

## UPDATES

### **March 21<sup>st</sup> - Submission of Judi Bari Bombing Evidence Ordered for Independent Testing**

*On March 21, 2011, Magistrate Judge James Larson issued an order granting a motion for preservation and independent testing of the bomb remnants (including potential DNA evidence, along with fingerprint evidence) in the case of the bombing of Earth First! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney.*

Last year, the bombing victims' attorneys received word that the FBI intended to destroy this evidence, even though the FBI never conducted an honest investigation in trying to determine who bombed Judi and Darryl, and never so much as subjected this evidence, including duct tape contained in the nearly intact Cloverdale bomb (which misfired, and which the FBI itself acknowledges was built by the same bomber(s) as the car bomb which ripped through Judi Bari's Subaru car seat and up into her body on May 24, 1990) to forensic examination.

In 1990, bombers did not know to cover their DNA tracks. There is every reason to believe that these bomb components may contain forensic evidence which will finally answer the question, who bombed Judi Bari. The FBI, apparently, has never sought DNA testing of this evidence, and has never so much as compared the usable fingerprints it lifted. Furthermore, given the history of this case, the victims cannot trust the FBI to do this sincerely on its own. For this reason, their lawyers sought both preservation and independent examination.

In keeping with its long and continuing tradition of targeting and framing left wing political activists (a pattern which continues into the present under Obama's FBI, evident in the abhorrent and terrorizing recent raids in Chicago, the Twin Cities, and other locales on above board peace activists and supporters of Palestinian self-determination, and their families), the FBI and the DOJ set out in 1990 to frame Judi and Darryl, and to discredit the environmental movement Earth First!, by accusing them of transporting the assassin's car bomb which nearly killed them.

To try to make their political frame-up case, FBI supervisors and senior agents flagrantly and extensively lied about the physical evidence, events leading up to the bombing, and Earth First!'s history, to other responding law enforcement agencies, including the Oakland police, and to its own agents. Judi and Darryl's legal team finally undressed these lies in a federal civil rights trial against the FBI and the Oakland Police in 2002, in which a jury found not only that authorities had falsely arrested and accused Bari and Cherney in violation of their Fourth Amendment rights, but that they had done so for the insidious purpose of trying to discredit their environmental movement, in violation of their First Amendment rights. The jury awarded a total of \$4.4 million to Bari's estate (Bari died of Breast cancer in 1997) and Cherney against various responsible FBI agents and Oakland police officers.

The civil case helped expose the fact that FBI dirty tricks continue into the present, notwithstanding the scrutiny of the Church Committee and its condemnation of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO in the 1970s, and it stands as a monument in the continuing struggle to stop the FBI from working to disrupt the supposedly free political assembly and expression of people on the left.

The FBI's refusal to subject the bombing evidence to the most rudimentary physical analysis demonstrates plainly that its only interest in the case was to blame and frame the victims, not to solve the heinous crime against them. Judge Larson's order clears the way for Darryl Cherney, on his own behalf and on behalf of the late Judi Bari, to work, finally, to solve the bombing, after the FBI has completely abdicated that responsibility and only ever interfered.

## **March 28<sup>th</sup> - Anti-Nuke Defendants Get 3+ Years in Prison**

*The five Disarm Now Plowshares defendants--Father Bill "Bix" Bichsel, SJ; Susan Crane; Lynne Greenwald; Father Steve Kelly, SJ; and Sister Anne Montgomery, RSCJ--were sentenced to a collective total of three years and five months in federal prison. In justifying the sentence, US District Court Judge Benjamin Settle, declared that the acts for which the Disarm Now Plowshares were convicted last December constituted "a form of anarchism."*

### **MORE:**

On All Souls night in November 2, 2009, the five cut through a chain link perimeter fence and entered the Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, north of Tacoma, WA. After walking undetected for nearly four miles they arrived at the bunkers where nuclear warheads for Trident submarines are stored. They cut through the bunker fences and unfurled hand painted banners which said "Disarm Now Plowshares: Trident Illegal and Immoral", knelt to pray, sowed sunflower seeds, and then waited to be arrested as dawn broke.

KOMO news quotes Assistant U.S. Attorney Arlen Storm as saying: "The judge found that this was essentially anarchy. And if everyone behaved in this manner, society could not function." Settle remanded all five into the custody of the federal Bureau of Prisons immediately after sentencing. The longest sentences were fifteen months each for Susan Crane and Father Steve Kelly, SJ. Lynne Greenwald drew a six-month sentence. Father Bix Bichsel and Sister Anne Montgomery received three and two-month sentences, respectively.

## **March 29<sup>th</sup> – Oglala Sioux Elder Speaks From Jail About False Imprisonment**

*Martin was arrested on March 11<sup>th</sup>, and accused of seven false and trumped up charges under the direction of Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) Attorney General Rae Ann Red Owl in retaliation for his defense of a brave group of elders who peacefully took over and now occupy the Porcupine Elderly Meals building to protest elder abuse, neglect, profiteering within the elderly meals program, and corruption. The Elder's Occupation is in Day 40.*

### **MORE:**

**"THINK POSITIVE, THINK FREEDOM!"**

Duane Martin Sr. Speaks from Pine Ridge Jail About His False Imprisonment, Elder Occupation. Seeks Positive Outcome to Today's Bond Hearing

Pine Ridge Jail, Pine Ridge Reservation, SD – Strong Heart Warrior Leader Duane Martin Sr. seeks another opportunity for justice in today's bond hearing on Pine Ridge.

Occupation supporters say Martin is being held as a "political prisoner" and his arrest is a retaliatory abuse of power by Attorney General Red Owl. The Attorney General visited Duane Martin Sr. at the jail and told him, "You can call down there and stop it (the occupation)." Martin refused, saying the elders led them in, and the elders will decide when it is time to leave.

"They have boxed me in, but I didn't do anything," Martin shared in a Tuesday phone call from Pine Ridge Jail. "We need everyone to think positive, think freedom!"

Attorney General Red Owl has been personally involved in penalizing the warrior leader by denying him civil rights of due process and a bond hearing guaranteed by the OST Constitution as well as the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act. Red Owl claims Martin is a "threat to the community" but has yet to present any evidence of the claim, and supporters believe he is actually a threat to deep-seated corruption.

In addition to being traditional Ithacan or Headsman of the Strong Heart warriors known as Cante Tenza, Duane Martin Sr. is also Lead Representative for the Oglala Judiciary Council, a traditional organization that looks into corruption in the OST Judiciary and law enforcement. He has been active in efforts to stop the illegal flow of drugs and alcohol into Pine Ridge and routinely visits schools to share Lakota language and songs with children while emphasizing an anti-drug and alcohol message.

While Martin is being falsely prosecuted, Red Owl has stalled or refused a real investigation into the multiple claims of physical and verbal abuse of elders at the Porcupine meals building as well as mounting evidence of theft and fraud. In a stunning act of bias, the Attorney General has chosen to pay for casino hotel accommodations for the accusers of warrior leader Martin, even though they are direct relation to the Porcupine center staff accused of elder abuse and fraud.

“We are accused of the things that other people are really doing,” Martin explained.

Since the elders and warriors peacefully entered and began occupation of the Elderly Meals Building, the tribe now faces an investigation of its Elderly Meals Program from Indian Health Service (IHS), which uncovered a large store of spoiled and rotten food in the Porcupine Building on Monday.

The clock is also ticking on the Tribal Government who face an April 7th deadline to respond to Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (HHS/OA) concerns about the elder abuse and other allegations. The HHS/OA has expressed their deep concern for the situation on Pine Ridge and is being kept updated on emerging details of abuse and corruption.

“This struggle is about the elders, its not about Canupa,” Martin reminded. “I am a just a warrior who is doing what needs to be done right now.”

Martin asks the supporters of the Elder’s Occupation to remain strong and hang tough with the elders, “The Great Spirit is with us.”

The elder-led protest occupation in Porcupine is being tracked live at “Lakota Oyate” on Facebook.

### **March 30<sup>th</sup> - Judge Allows Suit Over Restrictions On Inmates To Go Forward**

*A federal judge in Washington will allow prisoners, including political prisoner Daniel McGowan, in two restrictive prison units designed for terrorists and other prisoners who get 24-hour monitoring to proceed with parts of their civil rights lawsuit.*

#### **MORE:**

U.S. District Judge Ricardo M. Urbina said prisoners and their lawyers at the Center for Constitutional Rights can sue over alleged violations of their due process rights. The inmates argue they didn't receive enough notice of their transfer into special Communications Management Units and that they should be able to challenge those designations. In a 38-page ruling Wednesday, the judge also wrote that the inmates should be allowed to go forward with claims of retaliation by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Two plaintiffs, Royal Jones and Daniel McGowan, claim they were sent to the restrictive CMUs because they had a history of challenging prison authorities or speaking out about social issues. McGowan, who pleaded guilty to two counts of arson in connection with an Earth Liberation Front incident, got out of one of the special units only to be sent back in with little notice last month.

NPR explored what life is like inside the CMUs in Terre Haute, Ind., and Marion, Ill., in a two-part investigative series earlier this year.

Bureau of Prisons chief Harley Lappin told a House appropriations panel earlier this month that about 80 inmates currently reside in the CMUs. The prison system is spending about \$16 million each year on a special counter-terrorism operation that monitors inmates there and around the country, Lappin testified.

The judge tossed out several other claims by the inmates, including arguments that strict limits on their phone calls and family visits amount to cruel and unusual punishment under the Constitution's Eighth Amendment. The judge also wasn't persuaded by statistics that the high number of Muslim inmates in the CMUs is a sign of discrimination.

"Judge Urbina has agreed that our clients have raised serious constitutional questions about the CMUs, and has vindicated their right to a day in court to pursue their claims," CCR Attorney Alexis Agathocleous said in an e-mail statement. Our clients were designated to the CMUs without due process or oversight, even though they have no significant history of disciplinary infractions. This led to pattern of retaliatory designations to the CMUs. In a significant victory for our clients, the court will now scrutinize the BOP's actions."

Ed Ross, a spokesman for the Bureau of Prisons, declined comment.

### **March 31<sup>st</sup> – Former United States President Jimmy Carter Urges Release of Cuban 5**

*In an interview with Cuban Television, Jimmy Carter addressed questions regarding U.S. held political prisoners collectively known as the Cuban Five. Relevant excerpts are pasted below.*

**Rodríguez:** Mr. Carter, I was very moved as I listened to you in the press conference, and here in your statement, when I heard you also ask for, demand, freedom for the Five Cuban Heroes imprisoned in the States, who Cuba considers heroes, because they faced terrorist groups and were able to prevent the list of 2,099 wounded and 3,478 dead from terrorist attacks on our country from growing any larger.

I don't know how aware you are of how deeply the Cuban people feel about the demand that the Five be released. However, I didn't hear you say they should be pardoned.

You said that according to U.S. law you expected that they would be freed. They have appealed to the Supreme Court, which refused to hear their case, despite the fact that more than 10 Nobel laureates and hundreds of political personalities and intellectuals around the world had demanded it. In other words, all the legal steps have been exhausted.

The process has been extremely arbitrary, as you said, judges have acknowledged this, and two of them have been subjected to the additional punishment of being denied regular visits from their wives, as well as having the visits from their family members made very difficult.

To arrive at this point with the Supreme Court and not allow even for the review of such a complex case is what made these Nobel prizewinners and political personalities demand that Obama grant a pardon.

You were the President of the United States. You exercised the right to pardon, as a humanitarian gesture, that I tell you – as a Cuban – the Cuban people would deeply appreciate a pardon. Are you inclined to add your name to the other Nobel prizewinners who are asking Obama to pardon the Five?

**Carter:** As you know, I'm not only a former president, but I'm also a Nobel laureate.

**Rodríguez:** That's why.

**Carter:** Well, in my private talks to President Bush and also with President Obama, I have urged the release of these prisoners.

I recognize the restraints within the American judicial system, and my hope is that the president might grant a pardon, but you have to realize that this is a decision that could only be made by the president himself, it would be presumptuous of me to try to tell another president what to do; but the presidents, now and before this, have known that my own opinion is that the original trial of the Cuban Five was very doubtful, it violated standards, and also some of the restraints on their visitation were extreme.

Now I know that all of the people have been able to visit them in jail, and it is my wish in the future that before a pardon might be granted is that there could be more access by these families to these prisoners .

I have been informed by officials, for instance, that the shooting down of the small planes over Havana, that caused the death of two pilots, was done after the President of the United States informed Cuban leaders that no more flights would take place. And I was informed by Cuban officials that they notified the President of the United States, very clearly, that they could not permit a plane to fly over their capital city...dropping leaflets...but that they would protect the sovereignty of Cuba. So even those more serious, allegations, in my opinion are very doubtful, about their need or cause of the extensive sentences that have been granted to one of the prisoners; but in every way, in my private report with Obama when I return to the United States, in my public statements like today, in my previous conversations with American leaders, I've called for the release of the Cuban Five. One of the reasons is that, guilty or not, is they've served a long prison sentence already, more than 12 years, and the fact that they've been punished adequately, even if they are guilty.

**Rodríguez:** Recently a person very closely connected to the case, who you knew very well, Leonard Weinglass, passed away. I know that you know he was a man with a love for justice, who fought for justice, and his last words, his last work, even, on his deathbed, was to prove that the Five had nothing to do with the downing of the planes.

**Carter:** Yes, I know.

**Rodríguez:** To go further into the case would make this conversation much longer, but what the Cuban people know, what can be proven, what is known, even by U.S. authorities, through the reports that Cuba sent, is that the only thing these young people were doing was looking for information to prevent terrorist actions.

I am confident that you will be able to convey the insistence on a pardon, as a humanitarian gesture. These men have suffered a lot, and have lost family members without being able to be at their side; finally, I don't insist, I thank you for your interest and your statements in the name of the Cuban people.

Mr. Carter, you also said this morning at the press conference that you had a friendly meeting with Comandante Fidel Castro, who has expressed in his Reflections a great deal of anguish about the risks faced by the human species, about the huge nuclear arsenals that keep on growing and that are capable of destroying the world several times over, and also about the nefarious consequences that climate change might have for the human species. These are subjects in which I believe you have broad agreement.

As a nuclear physicist, you know what nuclear weapons mean for the human species, when you were President, you worked hard to educate your people against consumer culture, promoted rational policies, defended the environment, even though it made you unpopular among certain sectors.

Well, quickly, I'd like to know if you still think there is a chance to do something to save humankind.

**Carter:** Well, when I was president, we negotiated with the Soviet Union to reduce the level of nuclear weapons, through the so-called SALT II Treaty, and since then I've been a strong advocate of reducing productions in nuclear arsenals on both sides. Also I believe very strongly that there is a real threat to the well being of all human beings through global warming, and as you probably know, President Obama and his predecessor, President Bush, attempted to work with other nuclear powers on reducing arsenals, and that they have been monitoring very closely the agreements that have been signed by these governments.

I think the United States has not been adequately strong in its potential leadership in addressing the global warming issue. Cuban officials, since I've been here, have pointed out me that the old city in Havana is in danger of destruction... I have been to Bolivia to meet with Evo Morales, and maybe Bolivia will be the first country that will have major damage to its economy, because the glaciers in the mountains of Bolivia are melting...their source of drinking water. So I'm hoping that in the future, this issue, and the global warming issue, can be addressed by my country and all nations, and I know that Fidel Castro is addressing this now, at least in his Reflections. I talked to him about inviting ... more definitively about his actions at present, as related to the United States ... what goes on in current affairs, and he wants to use his voice as a senior statesman for the well being of all humankind. We've had good conversations, we basically agree on many things, and above all, we also talked about global warming, and I believe that there might be a possibility between our two countries. Now I'm afraid I have to leave, to get on my airplane, I don't have an Air Force One anymore.

### **April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Leonard Peltier Welcomes New Attorney**

*A recent letter from Leonard Peltier informs us that he has a new lead attorney. The letter is below.*

**MORE:**

Dear Friends:

Robert R. Bryan of San Francisco has agreed to serve as my lead attorney. I am honored that he has accepted my invitation. I ask all my supporters and friends to work with him in the struggle for my freedom and Native American Rights.

For decades Robert has specialized in human rights litigation and has successfully defended many people in murder cases involving the death penalty. He also has a history of defending members of the American Indian Movement. Robert represented Jimmy Eagle who was cleared of murder charges in the case in which I was later wrongfully convicted. He also was the attorney for Gladys Bissonette, an Oglala Lakota/Sioux tribal elder who was a major force during the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation, etc. Gladys was the mother of Pedro Bissonette, an AIM leader who was murdered by the BIA police shortly after the occupation.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse.

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier

## **April 6<sup>th</sup> – The MOVE Organization Calls for Louis Vuitton Boycott**

**WORLD-WIDE BAN ON FLESH-HUSTLING PIMP LOUIS VUITTON'S MERCHANDISE!!!**

*JOHN AFRICA'S MOVE Organization is calling on all animal lovers and environmentally-conscious people who have feelings to ban all Louis Vuitton merchandise.*

*Once again infamous designer to the rich, Louis Vuitton, is involved in the prejudicial, offensively sick exploitation of innocent Life. In Vuitton's 2011 Spring Preview (as pictured in the April edition of Lucky Magazine) the designer's house offensively paraded once free, once alive, real Bengal tigers (who are on the endangered species list) as decoration, like plastic ornaments on a christmas tree. Tigers that were brutally slaughtered, stuffed and stagnated are now used to glamorize and draw attention to a goddamn piece of cloth and sold for money.*

### **MORE:**

These Bengal tigers that once roamed free in their natural habitat in India have now been relegated to a goddamn accessory at a fashion show, all for a dollar bill, of which Louis Vuitton has plenty. This is not the first time the infamous Vuitton family has been embroiled in the hate-filled exploitation of innocent Life. According to wikipedia, the Vuitton family was involved in sending French Jews to concentration camps, aligning themselves with Hitler's Nazis and the genocide of Jews. The infamous family was motivated by their greed for money then just as they are now , exploiting Life, murdering Life, all for the sake of a piece of paper monogrammed with dead people.

JOHN AFRICA'S MOVE Organization is calling on all animal lovers and environmentally-conscious people who have feelings to ban all Louis Vuitton merchandise. This is beyond bad taste or inappropriate behavior. This type of callous disregard, disrespect for living beings has to be confronted and eliminated. It is this very attitude, fueled by monetary greed of individuals, that has caused the environment, children, Life to be in the disastrous condition it is. JOHN AFRICA teaches MOVE people that there is nothing more important than Life. MOVE is taught to respect Life without prejudicial categorization or separation. It has been our unwavering commitment to this belief that has led to every conflict MOVE has had with the government, leading to assaults on our family members and culminating in 100 year prison sentences for 9 MOVE members, the bombing and massacre of our children, animals and family members May 13, 1985.

TO QUOTE OUR FOUNDER JOHN AFRICA from The Guidelines, " IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE SAME MENTALITY THAT INVADES, EXPLOITS, CORRUPTS, PENS IN THE FREEDOM OF ANIMALS, HACKS IT'S WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLES OF AFRICA, BLOWS UP, TEARS DOWN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE HIMALAYAS, SHOOTS UP WHALES, HARPOONS SHARKS, PROVOKES FISH TO BITE DOWN ON A HOOK DRIVING THEM WILD WITH PAIN, SNATCHES DOLPHINS FROM THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS, THROWS THEM INTO THE HOLE OF A SHIP, A TANK OF EXHIBITION, ALL FOR THE SAKE OF A DOLLAR, THIS IS THE SAME SYSTEM THAT WILL TAKE CAMELS FROM THE DESERT OF AFRICA, PLACE THEM IN A DEATH TRAP OF EXPLOITATION, SNATCH ELEPHANTS FROM INDIA, STEALING BIG CATS FROM THE JUNGLES OF SOUTH AMERICA, INTERRUPT THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRD AND STICK IT IN A CAGE, IMPOSING ON LIFE, ALL OF LIFE, TAKING LIFE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OF FREEDOM AND PUTTING THEM IN THE STAGNATING PRISONS OF ZOOS, DEVON HORSE SHOWS, DOG SHOWS, CAT SHOWS, JAILING SO CALLED WILD LIFE AND CONVICTING, IMPRISONING THE ASSERTED MORALITY OF PEOPLE, AS A MENTALITY OF EXPLOITATION IS JUST THAT AND CAN BE EXPECTED IF NOT STOPPED, TO EXPLOIT EVERYTHING", JOHN AFRICA

## April 7<sup>th</sup> – New Article on CMUs by Former Political Prisoner Andy Stepanian

The guard told me ‘you are nothing like the Muslim prisoners’. He was wrong  
by ANDY STEPANIAN



My friend Noor (above left) has beautiful eyes, but today they look sad. Noor's grandfather passed away and she has had no way of letting her father know because the simple forms of communication all of us take for granted can't help her reach out to her father with this news. Noor's father, Ghassan Elashi, (at right) is a political prisoner incarcerated in a highly restrictive and secretive federal prison program called the [Communications Management Unit \(CMU\)](#), in which I was also incarcerated.

Ghassan is imprisoned for providing humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza, a selfless deed that the Bush administration [argued](#) was analogous to indirectly supporting Hamas, by sending charity to Zakat Committees that prosecutors allege were fronts for Hamas. In the same year US AID, The Red Cross, the UN and dozens of other NGOs contributed to the same Zakat committee to which Ghassan and his charity, The Holy Land Foundation, is accused of giving aid. The US attorney's office appeared to be selectively applying one's freedom to give, and selectively prosecuting some charitable groups, while sliding on others. For this alleged charity, Ghassan is being denied all contact with the outside world and the news that comes from it, including the news of his father-in-law's passing.

The [Communications Management Unit](#) is a designer penal program that focuses specifically on isolating and silencing its inmates. The demographic of the [CMU's](#) designees is made up of [an overwhelming 64% Muslim majority](#) and a smaller minority group of designees that have either highly politicized cases or ones with abundant press attention. This apparent [racial disparity](#) and the political nature of these prisons was the focus of a recent two-part investigation on [National Public Radio entitled "Guantanamo North."](#)

[CMU](#) inmates are isolated and silenced by administrative segregation and through heavy vetting or complete denial of contact with the outside world. To make things worse for Ghassan, he was recently stripped of what little communication he was previously able to have with his loved ones from within the [CMU](#), and is now being denied all phone calls, all visits, and all emails.

The United States prides itself on not having any political prisoners and yet the federal [CMU](#) programs in Marion, Illinois, Terre-Haute, Indiana, and the Administrative-Maximum Unit at Carswell, Texas (an institution for female inmates) are filled with a disproportionate amount of inmates who are Muslim, and a smaller group of non-Muslims with cases related to tax protests, environmental advocacy, and animal rights activism, all of which are considered political causes. The [CMU](#) violates federal designation protocols because most of the inmates sent to the [CMU](#) have federal custody classification points congruent with that of prisoners normally designated to low and minimum security prison facilities, and yet they are housed in conditions that at times exceed that of the US's most restrictive "super-max" prison, ADX in Florence, Colorado. (See Alia Malek's story, [Gitmo in the Heartland](#), in the Nation.)

When the [CMU](#) was first implemented it may have been done so illegally because it side-stepped the Administrative Procedures Act (a law that demands that federal programs such as these must first be brought to the attention of congress and made available for public comment.) Moreover the [Center For Constitutional Rights](#) has argued in [Aref v. Holder](#) that the [CMU](#) violates constitutionally mandated laws of due process because as of yet there is no administrative process to challenge an inmate's designation to or transfer out of a [CMU](#).

Ghassan Elashi was accused of providing humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza through his charity The Holy Land Foundation. Specifically, the government alleges that Ghassan's charitable contributions of humanitarian aid could be deemed as indirect criminal material support of Hamas under the newly redesigned and over-broad Material Support for Terrorists statute. When Ghassan was arrested in 2004, he immediately saw a Dallas judge and was released pending trial because the judge determined that he would not be considered a threat to the community or a flight risk. Ghassan stood trial once in Dallas in 2007, was acquitted on some of the counts levied against him and the jury deadlocked on the remaining counts against him.

[A mistrial](#) was declared on the counts the jury could not render a verdict upon and only after a second trial in 2008 were [Ghassan and 4 other men](#) found guilty of allegedly giving Material Support for Palestinians.

Ghassan was later sentenced in 2009 to 65 years in federal prison.

Noor, who has often told me "I am my father's daughter," is currently working on a memoir about her father's experience with the working title *Eyes Like My Father*. Noor's pen is her expression and in her writing, she seeks to provide her father a voice. Noor works tirelessly to advocate for her father while he awaits appeal, and continues her father's work towards a free and peaceful Palestine by using the mediums she knows best, visual arts, design, and the written and spoken word. As a graduate student at The New School in Manhattan, Noor has combined all of these mediums in a program called [Project Palestine](#), an initiative by New School students to re-center Palestine in contemporary dialogue. [Project Palestine's](#) monthly programs began in the fall and the programming continues to outdo itself each month, by bringing artists, poets, writers, scholars, and musicians to the school's midtown NYC campus. One of the programs, [Mainstreaming Palestine](#), consisted of a panel of artists moderated by a student, a performance by Israeli-born hip hop artist by way of Detroit named [Invincible](#), a talk from [documentarian Fida Qishta](#), and a reading from a young woman from Oklahoma named Pamela Olson, who shared excerpts from her new book [Fast Times in Palestine](#), a recollection of her experiences as a press coordinator for a Palestinian presidential candidate. Hundreds of New Yorkers from all walks of life, all

religions, identity, race, and orientation attended the program helping to build an open-ended community dialogue around the continued plight of Palestinians. Re-centering Palestine in contemporary dialogue is of the utmost importance to Noor and through her work with [Project Palestine](#), she is able to connect with and reach out to additional supporters who view the issue as having been a polarizing force for far too long in the hands of extremists on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I recently attended one of [Project Palestine's](#) programs at The New School and Noor invited me to join her and her friends for a cup of coffee afterwards. Noor introduces me to her friends--they are Iraqi, Jewish, Korean, a wildly diverse group that transcends all boundaries of race, ethnicity, and identity. Noor wears a contemporary and stylish hijab but some of her friends who are Muslim do not. Noor is not to be pigeon-holed, nor can the group at this table be. They are a new generation of American justice seekers who are able to look past what those in power on both sides of the green line sometimes can't and to see the hearts of the people with whom they share a table. I could only imagine what the world would look like if the microcosm at this table was projected upon the rest of society.

One of the women at the table asks me if I was in the [CMU](#) with Noor's father. I explain that I was not, that I was released about a month before he was transferred there. She then asks me to explain what it was like. I did not know if I had it in me to fully explain and I worried about revisiting it in front of Noor, considering that this time out with friends over coffee could be a pleasant distraction away from the pain of thinking about her father. Fighting back tears felt like a rock rested in the back of my throat. In 2008 I spent the last six months of a three-year federal sentence for animal advocacy activism in the [CMU](#) in Marion, Illinois. The guards called me a "balancer," presumably to offset the numbers in an anti-discrimination lawsuit the Bureau of Prisons is now facing. During the half a year I spent there I was told in confidence that I was, "nothing like these Muslim terrorists" and that I "would be going home shortly." Indeed I did go home, but Ghassan Elashi and nearly sixty other men with stories similar to his have yet to come home.

That guard was gravely mistaken when he said I was "nothing like" those men. While I am not a Muslim, I am everything like those men. And just like them I felt the same uncontrollable sadness and anxiety when I could not use the phone to call home, when I could not touch my wife, or talk with my mother. Those men had stories exaggerated by prosecutors just as I did, their cases were compounded by politics and amplified by sensationalism in the press just like mine was. At the end of the day they were fathers, husbands, brothers, and friends who yearned to be free with their loved ones again as much as I did. These men showed such grace and selflessness towards each other and to strangers like me despite the glaring injustice and political repression inside the [CMU](#).

Showing empathy towards these men and attempting to understand what it would be like to be in their shoes does not mean that one needs to have a bleeding heart. I lose sleep thinking of the men at the [CMU](#) with no way out--the ones with long sentences, the ones with administrative holds against them, the Palestinian stateless citizens who the US refuses to release on its soil and no other country is willing to accept them.

I knew of Noor for about four months before I finally reached out to her. I wondered if talking to her as someone who was where her father is now would be supportive and helpful to her. We met over coffee and I was not sure what to say when I saw her so I asked her if it was OK if I hugged her. I suddenly remembered what it felt like to sit in my cell thinking about hugging my wife again and then I thought of Ghassan. My head buzzed with possible things to talk about. I wanted to tell her everything was going to be all right yet I was certain that I didn't know if that was true or not. I wanted to say the most encouraging things even though something malignant was gnawing away at her. She smiled at me. Her resilience was surreal.

Writing about the [CMU](#) consumes me emotionally. I pray that I can lend the best voice to Ghassan and all of these men stripped from their loved ones; it scares me to think that my voice is only one of a few who are willing to advocate on their behalf. They need more voices to demand accountability and reconciliation from our governing powers. They need you to break the silence of this secretive unit, to talk about it over dinner and to work draw it into the national discourse.

Imagine being told you can't speak to your father. Imagine what it would feel like to not know whether or not he was well, if he was hurt, sick, or simply needed someone to talk to. Imagine living your life in constant fear of never being able to touch him again. This is how Noor feels everyday. I remember vividly how it felt to be inside the [CMU](#) and to want so desperately to hug my wife and yet I can only imagine how it must feel to be a father in that situation. Ghassan deserves to be free to be with Noor again. For many people the grief would be debilitating, but in Noor's case we see the opposite--she shares with the world a renewed zeal to continue her father's struggle from outside the prison gates through creative dialogue and grassroots community building. When I ask her where she derives such resilience, she simply says that she "is her father's daughter." Reading her father's sentencing transcript reveals a man who was deeply patriotic, incredibly charitable and a shining example of what it means to be a strong, moral person. America should not bury Ghassan behind razor wire, concrete, and steel bars, instead we each should strive to mirror the brave example he and Noor have set for us to follow.

*Stepanian is the co-founder of The Sparrow Project, a grassroots PR outfit that aims to braid popular culture, the arts, and revolutionary activism. In 2002 The Financial Times characterized SHAC as "succeeding where Karl Marx, the Baader-Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades failed." Their actions drew the attention of Wall Street and the FBI resulting in a politically charged free speech case called the SHAC 7 trial where Stepanian and 5 others were charged and convicted as terrorists for their activism. Sentenced to 3 years in prison, Stepanian spent his last 6.5 months in a secretive federal prison program that NPR would later name 'Guantanamo North'. Stepanian's activism as part of the SHAC7 is the subject of a feature-length documentary due out in 2012 from Finngate Pictures. Since his release from prison Stepanian works for a publisher, consults for social justice groups, and speaks on his experiences at universities.*

### **April 8<sup>th</sup> – ALF Political Prisoner Walter Bond Moved...Again**

*Walter Bond, who we are sending a birthday card to this evening, has been moved again. He is now in Nevada, eventually being transferred to Utah to face additional charges. His current address is:*

**Walter Edmund Bond #37096-013  
Nevada Southern Detention Center  
2190 East Mesquite Avenue  
Pahrump, Nevada 89060**

### **April 8<sup>th</sup> - Part 24 of Omaha Two Story Published**

*At our last letter-writing dinner, we announced that a multi-part story about the Omaha Two had been published. We had no idea that the article amounts to a book, with new chapters released every few days. The count is now up to the twenty-fourth part, which was released on Friday. For the full story, visit:*

<http://www.examiner.com/cointelpro-in-national/michael-richardson>

### **April 15<sup>th</sup> – Save the Date: Roses and Bread/Benefit for the Scott Sisters**

*Roses and Bread is an annual event organized and hosted by radical women and transgender folks. This year's event will be on April 15<sup>th</sup>. This is a women and trans only event and they are seeking folks to help organize and/or perform at the event. Details and contact information are below:*

#### **Roses and Bread**

**Friday, April 15 - 6:30 - 9:00 PM**

At the Commons, 388 Atlantic Avenue (bet. Bond & Hoyt Streets) in Brooklyn

#### **Women and trans only**

To benefit the Scott Sisters (for background, go to <http://freethescottsisisters.blogspot.com>)

To perform or organize, call **718-783-8141**.

### **April 16<sup>th</sup> – Documentary Screening: From COINTELPRO to Homeland Security**

703 South 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Newark, New Jersey

4:00 – 7:00pm

*Discussion and Q & A to follow each screening. We also have flyers for the event.*

### **April 30<sup>th</sup> – Book Tour: An American Radical by Susan Rosenberg**

*From a blurb about the book: "Candid and eloquent, Susan Rosenberg's powerful memoir is a profound indictment of the U.S. prison system, as she recounts her journey from the impassioned idealism of the 1960s to life as a political prisoner in her own country—and reflects on America's turbulent coming-of-age over the past half century."*

Weds. April 30, 2011, time TBD

PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature 2011

Cooper Union, New York, NY

<http://www.americanradical.com>