



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for November 20th

6 Nov - boredbutnotbroken, continued 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 most recent pieces.

MORE:

boredbutnotbroken, continued

today is my one month left celebration! that means candy, and a strange, as yet to be determined concoction involving a melted chocolate bar.

it also means my time here is running out, so i need to get my shit together and assess what i can realistically get done in the few weeks i have left. what am i going to have to set aside for later? where am i just going to be forced to admit defeat?

i've been thinking a lot lately about how i'll be able to contribute to prisoner justice work from the outside. one thing i'd really like to do is keep this blog going. the people who run and work in jails are aware that people on the outside don't really know what goes on in the inside, and have very limited contact with prisoners. they benefit from this and to some extent they rely on it at the same time prisoners want to share their stories – that became obvious when we put together the peak special issue on ontario prisons over the summer.

so in the new year this blog will hopefully morph into something that is no longer about me, but instead is open to contributions from anyone who is or has been in the prison system. i'm not quite sure how all the logistics will work yet, so stay tuned. for now there's an email address up and running: boredbutnotbroken@gmail.com, and there's a mailing address:

boredbutnotbroken
post office box 183
guelph, ontario
N1H 6J6
Canada

i'll be checking both as of dec. 10th

if you have questions, suggestions, or a post to contribute, get in touch. and if you know people who are currently in prison it would be great if you could help me spread the word. thank you!

random musings - october continued

last night they screwed up when they turned the lights out. the hallway lights went out as well as the ones in our rooms, and for a few wonderful seconds it was completely dark. i'm really looking forward to darkness.

the darkness around here today is just the general mood. it has been an eventful and rather unpleasant day.

i was in the shower this morning, around 10am, when the loudspeaker came on. "ladies, to your rooms. everyone to your room." fuck. that's weird – i wonder what's happening? my first thought is that the very pregnant woman on D-wing has gone into labour, but as time goes on it starts to feel more tense and serious than that. there's a lot of activity over the loudspeaker, asking various important people (like lieutenants aka white shirts, and the head of security) to call various extensions. the guards are not happy. lunch is a solemn affair, behind closed doors with no mass trading opportunity. we are not impressed.

rumour has it that Unit 2 was searched. i wonder if that means they just needed extra guards from Unit 4 and

we'll be out soon, but i'm told that we're not usually locked down when there's a search on maximum security. so maybe it's an institutional search. those take the whole day, at least.

it is, in fact, an institutional search.

during after-lunch quiet time i take a trip to the washroom and see guards wearing gloves and carrying garbage bags over in the A/B side's common room. they're looking under tables and they're being very thorough. i wonder what they are looking for. medium security units don't get regular monthly searches like Unit 2 does, so they're looking for something specific. this is a Big Deal. i have a very exciting visit at 2:45 – a friend who lives overseas now – and i ask the guard if i'll still get it. he says i will. i go back to my room and clean it up in preparation for the trashing. what a complete pain in the ass.

eventually it's our turn. the strip search happens in my room, which is freezing. right across the narrow hall another inmate is stripping for another guard, as i'm standing there naked a bunch of guards walk by with an inmate from down the hall. it's the birthday girl! i guess i'm her birthday stripper. i mean i don't really care, but i'm pretty sure it's not proper procedure for prisoners to see each other naked. i'm more pissed off at the fact that 2:45 has come and gone, and when i ask this guard if visits are still on she says no. this is very disappointing. usually visits aren't cancelled for searches so this is obviously quite serious.

after the strip-search we're sent to wait in the basement while the guards trash our room. yard time comes and goes as we sit around doing nothing. as usual when we return to assess the mess and clean it up, we find a huge discrepancy in terms of what got taken and what didn't. different guards like to confiscate different things and are more enthusiastic than others. my room was messy but my box of work and mail was untouched and only half of my hoarded snacks were missing. my anarchy flag (a red and black napkin from a Native Sisters event that someone once gave me) and my torn up orange peels (jail air freshener!) were also gone. all in all i got off pretty easy. other people lost all their food, including the birthday girl who lost all the peanut butters we'd collected for her gift bag, and some lost things they'd paid for off canteen (which is not supposed to happen). one woman lost a folder of recipes she'd been collecting out of magazines.

so now it's after dinner quiet time and who knows if we'll be let out later. people are justifiably pissed. i suggest they use the blog to rant.

to add insult to injury, the rooms are freezing cold. people are wrapped in blankets, blowing on fingers. even the guard working in the rotunda is wearing a toque.

october 11

the radiators are making strange noises. soon we will have heat! and not a moment too soon, because we're still on lockdown and it's fish slop for dinner tonight – the meal that only a few brave souls can stomach. the masses are not impressed. at least we won't freeze in our cells too, that just might have pushed the crankiness over the edge.

yesterday morning a petition was circulated asking for the heat to be turned on. i signed it, never imagining for a second that it would work, but maybe it actually did. or maybe the guards finally got cold enough to make some inquiries. either way, i plan to get as much of my body as close to my radiator as i possibly can.

someone on my wing gave me an account of her day yesterday to publish it. here it is.

A Court Day in Vanier Centre for Women. . .

O.K. Here goes, they wake you up at 5:00am. You do your wash-up brush your teeth and sit and wait for them to take you to A 'n' D to eat your breakfast, you don't have a toothbrush in A 'n' D so you can't brush your teeth down there although some girls sneak some stuff down like toothpaste, toothbrush, bar soap, maybe even some sugar, whiteners, juice crystals. They hide these things in a pad in their underwear because like I said we are not allowed to have these things in A 'n' D or at court so if you get caught you're in trouble. Some guards take it more serious than others but really they all act like you're committing a criminal offence.

It's kinda crazy if you ask me but whatever - it's jail - they say get used to it. While in A 'n' D we again sit and wait for the paddy wagon to come get us and take us to whatever court house we go to – Milton, St. Catherines, Brampton, College Park, Old City Hall and so on. I 'm one of the ones that go to College Park. My ride takes at least an hour on a good day stopping at Old City Hall to drop people off. Oh i forgot to tell you before we get on the paddy wagon we get patted down to make sure we don't have anything on us then when we get to where we are going we get patted down again. Now remember all we did is get in a metal box paddy wagon what could we possibly have on us. . .anyways i guess they just like to feel us up, what other reason is there. . .

O.K. So now we are there in a big cell in the basement of College Park. They decide to move us all upstairs to a different cell, not as big but still big enough for a lot of girls, til it's time for us to go to court and either deal with our case or remand it. Today mine was supposed to be bail but the Crown has decided that my bail be moved to a different court house so i'm remanded for another week and taken back downstairs to sit and wait for the other girls to be done and for the paddy wagon to come back and return those of us that didn't get released. Which doesn't come til 5:30-6:00pm. And we don't get back to Vanier til around 7:00pm and this time we have the privilege of doing a little strip for the guards because even though we never left secure custody we might have been able to pick up something on the way. . .now after the search we get our dinner yeah! We are all so excited to down another Vanier meal and then wait again til the guards are ready to take us back to our range.

The real reason why i'm writing this blog is to tell you all about the shock i got when i got back to my cell. . .while i was at court i guess there was a security breach and the whole jail was on lock down and searched so i got back to a complete mess my cell was torn apart my personal belongings were either emptied on the floor or just not there because the guard decided to throw them out. So remember it's at least 9:00pm - i'm exhausted from being at court all day and now i have one hell of a mess to clean up before i go to sleep, going through my stuff. I put my cell back together, i feel violated not only do they strip search you whenever they feel like it but they also tear through your belongings like they're a tornado destroying everything and throwing out whatever they choose some guards throwing out more than others. As i'm putting my cell back together I notice they've thrown out my canteen stuff. They say Oh well write a complaint to the white shirt and I'm told to go back to my cell. . .will anything be done about my missing canteen probably not and for those that don't get much canteen money that's a big deal because they might not be able to replace what they've lost. ~J.N.

october 12

lockdown, day three.

i have mixed feelings about lockdowns. when the guards are relaxed and don't really care if we chat at our doors it's irritating, because the noise is closer and it's harder to read and work. when the guards are strict about closed doors it can feel like a snow day – nowhere to go, and the whole day stretched ahead of you. the down-side, of course, is the lack of phone access and very occasionally a cancelled visit. despite the drawbacks, i usually find myself happy to be stuck in my room.

i try not to ever wish for a lockdown, though, because i know most people in here hate it. most people don't get tons of mail, they didn't come to jail with a list of projects (we can't all be dorky workaholics, after all) and not everyone finds reading books easy or enjoyable. most inmates spend their days hanging out, playing cards and watching TV. in addition, a lot of people meet with social workers and organizations that help with housing, employment, custody, the GED, and so on. those meetings don't tend to happen during lockdowns, and neither does the general programming. so if you're stressed about where you're going to live when you get out and you can't see the person who's helping you, and on top of that you have nothing to occupy your time, a day cooped up alone in a very small room can seem endless.

so people get mad, understandably. here's one person's account of the frustrations of the past few days:

Do you ever wake up in the morning wishing you didn't? Or ask yourself is this what hell feels like? I wake up every morning in a cell wondering what the guards have planned for my day. . .

We were locked down for over 48 hours, got strip searched and our cells got turned upside down. They invaded our privacy and threw away what they thought was garbage. We had to demand to take a shower after being locked up for 30+ hours. All because two inmates couldn't get along and a girl and her husband thought it would be a good idea to make up a fucked up story and call the jail with it. The “funniest” thing about it is that if you so much as talk back or even make a face at guards they are so quick to bounce you back to Unit 2, but when it's something serious they just violate all of us instead of dealing with the people causing the problem. They would rather see us suffer.

I've been sitting in this place for almost six months. It's my first and last time believe me. They barely give us cooked meals (pink

meat) but they want to give us misconducts for having peanut butters, jams or butters saved for when we are hungry. . .I wouldn't wish this place on my worst enemies. I bet you all the money in the world that they wouldn't treat their animals the way they treat us. We are humans too although we are in holding. And we are innocent until proven guilty. - Renee Hamilton

a lot of the frustration on my wing is being directed at the two people on the Unit who are believed to be the cause of the lockdown. apparently one woman told her husband that she's afraid because another inmate has a weapon hidden and plans to use it on her. her husband later called the jail.

on my wing people are calling her a rat and/or a liar, suggesting she made the whole thing up or that it's all being blown way out of proportion and we're essentially being locked up for nothing. the blame is being placed squarely on the two inmates who are 'causing shit', but it seems to be weighted more heavily towards the alleged victim of the alleged threat.

the guards, strangely, are taking the whole thing very seriously on the one hand (the intense search for the weapon, which rumour has it is a razor blade) yet not at all seriously on the other (they haven't even separated the two women, who are on the same wing and therefore could fight in their hallway – lockdown or no).

the whole thing is a bit bizarre.

it's also an example of the complete lack of solidarity amongst prisoners that rears its ugly head every so often.

i don't know if it ever got handed in but a letter was written to the guards and/or admin suggesting that the two individuals be bounced back to maximum security so we could be let out of our rooms. i refused to have anything to do with it but a lot of people ended up signing it. there's also the absolute unwillingness to consider that perhaps it's all true and someone was (or really believed herself to be) in danger of being seriously hurt. it's sad that people in shitty situations are so quick to turn on each other to safeguard the little we have, instead of coming together to collectively tackle our common and much more important problems.

october 13

there's frost on the ground. i've been here nine months as of today! and it's my first real day on the job.

october 14

i put comb teeth through the holes in my ears yesterday, so i have pierced ears again for the first time in years. it's the first jail thing i've done to my body – i've avoided like the plague the never-ending french braid/cornrow/fish tail sessions that go on in the common room, and i've refrained from getting a jail tattoo. plastic pointy earrings, though? i can get behind those.

jail tattoos are made with crushed up pencil crayons and a staple. that's why magazines with staples aren't allowed. giving (and presumably getting) a tattoo, or having the equipment, gets you a misconduct and bounced back to maximum security if you're not there already. there are a lot of people who have them, though, and some of them are really well done.

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it's pouring outside. the garbage can in the common room has been strategically placed to catch the water coming through the ceiling.

october 15

this morning i finished reading *One Woman Army: The Life of Claire Culhane*. the back of the book describes it more concisely than i could, so i'll just copy it here.

Rebel and raconteuse, activist and author, Claire Culhane is a Canadian original. In a life that has spanned most of the twentieth century, this remarkable woman played a part in many of the headline-making social struggles of our time: the spanish civil war; the women's movement; the FLQ crisis; the war in Vietnam; and the British Columbia prison riot of 1976. Her current campaign for prison abolition stems from an on-going personal and political struggle against authority. Described as compassionate and incorruptible by her friends, infuriating and unforgiving by her enemies, Culhane has touched the lives of thousands of ordinary

Canadians and been resolutely shunned by the Canadian establishment. Hers is a story of rare courage, of heartbreak and struggle, and, ultimately, of triumph over adversity. Clair Culhane is living proof that even in these cynical and dispirited times, one person can still make a difference.

if you're interested in Canadian history or in need of inspiration, this would be a great book to add to your reading list. ditto if you think you have things to learn about traditional tactics like lobbying, targeted protests and non-violent civil-disobedience – actually even more so if you've written them off and think you have nothing to learn from them. finally if you do prison abolition/ prisoner solidarity work, or just want to know more about incarceration in Canada, the last chapter is a must-read. Claire wrote two books about prisons and her work with inmates:

Barred from Prison: A Personal Account (1979)

Still Barred from Prison: Social Injustice in Canada (1985)

the titles refer to the fact that she was banned from multiple federal penitentiaries for years because of the effectiveness of her work and the trouble it caused the authorities. A revised edition of the second book, published in 1991 after the ban was lifted, was entitled No Longer Barred from Prison.

here are some of my favourite Claire Culhane quotes:

“The question that must be faced is- are too many people being held in prison for too long because of tough economic times, and if so, is it practical to house this surplus of 'hostages to the economy' in prisons?”

“As I see it, by trying to abolish the present prison system we challenge a social/political/economic order which must preserve and expand it's prisons to confine anyone who dares resist it – trade unionists, nuclear protestors, and political activists all qualify as potential 'criminals'.”

“Grim realist that I am, there's no way I can ignore the ten-year sentence the environmentalists fear has been laid on the planet. It adds up to the fact that, accepting all this grim reality, one has two choices: jump out the window or live with it. In which case one has another two options. Sit back and let it happen, or find a corner to fight back from, again for two reasons. It's the essential physiological function, and it's the last straw of hope (one cannot live without hope) that maybe, just maybe, if enough people everywhere are fighting back, just maybe, maybe, we don't go down. Once I get my head into that space I can keep going, since my prime drive is how to smash the system, my corner being the prison system, which is the Achilles heel of the whole rotten system.”

october 16

there's a guard on tonight that people haven't seen before. people asked her what she's doing on Unit 4 and where she usually works and she replied “IMAT”. that's the intensive Management and Treatment Unit, 2E, that was described a bit in an earlier post. basically, it's for people who can't handle general population but don't need to be in segregation. many IMAT inmates are struggling with their mental health.

that being the case, one would assume that all guards assigned to that unit would be particularly knowledgeable and compassionate when it come to these inmates; needs and the challenges they face.

one would assume that, but one would be wrong.

our one-time night guard responded to a question about her job on IMAT as follows: “I deal with crazy people and assholes.”

crazy people and assholes.

for effect, and encouraged by laughter on the wing, she continued “I deal with shit-slingers and assholes.”

crazy people. assholes. shit-slingers.

these are people who are having a particularly difficult time in jail. this place isn't great to begin with – imagine having to deal with it in a fragile headspace. it's bad enough that other inmates mock them and call them E-tards and so on, but coming from a guard responsible for their care and safety that kind of disrespect is beyond disgusting. if that's what she thinks about them, i wonder how she treats them?

maybe there's a reason they're slinging shit.

october 17

when i went to get medication this morning the wrong pills were in the little cup. I handed it back to the nurse and told her that the green one was supposed to be yellow. her reply? “oh, sorry, the multivitamins are right next to the iron.”

this kind of thing happens a lot here. wrong pill, wrong dose, wrong number of pills in the cup. mixing up iron and a multivitamin isn't a big deal, but what if the switched out medication is something essential, or the switched one is a powerful psych drug or something the person's allergic to? it was easy for me to notice the mixup because of the colour of the pills, but a lot of pills are small, round and white.

we take it on faith that we're getting the meds we're supposed to be getting; we have to trust the nurses because we don't see the pills go from the bottle into the cup, and the cup go onto the tray beside our name. i realize that everyone makes mistakes. i know the nurses are busy, so maybe they aren't given the time they need to double-check. it's also quite obvious that they're under-appreciated: inmates get mad at them for things they can't do anything about (like doctor's orders, prescriptions, or the fact that they can't give out more than one Tylenol at a time) and i've also seen them treated pretty shittily by some of the guards here. but a lot of people in this jail are on medication that they really need, and they depend on the staff to get it right – not most of the time but all of the time.

october 19

i've never been so surrounded by Christianity.

here on C-wing, every night after chores, people stand in their doorways until someone calls out “Whose Father?” and they respond with “Our Father, who art in Heaven. . .” and proceed to recite the entire Lord's Prayer. i couldn't believe it my first night here – i looked up and down the hall in shock and more than half the wing was participating.

in jail it's common for people to write things like “God bless you” in birthday cards, to say things like “tomorrow i'll get bail, God willing,” and to tell each other to just have faith in the Lord and things will turn out okay. if you were to walk down the hallway during quiet time and peek in all the windows, you'd almost certainly see a couple of people reading their Bibles. my daytimer was provided by The Canadian Lord's Day Association and has a Bible quote for each day plus a few extras thrown in for good measure (here is today's: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” i think this means that if i was a guy, Jesus would bust me out of here so i could go lay in a field :). similarly, my memo booklet comes compliments of New Life Prison Ministry.

there was no nightly Lord's Prayer tradition back on 2F, but Christianity was everywhere there too. my cell had a cross drawn on the wall above the door and a conversation written on the wall by my bed:

-bored

-read your bible

-okay

and further down: “praise Him.” looking into people's cells once to see who had the broom i saw more pictures of Jesus and the Virgin Mary than i've ever seen in one place before.

one particularly obnoxious ritual on 2F was the televised church show we were forced to endure every sunday by

the folks who had control of the TV. you know the type: people in fancy clothes and a lot of stage makeup, in huge gaudy churches with stages, singing for hours on end somewhere deep in the U.S. anyone who asked to turn it down – or better yet, off – was shot a how-dare-you-filthy-heathen look and quickly backed off. it became obvious that Christian or not, on Sundays we were damn well going to be force-fed some God. i always wondered what would happen if someone tried to take up any amount of shared space with any other religion.

then there were the anti-abortion protesters. they repeatedly defy court orders banning them from protesting and flyering too close to clinics so they're in and out of jail all the time. they refuse to sign bail conditions so they're kept in detention, and they refuse to sign the papers that would allow classification access to their records so they stay on maximum security. one of them explained the reason to me: by the time pregnant women are moved to a medium security unit their decision to abort or not has usually already been made, so in order to continue to do God's work on the inside she needs to stay on Unit 2. these women are not pushy when it comes to their religion but they are organized and persuasive. within days of the arrival of one of them on the range there was a daily prayer group convening by the back stairs that regularly drew around six people.

other people could be quite aggressive. i remember one woman who was very quiet and nervous and who struggled a bit with English once used a Bible to prop her cell door open (the most common use for books on 2F, sadly). other inmates walked by and noticed are started screaming at her. she tried to explain that she had just grabbed it off the shelf and hadn't even realized what it was, but they wouldn't let up until she started to cry. i'm not sure their god approved. . .

personally, i'd rather see a Bible wrecked than a good novel. good books can be hard to come by on maximum security but Bibles are free and you can get one brought to you whenever you ask. the person to talk to if you're in need of Christian texts or tracts is the chaplain. not that you can only get Christian stuff – he can also bring you the Qur'an, for instance, and he's the one to go to if you need a hijab and prayer mat, or a kosher or halal diet. there's a special meal schedule set up for those who observe Ramadan. i've even seen copies of The Watchtower and i've heard that Jehovah's Witnesses come in to speak to people. so don't get me wrong, i'm not saying that other faiths aren't accommodated here. it's just that they're not continually advertised and promoted the way Christianity is. every sunday there's an open call for Chapel. every morning there's an open call for Faith Builders (this is run by a reverend and involves reading and discussing a Bible passage) and people can sign up for more extensive Bible studies classes through New Life Ministries.

i don't know if there's a correlation between believing in and/or practicing Christianity and winding up in jail. if so, it could be a fascinating study of the relationship between Christianity and the factors that influence the likelihood of interaction with the legal system (class, support network, race, mental health, education level and so on). or are people just more likely to turn to religion once they're stuck in here? it's true that many inmates will go to almost any program just for something to do – talk about a captive audience! it's also true that prisoners are a very vulnerable population; people here need support and some need it desperately. it makes me wonder how many people “found God” in here – there are an awful lot of those first-hand accounts on the book shelves of hardened criminals who saw the light and became motivational speakers and recruiters for the church.

when it comes down to it, to quote a character in a short story i just read, “who am i to kick at people's crutches?” i just wish people here would stop whacking me over the head with them.

october 22

a guard asked me earlier if i'd heard of the FREE MANDY BANNER that was dropped from a crane in guelph. i hadn't. she was not amused, but i've been grinning for a long, long time :)

october 23

i just went to get my meds from the nurse's station. as i was standing in line an inmate swallowed her water and forgot to throw away the little paper cup before starting to walk away “hey” says the guard, and points to the garbage can. “oh sorry” she says, and goes back to throw it out.

i never throw out my meds cup. i take it back to my room and refill it from the tap the next day. i know – one less paper cup in the landfill everyday means fuck all in the face of climate change and ecological collapse, but it makes me feel better so it annoys me to think that today i'm going to be forced to create that little bit of extra garbage for no good reason.

but no! when i get to the nurses station the guard looks at my cup. “what, you don't like my water?” she asks, to which i replied “i don't like the waste.” she says “well at least they're not plastic” which is true enough, and i walk away with the cup.

this has happened before. someone else tried to keep her cup, having seen me do it, and was told she couldn't. the explanation for why i could and she couldn't “Hiscocks is an environmentalist.”

why do i get away with this stuff? it's not just the meds cups – i have the distinct impression that i am given the benefit of the doubt more often than others, that certain allowances are being made. why? is it the blog? is it now, because i'm a worker? do some of the guards have a secret hatred for capitalism, austerity measures, the G20? or have they just gotten tired of arguing with me? it's certainly not my charm and sunny personality. . .

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today is my nephew's birthday. by the time i get out of here i'll have missed every family birthday of 2012 except for one. i'm lucky – i've been able to call in to the celebrations. but i remember the sobbing coming from a room down the hall one night because a mother hadn't been able to talk to her twins on their birthday – all because the archaic phone system here can only reach landlines.

anyone who doesn't believe that jail is cruel really needs to come and spend some time in this place.

october 28

the guard who read my outgoing mail tonight read the october 17 entry about the IMAT nurse. she wanted me to know that there are some really wonderful people who work on that wing. i don't doubt it. she said she's sometimes embarrassed by the things guards say, and i don't doubt that either.

so i went to bed feeling a bit bad and wondering if maybe i'm coming off as too harsh. . . i don't want you all to get the wrong idea. and just as i'm thinking this, a different guard knocks on my door. he knows i live in Guelph, as does he, and we had a conversation recently (while i was doing laundry and he was supervising) about how great the city is and all the new condo developments are not. which made me feel like even more of a jerk.

this seems like a good opportunity for me to repeat, because i haven't said it in a while, that the shitty attitudes and unprofessional behaviour i sometimes write about are not the norm – not in my experience anyway. some guards seem to go out of their way to be nasty, others go out of their way to be nice. they have good days and bad days and things that drive them up the wall, like the rest of us, but for the most part the guards i've met here are decent people.

october 29

last night there was a nasty argument because someone wanted to leave her window open and other people were cold. it was just words, but they were vicious words. a few days ago the argument was over chores – someone had slacked off and not cleaned the toilets. that one almost came to blows and one person was bounced back to maximum security.

small things become big things in this kind of environment where we're forced to live in very close quarters with random people who are often very stressed out, and where we have so little control over anything.

october 30

we got some new people on the unit today. as i was setting them up with clothes and bedding one of them said “you're Mandy, right? i read your blog.”

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a pregnant inmate was taken to the hospital earlier to give birth. if all goes well, medically speaking, she'll be back here in a few days. can you imagine? the baby you've carried inside you for nine months being snatched away so soon after birth. any system that condones such a thing is not a system of justice.

but what does it feel like?

recently a visitor asked me what jail is like. he then went on to say that of course he didn't expect me to be able to describe it.

he's right – i don't think i can properly describe what it's really like to be here. but his question make me think about how i'd sum up this experience, and i'm going to give it a shot.

i've tried in this blog to give you a picture of my surroundings, a sense of what the days are like, an idea of the kind of things that go on. what it *feels* like, though. . .that's harder. at the risk of sounding melodramatic, the closest i can come to it is this: it makes me feel diminished as a person. the real me is not allowed. the person that i am is disrespected and devalued. i'm infantilized, and i struggle to hold on to a sense of dignity. and it's 24/7, day after day after day.

words are weak. i think it's something you have to experience to fully understand.

i often think of that experiment where random people were split into two groups: prisoners and guards. it feels a bit like that because really, we're not so different. i hear the things they talk about while i clean their bathrooms and fold laundry and they sit around and do nothing. how many of them have never broken the law, i wonder? if they'd been caught smoking pot or shoplifting in their youth, they'd be the ones caught up in the system now. who gets trapped in the cycle (of arrest, bail denial, guilty plea, probation violation, repeat repeat repeat) has a lot to do with a person's financial situation, background, neighbourhood, and sometimes just blind luck. and presto! look at that: one's a guard the other is an inmate.

in seventeen days i'll be released. if (when?) i run into my jailers on the outside we'll be equals. we'll be the same people we are now but they won't be in blue and i won't be in green, and no orders will be given or taken. does it seem weird to you that outside this fence we'll suddenly interact in a completely different way? this temporary hierarchy is so weird to me that sometimes i'm completely knocked off guard and disoriented by it. who do they think they are to speak to me that way? what gives them the right to treat me like this? what authority do these people have to tell me what to do and where to be, to yell at me for washing my spoon at the wrong time or forgetting to close my door?

i am the equal of every single one of these guards. i'm just as smart or smarter, i'm older than some of them and i'm as nice or nicer than most. so why did i have to lay in bed last night listening to one of them yell and scream and completely lose control over someone brushing their teeth after lights out, and then worry about whether or not i'd be able to sneak in a brush myself? i'm 38 years old and i'm nervous about brushing my teeth. it's absurd.

they look stupid when they enforce their ridiculous rules with such aggression, like any of it really matters. i'm embarrassed for them. they act like schoolyard bullies because they can, because they know the complaint system here is a joke and they won't be held accountable. they know they'll get away with it. even the ones that don't need complete control over every little thing, and know how to behave like reasonable adults, still enforce random and non-sensical rules. They're not even rules really, they're more like personal preferences that we are expected to keep track of:

-this guard is the one that doesn't like people wearing flip flops to the bathroom at night;

-this guard is one of the few that wants the doors closed for the duration of quiet time;

-this guard does a strip search like this, but this one does it like this;

-this guard doesn't allow you to take papers to the phone with you, but nobody else cares;

-this guard needs you to sit on the stool while you're on the phone and not use it to write on;

-these guards don't want your laundry bag out in the common space until the morning, while everyone else is okay with it going out the night before.

honestly – we need a spreadsheet.

imagine being constantly on the alert, knowing that one step out of line, even a line you didn't know was there, might cause someone with absolute power over you to freak out. imagine having to stand there and watch them lose their shit – along with any entitlement to your respect they might ever have had – all the while knowing that you could be sent to the hole for saying any of the things you really want to say:

- look at yourself. you're being a child.
- how about we discuss this like rational adults?
- actually, you're wrong because of x, y and z.
- please get a grip, you strange, strange weirdo

it's oppressive, it's constant, it's exhausting. i can definitely see how people with a low sense of self worth (and no support network to boost their ego!) could walk out of here feeling far worse about themselves than when they came in. it weighs on you, this feeling of always being wrong even when you're right, of being considered a lesser person even when you know you're not. it chips away at the spirit, even on good days.

and that's how jail feels to me.

oh, Vanier, how i won't miss you.

6 Nov - Caging the Young by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal continues to write columns and we've included his latest below.

MORE:

Sometimes, I'm shocked by the youth of some of the young men around me.

I've met guys who have never heard of Chuck D., Carlos Santana, Jimi Hendrix or Bob Marley. When I mention names like these, I can tell by their blank stares that they have absolutely no idea who these great musicians are – or were.

It's impossible to talk jazz with them – that's like rapping to them about lutes played by ancient Greeks.

That's a side of the prison industrial complex that most people - even activists – don't see.

Children in prison – so young that they don't shave – serving decades in prison – with decades to go!

Most are the human flotsam and jetsam of the drug wars, the illegitimate economy that flows in too many urban communities, and the raging fury that sparked the imprisonment boom that was – and is – America's rural jobs program.

Enemies of the State at birth, given an abominable, punitive, empty education – a preamble to prison that trains children to accept metal detectors and little else; so that schools are training grounds for prisons upstate.

What is clear – or should be clear to all of us – is that the present system isn't working and real dramatic and long lasting changes must be made.

Far be it from me to praise the U.S. Supreme Court – I'd be the last man to do that. But it's a measure of our present politics – the politics of revenge, retribution and mass destruction by incarceration, that it was the Supreme Court majority that determined that dozens of state prison systems were functioning in an unconstitutional manner (In the recent *Alabama v. Miller* case, regarding juveniles doing life sentences) – this Supreme Court, perhaps the most conservative in 50 years!

What does that say about legislatures?

What does that say about Black politicians?

What does it say about the political status quo?

It's going to take a Movement to change things.

6 Nov - Update on Sergey Turzhanskiy

Sergey appeared in court on November 6th, where some of their charges were dropped, though bail remains at one million dollars. A few days later, a house in Portland was raided in connection to Sergey's arrest.

MORE:

Sergey appeared in court today, but in a holding room where the judge can only see them through a TV. Their physical condition, after being in the medical unit, seemed to be not serious, but exactly what their condition is and what they did to them is still not clear.

Some of the charges, including attempted arson, attempt to elude, and obstructing governmental administration, have all been disposed, leaving Sergey with possession of a destructive device (C felony), criminal mischief 2 (A misdemeanor), disorderly conduct 2 (B misdemeanor) and attempted arson 2 (A misdemeanor). Sergeys next court date is November 15th at 9:30am.

From their partner:

I finally got to talk to Sergey!! They want folks to know that they are holding up well, getting plenty to eat, doing lots of yoga, drawing lots of pictures, and making life-inspiring friends among other inmates. They ask that folks send any good books, zines, and drawings to them and thank everyone for their continued incredibly gracious support and were really cheered up by the show of support at the arraignment today. They also said that it'd be cool if people sent us (me/support blogs/etc.) cool drawings in solidarity to make an art blog out of.

6 Nov - Sabi pleads guilty, takes 4 month sentence

Sebastian Senakiewicz accepted a non-cooperating plea deal that will put him in a boot camp and likely see him deported after his eventual release. We're including a corporate and an "alternative" media article about his plea.

MORE:

A 24-year-old Polish native who was arrested before the NATO Summit for allegedly bragging he could blow up a downtown bridge has pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years in prison.

Sebastian "Sabi" Senakiewicz pleaded guilty to one felony count of falsely making a terrorist threat on Tuesday. Cook County Judge Nicholas Ford sentenced him to four years in prison, and recommended he serve his sentence in a boot camp, according to the Cook County State's Attorney's office. Senakiewicz also will be deported after completing his sentence.

Senakiewicz, of the 3600 block of North Odell Avenue, was arrested on May 17, for allegedly bragging that was hiding explosives in a hollowed-out Harry Potter book. He also allegedly claimed he had a vehicle packed with explosives and weapons, and that he had enough homemade explosives to blow up a train overpass during the NATO Summit in May. He was also accused of making a Molotov cocktail before the summit.

He later admitted he had no explosives, and none were found at the home where he was staying in Chicago.

Prosecutors said Senakiewicz described himself as an anarchist and member of the notorious "Black Bloc" group, but was upset with the lack of chaos in Chicago leading up to the summit.

Occupy Chicago activists said Senakiewicz agreed to plead guilty to avoid facing an indefinite term in jail.

His attorney also blasted prosecutors for charging Senakiewicz over what supporters have said were simply drunken remarks to two undercover cops.

"Honestly, how serious was this case? Does this rise to the level of what this statute was designed for? No. Sabi

is guilty of imprudent language,” attorney Jeff Frank said in a statement provided by Occupy Chicago. “That’s hardly grounds to extract a guilty plea for a serious felony, but that’s how Ms. Alvarez has chosen to spend the taxpayers resources.”

Occupy Chicago has said the charges against Senakiewicz and terrorism charges against four others before the NATO Summit amounted to an effort by police and prosecutors to silence opposition to the NATO Summit, and to frighten peaceful protesters.

Chicago anarchist sent to boot camp for lie about bomb in Harry Potter book

Sebastian Senakiewicz, 24, never made a bomb. He was never found with any explosive-making materials; authorities thoroughly searched his house. The Polish immigrant did, however, tell a boastful lie that has landed him a stint at boot camp.

Just days before the Chicago NATO summit last May, Senakiewicz drunkenly told undercover agents that he had two homemade explosives hidden in his Chicago residence in a hollowed-out Harry Potter book. A search of his home found the bombs to be as fictitious as the boy wizard — there weren’t even any Harry Potter books at the address. But the 24-year-old anarchist, who Tuesday pleaded guilty to one felony count of falsely making a terrorist threat, could face deportation.

The [Chicago Tribune reported](#):

At a hearing in the Leighton Criminal Court Building, Judge Nicholas Ford imposed the 4-year prison term and recommended that Senakiewicz be admitted into a prison boot camp. If he successfully completes the program he could be released in as little as 6 months, but prosecutors said the Polish native would be subject to deportation on completing his sentence.

However, the Chicago Tribune’s report and the report from the AP — both reportedly based on a press release from State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez’s office — were mistaken about Senakiewicz’s sentence. He was not sentenced to four years, but four months at boot camp in lieu of jail time.

Senakiewicz is among a group of five people arrested in the run-up to the NATO protests — dubbed “the NATO 5,” including three other defendants (“the NATO 3”) arrested on state terrorism charges. “Activists charge that Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez brought the charges as part of a broad strategy by local law enforcement to infiltrate and disrupt peaceful protest activities, to frighten the public and to deter opposition to the NATO meeting,” noted the Occupy Chicago press team in a statement.

One of Senakiewicz’ attorneys, Jeff Frank, criticized Cook County’s treatment of his client (known to friends as “Sabi”). “Honestly, how serious was this case? Does this rise to the level of what this statute was designed for? No. Sabi is guilty of imprudent language. That’s hardly grounds to extract a guilty plea for a serious felony, but that’s how Ms. Alvarez has chosen to spend the taxpayers resources,” he said.

The “NATO 3” suspects, whose arrest for allegedly plotting to use Molotov cocktails during the summit has [sparked charges of entrapment](#) against Chicago undercover officers, have pleaded not guilty. Along with one other NATO arrestee also facing trumped-up terror-related charges, their cases are still pending.

7 Nov – Pfc. Manning Update

In a recent hearing for WikiLeaks arrestee PFC Manning, it was revealed that a plea deal may be in the works. We've included the latest news below.

MORE:

UPDATE – 11:45 PM EST According to [statement](#) by defense, “PFC Manning is not pleading guilty to the specifications as charged by the Government. Rather, PFC Manning is attempting to accept responsibility for offenses that are encapsulated within, or are a subset of, the charged offenses. The Court will consider whether this is a permissible plea.” I’ve put a strike through “all charged” because I do not feel it appropriately reflects what Manning did with the notice of plea. He is through the notice acknowledging he provided information to WikiLeaks but not that he provided all the charged information.

Original Post

At Fort Meade, Maryland, during a motion hearing in Pfc. Bradley Manning's court martial, his defense attorney David Coombs told the court Manning had submitted a plea notice indicating he would accept general responsibility for providing all charged information to WikiLeaks. The notice was the beginning of a process that could greatly simplify the upcoming trial proceedings in February.

Manning did not plead guilty to the charged offenses in the plea notice. However, significantly, he did indicate with this notice that he is willing to admit to the fact that the act of providing information to WikiLeaks did occur or that the government has evidence that would prove he did commit the act and so he is willing to plea to it.

The notice was a plea to lesser-included offenses—charges with different elements that the judge could agree upon if there is no evidence for the more severe charges. Pleading to lesser-included offenses makes it possible to not plea to committing offenses under the Espionage Act or Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA). Importantly, he can plead guilty without accepting the government's charge that he "aided the enemy" or "exceeded authorized access" on his computer

This is not a plea bargain with the government. Manning's defense did not go to the government and inform them that he wanted to accept general responsibility. Therefore, it is up to the judge to decide whether to accept the plea notice.

As far as sentencing goes, the lesser included offenses would likely come with a less severe punishment (although the charge of "aiding the enemy," which if convicted could lead to him be sentenced to life without parole, would still be in play.

What this does for the trial, if the plea is accepted, is it cuts back on the physical evidence and the witnesses that the government may need to call to make a case. It also cuts back on the arguments that would need to be made.

If any of this was accepted—and nothing is firmly in stone yet, the government would have to choose how to proceed by deciding how to handle the refusal to plea to the federal statutory charges under the Espionage Act or the CFAA.

Again, he did not plead guilty. This is all part of the process. The next step is the judge accepts or rejects the plea. If accepted, the government has to decide how it would like to handle the judge's decision.

7 Nov – Update on Maddy Pfeiffer

Pacific northwest grand jury resister Matthew "Maddy" Pfeiffer appeared before the grand jury on November 7th and proceeded to answer, "I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments" to every question, He was released and will appear again December 14th, at which time he's expected to be taken into custody.

MORE:

"Do you intend to answer that for every question?" (Green is the New Red)

Grand juries are used to threaten political activists in two ways: 1) by [threatening prison time](#) for those who refuse to talk about their political beliefs and political associations and 2) by using these threats, combined with secretive proceedings, to [intimidate and disrupt](#) the broader social movement.

The real danger of grand juries targeting activists is that these two distinct types of threats feed off of each other. Prosecutors tell activists who have been subpoenaed that they can "make this all go away" if they just answer some questions about their friends, and their politics. When facing the real threat of jail time, it can be tempting for some people to sacrifice their political ideals and the needs of the broader movement in the name of self-preservation. At the same time, activist communities can get wrapped up in a martyrdom mentality, repeating hardline "no compromise" slogans without recognizing that there can be room to refuse cooperation while also attempting to minimize the risk of jail time.

The recent subpoena of Maddy Pfeiffer to a Seattle grand jury targeting anarchists provides a great example of how to navigate a situation like this. Pfeiffer has refused to cooperate, but decided to enter the grand jury room

on November 7th, 2012. When released, supporters provided a [detailed transcript of the questions Pfeiffer was asked](#), and how they were answered. Here's an excerpt:

P: Do you know what a black bloc is?

M: I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments.

P: Have you ever been in a black bloc?

M: I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments.

P: Have you ever possessed a road flare?

M: I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments.

P: Do you know a man named _____ (name redacted)?

M: I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments.

P: Do you intend to answer "I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments." to all questions?

M: I am exercising my state and federal constitutional rights including the 1st, 4th and 5th amendments.

I'm not advocating that this is how everyone should respond to a grand jury. I know there are some folks who have had extensive experience with grand juries over the last few decades, and adamantly oppose even entering the grand jury room. However, I wanted to highlight this because it is in such stark contrast to the behavior of Leah Plante, who also pledged to resist the grand jury, then [refused to answer any questions about the terms of her unexpected release](#) from jail, and instead left town. Pfeiffer's response shows accountability and transparency; Plante's fosters distrust.

In California, a similar situation has developed regarding a grand jury targeting animal rights activists. Some people have rushed to say that [Ariana Tanabe is an informant](#) [edit: that post was removed, [here is another](#)] because she agreed to speak at a grand jury proceeding. Attorney [Ben Rosenfeld responded](#) that such characterization is misleading and divisive: "While testifying does not constitute resistance, it does not automatically constitute cooperation."

"While there are non-compromising ways to go before a grand jury, they all rely on a lot of accountability and immediate transparency, neither of which Leah provided immediately upon her release, nor has she provided two weeks later," [said former grand jury resister Scott Demuth](#). "While this is not necessarily evidence that she cooperated, this is extremely sketchy and irresponsible behavior. Also, by going before a grand jury after previously refusing to testify (and getting a lot of publicity for this) and getting contempt, not only does this show that silence in solidarity can be broken, but it can be used in a legal sense to show that the current incarceration of others for contempt is not punitive since it has already coerced testimony. This has been used as a justification to continue to hold grand jury resisters. Regardless of what Leah may or may not have said to the grand jury, testifying before one after being incarcerated for contempt of court could very well translate as a longer incarceration the Matt and Kteeo (and for others yet to be subpoenaed)."

This has been a difficult issue for activists and their communities to navigate, and unfortunately the threat isn't going away. Pfeiffer has a contempt hearing schedule for December 14th, at which point continued non-cooperation risks jail time. And at Pfeiffer's court date, a subpoena was delivered for another person to appear before the grand jury. It appears that the subpoena was delivered to the wrong person, though.

In many ways the most important way to prepare for new grand jury subpoenas is to study how others have responded over the years.

"In the animal and environmental movement, I was the second after [Henry Hutto](#) to be imprisoned for not testifying [in 1993]," said [Jonathan Paul, former grand jury resister](#) and Animal Liberation Front prisoner, in a recent interview. "Part of the resistance to the grand jury process is public outreach as this unconstitutional and fascist process spans to all walks of life, not just activists like me. Those who worked on freeing Henry after 45 days of not talking worked on my case so we knew the process better.

"I think my resistance [showed that anyone could resist the grand jury](#). I am no superman as I am just another person no different than anyone else in many ways. Really it is all about commitment in your beliefs...I saw the grand jury as a strong arm of the government and corporations whose continual behavior will destroy life as we know it on this planet. So for me to compromise my beliefs so I could be free while others suffer in ways I have never or never want to experience is narcissism at the highest level. I would never be able to live with myself."

8 Nov - Demand that Russell Maroon Shoatz be Released from Solitary Confinement

Russell Maroon Shoatz has been held in torturous conditions of solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons for the past thirty years. He has not had a serious rule violation for more than two decades. It is well past time for him to be released.

MORE:

Maroon's role as an educator, human rights defender, writer, and critical intellectual of liberation movements is widely renowned. He is a co-founder of the Human Rights Coalition and a member of Scientific Soul Sessions.

He is scheduled for his 90 day periodic review sometime this week and supporters are being asked to call State Correctional Institution (SCI) Greene Warden Louis Folino and PA Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary John Wetzel and demand that he be released into general population. Talking points below. Addresses for those who want to send letters is below as well.

SCI Greene Superintendent Louis Folino – [724-852-2902](tel:724-852-2902)

PA DOC Secretary Wetzel – [717-728-4109](tel:717-728-4109)

Talking Points

- 1) Inform them that you are aware that Russell Maroon Shoatz has been held in solitary confinement for 30 years and that his disciplinary record is impeccable.
- 2) Make clear that you understand that solitary confinement is an infamous torture that starves the human mind and soul of the basic needs of meaningful social interaction, human contact, and intellectual stimulation.
- 3) Ask them how it can be justified that Maroon is still being held in solitary while other prisoners with more extensive and recent disciplinary records are held in general population?
- 4) Assert that his supporters understand that Maroon is being targeted because of his commitment as an educator of other prisoners and his political ideas and affiliations. Then ask how the prison justifies torturing somebody based on his exercising his constitutionally-protected rights.
- 5) Inquire as to how is it possible that the prison is incapable of holding a 69-year-old man safely in the general population.
- 6) When speaking to the Secretary's office emphasize that he has an obligation to intervene in this situation and end the inhumane and barbaric treatment of Maroon.

Maroon has been told that his next Program Review Committee (PRC) hearing that decides on his continuation in solitary confinement will be Friday, November 9. However, PRC hearings typically occur on Tuesdays or Thursdays, so Maroon is asking for calls during that time period.

For those who want to write letters in support Maroon send them to these addresses:

Superintendent Louis Folino
SCI Greene
175 Progress Drive
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania 15370

Secretary John Wetzel

PA DOC Central Office
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania 17050

9 Nov - Jonathan Paul on the Grand Jury Process as a Tool of State Repression

Here's a great interview with former Animal Liberation Front political prisoner Jonathan Paul about resisting grand juries-- something he is all too familiar with.

MORE:

It's been about six weeks since two anarchist activists [were thrown in a Seattle jail](#) to force their testimony in a grand jury hearing ostensibly convened as part of an investigation into vandalism at a May Day rally. Neither activist has been charged with any crime, nor are they suspects in the case. They are simply people who may or may not have knowledge that could potentially help the FBI with its investigation.

Since their testimony could tend to incriminate themselves, their fellow activists and the causes they stand for (that's the whole point of the exercise, after all), the two activists have refused on principle to participate. Now they could be locked up for as long as 18 months without a single charge being filed against them, for doing nothing but refusing to help the government crack down on their movement.

In California, [a separate grand jury](#) was recently convened as part of another investigation, this one into two 2008 firebombings at U.C. Santa Cruz that the FBI has publicly blamed on animal rights activists. In 2009, federal prosecutors secured indictments under the [Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act](#) against four local activists for activities such as marching, chanting, chalking sidewalks and creating leaflets with the names and addresses of vivisectionists on them (under the AETA, First Amendment activities can be considered "terrorism" when aimed at animal exploitation-based industries). A year and a half later, a federal judge threw out the indictments for lack of specificity. Back at square one again, the U.S. Attorney's office turned to its old stand-by tool of state repression: the grand jury.

Grand juries are routinely used by prosecutors and investigators to break social movements by turning activists into informants on one another. Grand jury hearings are conducted in secret; the proceedings are controlled by the prosecutor (there is no judge in a grand jury hearing as the process precedes an indictment so there is no 'defendant,' per se); and typically attorneys (other than government prosecutors) are not allowed. The process seems practically designed to enable government fishing expeditions, and as one might imagine, grand jury subpoenas have a profound chilling effect on political speech.

[Jonathan Paul](#) is a former Animal Liberation Front activist who spent 51 months in prison for his participation in the 1998 arson of a horse slaughterhouse in Oregon. Prior to that arrest, he spent [five months in jail](#) in the early 1990s after refusing to participate in a grand jury proceeding. He was the second animal rights activist ever to be locked up to coerce grand jury testimony, and his imprisonment was the longest at that time in the history of the American animal rights movement.

I asked Paul to recount his experience and shed light on the coercive process that is now being used against the Northwest Grand Jury resisters.

Describe your experience with the grand jury subpoena. Why did they target you? What were they after?

The reason why they targeted me was quite simple: foremost, I was an eco-animal activist, and second, at that time the grand jury was focused on [Rod Coronado](#), who was on the run and was suspected of a number of ALF actions around the country. Rod and I were friends and roommates at the time. Also, in 1990, I was arrested for the 1987 liberation of 287 animals from University of Oregon, although the charges were dropped with some very well done legal wrangling. Although the grand jury was focused on Rod, in many ways they also were looking into others and would take any information they could on anyone else.

Did you consider cooperating, or did you know from the start that you would not comply?

I never considered cooperating and I knew the moment I was served with the subpoena from the two most stereotypical looking FBI agents I had ever seen. Really, it was almost comical. I knew from the start that I

would never comply. Quite simply I am not a snitch and never will be.

Besides threatening (and carrying out) your imprisonment, what else did prosecutors do to try to compel you to testify?

All they did was tell me I had to testify under law. I replied that under the Constitution that with my freedom of speech I also had the freedom not to speak. The judge did not like that and threw me in jail. In the first hours I was thrown in a holding cell stripped naked and was approached by the federal prosecutor and told that this was my last chance to testify. I guess he was trying to humiliate me while I stood naked in the cell but I in fact he did not. In our history, all over the world people and political activists are tortured and even killed for their beliefs while I was just fine, other than behind bars. To turn would be weak and narcissistic at best.

What kind of a support network did you have within the activist community? Did it make a difference in your resolve?

Being put in a cell and all alone is a tactic used to make people feel alone and scared and compelled to testify. I felt empowered. I knew of all the suffering happening to the animal nations and even other humans. I knew I had a good life and turning on those who suffer because I was in a cell was simply unacceptable. Having said that, however, it is imperative to have support because we all need support and to know we are not alone. Even those who stand firm and are strong still need the support.

You became sort of a quasi-celebrity from your decision to refuse to cooperate. How did you turn state coercion into a public relations coup? Do you think the symbolism of your act helped the animal rights movement?

In the animal and environmental movement I was the second after [Henry Hutto](#) to be imprisoned for not testifying. Part of the resistance to the grand jury process is public outreach as this unconstitutional and fascist process spans to all walks of life, not just activists like me. Those who worked on freeing Henry after 45 days of not talking worked on my case so we knew the process better.

I think my resistance showed that anyone could resist the grand jury. I am no superman as I am just another person no different than anyone else in many ways. Really it is all about commitment in your beliefs. Are you really a true activist for your cause? Are you a government informant or are you an activist? If you feel that you cannot stand up for your beliefs you really should reconsider whether being an activist is for you.

Describe how grand jury subpoenas are used as a tactic by law enforcement to break social movements.

This is quite simple to answer. The grand jury process is an information gathering process that includes forcing people to appear and testify under the fear of having your freedom taken out from under you and at the same time not knowing when you can get out especially if you choose not to testify. With the process super secret it instills fear into people and disrupts from the inside. A sort of mild COINTELPRO process.

What message or advice would you convey to the Northwest Grand Jury resisters, based on your own experience?

All I can tell you is that from my own experience I see the world in a very dark place. Species extinction, the climate crisis, massive deforestation, dying oceans, human overpopulation, human suffering, and the systematic and continual torture, murder, and suffering of animals were at that time for me very compelling reasons to not testify and turn on my movement and my fellow activists let alone the animals and the planet. I saw the grand jury as a strong arm of the government and corporations whose continual behavior will destroy life as we know it on this planet. So for me to compromise my beliefs so I could be free while others suffer in ways I have never or never want to experience is narcissism at the highest level. I would never be able to live with myself.

9 Nov - Kevin Olliff sentenced to 18 months

We recently received word from Kevin Olliff's supporters that he has taken a non-cooperating plea agreement and was subsequently sentenced to 18 months. We're sending him a card tonight.

MORE:

Hey all, yesterday Kevin entered his plea and was sentenced to 18 months. It is a prison sentence but he will be serving it in jail, and thankfully he will not have probation once he's released (probably in June). I'd like to take this time to thank everyone for all the support we've received thus far - it is truly overwhelming to witness how generous and kind y'all have been. I know as time goes on his support might lose momentum but please, please keep the letters and books coming in so he knows that people are thinking of him. Mail should be sent to:

Kevin Johnson #3341098

Post Office Box 86164

Terminal Annex

Los Angeles, California 90086

Donations to his commissary can be made via PayPal - my email address is kat@kittenmail.info. Thanks again.

10 Nov - Court Date, Financial Struggles, and a Letter from Cody Lee Sutherlin

On December 7th, the Tinley Park Five will be attending a 402 conference. This conference will determine whether a non-cooperating plea bargain can be reached for the five or whether the case will proceed to a jury trial.

MORE:

The lengthy jail time the five have already faced combined with the lost income for their households continues to be a burden to the Tinley Park Five and their families and friends.

Covering commissary costs has been a struggle recently. Unfortunately it's been a couple of months since we've been able to justify spending donations on reading materials because keeping up with the cost of food, stamps, phone cards, and writing materials has been a struggle by itself. Any reading materials they received would be appreciated now more than ever.

Thanks to all of you who have thrown parties and benefits for the five. The letter-writing parties provide them with the human interaction they need to keep their heads and hearts in healthy places. Thank you to everyone who's shared a link, given ten dollars, took time to write a letter, planned or attended a benefit, etc. The support received from so many diverse passionate communities continues to inspire both our imprisoned comrades and those working towards their freedom.

Hello World!

I want to start off by thanking everyone for the solidarity we've been shown. I can't begin to explain what it feels like to be stuck in an institution such as this one, though everyday is made easier by the love, letters, and donations we are receiving out there in the world.

Thanks to all of you that have shown support through benefits and actions in our name. It is rather heart-warming to know that people care about us to the extent of organizing events. I want to thank everyone who has sent a letter or card telling us to keep our head held high and we are not forgotten.

My life has become a series of waiting for letters, commissary and court dates. If you have written me and not gotten a reply, know that the system is toying with our mail and I probably have not received it. I do my best to respond to every letter. even if it's just to say "thank you".

The feeling I receive when a letter comes from somewhere across the country is near overwhelming. From coast-to-coast and everywhere between, thank you. Likewise, thank you to every person who has donated money to the fund.

It is very expensive to be jailed. Multiply that by five and it could put much hardship on our loved ones. It is very costly to order from commissary, but it's the only way to not go hungry. All of what we eat in a day could be considered a meal and a snack to others, and that's if those people could even stomach the "food" they serve us. Besides food, we have hygiene and stationary supplies to keep up on as well.

On top of that, phone calls run nearly \$7 for a fifteen minute call. If we are forced to call our loved ones without phone cards or a contract in place, that call becomes \$10! Thankfully, our lawyers are amazing people, and are only taking money for gas and print quotas. Those are just the day-to-day costs of being a prisoner. In the future, we could have to worry about clothes for trial and possible fines pending the outcome of our case.

So again... thank you to everyone who has been able to donate! If you find it possible to contribute anything, we do and will greatly appreciate it. If you simply can not afford to, we understand and know that your thoughts, letters, and actions are very much appreciated as well.

Lastly, but certainly not in the least. I want to thank all of our loved ones out there to all of the friends and family out there missing us, waiting with open arms, we love you! Thanks again for all of the love and support. Hopefully we can see each other sooner than later on the outside.

11 Nov – Rumors, Misconceptions, and Changes by Walter Bond

Animal Liberation Front prisoner Walter Bond has been writing a lot lately. We're including his latest.

MORE:

Since my arrest certain rumors and misconceptions have plagued me. Two in particular, 1. that I am homophobic and 2. that I am anti-feminist. I have never been accused of either of these prejudices in my actual life by anyone that knows me. this bullshit only happened after my arrest partly by agent provocateurs that exploited the rumor mongers with in so called anarchist circles. These rumors were also aided by my one time belief and affiliation with Vegan hardline an ultra conservative and now defunct version of Vegan Straight Edge that I have since disavowed. Much of the anger and derision that I have faced from the feminist camp comes from the fact that I have held pro-life and anti abortion views for some years. In truth, I have never been an advocate of the pro life agenda in any capacity ever, it was just a personal belief that I held which has since changed. In a moment I will explain why, but first:

Homophobic- I am NOT now, nor have I EVER been homophobic, this one really pisses me off! I challenge anyone to produce one shred of evidence that I am against anything LGBTQ. On the contrary, I have been an active part of the LGBTQ community of Denver Colorado as an openly bi-sexual man. I tabled Pride Fest on more than one occasion and even used to work in the production of homo erotica. I have in fact acted in gay adult film.

Sexist- I am not sexist or misogynist either. I made a point to bring up the solidarity between the Animal Liberation movement and women's rights in my final statement to the court in Utah. While I have never been an activist on the street for women's liberation due to the fact that I worked a full time job and volunteered several hours at Animal Sanctuaries and the LGBT center and there is only so many hours in the day. I have never disregarded or discriminated against anyone on the basis of sex or gender.

Abortion- I came into the Straight Edge scene in the mid 90's in the Midwest where it was very conservative. Pro-life was seen as an extension of Animal lib to many of us. The idea was if you care about the lives of shrimp than you should care about the lives of the unborn for the sake of consistency. Holding the Anti-Civilization views that I do I have often seen abortion as the point where technology literally kills life. However, I have come to a point where my views on abortion have completely changed. As I have had time to really think these issues through there is no doubt in my mind that humans are detrimental to the Earth, Eco-systems, Environment, Animals and each other. I am, above all things, an Animal liberation operative. My voice speaks for Mother Earth and the Animal Nations first! The last thing the Earth and Animals need is more neurotic hairless apes to consume and maim them. The sterilization, contraception, and abortion of humanity is the birth and liberation of the Animal Nations which is far more important to the health of the planet and me personally than any political fetus fetish.

I hope this clears up the bullshit that the inkpot activists, pretend anarchists and agent provocateurs have tried to ruin my name with. Unfortunately, the last group of people that should have fallen for these bullshit accusations were the first to dig my fucking grave and proliferate my character assassination. It has worked. My physical

support has completely dried up. I have two hundred bucks on my account to buy commissary goods, so that I can remain Vegan, talk on the phone and send emails (yes, I get charged for that) for the next 8 years of my incarceration. I fought in the streets for liberation with everything I had, I fought in court for liberation with everything I had. I have been put in some of the most restrictive circumstances that the bureau of prisons ever dreamed up for political prisoners and now guess I will wither on the vine because of a few keyboard commandos. Good looking out, way to fuck over an actual ALF activist behind bars!

13 Nov - "This place is a warehouse" by Alex Hundert

Alex Hundert, another of the 2010 Toronto G20 "Main Conspiracy" prisoners has been writing from prison and we've included his latest.

MORE:

When people talk about prisons in popular Canadian discourse, they tend to be speaking about the Federal system. This is in part because it is relatively uniform across the country in terms of its governance, whereas Provincial systems inherently vary from province to province. As a result, the provincial systems are very rarely put under the public microscope and this has allowed for some dramatic differences which amount to severely sub-standard conditions for people imprisoned by the Province. This is especially true in Ontario, the province which has far more imprisoned people than any other.

In practice there are so many more *things* – both objects and activities, facilities and programs – that people in prison in Federal penitentiaries have access to in comparison to people in provincial prisons, and this leads to a substantive difference in the material conditions in our standard of living. In theory, *things* that are understood to be "rights" or "entitlements" in federal institutions are considered to be "privileges" for people imprisoned by the province.

In the federal system if prison authorities try to take things away – be they services, programs or objects – they are (to some extent) held accountable through popular expression and democratic process by means of elected Inmate Committees, which exist not by favour of the institution but by mandate of correctional services Canada to function as both a representative voice and an organizing body for imprisoned people. In the provincial system where Ontario's Ministry of Correctional Services affords no such rights, the few things we have are used to control the people imprisoned here. With no protections for our rights and no meaningful accountability or oversight, the effect is that we are imprisoned in what is functionally no more than a high security warehouse.

Gordan Gatt, 53, has spent more than half his life behind bars – more than 20 years between 4 different federal penitentiaries, and more than a decade in provincial prisons. He has been on Unit 5A at the Central North Correctional Centre – a provincial facility – for almost 2 years now.

For Gatt, there is a "hundred times difference" between the federal and provincial systems that can be summed up in a single word: "freedom." For him, one of the most meaningful facets is the simple fact that in federal prison cells, "you have everything...you make your cell yours." He describes having a lamp, television, radio, and shelves filled with personal items, even plants. He also talks about the wide array of food available for purchase and the ability to prepare for oneself on the unit. These are all things that we do not have in provincial prisons.

Here, the guards can make us take pictures down from cell walls for punitive or arbitrary reasons, because, as they have made it clear to me, having pictures on our walls is a "privilege" we are "not entitled to." Gatt says that in a federal prison "that would never happen."

While there has always been a difference between the two systems, according to Gatt, it has become significantly more pronounced in recent years. When I ask him about what needs to change in provincial prisons he says, "it should go back to the way it used to be" [before super jails and spending cuts].

Before the province started making per-prisoner spending cuts in the provincial system, there used to be access to gyms, people were not 'locked out' of their cells all day, there were fewer 'lock-downs,' and there was far more 'rehabilitative programming' available to imprisoned people. For example, when the most recent cutbacks

resulted in earlier nightly lockups at the CNCC, one impact was that all evening programs and those run by volunteers – literacy, alcoholics anonymous, bible study – seemed to have simply disappeared.

Joel LaRoche, 47, has spent 10 years in the federal system and 6 years provincial. He too says that there is a “big difference” between the two systems. Citing everything from visiting policies to the quality of food to the fact that in federal prisons people do not have to wear prison issued uniforms – “you get to wear your own clothes,” he says. He emphasizes the ability in the federal system to work for pay instead of as free labour in provincial intuitions. He also says that in federal prisons “your movement is better,” by which he means there are more opportunities to leave the unit and to do so in a fashion that less resembles being herded from place to place. “It’s not right what they’re doing here,” says LaRoche in summation, “It’s violating my rights as a human.”

I ask LaRoche what he thinks accounts for the drastic difference in treatment between the two systems. “There’s only one reason,” he tells me, “and that’s the committee [providing] a voice for the inmates.” He adds, “it’s definitely not the government,” meaning that it is not any action being taken by the government that makes the federal prisons better.

When I suggest there are actually substantial legislative differences between the two systems, here is what he said: “If [the policy] were anything close to the same, this warehousing would not be happening...what do they think they are trying accomplish? Why would you take away a man’s quality of life? Is that going to make him better? No, it’s going to make him bitter and more violent.”

Jason Brown, 37, has spent more than 12 years imprisoned with over 4 of those in the provincial system. While at the Fenbrook federal pen he served as secretary of the inmate committee there. Correctional Services Canada mandates that there be a committee “who assists in the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates into communities as law abiding citizens,” and “to establish a means for inmates to provide input providing institutional operations, thus contributing to safe and secure operations” [there is no equivalent provincial policy].

I ask Brown what, in his words, the committee does. “It went to bat for the inmates,” he tells me. “If [the prison is] impinging on your rights,” he says, “the committee makes sure they’re held accountable for whatever decisions they make.” Here at the CNCC, and in other provincial prisons, there is no one who holds the institution accountable.

In the provincial system “they basically lock you up whenever they want...I don’t want to use the word,” Brown says recognizing the hyperbole in what he is about to say, “that is a lot like a dictatorship.”

Brown goes on to describe Provincial prisons as places where “guys are walking around like either zombies or machines” with nothing to do but wait for their release dates. “I know it’s cliché”, he says, “but it’s hell.”

“The provincial system is not what it was 10 years ago,” Brown explains, echoing what Gordan Gatt told me. Recognizing the impact of “all the cuts,” he says that currently “they don’t really do anything to prepare you for your release.”

I ask Brown what should be changed. “They would have to do it similarly to the Federal system...I don’t know where to start cause there is so much that has be done here,” he tells me. I ask him for a specific suggestion. He says “more rehabilitation.”

I ask Brown to sum up his position. “They treat you more human in the federal system. Here they treat you like cattle. We’re a warehouse.”

Chad Mauthe, also 37, has spent nearly 8 years in the Federal system and 5 provincial. When I ask him about the difference, he says, “you seem to have more rights when you’re in Federal, they seem to care a little bit more, they’re not just warehousing you.” He emphasized both the quantitative and qualitative differences in what he

calls “extra-curricular activities” – work times, access to facilities and programs, etc. In federal prisons he says there are “more things to take your mind off frustrations. Here we’re just penned up.” He laments the “quality of life in here...you don’t really have anything to do except walk around, read the paper, and watch music videos.”

Mouthe notes that in provincial prisons “there is a lot less contact...your community support is cut off from you” because of visiting policies and practices and due to the exorbitant cost of phone calls. This is something also mentioned by each Gatt, LaRoche, and Brown.

“Here they hold your privileges over your head,” Mouthe says. “Work and programs are treated like a privilege,” he explains, telling me that while at federal prisons “work” is still exploitative, at least there is some payment. “Here,” he says, “getting off the range – the privilege – is your payment.”

When I ask Mouthe what needs to be done to change things I’m surprised by his initial response. “They should build more jails” [in order to provide more specified programming in less crowded facilities]. I suggest to him that many of the people who support prisoners would find that solution unacceptable as it is often said that building more prisons directly leads to the imprisonment of more people. Here is his response: “I don’t believe in warehousing. I don’t think a guy should come to jail just because he has done something wrong...if there are community options available, obviously that is preferable...the laws are too tough...but I also think the world would be fucked without jails.”

I disagree with the last part of Mouthe’s statement. I want to live in a world without jails. But here is what I do agree with: if we want to live in a world without prisons, we need to seriously improve community based supports for people, and we need to develop and implement alternative justice models. But we cannot allow conditions in these warehouse-like super jails to continue deteriorating while we struggle to build those kinds of communities.

The provincial prison system in Ontario is a disgrace. But I need to recognize that I have great trepidation contrasting the provincial and federal systems during a week in which I have spent so much time thinking about the torturous abuse endured by Ashley Smith before she was killed by the federal prison system that I consider this: all four of the people interviewed for this piece have spent substantial time in both systems and each are saying unequivocally that provincial prisons are much worse places.

Both systems are expanding and both are getting worse. The new provincial prisons being built are much like this one – superjails – and due to the reality of the conservative government’s so-called tough on crime agenda, the new prisons soon will too be overcrowded. And like the already existing prisons, they too will be filled with people from communities disproportionately targeted by increasing militarized policing and disproportionately impacted by existing and upcoming austerity measures being enacted by all levels of government. These places are warehouses for people from targeted communities – communities of colour, immigrants, poor people, indigenous people, and people disabled by inadequate supports for mental health.

I’d like to conclude with the following digression: in that other world that is possible – the one that it has been said we might be able to hear “breathing on a quiet day” – there are indeed no more prisons. But in that world there’s also no more rape and no more routinized, systematized or sanctioned violence against women. There are community-based solutions for people with substance abuse problems and structural supports easily accessible for everyone’s mental health needs. In that other world that is possible all of our communities are actively and vigilantly anti-racist, and we have social justice and egalitarian economies, and there is healing. In that other world that is possible, we no longer use the word ‘crime’ and when people have violated collective agreements or caused harm to other persons we work together to seek restorative justice and balance.

Prison abolition is a necessary part of a just and sustainable world. While we struggle for that world there are immediate reforms that we can make today to include the lives of people imprisoned in these warehouses. And while we make for immediate reforms of unjust systems, which we must, we would also be wise to always remember that Indian activist Arundhati Roy was right; another world is possible, and on a quiet day, even in here, I too can hear her breathing.

14 Nov - Writing Updates for November 2012 by Kelly Pflug-Back

Yet another Canadian G20 prisoner, Kelly Pflug-Back, recently wrote to update folks on some of her writing.

MORE:

So, this November officially marks the half-way point of my sentence – which is pretty exciting. My infinite thanks go out to everyone who has shown their support, either directly or indirectly. While I do like getting letters from strangers, I am regrettably not always able to write back because a) envelopes cost money and b) I don't always have the energy. Furthermore, I'm going to request that nobody send me any creepy/flirtatious mail. It's fucking gross – if you send me anything containing comments about my appearance or other such lecherous “flattery”, not only will I not reply... I will also read your letter to the rest of the women on my cell block so we can assuage our boredom by laughing our asses off at you. Seriously, sending anything of that nature to a female prisoner just shows that you lack any notion of true political solidarity. It's also condescending as hell.

In other news, [a new poem of mine](#) is published in the current issue of [Goblin Fruit magazine](#) and my two most recent articles are available in the current print editions of [Iconoclast](#) and [OBSOLETE! Magazine](#). The former, which my partner and I co-wrote, is about why the rhetoric of “ethical consumerism” is not necessarily conducive to animal liberation or environmental sustainability, and the latter is an interview with Canadian painter Martha Eileen about her ongoing fight against the institutionalization of people with disabilities. To learn more about the present and historical abuse and neglect of people with disabilities in Canada's health care and education systems, check out the group [People First of Canada](#), or author and activist AJ Withers' home page, [Still My Revolution](#). While I will soon enough be free from incarceration, this is unfortunately not the case for countless people, both in Canada and worldwide, whose only crime is having been born different from what society deems “able bodied.”

If you're curious about what day to day life in jail is like, check out Mandy Hiscocks' blog, [Bored But Not Broken](#). She's also a G20 prisoner, and she posts regular updates on the riveting events here at the Vanier Centre For Women.

14 Nov - Appeal from Marshall Conway for Friend of a Friend Program

The Friend of a Friend (FOF) program was started by a group of concerned men at the Maryland Correctional Training Center, including Marshall "Eddie" Conway, and the staff of the American Friends Service Committee in 2006. Now it's being threatened and Eddie is asking for our help to restore the program.

MORE:

Several of us men had come together to address the violence between various street organizations and because of we were concerned about the increasingly young prison population. I had worked with the American Friends Service Committee for several years prior to the closure of the Maryland House of Corrections, and knew they were willing to continue their work with prisoners. Collectively we created the foundation for what would eventually become a system-wide program serving five Maryland prisons.

Over the years the FOF has worked with several hundred prisoners and reached thousands of other prisoners through our outreach programs that include theater productions and guest lecturers from Howard University and Morgan State University. FOF has earned the respect of the Maryland prison population by setting a positive example for others to follow. The real impact of the program is that it has saved many prisoners from engaging in conflicts that could have led to the loss of life and/or additional time spent in prison. Saving lives is the most important task of the FOF program, and members incorporate methods that help younger prisoners gain the skills to negotiate the prison environment and the community beyond the walls.

FOF has been successful at bringing prisoners together from all walks of life; many of whom have differing philosophical and/or political ideologies. This is unique in the prison environment where people tend to segregate according to their specific political, religious or gang/street organization affiliation. Coming together like this allows us to get to know one another and bond during the weekly sessions. This is important because it

allows prisoners from these backgrounds to get to know each other, and these relationships allow the FOF to negotiate disputes between members of these different groups. This leads to dialogue rather than violent conflict, and many of these prisoners return to the outside community and work with children and youth, and organizations such as AFSC. There is a broader sense of community and camaraderie among prisoners because the program exists throughout the system.

In this program we help prisoners, (78% are of African descent in the system in Maryland) understand their culture and history as well as their individual impact on their community. They are encouraged to accept responsibility and to create change in those communities. I believe for these reasons alone it is viewed by some Public Safety officials as a threat to the growth of the Prison Industrial Complex. While prison officials claim to have the best interest of the community at heart, their real interest is in their paychecks and positions of power. Programs like FOF break the cycle of re-incarceration and help prisoners to successfully re-enter the community. While FOF has worked to increase the peace in the prison system and the community beyond, other forces have continually attacked the program and worked to prevent unity among prisoners. Now, once again we have to defend our program from these attempts to get rid of it, and we need the help of everyone concerned with peace and justice so that we might keep up this work that has benefitted so many people. WE MUST SAVE A FRIEND OF A FRIEND!

Please join our supporters around the country for a call-in to Maryland Secretary of Public Safety, Gary Maynard. The number is [410-339-6005](tel:410-339-6005). Insist that this program be reinstated. Please feel free to email Gary Maynard at gmaynard@dpscs.state.md.us as well.

For further information please contact Benjamin Woods at [607-339-8188](tel:607-339-8188) or bwoods@afsc.org

15 Nov - Norberto Gonzalez Claudio, Puerto Rican Nationalist Gets 5 Years In Robbery

Norberto Gonzalez Claudio, who helped plan the 1983, seven million dollar heist of an armored car, as a leader of Los Macheteros, was captured by the FBI last year in Puerto Rico and pleaded guilty in June.

MORE:

The 67-year-old man was sentenced Wednesday to five years in prison for his role in a record-breaking, \$7 million robbery carried out in Connecticut nearly 30 years ago by a militant group dedicated to independence for Puerto Rico.

The graying nationalist said through a Spanish interpreter in U.S. District Court in Hartford that nothing is more important to him than his family.

"I would like to be with my family as soon as possible," he said.

The sentencing of Gonzalez brings the U.S. government as close as it may ever get to resolving the crime: The only remaining fugitive in the case, alleged stickup man Victor Gerena, is believed to be living in Cuba, outside the reach of American law enforcement.

The first indictment was delivered in 1985 and a total of 19 defendants were charged including Gonzalez's older brother, Avelino, who was sentenced in 2010 to seven years in prison after spending more than two decades as a fugitive. A third brother, Orlando, was also convicted of taking part in the robbery and was among family members in the courtroom Wednesday to support Norberto.

"This is kind of an end of an era for this district," defense attorney Richard Reeve said.

Norberto Gonzalez has been detained since he was arrested in May 2011 in the central island town of Cayey, where he had been living under a false name. U.S. authorities said he still had an active role in the Macheteros, which claimed responsibility for robberies, murders and bombings in the 1970s and '80s.

In June, he pleaded guilty to foreign transportation of stolen money, conspiracy to rob federally insured bank

funds and illegal weapons possession.

His wife, Elda Santiago, said that Gonzalez is happy because he feels he is going to prison in the name of independence for Puerto Rico.

"He feels he is completing his patriotic duty," she said after the hearing.

Gonzalez was also sentenced to pay restitution of not less than \$250 a month toward the stolen \$7.1 million. The U.S. government has not recovered any of the stolen money, which authorities believe was used to finance bombings and attacks in the militant group's push for independence.

The brazen holdup of the Wells Fargo depot on Sept. 12, 1983, in West Hartford, was the largest cash robbery in U.S. history at the time.

Authorities say it was carried out by Gerena, a Wells Fargo driver recruited by the Macheteros. He allegedly took two co-workers hostage at gunpoint, handcuffed them and injected them with an unknown substance to temporarily disable them. Gerena is one of the FBI's 10 Most Wanted fugitives, and the FBI is offering a reward of \$1 million for information leading to his arrest.

"Justice in this case is not yet absolute and will not be until Victor Gerena, the alleged mastermind of the Wells Fargo robbery, is captured and himself brought to justice," said Kimberly Mertz, special agent in charge of the FBI in Connecticut.

15 Nov - Ann Hansen's Statement On Her Recent Arrest, Imprisonment and Release

On August 3, 2012, Ann Hansen, a former member of Direct Action, an underground anarchist group active in the 1980s, was arrested and had her parole suspended for 'unauthorized associations and political activity' in the context of growing anti-prison organizing in Kingston, Canada's prison capital.

MORE:

Ann, with the advice of her lawyer, chose to not publicize her arrest until after her parole hearing. On October 30, the Parole Board canceled her parole suspension and released her on stricter conditions. This is her first public statement regarding her arrest and imprisonment.

On August 3, I was at my home near Kingston, Ontario, sitting in a lawn chair after supper when out of the corner of my eye I saw a line of black SUVs speeding towards our driveway. With a sinking feeling, I realized one of my reoccurring fears as a parolee was becoming a reality. Four SUVs turned into our driveway, slammed on their brakes and out hopped about six to eight cops from the Ontario Provincial Police dressed in full Darth Vader gear with a couple of them brandishing automatic weapons for full dramatic effect. As I struggled to stay calm, I noticed the acronym ROPE (Re-Offenders and Parole Enforcement Squad) in bright yellow blazoned across their bullet proof vests.

They parked askew all over the driveway, and while a couple of them with their fully automatic rifles took positions at the top of our property, the rest walked rapidly up to where I was and handcuffed me without saying a word. I asked the one female cop what this was all about and she said my parole was being suspended.

I spent a few days at the local remand center, Quinte Detention Centre, before a new parole officer (my regular parole officer was suddenly replaced) and a Security Intelligence Officer (SIO) from Correctional Service Canada (CSC) came to see me for a post suspension interview. They spent an hour and a half interrogating me and trying to intimidate me into giving them the names of anyone involved in [EPIC \(End the Prison Industrial Complex\)](#) or any other anti-prison activists, as well as information about any possible "bombings and arsons" which the SIO warned me I would be responsible for "if it all went sideways." Needless to say, they were not satisfied when I told them I didn't have names for them. The interview would have made a hilarious Monty Python script with the SIO comparing me at times to Ghandi and then in the next breath to [James Holmes](#), the

“joker” who killed twelve people during the Batman film in Colorado. The outcome of the interview wasn’t quite so hilarious.

On August 13, I was transferred to the maximum security unit at Grand Valley Prison for Women in Kitchener. Ten days earlier I had been lounging in my slippers in a lawn chair after supper, and here I was suddenly transformed into a high security federal prisoner who had to be put in leg irons and handcuffs just to be led from the admitting area into one of the pods of the maximum security unit. It was so funny, I felt like crying.

A few weeks later I received parole papers stating that the CSC parole office was “strongly recommending” that my parole be revoked with a long list of reasons why. As I suspected, the library was the scene of the ‘crime;’ I was not charged with any actual crime. The ROPE squad had arrived the day after I had screened a film about [Prisoners’ Justice Day \(PJD\)](#) at the Kingston Public Library. The film was followed by a ‘direct action workshop’ conducted by a lawyer who explained what to expect at a blockade/picket, which was to be held at the entrance to Collins Bay Penitentiary on PJD. These ‘direct action workshops’ have become commonplace globally as training workshops for large scale demonstrations or civil disobedience actions in order to familiarize people with the legality of different kinds of activities. They also teach people how to participate in large consensus decision-making processes, how to interact with the media, what to do if one is arrested and other skills necessary for protests.

The planned [Prisoners’ Justice Day blockade/picket of Collins Bay](#) was the most obvious reason why my parole was suspended, but there were many other ‘reasons’ listed based on paranoid suspicions that are not worth the time and effort of explaining. It is worth noting, however, the political context in Ontario, which provides the most logical reasons for my parole suspension. I believe that the reasons for my parole suspension are similar to the [G20 Main Conspiracy Group prosecution](#); that is, ‘preventative security measures’ aimed at arresting people before any ‘illegal act’ is even committed. These kinds of measures are used not only to disrupt political actions but also to have a chilling effect on political resistance in general. They put us on the defensive and force us to fight for our basic rights, which are supposedly entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It could be viewed as a sad day indeed when we are reduced to fight for our basic human rights, but I think it is actually a sign of the strength of our resistance. In the minds of the authorities, they are so threatened by the potential of our movements that they are reduced to trying to pre-empt our organizing efforts by arresting us for going to meetings, speaking out, and demonstrating, which are supposed to be legal activities even in a capitalist society.

I think the back story to the latest rounds of preemptive arrests in Ontario begins in the year leading up to the Toronto G20 Summit in 2010 when undercover cops were embedded in the Guelph and Kitchener/Waterloo anarchist communities. Billions of dollars were spent on police security and intelligence gathering in the year leading up to and including the actual days of demonstrations against the G20 Summit. We see similar police preparations occurring now to counter organizing against the Alberta tar sands and the [line nine pipeline reversal](#) in Ontario.

In Kingston, local police forces were no doubt taken by surprise by the sudden emergence of a relatively large and diverse movement to stop the closure of the [prison farms](#) in 2009. Prison abolitionists saw this as an opening move to free up land and money at Collins Bay Penitentiary to construct a regional superprison, as outlined in the government’s “[Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety](#).” In August 2010, hundreds of people in Kingston participated in a [two-day blockade of the entrance to Collins Bay and Frontenac Institutions](#) to prevent the removal of the prison farm cattle herd. The local cops were not prepared for the size of the movement and had to call in provincial police reinforcements on the second day. There were twenty-four arrests. Local prison abolitionists had also begun organizing against the plans for a massive prison expansion, which by 2012 has translated into the construction of six new prison units in the Kingston area alone.

In the months leading up to August 10, 2012, local prison abolitionists and some people involved in the prison farms campaign worked to organize for Prisoners’ Justice Day. Across the city, posters invited people to participate in an early morning blockade/picket of Collins Bay to halt construction on the new prisons as an act of solidarity with the prisoners fasting and refusing to work inside the walls. In the minds of the cops and CSC, visions of hordes of anarchists and outraged locals danced in their heads. Based on the ludicrous expectations for

PJD expressed by the CSC during my Quinte interrogation, I don't think it would have surprised them if 'what to their wondering eyes should appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer.'

For three months I waited for my revocation hearing with the Parole Board. It's hard to be optimistic inside the maximum security unit where [Ashley Smith died](#), and [Nyki Kish](#) waits for her appeal after being convicted of a murder she did not commit. It's always easier to do time when you have nothing to lose, but in my case I live with two others on a small self-sufficient farm and work with a great community of comrades locally, so I have a lot to lose. In the end the Parole Board released me with stricter conditions on October 30, 2012.

There is no doubt in my mind that I would have spent many more years in prison without the tireless support of a network of friends, family, anarchist allies and a good lawyer. It becomes clear in prison, that all the efforts of the CSC are directed towards isolating the prisoner from their networks of support both inside and outside the walls. I owe my 'freedom' to all those who supported me throughout this episode of my life, and I just hope I can reciprocate through my solidarity and by continuing the joyous lifestyle of resistance!!

19 Nov - Courts Dates for NATO 5

The remaining four of the NATO Five have court dates coming up. We've included details below.

MORE:

When: Tuesday, November 20, 2012 - 4:00am

Where: Cook County Criminal Courthouse 2700 S California, Room 502, Chicago

On November 19th and 20th, the remaining NATO 5 members will be appearing in court. These dates mark six months at Cook County Jail for our comrades - which is six months too long.

Join us in showing support for our imprisoned brothers by attending these hearings. They notice when friends are in attendance and it sends a clear message to the state: The NATO 5 are never forgotten.

SOLIDARITY IS A VERB.

November 19th: Brent, Jacob, and Jared in room 303 at 10am

November 20th: Mark (Migs) in room 502 at 10am

Noise demo and rally on the 20th: <https://www.facebook.com/events/373399902750226/>

**** IF YOU ARE GOING INSIDE THE COURTHOUSE DIRECTLY AFTER THE RALLY, KEEP IN MIND THAT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WILL NOT GET PAST SECURITY:**

http://www.cookcountysheriff.org/courtservices/CourtServices_ProhibitedI...

(also no cameras, MP3 players, or phone chargers) **

2 Dec – Sent Love Through the Walls with NYC ABC and Resistance in Brooklyn

In what many prisoners have told us is their favorite event of the year, Resistance in Brooklyn and NYC Anarchist Black Cross again join forces to bring you the annual holiday card-writing party for U.S. held political prisoners and prisoners of war.

MORE:

WHAT: Send Love Through The Walls Holiday Card-Writing For Political Prisoners

WHEN: 3:00-8:00pm, Sunday, December 2nd, 2012

WHERE: [263 Eastern Parkway](#), Apartment 5D (Direction Below) phone: [718.783.8141](tel:718.783.8141)

COST: FREE (Donations to cover the cost of stamps greatly appreciated)

This event is always a lot of fun, the food outstanding, the camaraderie lively, and the handmade cards flat out amazing. This year will be no different. So plan to bring your friends, your creativity, and a healthy appetite. We'll have updates on the pp/pow campaigns as well as paints, markers, crayons, and envelopes.

Directions:

Getting to 263 Eastern Parkway is simple:
From the [2/3/4/5](#) or [Franklin Avenue Shuttle](#):

Franklin Avenue Stop:

Walk west on Eastern Parkway (away from Franklin Avenue, toward Classon Avenue). We're about half a block down on the north side of the street. When you go into the building, take the elevator to your left.

For more information, contact:

Resistance in Brooklyn– [mmmsrnb at igc dot org](mailto:mmmsrnb@igc.org)

NYC Anarchist Black Cross– [nycabc at riseup dot net](mailto:nycabc@riseup.net)

7 Dec – Homecoming Holiday Party for Daniel McGowan

Daniel McGowan is a Brooklyn-born environmental and social justice activist, political prisoner and the subject of the Oscar-nominated documentary film, If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front. Family & Friends of Daniel McGowan have marked the anniversary of Daniel's arrest on December 7, 2005, with a variety of events in the past. This December, Daniel is finally getting released from prison and coming to a halfway house in Brooklyn. To celebrate, we are having a straight up PARTY.

MORE:

Please come join our celebration the evening of Friday, December 7, 2012, 7:00-11:00 pm at The Commons.

We'll have music, snacks, and drinks, and lots of fun holiday surprises. Whether you're a long-time supporter or joining us for the first time, you're more than welcome and you don't want to miss it! We are accepting cash donations and gift cards. (see below)

Friday, December 7th, 7-11pm

@ The Commons

388 Atlantic Avenue

Brooklyn, New York 11217

****Please also consider helping Daniel by contributing towards some of the things he will need for his transition back home. We have created a special online registry for those items needed:**

<http://www.simpleregistry.com/welcomedanielhome>

Alternatively, if you'd prefer to give a gift card, please choose from the following stores:

Apple store

Amazon

Century 21

H&M

JCPenney

MooShoes

REI

Red Bamboo (NYC veg restaurant)

Staples

Target

Uniqlo

Whole Foods

Zappos

<http://www.supportdaniel.org/morehelp/welcomehome.php>