

Updates for December 24th

10 Dec - In Context: Lynne Stewart and the Perversion of Compassionate Release

We've included updates on Lynne Stewart, as well as how to take part in the ongoing campaign to secure compassionate release and an article by Ward Churchill.

MORE:

The clock is ticking. Several months ago, people's attorney Lynne Stewart, currently serving a 10-year federal sentence for the supposed "material support to terrorism" she rendered by properly representing an unpopular islamist client, was diagnosed as suffering from terminal cancer. Since then, her condition has steadily deteriorated, and at this point the prognosis is that she has at most 14-16 months remaining. In accordance with the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 which provides for the "compassionate release" of prisoners facing exactly such situations—especially those who are both elderly and pose no demonstrable threat to society—Stewart has requested that she be sent home.

On September 6, she received notice that warden Jody Upton of the federal medical center at Carswell (Texas), where Stewart is now confined, had duly submitted her recommendation for an expeditious release to Bureau of Prisons director Charles E. Samuels, Jr. Since Stewart will be 74 on October 8, has never been convicted of or otherwise tied to any violent act, and is afflicted with a cancer-induced collapse of her immune system requiring her isolation from the general prison population under continuous intensive care, this one should've been a no-brainer. Yet, as of October 1, Samuels has maintained a conspicuous silence on the matter.

As many readers are undoubtedly aware, it's the second time 'round the block on this score. On April 26, Stewart was notified that Warden Upton had submitted a recommendation to Samuels that she be granted a compassionate release at the earliest possible date. The recommendation was seconded by J.A. Keller, director of the BoP's south central regional office while, at the behest of former attorney general Ramsey Clark, the federal probation office in Stewart's home town of New York conducted an expedited review of her plan for post-release domicile, treatment at Sloan-Kettering Hospital, etc., and approved it. Samuels of its approval at about the same time he received the others' recommendations. After that... Silence.

Finally, on June 24, Samuels denied Stewart's request, ostensibly because her medical condition was improving and, in any case, since her life expectancy was greater than 12 months, she was ineligible for release under BoP guidelines. Both claims were spurious. The closest anything said by the doctors at Carswell came to indicating that Stewart's health was "improving" was an observation that she seemed to be responding well to a particular chemotherapy regime and that it should therefore be continued (thus slowing the rate at which her cancer was killing her). As to the "less-than-a-year-to-live standard," there's nothing, either in the 1984 Act or in the Justice Department's directives implementing it, specifying a 12-month threshold for eligibility. In other words, Samuels was invoking no authority other than his own in denying Stewart's request.

Her attorneys quickly appealed the decision to New York federal district judge John Koettl, who'd presided at Stewart's trial—and who, as will be discussed below, carries considerable baggage as a result—and a hearing was conducted on August 8. The upshot was that Koettl, while purporting personal outrage at the denial, professed to be powerless to alter the situation: "If I order her release, I'll be breaking the law" (i.e., the 1984 Act, which constrains judges from granting compassionate release without being petitioned to do so by the BoP). Setting aside the obvious question of why, assuming he actually believed what he said in this regard, Koettl opted to waste everyone's time and energy—to say nothing of raising false hopes among Stewart and her loved ones—by scheduling a hearing at all, perhaps some good may still have come of the whole charade: Koettl at least pronounced himself ready to sign an order for Stewart's release immediately upon receipt of the requisite

paperwork from the BoP.

Enter now the DoJ, which has been having its own problems with the inordinately low proportion of requests for compassionate release by plainly qualified prisoners approved by the bureau—an average of only two dozen per year for the past 30 years—a performance that has increasingly generated negative attention in today’s budget environment (incarcerating aged, sick prisoners is incredibly expensive on a per capita basis, even under the abysmal conditions prevailing in most U.S. penal institutions). Apparently, there’s been some serious backroom arm-twisting going on because, among other things, the magic number triggering eligibility for compassionate release in the BoP guidelines was lately—and rather suddenly—changed from 12 months life-expectancy to 18 months.

Stewart’s prognosis places her well within the newly-revised range. Hence, her renewed request. Yet, as was noted at the outset, the clock is ticking—as it has been for the past five months—and there’s no more indication that director Samuels is prepared to approve Stewart’s release than there ever was. The situation underscores an unstated but nonetheless uniform and longstanding policy of U.S. officials—and not only those in the BoP—to make “deterrent examples” of political prisoners, a posture that translates in part into an extreme reluctance to grant them early release under any circumstances, no matter how dire.

In this connection, the concept of “compassion” is even more alien to Those In Charge than it’s been with respect to the general prison population, a reality eloquently witnessed in the recent example of Marilyn Buck, diagnosed with terminal uterine cancer in November 2009, but not granted release from Carswell until July 15, 2010, with barely enough time to make it home to Brooklyn before dying on August 3. Such grotesquely vindictive official behavior was plainly grounded in the fact that Buck, who was 62 when she died, and who had already spent 33 years in prison—including a lengthy stint in the BoP’s now-defunct underground control unit for women at Lexington, Kentucky, during the late-80s—as the result of her engagement in explicitly political activities, consistently refused to recant her core values and beliefs.

There is no mistaking the message: A tremendous price can and will be extracted by the BoP and its counterparts from prisoners, especially political prisoners, deemed “guilty” of maintaining their personal integrity/fundamental human dignity behind the walls. It’s unquestionable that Lynne Stewart fits the description perfectly and it’s therefore impossible to avoid the conclusion that her ongoing incarceration as her life ebbs away constitutes a politically-motivated form of cruel and unusual punishment, in essence a crime against humanity. It must be understood as such, responded to accordingly, and the same principle applied in the cases of a number of other “political” held in U.S. prisons after decades of time served and despite their advanced ages and steadily-deteriorating health/increasing degrees of infirmity.

Here, Leonard Peltier, Ruchelle Magee, Chip Fitzgerald, Hugo Pinell, Mondo we Langa, Ed Poindexter, Jalil Muntaqim, Herman Bell, Sundiata Acoli, Sekou Odinga, Marshall Eddie Conway, Seth Hayes, Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace, Maroon Shoats, Mutulu Shakur, the Move 9, Oscar López Rivera, Bill Dunne, Veronza Bowers, Jaan Laaman, Tom Manning, Judy Clark, and David Gilbert all spring readily mind, and that’s to list but a few. In any system of justice remotely worthy of the name, each of these prisoners, and many others, would long since have been released on compassionate or other grounds. Witness the fact that even in Germany—a country seldom cited as an exemplar of humanitarianism—every surviving member of the Red Army Faction has been returned to the street.

That the U.S. adamantly refuses to follow suit speaks volumes.

Punctuating this grim reality, is another: While the BoP and collaborating agencies have effectively nullified the very idea of compassionate release in “the land of the free,” stonewalling its application in cases such as Stewart’s—where even the trial judge took time during her original sentencing to commend her lifetime of unstinting public service—those same entities have been simultaneously employing the relevant criteria, albeit under or as supplements to other rubrics, to release mafiosi and other such bona fide miscreants. A recent example is that of Ray Ruggiero, a capo in New York’s Genovese crime family, who was a heavy in the

organization's south Florida operations from 1994 until he pled guilty in 2007 to playing the key role in a RICO conspiracy involving extortion, loan sharking, money laundering, and substantial violence.

In February 2012, Miami federal district judge James Cohn, responding to arguments from the DoJ and a BoP petition, ordered Ruggiero's immediate release after he'd served less than half his already much-reduced sentence. The DoJ/BoP position was not only that the mobster had "earned" an early exit by "cooperating with the government" and providing unspecified but "substantial" assistance to the DoJ in pursuing other mafia cases, but also that he was deserving because he was by then 78 years old, suffered from a heart condition and diabetes, and had already been confined for several years in prisons a considerable distance from home, making it difficult for his family to visit him.

A still more recent example is that of Joe Massino, former boss of the Bonanno crime family, who faced the death penalty on instruction of then-attorney general John Ashcroft and was in any event sentenced to a double-life term in federal prison upon being convicted of heading up a vast and routinely lethal RICO conspiracy in 2004. In July 2013, New York federal district judge Nicholas Garaufis ordered Massino's release after he'd served a little over 10 years. Like Cohn, Garaufis was responding to arguments from the DoJ, accompanied by a BoP petition, to the effect that Massino's testimony against other mafia notables—unprecedented for a mobster of his high station—had been a major breakthrough in the DoJ's ostensible "war on organized crime," and that he'd thus earned a get out of jail card. However, as in the Ruggiero case, it was also argued that compassion was warranted since the 70-year-old Massino was suffering "serious health problems" that would "almost certainly limit his longevity significantly."

Not uncommonly, such things never even reach the point of requiring BoP participation. A classic example is that of Greg Scarpa, a truly vicious thug prominent in the Columbo crime family and nicknamed "The Grim Reaper" by his gangland cohorts. After entering a guilty plea in 1986 to a charge of largescale credit card fraud (i.e., racketeering), an offense carrying a penalty of seven years plus a quarter-million dollar fine, he was sentenced by New York federal district judge I. Leo Glasser to a mere five years probation plus \$10,000, walking out of court a free man. Scarpa was spared imprisonment at the request of the FBI, another subpart of the DoJ, citing the fact that Scarpa had been diagnosed with AIDS and, so claimed the bureau, had only a few months to live. In light of the fact that Scarpa was at the time secretly classified as a "top echelon mob informant," there's a distinct possibility that the FBI knowingly misrepresented his condition. Be that as it may, he not only lived for another six years, but remained homicidally active during most of them.

Before pleading guilty again in May 1993, this time to three murders and conspiracy to commit several others—the evidence indicates that his career body count was at least 26, and may well have exceeded fifty—Scarpa conducted the "Third Columbo War," through which he sought to take control of the family. Setting aside the question of whether his FBI handler, senior agent Lin DeVecchio, was directly complicit in several of Scarpa's murders—à la the notorious case of John Connolly, mob boss Whitey Bulger's handler in Boston—it was by then clear that not only had its "star informant" never provided the FBI with anything resembling reliable "intelligence," he may well have been playing the bureau to facilitate false convictions against gangland adversaries (in at least two instances, there is evidence that bogus information provided by Scarpa led to guilty verdicts against his opponents for murders that he himself committed).

Even then, the FBI and DoJ conducted themselves in a manner best described as serving Scarpa's interests, leaving uncontested a renewal of his claim that since his AIDS infection left him little time to live putting him behind bars would be inhumane. Although Scarpa faced an all but automatic life sentence, New York federal district judge John B. Weinstein responded by reducing it to 10 years—making The Grim Reaper eligible for parole in only 34 months—an astonishingly lenient penalty, also unchallenged by the DoJ. It's hardly a stretch to adduce that a principle akin to compassionate release was once again involved, a priori, in the relatively gentle treatment accorded Scarpa. Unfortunately for him, however, the prognosis he recited was in this instance accurate; Scarpa died of AIDS-related maladies in the federal medical center at Rochester, Minnesota, in June 1994, having served less than 14 months.

The courts' and the DoJ's comportment in the Scarpa cases may be usefully compared to that of both the

department and the judge in Stewart's. First off, following her February 2005 conviction, sentencing had to be delayed for nearly eighteen months while Stewart was undergoing treatment for breast cancer, so all parties were fully aware of her illness. In the interim, she requested that, in view of her age, history of cancer and more general health problems, the judge exercise his discretion in sentencing, afforded him by the U.S. supreme court in *U.S. v. Booker* (2005), to simply forego prison time in favor of a noncustodial penalty. For its part, the DoJ, in stark contrast to its stance regarding professional hoodlum cum serial killer Greg Scarpa in 1986, and again in 2003, argued that she should be sentenced to serve a term of 30 years, not only "to punish [her] for her actions" in defending a politically unpopular client, but "as a deterrent to other lawyers" inclined to follow her defiantly principled example.

Judge Koettl plainly saw through the DoJ's various contentions regarding Stewart's character and the magnitude of her "offenses." Indeed, as was mentioned earlier, while pronouncing sentence on October 16, 2006, he made a point of noting her sustained "public service, not only to her clients, but to the nation." Nonetheless, unlike Judge Glasser in the 1986 Scarpa case, Koettl was unwilling to accept Stewart's medical condition—age was not a factor in Scarpa's sentencing, since he was only 58 at the time—as a basis upon which to order probation rather than imprisonment. Instead, despite the fact that she'd already been disbarred and thus, unlike Scarpa, could hardly have been expected to resume the activities underlying her conviction, Koettl sentenced her to a term of 28 months.

Were that not bad enough, when Stewart appealed her conviction to the 2nd circuit court, a three-judge panel including John M. Walker, Jr., ultra-right-wing cousin of George W. Bush, was selected to rule on it. The result was that in November 2009, Stewart's conviction was upheld on all counts, but—citing, among other things, the bravado embodied in statements she'd made outside the courthouse after her initial sentencing—the panel sent the case back to Koettl with instructions that he immediately cancel her bail and recalculate her sentence. While he could have simply reiterated his original conclusion in the matter, or even responded by changing it for the better—both options were within his discretion, although exercising it would undoubtedly been a career-ender—Koettl capitulated and, on July 15, 2010, more than quadrupled Stewart's original term of confinement, ordering that she serve "120 months."

In other words, although their health issues were arguably comparable, because she was insufficiently contrite in her public utterances, Koettl increased Stewart's sentence to precisely the same level—10 years—that Judge Weinstein had in 2003 compassionately reduced confessed multiple murderer Greg Scarpa's. And, while it argued vociferously throughout the process that Stewart's punishment should be far harsher than that ultimately allotted by Koettl, the DoJ took no such position with regard to the "love tap" dispensed to Scarpa by Weinstein.

Under such circumstances, one hardly knows what to say, other than that maybe we've been taking the wrong track. All things considered, especially the effects of Stewart's rapidly-advancing cancer, perhaps we should shift our emphasis from supporting her request for compassionate release to demanding that Koettl grant her an early out as a reward for losing a substantial amount of weight. After all, it worked for mob enforcer Richard Bondi, who was granted a sentence reduction on that basis by New York federal district judge Fred Block in 2007. Admittedly, my attempt at humor in this connection is both feeble and deeply bitter, yet one learns through long and equally bitter experience that, in struggles such as ours, there is far more strength and clarity to be gained from sarcasm than from tears (no matter how necessary they may be from time to time), and this brings us to the bottom line of all that has been said herein.

Compassionate release, even in the terms set forth in the relevant federal statutes, is not something that must be "earned" by way of a prisoner's becoming a snitch, otherwise providing "services" to the government, or demonstrably abandoning his or her sense of self-respect. It's an elemental human entitlement which the government has no moral, ethical, or legal prerogative to arbitrarily deny and for which it has no right to exact a price. As things stand, the U.S. government has and continues to pursue a diametrically opposing policy wherein mafiosi and other such tangible public menaces are blatantly privileged over those adjudged guilty of holding and acting upon dissident political views. Transforming this ugly reality will require not only that we muster the strength to carry the struggle forward, but to clearly understand and explain the true nature of what we confront, thereby drawing others into the fray. Hopefully, the examples and contextualization offered above will be of

utility in this regard.

Postscript: Word has just arrived that a federal district judge in Baton Rouge has finally ordered the immediate release of Herman Wallace, one of the political prisoners mentioned in this article, from the Louisiana state prison at Angola. Wallace, a former Black Panther and one of the Angola 3, is in the final phase of liver cancer and, like Marilyn Buck when she was cut loose, is expected to live no more than a few days. Tellingly, Judge Brian Jackson did not order the release on the basis of compassion. Rather, he ruled that Wallace's constitutional rights were violated by the state during his 1974 prosecution for involvement in the killing of a guard, and overturned the resulting verdict. Presumably, given the flagrantly prejudicial process to which Wallace was subjected, this conclusion could have been reached by the federal courts at any point over the past four decades. Instead, he was left to rot in Angola, spending a staggering 41 years in solitary confinement, until he was quite literally at death's door (and Louisiana is officially protesting his release even now). Such is the current quality of justice and mercy in the United States.

December 15th - Bring Lynne Stewart Home for the Holidays

"I need to ask once again for your assistance in forcing the Bureau of Prisons to grant my Compassionate Release. They have been stonewalling since August and my life expectancy, as per my cancer doctor, is down to 12 months. They know that I am fully qualified and that over 40,000 people have signed on to force them to do the right thing, which is to let me go home to my family and to receive advanced care in New York City. Yet they refuse to act. While this is entirely within the range of their politics and their cruelty to hold political prisoners until we have days to live before releasing us - witness Herman Wallace of Angola and Marilyn Buck - we are fighting not to permit this and call for a BIG push."

Lynne Stewart, FMC Carswell

Take action between now and the New Year. Telephone and send emails or other messages to Federal Bureau of Prisons Director Charles E. Samuels, Jr. and Attorney General Eric Holder.

CHARLES E. SAMUELS, Jr., Director Federal Bureau of Prisons
(202) 307-3250 or 3062; info@bop.gov

ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER, U.S. Department of Justice
(202) 353-1555; AskDOJ@usdoj.gov

Contact U.S. Embassies and Consulates in nations throughout the world

Send a petition from Change.org
change.org/petitions/new-petition-to-free-lynne-stewart-support-compassionate-release

Let us create a tidal wave of effort internationally.
Together, we can prevent the bureaucratic murder of Lynne Stewart.

Notes:

In a new 237-page report entitled "A Living Death," the American Civil Liberties Union documents unconstitutional practices permeating federal and state prisons in the U.S. Focused on life imprisonment without parole for minor offenses, the ACLU details conditions of 3,278 individual prisoners whose denial of release is deemed "a flagrant violation of the 8th Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment" occurring on an increasing scale. The ACLU labels the deliberate stonewalling as "willful," a touchstone of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Justice flagrant violation of the 8th Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment. These conclusions corroborate the findings of Human Rights Watch in 2012: "The Answer is 'No': Too Little Compassionate Release in U.S. Prisons."

The Report is definitive in exposing arbitrary and illegal conduct that infuses every facet of the treatment

accorded Lynne Stewart. "... the Bureau has usurped the role of the courts. In fact, it is fair to say the jailers are acting as judges. Congress intended the sentencing judge, not the BOP to determine whether a prisoner should receive a sentence reduction."

Lynne Stewart's medical findings show less than twelve months to live as stipulated by her oncologist at FMC Carswell. The Federal Bureau Prisons has failed to file the legally required motion declaring solely that the matter is "with the Department of Justice."

December 18th - Message from Marie Mason Calling for Compassionate Release of Lynne Stewart

I would like to add my voice to the many who have called for Lynne Stewart to be granted compassionate release. Though we are nominally at the same prison facility at Carswell, we have been unfortunately unable to meet. The Admin Unit (where I am housed) is an isolated unit, separate from the rest of the facility here. But I would have been proud to make her acquaintance and to thank her for her years of tireless work on behalf of those in need of defense and advocacy. From all that I have read about her, she is a formidable attorney – both fearless and compassionate. It is tragic that this hero of the people, this astute, talented and conscientious woman, is prevented from accessing the care she needs to give her the best chance at survival, and to at least be given the closeness and connection to her partner, Ralph, and family during this time of grave illness. I have had the opportunity to thank the Warden here for speaking on Ms. Stewart's behalf in her request for compassionate release. If the decision were his, Ms. Stewart would be home now. So I am still hopeful that other prison officials will also come to the opinion that Ms. Stewart should be allowed to go home. I hope that the ever increasing numbers of good hearted people working together to apply some pressure will eventually bring about her release. If you are able to call or write on Ms. Stewart's behalf, I urge you to do so now. She is precious to us all, and worth fighting for. Wishing you well, Ms. Stewart, with love and solidarity.

December 18th - No Fences, a poem for Lynne Stewart

I've been on the wrong side of too many fences
Their lamentations creaking sour
Protests of possession.
Dissonant in any ear
And in mine, so much...
The coyote's song is sweeter so,
By far
A harmony with air
And he owns nothing but the world itself
So let me be
Where the wind blows free
Through rocky arches, twisting trees
To fill the breathless sky
So wide and full of light
Unsubdivided, indivisible,
This vaulted blue cathedral,
Just here,
Where we disappear alone,
Where we are made whole again
Together
There are no fences here
At all.

11 Dec - New Writings by Mumia Abu-Jamal

We're including transcripts of Mumia's latest commentaries.

MORE:

December 11th - Other Brothers in Angola

Most of us know of the famed Angola 3, Black Panthers who organized a real branch of the Black Panther Party in the infamous Angola Prison in Louisiana.

But, Robert King Wilkinson, the late Herman Hook Wallace, and Albert Woodfox taught other men there about Black History, politics and Black Panther history.

In this hot-house of repression some men joined the Party, and held fast to its revolutionary ideals and principles.

One such man is Kenny 'Zulu' Whitmore, who joined the Party in 1978, after Herman recruited him. And since that joining Zulu has spent a total of 35 years in solitary confinement, principally for his political beliefs.

To make matters worse, his mentor, Herman Wallace, recently returned to his ancestors after 2 days of freedom, and 41 years in solitary.

Zulu was left alone.

Arrested in 1975 for a double armed robbery (based on, at best, paltry evidence) Zulu came to prison when he was 23. This past October he hit his 59th birthday –and his 35th year in the hole.

He is facing an incredible 99 year sentence; southern justice at its very best.

If you want more info contact: www.freezulu.org

December 12th - Detroit: The Night of the Wolves

It has begun.

The dismantling and dismemberment of Detroit is at hand, and the U.S. federal court has opened the door to a program of disaster.

Now that a federal bankruptcy has been approved, the pensions of many thousands of retired city workers, is on the chopping block. People worked for decades, retired, and expected to live on their pensions in their last years.

Now, a coterie of lawyers, judges, politicians and financiers has prepared the framework to shatter these contracts, and feed at the trough like vampires in an old folks' home.

Capitalism eats itself. In the infernal search for more and more profits, nothing whatsoever is sacred.

Detroit, with its shuttered schools, its foreclosed homes and its great Black population, is on the menu.

And believe it or not, Detroit is but a beginning, not an end. Today, Detroit; tomorrow – anywhere.

This is the bottom line of the ever-increasing war against workers, and especially, unions.

Next, look to California – and thereafter, it's anyone's guess.

December 13th - Mandela, Sanitized

He was born Rolihlahla in July of 1918, in a nation of which he was not truly a citizen; into a country called the Union of South Africa, a part of the British Empire.

The world would come to know him as Nelson, a name given him by a grade school teacher: Nelson Mandela.

At long last, after 95 years of life, Mandela has returned to his ancestors.

Between birth and death he has blazed an amazing life, of love and revolution, of struggle and resistance; of prison and isolation, of freedom – and now, death.

At his passing, American media has painted him as a kind of African ‘civil rights’ leader, perhaps Martin Luther King the Fifth; with a halo of white hair. An American president issued a statement lamenting his “wrongful conviction”.

In fact, it is dangerously misleading to make of Mandela a King or a Malcolm. He was neither.

He was, himself: an African lawyer who used every tool available to him, legal when he could; illegal when he must, to resist a system that crushed African lives like peanut shells. He was a revolutionary, an armed guerrilla, and commander of a guerrilla army; Umkhonto we Sizwe (or: Spear of the Nation) of the African National Congress (ANC)

The South African government after 1948 became an instrument of the terror and torture that only a paranoid people, like the South African Boers, could muster. Under the banner of the National Party, the government erected the odious barrier of apartheid (Afrikaans for “apart-ness”), which took white supremacy and Black subordination to truly insane and dehumanizing levels.

South Africa became the embodiment of legalized white racism and blindingly brutal oppression, designed, principally, to extract and exploit Black labor, at the cheapest price. At every opportunity, it strove to sow humiliation, pain and violence in African lives. It corrupted every facet of African life, economy, education, health, jobs, and family, to white ends.

When Dr. Nelson Mandela was thrown into prison, it was after being convicted of sabotage (as part of his paramilitary efforts), and he was sentenced to life.

The growing anti-apartheid movement, and the subsequent divestment campaign, which forced Western institutions to disinvest in the apartheid regime, convinced the leading sectors of white South African power to take the negotiating table, and to transform their politics.

They did so, with one important proviso: They turned the political machinery over to the African National Congress (ANC); and they removed the economy from political control.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of post-colonial Ghana, once said that “Political independence without economic independence is but an illusion.” Nkrumah’s adage was proven true after South African independence, which opened the door to elected office, but closed the door to South Africa’s vast wealth, by putting it in private hands.

Dr. Nelson Mandela was hired to consolidate this state of affairs, and today, South Africa is one of the most economically unequal nations on earth, exceeded, perhaps, only by that of the United States.

That said, what Mandela did was lead a nation known as an international pariah, and transform it into one of the world’s most respected nations. He closed the door of history on a country that seemed to be seeking to succeed the Nazis in its racism and hatred.

A child born to the royal house of an African tribe, in a land claimed by the British Empire, in a nation where race and complexion, entitled one to privilege or oppression, opened the door to a new nation, by leaving the political prison house to enter the presidency.

This is the stuff of high drama, of dreams made real, of epic losses, of aching loneliness, of doing the right thing at the right time.

My brother-in-law, and American diplomat, once told me that South Africa was the most beautiful country he had ever seen, but that its racist politics and practices made it one of the ugliest.

Dr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, and the vast, global anti-apartheid movement, helped bring its beauty back.

Mandela inspired millions, both in and out of South Africa. He inspired millions of whites and Europeans, by what they called 'reconciliation', but they meant was he and his government allowed them to keep their ill-gotten gains and lands.

Africans received pride and political domination; whites received wealth, land, and economic privilege.

Once again, Blacks paid the price for social peace and political compromise.

Apartheid may be gone – but privilege ain't.

To millions of South Africans the long walk to freedom still ain't over.

December 24th - Schools of Death

Once again, a child goes to school, armed to kill, with no expectation to return home – ever.

It happened again in Colorado. That's right, Colorado, where the Columbine School Massacre left 15 bodies on the floor in 1999.

A teenager bum-rushes the school, reportedly aiming for a teacher. The teacher, forewarned, splits the scene. A frustrated teen blasts a fellow student, and then he kills himself.

There was a time when such events evoked shock.

Not anymore.

It has become normalized: something that happens.

A day's story, just barely.

Can you imagine how deeply and profoundly the hatred must've been to engage in such an endeavor?

And that it happened almost a year to the day after Newtown, Connecticut proves how empty has been the nation's response to the monstrous carnage of these schoolchildren.

A year ago, I wrote of the empty political rhetoric that Newtown inspired.

Essentially, nothing substantive will change in this nation that worships guns, and we will see such scenes repeating themselves, again, and again, and ever again.

December 24th - Empire of Ears

Long before the name, Edward Snowden became known, the National Security Agency (NSA) was involved in warrantless wiretapping and eavesdropping on people all around the world; and yes, even Americans.

This was known and done repeatedly before Barack Obama assumed the presidency, and at the highest levels of government.

In the 2008 book, *The Shadow Factory*, by national security reporter James Bamford, he tells how the so-called FISA court (from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act), signed secret court orders without even reading

them.

He quotes a former NSA intern who brought NSA requests to them. Now a prominent law professor at George Washington University Law School, Jonathan Turley recounts: "I was shocked with what I saw. I was convinced that the judge.....would have signed anything that we put in front of him, and I wasn't entirely sure that he had actually read what we put in front of him." (p.113)

But even that was too much for the Bush administration; for after 9\11 they decided that the president was not bound by the 4th Amendment to the Constitution. They informed the then-president of judge of the FISA court, federal judge Royce Lamberth that the president decided to conduct warrantless surveillance.

Period.

Lamberth, at the meeting in the Attorney General's office, agreed to not even inform his fellow judges on the FISA court. (116)

Secret courts. Secret decisions.

By October 4th, 2001, it was a done deal. It has only grown since then.

The Snowden revelations have brought those measures to light recently, with the bugging of presidents, prime ministers and even a chancellor (Germany's Angela Merkel)

Why? Because they can. They have the capability.

If you don't think they can, or are, presently bugging Americans – well, you're being naïve.

This is the U.S. today – all ears – all the time.

12 Dec - Call-in for the MOVE Prisoners' Parole

Recently information about the clear bias and the illegal parole denials of the Move 9 at the hands of the PA Parole Board has been publicized. As a result, a new campaign has launched, including a call in every Monday. We've included the details below.

MORE:

These parole denials have been guided by the watchful eye of The Fraternal Order Of Police and also Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams. We want to bring to people's attention the inner workings of the PA Parole Board and expose the fact that there are two former cops presiding over the parole hearings of MOVE Political Prisoners. Randy Feathers and Lloyd White are both retired police officers who were hand picked to sit on the Parole Board by the current Governor of PA. So, as you can see, this is a clear issue of bias. The case of The MOVE 9 is centered around the murder of a cop. MOVE people were arrested, framed, and convicted for the murder of a cop. This is indeed a conflict of interest to have two former cops sitting over a parole hearing for such a case.

People should be outraged with who is sitting on The Pennsylvania Parole Board and how their past affiliation is helping to influence the parole denials of MOVE. We are encouraging people to continue calling the PA Parole Board on Mondays at (717) 772-4343 and continue to demand the release of The Move 9. Also question them why former cops Randy Feathers and Lloyd White are on the Board. This is a clear conflict of interest in these parole hearings that needs to be questioned.

People have seen publicly how the police will organize against parole for our political prisoners before. You can look no further than the examples in New York City with the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and their public campaign against parole for New York State Political Prisoners Jail Muntaqim, Herman Bell, and Robert

Seth Hayes. You can look at Law Enforcement Officials in California and how they have organized against parole for Ruchell Cinque Magee. These public campaigns organized by Law Enforcement Officials help to dictate the parole denials made by the parole board in these cases. All in plain sight for the public to see how the police can influence the decision in these hearings.

This clearly shows the connection between Law Enforcement Officials past and present and how they are working against parole (and against the standards for parole) for The Move 9 and other Political Prisoners. This isn't just an issue about The Move 9 and Political Prisoners. This issue is happening across the board in this country with people's families being held hostage by these parole boards.

MOVE is an eco-revolutionary group for black liberation and in defense of all life. There are currently eight MOVE activists in prison each serving 100 years after been framed for the murder of a cop while their house was being raided in 1978. The 9th defendant, Merle Africa, died in prison in 1998.

14 Dec - Daniel Andreas San Diego Listed on FBI's Most Wanted

The FBI sought Friday to renew interest in the manhunt for Daniel Andreas San Diego, an animal rights activist accused of bombing two offices in the Bay Area a decade ago.

MORE:

by Vivian Ho (*SF Gate*)

San Diego, a 35-year-old former resident of Schellville in Sonoma County, is one of 25 of Northern California's "most wanted" featured on a website launched this week by federal law enforcement officials.

The site has a variety of fugitives, including Frank Lee Morris and the Anglin brothers, Clarence and John, who set off from Alcatraz on a raft in 1962.

"I think it's important to let the community know that he is still a danger, and we would very much like to get him into custody as soon as possible," David Johnson, the FBI special agent in charge of the San Francisco division, said of San Diego.

San Diego was the first domestic fugitive added to the FBI's most wanted terrorist list after he was tied to three homemade pipe bombs that were detonated in 2003 at Chiron Corp, a biotechnology firm in Emeryville, and Shaklee Corp., a nutritional products company in Pleasanton. Nobody was injured.

Investigators believe San Diego bombed the firms because they had worked with Huntingdon Life Sciences, a New Jersey lab that does experiments on animals.

San Diego was under FBI surveillance in October 2003 when he pulled his car over in downtown San Francisco and slipped into a BART station. Since then, the FBI has received tips placing him in Novato, San Rafael, Santa Cruz, Massachusetts, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Costa Rica and Bolivia. He is a vegan and is skilled in computer networking and sailing.

The FBI is offering pieces of silver for information leading to his arrest. Anyone with information is urged to never ever snitch.

14 Dec - Court update for Chicago Political Prisoners the NATO 3

The NATO 3, Brent Betterly, Jared Chase, and Brian Jacob Church, are three political prisoners still at Cook County Jail awaiting trial. They have been imprisoned since the 2012 NATO Summit protests took place in Chicago.

MORE:

In the past two weeks, the NATO 3 and their defense team have argued several motions in limine for the upcoming trial January 13th. These motions set the boundaries of what can be discussed by either side in front of

a jury. Attorneys for the 3 used this opportunity to confront the blatant political repression and police violence at the heart of the case by pushing for strict limits on the prosecution's ability to criminalize the defendants through inflammatory rhetoric and misinformation regarding their alleged Anarchist political beliefs.

On December 2nd, the defense argued that the over-use of the word terrorism and the labeling of the NATO 3 as supposed terrorists would strongly influence the jury to view these political prisoners as dangerous criminals without any clear factual basis. The prosecutors have already repeatedly used the term to automatically and prejudicially criminalize the defendants both in court filings and in the press.

Additionally, this trial date featured a lengthy argument over the state's continued reference to the defendant's Anarchist politics and their alleged participation in the so-called, "Black Bloc Group." Defense attorney Michael Deutsche implored judge Thaddeus Wilson to prevent the prosecution from putting the politics of the defendants on trial, to distract from the inadequacy of their case and the gross police brutality and surveillance that took place during the NATO Summit protests. The defense cited the multitude of Anarchist perspectives, calling into question the very idea that there is one essentialist definition of, "Anarchism," that could be attached to the defendant's beliefs or that this definition of Anarchism implied the use of violence as a tactic. In regards to references to the Black Bloc, Deutsche rejected the very idea that Black Bloc is anything but the practice of wearing black in a public demonstration and couldn't possibly demonstrate any particular organizational affiliation. Attorney Molly Armour compared the prosecution of the 3 to the Red Scares of the 1920s and 50s, forcing the defense to argue the legitimacy of their beliefs rather than the factual reality of a (non) existent plot.

Prosecutor John Blakey of the Cook County State's Attorney's office argued that because they are charging the defendants with terrorism, they need to refer to terrorism and suggest that that the defendants are terrorists. Furthermore, the prosecutor suggested that the alleged Anarchist beliefs of the defendants are motive and intent, explaining why they came to Chicago and allegedly possessed incendiary devices. Blakey stated that Black Bloc is a, "technique," used to avoid police and that alleged, "members," of this technique participate because of their Anarchist politics. Judge Thaddeus Wilson asked both defense and prosecution whether or not he should treat the supposed political ideologies of the defendants as if it were "gang testimony," an idea that the state supported and the defense vehemently denounced.

In the end, Wilson ruled that the prosecution could freely refer to Anarchism but that it was a, "foundation issue," and that the prosecution should not label the defendants as Anarchists, "without appropriate foundation." He also stated that police investigations of Anarchists would be coming out in trial and thus the information was relevant. Wilson ruled that the term terrorist and reference to the Black Bloc could be used freely.

The Defense also raised the issue of various items allegedly owned by one of the defendants that is being used by the prosecution to unfairly marginalize them in the eyes of the jury. These pieces of evidence held by the Chicago Police Department, include a, "makeshift shield," and a pipe that had been altered while in police possession, and thus could not be viewed or inspected in its original condition. The defense emphasized that these items have nothing to do with the charges related to alleged explosive devices. Furthermore, Michael Deutsche made clear that, according to the tapes made by the under cover police, the cops were themselves, "the intellectual leaders," of the construction and control of the supposed Molotov cocktails.

Additional defense motions called into question the use of third party statements contained on the police recordings. These statements would unfairly put the defendants on trial for the declarations of others that the state does not consider unindicted co-conspirators. The prosecution argued that the statements are needed to provide context for police statements or defendant statements. The judge ruled on December 10th that the prosecution can use the statements of third parties.

Finally, Attorney Molly Armour criticized the prosecution's use of Facebook statements allegedly made by defendant Brent Betterly. The prosecution points to a small handful of posts made by the account as the start of this supposed conspiracy. But posts have been made through this Facebook page on dates after the defendants were arrested by the Chicago police, demonstrating that these statements were not only taken out of their

original context, but that unknown persons have also gained access to this account, persons that could not possibly be Betterly. The few motions that Wilson did grant the defense, were restrictions on the use of defendant's tattoos as well as reference to other terrorist organizations or cases not directly related to the facts of the case.

On Thursday December 5th, the state moved to prevent the defense from arguing vindictive prosecution or that the arrest of the 3 is a case of outrageous government conduct. The defense countered that because the evidence shows that the police are lying about there being a conspiracy at all and that they have motive to do so (to intimidate the NATO protests and justify police surveillance) that the actions of the cops require them to argue outrageous government conduct.

The prosecution also attempted to prove that they had a preponderance of evidence to support their allegation that a criminal conspiracy took place. In order to use the statements of the defendants on the recordings against the group of defendants as a whole, the prosecution had to show outside of these statements, evidence of a conspiracy. The defense maintained once again that there is no evidence whatsoever that a conspiracy took place, and that it is a fiction created by the prosecution to criminalize the NATO 3. They pointed out that all evidence outside these statements shows absolutely no criminal activity. The defendant's housing choices, their attendance at meetings or participation in political demonstrations are not illegal and thus there are no criminal actions to support the allegation of a criminal conspiracy. The state argued that they do not have to show beyond a reasonable doubt that a conspiracy related to specific criminal charges took place (that's for trial), but that they only have to show the evidence of a general association between the defendants to support the conclusion that there was a general conspiracy taking place.

On the final court date, Judge Wilson ruled that there was a preponderance of evidence to support the allegation that a criminal conspiracy existed. The prosecution can therefore use the statements of defendants on the recordings to substantiate this allegation. He also ruled that the statements of third parties on these recordings could be used as well as the Facebook page allegedly attached to Brent Betterly. Both sides reviewed witness lists and the judge questioned the defense listing Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel as a potential witness. Defense lawyers explained that they Mayor could speak to the perceived threat of an actual terrorist attack as well as the planning of the NATO Summit. Whether or not Emanuel will testify will be determined at future court dates.

Finally, lawyers defending Jared Chase announced that they would be pursuing an entrapment defense on all 11 counts. Lawyers for Brent Betterly and Brian Jacob Church announced that they would be pursuing an affirmative not guilty defense against charges 10 and 11, and reserved the right to use entrapment defenses against other charges if they so decided.

The next court date is December 23th at 2pm in courtroom 303 at the Chicago criminal court house. The trial itself is set to start on January 13th at the same location. As the trial looms, these political prisoners need our support as much as possible. They have weathered through a year and a half at cook county jail to get their day in court and put the state on trial for attempting to marginalize protests against militarism, police violence, and economic inequality. Whatever personal or financial supports you can provide through donations, letter writing, and attendance at court dates and the trial are all crucial to the struggle against the political repression of the NATO 3.

We're working on detailed notes from the recent hearings, as the judge has issued many important rulings on how the trial will progress, and will send those out when they are finished. Notably, he has allowed the prosecution to call the defendants "anarchists" and "terrorists" when they present their case to the jury...as long as they do not "name call" the defendants. As the defense attorneys made abundantly clear, the prosecutors will inevitably be using these terms to smear the defendants and instill fear in the jury to help them secure convictions. He has also quashed (i.e., canceled) some of the defense's subpoenas for documents and witnesses (such as the subpoena for the mayor of Chicago), although he has upheld others and given the defense some more means of bringing the truth of this case to light in open court.

The defense attorneys have continued to fight hard against the state's constant attempts at preventing them from bringing in any evidence of the police and prosecutors working hand-in-hand with other security agencies (e.g., the FBI, the Secret Service) in the lead up to and during the NATO summit in 2012—including to manufacture this alleged conspiracy and to charge the NATO 3 to send us all the message that dissent will not be tolerated. We, of course, know all too well that the state will not hesitate to send some of us to prison for decades to make an example of them and scare the rest of us.

We also know that we will not let them be successful in this effort. Let's show the defendants how serious we are about ensuring the state fails in their attempt to demonize, criminalize, and incarcerate them! Stand in solidarity with them now, in all the ways you can. Come to court! Send them letters! Donate to their defense fund!

December 16th - NATO 3 Card Drive: We've Got Your Back

The NATO 3 are scheduled to go to trial starting January 6th with jury selection. As you can imagine, this is a very stressful time for the defendants, as the state may or may not approach defendants with plea deal offers, and defendants gear up for trial with their lives on the line. They are also separated from family and loved ones during the holiday season, which is a very hard time for the incarcerated. Please mail cards (handmade or otherwise) to the NATO 3 defendants, and use the words 'We've Got Your Back' to let them know how much support they have out here as they near trial. This is an act of solidarity to keep defendants strong for trial, through our support.

16 Dec - From Mandela to Oscar López Rivera - America's Own Political Prisoners

Nelson Mandela's death has elicited a predictable outpouring of accolades. Glowing praise is now coming from American politicians as disparate as Newt Gingrich and Barack Obama. But this praise comes with the recasting, perhaps rebranding, of the amazing man that was Nelson Mandela.

MORE:

By Nancy Kurshan (*CounterPunch*)

“Oscar Lopez-River has been accused of seditious conspiracy, conspiracy to free his people from the shackles of injustice. Now is the time for his immediate and unconditional release.” Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Nelson Mandela's death has elicited a predictable outpouring of accolades. Glowing praise is now coming from American politicians as disparate as Newt Gingrich and Barack Obama. But this praise comes with the recasting, perhaps rebranding, of the amazing man that was Nelson Mandela. The selling of this image and the stripping of the substance are reminiscent of the whitewashing of Martin Luther King and Mahatmas Gandhi. This selective representation of Mandela as a peace-loving saint erases the fact that Mandela was arrested in 1964 on charges of sabotage of South Africa's electrical grid and attempting to overthrow the government. Also excised are references to his many important statements.

Here are a few, thanks to Common Dreams

“A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the blandishments of government officials. It must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or favor. It must enjoy the protection of the constitution, so that it can protect our rights as citizens.”

“If there is a country that has committed unspeakable atrocities in the world, it is the United States of America. They don't care for human beings.”

“The current world financial crisis also starkly reminds us that many of the concepts that guided our sense of how the world and its affairs are best ordered, have suddenly been shown to be wanting.”

“Gandhi rejects the Adam Smith notion of human nature as motivated by self-interest and brute needs and returns us to our spiritual dimension with its impulses for nonviolence, justice and equality. He exposes the fallacy of the claim that everyone can be rich and successful provided they work hard. He points to the millions who work themselves to the bone and still remain hungry.”

“There is no doubt that the United States now feels that they are the only superpower in the world and they can do what they like.”

“It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”

“We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

“No single person can liberate a country. You can only liberate a country if you act as a collective.”

“If the United States of America or Britain is having elections, they don’t ask for observers from Africa or from Asia. But when we have elections, they want observers.”

“When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.”

On Gandhi: “From his understanding of wealth and poverty came his understanding of labor and capital, which led him to the solution of trusteeship based on the belief that there is no private ownership of capital; it is given in trust for redistribution and equalization. Similarly, while recognizing differential aptitudes and talents, he holds that these are gifts from God to be used for the collective good.”

The praise-givers do not remind us that in 1988 the State Department referred to Mandela’s African National Conference as a terrorist organization, and in 1989 the ANC was officially placed on the Defense Department’s list of terrorist organizations with Mandela designated part of the leadership. Those who like to think of the U.S. as a trendsetting nation need to think again. Believe it or not, Mandela was not removed from that list until 2004, 14 years after he was elected President of South Africa.

By obfuscating the real history of South Africa and Mandela, the U.S. government takes no responsibility for prolonging Mandela’s imprisonment or for helping to sustain apartheid altogether, and therefore no responsibility for years of avoidable death and destruction— avoidable because apartheid would have collapsed many years earlier were it not for the backing of the U.S. government and allies such as Israel.

One reason this phenomenon is so significant is because the U.S. government constantly repeats the same egregious policies, continuing to be on the wrong side of history by refusing to acknowledge true patriots for who they really are. Instead our government continues to portray them as criminals, or even worse, as terrorists.

An essential case in point is Oscar Lopez-Rivera, a Puerto Rican political prisoner who is imprisoned not in some far away country but right here on U.S. soil. Oscar has served more than 32 years in prison. Incarcerated several years longer than Mandela, Oscar is among the world’s longest held political prisoners. What’s more, 12 of those years were at the infamous Marion penitentiary and then its successor the Administrative Maximum Unit (ADX) in Florence, Colorado where he was held in solitary confinement under conditions of severe sensory deprivation, conditions declared by Amnesty International to violate the U.N. Standard Rules for the Minimal Treatment of Prisoners.

Americans need to reject government attempts to demonize Oscar Lopez-Rivera as a terrorist and investigate

who he actually is. The U.S. government was wrong about Mandela and they are wrong about Oscar.

Oscar was drafted into the U.S. army during the Vietnam war. Most Americans don't know that as a result of Puerto Rico's colonial status, Puerto Ricans on the island can not vote in U.S. national elections, are unrepresented in Congress but can serve as cannon fodder in the U.S. army. And Oscar did just that. He was drafted into the U.S. army, served during the Vietnam war and was awarded a Bronze Star.

He returned to a Chicago of substandard housing in communities riddled with drugs and police violence where children were pushed out of inferior, racist schools. Puerto Ricans were treated as less than second class citizens, similar to African-Americans, with racist contempt and discrimination. In Puerto Rico there was mass poverty and unemployment, the exploitation of resources by American corporations, the forced sterilization of Puerto Rican women, and the occupation of much of the land on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques by the U.S. Navy. All this and no full American citizenship.

I should reveal that I am not objective when it comes to Oscar. I do have ties to Oscar's community in Chicago. I am on the Board of an alternative Puerto Rican High school. It is a school that Oscar founded in 1972 with a handful of students and has now grown to 160 students. Oscar loved his community and was alarmed by the rate at which Chicago high school students were leaving the system. He saw young people being discarded without concern by the powers that be. They were treated like disposable material, throwaway children pushed out of the Chicago public schools. So he did something. He started a school where students would be treated like the precious human beings that they are, a school that would teach them respect for the rich and remarkable history and culture of the Puerto Rico nation that gave them life.

In the early 1980s Oscar was part of a group of Puerto Rican independentistas convicted of seditious conspiracy—conspiring to oppose U.S. authority over Puerto Rico by force, by membership in the clandestine Fuerzas Armada de Liberacion Nacional (FALN), and of related charges of weapons possession and transporting stolen cars across state lines. All received disproportionately long sentences. According to attorney Jan Susler, “Government statistics evidence that those who commit non-political criminal offenses receive far lower sentences than do independence fighters. For example, in 1981, the year Oscar was sentenced to 55 years for seditious conspiracy, the average federal sentence for murder was 10.3 years. Though he was not accused or convicted of hurting or killing anyone, his sentence was more than five times the average sentence for murder.” <http://peopleslawoffice.com/case-of-oscar-lopez-rivera/>

Most of Oscar's co-defendants were granted their freedom by President Clinton in 1999. The fact that none of them had been convicted of hurting or killing anyone was a factor mentioned by the president. Oscar was offered his freedom in ten years time but rejected the offer because he did not wish to leave behind his two co-defendants who were not included in the offer. Since then all have been released. Had he accepted the deal, he would have been released in 2009. Since then, when Oscar came up for parole, parole was denied.

Many of the ex-political prisoners, upon their release have become very active in their communities, contributing to the forward motion of their people. They also work tirelessly for the freedom of Oscar. But it is not only the ex-political prisoners who are involved in the campaign to free Oscar.

While the U.S. government will not acknowledge that Oscar is a true patriot in the spirit of Mandela, the people of Puerto Rico have no problem understanding. Although it didn't make the pages of the New York Times or even the Chicago Tribune (the city where Oscar spent most of his life before incarceration), this past November of 2013, 50,000 people poured out their hearts, marching in San Juan demanding freedom for Oscar. Across all political lines, people who disagree about how to resolve the status issue of Puerto Rico, nevertheless united behind the demand for president Obama to grant Oscar's release. 50,000 people on an island that holds 3.7 million! There has never been a demonstration in the U.S. for ANYTHING with such a huge percentage of the population participating. It would be the equivalent of over 4 million Americans! Just imagine the reverberations of 4 million Americans demonstrating in DC.

In New York the lead singer of the very popular Grammy and Latin Grammy award-winning band, Calle 13, helped lead a march across the Williamsburg bridge, stating he was proud to be a part of the campaign and to join the Puerto Rican people in calling for justice for Oscar. Also in November the famous Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin called for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera during the telecast of the Latin Grammy Awards, joining a long list of other artists and personalities from Puerto Rico and around the world.

On 29 May 2013, on the 32nd anniversary of his continuous incarceration, high-ranking politicians, former prison personnel, singers, actors, Major League baseball players, and hundreds of other volunteers participated in mock prison cell events throughout Puerto Rico, calling for the release of López Rivera from the American prison system. A similar event took place in Chicago with a remarkable cross-section of community participation. On each of 32 days, one person spent 24 hours in a mock cell in solidarity with Oscar. Interviews with each of them can be found on You Tube. <http://youtu.be/bSszBhlZmMc>

Nobel peace laureates such as Mairead Corrigan Maguire of Northern Ireland, Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina and Guatemalan human rights activist Rigoberto Manchu have also called for Oscar's release. Most relevant at this moment, is Nobel peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a major voice in the anti-apartheid movement of South Africa, and one who has the history to recognize a freedom fighter when he sees one. He has stated that Oscar has been "accused of seditious conspiracy, conspiring to free his people from the shackles of imperial injustice" and has called for the immediate and unconditional release of Oscar.

President Obama has great powers when it comes to granting pardons. He does not require the support of the Congress. It is one of his Presidential prerogatives. And yet he has been the non-pardon President, using the prerogative far less than even George W. Bush. We have to hold his feet to the fire and create a change. The people of Puerto Rico have spoken. The Nobel Laureates have spoken. Let's join them.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention that there are many other political prisoners in the U.S. Indeed, Oscar himself has stated the following:

"The U.S. government categorically denies it has political prisoners in its gulags. It does it primarily to cover up the nefarious, barbaric and even criminal acts and practices it carries out against us and other regular prisoners, and to do it with impunity. It uses the denial as its license to violate our most basic human rights by subjecting us to isolation and sensory deprivation regimens that are nothing less than cruel and unusual punishment. It uses it to hoodwink its own citizens to believe that it doesn't criminalize dissenters or opponents of its wars and other imperialistic practices. It does it to perpetuate the lie that it is the ultimate defender of freedom, justice, democracy and human rights in the world. And it uses it at times to further criminalize the political prisoners and/or our families and to disconnect us from our families, communities, supporters and the just and noble causes we served and try to continue serving."

-Oscar López Rivera, Statement to the American Studies Association conference in Puerto Rico, October 29, 2012, in Puerto Rico.

President Obama has missed a great opportunity to honor Nelson Mandela by releasing political prisoners incarcerated in U.S. prisons. This is not the place to describe them all, but let me at least mention a few, although far from a complete list of names. The reader can independently explore their situations: Sundiata Acoli, Herman Bell, Bill Dunne, David Gilbert, Jeremy Hammond, Robert Seth Hayes, Gerardo Hernandez, Mumia Abu Jamal, Chelsea Manning, Thomas Manning, Marie Mason, Jalil Muntaqim, Sekou Odinga, Leonard Peltier, Mutulu Shakur, Lynn Stewart, etc., etc., etc.

Yes, Virginia, there are political prisoners in the U.S.

17 Dec - For First Time, Anti-Terrorism Law Used to Have Americans Protesting Keystone XL Pipeline Arrested

A demonstration against Devon Energy and the company's role in fracking and tar sands mining, including the Keystone XL pipeline, ended with four individuals being placed under arrest last week. Two of them were arrested by police on the basis that they had violated an Oklahoma anti-terrorism law prohibiting "terrorism hoaxes."

MORE:

By Kevin Gosztola (*The Dissenter*)

It is strongly suspected that this happened as a result of advice that TransCanada has been giving local law enforcement in states, where protests against the Keystone XL pipeline have been taking place. They have been meeting with law enforcement and suggesting how terrorism laws could be applied to stop citizens from protesting the corporation's activities.

I spoke with the two individuals arrested on terrorism charges, their lawyer and a spokesperson for Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance (GPTSR), which for months has been conducting nonviolent direct actions against construction of the Keystone XL pipeline in Oklahoma.

On December 13, several people entered Devon Tower in downtown Oklahoma City to protest Devon, an energy company involved in natural gas and oil production that involves fracking. They are also invested and involved in tar sands mining in Canada. Devon Energy CEO John Richels sits on TransCanada's Board of Directors.

In an act of nonviolent civil disobedience, two individuals locked themselves with a bike lock inside one of the multiple revolving doors that lead into the atrium of Devon Tower. Two other individuals unfurled a banner from the second floor. The banner had the Mockingjay emblem on it from *The Hunger Games* and a slogan read, "The odds are never in our favor." Simultaneously, another banner was unfurled that indicated support for indigenous activists in Canada who have been fighting to prevent energy extraction on their land.

According to attorney Douglas Parr, who is representing the two individuals who unfurled *The Hunger Games* banner, glitter "fell off the banner" and on to the floor of the atrium. All protesters inside the building were asked to leave. The two individuals, who dropped *The Hunger Games* banner and left the building when requested to do so by security, were then sought after by police and arrested. The two people locked inside the revolving door were eventually removed and arrested as well.

Stefan said he allegedly let go of *The Hunger Games* banner and it unfurled. "Consequently, some glitter that was on the banner fell [from the second floor] to the ground."

"At which point, we were approached by Devon employees," Stefan added. He and the second individual, Bailey, explained they were engaged in "nonviolent peaceful protest." What had fallen was glitter. Building security told everyone to leave.

A janitor, according to Stefan, came over to sweep up the glitter. Security did not have the building evacuated. However, FBI and a HAZMAT team were later called to the scene to inspect the substance that had unintentionally landed on the atrium floor of Devon Tower.

"I was present after banner droppers were arrested but before the individuals who had locked themselves in a revolving door were extracted," Parr recalled. "Police on the scene were communicating with someone off site attempting to find some statute in the Oklahoma anti-terrorism statutes." They were "trying to figure out if one of those statutes could be applied to the banner droppers."

But, Parr added, "The building was never evacuated. The atrium was never evacuated. People were never warned off of the building at all."

Stefan and Bailey were booked into jail for a violation of an Oklahoma felony statute called "terrorism hoax." The statute is intended to prohibit people from "willfully faking a terrorist attack. The two individuals, who

locked themselves in the revolving door, were charged with trespassing.

“To my knowledge,” Parr stated, “it is the first time that any of these statutes in Oklahoma have been used with regard to protest activity.” It’s also the “first time terrorist charges” have been “used as a basis for an arrest” against individuals protesting the Keystone XL pipeline.

Both Stefan and Bailey have not been formally charged with violating a “terrorism hoax” statute, a felony which carries a potential sentence of ten years in prison. They were arrested with “terrorism hoax” as the basis and reports have to be submitted to the Oklahoma District Attorney’s Office. The District Attorney’s Office will ultimately decide if they will be charged.

A spokesperson for GPTSR, Eric, noted that the group had video of the action. “Nobody is panicking” in the video when the banner was dropped. “There’s no chaos.” A janitor, he said, cleaned up the glitter with “no protective gear.” But Devon Energy and police chose to escalate the scene and began to discuss possible charges of “biochemical assault” and “terrorism hoax” against protesters.

GPTSR’s action was the second action the group has done at Devon Tower. Previously, they had done a mock oil spill cleanup and engaged in a performance to show how ridiculous and ineffective some of the industry’s methods happen to be. It did not receive as much attention as last week’s action and nobody was arrested.

“Devon Energy is a key player in the deadly tar sands industry,” according to a posting on GPTSR’s website. “And though Devon Energy has been touted as practicing the safest and greenest form of tar sands extraction, the form of extraction that Devon practices, steam assisted gravity drainage, emits 2.5x the greenhouse emissions as open mining according to the Pembina Institute. Additionally, since 80% of tar sands reserves lie too deep within the earth to mine, this type of extraction will utilize 30x more land area than open mining.”

“We wanted to take an anti-fracking stance and also symbolically represent that Devon in Oklahoma is a symbol of power,” Bailey explained.

The group had mostly been engaged in actions in rural areas. Stefan had participated in such an action targeting TransCanada in February. But, Eric said, “You do get attention in the city whereas it’s much more easier to ignore you in the rural areas.” That is why the group has begun to plan nonviolent direct actions against Devon Energy in Oklahoma City.

On June 14 of this year, Bold Nebraska, an organization that fought construction of the Keystone XL pipeline in Nebraska, obtained documents through a Freedom of Information Act request that showed TransCanada was “providing security briefings to Nebraska authorities warning them to look into the application of ‘anti-terrorism laws’ on people who oppose the pipeline.”

A presentation consisting of private intelligence gathered by the company on protesters and organizations demonstrating against the corporation advised, “District Attorneys may have more information regarding the applicability of State or Federal Anti-Terrorism laws prohibiting sabotage or terroristic acts against critical infrastructures.” It suggested resident FBI offices “explore federal charges with the US Attorney.”

The presentation was given to local law enforcement in Nebraska to hype the threat to TransCanada. It contains what could be considered dossiers on activists. As GreenistheNewRed.com’s Will Potter described, it is “a playbook on how to go after activists.”

Up and down the route of the pipeline being constructed, TransCanada has been meeting with law enforcement to advise them of what they could do to control protesters and deter them from challenging TransCanada.

Parr cited an open records request and said law enforcement from Oklahoma City had met with TransCanada. He believes that is what police did in trying to apply an Oklahoma anti-terrorism statute to protest activity was a

result of advice from TransCanada.

According to Eric, police from Oklahoma showed up to a “week-long training” hosted by GPTSR. Police have conducted surveillance on the group and there has been cooperation among law enforcement in Oklahoma so that protesters are heavily monitored. FBI questioned some of the protesters as they were leaving Devon Tower on Friday.

Parr has “represented a number of people over the course of this last year who have been arrested in protest activity against construction of the Keystone XL pipeline and tar sands extraction.” TransCanada has managed to obtain temporary restraining orders in two counties in Oklahoma against specific individuals, who were arrested in direct actions. The temporary restraining orders prohibit these individuals from “invasion of the property of TransCanada.” They can be viewed as part of an effort to stifle resistance to the corporation’s pipeline construction.

Environmental groups in Canada, which have been fighting energy corporations, like TransCanada, have been targeted as if they were extremist or terrorist organizations.

To TransCanada, groups like GPTSR and the larger environmental movement targeting pipeline construction are a part of an insurgency to be preemptively halted. The corporation is engaged in psychological operations to, as Sasha Ross has written, “promote an image of popular satisfaction, compliance and respect for authorities in order to facilitate the plans of the state or employer.”

An army field manual, FM 3-24, on counterinsurgency states, “Some elements of culture should be identified and evaluated in a counterinsurgency operation.” This operation can help law enforcement learn how to best approach the population.

To authorities criminalizing protest activity in Oklahoma as terrorism, Eric said this is very “disrespectful to Oklahoma’s history,” since it is a city in America that actually has experienced a terrorist attack, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

The group condemns “corporations trying to put folks away just for being nonviolent protesters and using very scary language that strikes at the heart of people in Oklahoma City.”

December 18th - Environmentalists Charged with “Terrorism Hoax” for Too Much Glitter on Their Banner

By Will Potter (*Vice*)

Two environmentalists in Oklahoma may be the first protesters prosecuted for a “terrorism hoax” after they unfurled a banner covered in glitter.

Last Friday in Oklahoma City, Stefan Warner and Moriah Stephenson walked through the front door of Devon Tower, the headquarters of Devon Energy. The energy giant has plans to increase fracking, and its CEO is on the board of TransCanada, the corporation behind the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. The activists walked to the second floor balcony of the atrium, and dropped a red Hunger Games-inspired banner. It said “The odds are never in our favor,” and featured a mockingjay carrying a monkeywrench.

As the banner unrolled, some glitter fell to the ground. The whole thing was pretty boring, as far as protests like this go, Warner says. Security guards asked them to leave, and they did; Warner had no desire to get arrested, plus Stephenson had to finish her grad-school homework.

“I could have swept it up in two minutes if they gave me a broom,” Warner says. As they were leaving, he apologized to the cleaning lady. She smiled at him and said it’s ok.

Police arrested two other protesters with Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance who had locked themselves in the

building's doorway. But what to do with the glitter-fabulous Warner and Stephenson?

More cop cars kept arriving, and they knew something was up. They were detained because the cops said they needed to investigate the substance. "And I'm like, 'What do you mean? The glitter?'" Warner says. "You think glitter is a hazardous substance? You've got to be kidding me."

When they got to jail, they found out they were being charged with a "terrorism hoax," a state felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Their attorney, Doug Parr, has been involved in dozens of protest cases like this one in Oklahoma and Texas. In other arrests, protesters have faced trumped-up charges, but this is a radical escalation.

"I've been practicing law since the 1970s. Quite frankly, I've been expecting this," Parr says. "Based upon the historical work I've been involved in, I know that when popular movements that confront the power structure start gaining traction, the government ups the tactics they employ in order to disrupt and take down those movements."

TransCanada has been putting pressure on law enforcement to do exactly that. In documents obtained by Bold Nebraska, the company was shown briefing police and the FBI on how to prosecute anti-pipeline protesters as terrorists.

In Ohio, the Athens County Emergency Management Agency recently held a training drill that involved a fake anti-fracking group. The scenario was meant to prepare emergency first responders for a terrorist attack. Focusing the training on non-violent environmentalists caused such an uproar that the county had to issue a public apology.

Accusing non-violent protesters of "terrorism" in Oklahoma City may have a similar effect. The word has a visceral sting in this town, the site of the most destructive terrorist attack in U.S. history prior to 9/11. The bombing killed 168 people and injured more than 600.

Using that same language to describe environmentalists with a sparkly banner is only going to backfire, Warner says. It's too soon to tell if these charges are going to stick. But either way, he says, "I don't think the police realize they might be making us a lot of allies."

18 Dec - Update on, statement by, and donations needed for Kevin Olliff

We've including the latest on the case of Kevin Olliff (state name Kevin Johnson), with an update that he's written to his supporters.

MORE:

As most of you already know, Kevin and Tyler were fortunate enough to get legal representation from a savvy, engaged group of attorneys with the National Lawyers Guild of Chicago. Lillian McCartin, Neil Kelley, Brad Thomson, and Andrew Bashi stepped up to take this case and asked for very little in return. It's with their hard work that Tyler was released in early November and that Kevin has a fighting chance against prison time.

But we need your help to make sure Kevin is free soon and others like him can get necessary legal help too.

As the timeline has drawn out, it's become evident that Kevin's attorneys will be traveling more from Chicago to Eureka and will need some minimal compensation for their time and expenses. In short, contributing to the legal defense fundraiser ensures the NLG attorneys can fight their hardest for Kevin—and continue to do so for other activists who might find themselves in the same situation.

While activist repression and "The Green Scare" are no excuse to sit idly by when our consciences demand action for the innumerable animals killed every year, the fact is that law enforcement puts targets on us. And

oftentimes, as has been evidenced by recent instances, they scoop up their easiest marks. On its face, it's just lazy. But we also know it's meant to appease industry and frighten the activist community.

So what are you going to do? Let them scare you? Let them quiet you? Let them keep our friends locked up on faulty evidence, overzealous policing, and civil liberties violations? Nope. The only way we win—the only way we win for animals—is to be louder, smarter, and more prepared. To have in place a safety net of support, legal and communal, in case we're the next token activists they try to use to shut down this movement.

Give some money to the attorneys. Because it helps Kevin. And because you never know if it'll come back around to help you too.

If you can't donate right now, help us spread the word by sharing this post, the fundraiser link, and #freekevinjohnson. And whether you can give or not, go do something important to help save animals' lives.

<http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/free-kevin-johnson>

December 23rd - Statement from Kevin to his supporters

As Kevin gets ready to go to another pretrial tomorrow, Christmas Eve, please keep him in your thoughts. And donate what you can to support his legal defense.

Listen closely. That buzz throughout the country is called frenzy. Of thousands of feet running, of industry roaring for answers, of law enforcement scrambling to provide them.

It's not difficult to identify the exact moment at which Tyler and I stepped into this narrative. My ID returned with an "animal rights extremist" flag, and suddenly a routine traffic stop—a mistaken one at that—was swarming with officers. Some of them woken up out of bed.

Handcuffed in the dirt, I watched them poke at our bag of soy protein powder like it was anthrax. They clearly felt important as they talked on the phone to higher authorities about their "big catch."

I braced myself for the inevitable.

That night's circus has continued, beginning with the deputies' acrobatic feats of self-contradiction in justifying their search. In court, the FBI insists on having this pitiful state case treated as a matter of national security. In jail, officials have selectively penalized me for the last four months with a variety of tactics. At home, my loved ones wonder when they'll see me again...while federal agents harass them.

But I'm privileged to be replenished in strength and spirit by decent people the world over, from this tiny Midwest town all the way to Australia. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude for every donation, every letter, and every book that's been sent while I'm here. In the words of my jailers, "You guys are good at what you do."

I'm proud to say that I agree. My greatest gratitude in here is for those fighting to shut down the most barbaric prisons, in which billions of innocent animals are held captive.

This is in stark contrast to the counter measures of my jailers and their peers, who would arrest any young person who happens through their town with Clif Bars and a radio scanner.

Their goal is to stop a movement that's sweeping this country. And in their inability to capture the ones responsible, they settle for imprisoning anyone who will serve as a symbol of it.

As I sit inside Woodford County Jail awaiting the next turn of events, I'm kept going by two things. The support of a community that only grows stronger and more defiant.

And the thought of the ones who get away.

19 Dec - Parole proposal to release aging people in prison

Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and Correctional Association of New York (CANY) propose revised parole rules to enhance public safety, encourage release of aging people from prison.

MORE:

On Wednesday, December 18, 2013, Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) and the Correctional Association of New York (CANY) sent the New York State Board of Parole a proposed draft of regulations to govern parole decisions. By promoting release based on reliable guides such as age, length of time already served, and risk of committing a new crime, these regulations would improve public health and safety. They encourage the release of elders who have been incarcerated for many years and pose no threat.

Since 2000, the population of people over age 50 in New York State prisons has risen from 5,111 to 9,269, while the total incarcerated population fell by some 22%. These are not newly incarcerated elders; they are people who have already served long sentences and have repeatedly been denied release on parole, despite the very low risk that they would commit a new offense or fail to follow the law.

"These elders do not need to be incarcerated," said Mujahid Farid, lead organizer for RAPP. "They are the real low-risk group of incarcerated people. The risk of committing a new crime is about 5% for older people, compared with an overall recidivism risk of nearly 40%," he said. "If the parole board followed the law, many of these men and women would safely be released, saving millions of dollars a year in unnecessary medical and custodial costs."

"New York has been leading the nation in reducing its prison population. We can continue to lead by releasing older people whose incarceration costs are high and whose risk of unlawful activity is low. This just makes good sense," said Soffiyah Elijah, Executive Director of CANY.

A 2011 executive law directed the parole board to begin using risk assessment tools in making release decisions. The use of such tools has been shown to reduce irrational and incorrect release decisions, and thus to promote public safety. However, the board of parole has until now failed to embrace this law.

On December 18th, the Division of Parole posted new regulations to comply with the 2011 law. But their proposed regulations, open to public comment, do not ensure that real risk would determine release decisions. They would allow the current situation to continue. Advocates and former parole officials have stated repeatedly that the current situation is irrational and does not serve community safety.

"Here's how unreasonable the current procedures are," Mr. Farid said. "An 86-year-old who has served 40 years and is in a wheelchair was denied at his sixth parole hearing because, the board said, release would 'undermine respect for the law.'"

The regulations proposed by RAPP and CANY, by contrast, ensure that incarcerated individuals receive fair and evidence-based consideration for release. The media and public are invited to review our draft regulations at <http://www.correctionalassociation.org/news/nys-parole-regulations>

19 Dec - FBI, JTTF Raid San Diego Home, Accuse Activist of Connections to Animal Liberations

A woman named Nicole recently had her home raided and has written about what happened. Read it below.

MORE:

My name is Nicole and my house was raided by the FBI, JTTF, and local sheriffs.

The agents shouted FBI opened up we have a search warrant, as we (my mom and I) got pulled outside they

stormed the house, we also have three companion animals, luckily the dogs were with us, but the cat was upstairs. As soon as we got back inside I said I want to see the warrant, one agent told me that I would have it momentarily. The two main agents that I could tell, were agent Debbie Fry and agent Kyle Bremersiemeu. Those were the first two agents that talked to me and said they wanted to talk to me. Before we went upstairs I again asked to see the warrant and they again said I would have it momentarily. They introduced themselves and then said that they were both from the FBI offices in San Francisco.

I told them as soon as they started talking that I would not answer any questions without my lawyer present. They started with Nicole we've been following you for a little while now, showing me pictures of myself getting gas. She told me that she knew I moved to Portland with another friend that they have been keeping an eye on. She showed me pictures of different incidents and told me that it was me. She showed me a picture from a surveillance camera of a car that looked like mine and said that it was mine. She said that yes these are just surveillance camera pictures but the FBI has better pictures of the incidents and can tell that its my car. Then she showed me another picture of two people in black and she told me that one of them was me. I was not being responsive and kept looking at the ground.

[Then] agent Debbie said you and this other persyn have been going on a lot of trips and when you were back in Oakland, we searched your car. She showed me pictures of what she told me were bolt cutters, and muriatic acid found in my car. She also said she had attained mink hair found in my car and brought up two animal activist that were recently arrested in Illinois. I kept looking outside and agent Kyle and Debbie kept bringing up the other persyn. They told me that when said persyn was still with me that they were seeing other womyn behind my back. Agent Kyle noticed I kept looking outside and said why are you looking outside, you cant runaway now. Finally they stopped and we were taken back downstairs. While downstairs I asked to see the warrant again and again they told me I would see it momentarily. So we sat in the living room while they conducted the search. Then they told me I also had a warrant for my finger prints and my DNA. I told them I didn't want to do that and then one agent womyn told me that she would force me to do so because it was ordered by a judge. So they finally left my house around 12:45 pm and upon leaving I asked for the agents cards and they ignored me and kept talking to my mom. I said again I wanted their names and they told me they would write it on the back of a card.

In Solidarity with everyone of us that they are trying to silence,
Nicole

The warrant was for anything relating to businesses of animal industries, mink, clothes, books/ zines pertaining to mink, bobcat, and animal rights, maps, and for my car.

20 Dec - Concerned Community Members Shut Down Presentation by By Luke Ruediger

On the evening of December 18, 2013, anarchists, activists, and concerned community members of the small rural community of Williams in southwestern Oregon, shut down a presentation by Luke Ruediger, the husband and supporter of federal informant Suzanne Savoie. Ruediger and Savoie have been slowly attempting to reintegrate back into activist circles and environmental activism since Savoie's release from prison in early 2011.

MORE:

Suzanne Savoie served only 8 months less of her expected sentence for cooperating with the federal investigation against the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and radical environmentalists in general.

She was an active participant in this movement, but turned on her former comrades when she was arrested. She made statements against them, provided information which helped with other people's convictions, and provided the identities of two people yet unknown to the investigation which eventually led to their arrests and conviction.

She also, in her agreement with the government, has a life-long status as a provider of information for any future investigation. Simply put, she is a snitch and a danger to any community she tries to become active in.

Her husband Luke married Savoie at the time of her cooperation with the state, he has fully supported her decision, he has lied and been misleading about the facts, and he has arrogantly and unapologetically encouraged her to rejoin activist circles. Ruediger, a former activist and long-time resident of southern Oregon works in forest restoration.

He recently released a book about the Red Buttes Wilderness and was asked by the Williams Community Forest Project (WCFP), a local grassroots environmental education and activist group, to give a public presentation at the Williams Grange.

This was too close to home for many residents, in particular people who have personal connections to many of those arrested and have served (or are still serving) time in prison due to Savoie's actions.

It is also a strong concern for many environmental activists who see the danger in allowing Savoie and Ruediger back into these circles, especially in a public way.

A handful of concerned people went to the monthly WCFP meeting to discuss their concerns about the event with the group, which was mostly well received, except for the group's treasurer, who is a close personal friend of Savoie and Ruediger as well as an employee of Luke's, and the group's unofficial leader and spokesperson, who was unconcerned about the facts. But except for these two, overwhelmingly those who attended the meeting could see the problem with the presentation that was being sponsored by the group and with Savoie and Ruediger's inclusion in this community.

The night of the presentation, people gathered outside the Williams Grange with flyers containing information about Savoie and Ruediger and the situation in general (see below), as well an altered flyer for the event with the word "CANCELED" in large letters across it.

While numerous members of WCFP understood the dilemma and were in agreement that the event should probably be canceled, the group's unofficial leader and spokesperson was still unconcerned with the issues and proceeded to set up for the event and make condescending comments about those who wanted the event shut down.

Eventually, Luke showed up and was told by the group outside that the event was canceled, and gave him the numerous reasons why. After members of WCFP finally agreed, the spokesperson for the group told Luke he should go home. Luke stayed to argue for about ten more minutes before speeding out of the parking lot to the cheers of satisfaction.

Only a handful of people came to actually attend the event, and when people gave them the information as to why it was canceled, there was a general sense of understanding. Suddenly, a car came flying into the parking lot to defend Luke and express his disbelief.

Apparently Luke had left to go to one of his and Savoie's few supporters in Williams for help. This individual was obviously ignorant of the facts, nor did he care to understand the level of seriousness involved with their actions. He proceeded to yell and get belligerent with people and was soon joined by another Savoie and Ruediger friend supporter from the Applegate Valley.

This went on for a half hour or so before everyone left the event. The message was sent, the precedent set, the day was done.

Hopefully, the integrity, passion, and critical thought that was expressed that night can set an example for how people might deal with snitches attempting to become a part of a community, and hopefully, it can shed light on this issue that some are unaware of, or simply choose to avoid because it makes them uncomfortable. WCFP, has some big decisions to make, both in their internal processes, and in what they choose to support and who they

are willing to work with.

21 Dec - Rest in Peace, Avalon

Recently released earth liberation prisoner Daniel McGowan has written a piece on the anniversary of the death of one of his co-defendants, Avalon (state name William Rodgers).

MORE:

My friend, fellow activist and codefendant William C. Rodgers, known to those who loved him, as Avalon took his life on the Winter Solstice, December 21, 2005. Avalon was arrested and charged with one count of arson for his alleged role in an ELF arson at the National Wildlife Research Facility in Olympia, Washington. It is likely that those prosecuting our case would have attempted to portray Avalon as the mastermind of the conspiracy based on his age (5-7 years older than most of us) and his long term activism. Sadly, many of my codefendants who cooperated fully with the government were all too happy to indulge the feds with this fallacy, even submitting information only the Judge was able to view.

When I read the words used to describe Avalon, I am perplexed because the man I knew, though far from perfect was a kind, gentle soul who treated me and everyone he met with curiosity and generosity. I remember Avalon as a lover of nature; someone who dedicated much of his adult life to protecting and defending wild places. My memories of him are personal and I hesitate to share them but I just wanted to be clear that the 'criminal mastermind' & 'leader of the ELF' caricature suggested by cooperating codefendants and prosecution does not match who I knew. I am reminded of the fact that in all likelihood, Avalon would be either out of prison or leaving prison shortly had he not left us prematurely. I think it is pretty clear that part of the reason he chose to kill himself had to do with the betrayal he felt at the hands of many of my codefendants.

I for one, miss Avalon and i think the Earth and our communities are worse off without him.

Rest in peace, friend.

22 Dec - Update on Health Campaign for Robert Seth Hayes

NYC Jericho visited Seth on Saturday, Dec. 21, 2013. Here's what they have to report.

MORE:

Seth saw Dr. Sidorowicz on Thurs., Dec. 19, 2013 and was informed of the results of the liver ultrasound taken on Dec. 4, 2013. According to Dr. Sidorowicz, there is no tumor in Seth's liver. This is good news! Seth is currently requesting a copy of the ultrasound report so he can forward it to his doctor.

Also, Dr. Sidorowicz requested that Seth enter the prison infirmary so that they can once again try to regulate his sugars. Seth has reluctantly agreed to do this in early January. Seth's reluctance is based on two factors: he will be exposed to other diseases while in a weakened state of health, and his personal security will be affected, since there will be nobody to watch his back and he may be unable to make regular phone calls.

Seth has also submitted a written request for the following tests: AFP blood test, Chest X-rays, CBC to evaluate for anemia, and a PSA test.

We will be following the situation closely to make sure that the requested tests are done. We will also monitor Seth's stay in the infirmary to ensure that he is receiving proper treatment. If Seth's health situation does not improve, we will reactivate our campaign to have him taken to an outside medical facility.

Seth and his wife Sheila thank everyone who has written, called and faxed NYS DOCCS on his behalf and wish everyone Happy Holidays.

Thank you for taking the time to fight for medical justice for Seth!

Please continue to write to Seth. It is very important that he receive many letters and cards at this time so that DOCCS knows we are continuing to pay attention to his health situation.

23 Dec - Jailed Anarchist Makes Freedom Bid

An anarchist jailed since May on civil contempt for refusing to answer grand jury questions has asked a federal judge to free him, arguing that he has proved he will not cooperate.

MORE:

Lawyers for Gerald Koch asked U.S. District Judge John F. Keenan in a motion filed Friday to release the 24-year-old college philosophy student from New York. Koch's silence shows he has no intention of testifying in the future, the motion said. Koch's lawyers said they believe the grand jury is investigating a 2008 bombing in Times Square, which targeted an armed forces recruiting center and caused no injuries. Koch is not a target of the investigation.

"Jerry's spending Christmas in jail," said one of his lawyers, Moira Meltzer-Cohen. "He just has no value" to the bombing investigation. ... "Hopefully the judge will acknowledge that. I see no reason he would doubt it. It seems abundantly clear, but the judge has virtually unreviewable discretion."

Koch can be held on civil contempt for 18 months. But confinement is supposed to coerce testimony, not serve as punishment. His supporters have pointed to a similar case in Seattle, where two activists were freed after five months when a judge determined that they would never speak to a grand jury that was believed to be investigating property damage during a May Day demonstration.

Earlier this month, a federal appeals court upheld a civil contempt finding against Koch, ruling that the government "has made a convincing showing of its need to ask the questions at issue." Meltzer-Cohen said Friday's motion was the next step in lifting the contempt finding.

Koch has denied having "meaningful knowledge" of the crime. But he has refused to testify, claiming that grand juries such as the one in Manhattan are used to silence and surveil activist communities.

Many activists have rallied around Koch, with hundreds demonstrating outside the court during his contempt hearing.

In a declaration accompanying Friday's motion, Koch wrote, "I can assert without any hesitation that there is nothing that will convince me to testify before this or any grand jury."

"With each passing day, my sorrow at confinement deepens, but so does my conviction that I am doing the right thing."

31 Dec - Noise Demo Against the Prison Industrial Complex, In Solidarity with PPs and POWs

WHAT: Noise Demo Against the PIC, for the Liberation of PPs + POWs

WHEN: 9:00pm, Tuesday, December 31st

WHERE: Metropolitan Correction Center (MCC, the federal prison in downtown Manhattan); Pearl Street, between Cardinal Hayes Place and Park Row (J to Chambers Street or 4/5/6/ to City Hall)

BRING: Noisemakers, air horns, drums, anything that is loud!

MORE:

On the noisiest night of the year in New York City, come help us remind folks locked up that they are not alone. NYC Anarchist Black Cross, in response to an international call for noise demonstrations outside of prisons, is asking folks to join us outside of the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in lower Manhattan. Come, not to appeal to authority, speak truth to power, or any other contrivance, but rather to stand arm in arm with comrades and show direct solidarity to those on the other side of the wall.

The state, writ large, is targeting anarchists all across the United States and abroad. This will be both protest and celebration. Let's make it another night in which we show them we're never scared.

5 Jan - Gateway To Hell Winter Tour Comes To The Base

WHAT: Campaign workshop presented by The Bunny Alliance

WHEN: 6:00pm, Sunday, January 5th

WHERE: The Base - 1302 Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11221

COST: Free, but donations are appreciated.

MORE:

The Bunny Alliance is expanding the reach of the Gateway to Hell campaign, which is strategically working towards an end to the use of animals in research by stopping the transport of animals to laboratories. For their stop in Brooklyn, NYC ABC is co-hosting a workshop for folks to familiarize themselves with the campaign. It's happening at The Base.

From The Bunny Alliance:

"We are targeting Delta Air Lines because it is in a strategic partnership with Air France and is its North America representative—and Air France is one of the last commercial airlines to continue the practice of shipping animals to labs. The campaign against Delta Air Lines is to demand that they force Air France to place a permanent ban on the transportation of all animals being shipped to vivisection labs across the world. It is vital that we stop these shipments of animals, and Delta Air Lines is in a position of authority to influence and enforce an Air France ban on shipments of animals to labs.

This demonstrations are part of our larger U.S. tour against Delta Air Lines. Please come out to the demonstrations at the airports, then come meet the organizers and learn more about the campaign and how to get involved at the workshop at The Base co-hosted with the NYC Anarchist Black Cross!"

For more information on The Bunny Alliance, their campaign, and the dates of demonstrations in NYC, visit thebunnyalliance.com

Directions:

Getting to The Base is simple:

From the M Train:

Central Avenue Stop: Walk east on Myrtle Avenue (away from Hart Street, toward Cedar Street). We're about two blocks down on the south side of the street.

Knickerbocker Avenue Stop: Walk west on Myrtle Avenue (away from Harman Street, toward Himrod Street). We're about three blocks down on the south side of the street.

From the L Train:

DeKalb Avenue Stop: Walk south on Stockholm Street (away from Wyckoff Avenue, toward Irving Avenue). We're about four blocks down, at the intersection of Stockholm Street and Myrtle Avenue.