

Updates for August 2nd

15 Jul - Dying for Sunlight: Mumia Abu-Jamal Statement on Pelican Bay Hunger Strike

Death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal has written a piece reflecting on the Pelican Bay hunger strike.

MORE:

Today, at the notorious California super-maximum prison, Pelican Bay, hundreds of prisoners are on a hunger strike. As of July 1, 2011 a number of men ceased eating state meals in protest of horrendously long-term confinement, government repression, lack of programs and the hated gang affiliation rules.

According to California Prison Focus, the health of some the men is dangerously deteriorating. Some have ceased drinking, as well as eating and haven't urinated in days. Some are threatened by renal failure, which can result in death.

Why? The demands of the strikers seem relatively tame, which gives us some insight into the level of repression. The five core demands are:

1. Individual instead of group responsibility.
2. Abolition of the "gang-debriefing" policy, which endangers both those who debrief and/or their families.
3. An end to long-term solitary confinement.
4. Adequate food, and
5. Constructive programs, such as art, phone privileges and the like.

A sub-demand is adequate natural sunlight – **sunlight**. There are few things more torturous than dying by starvation. These men are killing themselves potentially for fresh air and sunlight, and about a third of California prisoners, 11 out of 33 prisons, have joined them.

Contact the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition to find out how to support this effort for human rights. On the web at: prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com

15 Jul - Activist Andrew Stepanian Talks About His Time Inside 'Little Gitmo'

In 2006, animal-rights activist Andrew Stepanian was convicted of conspiracy to violate the Animal Enterprise Protection Act and was sentenced to three years in prison. He spent the last five and a half months of his time inside a Communication Management Unit (CMU) in Marion, Illinois, one of two prisons in the country that primarily houses Muslim inmates. Christopher S. Stewart, author of New York's "Little Gitmo" feature, spoke with Stepanian about the experience of being a "balancer," as CMU guards call the few non-Muslim inmates who are "reportedly blended into the population ... in order to address the criticism that CMUs were housing only Muslims."

MORE:

So how did you land in the CMU?

I was in general population for almost two thirds of the sentence. In May of 2008, my cell door opened at about 5 o'clock in the morning, and there was a SWAT team there. They shackled my feet together, then my hands to my feet, and then they put a black plastic box around the exterior of the cuffs. I have no violent infraction. I was teaching the GED program in the prison, and I didn't have any disciplinary record. The officials overseeing this started apologizing repeatedly to me. They said, "We don't have control over this, we're really sorry."

What happened next?

Then they put me on a plane with other inmates. The front of the plane had folks who had handcuffs on. The rest of us in the back, I don't even know how to put it, it was like one of these Anthony Hopkins movies. We had so much stuff on us, it was like they thought we were MacGyver or something. I actually sat right next to Ali

Chandia, who was being transferred from another low-security prison in upstate New York to the CMU. He was accused of sending paintballs to Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan. He asked me if I was Palestinian. I said no. He asked me if I was Muslim. I said no. And then he turned to me and said, "Then why are you going to the CMU?" And that kind of set the page for the whole rest of my stay there. I was kind of an outsider.

You were a "balancer." What exactly did that mean, and when did you come to this realization?

I was actually doing my laundry, and a guard comes up to me and says, "You're not like all the other Muslim guys, you're going to go home soon. Keep your head up, you're only here to balance."

Were other non-Muslims there?

There was a man by the name of Rich Scutari from a white-nationalist-type organization called the Order. He went to jail in the eighties. They brought Daniel McGowan, who is alleged to be in the group the Earth Liberation Front. He was a social-justice activist who organized a protest against the Republican National Convention and also worked for the Women's Law Collective in New York City. They brought Edward Brown. He was a fascinating case, he was a tax protester from New Hampshire who refused to pay taxes at the time of the Iraq War and went into a standoff with federal officials. He refused to leave his house for about eight months. He was in the cell next to me.

Were there Muslims who didn't have terrorism charges?

Yeah, there were a lot. If Marion were a basketball team, everyone there rode bench. They were never the star players, and the Feds were looking for the star players, so they were pressuring people on the bench to try and get the star players in. They were hoping somebody knew somebody.

What was the hardest part about being there for you?

The way it pulled me away from my family. I couldn't have contact with my wife, who was my fiancée at the time. My mail was being shut down. They essentially take away your voice, and it's an administrative black hole. These people can't get out. There's no procedure in place to challenge your designation there. I mean, once you're there, you have a feeling like, "I'm never going to get out." It makes you feel like you've essentially disappeared.

I've spoken to prisoners in general population prisons, and the topic of fear is constant. Was fear an everyday feeling in the CMU?

It was psychological. You were thrown into this pit, this black hole — there was no way you were climbing out. This is where it becomes the hardest part for the men with families. For a lot of men, part of their corrective process is being able to hold their child, even if it's once a month, for an hour or two. The most high-security prisons that we have in this country still give an opportunity for a man to enter a room, hold his kid, say hi to his wife.

How did the isolation affect you?

When my then-fiancée came to visit, I knew I wouldn't get to see her again for another four months or so. I only saw her for a few hours, and there's a camera hanging above my head and a camera hanging above her head, and we're speaking into microphones, and it's all being recorded, and people are looking at us — we obviously can't have any type of intimate conversation. And the moment that visit ends, it's like your heart sinks into your stomach. I saw men who would come back to their cells at the CMU and just hold their head in their hands and start crying. This is not the typical thing that you'd expect to see in a prison. But men were broken down, completely.

15 Jul – Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers Reject CDCR Proposal

Leaders of the Pelican Bay hunger strike unanimously rejected a proposal to end the strike from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). In response to the prisoners' five, straightforward demands, CDCR distributed a vaguely worded document stating that it would, "effect a comprehensive assessment of its existing policy and procedure" about the secure housing units (SHUs). The document gave no

indication if any changes would be made at all. Since this time, the strike has ended in Pelican Bay, but continues in other California prisons. We've posted an article explaining how someone gets put into a secure housing unit in the state of California.

MORE:

Sympathy for the prisoners on hunger strike in the Security Housing Unit at Pelican Bay State Prisons is limited by the widely held impression that these men (and indeed, most supermax prisoners) are the “worst of the worst.” According to conventional wisdom, in order to land in the most secure units in the prison system, these men must have committed terrible crimes in the first place, and then compounded them by committing further violent acts while in prison. How else could they end up in long-term solitary confinement, locked up 22 1/2 hours a day in 8 x 10 cells for years or even decades?

In fact, as we've [written many times before](#), solitary confinement is now a disciplinary measure of first resort, rather than last resort, in most state prison systems. Any prisoner, regardless of his original crime, can end up in solitary. And he can be placed there for a wide variety of reasons—some of them quite heinous, and some of them fairly innocuous. In a [post on the new Firedoglake blog “The Dissenter,”](#) anti-torture activist Jeff Kaye investigates the criteria under which California's prisoners can be placed in the SHU:

According to the California Code of Regulations, Title 15, Section 3315, there are 23 “serious rule violations” that can send an inmate to an SHU for a determinate time. These [include](#) “acquisition or exchange of personal or state property amounting to more than \$50... tattooing or possession of tattoo paraphernalia... possession of \$5 or more without authorization... [and] refusal to work or participate in a program as assigned,” among others. Certainly violence or “mass disruptive conduct” is included in these codes, but so are “acts of disobedience or disrespect” or the perceived “threat to commit” a disruption or breach of security, including the “threat” to “possess a controlled substance.”

Beyond this, prisoners can end up in the SHU for doing nothing at all, provided they are “validated” as gang members. Gang validation can be done on the basis of a tattoo or a stray comment. Most often it depends upon information extracted from other prisoners. According to an article by [Dr. Corey Weinstein in Prison Legal News](#):

More than 50% of the men in SHU are assigned indeterminate terms there because of alleged gang membership or activity. The only program that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCr) offers to them is to debrief. The single way offered to earn their way out of SHU is to tell departmental gang investigators everything they know about gang membership and activities including describing crimes they have committed. The Department calls it debriefing. The prisoners call it “snitch, parole or die.” The only ways out are to snitch, finish the prison term or die. The protection against self-incrimination is collapsed in the service of anti-gang investigation.

CDCr asserts that the lockdown and snitch policy are required for the safety and security of the institution. Having legitimate penological purpose, the SHU program is deemed worth any harm done to the prisoners. California prisons continue to have a high rate of assaultive incidents among prisoners and from prisoners to staff. There is no proof or even any study that demonstrates that these measures are effective anti-gang measures. They appear to be no more useful than previous brutalities...

Despite SHU confinement without end to attempt to control gangs, prison gangs thrive in California's prisons. The gang leadership predictably uses the snitch sessions to falsely target their rivals, or just recruit new members. Just as we have seen in US anti-terror investigations, information derived from coercion is often unreliable.

In his post, Jeff Kaye writes that “the ‘debriefing’ process is set up by statute ([PDF](#)). It is a long-term process, whereby the prisoner ‘volunteers’ to ‘debrief,’ i.e., to snitch upon other prisoners and identify them as ‘gang’ members.” Prisoners debrief under conditions of coercion, “segregated in their own unit for many months, often more than a year. If they fail to finish the ‘debriefing’ process, they lose whatever credits towards good behavior and release they may have accumulated during the debriefing process.” To demonstrate how the debriefing process works, Kaye provides a compelling example from a recent case in the California Court of Appeals, in which a prisoner's “refusal to engage in the debriefing process supposedly proved he was a gang member, and worthy of administrative segregation” in the SHU. The court's conclusions confirm, as Kaye describes it, that “if you don't participate in their snitch program, you must, by the logic of the prison authorities, be an active gang member. Review of possible ‘inactive gang status’ takes place ‘after six years’ of solitary confinement, assuming

the prison authorities determine you to have been 'inactive' during this time. But meanwhile, there's a long 'list' of debriefing or debriefed prisoners, any of whom, after many, many months of interrogation by prison officials, may have fingered you as gang member."

It is through this process that inmates are trapped indefinitely in solitary confinement—which is why the hunger strikers have included, among their [core demands](#), that the CDCR “eliminate group punishment” and instead “practice individual accountability” in relegating prisoners to the SHU, and that it “abolish the debriefing policy and modify active/inactive gang status criteria.”

Even if the prisoners' demands were met, and CDCR looked only at “individual accountability” in assigning SHU terms, inmates could not expect anything like due process. As [Charles Pillar has reported in the Sacramento Bee](#), California's prisons “use the officers who guard and manage inmates to pass judgment over alleged rule violations.” In other words, when it comes to disciplinary proceedings, prison officials simultaneously serve as police, prosecutor, judge, and jury, and inmates can be placed in solitary—or even have their prison terms extended—based on the say-so of a guard. Pillar's investigations found “a pattern...that suggests widespread suppression of inmates' rights to contest allegations by guards or pursue claims of mistreatment. Current and retired officers, prisoners and parolees allege that correctional officers and their superiors routinely file bogus or misleading reports, destroy or falsify documentation of abuses, and intimidate colleagues or inmates who push back.”

Against this backdrop, it's easier to understand the desperate measures being taken by the hunger strikers in California's SHUs—especially those who have been in solitary confinement for decades, with little hope of ever getting out. As [Todd Ashker, one of the Pelican Bay strike organizers, put it](#): “We believe our only option of ever trying to make some kind of positive change here is through this peaceful hunger strike. And there is a core group of us who are committed to taking this all the way to the death if necessary.”

17 Jul – Barbarous Confinement

Colin Dayan wrote a decent piece on the California prison hunger strike for the New York Times.

MORE:

MORE than 1,700 prisoners in California, many of whom are in maximum isolation units, have gone on a hunger strike. The protest began with inmates in the Security Housing Unit at Pelican Bay State Prison. How they have managed to communicate with each other is anyone's guess — but their protest is everyone's concern. Many of these prisoners have been sent to virtually total isolation and enforced idleness for no crime, not even for alleged infractions of prison regulations. Their isolation, which can last for decades, is often not explicitly disciplinary, and therefore not subject to court oversight. Their treatment is simply a matter of administrative convenience.

Solitary confinement has been transmuted from an occasional tool of discipline into a widespread form of preventive detention. The Supreme Court, over the last two decades, has whittled steadily away at the rights of inmates, surrendering to prison administrators virtually all control over what is done to those held in “administrative segregation.” Since it is not defined as punishment for a crime, it does not fall under “cruel and unusual punishment,” the reasoning goes.

As early as 1995, a federal judge, Thelton E. Henderson, conceded that so-called “supermax” confinement “may well hover on the edge of what is humanly tolerable,” though he ruled that it remained acceptable for most inmates. But a psychiatrist and Harvard professor, Stuart Grassian, had found that the environment was “strikingly toxic,” resulting in hallucinations, paranoia and delusions. In a “60 Minutes” interview, he went so far as to call it “far more egregious” than the death penalty.

Officials at Pelican Bay, in Northern California, claim that those incarcerated in the Security Housing Unit are “the worst of the worst.” Yet often it is the most vulnerable, especially the mentally ill, not the most violent, who

end up in indefinite isolation. Placement is haphazard and arbitrary; it focuses on those perceived as troublemakers or simply disliked by correctional officers and, most of all, alleged gang members. Often, the decisions are not based on evidence. And before the inmates are released from the barbarity of 22-hour-a-day isolation into normal prison conditions (themselves shameful) they are often expected to "debrief," or spill the beans on other gang members.

The moral queasiness that we must feel about this method of extracting information from those in our clutches has all but disappeared these days, thanks to the national shame of "enhanced interrogation techniques" at Guantánamo. Those in isolation can get out by naming names, but if they do so they will likely be killed when returned to a normal facility. To "debrief" is to be targeted for death by gang members, so the prisoners are moved to "protective custody" — that is, another form of solitary confinement.

Hunger strikes are the only weapon these prisoners have left. Legal avenues are closed. Communication with the outside world, even with family members, is so restricted as to be meaningless. Possessions — paper and pencil, reading matter, photos of family members, even hand-drawn pictures — are removed. (They could contain coded messages between gang members, we are told, or their loss may persuade the inmates to snitch when every other deprivation has failed.)

The poverty of our criminological theorizing is reflected in the official response to the hunger strike. Now refusing to eat is regarded as a threat, too. Authorities are considering force-feeding. It is likely it will be carried out — as it has been, and possibly still continues to be — at Guantánamo (in possible violation of international law) and in an evil caricature of medical care.

In the summer of 1996, I visited two "special management units" at the Arizona State Prison Complex in Florence. A warden boasted that one of the units was the model for Pelican Bay. He led me down the corridors on impeccably clean floors. There was no paint on the concrete walls. Although the corridors had skylights, the cells had no windows. Nothing inside could be moved or removed. The cells contained only a poured concrete bed, a stainless steel mirror, a sink and a toilet. Inmates had no human contact, except when handcuffed or chained to leave their cells or during the often brutal cell extractions. A small place for exercise, called the "dog pen," with cement floors and walls, so high they could see nothing but the sky, provided the only access to fresh air.

Later, an inmate wrote to me, confessing to a shame made palpable and real: "If they only touch you when you're at the end of a chain, then they can't see you as anything but a dog. Now I can't see my face in the mirror. I've lost my skin. I can't feel my mind."

Do we find our ethics by forcing prisoners to live in what Judge Henderson described as the setting of "senseless suffering" and "wretched misery"? Maybe our reaction to hunger strikes should involve some self-reflection. Not allowing inmates to choose death as an escape from a murderous fate or as a protest against continued degradation depends, as we will see when doctors come to make their judgment calls, on the skilled manipulation of techniques that are indistinguishable from torture. Maybe one way to react to prisoners whose only reaction to bestial treatment is to starve themselves to death might be to do the unthinkable — to treat them like human beings.

18 Jul - Marshall "Eddie" Conway: I Remember G

Eddie Conway wrote a piece in remembrance of Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt.

MORE:

Geronimo was the spirit of resistance.

A spirit of resistance to the injustice experienced by all oppressed peoples.

Upon our first encounter in Oakland in 1969, he impressed me as an intense brother with

a vision for liberation for our people.

The essence of resistance... the BPP... then came COINTELPRO, decades spent in the belly of the beast... and finally freedom.

To flee this place, the United States, and find refuge and a home in Africa is the dream of many of us political prisoners. G lived this experience, and I lived it vicariously through him. He gave me hope and happiness because he found freedom and a new level of struggle in a village in Tanzania.

I will miss him, we will all miss him - because his transition was much too soon. The transition of a warrior for justice is always abrupt and occurs far too soon. Yet, with G's transition, we now have a powerful ancestral energy out in the universe. Invoke him in the name of justice and resistance.

In Struggle,

Eddie

19 Jul – Walter Bond's Address to a Florida Fund Raiser

On July 16, a fundraiser for Walter Bond was held in South Florida. Walter called in at 2 p.m. to deliver the following address:

Currently, NIO has been embarking on a campaign to end vivisection before it begins by letting students of animal research know that their future career path will simply not be tolerated by the true animal liberation activists of this world. People that make a living torturing animals under the guise of science are nothing more than sick freaks that must be stopped. It is my opinion that there should be an LD50 experiment done on the entire animal research community. Until that fortunate day arises, please support NIO as much as you can. Every dollar you donate will go directly towards the liberation of our animal relations and the abolition of their exploitation.

We must never forget the animal victims of human injustice. We must never forget our responsibility to defend their lives.

We abolitionists in this animal liberation struggle know that these are not complicated issues. We will never live in harmony with each other until we can live in harmony with the environment as well as other species.

Animals have the right to live free from human slavery, use, abuse and death. It's not rocket science. It's very simple. Still many factions, groups and organizations in the past and the present spend too much time politicking, people pleasing and paper pushing. Their logic is flawed.

Personal interest is the enemy of animal liberation. Our mandate is to defend their lives. The four legged and the furry. Those with wings and those with gills. Not to smile and talk and play on people's sympathies. If people's sympathy was so powerful than they would not engage in these horrors and slaveries to begin with.

But I must confess I did not write this brief address to give you a lesson in morality or to try and get you to see the logic of a truly revolutionary mentality. I'm reaching out to you to let you know that we exist. I want you to know that people like me exist. We know that every single abuse that our animal relatives endure at the hands of speciesist human oppressors is sick and wrong! We know that torturers and murderers don't stop because we ask them or even because we tell them. They stop because we make them! Unless you have saved an animal from death and watched them frolic with glee or run for freedom, then you don't know what's right or wrong. Unless you've walked the path of a liberator or warrior for these critters, then you don't yet know how impotent all other half measures are.

And I want you to walk that path. I want you to walk that path because it's necessary if we want to save animals, any animals from imminent death and subjugation. I want you to walk that path because it's long overdue and justified and I want you to walk that path because if you don't no one else will.

Once upon a time I was not so secure with my own abilities. I spent years talking to people, organizing and putting my energies into indirect activities, instead of animal liberation itself. I, just like all of us, bought into the glamor and hype of mainstream groups or key individuals having all the answers. While it's always wise to learn from the experience of others and employ tactics that have proven successful in past and current campaigns, the true tactical answers are in our hearts and in our feelings.

When I was younger, I used to build slaughterhouses for a living. One day while packing away my work crew tools, a hog got loose from the kill floor and made his way to our maintenance area. He was bleeding from the throat, scared and running for his life. I stood there and watched as he was beaten to death. While my fellow coworkers cheered and high-fived, I decided to shut my mouth. I decided to turn away. I made a deliberate decision to be polite, not risk my job or safety and just focus on "the big picture."

Now as I look back on my activism from this prison cell, my only lasting and true regrets are in what I failed to do. My shame is in my complicity. A couple years later I was a vegan, an abolitionist and an animal liberation direct activist. I vowed to never turn away again and don't you turn away either! The future starts in the present and every life saved is a victory. Ours is and always must be a selfless movement and it must become a ferociously active movement. If there is one pitfall that seems universal among the mainstream of animal rights, it's their capacity to think more than act.

Our resistance to the abuses must be physical. Think about that! In the very place you are at this moment, animals need your defense, protection and urgency. If you don't get along with other people or groups within the animal rights community in which you live, so what? Work with those you do or work alone. Don't ask the question, "what can we do?" – ask the question, "what must we do?" and then do not accept defeat. Then you will find that you have joined the most powerful and self-realized group of people on the planet. Those who span various social justice movements from various times and places. Those who come from every race, creed and generation. The true catalysts of change, the liberators!

Don't be so concerned with "the big picture" or "long-term goals of animal rights." The future is important but far too many individuals and groups assume the position at the steering wheel of this movement already. Instead concern yourself with the trenches, the hard work, confrontations and liberations you can win now in your own backyard. Remember, if you don't act no one will and what we do or fail to do right now is incredibly important. It's literally the difference between life and death.

Animal Liberation, Whatever it May Take!

20 Jul - FBI raids suspected Anonymous hackers in 10 states, from New Jersey to California

Internet "hactivist" group Anonymous was the target of a bevy of early morning raids conducted at homes in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York and Ohio. FBI agents used search warrants to obtain computers and other electronics from the residences and arrested a total of 16 individuals with ages ranging from teens all the way to early 40s. Along with legal names, the indictment also notes screen names and internet monikers used by the group to communicate anonymously.

MORE:

These arrests were just part of a total of 35 search warrants which were executed today as part of the ongoing investigation into the security-threatening hacking activities of the Anonymous collective. Among its various exploits, the brigade of cyber spies has been implicated in attacks on everyone from Sony to the federal

government. The group has also executed web-based attacks on major credit card companies including Mastercard and Visa.

According to a press release from the Department of Justice, today's arrests focused primarily on Anonymous members who waged a cyber war on PayPal. Anonymous was allegedly inspired to hack the online payment company in "Operation Avenge Assange" after Paypal refused to accept donations for Wikileaks, the well-known whistleblower site headed by Julian Assange.

Anonymous' hacker cohorts, LulzSec, have taken aim at the CIA, as well as the Arizona Police Department in an effort to expose racial discrimination. Yesterday, LulzSec took credit for an attack on Rupert Murdoch's U.K. tabloid The Sun. A website redirect sent readers to a fake Sun page announcing the embattled media mogul's death from a drug overdose.

Murdoch's media empire has come under fierce scrutiny after it was revealed that journalists at the News of the World tabloid hacked into the voicemail accounts of prominent U.K. citizens. In addition to assailing one of the News Corp. sites head-on, LulzSec also claims to have a bounty of sensitive emails that will shed further light on the organization's less-than-honest tactics.

It wasn't immediately clear whether any of today's arrests also included members of LulzSec, but the group's Twitter feed appears to be as lively as ever. Today's actions clearly show that the federal government is no longer content to sit by while hackers have their run of the internet, but it's likely that Anonymous will respond in short order.

--
The FBI raided the New York homes of three suspected members of the hacker group "Anonymous" Tuesday morning, executing search warrants for computers and computer-related accessories, Fox News reports.

A dozen agents arrived at the Baldwin, N.Y. home of Jordan Giordan who, officials tell Fox, was identified as allegedly being used in a coordinated distributed denial of service attack against several companies.

All of the suspects are in their late teens and twenties.

Anonymous, a non-hierarchical group of hackers inspired by Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange, has previously targeted the websites of MasterCard, Visa, Gawker and The Westboro Baptist Church. The group first gained notoriety for their prolonged attack on the Church of Scientology.

In May, Anonymous and now defunct group LulzSec, targeted the websites of Arizona law enforcement in response the state's controversial anti-immigration bill, "releasing hundreds of private intelligence bulletins, training manuals, personal email correspondence, names, phone numbers, addresses and passwords" according to The International Business Times.

The two groups were also responsible digital break-ins at Sony, the US Senate, AT&T, and Fox News.

20 Jul - New map of surveillance cameras in the LES of Manhattan, New York City

The Surveillance Camera Players are an activist group who, among other things, monitor, track, and map the number of surveillance cameras in NYC. They recently put out an updated map of the Lower East Side.

MORE:

Formerly a poor neighborhood in which immigrants, first Jews from Europe and later Latinos and Puerto Ricans, lived and worked, the Lower East Side of Manhattan (the LES, also known as Alphabet City) is the area east of First Avenue and west of the FDR Drive, south of 14th Street and north of Houston. In the mid-1990s, after decades of "benign neglect," the LES fell prey to speculation and gentrification. Real-estate developers attempted to popularize the name "The East Village." (Note: even now there is no "West Village"; there is only Greenwich Village, of which the LES has never been a part.) Rents in the LES increased dramatically; squatters

were illegally evicted and their buildings demolished; community gardens were auctioned off and then bulldozed; gleaming “low-density” houses, gigantic “Manhattan-style” towers, expensive restaurants and “hip” boutiques were constructed in their places. And yet, fortunately, the LES – at least the area east of Avenue B – remains a gritty, authentic place, relatively undesirable for rich students, yuppies and tourists to congregate and breed. No subway line services the interior of the LES, and the immense Consolidated Edison power plant at 14th Street and Avenue D is both an eye-sore and a source of air pollution.

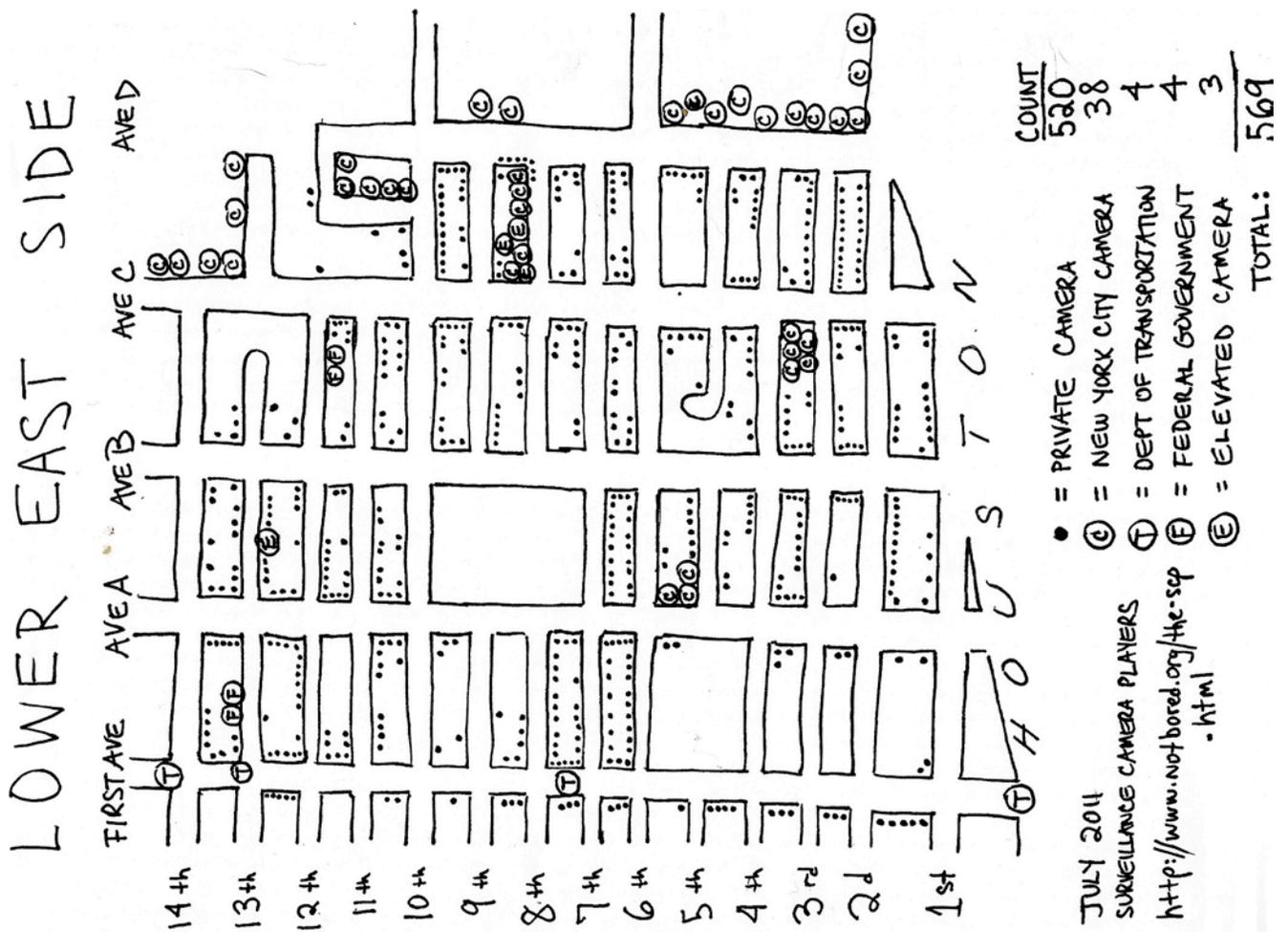
In our first map of the LES, which was made in March 2001, we depicted the locations of a total of 96 publicly installed surveillance cameras. In our second map, created in November 2002, we revealed a total of 118 cameras. In our third map, created in May 2005, we marked out a total of 298 of them. And, in our newest map, created in July 2011, we display the locations of 569 cameras. In sum: over the course of the last 10 years, there has been a 600% increase in the number of surveillance cameras installed in public places in the LES. .

In keeping with trends in other residential neighborhoods in Manhattan, the dramatic increase of cameras in the LES is directly and uniquely attributable to the growth of cameras installed on private property. The number of cameras installed on city-owned property – that is, the number of cameras operated by the NYPD, the DOT, the NYCHA and other “official” authorities – has not increased. It appears that, absent huge grants from the federal government, the local authorities don’t have the money to buy and operate video-surveillance systems, or they simply don’t think video-surveillance systems are worth the money, even if you have it to spend. (Take for example the cameras installed on the police station on Eight Street and Avenue C: they obviously don’t work, and remain there or were originally installed there “just for show,” instances of “security theatre.”) .

Why are private-property owners investing so heavily in video-surveillance? Why are they putting up so many cameras? The answer is simple: insurance. People with money and property have moved into the LES. Despite or because precisely because of the “edgy” atmosphere of the neighborhood, they have opened expensive restaurants and moved into expensive apartments (around \$3,000 per month). All these people want to insure their investments, their properties and their belongings. But to get insurance, to get affordable insurance, they have found it “necessary” to install surveillance cameras. The insurance companies, in partnership with their security firms, have made cameras “necessary.” Note well: what’s important here is the mere fact of the cameras, their physical presence at the insured premises, not their operations (live monitoring, recording, rapid reporting of events recorded, etc). The criminal(s) need not be caught, the cameras need not have any role in catching him or her or them, for the insurance claim to be made and accepted and for the payment to the victim to be made. .

These facts explain why there are so many signs in the LES that say “surveillance cameras in operation” (or words to that effect) and include a small picture of a surveillance camera upon them. By putting up a camera, you are making a definitive statement, sure; but it is a theatrical statement, a rhetorical flourish, and nothing more, a mere bluff waiting to be called. .

-- Surveillance Camera Players, 20 July 2011



22 Jul - Statement by Short Corridor Collective (Hunger Strike Leaders at Pelican Bay)

The Short Corridor Collective, representatives of the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike leaders, released a statement explaining their reasoning behind accepting the CDCR's offer and ending the hunger strike. As this struggle enters a new phase post-initial-negotiation with the CDCR, supporters outside prison are called on to carry this fight and make sure that the CDCR follows through with its offer of good faith.

MORE:

On July 1, 2011, a collective group of PBSP-SHU inmates composed of all races began an indefinite hunger strike as a means of peacefully protesting 20-40 years of human rights violations. The offenses against us rose to the level of both physical and mental torture—for example, the coercing of SHU inmates into becoming known informants for the state and thereby placing those prisoners, and possibly their families outside of prison, at serious risk of danger in response to being known to have informed on and caused harm to other inmates via informing on them. The decision to strike was not made on a whim. It came about in response to years of subjection to progressively more primitive conditions and decades of isolation, sensory deprivation and total lack of normal human contact, with no end in sight. This reality, coupled with our prior ineffective collective filing of thousands of inmate grievances and hundreds of court actions to challenge such blatantly illegal policies and practices led to our conclusion that a peaceful protest via hunger strike was our only available avenue to expose what's really been going on here in CDCR-SHU prisons and to force meaningful change.

We ended the hunger strike the evening of July 20, 2011, on the basis of CDCR's top level administrators' interactions with our team of mediators, as well as with us directly, wherein they agreed to accede to a few small

requests immediately, as a tangible good faith gesture in support of their assurance that all of our other issues will receive real attention, with meaningful changes being implemented over time. They made it clear: such changes would not happen over night, nor would they be made in response to a hunger strike going on.

Many inmates across the state heard about our protest and rose to the occasion in a solid show of support and solidarity, as did thousands of people around the world! Many inmates put their health and lives on the line; many came close to death and experienced medical emergencies. All acted for the collective cause and recognized the great potential for forcing change on the use of SHU units across the country.

With this support in mind, a core group of us was committed to taking the hunger strike to the death, if necessary, to force the changes sought. Naturally, though, we hoped it would not come to that!

On July 20, 2011, several top CDCR administrators sat across the table from us and made assurances that they are in the process of making meaningful changes right now, and will make affecting change a priority in the future, while providing regular updates and engaging in additional dialogue. And, we know they're being forced to restructure the entire CDCR system in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's Plata ruling, which deals with reduction of inmate population.

Thus, our collective decision was to end the hunger strike, on basis of their good faith gesture with a few small things and to give them the opportunity to make good on their assurances, e.g. an end to human rights abuses and torture. This decision drew from our view that we have been successful in exposing CDCR's illegal policies and practices to the world!

And, when it's all said and done, there comes a point where you have to give an entity the opportunity to perform their end of an agreement and the bottom line is this: CDCR could have signed off on a piece of paper, granting all of our demands and telling us, "you'll all be cut loose to the general population prison in six months." Then, six months later, tell us, "we've reconsidered and it's not happening." So, we'll see soon enough where CDCR is really coming from. More important is the fact that while the hunger strike is over, the resistance/struggle to end our subjection to (SHU) human rights violations and torture is just beginning!

We've drawn the line on this and should CDCR fail to carry out meaningful changes in a timely fashion, then we will initiate a class action suit and additional types of peaceful protest. We will not stop until the CDCR ends the illegal policies and practices at SHU!

We're counting on all of our outside supporters to continue to collectively support us and to carry on with shining light on our resistance in here. This is the right time for change in these prisons and the movement is growing across the land! Without the peoples' support outside, we cannot be successful! All support, no matter the size, or content, comes together as a powerful force. We've already brought more mainstream exposure about these CDCR-SHU's than ever before and our time for real change to this system is now! As for CDCR's propaganda—that the hunger strike was initiated and ordered by gang members and the fact that up to 6,600 inmates participated in 13 prisons across the state demonstrates the gangs' influence, which is why they're in SHU in the first place—our response is, (1) CDCR has never responded to our formal complaint, wherein we state, many of us have been in SHU 10-40 years, just based on a CDCR gang label, based on claims by confidential inmate informants; we have never been found guilty of committing an illegal gang-related act! Meanwhile, tens of thousands of other inmates whom CDCR has also labeled as gang affiliates are allowed in the general population of prisons! And, (2) the other inmates who participated did so based on their own recognition of, and decision to resist and protest, their similar conditions! All of our public statements about the PBSP-SHU protest clearly stated it was voluntary and those whose age and/or medical issues were an issue, should not participate! If PBSP-SHU inmates had the influence over the gang affiliates in CDCR prisons, as their propaganda claims, there wouldn't have been tens of thousands of inmates participating in the hunger strike (by CDCR's own statistics, their system is composed of approximately 70% gang affiliates—that's 70% of more than 140,000 inmates!)

The protest and resistance is not about gangs. It's all about a collective effort to end the torture in these SHUs and we hope it will serve as an example to all inmates: there's real power in collective peaceful protest actions.

24 Jul - Solidarity Noise Demonstration Ends in at least 15 Arrests

Comrades in Seattle were attacked and arrested at a housewarming party. At the subsequent demonstration against the attack, more were nabbed. More to follow as we know what's up...

MORE:

Tonight, July 24th, at about 10:45, between 30 and 40 anarchists gathered outside the downtown jail for a noise demonstration in solidarity with the six still in jail from last night's arrests. (One of the seven arrested has been released.)

The noise demonstration proceeded around the jail for about 15 minutes, banging pots and pans, banging on road signs and walls with sticks, throwing fireworks, writing anti-cop slogans on walls, and blockading the streets around the jail.

At this point, cop cars came from all directions, including undercover cars and canine units. The demonstration attempted to disperse, but many people were chased down. At least fifteen people were arrested, and five more were detained and released.

This is a call for all kinds of solidarity acts--including an appeal for funds. Those who are not currently in jail need help to bail out and provide further legal support for their friends and comrades.

Paypal: seattlelegaldefense@gmail.com

26 Jul – Tim DeChristopher's Statement to the Judge

On July 26th, Tim DeChristopher was sentenced to 2 years in federal prison and was handed a \$10,000 fine for bidding on oil and gas drilling leases in an attempt to protect public lands. While he doesn't go quite as hard as Walter Bond, the below statement to the judge is worth a read.

MORE:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the court. When I first met Mr. Manross, the sentencing officer who prepared the presentence report, he explained that it was essentially his job to "get to know me." He said he had to get to know who I really was and why I did what I did in order to decide what kind of sentence was appropriate. I was struck by the fact that he was the first person in this courthouse to call me by my first name, or even really look me in the eye. I appreciate this opportunity to speak openly to you for the first time. I'm not here asking for your mercy, but I am here asking that you know me.

[Assistant U.S. Attorney John] Huber has leveled a lot of character attacks at me, many of which are contrary to Mr. Manross's report. While reading Mr. Huber's critiques of my character and my integrity, as well as his assumptions about my motivations, I was reminded that Mr. Huber and I have never had a conversation. Over the two and half years of this prosecution, he has never asked me any of the questions that he makes assumptions about in the government's report. Apparently, Mr. Huber has never considered it his job to get to know me, and yet he is quite willing to disregard the opinions of the one person who does see that as his job.

There are alternating characterizations that Mr. Huber would like you to believe about me. In one paragraph, the government claims I "played out the parts of accuser, jury, and judge as he determined the fate of the oil and gas lease auction and its intended participants that day." In the very next paragraph, they claim "It was not the defendant's crimes that effected such a change." Mr. Huber would lead you to believe that I'm either a dangerous criminal who holds the oil and gas industry in the palm of my hand, or I'm just an incompetent child who didn't affect the outcome of anything. As evidenced by the continued back and forth of contradictory arguments in the government's memorandum, they're not quite sure which of those extreme caricatures I am, but

they are certain that I am nothing in between. Rather than the job of getting to know me, it seems Mr. Huber prefers the job of fitting me into whatever extreme characterization is most politically expedient at the moment.

In nearly every paragraph, the government's memorandum uses the words lie, lied, lying, liar. It makes me want to thank whatever clerk edited out the words "pants on fire." Their report doesn't mention the fact that at the auction in question, the first person who asked me what I was doing there was Agent Dan Love. And I told him very clearly that I was there to stand in the way of an illegitimate auction that threatened my future. I proceeded to answer all of his questions openly and honestly, and have done so to this day when speaking about that auction in any forum, including this courtroom. The entire basis for the false statements charge that I was convicted of was the fact that I wrote my real name and address on a form that included the words "bona fide bidder." When I sat there on the witness stand, Mr. Romney asked me if I ever had any intention of being a bona fide bidder. I responded by asking Mr. Romney to clarify what "bona fide bidder" meant in this context. Mr. Romney then withdrew the question and moved on to the next subject. On that right there is the entire basis for the government's repeated attacks on my integrity. Ambition should be made of sterner stuff, your honor.

Mr. Huber also makes grand assumptions about my level of respect for the rule of law. The government claims a long prison sentence is necessary to counteract the political statements I've made and promote a respect for the law. The only evidence provided for my lack of respect for the law is political statements that I've made in public forums. Again, the government doesn't mention my actions in regard to the drastic restrictions that were put upon my defense in this courtroom. My political disagreements with the court about the proper role of a jury in the legal system are probably well known. I've given several public speeches and interviews about how the jury system was established and how it has evolved to its current state. Outside of this courtroom, I've made my views clear that I agree with the founding fathers that juries should be the conscience of the community and a defense against legislative tyranny. I even went so far as to organize a book study group that read about the history of jury nullification. Some of the participants in that book group later began passing out leaflets to the public about jury rights, as is their right. Mr. Huber was apparently so outraged by this that he made the slanderous accusations that I tried to taint the jury. He didn't specify the extra number of months that I should spend in prison for the heinous activity of holding a book group at the Unitarian Church and quoting Thomas Jefferson in public, but he says you should have "little tolerance for this behavior."

But here is the important point that Mr. Huber would rather ignore. Despite my strong disagreements with the court about the Constitutional basis for the limits on my defense, while I was in this courtroom I respected the authority of the court. Whether I agreed with them or not, I abided by the restrictions that you put on me and my legal team. I never attempted to "taint" the jury, as Mr. Huber claimed, by sharing any of the relevant facts about the auction in question that the court had decided were off limits. I didn't burst out and tell the jury that I successfully raised the down payment and offered it to the BLM. I didn't let the jury know that the auction was later reversed because it was illegitimate in the first place. To this day I still think I should have had the right to do so, but disagreement with the law should not be confused with disrespect for the law.

My public statements about jury nullification were not the only political statements that Mr. Huber thinks I should be punished for. As the government's memorandum points out, I have also made public statements about the value of civil disobedience in bringing the rule of law closer to our shared sense of justice. In fact, I have openly and explicitly called for nonviolent civil disobedience against mountaintop removal coal mining in my home state of West Virginia. Mountaintop removal is itself an illegal activity, which has always been in violation of the Clean Water Act, and it is an illegal activity that kills people. A West Virginia state investigation found that Massey Energy had been cited with 62,923 violations of the law in the ten years preceding the disaster that killed 29 people last year. The investigation also revealed that Massey paid for almost none of those violations because the company provided millions of dollars worth of campaign contributions that elected most of the appeals court judges in the state. When I was growing up in West Virginia, my mother was one of many who pursued every legal avenue for making the coal industry follow the law. She commented at hearings, wrote petitions and filed lawsuits, and many have continued to do ever since, to no avail. I actually have great respect for the rule of law, because I see what happens when it doesn't exist, as is the case with the fossil fuel industry. Those crimes committed by Massey Energy led not only to the deaths of their own workers, but to the deaths of

countless local residents, such as Joshua McCormick, who died of kidney cancer at age 22 because he was unlucky enough to live downstream from a coal mine. When a corrupted government is no longer willing to uphold the rule of law, I advocate that citizens step up to that responsibility.

This is really the heart of what this case is about. The rule of law is dependent upon a government that is willing to abide by the law. Disrespect for the rule of law begins when the government believes itself and its corporate sponsors to be above the law.

Mr. Huber claims that the seriousness of my offense was that I “obstructed lawful government proceedings.” But the auction in question was not a lawful proceeding. I know you’ve heard another case about some of the irregularities for which the auction was overturned. But that case did not involve the BLM’s blatant violation of Secretarial Order 3226, which was a law that went into effect in 2001 and required the BLM to weigh the impacts on climate change for all its major decisions, particularly resource development. A federal judge in Montana ruled last year that the BLM was in constant violation of this law throughout the Bush administration. In all the proceedings and debates about this auction, no apologist for the government or the BLM has ever even tried to claim that the BLM followed this law. In both the December 2008 auction and the creation of the Resource Management Plan on which this auction was based, the BLM did not even attempt to follow this law.

And this law is not a trivial regulation about crossing t’s or dotting i’s to make some government accountant’s job easier. This law was put into effect to mitigate the impacts of catastrophic climate change and defend a livable future on this planet. This law was about protecting the survival of young generations. That’s kind of a big deal. It’s a very big deal to me. If the government is going to refuse to step up to that responsibility to defend a livable future, I believe that creates a moral imperative for me and other citizens. My future, and the future of everyone I care about, is being traded for short term profits. I take that very personally. Until our leaders take seriously their responsibility to pass on a healthy and just world to the next generation, I will continue this fight.

The government has made the claim that there were legal alternatives to standing in the way of this auction. Particularly, I could have filed a written protest against certain parcels. The government does not mention, however, that two months prior to this auction, in October 2008, a Congressional report was released that looked into those protests. The report, by the House committee on public lands, stated that it had become common practice for the BLM to take volunteers from the oil and gas industry to process those permits. The oil industry was paying people specifically to volunteer for the industry that was supposed to be regulating it, and it was to those industry staff that I would have been appealing. Moreover, this auction was just three months after the New York Times reported on a major scandal involving Department of the Interior regulators who were taking bribes of sex and drugs from the oil companies that they were supposed to be regulating. In 2008, this was the condition of the rule of law, for which Mr. Huber says I lacked respect. Just as the legal avenues which people in West Virginia have been pursuing for 30 years, the legal avenues in this case were constructed precisely to protect the corporations who control the government.

The reality is not that I lack respect for the law; it’s that I have greater respect for justice. Where there is a conflict between the law and the higher moral code that we all share, my loyalty is to that higher moral code. I know Mr. Huber disagrees with me on this. He wrote that “The rule of law is the bedrock of our civilized society, not acts of ‘civil disobedience’ committed in the name of the cause of the day.” That’s an especially ironic statement when he is representing the United States of America, a place where the rule of law was created through acts of civil disobedience. Since those bedrock acts of civil disobedience by our founding fathers, the rule of law in this country has continued to grow closer to our shared higher moral code through the civil disobedience that drew attention to legalized injustice. The authority of the government exists to the degree that the rule of law reflects the higher moral code of the citizens, and throughout American history, it has been civil disobedience that has bound them together.

This philosophical difference is serious enough that Mr. Huber thinks I should be imprisoned to discourage the spread of this idea. Much of the government’s memorandum focuses on the political statements that I’ve made in public. But it hasn’t always been this way. When Mr. Huber was arguing that my defense should be limited, he

addressed my views this way: “The public square is the proper stage for the defendant’s message, not criminal proceedings in federal court.” But now that the jury is gone, Mr. Huber wants to take my message from the public square and make it a central part of these federal court proceedings. I have no problem with that. I’m just as willing to have those views on display as I’ve ever been.

The government’s memorandum states, “As opposed to preventing this particular defendant from committing further crimes, the sentence should be crafted ‘to afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct’ by others.” Their concern is not the danger that I present, but the danger presented by my ideas and words that might lead others to action. Perhaps Mr. Huber is right to be concerned. He represents the United States Government. His job is to protect those currently in power, and by extension, their corporate sponsors. After months of no action after the auction, the way I found out about my indictment was the day before it happened, Pat Shea got a call from an Associated Press reporter who said, “I just wanted to let you know that tomorrow Tim is going to be indicted, and this is what the charges are going to be.” That reporter had gotten that information two weeks earlier from an oil industry lobbyist. Our request for disclosure of what role that lobbyist played in the US Attorney’s office was denied, but we know that she apparently holds sway and that the government feels the need to protect the industry’s interests.

The things that I’ve been publicly saying may indeed be threatening to that power structure. There have been several references to the speech I gave after the conviction, but I’ve only ever seen half of one sentence of that speech quoted. In the government’s report, they actually had to add their own words to that one sentence to make it sound more threatening. But the speech was about empowerment. It was about recognizing our interconnectedness rather than viewing ourselves as isolated individuals. The message of the speech was that when people stand together, they no longer have to be exploited by powerful corporations. Alienation is perhaps the most effective tool of control in America, and every reminder of our real connectedness weakens that tool.

But the sentencing guidelines don’t mention the need to protect corporations or politicians from ideas that threaten their control. The guidelines say “protect the public.” The question is whether the public is helped or harmed by my actions. The easiest way to answer that question is with the direct impacts of my action. As the oil executive stated in his testimony, the parcels I didn’t bid on averaged \$12 per acre, but the ones I did bid on averaged \$125. Those are the prices paid for public property to the public trust. The industry admits very openly that they were getting those parcels for an order of magnitude less than what they were worth. Not only did those oil companies drive up the prices to \$125 during the bidding, they were then given an opportunity to withdraw their bids once my actions were explained. They kept the parcels, presumably because they knew they were still a good deal at \$125. The oil companies knew they were getting a steal from the American people, and now they’re crying because they had to pay a little closer to what those parcels were actually worth. The government claims I should be held accountable for the steal the oil companies didn’t get. The government’s report demands \$600,000 worth of financial impacts for the amount which the oil industry wasn’t able to steal from the public.

That extra revenue for the public became almost irrelevant, though, once most of those parcels were revoked by Secretary Salazar. Most of the parcels I won were later deemed inappropriate for drilling. In other words, the highest and best value to the public for those particular lands was not for oil and gas drilling. Had the auction gone off without a hitch, it would have been a loss for the public. The fact that the auction was delayed, extra attention was brought to the process, and the parcels were ultimately revoked was a good thing for the public.

More generally, the question of whether civil disobedience is good for the public is a matter of perspective. Civil disobedience is inherently an attempt at change. Those in power, whom Mr. Huber represents, are those for whom the status quo is working, so they always see civil disobedience as a bad thing. The decision you are making today, your honor, is what segment of the public you are meant to protect. Mr. Huber clearly has cast his lot with that segment who wishes to preserve the status quo. But the majority of the public is exploited by the status quo far more than they are benefited by it. The young are the most obvious group who is exploited and condemned to an ugly future by letting the fossil fuel industry call the shots. There is an overwhelming amount of scientific research, some of which you received as part of our proffer on the necessity defense, that reveals the catastrophic consequences which the young will have to deal with over the coming decades.

But just as real is the exploitation of the communities where fossil fuels are extracted. As a native of West Virginia, I have seen from a young age that the exploitation of fossil fuels has always gone hand in hand with the exploitation of local people. In West Virginia, we've been extracting coal longer than anyone else. And after 150 years of making other people rich, West Virginia is almost dead last among the states in per capita income, education rates and life expectancy. And it's not an anomaly. The areas with the richest fossil fuel resources, whether coal in West Virginia and Kentucky, or oil in Louisiana and Mississippi, are the areas with the lowest standards of living. In part, this is a necessity of the industry. The only way to convince someone to blow up their backyard or poison their water is to make sure they are so desperate that they have no other option. But it is also the nature of the economic model. Since fossil fuels are a limited resources, whoever controls access to that resource in the beginning gets to set all the terms. They set the terms for their workers, for the local communities, and apparently even for the regulatory agencies. A renewable energy economy is a threat to that model. Since no one can control access to the sun or the wind, the wealth is more likely to flow to whoever does the work of harnessing that energy, and therefore to create a more distributed economic system, which leads to a more distributed political system. It threatens the profits of the handful of corporations for whom the current system works, but our question is which segment of the public are you tasked with protecting. I am here today because I have chosen to protect the people locked out of the system over the profits of the corporations running the system. I say this not because I want your mercy, but because I want you to join me.

After this difference of political philosophies, the rest of the sentencing debate has been based on the financial loss from my actions. The government has suggested a variety of numbers loosely associated with my actions, but as of yet has yet to establish any causality between my actions and any of those figures. The most commonly discussed figure is perhaps the most easily debunked. This is the figure of roughly \$140,000, which is the amount the BLM originally spent to hold the December 2008 auction. By definition, this number is the amount of money the BLM spent before I ever got involved. The relevant question is what the BLM spent because of my actions, but apparently that question has yet to be asked. The only logic that relates the \$140,000 figure to my actions is if I caused the entire auction to be null and void and the BLM had to start from scratch to redo the entire auction. But that of course is not the case. First is the prosecution's on-again-off-again argument that I didn't have any impact on the auction being overturned. More importantly, the BLM never did redo the auction because it was decided that many of those parcels should never have been auctioned in the first place. Rather than this arbitrary figure of \$140,000, it would have been easy to ask the BLM how much money they spent or will spend on redoing the auction. But the government never asked this question, probably because they knew they wouldn't like the answer.

The other number suggested in the government's memorandum is the \$166,000 that was the total price of the three parcels I won which were not invalidated. Strangely, the government wants me to pay for these parcels, but has never offered to actually give them to me. When I offered the BLM the money a couple weeks after the auction, they refused to take it. Aside from that history, this figure is still not a valid financial loss from my actions. When we wrote there was no loss from my actions, we actually meant that rather literally. Those three parcels were not evaporated or blasted into space because of my actions, not was the oil underneath them sucked dry by my bid card. They're still there, and in fact the BLM has already issued public notice of their intent to re-auction those parcels in February of 2012.

The final figure suggested as a financial loss is the \$600,000 that the oil company wasn't able to steal from the public. That completely unsubstantiated number is supposedly the extra amount the BLM received because of my actions. This is when things get tricky. The government's report takes that \$600,000 positive for the BLM and adds it to that roughly \$300,000 negative for the BLM, and comes up with a \$900,000 negative. With math like that, it's obvious that Mr. Huber works for the federal government.

After most of those figures were disputed in the presentence report, the government claimed in their most recent objection that I should be punished according to the intended financial impact that I intended to cause. The government tries to assume my intentions and then claims, "This is consistent with the testimony that Mr. DeChristopher provided at trial, admitting that his intention was to cause financial harm to others with whom he

disagreed.” Now I didn’t get to say a whole lot at the trial, so it was pretty easy to look back through the transcripts. The statement claimed by the government never happened. There was nothing even close enough to make their statement a paraphrase or artistic license. This statement in the government’s objection is a complete fiction. Mr. Huber’s inability to judge my intent is revealed in this case by the degree to which he underestimates my ambition. The truth is that my intention, then as now, was to expose, embarrass and hold accountable the oil industry to the extent that it cuts into the \$100 billion in annual profits that it makes through exploitation. I actually intended for my actions to play a role in the wide variety of actions that steer the country toward a clean energy economy where those \$100 billion in oil profits are completely eliminated. When I read Mr. Huber’s new logic, I was terrified to consider that my slightly unrealistic intention to have a \$100 billion impact will fetch me several consecutive life sentences. Luckily this reasoning is as unrealistic as it is silly.

A more serious look at my intentions is found in Mr. Huber’s attempt to find contradictions in my statements. Mr. Huber points out that in public I acted proud of my actions and treated it like a success, while in our sentencing memorandum we claimed that my actions led to “no loss.” On the one hand I think it was a success, and yet I claim it there was no loss. Success, but no loss. Mr. Huber presents these ideas as mutually contradictory and obvious proof that I was either dishonest or backing down from my convictions. But for success to be contradictory to no loss, there has to be another assumption. One has to assume that my intent was to cause a loss. But the only loss that I intended to cause was the loss of secrecy by which the government gave away public property for private profit. As I actually stated in the trial, my intent was to shine a light on a corrupt process and get the government to take a second look at how this auction was conducted. The success of that intent is not dependent on any loss. I knew that if I was completely off base, and the government took that second look and decided that nothing was wrong with that auction, the cost of my action would be another day’s salary for the auctioneer and some minor costs of re-auctioning the parcels. But if I was right about the irregularities of the auction, I knew that allowing the auction to proceed would mean the permanent loss of lands better suited for other purposes and the permanent loss of a safe climate. The intent was to prevent loss, but again that is a matter of perspective.

Mr. Huber wants you to weigh the loss for the corporations that expected to get public property for pennies on the dollar, but I believe the important factor is the loss to the public which I helped prevent. Again, we come back to this philosophical difference. From any perspective, this is a case about the right of citizens to challenge the government. The US Attorney’s office makes clear that their interest is not only to punish me for doing so, but to discourage others from challenging the government, even when the government is acting inappropriately. Their memorandum states, “To be sure, a federal prison term here will deter others from entering a path of criminal behavior.” The certainty of this statement not only ignores the history of political prisoners, it ignores the severity of the present situation. Those who are inspired to follow my actions are those who understand that we are on a path toward catastrophic consequences of climate change. They know their future, and the future of their loved ones, is on the line. And they know we are running out of time to turn things around. The closer we get to that point where it’s too late, the less people have to lose by fighting back. The power of the Justice Department is based on its ability to take things away from people. The more that people feel that they have nothing to lose, the more that power begins to shrivel. The people who are committed to fighting for a livable future will not be discouraged or intimidated by anything that happens here today. And neither will I. I will continue to confront the system that threatens our future. Given the destruction of our democratic institutions that once gave citizens access to power, my future will likely involve civil disobedience. Nothing that happens here today will change that. I don’t mean that in any sort of disrespectful way at all, but you don’t have that authority. You have authority over my life, but not my principles. Those are mine alone.

I’m not saying any of this to ask you for mercy, but to ask you to join me. If you side with Mr. Huber and believe that your role is to discourage citizens from holding their government accountable, then you should follow his recommendations and lock me away. I certainly don’t want that. I have no desire to go to prison, and any assertion that I want to be even a temporary martyr is false. I want you to join me in standing up for the right and responsibility of citizens to challenge their government. I want you to join me in valuing this country’s rich history of nonviolent civil disobedience. If you share those values but think my tactics are mistaken, you have the power to redirect them. You can sentence me to a wide range of community service efforts that would point

my commitment to a healthy and just world down a different path. You can have me work with troubled teens, as I spent most of my career doing. You can have me help disadvantaged communities or even just pull weeds for the BLM. You can steer that commitment if you agree with it, but you can't kill it. This is not going away. At this point of unimaginable threats on the horizon, this is what hope looks like. In these times of a morally bankrupt government that has sold out its principles, this is what patriotism looks like. With countless lives on the line, this is what love looks like, and it will only grow. The choice you are making today is what side are you on.

27 Jul - Leonard Peltier Releases Letter from the Hole

Leonard Peltier, Lakota, imprisoned for the past 35 years, has released a letter from solitary confinement, through his attorney. The letter is posted in its entirety on the website AIM WEST.

MORE:

Dear Friends,

For over 35 years I have been in federal prison for crimes I did not commit. Since June 27 the guards have had me in the hole, a small miserable cell with little air that is dangerously hot. They are torturing me by keeping me in solitary confinement this is an effort to break and kill me. However, the public pressure being generated by my many supporters and counsel is making a real difference.

The government wants me to die in here, but I'm not going to. A dynamic new legal team with as lead attorney Robert R. Bryan of San Francisco has brought an innovative approach to the case. He is not going to let them continue to slowly execute me. Robert has launched a complex investigation spanning the entire country. The team also includes Nicole Gibier, my International Legal Liaison, and Cheryl J. Cotterill, associate legal counsel. With the leadership of Dorothy Ninham from the Oneida Reservation, Wisconsin, who I knew long before being arrested, and dedicated volunteers, we are rekindling the movement.

I am innocent. A racist jury tried me. A biased judge would not let me have a fair trial and the prosecution manufactured evidence including a supposed murder weapon. Later on October 15, 1985, the government admitted that it "can't prove who shot those agents." The judge would not even let me prove that the FBI intimidated and tortured witnesses and was engaged in a Reign of Terror a war against the people on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Robert's experience, tenacity, and unbridled approach can once and for all win my freedom. He has won countless murder cases and has represented members of the American Indian Movement. Robert successfully defended Jimmy Eagle, indicted for the murder of the two FBI agents in the case for which I was wrongly convicted. He understands the struggle.

To succeed we must have money for my defense. We desperately need your help. Please make a contribution (and indicate that your donation is for the "Legal Defense") to:

Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee
Post Office Box 7488
Fargo, North Dakota 58106

Your can also contact my attorney directly: RobertRBryan@gmail.com (Law Offices of Robert R. Bryan, 2107 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 203, San Francisco, California 94109-2572).

I believe in the Spirit of Crazy Horse. They have imprisoned my body, but my spirit soars like an eagle. I will never give up, despite the threats to my health and life from this long imprisonment. I am an innocent man and will continue fighting against the genocide of my people.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

Doksha,
Leonard Peltier
U.S. Penitentiary
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

27 Jul – Justin Solondz has been Transferred to SeaTac, Pleads Not Guilty

The focus of our last letter-writing night, Justion Solondz, has been transferred. Please write to him at:

Justin Solondz #98291-011
FDC SeaTac
Post Office Box 13900
Seattle, Washington 98198

Here's a corporate media article about Justin entering his not guilty plea:

UW eco-arson suspect pleads not guilty

The man accused of building the firebomb used by Earth Liberation Front activists to torch the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture in 2001 pleaded not guilty Wednesday to several federal charges.

TACOMA — The man accused of building the firebomb used by Earth Liberation Front radicals to torch the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture in 2001 pleaded not guilty Wednesday to several federal charges.

Justin Solondz, 31, was arrested July 6 in Chicago after his expulsion from China, where he had been serving a prison term for selling drugs.

A former student at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Solondz is charged with conspiracy, arson, making an unregistered destructive device and using a destructive device during a violent crime, a charge that could result in a life sentence.

After the hearing in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, Solondz's attorney said his client was glad to be back in the United States.

Solondz was a purported member of a cell of radical environmentalists known as "The Family" who are believed to have participated in a string of arsons and other sabotage that caused \$80 million in damage in Washington, Oregon, California and Colorado.

Prosecutors allege that Solondz built a firebomb in a "clean room" behind a home in Olympia, transported it to Seattle and served as the getaway driver the night of the UW arson.

The firebomb was planted in the office of UW professor Toby Bradshaw at the Center for Urban Horticulture. Bradshaw was targeted because the arsonists believed, mistakenly, he was genetically engineering trees.

Damage from the arson was estimated at more than \$6 million.

In June, Briana Waters pleaded guilty to charges of arson, conspiracy to use a destructive device, possessing an unregistered destructive device and the use of an explosive device in a crime of violence in connection with the arson. She agreed to testify against Solondz, whose trial is scheduled for Sept. 19.

Waters, 35, is Solondz's former girlfriend.

Two other women, Lacey Phillabaum and Jennifer Kolar, pleaded guilty to the UW arson and were sentenced to three and five years, respectively.

Also charged in the UW arson was William C. Rodgers, who committed suicide in an Arizona jail in December 2005.

Solondz was indicted in Washington state and California in 2006. The FBI issued a \$50,000 reward in late 2008 for information leading to his arrest. At the time, the FBI said he might be in Canada, Europe or Asia.

He surfaced in Dali, a Chinese city popular with Western tourists, using a phony Canadian identification and an altered appearance. He was arrested in a drug investigation in March 2009.

Paul Solondz said his son did not flee the United States to avoid prosecution, according to The Associated Press. He said Solondz went to Italy for a wedding in 2005 and traveled from there, visiting Holocaust sites in Europe before going to Russia and China.

He entered China with a valid visa and renewed it twice, his father said.

27 Jul - Amnesty International Declares to be in Favor of Cuban Five

Amnesty International (AI) issued a report which reflects serious concerns about the fairness of the trial of the five Cubans unjustly imprisoned in U.S. Jails.

MORE:

There are fears about serious injustices and a real concern that the Supreme Court refused to hear their appeal, which violates Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reads the report cited by Mexican news outlets.

AI questions how much access the defense lawyers had to evidence, and even the validity and soundness of these, so it calls on Washington to reconsider the case and take appropriate action to remedy such arbitrariness.

After discussing the matter in detail, the report concluded that the process was surrounded by anomalies and considered punishment that was imposed disproportionate.

The text was presented on Monday by Alfonso Anaya y Maricarmen Montes, from the Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero International Christian Service of Solidarity with Latin America and the Caribbean, along Daniel Zapico, from AI, and Peter Gellert, director of the Solidarity-with-Cuba Movement in Mexico.

Activists insist on reviewing the cause of Fernando Gonzalez, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero and René González, who are serving unjust sentences, for fulfilling the sacred patriotic duty to protect their nation from the activities of Florida-based terrorist groups.

In their opinion all the legal avenues in the case are not yet completely closed and they see as imperative the possibility of a pardon by the Barack Obama Administration.

As part of this campaign, Zapico announced during a press conference, a march of solidarity with Cuba on Tuesday in the Federal District, with the participation of over 100 social and civic organizations.

The mobilization, which will start from the floor dedicated to the independence hero Benito Juarez (the Benefactor) to the U.S. Embassy, aims to salute the 58 anniversary of the assault on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, reported La Jornada newspaper.

29 Jul – Scott Demuth has been Released!

We're excited to let you all know that Scott was released a few days ago and is back home in Minneapolis! His prison sentence is now complete and he's excited to be coming home. While he still has a year of supervised release ahead of him, he'll once again be with his family, friends, comrades, and loved ones here in the Twin Cities.

MORE:

We'd also like to thank all of you for the tremendous amount of support you've shown him and Carrie Feldman from the beginning of this ordeal, when Carrie was subpoenaed to the grand jury in Davenport, IA in late 2009. Since then, you've supported both Carrie and Scott while they were in jail or prison, helped us raise the much-needed funds for their legal defenses, helped spread the word about their cases and other Green Scare cases, and shown the power of our solidarity in the face of state repression.

Scott no longer needs the same kinds of support he needed while he was in prison, but there are plenty of other political prisoners and prisoners of war who need our support. We encourage everyone to reach out to other prisoners to help them through their ordeals. If you're around the Twin Cities this weekend, we also invite you to a welcome-home gathering for Scott:

- * When: Sunday, Aug. 31st, 2pm-??
- * Where: Lake Calhoun, south beach
- * What: Swimming, potluck, fun!

If you're not in the area and would like to send Scott some letters of support for his transition back home, you can send them to:

Scott DeMuth
c/o Coldsnap Legal Collective
Post Office Box 50514
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55405

With love and solidarity,

the Scott and Carrie Support Committe (SCSC)
<http://davenportgrandjury.wordpress.com>

1 Aug - Write Commissioner Fischer for Jalil Muntaqim

Jalil was transferred to Attica a few months ago, and has experienced continual harassment since his arrival. On Thursday, a cell search was conducted and officers removed a short article written by Jalil in 1991 in response to the Rodney King riots and calling for organized resistance. Despite the age, current irrelevance, and isolated nature of the piece, Jalil is being tried for "gang affiliation," a Tier 3 disciplinary classification. It seems doubtful that such a tenuous charge will be upheld, but if it is, it will mean lengthy SHU time (up to 5 years).

MORE:

This is coupled with the frequent harassment of him and his visitors. Recently, I was informed by a CO that Jalil is the "scum of this earth," and another visitor was referred to as a "pp groupie." This kind of behavior, though to be expected, is unacceptable.

Jalil has asked that folks write to Albany demanding that the charges be dropped completely. He has no history of gang involvement or affiliation in the 39 years of his incarceration.

Letters of support can be mailed to:

Commissioner Brian Fischer
NYS Department of Correctional Services
Building 2
1220 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12226-2050

Be sure to refer to Jalil as Anthony Bottom and include his DIN number. This would also be an excellent time to write to Jalil and let him know he has our support:

Anthony Jalil Bottom #77A4283
Attica Correctional Facility
Post Office Box 149
Attica, New York 14011-0149

1 Aug - NLG Know Your Rights Website Available for “Anonymous” Activists

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) provides legal defense and educational resources to activists who are being targeted, including individuals alleged to be affiliated with “Anonymous,” LulzSec, and other activists and hacker collectives.

MORE:

The NLG has launched a website, www.anonlg.com, with Know Your Rights information tailored to individuals subjected to recent U.S. Department of Justice arrests, searches, seizures, harassment, and grand jury subpoenas as part of the FBI’s “Cyber Crimes” operations. Activists who have already been targeted or are concerned about their safety may call a Guild hotline—888-NLG-DANK—or access the organization by email at help@anonlg.com.

National Lawyers Guild lawyers, in their continuing efforts to protect the right to dissent, are coordinating legal defense for many of these activists.

“The Defense Department’s plan to treat cyberspace as an operational domain, equipping forces for cyber missions, virtually guarantees that computer activists will face increasing government scrutiny. Anonlg.com provides Know Your Rights information for those with advanced computer skills who lack experience dealing with the FBI,” said Heidi Boghosian, Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild.

The NLG advises anyone visited by the FBI to assert the right not to answer any questions, to get the agent’s business card and to state clearly and unequivocally that they will have an attorney contact the agent on their behalf.

The National Lawyers Guild, founded in 1937, is the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States. Its headquarters are in New York and it has chapters in every state.

1 Aug – Rev. Joy Powell Sentenced

Reverend Joy Powell was sentenced to 25 years to life. She is going to appeal, with a different lawyer (her last court appointed attorney only visited her twice in 2 years). She read a four to five page statement about how she was sorry that the murder occurred, but that she did not do it and that there was no evidence, etc. The judge and DA claimed she "did not help them solve the case." For more information, visit freejoypowell.org

27 Aug – COINTELPRO 101 – A Benefit for Sekou Odinga

WHAT: Benefit for Sekou Odinga
WHEN: 6:00-10:00pm, Saturday, August 27th, 2011
WHERE: Riverside Church (490 Riverside Drive, Manhattan)
COST: Donations plus \$5 for Dinner

We have palm cards for this event. Please take and distribute them.

Panelists: Anochi Odinga, Jill Soffiyah Elijah, Andrew of NYC ABC, Others to be Announced
Invited Guests: M1, Bilal Sunni-Ali, George Edward Tait

MORE:

Beginning in the 1950s with a focus on the Puerto Rican independence movement and continuing through the 1960s and into the 1970s when much of its focus had shifted to the Black Liberation, Chicano Liberation and American Indian Movements, COINTELPRO racked up a number of assassinations, false imprisonments and ruined lives. No government official was ever punished for actions taken under the program's auspices. The film by Freedom Archives details this history through the artful use of still photos and moving images of the period covered. Films of police attacks and protests; still photos of revolutionary leaders and police murders graphically remind the viewer of Washington's willingness to do whatever it takes to maintain its control. Organizers who began their political activity during the time of Cointelpro discuss the effect the program had on them and the organizations and individuals they worked with. Indeed, several of the interviewees were themselves targets and spent years in prison (some under false accusations, as in the case of Geronimo ji-Jaga Pratt) or on the run.

Former Black Panther member Kathleen Cleaver states toward the end of the film that Cointelpro represented the efforts of a political police force making the decision as to what is allowed politically and what is not. Anything outside the parameters set by this force was fair game. Nothing that was done by government officials or private groups and individuals acting on the government's behalf was perceived as wrong or illegal. As Attorney Bob Boyle makes clear in his final statement in the film, Cointelpro is alive and well. The only difference now is that most of what was illegal for the government to do during Cointelpro's official existence is now legal. The PATRIOT Act and other laws associated with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security have insured this.

Cointelpro 101 is a well made and appealing primer on the history of the US police state. Produced, written and directed by individuals who have themselves been the target of tactics documented in the film, it has an authenticity and immediacy that pulls the viewer in. Although too short to cover the history in as full detail as some may desire, the film's intelligence and conscientious presentation of the historical narrative makes it a film that the student, the citizen and the activist can all appreciate.

19 Sep - Attend Walter Bond's September 19 sentencing in Salt Lake City!

It sounds really stupid, but popularity counts in courtrooms. It is very important that people show up in person to these hearings to show support for the safety of the accused...The lawyers I interviewed... said that judges do not like being watched... and if you show they are being watched, they behave differently....pack that courtroom with family and friends to make the judge know he/she will be watched every step of the way. Lawyers I talked to on this also said it was important to pack the courtroom to humanize the accused past an identity solely reliant on the accused crime. In court, they automatically label the plaintiff the "victim," etc. and it is very manipulative language use.

WHEN: Monday, September 19, 2011 at 2:00 pm

WHERE: Room 142, 1st Floor, U.S. District Court, 350 South Main Street, Salt Lake City, Utah

MORE:

Join other supporters in the Salt Lake City courtroom where Walter Bond will be sentenced for A.L.F. actions targeting 2 businesses that profit from animal torture and death!

This is an opportunity to stand by prisoner-of-war Walter Bond, observe courtroom proceedings first-hand, and show the press that we abolitionists support Walter 100%.