although there were some hidden efforts against Chip.

Throughout the days before his arrest, Chip was accused of being involved in the death of a security guard. Nevertheless, the evidence against him was not too heavy, and Chip has denied any involvement, he was still convicted and sentenced to death.

Though Chip was sentenced to death, in 1972, the California Supreme Court banned the death sentence in 1972. He and others on Death Row had their sentences changed to life imprisonment with the possibility of parole, but he has been refused parole many times.

Also, in his 50 years of jail, he's been housed at every major California prison. He was recently was transformed from R. J. Donovan Correctional Facility San Diego to Lancaster State Prison.

The Web site About Romaine Chip Fitzgerald – Biography | Free Chip Fitzgerald (freedom4chip.org) includes a biography, a petition drive for his freedom, testimonials and writings from him.



The New Afrikan Independence Movement/ Republic of New Afrika

By Shaka Shakur #1996207

March, 2021

Land, Independence, and Self-Government have been objectives sought by Black people ever since we were kidnapped from Afrika and brought to this country as slaves. Many ran away and established communities in the woods, mountains and swamps. We armed ourselves and created bases in which we could operate, liberated zones to which other enslaved brothers and sisters might flee. Others organized rebellions, aimed at destroying slavery and liberating territory from which to build an independent state. To the Black people who were forced to come to this land, Black nationalism was not taken lightly. Although brutally crushed, Our ancestors continued to revolt. Although sold down the river, they continued to escape. Independence and self-determination were what they wanted. These Blacks were, in effect, laying bricks on a foundation that was later to become known as the Republic of New Afrika. (1)

The process that gave rise to what became defined as the New Afrikan Nation started on the Afrikan continent and carried over to North Amerika. Primarily the New Afrikan Nation was born as a result of its own internal motion and internal contradictions. Afrikan tribes were combining into, were fused into, nations, prior to being transported to amerika.

You may have had one nation comprised out of many tribes and although each tribe had their own distinct tribal identities and culture, they recognized their collective identity based on their particular collective and historical development. For example, the naming of themselves as Angolans, Nigerians, Ghanaians, etc.. These are National distinctions and National Identities. Despite the fact that within their borders they have different tribal origins and relations, their National Identity and National Consciousness is that of a Collective definition.

Primarily a New Afrikan is an Afrikan born in North Amerika. New Afrikans hold many different theories, some are socialist, some are capitalist, some are nationalist, some are Pan-Afrikanist and so on. The Republic of New Afrika (RNA) is the name given to the Black nation in Amerika by 500 nationalist leaders at the Black Government Conference held in Detroit, Michigan and convened by the M.X. Society on March 29-31, 1968. The RNA consists of a population of millions of ideas. (2)

Marcus Garvey once exclaimed, "Where is the black man's government? Where is his president, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?"

On March 31, 1968, the seed of Garvey's prophetic vision came to fruition as a force of over 500 black nationalists met at the convention in Detroit and issued a Declaration of Independence for a black nation on the North Amerikan continent, named that nation the Republic of New Afrikan and identified five states in the deep south as the subjugated National Territory, creating basic law and a provisional government with elected officials under a mandate to FREE THE LAND!! (3)

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT TEACHES THAT ALL BLACKS DESCENDANTS OF SLAVES IN NORTH AMERIKKA, ARE CITZENS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NEW AFRIKA BY BIRTH, FOR WE HAD BEEN SNATCHED FROM EVERY REGION IN AFRIKA AND MOLDED BY THIS COMMON HISTORY OF OPPRESSION AND STRUGGLE INTO A NEW AFRKAN NATION IN THE WORLD. .We were geographically seperated from the continent of Afrika, but just as Afrikan as any nation there. Blacks may chose to give uptheir New Afrikan citizenship, or they may opt for

exclusive RNA citizenship. New Afrikan citizenship is a right of birth, and the right to choose in this matter lies at the heart of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. Thus, when the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PGRNA) was established, it set about the task of informing Black people of their rights under international law to self determination, land and reparations. Since its existence , the Provisional Government has sharpened the theoretical basis for New Afrikan Political Science, organized national elections for officials in the Provisional Government, demanded reparations from the u.s. government, defended itself against enemy attacks, sought to establish diplomatic relations with other governments and struggled for the right of New Afrikan Prisoners of War. Freedom, Self Government and Self Determination - the objectives sought by blacks since our arrival in these shores had now reached a higher stage. (4)

It is important to note that the PGRNA was established by New Afrikans who held a number of different political, economic and social theories. What those who founded the PGRNA collectively recognized was that an Afrikan (Black) Nation in amerika does exist. They named it New Afrika, created the Provisional Government for it and gave the PG the dual mission of educating the New Afrikan masses with regard to our true National Identity and struggle for independence in the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Louisiana. These states are a part of the historical Blackbelt birthplace, and North Amerikan farmland of the New Afrikan Nation. This area is called the New Afrikan National Territory.

The struggle to free this land is called the New Afrikan Independence Movement. All those in it recognize the existence of the nation and partake in the struggle to free it. (5)

While there is this clarion call to 'Free The Land' and a movement to target these particular states that we identify as the National Territory, we realize that some things are subject to change and evolve. We also know that while it may be a dialectical materialist and theoretical basis to support the establishment of a Sovereign/Independent National Territory, some realities will be decided by boots on the ground, through the motion of the people, masses. We know that any serious struggle or war for National Liberation of New Afrikan People and for Socialism will no longer leave the continental north amerikan continent as we know it. Any form of people's war in the u.s. by the masses for the establishment of a socialist or communist entity will totally cause a reconfiguration of the u.s. empire as we know it.

Any correct theoretical analysis has to be applied to concrete

conditions and out of that application, new theory, new strategies and tactics and new realities will evolve. While leadership and direction may be given by a revolutionary party or vanguard formation or a federation of various revolutionary collectives, ultimately, it is the people who have the power and those boots on the ground is what will be decisive.

Various elements, groups and people who profess to be allies try to deny the legitimacy of our right to wage a National Liberation Struggle or Struggle for Self Determination; as such these allies often reek of settler arrogance, paternalism, hidden agendas and thinly camouflaged white nationalism. These superficial allies have never done any real research or investigation into the historical development of the New Afrikan Nation or the history and origin of the New Afrikan Independence Movement. We do not need nor seek your validation.

The rhythm of a people never stop whether they are transported across oceans or in the bowels of slave ships or remain stationary. That beat and culture continues along its path of development and evolution. It is shaped and conditioned by its current conditions and objective material reality. With that being said, the residue of the old remains as it contributes and give rise to and helps to form and shape the new.

Our Struggle for Land, Independence and Socialism is no less valid or any less legitimate than the anti-colonial wars waged on the continent of Afrika to oust the Portuguese, the Arabs, the Belgium and other settlers. In fact since the arrival of our ancestors on these shores, we have continuously waged a war for Land and Independence from the settler colonizer and imperialist u.s. government. Whether it was in the form of maroons fighting the colonial British forces to a stand still, whether it was forcing the u.s. colonial forces to sign peace or cease fire treaties as we retreated into the hills and or swamps with Indigenous allies or whether it is screaming in the streets that Black Lives Matter as we rebel and revolt in the Urban Ghetto Colonies across Amerika!! Whether it was as we launched raiding parties from the swamps and hills to attack and set afire slave plantations.

This was war and despite the fact that second class citizenship was imposed upon us with the 13th and 14th amendment, changing chattel slavery from private ownership to that of state ownership, this war against neo-kolonial domination and genocide has never stopped or ceased. It has merely taking on various forms as it goes through its stages of development and dialectical process. You do not amend a people into a constitution. You do not impose second class citizenship upon a conquered or kolonized people. In fact it

is a violation of international law as defined by the United Nations regarding formally conquered or kolonized people.

ARTICLE 15 of the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS STATES:

- 1) Everyone has a right to a nationality.
- 2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality

When people talk about it being 'two amerikas', when people talk about the rate of imprisonment of New Afrikan people, the rate that New Afrikan people are murdered by kolonial occupational personnel (Kops), when we talk about the rate of Black womyn dying from various forms of cancer, the school to prison pipeline of our children, the environmental racism of pumping poisonous water into our schools and communities, etc. etc. this represents National Oppression and Genocide. It ain't never been no one Amerika except white racist settler amerika, so to say two amerikas is a misnomer and an attempt to divert a proper political assessment and analysis of the truth and to keep us going down a path that doesn't lead to national liberation or freedom. Its strategic and a military diversionary tactic designed to keep us away from more militant forms or struggle and resistance.....

The New Afrikan Liberation Collective represents just one of the many organizations within the New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM). We invite you to unite with us as we struggle to not only Free The Land but build up and strengthen the Provisional Govt of the Republic of New Afrika and advance our Vita Wa Watu!! FREE THE LAND!!!

Suggested Reading:

- 1) Free The Land: The Republic of New Afrikan and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State by Edward Onaci
- 2) The History of The New Afrikan Independence Movement by Chokwe Lumumba
- 3) Meditation and Notes on Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth by James Yaki Sayles (Required Reading)
- 4) New Afrikan P.O.W. Theoretical Journals and Vita Wa Watu Journals 1 thru 12 by Spear and Shield Publications/ The Rebuild Collective (Required Reading)
- 5) We Are Our Own Liberators by Jalil A. Muntaqim
- 6) Night visions: Class and War on the Neo Colonial Terrain by Butch Lee
- 7) Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat by J.Sakai (Required Reading)

Relevant Information/Attachments:

International Convention on the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, States in Article II:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, such as;

- killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III further states;

The following shall be punishable:

- Genocide
- Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- Attempt to commit genocide;
- Complicity in genocide. pg 47

The U.N. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples affirms: ...the inherent right of colonial people to struggle by all means at their disposal against colonial powers which suppress their aspirations for freedom and independence....

While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights States:All people have the right of self determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Pg. 48

The United Nations General Assembly in Resolution 3103 (XXVIII) on December 12, 1973, emphatically reaffirmed that:the continuation of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations, as noted in General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV) of October 1970, is a crime and that colonial peoples have the inherent to struggle by all necessary means at their disposal against colonial powers and alien domination in exercise of their rights of self determination recognized in this Charter of the United Nations....Pg. 50

All of the above quotes were taken from the book "We Are Our Own Liberators" written by Jalil A. Muntaqim

The full text can be found in the United Nations Charter The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



400 Prisoners Escape After Prison Riot in Haiti

from AMEnglish.com

March 2021

On Thursday, February 25, 2021, past noon, there was a strong riot in the Croix-des-Bouquets prison, near the capital of Port-au-Prince.

The prisoners quickly took control of the prison facilities, managing to disarm several gendarmes to make their way behind bars and walls.

The bloody riot / escape resulted in about 25 deaths as a result of the confrontations with the jailers and police in the sector, but with the happy figure of 400 escaped prisoners.

Since then, there have been several roadblocks where they have managed to recapture some prisoners.

Riot and escape against the prison!



A Sense of History: Lessons from Haiti's New Political Uprising

from WeaveNews.org

March 2021

Around May of 2019, multiple cases of sexual violence against female students at Haiti's Quisqueya University and the University of Port-au-Prince (both in the capital) were reported, sending shockwaves through student circles and the community. Then, in early October 2020, a student named Grégory Saint-Hilaire was killed in a clash with police at l'Ecole normale supérieure (a teachers college) at the State University of Haiti. Hundreds of university students took to the streets, blocked roads, and burned cars as they clashed with police in Port-au-Prince. This protest resulted in the death of another student who was shot in the head, allegedly by police. Later in October, a 22-year-old high-school senior named Evelyne Sincere was kidnapped and her naked body subsequently found on a garbage dump site in Port-au-Prince amidst government silence.

Student activists in Haiti have risen up and played an important role in the massive popular protests against the current government of Jovenel Moïse. Moïse's disputed presidency has been embroiled in corruption, protracted political instability, violence against women, and gang violence, the latter of which has often been linked to the state.

There is also a deeper context: an ongoing economic crisis that is deeply tied to the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake. The quake opened the door for disaster

Plant Profile: *Dandelion*

The isolation of prison extends beyond separating humans, it also separates the imprisoned from most of the rest of the world, from nature, from animals, from plants, all things that are vital to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. But for those who are allowed time out in the yard, there remain small opportunities for exploration and encounter.

Here is brief profile of a plant you may be able to find growing nearly anywhere.

Common name: Dandelion

Scientific name: *Taraxacum* spp. (All plants known to western civilization have a latin binomial name to help with classification and identification. Spp here means “species plural,” as there may be a few different Dandelion species growing around you.)

How to identify: Dandelion is easily identifiable by the bright yellow, many-petaled flowers (each of those yellow “petals” is actually a tiny flower) or, after it has gone to seed, the spherical head of fluffy white seeds that blow away in the wind. See the images of the flowering stage and seed stage below. The leaves are also pretty recognizable, though they have some variation. They are all basal (growing straight out of the ground and not from a stem). They are irregularly toothed, as shown below. They can be identified only by leaves, but when first learning it, its easiest to let the conspicuous flowers guide you to the leaves. Some plants have just one flower and some have multiple flower stalks per plant; these are just different species. Dandelion likes to grow in full sun and disturbed areas (including lawns and yards). Look out for Cat’s Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), a look-alike, that can be distinguished by its solid stems; the stems of the hundreds of medicinal species of Dandelion are hollow.

Encountering Dandelion: All parts of the plant (roots, flowers, leaves) are edible! The flower heads are quite sweet; the leaves, root, and milky white latex that exudes when the plant is injured are gently bitter. The sweet taste is indicative of its nourishing/building quality and can help supplement a diet that is low in fresh greens and vegetables. The bitter taste indicates an affinity for the liver and the entire digestive system. Especially the roots promote healthy liver function in a gentle way, and the leaves promote healthy kidney function. One chemical component, inulin, is specifically beneficial to the good bacteria in our gut. These qualities combined help the body to balance and move fluids and dampness in the body and to eliminate toxins (like cellular waste products). Three things to be aware of, though, before eating wild plants: avoid the area if any lawn chemicals or other toxins are used in the area, make sure you’ve identified the correct plant (most easily done when its in flower), and avoid over-harvesting to make sure it is able to reproduce and come back next year! But Dandelion does not have to be consumed to be encountering. Meeting the plant, getting to know it, or picking it just to have it around, can all add a little something to a perhaps otherwise dreary day. In fact, Nicole Rose, author of *The Prisoner’s Herbal*, which features Dandelion on the cover, tells a story about harvesting Dandelion and keeping it under her pillow when she was doing time in a UK prison for involvement in a campaign to shut down a large animal testing company. While not limited to such, Dandelion, both consumed or just encountered, can be helpful for a person who experiences quick and regrettable anger, frustration, mental dullness, depression, or pushing themselves too hard. These are all related to “excess heat” psychologically, similarly to the way it helps to move out excess heat in the physical body.



capitalism and tightened the always enduring tension between the global interests of capital (and of Haiti's business class) and the sovereignty of the Haitian people. Additional factors include the real effects the Venezuelan/PetroCaribe crisis has had on gas prices in Haiti and the government's seemingly fraudulent handling of resources meant for building infrastructure in the country.

A Legacy of Freedom Struggle

The quest for Haitian self-determination has deep roots in Haiti's colonial past. As the legendary Haitian pro-democracy activist and intellectual, Patrick Élie, once said: "we got the freedom from slavery . . . but the rest, we didn't get, and the cry for democracy now is the new definition of the old Haitian dream."

Similarly, a leading historian of Haiti recently made critical connections between the legacy of Jean-Jacques Dessalines (independent Haiti's first head of state) and Haitian protests; namely, that there is a desire for a "new kind of independence," one that is free of "predatory leaders and reliance on international aid that comes with strings attached." Indeed, the Haitian people have long been subjected to both external and internal forces that have crippled the country in many ways.

For Haiti, external predation begins with France. In gaining independence from the French in 1804, Haiti became the world's only successful slave revolt-turned-revolution and the first black state in the Western Hemisphere. And yet, the people who partook in the destruction of slavery in their struggle for self-determination quite literally paid a massive price for it, what one of Haiti's most prolific scholars has called "the greatest heist in history". Yes, Haiti (not France) in 1825 had to pay reparations to former colonial enslavers for "their lost revenues from slavery."

Foreign Obstacles to Haitian Sovereignty

This dealt a major economic blow to Haiti in the 19th century and, as Dr. Marlene Daut has shown, it meant that French prosperity was built on Haitian poverty. In the 20th century, this imperialistic meddling in Haiti became standard practice. The United States occupied Haiti between 1915-1934 and, in many ways, shaped the material conditions through which one of the most brutal dictators in the history of the Americas waged racist and anti-black violence against Haitians.

Even after the occupation, the US continued to back anti-communist coups and strongmen in Haiti. This led to the reign of the Duvalier regimes of François ("Papa Doc") and his son Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc"), a period of extreme violence and authoritarianism which lasted until 1986. Leading up – and subsequent to – the 2010 earthquake, the

decades of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s saw multiple coups d'état, natural disasters, and constant interference by the United States – both militarily and economically. Internal strife and political corruption certainly contributed to Haiti's problems, but a constant impediment to Haitian sovereignty, from independence to the present day, is still outside encroachment.

An Unyielding Politics of Struggle

The counterpoint to these external forces has and continues to be the long struggle of the Haitian people for their autonomy. Whether it was against former French colonists, British invaders, Napoleonic armies, US-backed dictators (within and outside of Haiti), or ostensibly democratically elected presidents who mishandled (and appropriated) international aid donations, the Haitian populace has remained steadfast in their political participation and pro-democracy movements.

By invoking the legacy of the Haitian Revolution, it is clear that the Haitian people derive their legitimacy from a sense of history, and not from what the US or any other foreign country may deem as valid. Haitian people understand that the politics of their freedom are deeply entwined with the country's past. The massive protests of the past few years are yet another example of how Haitians will fight both internal and external powers in the face of unimaginable odds. From students to journalists to others in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, the people of Haiti are standing up to Moïse's regime and his plans to draft a new constitution, which would allow him to stay in power another five years. Yet, their actions also invoke a resistance to foreign intervention into and perceptions of Haiti.

A New Silencing?

In spite of the massive popular uprisings against Moïse's dictatorial turn, there's been a relative silencing from major western media outlets regarding the current situation. In the mid 1990s, anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote a seminal book in which he brilliantly demonstrated how the West refused to acknowledge the Haitian Revolution. Since then, there's been a flourishing of research and scholarship on Haiti and the Revolution within academic circles. But what can we make of the current situation in Haiti (which some see as a second revolution) and what appears to be a lack of major news correspondents on the ground?

Pieces from The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Guardian suggest that corruption, poverty, and lack of internal governance are at the root of Haiti's troubles. The editorial board's opinion piece at The Washington Post even went as far to suggest that the only way to lessen the flow of Haitian migration into the US (and therefore alleviate the problem of deportations) was

for the Biden administration to take a harder stance on Moïse, the [actual] source of the problem. This stance of US interference in Haiti is historically consistent, and it miserably fails to acknowledge that perhaps the US is itself one of the foundations of Haiti's current predicament.

Experts of Haiti on social media have further pointed out how the language used by these media outlets reinforces colonialist tropes that have reduced Haiti to the lazy and racist characterization of "the poorest country in the western hemisphere." Thus, the few major outlets that have covered Haiti have in fact done actual Haitians on the ground a disservice. By shifting the focus towards Haiti's failed internal leadership, its poverty, or the images of violent protests, major media outlets engage in a process of silencing the rising tide of a Haitian people who have long engaged in the politics of freedom.

Lessons

After the Haitian Revolution, one of the most famous Latin American independence figures – Simón Bolívar – went to Haiti (not the United States or France) to seek arms and munitions for his campaigns. His request was granted, provided that he abolished slavery in the newly liberated and former Spanish territories. Bolívar did so, and soon Haiti became a beacon of hope and freedom for the millions of people across the Americas who were at that point still enslaved. Haiti inspired slave conspiracies and revolts throughout the Americas, and showed African and African descendants throughout the Hemisphere the possibilities of freedom, if only one rose up to take it.

It is time we look to Haiti once again, not just for inspiration but also for lessons on how to engage politically and fight for one's freedoms and rights. In an age where nativism, xenophobia, authoritarianism, and global anti-blackness are on the rise all over the world, Haiti should serve as a reminder of what is possible when people come together en masse and fight for their liberation. Even more, we may be able to understand popular engagement and civic participation in ways that may not always fall neatly in line with how western countries envision political engagement. In this regard, Haiti's new political uprising can offer us lessons for how to reimagine a more just and autonomous future.



Algeria Riots After Militant is Sentenced to Seven Years

from amwenglish.com
March 2021

Riots erupted in the evening of Sunday, February 28 in

several neighborhoods of Ouargla, in southern Algeria, after a militant of the popular protest movement in Algeria was sentenced to a heavy prison term and accused of "apology for terrorism".

Protesters blocked several roads and burned tires after the local criminal court sentenced Ameer Guerrache to seven years in prison. Young people threw stones at police officers in the midst of tear gas.

In another video also broadcast on social media, Ameer Guerrache's mother implored Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to release her son.

Arrested at his home on July 1, 2020, Ameer Guerrache, 31 years old, presented as a militant and poet, is "one of the greatest leaders of the (protest) movement in Mekhadma for several years," said the CNLD, a prisoner advocacy organization. The Mekhadma movement takes its name from a deprived neighborhood in the city of Ouargla, where last June hundreds of people had protested against their living conditions and their marginalization and exclusion from local development. Ouargla is the capital of a wilaya (prefecture) rich in hydrocarbons, where many deposits are located, including that of Hassi Messaoud. But it is also a city with a high youth unemployment rate.

The Algerian Ministry of Justice recently announced that a total of 59 prisoners of conscience had been released following the announcement of a pardon granted by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on February 18. At the same time, however, convictions continue at a steady pace in the courts.



Samaria Rice on Tamika Mallory dispute: 'I didn't have to call you out your name'

from thegrio.com
March 2021

Samaria Rice appeared as a special guest on SiriusXM's The Clay Cane Show to further discuss her comments made toward Tamika Mallory, Ben Crump, and others who have created platforms advocating for social justice.

Rice and Lisa Simpson, mother of Richard Risher, who was killed by LAPD officers in 2017, joined for a conversation on social justice and police brutality. The host Clay Cane and the women discussed the activism space as well as policy change during their radio broadcast. Rice went further into her viral comments slamming well-known people in the social justice movement.

"I could've said it different. Tamika, I didn't have to call you out your name, but baby girl, you out of pocket. You out your lane," Rice exclaimed.

theGrio reported Rice called out Mallory after she appeared at the Grammy Awards with the Atlanta rapper Lil Baby. Rice accused the activist of "monopolizing" the fight for racial justice. Mallory performed a poem discussing Black oppression and police brutality. Rice used her social media accounts to make her statement against Mallory and others.

She made it clear that she is a fan of the musician and did not appreciate people using her words against him.

"I did what I did, I said what I said. Could I have said it in a different way? Yes I could've," she remarked on the radio show. "Yes I could have, but at the time, it got me angry. And, here we go once again. Maybe you should have the mothers on the stage with you Tamika as a family. It wouldn't have looked too obvious. And, this ain't got nothing to do with Lil Baby."

"My direct message was for Tamika Mallory, the activist Shaun King's and the Black Lives Matter Patrisse Cullors of the world," she explained to Cane. "It's no working together because she has created a platform...what are we going to work and do? She already created a platform, and guess what? My platform was given to me from the death of my son. What type of work are we going to do because I'm not interested in no movie deals and book deals. That comes to me every day. I have to turn away every day. So, tell me, what we going to do?"

She continued, "going forward, I don't know if it's a conversation we can have. I don't know. I just know I need them get out of our fight. They've built a platform, go live on that platform and get up out this fight."

"I don't know any Black Lives Matter chapters that help people," Simpson remarked. Rice supported her local chapter of BLM in Cleveland for being supportive of her family and community.

Simpson continued, "the smaller chapters are putting in all the work and the global network is getting the paycheck... They're getting everything and they don't have a boot to the ground."

Rice's original statement was made on Sunday after the award show. She accused the aforementioned activists of having ulterior motives.

"Look at this clout chaser did she lose something in this fight I don't think so," wrote Rice, who also criticized civil

rights attorney Crump. "That's the problem they take us for a joke that's why we never have justice cause of shit like this."

She also took to Facebook to say, "F**k a Grammy when my son is dead, F**k all pig cops."

On Tuesday, Ms. Rice released an official statement, along with Simpson, doubling down on their thoughts about Mallory, Crump and others, asking them to "step down" and "stand back."

"Tamika D. Mallory, Shaun King, Benjamin Crump, Lee Merritt, Patrisse Cullors, Melina Abdullah and the Black Lives Matter Global Network need to step down, stand back, and stop monopolizing and capitalizing our fight for justice and human rights," the statement read. "We never hired them to be the representatives in the fight for justice for our dead loved ones murdered by the police."

Their statement concluded: "We don't want or need ya'll parading in the streets accumulating donations, platforms, movie deals, etc. off the death of our loved ones, while the families and communities are left clueless and broken. Don't say our loved ones' names period! That's our truth!"

The women claimed the activists use their loved-ones images and names for events and fundraising however given them anything. They are not the only parents to recently call out activists with large followings. theGrio reported Mike Brown's father Mike Brown Sr. and local community organizer Tony Russell have demanded the Black Lives Matter organization provide \$20M to continue their work in Ferguson, Missouri.

According to the report, Sr. has only received \$500 from any BLM affiliated group since his son's 2014 killing, despite being a community figure who organizes and supports other families in healing and empowerment. Their demand comes after BLM leaders revealed \$90 million in donations during 2020 in response to the uprisings launched after the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and others.

"On behalf of many activists in the St. Louis area, I'm joined by Mike Brown Sr., the father of Mike Brown Jr. Today, we hold Black Lives Matter accountable," Russell announced in a video shared on social media.

This article contains additional reporting from theGrio's DeMicia Inman, Keydra Manns, Stephanie Guerilus and Blue Telusma.



National Shut'em Down Demonstrations:

In the spirit of Abolition on the historical dates of August 21st and September 9th, 2021 organizers must highlight prisoners' historical struggles, and the current political struggles to dismantle the prison industrial slave complex. Jailhouse Lawyers Speak nation membership is calling for mass outside demonstrations.

Specific locations: ICE, jails, prisons, and higher learning institutions. (With regards to higher learning institutions we are pointing towards the learning institutions with connections to prison labor).

A few states may already have specific ongoing campaigns that directly speak to decarceration or closing down a prison or jail. Efforts should be made to network to boost those campaigns on these dates at the recommended locations. With everyone working across the nation on the same days, this would magnify our struggle for humanity and highlight specific state related campaigns. These "Shut'em Down" demonstrations should serve as a wake up call to every person in this nation that the current jailing path does not work and it's time to end it.



8.21.2021 + 9.9.2021

NATIONAL SHUT'EM DOWN DEMONSTRATIONS

PROTEST IN THE SPIRIT OF ABOLITION!

Come together and protest in the spirit of abolition at your local jail, prison or ICE on August 21, 2021 & September 9, 2021

To be added to endorsement list contact: outthemud.jls@protonmail.com

Media contact: media@incarceratedworkers.org



In the days leading up to the Shut'em Down demonstrations, we will post locations of planned Abolition demonstrations and endorsements on iamweubuntu.com.

If you know you will be holding a "Shut'em Down" demo or simply would like to be listed as an endorser, email us at outthemud.jls@protonmail.com

IWOC is the media contact: media@incarceratedworkers.org

Dare 2 Struggle
Dare 2 Win!
Jailhouse Lawyers Speak

#ShutEmDown2021
#shutemdown
IAmWeUbuntu.com

Loss of My Brother Tranell Nash: “Those in Prison Are at Greater Risk of Suicide”

by Leon Benson #995256

April 2021

“I just wanna die, let me tell you why/ All this other shit I’m talking ‘bout they think they know it/ I been praying for somebody to come save me—no one’s heroic/ And my life don’t matter I know it, I know it/ I know I’m hurting deep down, but can’t show it/ I never had a place to call my own/ I never had a home, ain’t nobody calling my phone/ Where you been? Where you at? What’s on yo mind?/ They say every life is precious, but nobody care about mine.”—Logic, 1-800-273-8255 (2017)

I remember hearing the above lyrics playing on the radio. In the song entitled “1-800-273-8255” (a real suicide prevention hotline), Hop Hop artist, Logic, gave the world a rare message about the issue of suicide. The song was on the radio for several months. Sadly, once this song was replaced by the next trending hit, so was the national conversation on such a taboo topic.

In Flint, Michigan where i grew up there was not much talk about suicide. When the topic was brought up about those who committed suicide, they were often seen as weak. Even those proclaiming the Christian faith deemed suicide an unforgiving sin. These early experiences caused me to believe those who attempted or committed suicide were of lesser character.

Then, two of my childhood peers committed suicide. First, Marlon Veal in 1996. He shot himself while alluding the police. Second, Vincent “Harpo” Crum in 1997. He shot his girlfriend and then shot himself in a suicide-murder attempt. By the grace of God she survived. In both instances I was in denial that they would do such a thing. There had to be another explanation. But time revealed that they both committed the deadly deeds.

For many years after their deaths I was angry with them. Because we were raised to be stronger than that. We were taught not to cry or to run from fights. But, i was grossly MISEDUCATED about suicide.

WTF...NOT TRANELL NASH?

Fast forward my life to present day 2021, and after experiencing 22 yrs of incarceration. When i received the horrible news, in February, that my friend and follow prisoner, Tranell Nash, committed suicide while @ Pendleton Correctional Facility (PCF). I was shocked, confused, and brought to tears.

In 2011 I was sent to PCF after a decade of solitary confinement. It was there that I first encountered Nash, who other prisoners called “Fried” due to his drug use and quick temper. We met while attending Hebrew Israelite spiritual services. It was there we were given our true Israelite names. Mine is LAVI and his EL NATAN. After our naming ceremony I never called him Fried again.

In time we grew a genuine bond and respect for each other. Although he was 7 yrs my junior, I admired his mature and serious attitude toward Biblical Prophecy, humanism, and the upliftment of at-risk communities, particularly those of color in Indianapolis, where he was from. He always expressed a powerful need to redeem his past through community outreach. Because in 2005, he was sentenced to 50 yrs in prison for murder. Although he was remorseful, he carried a heavy, spiritual burden for the life he took.

This motivated Nash to look for ways to help the outside and inside communities. In 2018 we created a correspondence program for at risk youth, domestic violence victims, the elderly, and newly released inmates. The program’s therapeutic aims were to provide at risk groups with wisdom, acknowledgement, healing, and constructive venting space. We worked with Dee Ross of The Ross Foundation in Indianapolis, and Dr. Venson Jordan of The Jordan Wellness Adventure Center in Rhode Island.

Between 2018-19 we participated in a program called TRUE•SELF. There we worked SUICIDE WATCH and had to observe other prisoners in dry cells who attempted or threaten to commit suicide. We witnessed many suicidal deaths at PCF, but mostly attempts.

I remember having extended conversations with Nash and others about these suicides. Because we had personally known the majority of the victims. In addition, before taking up SUICIDE WATCH we had to complete a seminar training that RE-EDUCATED us about the statistics, risk factors, and prevention of suicide.

Due to my experiences combined from PCF and solitary confinement, I was no longer the naïve 20 year old misled to be indifferent to those who attempted and committed suicide. However, there remains many unanswered questions surrounding the the alleged suicide of Tranell Nash.

Why would he kill himself while having such a rich understanding of practical spirituality and suicide prevention? He only had 9 yrs left on his sentence and he could have been released much earlier through time cut programs. He had great family support. Was it the isolation from family visitation due to Covid-19 quarantine restrictions that pushed him over the ledge? It was rumored

that he was in a paranoid state days before the incident. Was it a cry for help or illicit drugs? Was it an official cover up by PCF guards and staff? He was very private and never shared his inner feelings with many others. Also, he carried a deep spiritual burden due to the life he had taken. Did my brother, EL Natan perform some type of spiritual harakiri?

Many of our questions may never be answered. But, EL Natan's life mattered whether he was in prison or not. He was a good brother and IS a child of YAHWEH. So we must use his life as an example to examine prison suicide prevention much, more deeply.

Before moving forward, I sincerely ask that the reader take a moment of pause in honor of my brother and other victims of suicide...Shalom. Rest In Power EL Natan Ben-Yisrayl. Selah.

RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE

#1- Biopsychological. Mental disorders (manic depression, schizophrenia), mood disorders (bipolarism), and certain personality disorders; alcohol & drug abuse; hopelessness; ; impulsive & aggressive tendencies; history of trauma & abuse; major physical illness; prior suicide attempt; & family history of suicide.

#2- Environmental. Job or financial loss; relational or social loss; easy access to lethal weapons or drugs; & the contagious influence from local suicide clusters.

#3- Sociocultural. Stigma associated with help seeking behavior; lack of social support & a sense of isolation; limited access to health care, especially mental health & substance abuse treatment; media exposure & influence of others who have died from suicide; & certain cultural and religious beliefs that makes suicide a noble resolution of existential dilemma.

The above risk factors are more specific to people in so-called "normal society" and should be taken seriously. According to statistics men are more likely than women to succeed in committing suicide. While women attempt more non-lethal forms of suicide.

However, the factor that should highlighted here too is how all these risk factors for suicide puts people in carceral environments at much, greater risk than those in society.

PRISONS ARE FACTORIES OF SUICIDE

In a 2018 song entitled "I Thought About Killing You" by renown and now billionaire, Hip Hop artist, Kanye West, he expressed the following:

["Weigh all the options. Nothing is off the table. Today I thought about killing you. Premeditated murder. I think about killing myself and I love myself way more than I love you. The most beautiful thoughts are always besides the darkest."]

My point for sharing this excerpt was to compare the thoughts of this affluent, wealthy, and highly successful person, with that of what might be going through the minds of the lowly, socially outcast, and forgotten 2.2 million people now held in the darkest dungeons of American prisons. Even more immediate, more than 75% of the people currently incarcerated will be released back into society. Probably right next door to you?

It has been proven by study after study that prisons are not places for true rehabilitation. More specifically, although Indiana prisons do provide some mental health programs, those programs are so underfunded, under staffed, and limited with intake space that they have little impact on the mass majority of prisoners passing through its gates.

Essentially prison officials are throwing people into cages under the worst conditions that puts them at greater risk for suicide and other destructive behaviors. This is like providing prisoners with proverbial razor blades to slit their own wrists. In other words, this is state sponsored suicide. If not while the person is still in prison, but carried over in their behavior upon release.

Imagine for a second the pressures that the average person experiences daily while enduring long term incarceration. It can be called a serious mind f—k. Deeply consider the following carceral risk factors:

IMAGINE that you were sentenced to at least 10 yrs or more in prison. For your crime you lost everything you had. Your significant other left you and doesn't allow your children to communicate with you. Nobody provides you financial support for attorney fees for your appeals nor for you to purchase commissary. Now you are left to the whims of the state and other prisoners.

IMAGINE not receiving a letter in years. Then when you attempt to call someone they never answer the phone; or when they do they never listen to your deepest concerns or hurt. Rather they patronize you with rambles. While you are trying to express that your last appeal was denied and you are now doomed to die in prison, if not for a revolution.

IMAGINE that you can trust nobody. They are either the OPPS or mentally insane. While you are held in solitary confinement indefinitely. Where the guards play in your food and will beat you to death. While other inmates scream

so loud over the unit that you can hardly hear yourself think.

...And knowing that others prisoners had killed themselves to escape lesser hardship. All of this while believing that if you died in that cell nobody in the outside world would notice.

Now IMAGINE that with any combination of the above experiences that you were actually innocent. Would you not contemplate suicide under such harsh conditions?

While in solitary confinement I, too, contemplated killing myself. I never admitted this publicly until now. This was in 2002 when I felt the most alienation, hopelessness, and powerlessness over my circumstance. However, what kept me alive is encouraging words from a couple kites (letters) from my brother, Ramar Danials from another range. Plus, I realized in that moment that if I died then my truth would die too. This is when I spiritually resurrected with the mantra TRUTH NEVER DIES IT IS ONLY REDISCOVERED.

In time I realized prison conditions in general, let alone those in solitary confinement units, are structural risk factors. By design prison manufactures suicidal tendencies. All of this before a person is ever released back into society. Now IMAGINE formerly incarcerated people having a bad day while standing next to you in a line at a gas station. BOOM.

REMOVE THE WALLS & LISTEN

“If any man have ears, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. And unto you that hear more shall be given.”

—MARK 4:23-24

To prevent prison suicide is to commit to one simple skill: ACTIVE LISTENING. Communications expert Kelly Fowler observed, “We saw the importance of active listening, rather than the combative or passive approaches to listening which lie behind much failed communication... As listeners, we tend to “tune in” to the level we think is most important. However, we may have no idea what the speaker thinks is most important, and this can create misperceptions or crossed wires, which yield undesirable results.”

Fowler shares three different levels of communication: factual, beliefs, & emotional. Be sure to know which level you are engaging a person. This takes active listening.

The majority of victims felt mentally and emotionally isolated for days, months, or even years before they even attempted or committed suicide. Clearly, the people around them were not actively listening or were doing so combatively or passively. When we compare these low standards of listening to prisoners, the most marginalized group in U.S. society, it becomes more obvious of why this group is at the greatest risk.

Being in prison automatically comes with the social stigma that you are a cheat, con, manipulator, sociopath, liar, pimp, or swindler. We have all heard the cliché that “All people in prison say they are innocent” used as a means not to listen to or take people incarcerated seriously. Ironically, many prisoners carry this implicit, but often explicit bias against each other as well.

It is impossible to over-emphasize the deep need that all human beings have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. Few know this need more than the ones locked up and locked out of the social empathy from those closest to them. The need to be understood while in prison starts out like a scream at the top of your voice. But after screaming for so long without any significant response the voice becomes hoarse, and then eventually silenced. Now the mental suffocations begin.

In today’s society people are distracted by cell phones, working, social media, or raising children. They hardly listen to each other. Therefore, it is harder for them to listen to the needs of loved ones in prison.

However, in order to prevent more victims from dying so senselessly in prison like Tranell Nash, WE all must listen to each other more actively. The next time you get that GTL collect call—Listen! You may be saving a life without knowing it.

#prisonlivesmatter

SOURCES

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- “Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide.” Suicide Watch Handout #3
- “Listen Up: Remove the Barriers; Hear the Words.” By Kellie Fowler



Campaign for Mass Release & Closure of IDOC Facilities

IDOC Watch is preparing to launch a campaign for the release of several thousand people from Indiana's prison and jail system, and the corresponding closure of several IDOC facilities that will no longer be needed if the prison population is significantly reduced. We have identified a number of "triggers of mass release," changes in policy or law which, if implemented, would immediately result in the release of hundreds or thousands of people from prisons, jails, and parole.

We have also identified issues with conditions in the prisons and jails that we believe strengthen our argument for mass release.

In addition to releasing people from prison, jail, and parole supervision, our goal is to permanently close multiple prisons, prevent the expansion of jails, and decrease the use of e-carceration (home detention), by building a powerful mass-based political movement which understands that incarceration and surveillance do not increase public safety.

This campaign is still in the development stage, and a lot of research, planning, information distribution, and movement infrastructure building needs to be done before it is launched publicly and the mass mobilization that is necessary for its success begins.

Triggers of Mass Release

For each of these triggers, we need close estimates of how many people are in prison, jail, or under parole supervision and would be released if the policy or law was changed. We intend to begin the campaign by focusing on the first three Triggers of Mass Release listed here.

1. Releasing everyone over the age of 60 who has served more than half of their sentence, and everyone who has a medical condition that makes them especially vulnerable to Covid-19.
2. Releasing everyone being held in prison on a technical probation or parole violation.
3. Release of everyone from prison who would already have been released if they weren't serving disciplinary time ordered by a facility Disciplinary Hearing Board. Restoration of good time across the board to all people incarcerated in the state of Indiana.
4. Releasing everyone being held in jail on a cash bond.
5. Releasing everyone sentenced before July 1, 2014 who remains in prison, who would already be out if they had been sentenced for the same crime on or after July 1, 2014, when new sentencing guidelines came into effect due to the passage of HEA 1006. HEA 1006 was marketed as a decarceral reform, but has actually caused an increase in both prison and jail populations.
6. Reverse the changes in sentencing guidelines instituted as a result of HEA 1006 that increased the period of incarceration for certain crimes (return sentencing structure to incarceration for $\frac{1}{2}$ the sentence for all crimes).
7. Releasing all incarcerated people with special needs and creation of neighborhood-based programs to aid people with special needs.
8. Ending the use of ICE holds in jails throughout the state of Indiana.

9. Complete decriminalization of marijuana and retroactive application of decriminalization to everyone in jail or prison for a marijuana-related offense.
10. Making 1 year the maximum period for probation and parole, and releasing everyone who has been under supervision for more than one year.
11. Establishment of new time-cut programs, enough so that no one in prison is “idle.”
12. Release of all women convicted of crimes of self-defense, or railroaded as accomplices in crimes committed by male partners.
13. Releasing everyone whose sentence would have already been completed, if they had been sentenced after 2005, when Indiana Code governing sentencing schemes was modified in response to the *Smylie v. State* decision in the Indiana Supreme Court. Retroactive application of the post-*Smylie v. State* sentencing reforms to everyone sentenced prior to that decision in the Indiana Supreme Court.
14. Re-sentencing with the opportunity for parole of everyone sentenced to life without possibility of parole.
15. Abolishing the Habitual Offender Enhancement (Indiana three strikes law) and reducing the sentence of everyone currently in prison who has a habitual offender enhancement on their sentence accordingly
16. Releasing all people convicted or held pre-trial for crimes related to sex work from prisons, jails, and parole/probation supervision, and fully decriminalizing sex work.

Keep up with the Freedom Now! Campaign by following us on our blog and social media, or joining a local IDOC Watch chapter!

The Other Deadly COVID Prisons: Reservations and COVID-19

from RashidMod.com

by Kevin Rashid Johnson #264847

Two of Amerika’s most oppressive institutions directed at confining and controlling people of color in particular are the two deadliest centers of COVID-19 infections: namely prisons and AmerIndian reservations.

Some Amerikan prisons have higher infection rates than entire countries. Indeed the largest clusters of coronavirus in the U.S. have been in prisons. But the devastation caused to First Nation peoples by the virus and lack of attention from the U.S. government is much worse. AmerIndians, like Blacks who are especial targets of U.S. imprisonment, are more vulnerable to COVID due to disproportionate rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, asthma, and diabetes. But it not only is causing massive loss of life, its threatening the very lifeways of these Nations.

The Navajos, for example, who are the largest First Nation with over 300,000 members, has 22,776 confirmed COVID cases and 783 deaths as of Dec 31, 2020. But the most

vulnerable members being lost to the virus are their elders, who are the history-keepers and cultural teachers.

Clayson Benally, a member of the Navajo Nation, explained the impact of these deaths. “Every time one of those elders leaves this world, it’s like a whole library, a whole beautiful chapter of our histories, of our ceremonies—all that knowledge gone. It’s not written, it’s not dictated, you’re not going to find it on the internet.”

Clayson’s own grandfather, James Benally, is such a figure. Estimated to be in his 90s, he is a traditional medicine man and world-renowned hoop dancer, and is recognized by the state of Arizona as an Arizona Indian Living Treasure. Recognition that has however, done nothing to bring in needed protections for the Navajo peoples against COVID from the state.

Added to this is the fact that practitioners of traditional medicine like his granddaughter Jereda Benally, haven’t been able to see patients due to a COVID lockdown that’s been in effect since Nov 16, 2020.

Because of the extreme poverty and lack of basic resources imposed under the U.S. reservation system that confines First Nations on wasteland, there are few resources available locally to aid their struggle against the virus. The very fact that there are no nearby grocery stores compels them to visit border towns for groceries, with the danger of bringing COVID back on the reservation.

Worse still is that 10% of Navajo reservation residents have no electricity and 40% have no running water. Which contributes greatly to their disproportionately high infection rates and makes it especially dangerous for elders, because many can't regularly wash their hands under running water for 20 seconds.

The conditions faced by the First Nations under the

pandemic mirror the genocidal conditions imposed on them by the U.S. during its campaigns to remove and exterminate them using germ warfare, like deliberately infecting them with smallpox and allowing the disease to fester among them. Conditions which were denounced as crimes against humanity when the German Nazis replicated them against Europeans.

We must recognize and stand with the First Nations against their ongoing suffering under U.S. capitalist imperialist domination and ongoing genocidal conditions.

Dare to Struggle Dare to Win!
All Power to the People!



Political Education: Key Terms and Concepts

Capitalism: an economic system organized and operated with profit and capital accumulation as its end goal¹

PIC: "Prison Industrial Complex"²

Reformism: a belief that an issue can be solved by keeping a problem intact and operating according to its purpose if only certain aspects of it can be mitigated or altered in some way

Revolution: a complete transformation of something into that of something else entirely³

Neocolonialism: independence/sovereignty infringed upon by another power (nations, ethnic groups, "races", empires, etc), but in a more advanced and disguised form

Fascism: a form of organized society in which the state exercises its grip on power in authoritarian methods. Typically by way of patriotic brainwashing, and militaristically with its police/army⁴

Imperialism: a nation or group of nations violating another nation's right to be independent and free of any form of foreign interference

Counter-insurgency: undermining anyone/ any group's ability to organize and overthrow their oppressors

¹ When societies are organized in such a way as the capitalist systems, society's needs/desires (overall wellbeing) are shoved to the side in the drive for material gain.

² We refer to the prison system as such due to its scale and how large of an apparatus the prison system is in reality as well as the types of industries related to the PIC.

³ This is the fundamental distinction between "reformist and "revolutionary" ideology.

⁴ Fascism varies in its exact form. There are blatant forms of fascism (Mussolini's Italy, Nazi Germany, etc), and there are very disguised forms, such as the U.S. currently.

Understanding Abolition

IDOCWatch is an abolitionist organization. This is an important distinction. All of our work contains potential success for gaining further ground in the abolition war. In our understanding of the method in which society is organized (primarily its mode of production, which we understand as exploitative and unjust), we've come to the conclusion that prison serves an inhumane society. As a severe form of social control, the PIC stands as inherent component to the capitalist structure that enables its perpetuation. The idea of warehousing and torturing another being for having violated the unfair and prejudiced "laws" of an illegitimate society is completely absurd. Realizing and understanding this is in essence understanding the importance and logic of abolition.

Reform vs Revolution

To reform the PIC is, in fact, to UPHOLD that system and its affects on/to society. We see no other alternative to creating an authentic humane and free society than to outright ELIMINATE the PIC and its function in society. Accompanied by this abolition work is community work that can provide ideas and projects that people can work collectively on that will allow other alternatives to incarceration (more rehabilitative and therapeutic approaches to issues in society) to initiate. This kind of work provides concrete logic to the abolitionist stance. As for reformist agendas, they fall short on recognizing the PIC's societal function, therefore missing the point on its absolute illegitimacy. We don't view the PIC in the abstract, so we can understand it is only one part of a larger structure which expands, disguises, and continues the oppression of millions of people.

Importance of Historical Analysis

Our political line contains historical references and breakdowns. It's important to make note of these because it demonstrates the power that each tactical decision made (either by the state/PIC or its opposition) can have. This is measured by the effects still felt today by actions put in place in history. An analysis of historical materialism allows us to have a clear vision of what we are actually up against and how to/how not to proceed in that endeavor.

Building a Midwest Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement

from Black-Ink.info
April 2021

This document is the product of a group of revolutionaries in the so-called "Midwestern" region of the United States, to clarify a regional political trajectory for revolutionary abolitionist practice in the Midwest. We define it as a "trajectory" because we think that any strategy and analysis we outline should be subject to constant critique, development, and revision. These are therefore not definitive words but instead present both working theoretical and practical positions. We hope that this trajectory informs revolutionaries working within our own region, as well as revolutionaries organizing throughout and against the broader white colonizer plantation society.

We are in the middle of a revolutionary period. Following the rebellions of Summer 2020, a level of revolutionary consciousness has reemerged on a mass scale throughout the United States. Over the past two years, there have been massive revolts against Capital and the State across the world. Physical infrastructures of policing and the prison industrial complex became the targets of

generalized militant street action in unprecedented ways. Uprisings, escapes, and strikes still continue to persist in sites of detention, at times spilling beyond the walls. Not only is concerted militant action against the police state now a defining feature of the revolutionary seasons to come, equally important is how radical movements for Black autonomy have continued to since take root. Militant struggles for Indigenous self-determination and the liberation of colonized ecologies and lifeways daily expose the illegitimacy of the settler colonial nation. While Amerika's imperialist death march continues to face resistance all across the planet, there are currently masses of people within the core of empire who are realizing the potential they have to stop the machinery of racist Capital and subvert its control over our communities through sustained collective action. The only logical outcome we foresee for the current global trajectory is REVOLUTION OR DEATH in ongoing fascist eco-genocide.

Part 1: Revolutionary Abolitionism

We want to define Revolutionary Abolitionism as we believe that the character of a revolution in the United States emerges from the historical conditions of resistance to captivity and forms of state dominion specific to the local articulation of anti-Blackness and white supremacy. At

its deepest foundations, the United States of Amerika is a white settler nation based on racial slavery, land occupation, population displacement, and perpetual warfare. We write from the perspective that U.S.-based revolutionary groups continually fail in their attempts to import ideologies from other historical and geographic locations to carry out the initiative of revolution in this particular social context. There is a rather substantial record of revolutions, radical traditions, and organic forms of struggle generated precisely from within the belly of settler empire itself. These are longstanding histories of local-level resistance and place-specific lineages of contesting state and capital. While we believe that the countless global revolutionary traditions have much to teach us, we believe that a revolution in the United States will take on a character defined by localized social contexts that are relative to a region's situated material history. We neither wish to recuperate the white Amerikan national map nor give its borders any shred of legitimacy. We are writing with the aim to understand and base our understanding on the histories of Black and Indigenous resistance to the most evil and depraved empire on earth. The "U.S." is a term that invokes our enemy and target.

The history of revolutionary movements in this country while varied have always been connected to and driven by a politics of freedom struggle. For this reason, we believe that a revolutionary abolitionist trajectory is the most likely to resonate within the United States. The pursuit of freedom of the oppressed by their own hands utilizing any means necessary is critical to the revolutionary abolitionist trajectory in the present day. Abolition means nothing if it is not absolute freedom struggle, a movement for total liberation. An insurgent defiance against every interlocking system of oppression. We are uninterested in settler colonial Amerikan notions of "freedom" that leave the State and white supremacy intact. We are interested in a freedom that means the destruction of the United States in its entirety. The fundamental revolutionary action that has remained central to any movement in this country is the self-activity of the Black masses who were enslaved but remained constantly in revolt against the plantation society. Current revolutionary movements must take on the character of the revolt.

The main aspects we find valuable about revolutionary abolition is how it is fundamentally rooted in the Black Radical Tradition. The history of revolutionary abolitionist movements—from the slave uprisings to Attica to the Black Panther Party—are distinctly informed by the Black Radical frameworks. Revolutionary abolitionism as a trajectory of freedom struggle in the United States also encompasses a multitude of other autonomous radical traditions. These traditions cannot be flattened or collapsed for the sake of

comparison to create a "movement of movements," as many on the settler Left would have you confused. We do not believe that a revolutionary abolitionist movement should be ideologically, organizationally, or even strategically uniform. Instead, revolutionary abolitionism as a trajectory embraces a multitude of influences and frameworks such as the Black radical tradition, anarcho-communism, Indigenous resistance, decolonial movements, autonomist forms of communism, Black feminism, radical queer frameworks, insurrectionary anarchism, eco-socialism, etc.

Building on the ideas of three decades of radical and revolutionary Black/Native feminist consciousness in particular, we also believe the Prison Industrial Complex forms the overarching context of struggle that we are situated within and fight against as abolitionists. This perspective of the existing terrain compels all abolition movements to ask: If the Prisoner Liberation movement is not considered ground zero in this trajectory of freedom struggle than have we failed to be abolitionists? Both the leadership and participation of imprisoned populations, and nonimprisoned peoples' willingness to bend the bars and connect with revolutionaries inside are important features of a movement that is qualitatively abolitionist in the United States.

While many of the above principles expelled in definition exceed the boundaries of this position paper, the terms of engagement and proposals for Midwest revolutionary abolitionists that we plot here forward are possible and in a number of places already being actualized. Blueprints and models of course are never sufficient, and a catalyst project will always require experimentation to achieve any objectives it sets out to do. The remainder of this article will discuss the specifics and peculiar contours of the Midwest as a specific terrain we see ourselves situated in as revolutionary abolitionists in the streets, and an argument for the proliferation of the Distro form, which encompasses a Catalyst project that combines the objectives of survival, study, and class combat through the simple use of table, some food and zines.

Part 2: The Midwest

The regional specificities of the Midwest are particularly important for revolutionary abolitionists. Our conception of the "Midwest" is related mainly to particular conditions of life in the areas we reside that are determined by and place-specific structures we are in conflict with. We want to discuss the specificity of the region's terrain, pathways and transportation infrastructure, the geography's specific "car culture," and the proximity between a variety of urban centers. These are all serious material factors in the play of accumulating revolts and the capacity of neighbors to share in the production of insurgency, to connect and maintain

across space most importantly. Unlike the East Coast which is connected by a bunch of trains and major interstates and is relatively close together, the urban centers are islands within the Midwest. This does not mean we cannot find our way to new pathways. The use of cars in rebellions and the ability for our comrades to drive across large distances to build is something that we should invest deeper and consider in revolutionary strategy. We can be driving across the highways and utilizing roads to visit and build with our comrades, in addition to traveling to aid insurgents in their revolt.

Large white localities in the region present a challenge for revolutionaries invested in the destruction of whiteness. The reactionary rural and suburban areas present a dangerous terrain in the Midwest. As revolutionaries in the Midwest, we've driven through rural areas with Trump signs and forests where white citizen's militias train with AR-15s. As revolutionaries, we accept the present realities of the white reactionaries as our enemies. However, the presence of the white reactionaries does not negate a revolutionary horizon guided by the Black Radical Tradition in such zones. In some senses, areas full of white reactionaries present opportunities for revolutionaries to seize on and substantial vacuums that oppositional activity can set the terms of struggle from within and fill. Many of these large white localities means a lack of presence of the Black neo-colonial elites which means the conflict defined by the revolutionary forces battling the State and their white citizen militias is clearer and less difficult to navigate than the liberal managers of capital.

While we do not diminish the danger of the white reactionary, we find that the neoliberal technocrats and Black neo-colonial elites in the major cities present a much significant danger to revolutionary forces through their ability to co-opt, defuse, and redirect movements that demonstrate to have material teeth. Thus, those of us positioned within the Midwest small cities and more rural zones have opportunities that our comrades on the Coasts may not have. We can build out revolutionary bases in many areas without worrying about liberal co-optation. Furthermore, the danger from such reactionary forces makes us adopt a stricter culture of security and community defense.

The small cities and the large cities of the region both have distinct things to offer one another. The large cities have older pre-existing revolutionary milieus which are connected to long time movement history. The experience of these revolutionaries is invaluable. In addition, movement infrastructure in these spaces tend to be more well developed in terms of physical spaces, publications and other types of things. The small cities, suburbs and rural

areas offer the big cities spaces that are less dominated by the NPIC and the Establishment "Left." This means that the groups in this area can build with less resistance. Furthermore, these spaces are not considered to be radical centers so they could provide a space for revolutionaries to build infrastructure with less amount of cost. Additionally, the State in these areas is less familiar with a revolutionary current so they are going to be less prepared to repress revolutionary movements. While in some larger cities, the State infrastructure has spent decades refining tactics against revolutionary movements, this is not the case universally. We need to take this into consideration in regard to our tactics.

We encourage revolutionaries to build autonomy in terms of their region in addition to the immediate areas that they live in. Driving across the occupied Midwest for a couple hours to support fellow revolutionaries needs to become a more regular practice. To destroy this world, we will need to build deep roots throughout every part of the Plantation. This will happen through building intimate relationships with revolutionaries throughout our region. A box of zines or an in-person organizing conversation can go a very long way in terms of building revolutionary capacity between different places. Furthermore, our revolutionary comrades present in areas dominated by the NPIC found it often refreshing to meet comrades in areas not dominated by the nonprofits and the Academy. Our connections to one another are the key to a revolutionary project. Different regional localities must be in constant conversation as a tactical concern. Although much of this work has been happening informally and ad hoc, we need to think about driving a few hours to see our comrades in areas with less developed revolutionary infrastructure as a commonplace practice.



Part 3: Distro as a Form of Catalyst

As this document is not just concerned with theoreticals, we also want to present an organizational model for our comrades reading it. The Distro is a situated, place-based project—a hyper-local catalyst that addresses the specific needs and concerns of an existing neighborhood or community. The idea of this so-called form of organization is put best as the phrase “each one teach one,” and described

spatially as “block by block.” As Malcolm X says, “all revolutions are based on land” as the land is the source of all life. We must be willing to seize and hold the land as we push for abolition and decolonization. Important to clarify is how this notion of place-based work is not to be confused with the common “land-based” white radical project model, which is reactionary and reinforces settler occupation and a colonial relation of dominance. The Distro is a tool of insurrectional activity that has no attachments to land as a property relation, commodity, or object of ownership. As a revolutionary abolitionist project, the Distro must therefore be rooted in a form of radicalism that is principled in its anti-colonial practices and anti-capitalist methods.

A Distro is something that someone with relatively no experience can partake in or with very little necessary resources can get started. The initial catalyst group size should be from 3 to 15 people. It is critical that this catalyst group has very clear set goals and shared principles before it engages in collective work, so having a few discussions about framework and principles is important prior to making moves within the community. The goal of the Distro is not to perform the functions of a vanguard but rather act as a catalyst for a variety of autonomous projects within a neighborhood and eventually a larger regional area. We believe that the Streetside Distro in particular is an easily reproducible form through which revolutionaries can organize in so many different settings. Distros have over the years even served to provide structure for genuine grassroots revolutionary movements to organize across prison walls.

The Distro is a versatile medium and method of revolutionary abolitionist community organizing which is based principally in collective practices of survival, study, and class combat (conflictuality). We find that these three practices are essential for the revolutionary project.

We believe that revolutionaries must be supporting each other and our communities to SURVIVE the brutality of capitalism. We take particular inspiration from the idea of Poor People’s Survival Programs, as theorized and implemented by the Black Autonomy Federation. Faith and courage in one’s capacity to challenge oppressive systems is gained through taking action to keep one another housed, fed, warm, and safe. A critical part of these survival programs is going to be developing structures of access, care, and material support for people with children, people with disabilities, formerly incarcerated people, and survivors of systemic state and interpersonal violence.

The idea of STUDY is the idea that revolutionaries involved in these distro projects need to be constantly developing cultures of learning, self-criticism, and

accountability. The cultures of learning are going to be oral in many cases rather than dense theoretical cultures that are only accessible to academics. While we believe that it is essential for all revolutionaries to have deep knowledge of history, theory, and tactics, we believe that the main concern for revolutionaries is doing popular education about revolutionary topics. If you are not prepared to communicate the objectives of your project to people without academic jargon or in a way that moves beyond savior paternalism, then preliminary education internal to your group may be needed. We suggest therefore trying to naturalize Abolitionist Study as a feature of your immediate communities of struggle and slowly move outwards into neighborhoods, spheres of social life, or other centres of convergence.

We believe that a good popular form for political education is distributing zines. The “Zine Distro” is a useful medium for entering into the common vibration of your community, circles, social space, or whatever. Sharing literature is central but it is not the only way to communicate your ideas to people you are in relation with. Importantly, the zine distro must be oriented towards the people rather than to the personal politics of the revolutionaries. The goal of the popular education is not to try and circulate esoteric texts but rather educational material that builds and helps makes sense of the ongoing struggles and material conditions faced by a community. The goal of the Zine Distro should be to articulate and defend the revolt against settler society. This could mean that the Distro develops texts specific to the area that the revolutionaries operate in to develop a localized analysis. For instance, the Midwest has a long history and deep culture of zine distribution that interestingly has always had one of its largest audiences in the prisons. The importance of reaching into the prisons and sending literature and correspondence also can never be underestimated. Co-creating literature with imprisoned revolutionaries is also an invaluable way to sharpen one’s own group analysis, as the nonimprisoned revolutionary can never fully comprehend the changing politics of power in plantation society without listening in to the pulse of the movement for Prisoner Liberation.

Finally, we emphasize the need for class combat as a central part of the Distro model. We believe that conflictual actions that contest the dominion of the State and racist Capital are critical. We want to emphasize that we place importance on the mass grassroots organizing model for this conflictuality. The Distro should help catalyze projects that fight back against class enemies such as cops, prison bureaucrats, capitalists, landlords, fascists and bosses through utilizing a variety of different tactics. The most important that the projects could look very different place by place, it could be a Copwatch in one neighborhood or a tenant’s union in

the next or both. The goal is to enable collective groups of people that can combat class enemies in a way that is militant, uncompromising, and continues to bring people into the struggle. The centrality of attack is critical as well. Yet the difference between this approach to class combat and what we add to an insurrectional approach is our focus on what happens in between upswing periods of revolt and that revolutionary activity necessitates the creation of mechanisms of community accountability and a deep commitment to eradicating gendered and racist violence, exploitation, marginalization, domination, hierarchy, and ableism internal to our movements.

Expect contradictions to arise when you work together with people from different social positions, political tendencies, and with different ideas of class belonging, so it is important to organize a Distro with people you know and trust, and who have the same principles and respect for your autonomy and need for rest. Often times discussing the idea with some longtime friends is the best way to go about it. Or people you have developed a strong level of political trust with. Some projects might see it necessary to expand their efforts to Serve the People and simply fill a material community need. But people should collectively understand what the objective of their project is and anticipate that the consequence of expansion may be an emergent charity dynamic, savior logic, or the misguided subversion of mutual aid's transformative valence. Scaling too large might also result in burn out, so be mindful of capacity and the potential timeline of your project. It is important to constantly assess and reevaluate your objectives as a collective, and be mindful of the number of people moving in and out of planning spaces. Both for logistical and security reasons. The idea is not to centralize efforts, nor is the Distro an apparatus to manage actions that take flight over the course of its existence. The purpose of the Distro is to catalyze and not become an anchor. To repeat, the goal of the distro is to catalyze and not become an anchor for the revolutionary process in motion.

The moment is now ...

We must seize the time. We cannot wait. We encourage readers of this text to begin organizing along the lines of the trajectory we charted out at whatever capacity you have. Small steps of a few individuals are essential for any mass revolutionary movement to catalyze. We wrote this text to be used in struggle. It is meant to be shared on a street corner, through the bars of a prison, or with comrades in another city who are struggling to find their role in movement. We build with care, urgency, and the dedication to build liberated worlds out of the ashes of this one.

Finally, it has become clear that a new Civil war among white society is on the horizon. We suggest revolutionary

abolitionists seize the moment during this crisis internal to the Amerikan plantation as the enslaved Black masses did in the General Strike, during the first Civil war, to destroy chattel slavery. Settler society must be obliterated by the revolutionary abolitionist current by any means necessary. GLOBAL BLACK INSURRECTION. KNIFE TO THE THROAT OF AMERIKAN FASCISM.

For freedom and autonomy
For the end of this world
For the countless new worlds beyond

“Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.” —Franz Fanon



Barclays Drops Prison Bond Deal at Last Minute After Furor

from Bloomberg.com

April 2021

Barclays Plc pulled out of its role as the lead underwriter of a municipal-bond sale that was set to build prisons for CoreCivic Inc. after criticism that the bank was backtracking on a pledge to no longer provide financing to for-profit jail companies.

KeyBanc Capital Markets, another manager, also said it was resigning from the transaction.

The \$634 million bond issue was set to be sold as soon as last week through a Wisconsin agency to raise money for a CoreCivic-owned company that was planning to build two prisons in Alabama. The facilities were set to be leased and run by the state's Department of Corrections.

The bank's lead role in the deal drew controversy because it appeared to be at odds with Barclays' announcement two years ago that it would no longer provide new financing to private prison companies, whose model of profiting from incarceration has drawn controversy for years. Other banks, including Bank of America Corp., JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Wells Fargo & Co., also said at the time that they were severing ties with the industry.

The banks' last minute decision to abandon the deal was highly unusual and may reflect the growing clout of investors who are pouring into socially minded investment funds, creating a lucrative and growing business that financial institutions are eager to court.

“We have advised our client that we are no longer participating in the transaction intended to provide

financing for correctional facilities in the State of Alabama,” Barclays said Monday through a spokesman in an emailed statement. “While our objective was to enable the State to improve its facilities, we recognize that this is a complex and important issue. In light of the feedback that we have heard, we will continue to review our policies.”

KeyBanc Capital Markets has “resigned” from the transaction, a bank spokesperson said via email. A representative for Stifel Financial Corp., another underwriter, didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

The banks’ retreat may not derail the project, though the departure of the lead underwriter will almost certainly delay the financing. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, a Republican who has spearheaded the overhaul of the prisons, said in a statement that the state was disappointed by the decision but would move forward with the projects.

CoreCivic spokesperson Amanda Gilchrist said in an emailed statement on Monday that the company is proceeding with efforts to “deliver desperately needed, modern corrections infrastructure to replace dilapidated, aging facilities.”

“The reckless and irresponsible activists who claim to represent the interests of incarcerated people are in effect advocating for outdated facilities, less rehabilitation space and potentially dangerous conditions for correctional staff and inmates alike,” she said.

The taxable municipal bond sale was expected to provide about 68% of the financing totaling \$927 million, according to investor roadshow documents dated March 31. Those plans included the potential sale of \$215.6 million in debt issued through a private placement and an equity contribution from CoreCivic.

Barclays had defended its work on the deal, saying it wasn’t at odds with its 2019 decision because the money was financing facilities that would be run by Alabama. The state’s officials said the deal with CoreCivic will help it improve conditions within its prison system after the state and its corrections department were sued by the U.S. Justice Department in December for failing to protect male prisoners from violence and unsanitary conditions.

Governor Ivey said in the statement that the new facilities would be safer and provide more secure correctional environments.

“These new facilities, which will be leased, staffed, and operated by the state, are critical to the state’s public infrastructure needs and will be transformative in addressing

the Alabama Department of Corrections’ longstanding challenges,” the statement said.

Barclays nevertheless drew fire from advocacy groups and the public portion of the debt sale was reduced last week, a step that usually indicates that a bank is having difficulty lining up buyers for securities.

Last week, the American Sustainable Business Council and partner organization Social Venture Circle, which represents 250,000 businesses to advocate for responsible practices and policies, announced that they would refund Barclays’ membership dues. Barclays joined the group in 2019.

“We applaud Barclays’ decision to not underwrite the Alabama private prison bonds,” said David Levine, president of American Sustainable Business Council in a statement on Monday. He said that he invites the bank and other financial institutions to “chart a responsible and beneficial path forward for investing and rebuilding our communities, and our economy.”



This Is Not Justice. It’s Self-Preservation.

from NYMag.com

April 2021

The three-week criminal trial of Derek Chauvin ended on Tuesday with three guilty verdicts, forestalling mass protests of the sort Minnesota officials had spent weeks anticipating and deploying armed agents to suppress. More than a legal referendum on Chauvin’s conduct, the trial was a bilateral effort to defend the virtues of policing. The dishonesty this required from both prosecutors and the defense — and the workaday violence it obscured — should leave no doubt that justice for people like George Floyd has nothing to do with the rare officer an unjust institution chooses to rebuke.

The crux of the prosecution focused on whether Chauvin’s behavior was deviant enough to warrant consequences. Close to a dozen former and current police officials — mostly from Minneapolis, but elsewhere too — testified against the former officer, who last spring was video-recorded kneeling on Floyd’s neck for more than nine minutes until the 46-year-old Black man died. Minneapolis police chief Medaria Arradondo said Chauvin had violated department policy by his actions. MPD inspector Katie

Blackwell did the same, as did Lieutenants Richard Zimmerman and Johnny Mercil and Sergeant Jody Stiger of the Los Angeles Police Department, among others. Taken together, these officials composed a collective effort to draw a hard line between Chauvin's conduct and policing by the book — what is permitted by department policy and, in Stiger's case, national norms. "Totally unnecessary," said Zimmerman in characteristic testimony. "If your knee is on a person's neck, that can kill them."

Killing people is not usually a problem for American police, who on average kill roughly 1,000 civilians a year, including fatally shooting more than 400 unarmed people total since 2015, according to the Washington Post. Thus, the rebuke of Chauvin by his fellow officers should not be interpreted as institutional opposition to needless death. It is a preservationist response to the questions of legitimacy that arise when an officer gets caught on camera torturing a handcuffed man to death, sparking some of the largest protests in U.S. history. These questions are compounded by growing public recognition that this behavior is not unusual. In the years since Eric Garner was video-recorded being choked to death by a police officer in Staten Island in 2014, the sentiment that police violence is a major problem in the U.S. has come to be shared by roughly half of American adults, while about two-thirds feel that the criminal-legal system treats police too leniently. Departments nationwide, and the Minneapolis Police Department in particular, face unprecedented threats to their primacy and local esteem in the form of budget cuts and even proposals to disband them.

Throwing Chauvin under the bus in court is a good way to reassure people that this system can and does work the way they want it to. This is a goal of interest to the prosecutors, who during the trial found themselves in the rare position of pressing charges against a police officer. They made their view clear in their closing arguments on Monday. "This case is called the State of Minnesota v. Derek Chauvin," said prosecutor Steven Schleicher. "This case is not called the State of Minnesota v. the Police. Policing is a noble profession ... and there is nothing worse for good police than a bad police, who doesn't follow the rules, who doesn't follow procedure, who doesn't follow training, who ignores the policies of the department, and the motto of the department: 'To protect with courage, to serve

with compassion.'"

Not six years ago, officers within the same department killed Jamar Clark, then razed the protest camp established by residents to oppose them. While Chauvin was choking Floyd's life out last year, several of his fellow officers stood by and watched, including Alex Kueng, whose mother described his reason for joining the department to the *New York Times*: "That's part of the reason why he wanted to become a police officer — and a black police officer on top of it — is to bridge that gap in the community, change the narrative between the officers and the black community." That's one department over just a handful of years. Drive a few miles in any direction and the story is similar: the killing of Philando Castile in 2016, the killing of Daunte Wright last week. Most of these officers were determined to have abided by department policy.

Policing is not an intrinsically noble profession. It is a profession, plain and simple, that attracts some applicants who may behave nobly and others who do not, and that generally encourages people to be worse versions of themselves — to ignore or justify the brutality of their colleagues, to excuse violence, to reject accountability. Whether there are more "good" or "bad" police does not change the fact that the police will not stop killing people needlessly. The parameters of acceptable law-enforcement conduct are so warped that prosecutors could not feasibly expect a conviction for Chauvin by arguing that it's not legal to kneel on someone's neck until they die. They had to demonstrate that kneeling on someone's neck until they die warranted consequences because it violated a specific police-department policy, because it did not fit the "reasonableness" standard enshrined in law by *Graham v. Connor* in 1989: that if a "reasonable" police officer would have done the same thing under the circumstances, then it is legal.

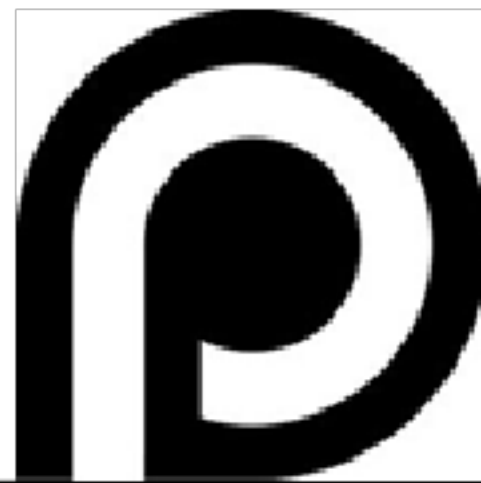
This is not a standard — or system — that has to be preserved, regardless of Tuesday's guilty verdicts. It is a license for the police to keep doing what Americans are in the streets protesting them for doing, and insisting it is nonnegotiable under the auspices of public safety. Chauvin's former colleagues may have come out in force to rebuke him during his trial. But the result was less justice than an unusually strident effort toward self-preservation. And it probably worked.

Writing to Prisoners

Since prisoners are often transferred between facilities, we won't print addresses that can quickly become outdated. Instead, we'll direct you to the Indiana DOC "Offender Database" on their website. You can look up their current location with their DOC# (listed on Table of Contents). We use the number because the names they use are often not the state name that the DOC lists them under. And then look up the mailing address for that facility. Correspondence and engagement with what they've written here is welcome.

Some tips for writing to prisoners: Be clear about your intentions. Share something of yourself and also be curious to learn more about them. If you're not sure where to start, reference ideas they have written about. Don't say anything sketchy or incriminating for yourself or others. Assume that everything you write is being copied and read by prison administrators. Use only blue or black ink on white, lined paper in plain, white envelopes. Keep in mind that prison is, in many ways, the epitome of toxic masculinity and saturated with problematic and harmful ideas and social norms. Prisoners often will not have the latest language or frameworks for social justice. Be generous and seek to understand their different experiences, but also don't be afraid to engage and share your own experiences.

If you prefer to correspond online, you can set up an account at web.connectnetwork.com



IDOC Watch has a Patreon patreon.com/idocwatch

IDOC Watch is a prison abolition group based in Indiana that works to expose and end abuses by the Indiana Department of Corrections, build prisoner power, and strengthen solidarity between those who are locked up and those who aren't. We practice prisoner-led abolition, which is a strategic tendency within the abolitionist movement that prioritizes connections between organizers inside and outside the prisons, jails, and other forms of carceral monitoring, and formerly incarcerated people. We believe that the most effective strategies and tactics for overcoming the prison industrial complex will be informed by the experiences of people who have suffered through the system directly.

All funds we receive through Patreon will be put directly to covering our everyday expenses and building toward future actions that advance the struggle. Phone calls, printing, mailing, and covering emergencies inside comrades have are all expensive but integral to the work we do.

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