



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for October 9th

17 Sept - The Plot Against Occupy

As with the last batch of updates, we are including an article by a supposedly progressive publication, Rolling Stone, about the Cleveland 4. We've also included a response by the Four's supporters.

MORE:

Thunder rumbled and rain pattered on the leaves as Connor Stevens tramped through the darkness down a wooded path to the base of the Brecksville-Northfield High Level Bridge. A sad-eyed 20-year-old poet from the Cleveland suburbs, Stevens was crouched in the foliage, his baby face obscured by a bushy lumberjack's beard. Beside him ducked two friends from Occupy Cleveland – the group that had come to define Stevens and his place in the world – both as gaunt and grungy as Stevens himself. Farther up the trail, Stevens knew, three other comrades were acting as lookouts. Gingerly, the young men opened the two black toolboxes they'd carried down from their van. Inside were eight pounds of C4 explosives.

They were actually going through with it. The six of them were going to blow up a bridge.

That they were on the brink of something so epic was surprising, even to the crew, a hodgepodge of drifters plus a pair of middle-class seekers: quiet Stevens and puppyishly excitable Brandon Baxter, also 20. Anarchists who had grown disenchanted with the Occupy movement, which they considered too conservative, they yearned to make a radical statement of their own – to send a message to corporate America, its corrupt government and that invisible grid underlying it all, the System. They'd joined Occupy Cleveland in the fall, but over the winter they'd waited in vain for the group to pick a direction before finally taking matters into their own hands. For weeks they'd fantasized about the mayhem they'd wreak, puerile talk of stink bombs and spray paint that had anted up to discussion of all the shit they'd blow up if only they could. But the grandiosity of their hopes stood in stark contrast to their mundane routine. They spent their days getting stoned at their Occupysubsidized commune in a downtown warehouse, squabbling over dish duty and barely making their shifts at the Occupy Cleveland info tent; when they managed to scrounge up a couple of cans of Spaghettios for dinner, it was celebrated as an accomplishment. If not for the help of their levelheaded comrade Shaquille Azir, who at this critical moment stood as lookout, hissing, "How much longer is this gonna take?" the plot might never have come together.

The boys anxiously fiddled with the safety switch on one of the IEDs. Even on this April night, as they planted two bombs, the plan felt slapdash. No one knew how to handle the explosives. They had no getaway plan. At one point they'd discussed closing the bridge with traffic cones to minimize casualties – 13,000 vehicles crossed the bridge daily – but there was no mention of that now. Some of the accomplices weren't even clear on the evening's basic agenda. "Do we plant tonight and go boom tomorrow?" Baxter had asked in the van. "No, we're going to detonate these tonight," someone had clarified.

The red light on the other IED winked on, signaling it was armed. "One is good to go," Stevens announced. "We just gotta do this one." A night-vision camera mounted nearby captured the boys' movements as they hunched around the second IED until its light shone. Then all six jogged back to the van, relief in their voices. "We just committed the biggest act of terrorism that I know of since the 1960s," Stevens said, as a recording device memorialized every word. All that was left now was for the boys to pick a location from which to push the detonators and go boom. They were feeling pretty good. They decided to go to Applebee's.

Nothing was destined to blow up that night, as it turns out, because the entire plot was actually an elaborate federal sting operation. The case against the Cleveland Five, in fact, exposes not just a deeply misguided element of the Occupy movement, but also a shadowy side of the federal government. It's hardly surprising that the FBI decided to infiltrate Occupy; given the movement's challenge of the status quo and its hectic patchwork of factions – including ones touting subversive agendas – the feds worried it could become a terrorist breeding

ground. Since 9/11, the federal Joint Terrorism Task Force has been charged with preventing further terrorist attacks. But anticipating and disrupting terrorist plots require both aggressive investigative techniques and a staggering level of collaboration and resources; to pull together the Cleveland case alone, the FBI coordinated with 23 different agencies. The hope, of course, is that the results make it all worthwhile: The plot is detected and heroically foiled, the evildoers arrested, and the American public sleeps easier. The problem is that in many cases, the government has determined that the best way to capture terrorists is simply to invent them in the first place.

"The government has a responsibility to prevent harm," says former FBI counterterrorism agent Michael German, now the senior policy counsel for the ACLU. "What they're doing instead is manufacturing threatening events."

That's just how it went down in Cleveland, where the defendants started out as disoriented young men wrestling with alienation, identity issues and your typical bucket of adolescent angst. They were malleable, ripe for some outside influence to coax them onto a new path. That catalyst could have come in the form of a friend, a family member or a cause. Instead, the government sent an informant.

And not just any informant, but a smooth-talking ex-con – an incorrigible lawbreaker who racked up even more criminal charges while on the federal payroll. From the start, the government snitch nurtured the boys' destructive daydreams, egging them on every step of the way, giving them the encouragement and tools to turn their *Fight Club*-tinged tough talk into reality. To follow the evolution of the bombing plot under the informant's tutelage is to watch five young men get a giant federal-assisted upgrade from rebellious idealists to terrorist boogymen. This process looks a lot like what used to be called entrapment. And yet

Before 9/11, German says, the FBI would have considered the idea of advancing terrorism plots just to defuse them as "laughable. But what was justified as an emergency method has become a normalized part of regular criminal-justice work." All too often, agents rely on informants who pump up criminal plans to comic-book-villain proportions. It's a tactic that's been used repeatedly to convict Muslims of being domestic Islamic terrorists, like the four men in Newburgh, New York, convicted in 2010 of a plot to shoot down military jets – a plot engineered by an informant who provided them with a fake Stinger missile.

Now this same strategy is being used to ensnare homegrown political activists. Environmental crusaders have fallen prey, including Eric McDavid, sentenced in 2008 to 20 years for conspiring to blow up a dam, even though it emerged at trial that a driving force behind the scheme was an FBI informant named "Anna." And anarchists are increasingly in the crosshairs, especially as they've become more visible with the rise of Occupy Wall Street. In a May sting at the Chicago NATO summit, three anarchists were charged with plotting to use Molotov cocktails on police stations and Mayor Rahm Emanuel's home – accusations that defense attorneys call "propaganda," contending the bomb ingredients were provided by undercover agents.

"These tactics are beyond the pale for what could be seen as a legitimate anti-terrorism operation," says *Green Is the New Red* author Will Potter, who tracks government crackdowns on activists. "But this is how the Bureau is spending their counterterrorism money, and thousands of man-hours: creating the terrorism plots that they are ostensibly preventing."

When Connor Stevens arrived at Occupy Cleveland's tent city on October 9th, 2011, it was with the electric knowledge that he was exactly where he belonged. Wearing a secondhand sweater he'd found at the donation tent, he gazed with amazement around the encampment of 100 people, swept up in the camaraderie: Everyone here was an ally, working for a common goal. The mood was infectious. His friend Brandon Baxter from nearby Lakewood, as hyper as Stevens was introverted, was rushing around the plaza, already Occupy's most eager evangelist. "Hi, I'm Brandon!" he'd say, approaching every onlooker in sight. "Can I talk to you about Occupy Cleveland?" For the moment, Stevens was content to stand on the sidelines and beam his gapped-toothed grin, taking it all in.

"From the minute he got there, Occupy consumed his life," recalls his sister Breelan. "He wanted to fix the whole world."

Stevens had long been smitten with radical ideology – inspired by the Communist Manifesto and the Black Panther Party, concerned for the plight of the poor – and he was determined to cultivate an appropriate political identity. To that end, he had recently decamped from his mom's home in the Cleveland suburb of Berea to a Christian-anarchist commune in the rough neighborhood of Detroit-Shoreway, shedding his bourgeois trappings to live as Jesus did: with few possessions, serving others, and questioning the establishment. His sister attributes Stevens' independent spirit to their parents' influence: "They're Christian, but adamant about us having our own thoughts and opinions, being aware of the world outside."

Serious and thoughtful, Stevens called himself the Bearded Bastard, projecting an air of mellow masculinity with his facial hair, flannel shirts and a pipe he smoked semi-ironically. With his Hemingway-esque image, it took people by surprise to discover that Stevens was gay (though he politely insisted on the more properly radical term "queer"). More readily apparent was that Stevens was a walking wound with an aura of sadness, who wrote poetry as his way of grappling with "the meaning of suffering." He was a welcome addition to the commune, which called itself Agape House: a condemned building with graffiti-covered walls, where residents stayed up after Bible study drunkenly discussing the works of Howard Zinn and hosting rowdy punk-rock shows. Stevens spent his days as a guerrilla gardener, coaxing greenery from the city's vacant lots as a form of populist protest. "No war but grass war," he'd say, pulling weeds.

"Connor is the gentlest, sweetest person around," says his friend Katie Steinmuller.

His demeanor hadn't always been so chill. Before dropping out of Berea High School in 10th grade, intent on "unschooling" himself, he'd founded a militant student group called Fighters for Freedom, disrupted a job fair where the Army was recruiting, and e-mailed a sergeant to call him a "fascist pig." His loathing of law enforcement had begun at age nine, when his father was arrested for touching the breasts and buttocks of two 10-year-old girls; Dad pleaded guilty, served seven months in state prison, and remains a registered sex offender. Young Connor became enraged not at his father, but at the men who had taken his daddy away. "I developed a keen hatred for authority, 'order' and especially 'law,'" he later wrote. "The simple fact that they can put you in handcuffs and haul you off was enough for me to hate them at that adorable age."

His father's conviction changed everything for the fracturing Stevens family. Connor's mother, Gail, who had been a stay-at-home mom to her five children, suddenly had to support them, and her absence while working long hours as a medical assistant further stoked Connor's fury. Police in their town of 19,000 finally decided to have a chat with his mom after fielding a complaint about 15-year-old Connor's MySpace page, where he'd posted the Unabomber's Manifesto and screeds urging readers to "KILL COPS! YEA, THE PIGS IN BLUE ARE THE FASCISTS WE HAVE TO FIGHT!!!" "Gail says Connor is not a violent person but has very strong beliefs and is immature about it," the police report noted. "She is working with him about how he comes across." He evidently listened to his mother, coming to embrace pacifism. "One of our major principles was nonviolence," says Zachy Schrauf, who shared a room with Stevens at Agape House. "We became brothers in Christ and all that shit."

It was while living at the commune and working at the anti-war kitchen Food Not Bombs that Stevens met fellow volunteer Brandon Baxter, who was hurling himself into the activist life with the energy of someone discovering a cool new band. With his bright blue eyes, earnest intensity and radical garb – camo jacket, biohazard patches, black bandanna around his neck – Baxter looked like a post-apocalyptic Boy Scout as he stood on the corner of 25th and Lorrain shouting, "Free food!" Baxter was psyched to be doing something constructive – psyched, really, just to be out of his hometown of Lakewood, an inner-ring suburb where he'd been rudderless since finishing high school. His quest to fit in somewhere had already taken one reckless turn when, wanting to connect with his German heritage, he briefly joined a neo-Nazi group. ("Brandon doesn't know anything about the world," says his sister Rachael Garcia. "He's very impressionable.") He'd been just as enthused upon realizing that his father, absent much of his childhood, was infatuated with Native American culture; Baxter had attended powwows and absorbed the culture so fully that new friends believed him to be part Indian. His newest incarnation as anarchist do-gooder suited him fine. Hearing about Occupy Cleveland's dawning days, Baxter had encouraged Stevens to check it out with him. "Let's have a revolution!" Baxter crowed.

Few places in America were in as dire need of change as Cleveland. In 2010, *Forbes* named it the country's most miserable city; its recession had been under way for a decade, with jobs vanishing and unemployment and homelessness skyrocketing. Stevens and Baxter were ready to be part of the solution, and they vigorously dived into Occupy. They attended study groups on horizontal decision-making and the principles of anarchism. It was a lot to absorb. "Within the first day it was so much information that my mind was boggled," Stevens told a documentary filmmaker who showed up at the tent city.

The boys' inexperience and political naiveté were instantly apparent. "They were not well-informed," says Sam Tylicki, a longtime anarchist in Cleveland. "Their hearts were in the right place, but they were new to everything. They saw the world not making sense but didn't know exactly what to do about it." Stevens and Baxter were stung to find themselves relegated to grunt work – kitchen duty, night watch. Deepening their hurt, the old-guard liberal contingent swiftly took the reins of Occupy Cleveland's discussions, rejecting the suggestions of the younger, more radical crowd. A suspicious rift opened between the two groups. Anarchists complained about Occupy's timidity, and jealously referred to its core members as the Power Circle.

Tensions came to a head when the city gave Occupy Cleveland an October 21st deadline to remove its tents, and the two factions clashed over how to proceed, with liberals tempted to comply and radicals like Stevens and Baxter insisting on standing their ground and getting arrested en masse. At 10 p.m. on the appointed night, as a crowd of 500 gathered and police arrived in riot gear, a staged bit of symbolic protest unfolded: Eleven volunteers preapproved by the Power Circle were peacefully arrested. Then everyone packed up their tents and dispersed. "This is bullshit – fuck this!" the radicals grumbled, stalking off in a huff. The glory days of Occupy Cleveland had lasted less than three weeks. For Baxter and Stevens, the movement that had jolted them with optimism and purpose felt like a crushing disappointment.

Someone else was there the night of the arrests. Shaquille Azir stood in the crowd, checking out the scene. He was 38, with ears that jutted from his bald head, a double chin and an imposing presence – six feet five, 350 pounds – a physique he described on his MySpace page as having "some extra baggage." Azir homed in on the mad-looking, bandanna-clad dudes waving anarchist flags. He approached one, a 26-year-old with a black mohawk and a pitted face named Doug Wright. Wright was a lifelong trainhopper who told friends he'd hitched his way across 40 states and once worked as a roadie for the garage band the Scurvies; his status as a real-deal gutterpunk inspired respect among younger Occupiers.

Wright was fired up that night. He bragged to Azir that his missing teeth and crooked nose were from past riots. He added that if he went back to jail, he wouldn't be out for a while. (In fact, Wright did have a history of violence, having served time in New Orleans for aggravated assault.) Soon Azir was listening to Wright bitch about Occupy.

Wright confided that he suspected the Power Circle was in cahoots with the government; he'd already told them so, shouting, "You're gonna get us sent to FEMA camps!" He was ready to start some real shit – like detonating a smoke grenade as a diversion, then pulling down the bank signs from the tops of Cleveland's towers. "Wright was still in the planning phase and was unsure how they would go about bringing down the signs," an FBI report reads. "Wright stated that . . . they need to make sure everyone knows that the action was against corporate America and not just some random acts."

Azir listened with studious sympathy. It was a technique honed over the course of his devious, dishonest life. His name had once been Kelvin Jackson, before he'd spent three years in state prison for robbing a bank, using a toy gun, while his girlfriend and their baby waited in a cab outside. His rap sheet also included cocaine possession, receiving stolen property, forgery, theft and passing bad checks. That was Azir's thing, writing worthless checks – a "crime of dishonesty," as it's known, a conviction used as evidence of a person's untruthfulness, the sort of thing that can cripple your job prospects or undermine your credibility in a court of law. In the eyes of the FBI, however, Azir's crimes had posed no impediment. Months earlier they had hired him as an informant, finding his leads fruitful enough that they'd opened several investigations, paying him \$5,750, plus \$550 in expenses.

Azir needed the cash. He owned a construction company that rehabbed houses, Desdy Property Group, which he bragged earned him \$75,000 a year. But in reality he had been fending off foreclosures, the state tax department and lawsuits from stiffed contractors and people to whom he had written worthless promissory notes; he had been on the losing end of tens of thousands of dollars' worth of civil judgments. Seeking financial shelter, Azir had filed nine attempts at bankruptcy. Now, as he sat across the table from boastful Doug Wright, Azir was on the verge of being busted in two more bad-check cases – placing him on probation, for which the FBI would take him off its payroll. Azir needed to prove his value to the feds, and fast.

Which might explain why over the next three months, Azir kept in touch with Wright, even when Wright showed no sign of action. In February, Azir and Wright met for breakfast to discuss the issue: Did Wright still want to bring down those bank signs? Sure, Wright answered. Explaining that he had drifted away from his Occupy friends, he told Azir he wanted to touch base with them first and see what they thought. He would begin with his buddy Brandon Baxter.

By this time, Baxter wasn't doing so well. Even though he'd been trying his hardest to play his role as Occupy Cleveland's slogan-shouting cheerleader, the group was rapidly disintegrating. One big reason was that its members had nowhere to meet: Since the loss of the encampment, Occupy's presence had been reduced to a single information tent on Public Square – too chilly a gathering space in winter, especially when the gusts coming off Lake Erie whipped through the plaza and caught the tent like a windsock. For a short time, Occupy had rented a 10-by-15-foot office in a downtown high-rise, but Baxter and others had swiftly moved in with their sleeping bags and got the group evicted.

Therein lay Occupy Cleveland's other problem: Its thinning ranks were dominated by homeless teenagers. "They had no place to go," says Leatrice Tolls, a veteran activist who became Occupy Cleveland's maternal figure. "These were kids that were very lost, and needed a place to get fed and sleep." Still, homeless teens were better than no members at all, and Occupy was anxious enough to keep them that there was talk of renting a space for them to live – like a new incarnation of Agape House, which had disbanded for lack of funds.

"It's just so hard to sleep outside," Baxter complained to his friends. He was loath to return to Lakewood, the site of his traumatic childhood, where a restraining order barred him from his mother's house. Such a constant font of positivity was Baxter that few realized he had grown up in a household his sister Rachael Garcia calls violent. "He was very fragile as a child," she says. "He was so sensitive. He'd come to me every day, crying," given to nervous tics, doodles of people hanging in nooses and writing violent poetry. "In my deepest darkest fantasies [sic] I see myself as evil," he wrote, "lacking all reason and empathy spilling the blood of the innocent."

When Baxter was 17, the stress had reached an apex. Believing his stepfather had beaten his mother, Baxter pulled a kitchen knife. "Cut me if you're going to cut me!" the stepdad urged, before Baxter sliced the knife across his chest. Baxter did a stint in a psych ward, says Garcia, after which he was legally forbidden from coming within 500 feet of his stepdad, and maintained little contact with his mom. Instead, he'd moved in with his biological father, a tense, out-of-work roofer whom he barely knew.

Occupy had been Baxter's escape hatch. Now he reluctantly returned to his father's home, which the bank was trying to foreclose on. Dad was scraping payments together by selling Native American handicrafts online. Baxter continued to faithfully walk or bike the seven miles into Cleveland for Occupy's meetings. Late one February night, furious with himself at his inability to somehow repair a broken world – or even his own broken life – Baxter had what he called a "mental break." He leapt in front of a moving car, shouting, "Kill me!" Police responding to the driver's 911 call found Baxter standing on the railing of the Hilliard Bridge, looking down onto the lanes of traffic below and screaming incoherently. The cops talked Baxter into coming down, then tackled him as he tried to flee. He had a 10-and-a-half-inch knife in his coat and a smaller one in his pants pocket. Charged with carrying a concealed weapon, he was sent to Lakewood Hospital for a psychiatric evaluation. On his way out of the police station, Baxter gave officers the finger, yelling, "Fascists!"

Days later, Wright and Azir picked Baxter up from his dad's house and took him to lunch at a Lakewood restaurant. They wanted to talk about fucking shit up – for Occupy's sake. Baxter was in.

They brainstormed and discussed possible targets, like a bank. Or Cleveland's new casino, during its grand opening. Or what about the G8 in Chicago, or the Republican convention? At one point Wright mentioned explosives, but dismissed it as too costly. They kept on talking.

Flash-forward a month to late March. The group was still dithering. It had made only one decision: That its action should coincide with May Day, when Occupy was calling for a national day of protest. Wright had finally downloaded *The Anarchist's Cookbook*, which he'd been talking about doing forever, and which he hoped would jump-start their imaginations: "We can make smoke bombs, we can make plastic explosives," Wright said in his gravelly voice, laughing. "It teaches you how to pick locks. It does everything."

At the word "explosives," Azir perked up. "How much do we need?" he stammered. "How much money we need to make explosive – make the plastic explosives?"

"I'm not sure," Wright said. "I haven't read too much yet."

"Well, you gotta get with me," Azir persisted. "If we gonna be trying to do something in a month, you need to get with me as soon as possible on how much money we gonna need, and the materials that we gonna need. Tell me what all we need to make the bombs." The very next day, Azir met with Wright to float a remarkable proposal: Now that they were broaching the topic of explosives, was Wright determined to make the bombs from scratch – or should they just buy some C4 from a guy Azir knew?

Days later, Wright and Baxter were standing with Azir in the kitchen of one of his vacant properties, agog as Azir's arms-dealer friend laid out an array of batons, tear gas and gas masks before them. Wright and Baxter excitedly asked about ordering some riot gear. The arms dealer – in reality, an undercover FBI agent – pointed to a picture of explosives and asked if they would need "the heavy stuff."

"Yeaaaah, we're gonna wait on that," Wright sidestepped. He repeated his disinterest in explosives two days later, when the undercover agent phoned – and then again the next day, when Azir prodded him about it. Wright explained that they were flat broke, without money to afford even the riot gear, much less the explosives.

Azir had a solution. He gave them jobs.

Everybody at the warehouse – Occupy Cleveland's commune where anyone who worked a shift at the information tent earned a space – agreed that Baxter and Wright's boss sounded way cool. Since the boys didn't have a car, Azir picked them up for work each morning and drove them to the day's construction site. He gave them beers all day long. And when he dropped them off at the Warehouse each night, they came in bearing cases of beer, baggies of pot and Adderall – all procured with the help of Azir, they said.

Stevens had joined the conspirators not long after they met with the arms dealer, in part because of the lure of a job. "Scratch my back, it hurts!" Stevens would cry out as he burst through the door of the Warehouse, skin burning from handling fiberglass insulation. He was proud to be employed for the first time, even if his pay was only five bucks an hour. "Just getting home, boss is gonna get here at nine to start it all over again," Stevens would text his sister near midnight, before zipping into his winter coat to get some sleep.

Rest was near impossible in their freezing-cold living space. The Warehouse was a cavernous indoor tent city for a dozen or so residents – mostly young men – who stayed up till all hours drinking 40s, playing guitar and arguing over cigarettes. There were no rules, no respect for personal space, no working stove and almost no heat. The place was filthy, with dishes stacked so high in the kitchen that someone just moved the pile into the bathroom.

The chaotic atmosphere wore down Stevens. "I don't feel spiritually right," he complained to a friend. He was frustrated with the stagnancy of Occupy Cleveland, whose entire existence was now staked to round-the-clock staffing of a tent that no one even visited. Stevens was attending church weekly. He told his sister he thought God might be calling him to the ministry.

And yet at the same time, Stevens was also busy trading ideas with Baxter, Wright and Azir about what to bomb. Some friends wonder if Stevens initially joined to talk his comrades out of the plot: "He's a deeply moral guy," says Occupier Joe Ziff. "I have a hunch that he may have gone along in the hopes that he could stop it." Whatever Stevens' reasons, from the moment Azir had brought his arms-dealer friend into the picture, the conversation had definitively shifted to talk of explosions. The friends discussed attacking a KKK headquarters, then dismissed the plan as lacking a deeper message about the one percent. Baxter mentioned blowing up a bridge, which earned a vote from Azir – "Gotta slow the traffic that's going to make them the money" – but then Baxter backpedaled, concerned that the media might not portray the action in a positive light. Stevens suggested targeting mines or oil wells. Wright joked that if he got drunk enough he might wear a suicide vest; Baxter confided that once he would have been willing to do that, but no longer. He'd gotten himself a girlfriend now – fellow Warehouse-dweller Justine Strehle, an 18-year-old who wore fuzzy hats with animal ears – and was moony with new love.

Azir implored them to decide. "What are we going to do with the stuff we got?" he asked. "We're on the hook for it."

"We've got eight fucking pounds of C4," Wright said in disbelief.

It was true. The "arms dealer" had been remarkably flexible about payment, allowing them to place an order for eight bricks of C4 plastic explosives, vests, tear gas and gas masks for \$900, only half of which would be due upon receipt; if they couldn't come up with the additional \$450, the dealer would even allow Wright to work off the debt. Stevens was worried that the C4 salesman could be a cop, but Azir vouched for him, saying if it made Stevens feel better, he'd personally meet with the guy when it came time for the buy. Now, as Azir wouldn't stop reminding them, they needed to come up with something to blow up in time for May Day: "We're 10 days away – if you guys are going to do something, let's put together a plan!"

The guys in the crew put on their thinking caps. They could turn the C4 into depth charges and throw it into a river to sink a ship. Would that work? Or they could blow up the Cleveland Justice Center. Better still: They would blow up the Federal Reserve Bank. But wait – where was the Federal Reserve, anyway? Discussions were endless. So fantastical did their schemes seem to Baxter that he proposed they throw tacks out the window of their getaway car, to foil would-be pursuers.

Azir was fed up with their bumbling indecision. "Did you follow up on anything? What are we doing? Because as usual you got me on a stupid-ass holding pattern," he scolded. "Every time we meet, we leave saying we're going to do some research and then we get back together and we're back to square one!"

The boys had come to look up to Azir, one of the few adults in their lives. "This guy portrayed himself as a father figure," says Occupy's Sam Tylicki. "He provided them work, provided them drugs, provided them with alcohol, provided them housing." Azir, aware of their miserable living situations, had offered to let the guys squat in one of the empty apartments he was rehabbing, an opportunity that Wright and Stevens took him up on. They were grateful to Azir, who even proposed to pay for identical tattoos for all of them, branding them as their own little gang for life.

The buy, which took place on April 29th, was simple. Azir, Wright, Baxter and newly drafted crew member Tony Hayne – who had a rap sheet for theft and domestic violence – drove to a hotel room in nearby Warrensville, where they snapped on latex gloves and blasted the TV in an attempt to foil any recording devices in case the guy was a cop. Wright threw \$450 in cash on the bed. The undercover agent handed over a duffel bag full of riot gear, along with two black boxes containing decoy bombs that looked like real IEDs. He explained how to arm them and how to detonate each with a cellphone. Then they were on their way.

Driving back to Cleveland, Azir asked if they were all in for the plan, which would take place the next night. Wright replied yes, except for Stevens, who had skipped out on the buy for a reason: He didn't want to go through with it after all. Azir told Wright to have Stevens call him.

Later that day, amid performances and speeches at an Occupy festival next to City Hall, Stevens was even quieter than usual. He'd been acting weird for a few weeks – by turns depressed, aggravated, antsy and either drunk or high as hell. But now, during a Native American shaman circle in which everyone took turns congratulating an Occupy friend about to become a father, Stevens burst out crying. And at 8:00 the next night, when Azir pulled up in a van to pick him up with Wright and Hayne, Stevens hung back. The others were already inside: Baxter and one last-minute member, 23-year-old Josh Stafford, a stoned street rat and devoted Juggalo who told a friend he was schizophrenic.

Stevens looked haggard, his normally trim beard and hair grown out grizzly wild. He said he wasn't coming. He asked Azir whether his decision to bail would affect his construction job; early in his employment, Azir had told Stevens that if he wasn't "good" with the plan, he didn't want Stevens around. Azir now replied that the van still had space for one more, but that tonight's plan and the job were separate issues. It was all up to Stevens.

Wright rolled down a window. "There's still space if you want to join."

Stevens looked at his friends in the van. He got in.

So here they were at Applebee's, wet and bedraggled as they took their seats around the table. The operation had gone smoothly: Wright, Stevens and Stafford had planted the bombs under the bridge while Baxter, Hayne and Azir had acted as lookouts. Although it had taken mere minutes, the tension and the rain had made it feel like forever, and the mood in the van afterward had been one of adrenaline-charged bonhomie. "If you do this stuff together, you're basically family," Wright had said, adding, "I'm glad you came, Connor." Stevens had agreed he was glad, too.

In the cheery restaurant, Wright scanned for cameras; Azir had suggested going to a place with surveillance video, to establish their alibi. As another red herring, the guys volunteered to their waiter that they were a touring rock band en route to a gig in Lakewood. As soon as the waiter left the table, Wright and Stafford each hunched over a detonator phone.

Wright tried punching in the code first. Back in the van he had joked, "I guess if we call and the FBI picks up, we know it didn't work." Then he added, "Something like that happens, I'm just going to swallow a razor blade." But now, when Wright dialed the number he'd been given, a voicemail picked up. Stafford tried too: voicemail. Each tried calling again, then texting; they tried entering multiple codes.

Stevens snickered. "What kind of group did I get involved in?" he asked.

"This is serious," Wright said. "We need to figure it out." They called the arms dealer to ask whether they had the correct code. Then Wright and Stafford tried sending the codes at the same time. For more than 10 minutes, they tried unsuccessfully to detonate the bombs. Then they all got up and left the restaurant. The FBI was waiting in the parking lot.

"The public was never in danger from the explosive devices," read the U.S. Attorney's Office statement to the media the next morning, announcing the arrests. "The defendants were closely monitored by law enforcement." All five were charged with conspiracy and attempting to use weapons of mass destruction. The trial is scheduled to begin on September 17th – if convicted, the boys could get life in prison. Hayne has already cut a deal, pleading guilty and agreeing to testify in exchange for a sentence of up to 19 years.

It's difficult to characterize five young men who may have been willing to detonate a bridge – killing an untold number of people in the process – as innocent. The pivotal question is not how sincere they were, but whether they could ever have managed to put together and act on such a plan on their own, without the pressure, funding and resources provided by Shaquille Azir. Consensus among friends and family is unanimous. "I hate talking about them like this, but they weren't smart enough for something like this," says Strehle, Baxter's girlfriend, echoing the prevailing opinion. "They were clueless."

The crux of the Cleveland Five's defense will likely rest on whether Azir's aggressive role in the crime constituted entrapment – a strategy which Baxter's defense attorney John Pyle foreshadowed at an early court

appearance. "They couldn't blow their noses, let alone blow up a bridge," he said of his clients, "were it not for what this provocateur did." Yet the government has had no problem overcoming the entrapment defense to win convictions in similar cases. The legal definition of entrapment is actually rather narrow: Even though enticing people into committing crimes might seem unjust, that doesn't make it unlawful. Prosecutors typically argue that defendants' histories show they were predisposed to commit the crime. And juries frightened by the magnitude of the foiled plots are inclined to bring down the hammer.

In the case of the Cleveland Five, defense attorneys have also signaled their intention to reveal Azir's extensive criminal history, which could undermine his credibility. Azir has been causing prosecutors plenty of headaches since the arrests. After his identity was outed by the Smoking Gun, the FBI scuttled him into the witness-protection program, reportedly in response to a threat. But living life under federal protection hasn't kept him out of trouble. In May, Azir – who still faces two outstanding bad-check cases he picked up during his time with Occupy – was arrested in Cuyahoga County for theft. He's out on \$5,000 bail.

Meanwhile, the Cleveland Five, denied bail, have remained in prison since their arrests. (All declined comment for this article.) Each is adjusting to prison in his own way. Baxter has been stalwartly upbeat, saying that what he's read so far of the FBI transcripts of Azir's recordings are "not bad." Wright, by contrast, is lashing out, having been put into solitary confinement for breaking minor prison rules, including "hoarding Personal Hygiene." "I didn't know you could have too much soap . . . WTF?!" he wrote to a friend, signing off, "Freedom or Death, Down with the Fascist Pigs." He recently declared a hunger strike in protest of his treatment.

But it is Connor Stevens who has blossomed behind bars, writing zealous, rambling diatribes from jail, warming to his new role of political prisoner. "More and more of the truth will come out during the trial. What's done in the dark will be brought to the light," he wrote in one letter. "They can stone me to death tomorrow and I will die with dignity on the righteous side of the People." Stevens has been bowled over by the letters of solidarity pouring in from friends and strangers, and is relishing the embrace of the anarchist brotherhood. He often gets swept away by his own rapturous outrage. "The Fascists have not merely imprisoned the May Day 5," he wrote. "They have, in effect, declared war on any life which even QUESTIONS their hegemony." It's as though Stevens, in his rhetorical fervor, forgot the part where he tried to blow up a bridge.

From the loving yet angry kid with half-baked political ideals, Connor Stevens has morphed into someone who sounds like the fiery radical the government has painted him to be. Perhaps in the end, after all their efforts, the feds really did get the terrorist they wanted. But Stevens got something, too. With his legit cred as a political dissident, he has finally found a life-defining mission and, at last, a sense of belonging and identity – the fulfillment he was searching for all along.

The Plot Against Occupy, a Response

This week, Sabrina Rubin Erdely's article "The Plot Against Occupy" was published on *Rolling Stone's* website. We are thankful to Rolling Stone and Sabrina Rubin Erdely for running an article which brings information about this case into the public spotlight. This case reflects some critical trends in law enforcement practices that have a significant bearing on our political landscape, and it's important that we are looking at these phenomena publically. Erdely also takes a stab at making sense of how these five guys could be convinced to participate in this potentially murderous act, and we appreciate her wanting to tell a story about these guys that puts this act they're accused of in context. However, beyond providing back story, the work goes astray as it enters into the realm of creative fiction, putting words into the guys' mouths and feelings into their hearts and presenting this as an authentic retelling of facts.

The problem with the situation is that, though Erdely paints a decent picture of how the guys were netted by the informant, she starts to enter into a fictional narrative when she says that they were "feeling pretty good" or otherwise casts the mood, intentions or motivations of the guys. There is so clearly a complex emotional dynamic at play, between the relationships these guys had with each other, the predatory manipulations of the informant (who not only provided for them but would also threaten violence against a number of the guys and their families), and the uncertain political feelings they seem to have been carrying. It is a jump to go from the FBI's transcripts, tainted by that organization's own agenda, to a claim about what was happening in the hearts of

these guys -- and large parts of the article appears to be based on these transcripts. Since the guys' sentences hinge in part on their motivation, Erdely's conjectures have the potential to have a serious impact on their futures.

Meanwhile, the article, in its desire to simplify the situation by painting the guys as "disoriented young men wrestling with alienation, identity issues and your typical bucket of adolescent angst," disregards the committed work they were doing (cooking weekly free meals for Cleveland's homeless population, defending foreclosure victims from eviction, and organizing for Occupy). It ridicules the legitimate challenges presented to those who are serious about social change in a manufactured political context which beats down on those with the consciousness to want change. The guys' search for politically meaningful work is demeaned as a quest for an "identity." Personally, we find this description condescending, when the political questions these guys were facing are well-founded, the answers elusive. We don't support bombing bridges or hurting people to make a political statement -- not at all -- and we don't believe these guys do either; the act they are on trial for came out of the imaginations of the FBI, selected for its reprehensible nature.

Erdely's article does more than other mainstream articles to date to expose the predations of the FBI's informant (though Azir's coercion went beyond what's covered). What is alarming, though, is that the article lets the FBI off the hook for sponsoring and authorizing, and likely directing these actions. On the first page, the FBI's tactics are rationalized: "anticipating and disrupting terrorist plots require both aggressive investigative techniques and a staggering level of collaboration and resources." To say that "the feds worried [Occupy] could become a terrorist breeding ground" seems implausible, given the lack of any sort of history to substantiate this. However, there is a long history of the FBI targeting political groups on strictly political grounds. While some questions are briefly raised about this, in an article titled *The Plot Against Occupy*, I would have expected this story to be drawn in the context of the coordinated police evictions of Occupy groups across the country, the reports of systematic violence and sexual harassment by police against Occupy Wall Street demonstrators in New York, and the other incidents of undercover agents perpetrating crimes that are then attributed to Occupy. While the specific image of terrorism the FBI is selling us has changed since 9/11, these tactics of inventing crimes and charges, media manipulation to cast social justice activists as dangerous, and even the use of the label "terrorist" are familiar to anyone who's followed social movement of the 20th century, and have only grown more effective with practice.

Finally, on a personal note, it was very hard to read the closing paragraph of the article. Though we are sure Connor and the other guys have been happy to have the support that they've received, the notion that any of them are reveling in their current situation is a sickening distortion. Like most people held in prison, particularly in solitary confinement, the guys are all struggling on a physical, mental and emotional level. Brandon and Connor are both twenty, the other guys not much older. Every day, they are facing harassment, theft, threats of violence, forced medication (in some cases) and the reality that they may potentially spend the rest of their lives in this abusive prison system. The article concludes that Connor has found his "fulfillment," but the reality is that he and the other guys have found the secretive hell that more than two million Americans are subject to every day.

20 Sept - Jalil Muntaqim Response to 2012 Parole Denial

We just received the following from supporters of Jalil Muntaqim following his second parole denial in two months. As he explains, the August 21, 2012 denial resulted from a de novo hearing of his 2010 parole denial, and the September 18, 2012 denial was from his normal 2012 parole board hearing.

MORE:

As many of you know, I sat before the parole board on August 21, 2012 for a de novo (re-do) hearing of the 2010 denial that was appealed and reversed. The reversal was based on not having on the record any statements from the defense attorney from trial and no trial record. Upon obtaining these records, a new hearing was conducted resulting, again, in a denial with the boilerplate language that, due to the nature of the crime and criminal history, I am not worthy to be released on parole.

On September 18, 2012, I again went before the parole board for the original scheduled parole hearing. Once again, I was denied release by two parole commissioners, Mr. Walter Smith, a former Senior Investigator for the State's Crime Victims Board, and Ms. Sally A. Thompson, a 20-year NYPD veteran, a cop and detective, and presently a member of the Fraternal Order of Police and the Detective's Endowment Association.

Naturally, on the record, I raised my concerns regarding the conflict of interest. Yet, Commissioner Thompson proclaimed that she could be fair and impartial. Commissioner Smith, as the primary interrogator conducting the hearing, offered in defense of Commissioner Thompson that the majority of parole commissioners have a background in law enforcement, and all are expected to do their jobs with fairness and impartiality.

Nonetheless, despite a thorough examination of the record finding absolutely nothing objectionable to denying my release on parole, release was again denied because of the nature of the crime. In essence, nothing I could present would persuade them to grant parole. In fact, during the hearing, I explained that at my previous parole hearing I was denied for the nature of the crime. I read from the August 21, 2012 denial that it was stated my "release is incompatible with the public safety and welfare of the community." I then asked Commissioner Smith exactly what in my record indicates this conclusion.

Commissioner Smith said, "that's a good question," but was then unable to provide a single specific issue or thing in the record that supported that conclusory statement.

However, in Commissioners Smith and Thompson's denial, they concluded: "The panel has concluded that your release to supervision is not compatible with the welfare of society and therefore parole is denied." ... "To grant your release at this time would so deprecate the seriousness of your offense as to undermine respect for the law."

What must be noted as part of the record are two independent psychological reports that state emphatically I am not a threat to society or at risk to become a recidivist. Furthermore, their own COMPAS risk assessment evaluation conducted by DOCCS analysis concludes I am "low risk" to be a recidivist or to engage in future acts of violence.

Obviously, the parole denial is a subjective political decision by law enforcement-influenced parole commissioners, void of objective reality or material facts to support their conclusory statement for denial.

This denial will be appealed. The process will probably take at least one year. In either case, I am scheduled to go before the parole board in June 2014. It is my sincere hope that by that time we can collectively create a new political environment substantial enough to challenge and change the composition of the NYS Division of Parole and to ensure that the voice of the community is respected.

24 Sept - Second Circuit Court of Appeals Denies Lynne Stewart a Re-Hearing

On Monday, September 24, 2012 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit rejected Lynne's appeal for a re-hearing before the entire court. This means she will, at age 70, likely serve another 7 years behind bars.

MORE:

Her original conviction was upheld in 2009 by a three-judge panel of the Second Circuit. The Second Circuit's opinion was not unexpected. This was the same court that earlier pressed Federal District Court John Koeltl to re-consider his original 28-month sentence and instead sentence Lynne to ten years.

Lynne, a leading civil rights attorney for 30 years, was convicted in 2005 on frame-up charges of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism. Her crime? She issued a press release on behalf of her client, the "blind sheik" Omar Abdel Rachman, a leading Egyptian Islamic cleric, who was also a victim of the U.S. "war on terror" when a government-instigated frame-up trial convicted him of conspiracy to destroy New York buildings. Typical of "conspiracy" convictions, no evidence of wrongdoing was presented at his trial.

Rachman, a leading critic of the Hosni Mubarak dictatorship in Egypt, and now serving a life sentence in Rochester, Minnesota, was the subject of national attention a few months ago when Egypt's new president, Mohammad Morsi, embarrassed the Obama administration by demanding his release.

Lynne's attorneys explained on Monday that "The clock now starts running on our Petition for Certiorari to the Supreme Court. We have 90 days to get it filed (with the possibility of a 30-day extension)."

Lynne is presently imprisoned at FMC Carswell outside of Fort Worth, Texas. She has successfully recovered from a difficult surgery that was spitefully delayed by prison authorities.

For the past 45 days Lynne was denied all visitors, mail and other basic prison rights on the trumped-up accusation that she violated prison rules in assisting a fellow prisoner certify a legal document.

Her spirits are high and she is now going through a backlog of some 100-plus letters from friends and supporters.

Here's a brief summary/timeline of Lynne's case.

- indicted on April 9, 2002;
- on February 10, 2005, convicted on all counts of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism;
- on October, 17, 2006, sentenced to 28 months;
- on November 17, 2009, a US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit three-judge panel upheld the conviction, shamelessly accusing Lynne of "knowingly and willfully making false statements," re-directing her case to District Court Judge John Koeltl for re-sentencing, instructing him to consider enhancements for terrorism, perjury, and abuse of her position as a lawyer – an outrageous mandate intimidating Koeltl to comply.
- on November 19, 2009, Stewart jailed at MCC-NY, 150 Park Row, New York, NY; and
- on July 15, 2010, Stewart re-sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for doing her job honorably, ethically, and admirably with distinction for 30 years.

Disgracefully, Judge Koeltl explained it, saying: "(C)omments by Stewart in 2006, including a statement in a television interview that she would do 'it' again and would not 'do anything differently' influenced (the) decision....indicat(ing) the original sentence 'was not sufficient' to reflect the goals of sentencing guidelines."

Forgotten were Koeltl's October 2006 comments, calling Lynne's character "extraordinary," saying she was "a credit to her profession," and that a long imprisonment would be "an unreasonable result," citing "the somewhat atypical nature of her case (and) lack of evidence that any victim was harmed...."

He also considered her age (70), health (at times poor), distinguished career representing society's disadvantaged and unwanted, and the unlikelihood she'd commit another "crime." However, the Second Circuit Appeals Court intimidated him to comply, his own career perhaps on the line otherwise.

25 Sept – New writings by Mandy Hiscocks

Mandy Hiscocks, in prison for protesting the 2010 Toronto gathering of the G20, prolifically writes for a popular blog. We've included her two most recent pieces.

MORE:

on being a proper lady

yesterday i had a counsel visit. these can be over an hour long, and there's no washroom access once you're locked in the room with your lawyer. now it just so happens that i have what is quite possibly the world's smallest bladder and therefore i'm a bit neurotic about not being within reach of a toilet or a bush. so when my name was called i quickly ran to the bathroom.

while i'm pissing, i'm called over the loudspeaker again, and then i hear another, distinctly hostile, voice:

-Hiscocks!

-coming!

-Hiscocks!

-coming!

-HISCOCKS I'M WAITING HERE !!!

wow. crusty, much?

i go out. the gurd is wating for me, all narrowed-eyes-and-wide-stance aggression.

-what were you doing?

-um, taking a piss.

i refrain from asking her if she'd like further details, which turns out to be a good decision on my part because she's in a seriously unfriendly mood. she also seems oddly upset by the word "piss":

-there's other ways to say it you know. there's male officers here, they don't need to know what

you were doing in the bathrrom.

-well i'm pretty sure they've heard it all before. in fact i bet they've even done it themselves!

(but in fairness to those male guards, if you're reading this, i'm very sorry and i sincerely hope you aren't too traumatized. i guess you can thank your lucky stars i wasn't changing a tampon.)

on our way to the visit this guard walks right beside me instead of across the hall and a bit behind, as is customary. i assume she's doing this to be intimidating – and it's working. this guard IS BIG! and she's got a reputation as the tough one, one they call when an inmate "needs" to be restrained. basically, she is not to be fucked with. that being said, i'm not so intimated that i don't lose myself in thoughts of how i could have answered her question in "other ways". . .

-what were you doing?

-peeing.

going pee pee.
i had to tinkle.
urinating.
number one.
taking a leak.
emptying the ol' bladder
passing water.
making wee wee.

but wait. although avoiding the rather shocking term "piss" any of those options would still have informed those fragile males that that's what i was doing. i guess i could i have gone with "powdering my nose" or "pardon me, but i was momentarily indisposed." i didn't grow up in the 1800s so i'm not really sure.

the best part of all this is that this guard swears like a sailor (as they say). she can be really nice, but also clearly gets off on her power to intimidate and control. she's also the one who thought it was pretty funny, when i first arrived, to amuse the other inmates by calling me "Not Her Cock" - as if we're all in grade school.

still, it sure was awfully nice of her to take the time to critique my manners. . .although it's possible she might be going just a tad above and beyond her description as a correctional officer. i wonder what my next lesson in the finer points of ladylike behaviour will be? how to properly cross my legs while sitting? how to drink tea (small sips, pinkie up)? a perfect curtsy, fit for the Queen?

ah Vanier, at least you're entertaining.

a visit to the real world

my new unit is usually for people who haven't been convicted and/or sentenced yet, so every week day morning a few people are woken up early for court. a few weeks ago i was one of them! i had been asked to testify at a G20-related preliminary inquiry, the subpoena and the judge's order had been delivered to the jail, and i was prepared for a long, cold day in the court cells of Toronto's Old City Hall. going to court is a big part of life at Vanier for many inmates so i thought you might be interested in what it's like.

a guard comes by to wake us up at 5am. not all guards, or inmates, make an effort to be quiet so often other people end up getting woken up too which makes for some sleepy-grumpy bathroom encounters. we have about half an hour to get ready; showers are not permitted. having gone to court a few times back in 2010 when i was detained pending bail i knew we'd be eating breakfast down in the cells in Admissions and Discharge (A + D) and that our regular trays (even our special diet trays) wouldn't be available. people hate going to court on tuesdays and thursdays because we miss out on pancakes and porridge and just get bread and cereal. knowing there wouldn't be any soy milk for mine and that i would be hungry all day, i scarfed down a couple of rice cakes with peanut butter, jam and banana. it's all about being prepared! I'D EVEN PRE-TRADED for dinner vegetables and organized for someone to collect them for me - we wouldn't be getting special diet trays at dinner either. too bad for people with serious medical food needs, i guess.

one (more) thing about being on Unit 4 is that when you go to court you can leave everything in your room, a guard locks your door to prevent theft and when you get back it's just as you left it. back on maximum security i would have had to pack everything - including sheets, blankets and clothes - into a property bag because upon return there'd be no guarantees i'd go back to the same range let alone the same cell. people who go to court a lot on Unit 2 end up moving around a lot, which i imagine must be pretty stressful. it takes awhile to get used to new people and different range cultures and dynamics.

we're down at A + D by 6 am. it's always been a mystery to me why they need us there so early - the wagons won't arrive until at least 7:30. we chat a bit (i catch up with some folks from 2F, which is nice), breakfast comes (i munch on dry cereal), some people go back to sleep on the cold concrete benches, others read their little prison issue bibles. the only reading material we can bring to court is religious stuff - i'm kicking myself for not thinking ahead and getting my hands on a copy of the koran, which i've never read. even the bible would have been better than nothing. [sigh, preparedness fail]. while we wait a couple of people change into their street clothes - that's allowed as long as you let the A+D guards know in advance so they can have your stuff ready. it's a well known fact that people already in custody are more likely to be convicted so the hope is that you can fare a little better if at least you're not in institutional clothes. the long wait gives people the opportunity to hide stuff on and in their person: coffee, peanut butter, sugar, pencils, anything to make them a bit less hungry or bored all day. it's tricky and takes some creativity because some of the guards are very enthusiastic about the pre-boarding pat-down search. it's also somewhat entertaining to watch, but mostly we sit in a cold, tired, lightly stunned silence. no doubt we're all wondering why we were rushed out of bed and off the unit only to sit around for an hour and a half. . . as always, jail is a lot of hurry up and wait.

finally the vehicles start to arrive, the two pregnant women in the cell are taken in a van with real seats because the wagon isn't considered safe for them. personally, i think it's very unsafe for anyone - we're travelling along the 401 in a metal box with no seat belts and our hands cuffed together. sometimes in the big compartments that fit groups of people we're even cuffed to each other. each compartment is locked and unlocked from the outside with a key - maybe there's an emergency "unlock all doors" button in the cab but somehow i doubt it. we're

completely trapped without the use of our hands (and people being transported to courthouses out of toronto by the OPP have their feet shackled too). to top it all off, you can't see out of the toronto wagon windows which only increases the feeling of helplessness. every time i'm in one i breathe deeply and try not to think about drowning, suffocating, bleeding to death or being burned alive in some horrible highway accident all because society's safety from me is considered more important than my own.

at some point this mild feeling of panic and claustrophobia gets pushed aside by the familiar need to piss and stress about being prevented from doing so. i try to lay down and sleep so i don't have to think about it, but it's impossible. every stop makes me lurch forward and almost fall off the slippery metal bench; every turn makes me slide to one end or the other of the compartment. turns are good though because they mean we're off the highway and in the city, finally. this trip was long, about two hours, due to the ridiculous commuter traffic (honestly, people, take a bus! or AT LEAST CARPOOL. . .) so by the time we got to toronto i was seriously considering the pros and cons of pissing on the floor and wondering if that could actually be done in handcuffs. people have really had to do that before - just one more degrading and humiliating moment in custody i guess.

after our drop-off at superior court we arrive at old city hall at 10 am. the wagon continues on to college park and the three of us are put in a freezing cold cell with an even more freezing cold metal toilet and given a styrofoam cup. and then we wait.

and we wait. and wait. and then, for variety, we wait some more.

luckily the walls are covered in graffiti which provides some distraction. i read about who just got bail, who was sentenced to what. who loves who, who loves who FOREVER, "FUCK THE POLICE" is popular, obviously, as is "FREEDOM IS A MUST". i learn who is a rat, a goof, a snitch. who can go and fuck what. there are messages from one prisoner to another, and pictures of animals. there is anger, frustration, desperation: "LET ME OUT!"; "i'm sick of this shit i retire." and there are conversations, my favourite is this one:

- _____ is a cock sucking fag.

- yeah well he saved my ass so who cares? if he's a fag? like, really, is that important to you?

a small voice of reason, a glimmer of solidarity.

other than reading the walls our options are pacing, chatting, working out, and the classic cop-shop/courthouse dilemma: try to sleep and get even colder or stay awake for warmth but be horribly bored. i'm kicking myself again for not stuffing an envelope full of reading material, blank paper and puzzles and hoping the guards would assume it was legit documentation from my lawyer. preparedness fail, part two.

eventually lunch time rolls around. we ate breakfast at 6am instead of the usual 7:30, and now it's 1pm - an hour and a half past our usual lunch time. i've been on Vanier schedule since january and am at this point fully institutionalized. so i'm hungry. my veganism goes out the window and i gladly take a cheese sandwich (the other option is tuna). i try to make it last but i fail, i wash it down with some watered down grape drink, and that's lunch. i wish i'd risked it and packed some peanut butter but my inner cop can be quiet persuasive in here. anyway a bit later a guard comes around with extra sandwiches so we all get another.

the afternoon drags on. i'm so tired and cold. i've slept off and on and my brain is fuzzy. this is not a very good state to be in on the witness stand! i'm starting to wonder if i'll ever be called and then, at last, i am.

at old city hall there are not back entrances to the courtroom for people in custody so i'm led, handcuffed, through the building. it's like stepping into another universe and things feel strange and disjointed for a moment. all around me people are doing normal things: talking on cellphones, buying and selling coffee, wearing things other than green tracksuits and corrections uniforms. you can't tell at first glance who's in charge of who, and most people can leave the building whenever they feel like it. well hello there real world! how i've missed you. .

as i'm escorted into the courtroom i see people i know. this is weird because for the past eight months i've never seen more than two friends at a time and, except for the few times they've been lawyers, we've always been separated by glass and talking over a phone. i can't talk to the folks in the courtroom but we smile at each other, which is enough.

as it turns out it's not my turn after all. they've put another witness on the stand instead: john vandenheuvel, OPP, head of the investigation into me and my friends. i hope he's being made to squirm but sadly i don't get to watch because i'm to be taken back to the cell. the disorganization and inefficiency is, as always, staggering. how often i've said it: if hospitals were run like courthouses everyone would be dead. i don't mind the time though because outside of the cellblock the building is warm so as far as i'm concerned the more time spent there the better.

later on i do take the stand for real. it's short, which is good because i find testifying stressful. but it's a long day of bored cold hunger for something that takes five minutes. not that that's at all unusual - a lot of people get dragged in to court for no reason every day, knowing full well their case will be remanded to another day or that they don't have a surety and won't be granted bail and so will be returning to jail at the end of it. everyone involved knows that nothing will happen, but everyone has to show up. why can't a quick call be made to the jail? "don't bother bringing inmate x, we're not ready"? why can't they appear by video court instead? people do that every day, the system is already in place. it's no wonder the courts are so backlogged that it can take years just to get a trial - years that are increasingly spent in custody. the whole thing would be laughable if it didn't have such a terrible effect on the lives of a few people and their loved ones. not to mention people on the outside who could put the money the state wastes on the "justice" system to better use (food, shelter, healthcare and education come to mind).

the day ends and now we're waiting for the wagons. as it gets later and later we start to hope they won't come before 6pm (dinner time) so we can have a sandwich. they come at 5:50. figures. the ride home is shorter, and uneventful although for some reason i feel slightly car sick this time. back at the jail we're put in an A+D cell and given dinner. it's sausages, so i eat bread and margarine, carrots and pineapple. it's delicious. the processing takes forever. everyone has to be strip-searched; the new arrivals need to do an intake, get a TB shot and their prison clothes, and get checked out by the nurse. no attempt is made to search the regulars first and get us back to our units. more importantly, no attempt is made to prioritize those who have to return to court in the morning, so that they can get to their unit in time to use the phone. that phone call could mean the difference between having a surety in court the next day or not; it could be someone's only opportunity to get a lawyer, or talk to their kids, or make sure someone is going to feed and walk their dog. the guards don't care about things like that - things are done on their schedule, at their convenience. so we don't get to our units until 9pm, just in time to get sent to our rooms on Unit 4 and well past the 7:30 lock-up on Unit 2.

there are people who go to court day after day. if they need a special diet they don't eat properly. if they're on Unit 2 they don't have any access to phone or shower; if they're on Unit 4 there is some access due to the later bedtime but it's still severely limited. everyday these people will be tired and hungry; everyday they've spend hours freezing in a court cell and bouncing around in a wagon. some trials take days, some take months - can you imagine keeping a schedule like that for months on end? regardless of your perspective on crime and punishment i'm sure you agree that people deserve to be treated decently while their case is being dealt with.

25 Sept - "Rescued:" New short film on former political prisoner Jonathan Paul

A new short film has been made about former Animal Liberation Front prisoner Jonathan Paul. Please take the time to share the link with folks who have access to viewing the film online.

MORE:

The history of the Animal Liberation Front has a very short list of well-known people whose work has been well documented. There is a much longer list of unsung heroes whose contributions have gone unknown or underappreciated. One such person is Jonathan Paul.

A new documentary short titled "Rescued: Animal Liberation" highlights the activist career of Paul, recently released after serving 51 months for burning down a horse slaughterhouse.

As part of his plea agreement, Paul admitted to a role in a slew of high-profile Animal Liberation Front raids. These include some of the most notable ALF actions, such as the break ins at the University of Oregon in 1986 and the University of Arizona in 1989. As one person who reviewed his legal paperwork said to me: "People have no idea what a rock star Jonathan Paul is, and how many actions he had a part in."

The extent of Jonathan Paul's work with the ALF has not been fully covered or appreciated, and this film by Dog Park Media is a start towards documenting his important work.

View the film online at: <http://www.dogparkmedia.com/rescued>

26 Sept - Bureau of Prisons Houses More "Terrorists" than Guantanamo

Here's an article from the latest Prison Legal News that outlines the use of Communications Management Units in the United States.

MORE:

According to the New York Times, the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) confines more than twice as many prisoners for "terrorism-related" offenses than the controversial and oft-maligned U.S. military detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"As of October 1, 2011, the ... [BOP] reported that it was holding 362 people convicted in terrorism-related cases, 269 with what the bureau calls a connection to international terrorism, up from just 50 in 2000. An additional 93 inmates have a connection to domestic terrorism," the Times stated. The Times also noted that many of those prisoners were prosecuted as part of the government's "zero-tolerance" approach to any conduct remotely related to terrorism. The BOP, for its part, has set up two special Communication Management Units (CMUs) to house such prisoners, who are disproportionately black and Muslim.

At a time when many legal experts of both conservative and liberal persuasions are calling for an end to the draconian federal sentencing guidelines and decrying the rising federal prison population, the U.S. government is unrelenting in seeking maximum penalties for defendants with ties to terrorism, no matter how attenuated they may be.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks galvanized federal and state law enforcement into declaring a "War on Terror," and sparked a reorganization of various independent agencies such as the Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement into the Department of Homeland Security. Thousands of new federal officers now patrol the border and detain and deport hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants every year, while dozens of "fusion centers" have been formed nationwide to collect information about national security risks. [See: PLN, Aug. 2012, p.32]. The social and financial costs of these measures have been well-publicized and are the subject of rigorous debate.

However, the BOP, in full stealth mode, has largely evaded this level of public scrutiny. Those familiar with the operational style of federal prison officials are not surprised by this lack of transparency; the BOP rarely grants interviews, provides little background information related to its activities and discloses details concerning its funding and staffing only to Congress, which is responsible for approving the BOP's budget. Attempts to obtain information through Freedom of Information Act requests are routinely frustrated, forcing the media and concerned citizens to file federal lawsuits to compel compliance with public disclosure requirements.

As best as can be determined by the limited public information available, most of the approximately 170 prisoners confined at Guantanamo Bay are foreign nationals apprehended by American forces in various military operations in Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of those, 87 have been cleared for release by the government but remain incarcerated.

Federal officials have argued for years about whether or not military tribunals are the most appropriate way to deal with suspected terrorists detained at Guantanamo, and the Supreme Court has weighed in on the issue with rulings in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, 548 U.S. 557 (2006) and *Boumediene v. Bush*, 553 U.S. 723 (2008). [See: PLN, Dec. 2008, p.20; Sept. 2006, p.27]. One fact that is not in dispute is the huge annual cost to house each prisoner at Guantanamo, which is around \$800,000. By comparison, the average cost of confining prisoners in a BOP supermax facility is approximately \$92,000 per year.

Compared to the relatively faceless, anonymous detainees held at Guantanamo, the BOP houses some of the most notorious foreign and domestic terrorists. Richard Reid, the shoe bomber; Terry Nichols, who was convicted along with Timothy McVeigh in the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building; Ahmed Ressam, the “millennium bomber”; John Walker Lindh, the “American Taliban”; and Eric Rudolph, convicted of bombing abortion clinics and the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, are all held at the BOP’s supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, as are al-Qaeda members Zacarias Moussaoui and Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad.

Prisoners confined at the BOP supermax are limited in their ability to communicate with the outside world, barred from using email and restricted to highly-monitored phone calls. Outside exercise is limited to two hours in what amounts to a large cage with little to no contact with other prisoners. Human rights activists have condemned such conditions of confinement as “inhuman” and unworthy of a democratic form of government. There has been little outcry from the public, though, which apparently is not troubled by such restrictive conditions.

The CMUs are a more recent example of the BOP’s development of sophisticated ways to confine prisoners considered by the government to be dangerous or troublesome. They are a perfect illustration of what happens when governmental agencies are free to make their own rules with little or no oversight from Congress, the courts or the public. The CMUs are designed to be monuments to the federal government’s power to prosecute, convict and confine individuals who sometimes have only a tangential connection to terrorism.

While there is legitimate concern as to the dangerousness of some accused international terrorists, many of the American-born or naturalized U.S. citizens in BOP custody serving long sentences for “domestic terrorism” do not present as clear a threat.

Due to the questionable dangerousness of such prisoners, a group of researchers sought and won approval from the Department of Homeland Security in 2009 to study the issue, but was denied access to the prisoners by BOP officials. Professor Gary LaFree, director of a national terrorism study center at the University of Maryland, said, “There’s a huge national debate about how dangerous these people are. I just think, as a citizen, somebody ought to be studying this.”

One issue that is already well known is that people convicted of terrorism-related charges receive lengthy sentences. According to a September 2011 report from the Center on Law and Security, of the 204 people charged with what the Center calls serious jihadist crimes since the 9/11 attacks, 87 percent were convicted (lower than the average DOJ conviction rate, which is in the 90 percent range) and they received an average sentence of 14 years (compared to the overall average federal sentence of approximately 6 years).

The federal government’s decision to seek harsh sentences in such cases is reminiscent of the original rationale for the federal sentencing guidelines that grew out of the “War on Drugs.” The clear purpose of draconian sentences for drug offenses was to incarcerate drug dealers for long periods of time to cripple the drug trade. Yet despite the flood of drug offenders entering the federal prison system, most experts agree that use of illegal drugs in the U.S. has remained fairly consistent.

Scholarly studies such as those by Professor William J. Stuntz of Harvard University, author of “The Collapse of American Criminal Justice,” have shown there is little to no connection between soaring incarceration rates and reductions in crime. Current downward trends in crime rates appear to indicate that increased and targeted policing has a much greater impact than sending more people to prison. Regardless, with respect to terrorism cases, federal prosecutors have demonstrated they are willing to go to extremes to obtain convictions despite widespread criticism of their methods.

In one case originating in Virginia, according to the *Times*, “prosecutors used the Neutrality Act, a little-used law dating to 1794 that prohibits Americans from fighting against a nation at peace with the United States. Prosecutors combined that law with weapons statutes that impose a mandatory minimum sentence in a strategy

to get the longest prison terms ... said Paul J. McNulty, the United States attorney overseeing the case. ‘We were doing all we could to prevent the next attack,’” he stated.

That case involved 11 defendants charged with participating in a conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism. Their crimes? Playing paintball and firing legally-owned firearms in a rural area, which was described as “paramilitary training” by prosecutors. Several of the defendants had also attended a training camp in Pakistan (a U.S. ally). Although belonging to a group that opposes India, which has long had an adversarial relationship with Pakistan, they committed no attacks or violence in the United States or elsewhere. Three of the defendants, Masoud Khan, Seifullah Chapman and Hammad Abdur-Raheem, all American citizens, went to trial; they were convicted and sentenced to prison terms of life, 85 years and 97 years, respectively.

“It was a deterrence strategy and show of strength,” said Karen J. Greenberg, a law professor at Fordham University. “The attitude of the government was: Every step you take toward terrorism, no matter how small, will be punished severely.” Of course, one questions whether such enthusiastic prosecutions would have deterred the 9/11 attackers, whose mission was to ram planes into buildings and die in the process.

In another case, Dr. Rafil A. Dhafir, a U.S. citizen, was prosecuted for sending millions of dollars to Iraq through a charity he founded despite U.S.-imposed economic sanctions on that country. He was convicted of fraud, money laundering, tax evasion and conspiracy charges, and sentenced in 2005 to 22 years in federal prison. He was not charged with promoting violence, though prosecutors accused him of terrorism-related conduct during sentencing. Dhafir was resentenced in February 22, 2012 after his case was remanded by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, but still received 22 years. Initially confined in a CMU, he was released to the general prison population shortly before resentencing.

More than 300 prisoners have been prosecuted and convicted of domestic terrorist acts since 2001, completed their sentences and then been quietly released. Most were not accused of violent offenses but rather of “‘material support’ for a terrorist group; financial or document fraud; weapons violations; and a range of other crimes,” according to the *Times*. Foreign nationals released from BOP custody after finishing their sentences were deported, but U.S. citizens returned to their homes and families. The recidivism rates for the latter group are well below that of the average federal prisoner, which tends to indicate that domestic “terrorists” are not the threat they are portrayed as being by federal prosecutors.

Faced with a lack of cooperation by the BOP and the reluctance of many released prisoners – most of whom are still on supervised release – to speak with the news media, the *Times* interviewed several prisoners currently serving time for terrorism-related offenses. One, Randall Todd Royer, now known as Ismail Royer, is a 38-year-old Missourian who converted to Islam.

Royer was active in the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Muslim American Society, often traveled to Washington, D.C., and visited the White House. He is now serving a 20-year federal prison sentence after pleading guilty to “helping several American friends go to a training camp for Lashka-e-Taiba, an extremist group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.... He trained at [the same] camp himself ... in 2001, he was stopped by Virginia police with an AK-47 and ammunition in his car.” He denied ever planning to kill Americans. He was one of the 11 defendants in the Virginia case described above who trained with paintball guns and legal firearms, and committed no violent acts.

Royer received the statutory minimum sentence of 20 years, was divorced by his wife and is only able to have non-contact visits with his young children. After a stint at a CMU, he was transferred to the BOP’s Florence supermax facility.

One analyst, Chris Heffelfinger, author of “Radical Islam in America,” concluded that Royer’s prosecution was justified but that he received probably double the punishment that the crime deserved. “I think a strong law enforcement response to cases like this is appropriate nine times out of 10,” he said.

Another alleged domestic terrorist, Daniel McGowan, was placed in the CMU after receiving a 7-year federal prison sentence; he pleaded guilty in 2006 to arson-related charges in connection with fires set by environmental activists at a lumber company and tree farm research center. There were no injuries. Prosecutors pursued a terrorism enhancement at his sentencing, claiming McGowan's offenses "either involved or were intended to promote a federal crime of terrorism." Other prisoners held in CMUs have included animal rights activists.

"Many of the men here (both Muslim and non) are considered political prisoners in their respective movements and have been engaged in social justice, religious organizations, charities and humanitarian efforts," McGowan wrote. "Another conception of the CMU is that it is a location designed to isolate us from our movements and to act as a deterrent for others from those movements (as in 'step outside the line and you too will end up there')."

In response to the high number of prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offenses, the BOP set up CMUs in the federal prison complexes at Terre Haute, Indiana in 2006 (in the former death row unit) and at Marion, Illinois in 2008. Derisively described by Muslim activists as MMUs, or "Muslim Management Units" because over two-thirds of the prisoners held in such units are reportedly Muslims, the CMUs house up to 80 prisoners, permit no physical contact with visitors, and have closely-monitored and limited access to the BOP's phone and email systems. Incoming and outgoing mail is read and scanned.

The Center for Constitutional Rights filed a lawsuit in March 2010 on behalf of five CMU prisoners and two of their spouses, challenging conditions in the CMUs; the suit remains pending on the plaintiffs' procedural due process and retaliation claims. See: *Aref v. Holder*, U.S.D.C. (D. D.C.), Case No. 1:10-cv-00539-RWR-DAR. On October 7, 2011, twelve members of Congress sent a joint letter to the BOP, questioning policies and practices in the CMUs. More recently, a group of prisoners in the CMU at Marion went on a hunger strike in April 2012 to protest human rights violations by prison officials and interference with the religious rights of Muslim prisoners.

One question that remains unanswered is whether or not the government's approach of prosecuting "terrorism" offenses that only marginally involve actual terrorism, and imposing lengthy sentences and harsh CMU confinement on domestic "terrorists," will protect the U.S. from future attacks. Assuming, of course, that that is in fact the government's goal.

Sources: *New York Times*, www.findlaw.com, www.ccrjustice.org, www.democracynow.org, www.cnycentral.com, www.truth-out.org, www.thinkprogress.org, www.aclu.org, *Washington Post*, www.supportdaniel.org, www.prisonabolitionist.org

26 Sept - Theocracy by Marie Mason

Animal Liberation Front prisoner Marie Mason has a new poem that we're including below.

MORE:

No disrespect to Detroit's brilliant,
Beleaguered, and recently drug-martyred poet -
But Gil Scott-Heron was wrong, wrong, wrong.
The revolution Has been televised
And trivialized,
Made almost antiseptic, it's apocalyptic attempts
Co-opted, contained and commoditized.
Now showing, an exhibit at the MOMA,
A thrilling documentary about
Just plain folks in far away places, maybe,
Coveting our conventional "democracy"
Surely these young people in tents knew that
Last year.

Not far away, but here,
They are serving Ben and Jerry's,
And endlessly updating their Facebook pages,
Considering the subjugation of women and discussing brands..
Where are the anarchists, now,
As billions change hands and borders flex,
And bodies go to ground (blood being the most productive crop this year)
The shadow of Theocracy
darkens, sinister, solidifies
And creeps into the catbird seat,
Directing an international conversion event
That had naught to do with God
Well-documented and almost unseen.
Whose revolution has this been,
Really?

27 Sept - Grand Jury Investigation Targeting PNW Anarchists Dates Back to March 2

New information has emerged about the grand jury targeting Pacific Northwest anarchists. Documents provided to Eugene, Oregon's Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC) indicate that the grand jury, which many had guessed had been convened as a result of May Day protests in Seattle this year, actually began in March. We're also including further updates on the resisters, including the recent arrest of KTeeO, who is now being held in SeaTac.

MORE:

In an e-mail obtained by *The Portland Radicle*, the federal district court which issued subpoenas that resulted in military-style raids and seizures of property in Portland said they empaneled the grand jury on March 2, 2012. The raids and subpoenas did not occur until July 25.

This would suggest that the scope of the grand jury is larger than previously thought.

"There's some form of investigation that's larger in scope than simply May Day vandalism. What the true nature of that investigation is, we don't know," said Lauren Regan, the executive director of the CLDC.

After the raids, the only comment given by the FBI is that the raids were part of an "ongoing violent crime" investigation. Federal agents seized electronics, clothing and political literature. A copy of a search warrant shared with *The Portland Mercury* showed that the federal warrants were in connection to crimes such as conspiracy to destroy government property, interstate travel with intent to riot and conspiracy to travel interstate with intent to riot. No affidavits or other any other documents have been made public by the government thus far.

Regan said the government will mislead the public while in pursuit of information.

"It is very common for the federal government to put out information that they want the general public to know either because it's a red herring, a smokescreen for what they're actually doing, or they want to hit the hive and watch the buzz," she said. "Sometimes the government will intentionally set a trap. They'll hold up their left hand and say 'Look over here! This is what we're investigating.' Meanwhile, they're holding up their right hand saying 'Haha, this is what we're really going after.' The feds are sitting back collecting information that we're not aware they're collecting, then that can almost entrap people in other, different federal crimes."

Regan said that one purpose of casting such a wide net is to map political movements using broad surveillance.

“In a lot of these grand juries that we’re seeing recently, one of the big things that they’re doing is they will contact someone and they will watch who that person goes to talk to, whose house they go to, what phone numbers they dial.”

Regan noted that, unlike the applicable rules for a normal jury trial, hearsay, for example, can be used by prosecutors before a grand jury. People targeted by the grand jury must usually withdraw from ongoing projects or be watchful of their public statements.

“There’s a reason grand juries are usually characterized as witch-hunts. They can start off investigating one thing and they can end up tapped into nine other things, in particular because grand jurors themselves can inquire into other areas of investigation. There’s no telling the full breadth of what a grand jury could investigate,” Regan said.

For this reason, Regan said it’s unwise for communities targeted by a grand jury to openly speculate as to what it is investigating.

“One of the worst things that activists can do under these circumstances is to sit around and speculate as to what the real investigation might be, because the government loves it when we do their work for them,” Regan said.

Regan said that the federal government was largely successful in targeting radical environmentalists around the nation with their Operation Backfire investigations, which led to the capture and prosecution of numerous individuals involved with property destruction in defiance of deforestation or fur-farming, an ongoing period generally referred to as “The Green Scare.” Numerous activists informed on one another or were scared into taking plea deals and, Regan said, it emboldens the government to try the same tactics until they’re proven ineffective.

“I think that we’re seeing repetitious investigations of the same types of things, quote-unquote ‘anarchists, socialists, communists, environmentalists, terrorists.’ They’re all being thrown into one pot at this point. The government is using broad and ambiguous definitions to try to target those political movements and philosophies,” Regan said.

Referring to the U.S. government’s 1960s and 70s Counterintelligence Program, which FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover ordered to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” civil rights and numerous radical political movements, Regan said, “We only have to look back at the COINTELPRO era to recall that the government is not really focused on investigating and solving crimes in order to make the public safer. When they’re going after political groups like this, the goal is to scare people into submission, they want to scare people away from being active. That’s their primary goal.”

Regan said that to resist a grand jury, people should not be intimidated.

“The most effective way to counteract that is to do the opposite; not be scared into submission and not disassociate yourself from people based on their political beliefs,” she said.

When asked if the proceedings were “Kafkaesque,” Regan laughed.

“If I started using that word, I’d probably be using it every single day,” she said.

The CLDC will be posting digital copies of the documents they obtained on their website.

Update on Matt Duran Hearing

Matt Duran had a hearing on the 26th. He is still being held at SeaTac FDC on contempt of court for an undetermined amount of time. He could potentially be held until March of 2014.

Here’s a summary of what happened on the 26th:

Friends and Supporters arrived and went through security at the Federal Courthouse about 10 minutes before court began. Court proceedings were held on the 13th floor with Judge Richard Jones.

Judge Jones began the morning with an explanation of the policies around open v. closed contempt hearings. He explained that the beginning of Matt's hearing is not technically a contempt hearing, but a chance for Matt to state his intentions around whether or not he will be providing the court with information or if he will continue to resist their coercion. This means that the first portion of the hearing was specifically addressing the Grand Jury proceedings and could not be accessible to the public. He continued to explain that, once Matt stated his intentions, and if he continued to resist the court's wishes, the hearing then turned into a contempt hearing and would become public.

Judge Jones went on to explain and apologize for the "miscommunication" during Matt's initial Grand Jury appearance. During his initial appearance on September 13th, those who were attempting to get through security and up to the contempt hearing were repeatedly told that the hearing was closed and that no one would be any further than the lobby of the courthouse. He admitted that the original contempt hearing on September 13th should have functioned identically to the way that day would go.

At that time, Judge Jones notified Matt's friends and supporters that the first portion of the hearing would be specifically discuss the Grand Jury and proceeded to excused the public, closing the hearing.

Friends and Supporters hung out just beyond the doors and the hearing was open again approximately 3 minutes later. Matt, once again, kept true to his word, to his principles and to his loved ones, and did not answer any questions.

Once allowed back in, Matt's lawyer took the floor to explain Matt's current conditions and intentions. Here is an abridged and bullet-point list of issues and information brought up by Matt's lawyer in court —

Matt is in Solitary Confinement (the Secure Housing Unit) which means ...

- + he has very little access to phone
- + he has been denied the ability to initiate contact with attorney
- + he has been denied visitor request forms
- + he has been denied vegan food (has access to vegetarian options and commissary items)
- + he has no way of socializing within the prison
- + he has no access to sunlight, fresh air or an untinted window to the outdoors

Even under these conditions, Matt has no intention of changing his mind or strategy. Matt's lawyer explained that Matt will be at peace no matter where he is within the prison. She said that he would like to socialize and play chess with other inmates, but is content where he is. He has a clock radio and a couple of romance novels the prison gave him upon arrival. She went on to describe the kinds of support Matt has been getting while in prison. Matt has received an overwhelming number of letters from all over the world, some from friends and most from strangers, who support and respect him for his convictions. Recently, a few publishers have written him offering to send him books for free and he has begun to receive reading material from many sources. She also cited that, during the transport to the Prison, an inmate in the vehicle with Matt complimented him and respected him because "...most people are in here because they were informed on by other people...". Matt's lawyer demonstrated how resilient, driven, focused and principled Matt is and will continue to be. She also argued that, because of Matt's steadfast commitment to silence, his detainment was punitive.

The Prosecution (the government) took the floor after Matt's lawyer's statements. They explained that Matt's conditions and treatment were normal and the same as all prisoners at the Federal Detention Center at SeaTac. They also asserted that because Matt's lawyer did not have representation from FDC SeaTac, Matt's detainment conditions could not be corroborated. He also argued that, because Matt is getting worldwide support "...he must be doing fine..." The Prosecution made clear that, even though statements of non-compliance were made by Matt and on behalf of Matt, a statement of non-compliance would not be enough to prove that incarceration had moved from coercive to punitive. He also made it known that congress passed the law ruling that someone can be held for no more than 18 months in civil contempt as a coercive strategy for a reason. The Prosecution explained that the full coercive affects of imprisonment had not be felt by Matt due to the short term of

detainment and that a second hearing date for 6-8 months out to reassess his incarceration was reasonable. The Prosecution made that suggestion then rested.

Matt's lawyer took the floor and suggested that the court not set another hearing date, while reserving herself and her client the privilege of coming forward to request a date.

The Prosecution agreed with this suggestion.

Judge Jones ruled to not set another hearing date and to keep Matt Duran detained.

KTeeO Jailed

Katherine "KteeO" Olejnik was taken into federal custody today for refusing to cooperate with the grand jury. She is the second subpeanut to be jailed for refusing to testify.

Please write to KteeO! She is specifically interested in news and information about the Basque region, and reading material related to linguistics and social anthropology.

Katherine Olejnik #42592-086

FDC SeaTac

Post Office Box 13900

Seattle, Washington 98198

This is the statement she wrote explaining why she is refusing to cooperate:

For me choosing to resist a grand jury is about humanity – I cannot and will not say something that could greatly harm a person's life, and providing information that could lead to long term incarceration would be doing that.

For me choosing to resist a grand jury is about freedom of speech and association – I cannot and will not be a party to a McCarthyist policy that is asking individuals to condemn each other based on political beliefs.

The reasons above are why I am choosing to not comply. I apologize to those in my life on whom my incarceration is going to be a burden, and I thank you for understanding my decision.

For those unaware the folks being subpoenaed are being incarcerated for refusing to answer questions about others' political beliefs.

In Solidarity With All Those Resisting the Grand Jury,
KteeO Olejnik

Reportback from KTeeO's Grand Jury Appearance

Katherine "KteeO" Olejnik had a grand jury subpoena for this afternoon (September 27th). She and her lawyer tried a number of different legal strategies to quash the subpoena. Unfortunately they were unsuccessful. Although KteeO chose not to release any public information about her subpoena until today, she committed from the beginning to refuse to cooperate. Here's what went down today:

10 AM Hearing for the Motion to Quash the Subpoena

- Judge Richard Jones started by explaining that there was a "miscommunication" between him and the US Marshalls on September 13th – Matt's day in court. He explained that there were parts of the Hearing for the Motion to Quash and the Contempt Hearing that were supposed to be open to the public. He annoyingly recited various legal citations to validate that some parts are open and portions of either hearing that reference information from the Grand Jury are supposed to be closed. Essentially, "Oooops!" but in legal garbage.
- After that he closed the hearing and excused people that were there to support KteeO. We waited outside.

- Eventually we were invited back in. KteeO's attorney made these points:

* Violates 1st, 4th, and 5th Amendment Rights!

* Separation of Powers (grand juries are not open to the public, there's no judicial oversight, etc.)

* Individuals have the right to not talk to law enforcement simply because they don't want to. It is a legal right everyone has in almost any situation except grand juries.

* You say this shit is about the courthouse, but this grand jury was convened in March!

- After Jennifer Kaplan made her points the prosecutors whined about how this grand jury is only about the vandalism that occurred and is not investigating anarchists (Don't remember if "anarchists" was the word used).
- Prosecutors asked the Judge to explain how Civil Contempt works.
- We finished around 11 and had a recess until 2 PM.

Grand Jury

- Supporters of KteeO waited outside the courthouse.
- When the Grand Jury was finished KteeO ran out to smoke a final cigarette.
- She said **they did not let her take notes.**
- She refused to answer questions. She reported the jurors almost seemed annoyed. She speculated that maybe they were annoyed because they kept asking her questions and she kept adamantly refusing.

Contempt Hearing

- Judge Richard Jones explained for the umpteenth time that day that some parts are open and some parts are closed. Once he was done he excused us "guests" (yes, we were called guests at one point!) for the closed part.
- During the closed portion they went over the transcript from the Grand Jury. They asked KteeO if the transcript was accurate. She said it was. (They explained this is what happened when we, the guests, were invited back in.)
- The court was then open for civil contempt.
- Established that the end date for this grand jury is March 2014.

Kteeo was taken into custody.

Matt Duran in General Population

We found out today that Matt has been moved from the Secure Communication Housing Unit (solitary) to general population. Now he will be able to socialize with other inmates, play chess, make phone calls, and hopefully have access to more books. He says he has received a ton of letters. Let's keep them coming, and remember to send lots of letters to KteeO as well!

Leah's Next Subpoena Appearance – October 10th

I have a hearing at 9 AM, that my lawyer says is not my contempt hearing.

I have grand jury at 1PM, and they are preparing for a contempt hearing.

The State said I don't have to attend the 9 AM hearing but my lawyer is advising me to.

I just received my 4th subpoena. I have quite the collection, now.

Seventeen Days and Counting

That's how long Olympia resident Matt Duran has been held at the SeaTac Federal Detention Center for [refusing to testify before a federal grand jury](#), ostensibly about political or social acquaintances who may have had something to do with the political vandalism on [May Day](#).

At least three people have appeared before the grand jury after a series of raids and subpoenas issued in July. The warrants for the raids listed black clothes, sticks, paint, notebooks, and "anti-government or anarchist literature or material" among the items to search for.

Two of the three—Matt Duran and Katherine “KteeO” Olejnik—are currently imprisoned at the SeaTac FDC for refusing to cooperate. The third, [Leah-Lynn Plante](#), who prosecutors admit was not in Seattle on May Day, remains free.

Duran had a hearing last week. Some eyewitness details from [nopoliticalrepression.wordpress.com](#):

... Matt's lawyer took the floor to explain Matt's current conditions and intentions. Here is an abridged and bullet-point list of issues and information brought up by Matt's lawyer in court —

Matt is in Solitary Confinement (the Secure Housing Unit) which means ...

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- + he has been denied vegan food (has access to vegetarian options and commissary items)
- + he has no way of socializing within the prison
- + he has no access to sunlight, fresh air or an untinted window to the outdoors

Even under these conditions, Matt has no intention of changing his mind or strategy. Matt's lawyer explained that Matt will be at peace no matter where he is within the prison. She said that he would like to socialize and play chess with other inmates, but is content where he is. He has a clock radio and a couple of romance novels the prison gave him upon arrival.

The local chapter of the National Lawyers Guild [has urged](#) the FBI and US Attorney Jenny Durkan to drop the subpoenas, arguing:

While grand juries are part of our federal criminal justice system, the grand jury was intended to serve as a protector of people's rights and should not be used as a mechanism for intimidating those who speak out against social and economic injustice in our society. "Movements and individuals working for social change in the United States have historically been at the receiving end of grand juries being used to harass political activism," said Neil Kelley, an officer of the Seattle NLG.

Throughout the process, Emily Langlie from the US Attorney's office has reiterated: "We do not prosecute people for their political beliefs."

In Regards to Snitchjacketing

Snitch Jacketing is a term originally used to describe an FBI tactic for sowing divisions within a target group through spreading suspicion of an informant. It has been used as an interrogation technique as well, feeding the target false information that other subjects have snitched in order to break their resolve.

Even worse than the police employing this technique to break up communities is when communities use this technique themselves when speculating about those involved with a state investigation.

In regards to the Grand Jury investigation in the Pacific Northwest, CAPR is assuming the best intentions of those who have been subpoenaed. In the event that someone does co-operate it will become evident in the resulting grand jury transcripts, records of those indicted (if there are indictments), and in the upcoming FOIA requests that we are committed to obtaining and publishing. Each of the subpoenaed has decided to take a

different approach in resisting the Grand Jury. Each technique has allowed for varying degrees of transparency. We are assuming that there will not be co-operation with the investigation and we are asking the same of the larger radical community. We are asking that you consider the implications of the things you say about those who have been subpoenaed before speaking speculations about others.

If you have questions about this process or would like to contribute in some way please contact us.

28 Sept - Statement from Tim DeChristopher Regarding Decision on Appeal

Environmental prisoner Tim DeChristopher has decided not to pursue his appeal and explains why in the statement we've pasted below.

MORE:

After nearly four years in the criminal justice system and 14 months in prison, I have decided not to continue my appeal through the federal court system. I greatly appreciate the pro bono efforts of Ron Yengich, Liz Hunt and Pat Shea, who have defended me in the courts and articulated the issues of the case. I am also grateful for all the support I have received throughout this process, especially from Peaceful Uprising and the First Unitarian Church in Salt Lake City.

Throughout every stage of this legal process, it has been a predetermined conclusion that I should be punished for standing up to the collusion between government and corporations. Any potential discussion of ethics, justice or the role of citizens has been banished from the court. The government insisted on this back in 2009 when they wrote that such discussions should be relegated to "the public square, not a court of law." The first development in this case was a preemptive motion by the government to limit our defense, setting the stage for the trivialities which followed. As a result, our defense team has been restricted to debating a narrow range of technicalities rather than the critical issues of the case.

When a conviction is overturned, it is often reported that the conviction was overturned "on a technicality." Yet is almost never mentioned that every conviction is obtained and upheld on a technicality. Technicalities are the entire foundation of a legal system which has closed itself off to questions of morality and justice. Weighing these questions is the function of a jury, whose role as designed by our founding fathers is to protect fellow citizens from the government. But Judge Benson and the US Attorney's Office insisted on preventing the jury from fulfilling their duty.

During the voir dire, the US Attorney's Office was nearly apoplectic when it was suggested to potential jurors that they should use their conscience. After telling jurors that it was not their job to think about what is right or wrong, Judge Benson blocked evidence of government wrongdoing on the grounds that it would "confuse the jury." That kind of contempt and fear of citizen participation in government is the hallmark of tyranny and the pathway to oppression.

To continue debating technicalities through further appeals would only serve as a distraction from the critical discussion of how citizens should hold their government accountable. If there is any hope of this country ever getting a justice system worthy of the name, that hope lies in fully informed juries of ordinary citizens, not in judges protecting the interests of the powerful.

Throughout my incarceration I have witnessed the direct personal impacts of a legal system obsessed with technicalities rather than justice. The prisons I have been in are filled with nonviolent inmates suffering from mandatory minimums and other policies which are completely detached from the best interests of the individual or society. The injustice on display in my case is truly systemic, and we will put our continuing efforts toward creating a system of genuine justice for all.

Elizabeth Hunt, Attorney, Tim DeChristopher's Legal Defense Team, Issued the Following Response:

"For me, I think it is very sad that he stands convicted of two felonies and continues to be held in federal prison in a case wherein the Government conceded on appeal that there was legally insufficient evidence to sustain either conviction, and only argued procedural issues. I do not see how it is in anyone's interest for our

government to prosecute, convict, and imprison someone and not take meaningful corrective action when it is recognized that there is legally insufficient evidence to justify the convictions.”

28 Sept - George Horton Sentenced

On Friday, September 28th, 2012 George Horton was sentenced to 10 months in Jail for his actions during the anti-capitalist demonstrations during the 2010 G20 in Toronto. This will be followed by 2 years probation. We're sending him a card tonight.

MORE:

He was convicted of Intimidation of a Peace Officer & Assault on a Police Officer related to the attack on a Toronto Police cruiser with Staff Sergeant Queens inside, as well as a number of attempted mischief's on a number of police cruisers & a Tim Hortons. He was also convicted of Mischief over \$5000 for attacking a CBC News Van. The Judge said these actions, “contributed to ongoing attacks on police, business and Media,” with George making a “notable contribution to the path of distraction [at the G20]“.

As the Judge read out officer Queens victim impact statement, where he describes being swarmed, attacked, and hit in the head by a black flag, Queens and G20 Lead Investigator Girioux freaked out. After someone in the room told them to go “fuck themselves”, they grabbed the comrade sitting behind them, shoved him over his seat and threw him against the wall, and then tried to flex their muscles by ejecting 2 other members of the crowd. This led to an uproar in court in which the judge & police were in turn chewed out by a number of people who were then kicked out.

In a truly ironic moment, the judge struggled to read out her prepared statement praising Canadian democracy, freedom and rights as she was drowned out by the G20 cops discussing charging members of the gallery and sirens rang outside the window.

We will have Georges address posted as soon as possible on our website and you can check out regular updates from Peterborough ABC, which will also feature updates from George in prison.

28 Sept - Long Distance Revolutionary: A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal

On October 6, the new documentary film entitled Long Distance Revolutionary: A Journey with Mumia Abu-Jamal, made its world premier. Angola 3 News recently interviewed the filmmakers and we've included the interview below.

MORE:

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a veteran journalist, author of seven books, and a former Black Panther who was convicted of first-degree murder in the shooting death of white Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner in a 1982 trial deemed unfair by Amnesty International and many others. Abu-Jamal, who has always maintained his innocence, spent almost 30 years in solitary confinement on death row in Pennsylvania. The death sentence has now been officially overturned and since early in 2012, Abu-Jamal is out of solitary and in general population at SCI-Mahony, with such new ‘privileges’ as contact visits with family and friends ([view photos](#)).

Long Distance Revolutionary features interviews with a range of longtime Abu-Jamal supporters including Pam & Ramona Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Amy Goodman & Juan Gonzales of Democracy Now, Cornel West, Alice Walker, Angela Davis, and many others. Making his first appearance in a film about Abu-Jamal is actor Giancarlo Esposito, known recently for his role as Gustavo Fring on the AMC TV series, *Breaking Bad*.

Featured in *Long Distance Revolutionary* is a clip of Esposito reading from Abu-Jamal's first book *Live From Death Row* at a mid-1990's event supporting Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia. The rally attracted a large counter-demonstration outside of the event, that had been organized by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). In the film's recent interview, Esposito reflects upon the intensity of that day, and fearing that his acting career would be negatively affected by the broader FOP-led campaign of public intimidation towards those supporting Abu-

Jamal. These intimidation tactics surfaced again this week, as [Politics PA reported](#) on a National Republican Congressional Committee “campaign consisting of online ads reminiscent of Willie Horton and hundreds of thousands of robocalls” linking Abu-Jamal to congressional candidate Kathy Boockvar.

Philadelphia’s disturbing history of racial oppression and officially sanctioned police violence is a central focus of *Long Distance Revolutionary’s* interview with Linn Washington Jr., currently an Associate Professor of Journalism at Temple University and a columnist for the historic Philadelphia Tribune--the nation’s oldest African-American owned newspaper. In the film, he comments that “Philadelphia has a veneer of liberalism and this whole Quaker mystique. The reality is it has been this ruthlessly racist city—really from its inception.”

Linn Washington has been covering the Mumia Abu-Jamal/Daniel Faulkner case since the morning of December 9, 1981. While not spotlighted in *Long Distance Revolutionary*, Washington has continued to report on the many different reasons that Abu-Jamal deserves a new trial, including a recent test he conducted with journalist Dave Lindorff. The results are interpreted by Washington and Lindorff to have conclusively disproved the prosecution’s scenario of the shooting presented at Abu-Jamal’s 1982 trial (see [article](#) and [video](#)).

We interview Noelle Hanrahan and Stephen Vittoria about their new film examining Mumia Abu-Jamal’s life and work as a revolutionary journalist. Vittoria is the writer, director, editor, and co-producer of *Long Distance Revolutionary*. His last film, *One Bright Shining Moment: The Forgotten Summer of George McGovern* won “Best Documentary Features” at the Sarasota Film Festival. He also recently was a producer on two feature documentaries by Academy Award winner Alex Gibney: *Gonzo: The Life & Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson* and *Magic Trip*.

Noelle Hanrahan co-produced the film alongside Vittoria and co-producer Katyana Farzanrad. The director of Prison Radio, Hanrahan first began to record Abu-Jamal’s radio commentaries from SCI-Huntington’s death row in 1992, which now total over 2,000 (archived at www.prisonradio.org).

Mumia Abu-Jamal has now written seven books, including [Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the USA](#), [The Classroom and the Cell: Conversations on Black Life in America](#) (with Marc Lamont Hill), and [Message to the Movement](#). He has also written a foreword to a newly released, expanded and updated version of [From the Bottom of the Heap: The Autobiography of Black Panther Robert Hillary King](#).

Angola 3 News: *Unlike previous documentary films about Abu-Jamal, your film deliberately avoids the legal/factual background of Abu-Jamal’s case and instead focuses entirely on his life and work as a revolutionary journalist. Why did you choose to do this?*

Steve Vittoria: First of all, John Edginton made an excellent film about Mumia’s case and it was broadcast here in the States on HBO entitled *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?* Even though it was made back in 1995, it’s a fairly comprehensive look at the legal narrative. Books, articles, other films, as well as a myriad of videos have been distributed worldwide that deal with the case.

As a documentary filmmaker, unless I’ve uncovered something so different than what’s already been created, why traverse ground already traveled? What has really interested me about Mumia Abu-Jamal since I first heard his commentaries and read his work was his extraordinary ability to transcend the Draconian hell that is Death Row and suggest alternative narratives to the myths of so-called American justice and liberty. His work over the last decade or so has evolved into a sophisticated and searing indictment of American imperialism – on a par with Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and the ever courageous Arundhati Roy.

In the film, Cornel West sums it up this way: “He forces us to come to terms with the depths of the crisis of the American Empire.” In a country run by mass murderers, economic rapists, and general run-of-the-mill sociopaths, you’re forced to look for some sanity, some compassion, maybe even some love in the bowels of this

asylum. I found that sanity courageously written from a dark, dank hole in America's prison gulag.

Here's a man who has been fighting for the victims of a violent empire since he was fourteen years old. Here's a man who has published seven books from death row and who has written thousands of commentaries that have been broadcast all over the world from death row, that impact real people every day. Remember, thirty years on Death Row and he hasn't blinked. As a storyteller, that's an incredible story to tell.

The story about his case can be summed in one line uttered by the judge in his case, the Honorable Albert F. Sabo, who boasted in chambers: "I'm going to help them fry the nigger." That's all you really need to know about the case.

Noelle Hanrahan: The impact of Mumia Abu-Jamal's writing and his radio commentaries is far greater than one, albeit dramatic, incident. Yes, Mumia was shot and critically injured on Dec. 9th 1981, yet that is clearly not the defining moment of his life. It is not who he was or who he has become. For the very first time, through this movie, people can begin to see what circumstances and forces shaped Mumia, and how he in turn has shaped the world.

A3N: *The film begins with a variety of right-wing talking heads, ranging from Michelle Malkin to Michael Smerconish, who are shown calling Abu-Jamal a 'cop-killer,' among other things. Why do you begin the film this way? How do you respond to their 'cop-killer' accusation?*

SV: The entire film is a response to their lunatic ravings. It's like taking candy from a baby. I wanted to let the bed-wetters have their say right off the bat and let the audience experience how ridiculous their gibberish really is. Some may think that it's vile, that it's ugly, that it's hate mongering or fear mongering, but it's really absurdist comedy because there's no basis in reality, and that's the light it should be seen in. Why not begin the film with a clown parade?

Documentary audiences need some laughs. In 1932, Tod Browning directed a horror film called "Freaks" about circus sideshow performers, including a bearded lady, pinheads, a sword swallower, you know freaks. Maybe this is homage to Tod Browning.

NH: First, mainstream media claptrap led by Fox TV reaches and influences millions. They are trying to weave a fictional narrative and feed it to folks as if it is reality. News once had a veneer of professional practice, and noble goals. The last thirty years have brought a dramatic shift in what passes for mainstream journalism. Corporate capital has bought out and dumbed down what today passes itself off as broadcast news.

News today leads with pet stories and gore, and fast paced shrill video and sound bites that are emptied of content and serious analysis. Frankly, it is a perfect storm for the expansion of the police state. 'Cop Killer' is like some red towel before the bull, two words that they throw out to divert attention from the real issues that are at the core of the repression that dominates this culture. They obfuscate, confuse, frighten, threaten, and tell us War is Peace. These are tactics and methods of the state and their hired enforcers: the police.

A3N: *Noelle, as someone that has collaborated with Abu-Jamal since the early 1990's, what do you think the mainstream media has failed to accurately report on regarding his journalistic career and struggle for freedom?*

NH: In 1981 Mumia was an award-winning mainstream journalist who was extremely well known in Philadelphia. Today, if you listen to mainstream reporters they would try and sell you a lie upon lie upon lie about Mumia. I have been stunned by the ignorance and duplicity of the writers and reporters who are determined to try and rewrite history.

20/20 actually distorted Mumia's voice (that I had recorded) because they wanted it to sound worse. Mumia was not allowed to conduct his own defense and was removed from the court room during his trial because he was having a positive impact on the jury. He was compelling and his voice is very authentic.

The police spent days in the studios of WUHY (now WHYI) where Mumia had worked, poring over his audio tapes trying to find something to play for the jury that would enflame the jurors. They listened to dozens of hours of tape, but everything that they came across that he produced would have had a positive effect on the jury. They eventually dug up something he had written in the Black Panther Party paper when he was sixteen, a quote actually from Mao Tse-tung: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" This is what the police had read to the jury to try and convince them that he was just waiting to kill a cop, to inflame them, to push the jury to vote for death. This jury had asked for reinstruction on manslaughter. Remember it was July 3, about to be the 4th of July weekend, when the jury was facing sequestration over the holiday weekend, and the judge and the DA pushed them to come back with death.

Our film counters the false mainstream narrative with facts. "He forces us to come to terms with the depths of the crisis of the American Empire and how do you create some awakening," notes Cornel West in the film.

A3N: *Stephen, while Noelle has been working with Abu-Jamal since the early 1990's, you have approached this project as an 'outsider' of sorts. What was your impression of Abu-Jamal before starting the project? Did this impression change following the completion of the film?*

SV: Actually, I worked with Mumia a few years before I started this project, when I was producing a documentary entitled *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, and Manifest Destiny* and Mumia recorded twenty-five remarkable short essays that defined the march of Empire over the last five hundred years – from Columbus setting foot on Hispaniola to George Bush's murder spree in the Middle East. So I had some history with Mumia as a contributor to my film and that was really the genesis of *Long Distance Revolutionary*.

As I approached this project, my impression of Mumia was this: a brilliant writer, a courageous voice battling the forces of tyranny, a tireless warrior, a fierce researcher completely dedicated to his craft, and ultimately a long distance revolutionary. After producing this film for three years, none of that changed because my impression was spot on and solidified.

But what I did learn that pleasantly surprised me was from a personal standpoint, because after thirty years in hell the man remains gentle, he remains loving, and for me, above all, funny. Mumia loves to have fun, loves to laugh. When we visit, sure, we talk about drone attacks, poverty, torture, mass incarceration, you name the horror and we talk about it. We even talk a lot about art and music. Mumia loves music. Most of the time we laugh and talk about the craziness masquerading as culture in this country.

A3N: *Specifically, what do you think is most significant about Abu-Jamal's life and work?*

SV: Clearly, it's been the consistency of his work and the consistency of his message. Of course he's matured as a writer but his belief structure has remained remarkably consistent. Professor Todd Steven Burroughs from Morgan State defines this well in the film, saying: "I was astounded at the fact that at 15 years old, he was essentially the same writer. The style was a little more dogmatic as a Panther. You know, because he's using all this Panther rhetoric, "Do Something, Nigger, Even If You Only Spit!" But, at core, it is the same black leftist analysis that he does at 56. And I was shocked at that."

I think Todd is right on and I think the film captures this reality. How many writers, how many activists, how many revolutionaries remain that consistent? Not many. I know I'm not. But Mumia has managed to stay true to his spirit. Maybe that has something to do with being right.

NH: Mumia has been consistently focused on exploring and honoring the humanity of those people in society who often remain unheard. His dedication to his craft and his commitment to speaking truth to power, regardless

of the oppression and obstacles is truly epic. As a journalist myself, I could not imagine doing more important work than amplifying prisoner's voices and listening to their perspectives.

A3N: *Along with video footage of Senator Bob Dole's infamous tirade against Abu-Jamal on the Senate floor in the mid-1990's, you also spotlight some more recent footage from the 'discussion' of a Congressional Bill condemning the City of St. Denis, a suburb of Paris, France that named a street after Abu-Jamal. What do you think it was about this street-naming that so outraged US politicians? What do you think are the primary motives of the Philadelphia FOP-led campaign against Abu-Jamal? Do you think it would be accurate to describe this campaign as a modern-day lynch mob?*

SV: The street-naming publicly outraged US politicians because the US Congress is so weak and ineffectual when it comes to representing the true needs of their constituency and actually affecting change that might actually move the society forward. Things like real health care, real education, and real financial reform are truly important, but instead they latch onto things that they can yell and scream about--pretending that they're actually doing something. And Mumia was the perfect patsy.

They create a demon, stir up the racism that runs through the US psyche like a main circuit cable, and then start lying. This formula has worked in the US since the founding fathers were counting their slaves. It's an old and insidious game, but it works because the sheep buy it every time.

Regarding the FOP and their ongoing campaign, is it accurate to call it a modern-day lynch mob? Of course it is. Lynching never stopped in this country. The props just changed: trees and rope were replaced by mass incarceration. Law professor and author of the bestselling book *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander, framed it this way in the film: "There are more African American adults under correctional control today, in prison or jail, on probation or parole, than were enslaved in 1850 – a decade before the Civil War began."

NH: Anyone who questions the hegemony of the right wing is subject to their ire. They certainly protest a lot more than it seems appropriate. It makes one wonder, are these truths and their revelation, so damaging to the state that they have to use every conceivable tactic of intimidation to try and suppress it?

A3N: *Can you each please tell us about one notable interview featured in the film that viewers should be sure to watch for?*

SV: Two interviews stand above all the rest. First is Lydia Barashango, Mumia's sister who passed away just before we finished the film. Her memories of growing up with Mumia were warm and wonderful and honest to the bone. When we interviewed Lydia she was already in the horrific throws of cancer and yet she represented her family's history with dignity, respect, and great honor. She was also, like her brother, very funny. Her memories captured Mumia's life with great love.

The second interview was filmed in 1995 by John Edginton for his film *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?* I love this interview for two reasons: one, it captured Mumia's intellect and rebellious nature, and two, Mumia looks great because the interview was shot on film and Mumia is extremely confident--it's like this moment of his life was captured forever. It's very iconic imagery.

NH: Wow that is hard. Everyone has something to say that is very poignant, interesting and in many cases, profound. We will be releasing longer versions of many of these interviews, so folks should tune in as we post them at www.mumia-themovie.com. We will be editing and posting more from Dick Gregory, Cornel West, and Michelle Alexander. We also have a DVD of extras that is available now from www.prisonradio.org.

A3N: How do we get to see your movie? Are there upcoming film screenings besides the Mill Valley Film Festival? When will the DVD will be released?

SV: Visit www.mumia-themovie.com to see the updated screening list. After the Mill Valley Festival, the film enjoys a great fall festival run. We begin at the Starz/Denver Film Festival on November 3 and 4, CPH:DOX Copenhagen on November 7, and then the great New York City doc festival DOC NYC on November 10. The film will then open theatrically in New York and Los Angeles early in 2013 followed by other cities, special engagements, and an extensive college tour.

Video on Demand and Home Video will be released shortly after the theatrical opening. In fact, the DVD will have some amazing extras including extended interviews with our historic cast.

A3N: Anything else to add?

SV: Earlier, I mentioned a project entitled *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, and Manifest Destiny*. I decided to shelve the film but not the project. Mumia and I have decided to write this story as a non-fiction book and we are now well into the process. In the long shadow of Howard Zinn, we hope this 500-year story will shed some needed light on the myth and reality of American history.

NH: Just to take a bit of a risk and be a bit vulnerable, as it has been twenty years that I have been on this journey, let me share with you a note I wrote to Mumia:

Someone asked me why I connect with you. Well, actually they said ‘why do I love’ you? I hesitated then answered:

I, with every molecule of my soul, want the world to be more beautiful, more generous, and more caring. I dream about that. Helping the world hear your voice is like participating in a wonderful and deeply moving jazz quartet, or with all the folks that make this possible, even a symphony. It is that beauty, when your voice joins with ours, and the voices of all people of color are honored with our listening. And we inspire and move together to a deeper understanding of the present and our history. Now that, I believe is transformative. That spirit of possibility will change the world.

I believe you will be free. This work--radio from prison--is truly your work. You continue, you struggle, no matter what the hurdles. Amazing. And we are there with you with every breath and every step you take toward freedom.

30 Sept - Court declares 92 Occupy Chicago arrests unconstitutional

A judge in Cook County, Illinois has dismissed over 90 cases against Occupy Chicago activists on the grounds that they violated the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

MORE:

Judge Thomas Donnelly declared that the city’s park curfew law that was used to arrest activists in Grant Park last October was “unconstitutional both on its face and as applied and all complaints in this case are dismissed with prejudice,” according to the Chicago chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG).

“The Occupy Chicago demonstrators were subject to constantly changing rules and regulations that ended in a directive that they had to be constantly moving in order to protest,” the judge explained in his 37-page opinion. “Viewed in isolation the rules and regulations appear reasonable, but viewed in the larger context of the Occupy movement’s presence in Chicago, they give rise to the inference that the City was attempting to discourage this particular protest.”

“The police would promulgate a rule; when the protesters would comply, the police would change the rule,” he added. “These facts, together with the clear pattern of selective enforcement of the Curfew, support a finding that the city intended to discriminate against the Defendants based on their views.”

NLG attorney Sarah Gelsomino, who represented the activists, said that Donnelly “made the right decision by declaring the city’s ordinance unconstitutional and by dismissing the remaining cases brought by the city against activists legitimately engaged in free speech.”

Chicago Law Department spokesperson Roderick Drew told the Chicago Tribune that the city would appeal the ruling. Raw Story

FACTS & FIGURES

On September 17th 2011, men and women of all races, backgrounds, political and religious beliefs, began to organize a nonviolent protest in New York to protest against greed and graft on Wall Street and the ensuing ramifications on U.S. polity and economy. memebee.com

These men and women represent 99% of the nation, with the goal of ending the greed and corruption of the wealthiest 1% of America. ‘Occupy Wall Street’ is a leaderless resistance movement which began as a call to action from Adbusters, a Canadian-based anti-consumerist organization. templademocraticsocialists.blogspot.com

The protests have now spread across the nation as the U.S. police have embarked on a crackdown on protesters, arresting hundreds of them amid the mainstream media’s sparse coverage of the unprecedented recent protests in America. pinoyexchange.com

Occupy Wall Street organizers say:

As members of the 99 percent, we occupy Wall Street as a symbolic gesture of our discontent with the current economic and political climate and as an example of a better world to come. Occupywallst.org

“We are unions, students, teachers, veterans, first responders, families, the unemployed and underemployed. We are all races, sexes and creeds. We are the majority. We are the 99 percent. And we will no longer be silent.”

1 Oct - Danger to Society: Jailhouse Diary of a Political Prisoner

On July 13, 2012, Judge Lynisse Bryant-Weekes declared Camille Marino a “danger to society,” revoked her \$25,000 bond, and threw her back in jail on a half million dollar bond. During the 33 days she was incarcerated, she penned a jailhouse diary that will be published shortly. All proceeds will go toward legal fees for her upcoming trial on November 14. We’re including as except below.

MORE:

I pretty much gave up on exercising in here. My energy is depleted from eating a basic diet of junk food and drinking unfiltered Detroit water. I’m going to have to detox my system just from all the water I drink in here when I get out. Besides, there are only so many sit-ups, knee bends and repetitive floor exercises one can do before the monotony becomes painful. I bought five fruit and nut granola bars yesterday. So my new breakfast from here on is a 4 oz. orange juice and a granola bar.

I want to talk a little bit about effective campaigning. While many proclaim to hold the holy grail of effectiveness in different arenas, I fail to see any proof of it. I’ve seen no industrial abuser shut down in this country by the work of above ground activists. Yes, many of us are making inroads on many fronts. But what vivisector or lab have any of us stopped? What animals have we liberated?

I believe that the best chance we have of turning popular support against vivisection is to put a face on the torture and unmitigated horror that is the domain of “strict federal guidelines” and “animal welfare regulations.” These are the mantras of the vivisection complex that evoke innocuous images of healthy white mice navigating mazes and humane interactions with happy animals. We must understand that this propaganda tool is their weapon and we need to disarm them if we are going to advance.

When I was in New York, before I had any grounding in this movement, a story broke about Columbia

University. A veterinarian had turned whistleblower. They were apparently doing some kind of menopause experiments on baboons where they sawed off their skull caps and implanted electrodes and devices in their brains. Well, the baboons were left to languish in agony in their cages with inadequate pain relief and, if I remember correctly, some of them died. I was sickened, horrified, and lost several nights sleep. However, I was allowed to believe that now that this unbelievably sadistic experiment was exposed, the perpetrator would be stopped and the animals would once again be well-cared for inside Columbia. Little did I know that the only violation of animal “welfare” law was the element of pain relief. Little did I know that this unfathomable sadism was standard practice and otherwise considered humane, at least according to the laws written by abusers. In other words, I think that highlighting AWA violations allows the public to believe these are the exceptions to the rule.

To be clear, any damage to a university’s reputation is beneficial and valuable. This is their stock in trade. And trust that I will fully exploit any violations I find at the University of Florida. In fact, I should check today on the status of one formal complaint that needs to go forward. But while some organizations have turned exposing violations of animal welfare law into an art form, the exposure that they are able to garner in the media needs to be supplemented by the rest of us.

We must begin to put a face on standard vivisection atrocities and business as usual.

To that end I’ve become something of an expert in my own right on how to penetrate university vivisection labs legally and expose their fully-legal and regulation-compliant crimes to the light of day.

I initiated my campaign against the University of Florida in October of 2010 after I heard a colleague speak about the primate experiments being conducted there. Unfortunately, the information I was given at that lecture by a veteran activist was factually incorrect and, when the media broke the story about my first misguided campaign initiative, it became abundantly clear that I was out there on my own. And to this day I have never given up anyone’s name and have taken full responsibility for my mistakes. But I also made an indelible mental note about the true nature and underlying motives of members of our alleged “community.” I had no idea how to proceed, so I organized a few pathetic protests along with another member of Negotiation Is Over (NIO) Florida, but we simply had no momentum. We did have energy and dedication, however.

If no one would listen to us, we were going to make sure our presence was known.

We crashed and disrupted a Christmas gala at the University of Florida that was full of alumni, benefactors and supporters. Unfortunately for UF, they all learned that as they celebrated, their money was paying for monkeys to be imprisoned and tortured only buildings away. After accomplishing our mission, the police and security that swarmed each of us independently further disrupted the event. We allowed ourselves to be ejected and were each trespassed from the campus and all UF property in December 2010.

On this night, NIO Florida’s unique brand of above ground activism and our style of engaging the enemy was born.

But we needed substance in addition to style.

I had filed open records requests two months prior in October of 2010 to gain access to UF’s veterinary files documenting their primate experiments. In violation of Florida statutes, the university refused to disclose them. They remained in noncompliance, hiding their atrocities for 14 months until I won a lawsuit against them on December 30, 2011. The Eighth Circuit Court of Alachua County compelled them to turn over their records to me. This was a major victory for me and a watershed moment in gaining access to their labs.

And while being condemned for hurting the movement because the enemy was using the legal system to insulate itself from turning over records to extremists, the myopic conformists and pacifists proved to be wholly without perspective. Repression is a reaction to a threat. I revel in this fact. People may want to believe they’re effective and throw me under the bus as the worst thing that ever happened to this movement, but it seems obvious that if conventional mainstream efforts were worth anything except garnering donations, there would be a swift and orchestrated response to THEM! I’m perfectly comfortable out here on the fringe and under a microscope....

In January 2012, I started to publish UF’s records and put a face on “welfare regulations” and the “humane”

manner in which they torture monkeys to death. Our protests took on a new energy and momentum. Once our community learned about the decades of poisoning, pain, and drug addiction these victims endure, there was unilateral outrage. Now it was our job to get our information into the public's consciousness.

At a 40-person demonstration at an alumni gala on Feb 4, 2011, UF orchestrated another activist's and my arrest in an effort to squash dissent and shut us down for good. The other member of NIO Florida was arrested for carrying a suspended driver's license while standing on a public sidewalk. I was arrested on criminal contempt charges out of Detroit for refusing to comply with an unconstitutional injunction and remove a dog-murdering vivisector's name, face, contact information and summary of his crimes from NIO. I was jailed for 31 days and extradited to Michigan where I bailed out on a \$5,000 bond.

Now traveling back and forth between Florida and Detroit, I staged the civil disobedience at WSU on May 2 to get NIO Michigan's campaign off the ground. I incurred two felony charges and the campaign out here appears to have died... not surprising since online activists virtually decimated on-the-ground support in Detroit. This is an increasingly detrimental issue and I cannot have hysterical and irrational people representing me or NIO online unless and until they become actual activists in the real world.

Bonding out this time on a \$25,000 bond, I returned to Florida.

Escalating my own campaign at UF, I used open records laws once again to demand pictures of the tattooed holocaust victims imprisoned in their dungeons. I began to publish these a week before I was thrown back in jail in Detroit on July 13. We also were able to get in a major round of demonstrations and focus Gainesville's attention on the vivisectors and their war crimes.

The one further way in which I am anxious to penetrate the enemy and expose their crimes is to get that court ruling that will make the location of their victims a matter of public record. As previously alluded to, we hold that since the location of the animals is not specifically included under "security exemptions," that this information is public record. Therefore, my civil attorney, Marcy LaHart, filed her brief with the court in early July and we expect our appeal to be heard this summer. Communicating with my lawyer about this has proven to be a tremendous problem while I'm in jail. I cannot get her number "authorized" so I have no direct contact.

Nonetheless, while the repression apparatus is crushing activists' constitutional freedoms across the board, this could be a precedent that would even up the playing field a little. I so badly want it! Whether I'm in here or not, the campaign against UF will go forward.

So let's get back to what is or is not effective. Without question, like countless activists before me, I've learned to penetrate the enemy and expose their war crimes with tremendous efficiency. But, unlike most, I am unsatisfied disseminating this information within our community or looking to the USDA to slap their wrists.

Until we figure out how to connect the dots for the public, blast our image of vivisection into their consciousness, galvanize outrage in THEIR community and start shutting them down, I fail to see where any of us is "effective" for the animals.

It must be near 9 am and I'm dreading the cell door opening. I'm glad I get along with everyone. I'm glad everyone likes me. But I'm not sure how this strange thing happened where different groups of inmates seem to gravitate to my cell. There's usually between three and five prisoners hanging out in here at any given time so I'll have to go out in the dayroom so everyone will disperse. But, if it weren't for my "crew" in here with whom I can talk about anything and stay clear of the drama, this would probably be a lot more difficult.

If I was on facebook today, I would put up this status:

"I'm somewhat perplexed when people say to me 'you must really love animals.' I wonder if people said to the liberators in Nazi Germany, 'you must really love Jews.'"

Later (10 pm)...

My two vegan converts split my chicken patty over dinner as we discussed factory farming and all their flesh-eating aspirations when they get out. I wonder if any vegan proselytizers honestly believe their results are any different than mine. Hmmm...

The dynamic in this unit seems to have shifted. One of the women hid underneath the bottom bunk in her cell last night to play a joke on the deputy on duty. But it was one of the toy cops with control issues who did the rounds and all hell broke loose today. Apparently they want to charge Shea with attempted escape and are asking the prosecutor to give her 10 to 15 years. And they are threatening to charge every single one of us as accessories even though we were all locked down. WTF! I'd love to match wits with one of these insipid buffoons outside this building that should have been condemned ten years ago.

It really annoys me when the women get emotional and react. When they make us line up in front of our cells to perform, I stare straight ahead at the wall opposite me and refuse to make eye contact. If they're trying to get their kicks rattling and provoking the prisoners, I don't play that game. I've persuaded a few of the women to rise above this situation and simply not react. They can lock up our bodies, but they can't penetrate our psyches unless we let them.

Back to the new inmates. Two of them are on federal holds, allegedly don't know why they're here, and don't fit. They put one in Ebony's cell and she confided that the feds are trying to intimidate her into being an informant against her associates. The other one that I mentioned last night that talked about blowing up the WSU vivisector is really a mental case and her interest in my politics is disturbing. Ebony and I are not playing this game – whatever it may be – and we both have our guard up. It's no playground in here – there are all kinds of people who would do anything to get themselves out.

1 Oct - Mumia's Post-Sentence Motion Denied

Judge Pamela Dembe, President of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, affirmed her secret sentencing of Mumia Abu-Jamal to life imprisonment and dismissed Mumia's post-sentence motion on October 1 according to the court docket records.

MORE:

Dembe's order followed the DA's motion to dismiss, which outrageously asserted that a life sentence was "the precise relief" Mumia sought over the past thirty years!

The DA's motion centered on a false rendition of the prosecution's "evidence" against Mumia--it went way beyond the even the perjured and coerced testimony that was presented at the trial. Needless to say, it ignored the federal court rulings that Mumia was unconstitutionally and illegally sentenced to death.

It was Judge Dembe who deemed it irrelevant that Judge Albert Sabo, the trial judge and PCRA judge from 1995-1998, admitted his bias and racism with his declaration, overheard by a court stenographer, "Yes, I'm going to help them fry the n-----." It was Sabo's instruction to the jury that the courts found to be illegal. Dembe in 2001 refused to hold an evidentiary hearing on Sabo's bias as well as new evidence of Mumia's innocence, including the confession of Arnold Beverly, who swore he was the man who killed police officer Daniel Faulkner.

On August 13, 2012, Judge Dembe imposed a life sentence without parole on Mumia, without even notifying him. This was in flagrant violation of constitutional and PA statutory law, intended to foreclose Mumia's right to challenge his sentence to "slow death row," life sentence without parole. Had Mumia known of the impending sentencing, he would have argued for *immediate release* from prison pursuant to a motion for extraordinary relief based on *thirty years of solitary confinement on death row pursuant on an illegal sentence*. The decade he spent in solitary confinement while the DA tried to get the death sentence reinstated by the Federal Court of Appeals and U.S. Supreme Court was retaliation against Mumia for not being silenced.

Mumia's post-sentence motion challenged Judge Dembe's secret proceeding. It also was a constitutional challenge to life imprisonment without parole as a violation of the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment, the Pennsylvania Constitution's prohibition against cruel punishments, evolving standards of decency and international law. It further challenged solitary confinement and the fact that death row prisoners are illegally kept in solitary.

Mumia's challenge to a life-imprisonment sentence unified the fight of all those men and women who are fighting state torture, the death sentence, the "slow death row" of life imprisonment and the debilitating and

degrading conditions of incarceration. Having been defeated and denied a "legal lynching," the state wants Mumia to rot away in prison. Our fight continues to be freedom for Mumia, as part of the fight for liberation of all mankind.

1 Oct - Update on Amelia Nicol

Anarchist prisoner Amelia Nicol had her sentencing hearing on October 1st, in Denver County Court. She had been found guilty on August 21, 2012 of Criminal Trespass, Assault on an officer, and Resisting Arrest. All charges stemmed from a raid on an alleged squat in the Jefferson Park Neighborhood of Denver in October of 2011.

MORE:

Amelia was sentenced today to 2 sentences of 1 year imprisonment each, both ordered to run concurrently. She was granted time served of 345 days, and the judge ordered that she could be released immediately, pending meeting and intake into probation, of which she is to serve 2 years.

It is our understanding that Amelia will be released by tomorrow afternoon.

Any further updates will be posted once we get them.

2 Oct - Jason Sutherlin of the Tinley Park Five Thanks Supporters and Comrades

One of the Tinley Park 5, all awaiting trial for allegedly attacking a gathering of known white supremacists, has written an update and letter of thanks that we've included below.

MORE:

Comrades & Supporters,

I want to start by thanking everyone who has taken the time to support us. The letters, books, and visits have been a huge boost during this most difficult time. I have personally received letters from coast to coast, from up north and way down in the dirty south. Big shout out to the Atlanta kids, y'all are the definition of what solidarity is. The hometown crew from Bloomington; you're amazing and appreciated on so many levels. Chicago ABC, thanks so much, keep the 'zines coming. A lot of people are excited when they get here.

I know that so many have tried to do so much more only to be turned away by DOC. I know that visits, books, and mail as well as funds for commissary have all been denied or "lost" on a consistent basis. Our mail also gets held both going out and coming in. It's hard not to get super frustrated when you know people are reaching out and the institution either denies or holds up our correspondence.

It's a constant battle to keep my head up while here. This place is set up to break people's resolve to go to a trial. It really is worse than prison and everybody knows it. We are locked in the cell eighteen hours a day. We have no contact visits for fifteen months. We are fed one hot meal a day which is utterly disgusting. the commissary prices are outrageous and steadily rising. I am sending the price list with this letter. Check it out. Of course both our food service and commissary providers are privatized and making a nice profit, no doubt.

I am not writing this to dwell on the negative, when I look around and see that with the support of my community I am in a better situation than many others here. I have an education. I have people who love me and I have a wider community helping me through this struggle. I have not been lost and forgotten in the system and I thank all of you. I promise, I will "pay it forward" and be an advocate for people locked up and without support. They can't keep me forever.

One thing before I close. Please try to remember when doing prisoner solidarity and 'zine outreach, that so many incarcerated people have been utterly failed by public schools. We must always remember that education is a privilege as much as race and class and gender. Many genuinely interested brothers have brought 'zines back without being able to decipher much of the language. I just wanted to throw that in.

I love all of you and draw so much of my resolve and strength from all that you do, as much from those I don't know from those of you I do know. Maybe more so really. I hope for the best every day and know this is a

temporary situation. Until I am free and EVERY LOCK BREAKS, don't forget us. We need you and appreciate all that you do. Keep doing what we do. WE ARE WINNING!!

3 Oct - After Facing 72 Felonies, Pax Pleads to Three

Bryan Wiedeman, better known as Pax, recently resolved their case by taking a non-cooperating plea deal.

MORE:

We would like to say 'thank you' to all who have extended solidarity to Pax (Bryan Wiedeman) throughout this situation. We hope that similar solidarity will be displayed in other instances of repression-political repression as well as policing-as-usual that operates along class-based, racist and patriarchal lines.

Portland, Oregon — Bryan Michael Wiedeman accepted a plea deal on October 1st for three counts of criminal mischief in the first degree. Wiedeman was arrested on May 3 and was initially charged with 72 felonies — 36 counts of criminal mischief and 36 counts of conspiracy to commit criminal mischief. The **non-cooperating plea deal** Wiedeman accepted includes 5 years supervised probation, 20 days of weekend jail, 80 hours of community service, and \$43084.59 restitution.

The discrepancy between the original charges and the anti-climactic outcome is evidence that the prosecution was politically motivated, says Kristian Williams, with the Committee Against Political Repression.

"The police don't ordinarily kick down doors with guns drawn over simple vandalism," says Williams, "and the attempt to inflate the case to felony conspiracy is pretty shameful. Clearly the whole affair was politically motivated."

12 Oct – Call in for the Cuban 5

The Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban 5 is asking all freedom loving people to call President Obama on Friday October 12th, 2012 to ask him to free the Cuban 5, to whom we sent letters at our last letter-writing dinner.

MORE:

Let President Obama know that for 14 years these innocent men have been separated from their families and friends. Tell him that he has the power to reunite these men with their loved ones!

Ask your friends and family members to call in as well! Thousands of messages will let President Obama know that there is a mass movement calling for the freedom of these five men!

Call President Obama at 202.456.1111

Sample Script (optional):

This message is for President Obama, I ask that you use your executive power to free the Cuban 5. For 14 years, the Cuban 5 have been unjustly incarcerated for protecting their homeland Cuba and the United States from terrorist actions.

They have the support of various reputable actors, academics and civil rights leaders, such as: Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte, Cindy Sheehan and Angela Davis. As well as the support of thousands of people throughout the United States and the world. Only you have the power to set these men free! Please end this long standing injustice by sending these men home. Thank you!