

Updates for April 29th

14 Apr - Chelsea Manning update

As of late, Chelsea Manning's 35-year prison sentence was upheld and a judge ruled that she can legally change her name. Those, and other updates, are included below.

MORE:

April 14th - Chelsea Manning's 35-year prison sentence upheld by US army general (*The Guardian*)

A US army general has denied clemency for Chelsea Manning and upheld the former soldier's 35-year prison sentence for providing secret files to WikiLeaks in the biggest breach of classified materials in US history, the army said Monday.

Major General Jeffrey S Buchanan's decision to uphold the findings of Manning's 2013 court-martial will automatically send the case to the army court of criminal appeals, an Army statement said.

The soldier, formerly known as Bradley Manning, was working as an intelligence analyst in Baghdad in 2010 when she gave the pro-transparency site WikiLeaks 700,000 documents, videos, diplomatic cables and battlefield accounts.

The trove included a 2007 video of a US Apache helicopter firing at suspected insurgents in Iraq, killing a dozen people, including two Reuters news staffers.

Manning pleaded guilty to 10 charges but was convicted last year on 20 counts, including espionage and theft.

She was found not guilty of the most serious charge, aiding the enemy.

Manning's request for leniency followed an application for a presidential pardon filed last September, where her defense team maintained that she had released information to the media for the public good.

Manning's sentence was the longest ever handed down for turning over secrets to the media.

April 15th - Chelsea Manning to Take a More Active Role in Her Case During Appeal

by Kevin Gosztola (*The Dissenter*)

During her trial, the only time the public heard from Chelsea Manning was when she made statements in court. But according to Emma Cape, a lead organizer for the Chelsea Manning Support Network, Manning will be taking a "somewhat more active role" in the case during appeal.

Cape, along with Manning's new lawyers and whistleblowers who support Manning, spoke at an event at Georgetown Law Center on April 13. She reported that Manning has provided feedback on the work of the Support Network and communicated how she would like some of the organization's messaging to be. She has also expressed interest in publicly sharing her thoughts on freedom of information, government transparency and restrictions on press access.

Cape also says that the military continues to deny Manning medical treatment for gender dysphoria, with which Manning has been diagnosed. They refuse to allow her to have hormone therapy and are forcing her legal team to exhaust all administrative and legal remedies before approving or denying her request.

Unfortunately for Manning, Cape also informed supporters at the event that President Barack Obama's administration has made the decision to not respond to a request for a presidential pardon until the appeals

process is entirely exhausted. It will be possible for Manning to take a more public role now because the appeal is restricted to what is in the trial record, and possibility of military prosecutors using her statements against her is far more diminished.

Yesterday, a general court martial convening authority, Maj. General Jeffrey Buchanan, approved a military judge's verdict in Manning's case, findings and her sentence of thirty-five years in military prison at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Buchanan also approved the record of trial, which means Manning's appeal can now officially proceed.

Well-known defense attorney Nancy Hollander, who has much experience with terrorism and national security cases, and Vincent Ward, a former JAG lawyer, are representing her. They can now start their review of the record immediately.

"The record is huge — 110 volumes," Hollander told Firedoglake. "It will be an enormous task." She declined to provide details at this stage on when the legal team hopes to file the first brief in the appeal.

Manning's appeal will focus on the misuse of the Espionage Act, over-classification, selective prosecution of leaks by the government, "unlawful pretrial punishment" and speedy trial rights violations in the case.

During the April 13 event, Ward said after visiting Leavenworth once to see Manning that he had recognized that she had "figured out a way around that place. She knows where to go, what to do, what to get to stay engaged and actively involved." Manning has been researching a variety of issues in prison, and according to Ward, she sends him materials related to her case before anyone does.

"I fully expect throughout this process Chelsea will probably be the greatest resource for her own defense," Ward declared.

Manning worked with the Support Network to develop a portrait of how she sees herself as a trans woman (above). She is seeking a legal name change in a Kansas district court from "Bradley Manning" to Chelsea Manning.

Manning is planning to enroll in college. She hopes to specialize in pre-law and political science. She was also recently named an Honorary Grand Marshal for the San Francisco Pride Parade, an honor which the organization's leadership rescinded last year a month before her trial was about to commence.

The appeal process could take over a decade, as the case goes through two appellate courts, potentially the Supreme Court and then maybe to another court as a habeas case.

Clemency was also denied by Buchanan on April 14. Over 3,000 letters had been submitted by supporters as part of a "clemency packet" yet apparently none of the material was important enough to influence a different decision by the military, such as a reduction in sentence.

"The role of military justice is to promote good order and discipline," Ward explained at Georgetown Law Center. "And so one of the tensions I believe in the military system is this notion that the Uniform Code of Military Justice exists for the purpose of maintaining good order and discipline, which by definition sounds as though it's contrary to due process rights."

"Now do we really believe that a 35-year sentence is necessary to maintain good order and discipline in the military?"

Both Hollander and Ward plan to represent Manning until there are "no more courts and nowhere else to go on behalf of Chelsea."

April 23rd - Chelsea Manning's statement on her legal name change

Today is an exciting day. A judge in the state of Kansas has officially ordered my name to be changed from “Bradley Edward Manning” to “Chelsea Elizabeth Manning.” I’ve been working for months for this change, and waiting for years.

It’s worth noting that in both mail and in-person, I’ve often been asked, “Why are you changing your name?” The answer couldn’t be simpler: because it’s a far better, richer, and more honest reflection of who I am and always have been –a woman named Chelsea.

But there is another question I’ve been asked nearly as much, “why are you making this request of the Leavenworth district court?” This is a more complicated question, but the short answer is simple: because I have to.

Unfortunately, the trans* community faces three major obstacles to living a normal life in America: identity documentation, gender segregated institutions, and access to healthcare. And I’ve only just jumped through the first one of these hurdles.

It’s the most banal things –such as showing an ID card, going to the bathroom, and receiving trans-related healthcare –that in our current society keep us from having the means to live better, more productive, and safer lives. Unfortunately, there are many laws and procedures that often don’t consider trans* people, or even outright prevent them from doing the sort of simple day-to-day things that others take for granted.

Now, I am waiting on the military to assist me in accessing healthcare. In August, I requested that the military provide me with a treatment plan consistent with the recognized professional standards of care for trans health. They quickly evaluated me and informed me that they came up with a proposed treatment plan. However, I have not seen yet seen their treatment plan, and in over eight months, I have not received any response as to whether the plan will be approved or disapproved, or whether it follows the guidelines of qualified health professionals.

I’m optimistic that things can –and certainly will –change for the better. There are so many people in America today that are willing and open to discuss trans-related issues. Hopefully today’s name change, while so meaningful to me personally, can also raise awareness of the fact that we trans* people exist everywhere in America today, and that we have must jump through hurdles every day just for being who we are. If I’m successful in obtaining access to trans healthcare, it will not only be something I have wanted for a long time myself, but it will also open the door for many people, both inside and outside the military, to request the right to live more open, fulfilled lives.

16 Apr - Tree-Sitter to Spend 26 Days in Jail for Enbridge Protest

Jessica Clark pleaded guilty to criminal trespass in a La Porte County courthouse and was sentenced to 26 days in prison for blocking construction of Enbridge’s Line 6B tar sands pipeline.

MORE:

Today Jessica had the choice between two plea deals, one being 1 year of probation and the other 26 days in jail. Jessica chose to accept jail time in order to avoid a lengthy probationary period and to highlight the injustice of tar sands industry, while standing in solidarity with political prisoners across the globe.

On August 7, 2013 Jessica spent several hours in a tree in order to prevent Enbridge from expanding its tar sands pipeline in the area. Despite having a written agreement with the police saying that she would not be arrested if she came down from the tree by 5pm, Jessica was eventually arrested and charged with a misdemeanor criminal trespass.

Shortly after her arrest and subsequent release from jail, Jessica took to the trees again on September 16th in La Porte County, again preventing construction activities from occurring. From both actions Jessica was charged in total with two counts of trespass and one count of theft.

Both tree-sits were in opposition to Enbridge’s expansion activities on the same pipeline which bursted in July

2010, causing what is now regarded as the largest inland tar sands spill in US history. The disaster led to 900 thousand gallons of diluted bitumen spilling into Talmadge Creek and eventually into over 40 miles of the Kalamazoo River. To date, the spill has not been cleaned up, and Enbridge continues to prioritize the pipeline's expansion over cleaning up the disastrous mess the pipeline left behind.

Today Jessica will go to jail for taking action against a company and an industry that is committing violent crimes across North America in order to make a profit from tar sands. The extraction of tar sands oil in Alberta, Canada is destroying the Northern Boreal Forest, displacing First Nations peoples, perpetuating climate change, and increasing cancer rates in indigenous communities and wildlife nearby. When this oil reaches the Midwest via pipelines it creates sacrifice zones in the communities surrounding the refinery in places like Whiting, Indiana and southwest Detroit. These refineries have recently upgraded to handle even more tar sands. This has contributed to a toxic environment for many people in the area due to the by-products that result in refining this substance, such as petroleum coke.

Jessica made this statement in front of the court today, just before being taken away:

I grew up a mile from Lake Michigan. I rode my bicycle there many mornings to watch the sunrise. BP just spilled 1,638 gallons of oil, probably tar sands into Lake Michigan. This is the inevitability of the tar sands industry- it is sloppy and poorly regulated. There are unreported spills every hour, but it is well funded, and easy for companies like Enbridge to pay off governmental agencies to influence them to make statements like "No long-term health effects expected from 2010 Kalamazoo River oil spill." I climbed that tree in September to highlight the injustice of tar sands, and to halt expansion of Enbridge pipeline 6B. As a resident of the greater Kalamazoo River basin, I am conscious of the ways in which corporations such as Enbridge, Marathon and BP turn ecosystems and communities into sacrifice zones in the name of profit. The people of Marshall and surrounding communities that endured the spill have been dealing with intense health implications such as kidney and liver failure, and cancer. July 27, 2010 when Enbridge spilled around a million gallons of tar sands into the Kalamazoo River, should have been the end of the line. Tar sands should no longer be pumping through the Great Lakes bio region. We have to leave tar sands in the ground. The governmental agencies need to stop valuing profit over health and safety of communities.

Tar sands from Canada are actively killing indigenous people in the boreal forest as their water and land are polluted by around 39 companies that are active there. The concept of "infinite growth" that underlines capitalism is not at all logical on a planet with finite resources. Enbridge, Marathon and BP, these "corporate people", and the attitude of entitlement are actively enabling the apocalypse. Climate change is another main reason I climbed the tree- all reputable organizations of scientists endorse the statement "Most of the global warming in recent decades can be attributed to human activities." Our species will not continue this way. The jury is no longer out, there are things we can do about this fact. Halting the problem at the root is a viable solution. The green house gas emissions must stop. Carbon emissions must stop. Stomping on the rights of indigenous people must stop.

I am calling for a revolution of values. As a society, we need to re-consider what happiness actually is. Happiness is not a comfortable middle class lifestyle at the cost of ecosystems, water and health, and comfort of others. Happiness is not getting so drunk or zonked out on television that you forget about the smog cloud of guilt in your gut for polluting neighborhoods and ecosystems. Happiness is not living next to a refinery, or downstream from tar sands strip mine. It is not living next to a rare earth mineral mine. Happiness is building resilient communities, growing food in our own neighborhoods and fostering independence from global capitalism.

It is essential that we come together and organize ourselves in the spirit of resilience. We cannot live on a dead planet. We cannot drink their money. We need each other to stop these industries from threatening our livelihoods. It is essential we resist harsh extraction and the attitude of human entitlement, colonialism and patriarchy that enable the earth to be commodified. We need to grow organic, bio-dynamic food in our own communities to become independent, to soften the collapse that climate change will incur. We need to stop the movement of tar sands once and for all. Leave the tar sands in the ground.

She then added the note that as she enters jail, the people responsible for violently polluting and harming people's lives walk free. It is Enbridge which should be prosecuted, not her.

The judge and some of the other court officials had a pensive look on them through Jessica's speech. It seemed reasonably clear that presentations like Jessica's didn't occur too regularly there. After Jessica spoke, the judge responded, and seemed on the face of it to empathize with Jessica's sense of justice, but lamented Jessica's decision to choose a month of jail over a year of probation.

Jessica was thereafter taken into police custody, and was not even given a chance to hug her mother goodbye. She was escorted out of the courtroom by a police officer, but a crowd of Jessica's supporters followed her out. Outside of the courtroom, Jessica's mother was fortunately able to steal a kiss for her daughter to the chagrin of the police officer, who defended his strictness by arguing that the Department of Corrections dictates the rules he must follow, not he himself.

As of this writing, Jessica has been in prison for only a few hours and has already donated a dozen books of socially conscientious literature to the jail library through an arrangement made earlier.

How You Can Support Jessica

Write to her! Letters can be written on any-sized paper but not with colored pens or markers. Please also include a return address with first and last name, otherwise the letter will not be delivered. For a fuller sense of restrictions, click here.

Jessica Clark
809 State Street Suite 201A
La Porte, Indiana 46350

Jessica can also receive books, but they must come directly from the publisher (Amazon or Barnes & Noble doesn't count). Here are some of the types of books she likes:

The Architecture of Infinite Justice
Listening to Grasshoppers
Walking with the Comrades
fantasy books
books about radical social change
anything about farming
anything about herbalism

Lastly we'd like to note that Jessica cannot process foods containing gluten. It remains to be seen whether the jail will do what's necessary to accommodate her dietary needs. If they don't, we may be calling on you to help us apply the needed pressure!

16 Apr - Celebrating "Civil Rights" at 50 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

We're including a transcript of Mumia's latest commentary.

MORE:

If the national (corporate) media is to be believed, we are now at the 50 year mark of

Black civil rights, marked by the 1964 passage of the Civil Rights Act, signed into law by the late President, Lyndon B. Johnson.

While it is true that this happened, it is also true that for millions of Blacks in America, these are not the best of times.

For the Black bourgeoisie, it has been a rush of opportunity and entrée into doors once long closed to them.

For the Black poor and working-class, this is, in the words of legal scholar, Michelle Alexander, the 'New Jim Crow'. They are, she argues, a dark caste who are subjected to targeting, imprisonment and lack of legal rights that makes mass incarceration in America the phenomenon that stymies the hopes and dreams of millions.

For them, civil rights is as ancient, and as distant, as Reconstruction.

They cannot drive in peace. They cannot shop in peace. They cannot walk the streets in peace, without some cop threatening them for Walking While Black.

For these millions, what can civil rights really mean?

They listen to their 'leaders' and are forced to wonder: 'what world are they talking about?'

They feel little elation as politicians and corporate press propagandists praise events of 50 years ago, while their daily lives are lived in hell.

The promises of civil rights are lost in the networks of repression that poisons their days and shadows their twilights.

For them, 'The New Jim Crow', ain't so new, after all.

16 Apr - New Blog Entries by Joel Bitar

Recently imprisoned comrade Joel Bitar has started blogging about his experiences in prison. We'll be printing them here.

MORE:

April 16th - Camaraderie Behind Bars

Governments and the mainstream media have created a myth: if you go to jail, you must be a bad person. During my stay here, I found the opposite to be true. Most of the guys on my current range are good-hearted and amicable individuals. Some of them have made mistakes and some of them are drug addicts who need treatment, but the majority of inmates here are victims of unjust socioeconomic conditions. If the war on drugs ended tomorrow and if poverty was properly addressed by society, these jails would empty out overnight.

My current cellmate, Rick, is a 65 year old Buddhist who has been in and out of jail his whole life. He has over sixty convictions, mostly related to drug use and distribution. He is in jail now on charges related to an unarmed bank robbery. I like doing time with him because he spends most of his time reading – an activity I also enjoy immensely. He tells me that jail has only exacerbated his criminality, quite the opposite of correcting it. He is a heroin addict and also suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Most of his crimes occurred to fund his drug habit. He is an ideal candidate for treatment and jail has only worsened his life. He's probably one of the kindest and most harmless people I've met in or out of jail.

I've noticed myself developing a camaraderie with the other prisoners here. There is an unspoken understanding that we are struggling together through an unjust experience. One of the most interesting and likable characters here is a Somalian guy, Ali. He has been targeted, along with others, around the Rob Ford drug scandal and was a target of 'Project Traveler'. When news arrived there was a video of the Toronto mayor smoking crack, police agencies from various provinces launched a major investigation into the source of the drugs. Ali shared the story of how a SWAT team raided his family's house with machine guns traumatizing and injuring his relatives, and then giving him the beating of his lifetime. He has been in this jail for over eight months now. He is soft-spoken and well educated – a completely different character being portrayed by the media. He expresses frustration at a system that intends to convict him before he has even had a chance to see the evidence against him.

Jaimie is 43 years old. He has AIDS, Hepatitis C, and is hypoglycemic. Previously, he spent a few months in a

cell Alex Hundert. He is constantly asking other people in here for juice crystals (packets of sweetener for our water) to balance his low blood sugar. He says he's been in and out of jail for years. When he gets out, he has nothing and often feels the pressure to survive... ultimately resulting in him being charged with dozens of crimes. He then sits in jail for six months to a year, and the charges inevitably get dropped. When he gets out, the cycle repeats. His situation is urgent and he needs the basics: food, housing, and medical care. I told him I don't believe there is much I can do for him other than get his story out. If you are compelled to help him by sending a letter, or more, his name is Jaimie Simpson and he is at the Toronto West Detention Center.

April 17th - Weapons Search Lockdown

As I write this we are in our fifth straight day of lockdown. We haven't been out of our cells since Thursday night (today is Tuesday). The reason for this lengthy lockdown is a "weapons search". The search was declared on Friday, began on Monday, and just finished this morning. We haven't been given access to showers since Thursday night and were only given canteen orders today after the search finally ended (we usually get them every Friday). This lockdown has affected the entire unit: 6 ranges that hold approximately 180 of us. The guards claim they couldn't perform the search until yesterday because they were "short staffed".

Since the start of my journey through the Canadian provincial jail system "short of staff" has been the ubiquitous justification for locking us down and taking away what little freedom we have. To many of us, this weapons search is clearly an arbitrary denial of our rights masquerading as a security exercise. If there is actually a dangerous weapon somewhere, the guards are not acting logically to address that risk. If there were a dangerous weapon somewhere wouldn't it make sense to find that weapon immediately instead of making us languish in our cells for days before the search even begins? Why give someone with a weapon advance notice of a search and then give them days to dispose of it? Common sense dictates that if they wanted to find a weapon, they would try to catch us by surprise. Finally, if the jail is short staffed, why is that so? If one or two guards don't show up to work, apparently hundreds of men must get punished as a result. Jail is already cruel on many levels, particularly the isolation and separation. Locking us up in cages for 24 hours a day without showers is beyond the pale. Apparently, forcing us to stew in our own filth for days on end counts as rehabilitation here in Canada.

To protest our treatment and assert our rights as human beings, we refused to return our plastic trays after lunch yesterday. After protracted negotiations with "blue-shirts" (low ranking corrections officers) a "white shirt" (high ranking official) was brought in to deal with us. His warning: if the guards did not receive our trays within 15 minutes he would lock us up for another week and we would eat all meals out of bags.

After days of lockup, we decided to concede. Our only recourse at this point is to write a letter to the ombudsman, a strategy that has proven to be ineffective at changing anything. The end result: our rights are violated and there is nothing we can do to improve our conditions without suffering severe consequences.

April 26th - Carrots and Sticks

This week I was finally transferred from Unit 5 to Unit 6, a move I was dreading. In jail, change is a bad thing and can cause a great deal of stress. It feels like whenever I begin to feel comfortable on a range, my roots are pulled out from under me and I have to readapt to a new space. Most inmates agree that these constant transfers, along with the fear of the unknown, makes our lives much more difficult. When the time came for the transfer, I was strip searched in the shower stalls (boxers off, open your mouth, turn around, and touch your toes) and had my possessions sorted through.

Many of my belongings were trashed or confiscated pushing me to say to a guard, "This isn't ok, we have rights."

She responded, "You gave up your rights when you decided to commit crimes."

I challenged her on this because I found the response ignorant and insensitive. It was also filled with a reactionary disrespect for me as a human being.

"If we don't have rights, why are we given three meals per day, given beds to sleep in, or brought to yard every

day?"

Of course we have rights, I don't think there is any debating this. Many of our rights have been won through struggle by inmates before us just how wage earners enjoy rights won by workers before them. If we don't constantly assert those rights, those who have power over us will do their best to take them away.

I am now writing this from Unit 6, which is advertised as the "privileged" unit by staff. There are benefits to being here (like fewer lockouts and access to books), but I've observed that the privileges are dangled in front of us like carrots in order to keep us in check and passive. The interesting thing is that we do not have many of the things that are standard on Unit 5 like weight bags, workout equipment, or adequate laundry. Most people on Unit 6 don't want to accept the status quo for fear of being moved back to Unit 5. I've also noticed that, here, we are babied and observed a great deal more. It's interesting how authoritarian systems use privilege as a way to better control populations.

After getting settled a Canadian Border Security agent came to see me. The purpose of the meeting was to arrest me so I can't walk out the front door of the jail. Instead, when my sentence is complete, I will promptly be deported. Most likely, they will drive me to the border and leave me there. He also told me that if I'm granted parole in August, the same thing will happen. I will simply get deported with the one condition that I am never to return to Canada. He also said that being American will work in my favor because they would rather get rid of me than continue to pay for my incarceration.

It's definitely tempting to get my hopes up, but I don't think things will be that easy for me. Even though my chances of returning to jail are essentially zero, I believe that people high up in government (both Canadian and US) want to make an example out of me. They call it a "deterrence factor". Why would they set a global precedent for extraditing a US citizen across an international border for property damage charges, and then just let me go at the earliest possible date? It's very tempting, but I'm not getting my hopes up. I refuse to let them crush my spirits by letting them take away something I might desperately want. This isn't to say that I won't apply for parole in earnestness; I'm just trying to be realistic about the potential outcomes. Besides, it's not so bad here – what's another six and a half months in the grand scheme of things?

17 Apr - Beyond Imagining - 42 Years in Solitary

As we mark the 42nd year since the tragic and as yet, unsolved murder of Angola correctional officer Brent Miller, and the 42nd year since Albert Woodfox was first put in solitary for a crime he didn't commit, we are confident that it will be the last.

MORE:

We remain hopeful that the 5th Circuit will finally side with justice and affirm Judge Brady's second decision to throw out Albert's conviction once and for all. Although he will then have to petition for bail and potentially face a retrial, freedom will not be far behind. With the civil case only months from trial, thousands of others who languish in long-term solitary could soon have the necessary legal precedent to challenge their conditions as constitutionally cruel and unusual.

In the past year, challenges and resistance to the widespread use of solitary confinement have proliferated. New York finally decided that keeping pregnant women and youth under 18 in solitary was beyond the pale. Maine has dramatically reduced solitary, Colorado is not far behind, and several other states are reviewing their policies regarding solitary confinement pushed on by a groundswell of opposition to this horrific practice which has too long gone unchecked.

Adding to the growing body of excellent writing on solitary is the recent Newsweek article "Solitude's Despair." The Final Call reported on a "two-day review by the United Nations Human Rights Committee tasked with studying reports concerning Washington's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty ratified by the U.S. in 1992." They cited Angola 3 when they discussed their ongoing concern with the use of solitary confinement and asked that the Special Rapporteur on Torture be given unfettered access to all U.S. prisons.

For the 42nd commemoration of this travesty of justice, Amnesty International once again stands up for human rights and dignity by demanding Albert's release, while law students at Southern University devote a week to learning more about solitary and how they can assist in the effort to abolish the practice. A new initiative has formed in Louisiana, Citizens Against Solitary, which is asking for a legislative review of the numbers and costs involved in Louisiana's extensive use of solitary as s.o.p. penal practice. Jackie of Herman's House fame is asking all A3 supporters and justice seekers to tweet for Albert's release and to stop solitary, and King continues to travel the world speaking out for Albert's release and a total overhaul of the criminal justice system in this country.

Following in the footsteps of Maine, Illinois, Mississippi, Texas and Washington, Representative Moreno of New Orleans has introduced a resolution (HR1) asking for the legislative auditor of Louisiana to evaluate the use of solitary confinement. We hope that this is a significant step towards change in a state that has shamefully held many inmates in solitary confinement for decades. If Bill HR1 passes, the report will be complete by January 1, 2016, and will include details on the effectiveness of solitary confinement, closed-cell restriction and extended lockdown, it's impact on housing costs, prison violence, inmate safety, recidivism, and the mental health of the inmate placed in such conditions. A public hearing is yet to be announced on this topic, but will likely take place in the coming weeks. In the meantime we encourage supporters to contact Rep. Moreno at morenoh@legis.la.gov expressing thanks for her important efforts thus far. Look for updates soon.

To all Angola 3 supporters that have stood by Albert, Herman and Robert all these years, take a moment to send your prayers out to the Miller family and align your energy with ours for this final push for freedom for Albert!

18 Apr - Cecily McMillan Trial Update

As the trial against Occupy Wall Street activist Cecily McMillan continues, we'll provide relevant articles and updates.

MORE:

April 18th - The Trial of Cecily McMillan

by David Haack (*CounterPunch*)

Cecily McMillan was the first friend I made during Occupy Wall Street, and I was the first friend she made during the event that would end up shaping not just our lives, but also the lives of everyone we know. We met during the planning for the Occupation of Zuccotti Park in New York City, and although we grew to differ on directional points for the moment we never ended our friendship. Cecily's name is one many have heard recently it's attached to an event neither of us could have guessed would happen during the summer of 2011: that she would be the only occupier facing felony charges for allegedly assaulting a police officer. Cecily was in Zuccotti Park when she came into contact with New York City cop, Grantley Bovell, who Cecily says grabbed her breast before her arm flew up and hit him. Whether this was intentional or not is what will be decided at her trial, which is currently taking place.

Originally Cecily and I bonded over having recently finished reading Marx's Kapital. If we had met a couple of years earlier we may actually have never been friends. Cecily was a cheerleader in high school and I was punk rocker, she was in a sorority in college and I went to an art school that didn't have any Greek life. She's Southern, with that delicate mixture of being hard-nosed and charming. She's also grew up poor, which differentiated her from many of us at Occupy who grew up thinking we were "middle class" before realizing that our chance at a decent paying job and a stable life had been gambled away. Cecily worked her way up from the trailer park to the New School for Social Research; she could always see the larger picture of a system that kept the people where she was from in poverty.

No one can doubt Cecily's character in that she always sticks to what she believes in. This showed during our disagreement. What sort of struck me, however, was something you usually don't notice with someone you're quarrelling with, which is how brave they are for taking the other position. She is brave in that it doesn't matter to her if her opinions differ from the crowd she will stick with them. She now stands falsely accused of this crime. I have no doubt that her bravery has helped her get through this ordeal, and will continue to help her until

the trial is over.

Cecily had friendly disagreements with some of us within the movement, but like all of us she disagreed much more with the path our society is on. It's one where the bottom 80 percent owns just 7 percent of overall wealth and one percent of the population owns 42 percent of the wealth. She sticks by her beliefs but is also a gentle soul. She believes strongly in forms of nonviolence as the best ways to change a world gone astray. After Cecily was beaten into a seizure she remarked to me that the first time she was arrested during Occupy, which had been a few months before, the police said to her that they agreed with what she was fighting for but had to do their jobs. She always held onto the belief that the police would join in the movement, one that most of us didn't have. This was influenced by the fact she had been in Madison, Wisconsin, where it actually did happen. This, of course, did not happen during Occupy. How this trial turns out will set a precedent for whether or not people can speak out against banks and corporations in the years to come without facing lengthy prison sentences like Cecily's.

Cecily and I spoke as the trial date neared, and she felt overwhelmed by the attention it was receiving. It is generally understood by her and the people in her circle that what has happened could have happened to anyone. The fact that she may well be the least important part of the trial. It is certainly true that police and protesters came in contact so the possibility of flinching in a certain way when an officer touches you becomes quite plausible. This, I imagine, is especially true if you are a woman who is grabbed unexpectedly from behind. I say she is special in this trial in terms of what she stands accused of. Her intentions are on trial, not just her actions. The question is whether or not her flinch upward that hit the officer was intentional. When you've come to know the disciplined, well-intentioned, nonviolent person that she is you understand that it would never be intentional.

20 Apr - New Online Petition for the Omaha 2

The Jericho Movement has started the petition "Governor State of Nebraska; State House of Nebraska; Nebraska State Supreme Court: Petition for Amnesty or Commutation of Sentences for Mondo We Langa and Ed Poindexter" and need your help to get it off the ground.

MORE:

Will you take 30 seconds to sign it right now? Here's the link:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/governor-state-of-nebraska-state-house-of-nebraska-nebraska-state-supreme-court-petition-for-amnesty-or-commutation-of-sentences-for-mondo-we-langa-and-ed-poindexter-2>

Here's why it's important:

Mondo (AKA David Rice) and Ed were the leaders of the Omaha Chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1970, and were convicted of murder. The Directions of then FBI Head J. Edgar Hoover were to get Panther Party members even if it required falsifying evidence. Hoover's Counter Intelligence Program was later determined inconsistent with the principles of a Democracy by the Frank Church Senate Committee.

21 Apr - New Campaign: Welcome Home Cody Lee Sutherlin (Tinley Park Five)

Cody Lee Sutherlin of the Tinley Park 5 is due to be released from prison in June. So Bloomington ABC, NYC ABC, and Sacramento Prisoner Support have launched a campaign to start a release fund for Cody Lee.

MORE:

From j.mp/CodyLee:

"In May 2012 five antifascists were arrested and, in early 2013, took non-cooperating plea deals for 3 felonies each for taking part in emphatically stopping a meeting of white supremacists organizing under the guise of the Illinois European Heritage Association at a restaurant in Tinley Park, Illinois. For more information, see tinleyparkfive.wordpress.com.

Cody Lee Sutherlin is the third of the five to be released, rejoining us in early June. Bloomington ABC, NYC ABC, and Sacramento Prisoner Support have launched a campaign to start a release fund for Cody Lee. By the

time Cody Lee is released he'll have been locked up for just over two years, will have a felony record, and certain things just won't be the same. Let's help him make a smooth transition! Let's raise some money and secure a release fund that will welcome him upon his release. Your donations will help Cody pay bills and costs of living while he looks for a job; buy a phone; and pay for license plates and insurance for his bike."

Please remember that prisoner support doesn't end when a comrade is released. Through halfway houses, supervised release, parole, or probation, there is usually state supervision beyond the initial sentence. Also, prison is traumatic. And of course there is the stigma of being a former prisoner that effects nearly every aspect of one's life. All of this adds up to the less obvious, but equally necessary, support needed when our loved ones come home. Donate to your ability and show an anti-fascist comrade how we welcome folks home.

If for whatever reason you'd rather donate to Cody Lee offline, please make the check payable to Cody Sutherlin and mail it to:

Sacramento Prisoner Support
Post Office Box 163126
Sacramento, California 95816

If you'd like to write to Cody Lee to let him know you're thinking of him and that you're glad he's getting out soon, he'd love to hear from you. His current address is:

Cody Sutherlin M34021
Robinson Correctional Center
13423 East 1150th Avenue
Robinson, Illinois 62454

More information is available at tinleyparkfive.wordpress.com and j.mp/CodyLee

22 Apr - The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Jail: It Turns Out That Gerald Ford Is Dead

This is the sixth installment of The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Jail.

MORE:

I'm in the odd but not unpleasant position of regularly receiving in the mail books ordered for me by strangers whose identities I often have no way of ascertaining. This has added a degree of intrigue to my life. I wish I knew, for instance, who keeps sending me black militant literature so that I could express my thanks, or figure out who's trying to set me up, or whatever. I'm kidding, of course, but at least one of these books, Soledad Brother, turns out to be on the list of proscribed material that on some U.S. prison compounds constitutes procedural evidence of involvement in the Black Guerrilla Family prison gang, which in turn can lead to indefinite solitary confinement (I happen to know this only because I was recently contacted by Shane Bauer, the journalist who did his own stretch of solitary in an Iranian prison a couple of years back while awaiting trial on trumped-up espionage charges; upon his return, he did a fine piece for Mother Jones on the excessive manner in which solitary is used here in the United States, a copy of which he kindly sent me and which I believe can be read online as well). This got me to wondering whether a honkey such as myself could be accused of being a Black Guerrilla member on such grounds, which of course would be rather silly — but if not, then it would seem that there are some books that can in effect be possessed by white inmates but not by black ones. These are the sorts of absurdities that arise when prison policy is left to the discretion of prison administrators rather than sentient human beings.

I'm also curious as to who sent the four-volume, 2,000-page English translation of a 14th-century Chinese novel that was shipped to me the other day from Beijing. Outlaws of the Marsh, according to the back cover summary, has over 100 protagonists — not characters, mind you, but protagonists. The total number of characters is probably unknown.

With the irrational sense of virtue that accompanies the undertaking of any difficult task regardless of whether there is any good reason to attempt such a thing to begin with, I sat down with a pad of paper and a pencil and

started reading. A mere four pages in, I had dutifully jotted down the names and positions of some dozen or so high officials attached to the court of Ren Zong, third emperor of the Song dynasty. An excerpt from my notes:

Zhao Zhe – Premier
Wen Yanbo – His deputy
Fan Zhongyan – deputy premier

A famine strikes, so General Hong Xin is dispatched to retrieve the divine teacher Zhang that he might intercede with the gods. Naturally, Xin manages to cause the accidental release of 108 demons from the monastery crypt before arranging this. Then we are informed that “Emperor Ren Zong ruled for 42 years and died without leaving a son,” and the plot resumes “a long time after,” leaving me behind with my now useless list of deputies and fucking deputy premiers from the long-gone Zong Administration (not that I’ll miss it, prone as it clearly was to just sort of lurching from crisis to crisis).

But the story continued, and 200 pages later, I had compiled quite a list of character names, including Nine Dragons Shi Jin, Miraculous Strategist Zhu Wu, Gorge-Leaping Tiger Chen Da, White Spotted Snake Yung Chun, Sagacious Lu, Accomplished Cast Iron Buddha Cui, Qui Second Son Flying Messenger from Hell, Rat Crossing the Street Zhang the Third, Snake in the Grass Li the Fourth, and Fu An, “better known as Dried Pecker Head.”

Outlaws is nothing if not colorful. It may even suffer from a surplus of color. There are the inimitable fight scenes:

“He landed a blow on Zheng’s nose that flattened it to one side and brought the blood flowing like the sauces in a condiment shop — salty, sour, and spicy. ‘Mother-raping thief!’ said the major.”

... there are the charming instances of traditional Middle Kingdom law enforcement techniques:

“Major Lu Da has fled to escape punishment, no one knows where. I’ve arrested these neighbors and a landlord.”

... and as is so often the case with literature written by the Chinese, there are here and there passages in which something just seems off, as if it had actually been composed by an advanced yet unfinished artificial intelligence that has escaped from some DARPA black operations site and is now roaming the internet, frantically writing prose in an effort to pass itself off as human:

“What right do you have to make sport of a respectable woman in times of peace and order?”

Perhaps I oversold that one. Anyway, it’s an interesting book.

Not having internet access can be disconcerting. For the last several months, I’ve been trying to figure out whether or not Gerald Ford is dead, and it wasn’t until yesterday that I was able to arrive at an answer. You might wonder why I didn’t just have somebody on the outside look it up for me. The problem is that I always forgot to ask whenever I called someone up. And on the three or four occasions each day when I would think to myself, “Oh, right, got to find out about Ford,” I was disinclined to call someone from jail simply to ask if Gerald Ford is still alive. Out in the world, I would end up having to go online and pull up Ford’s Wikipedia page twice a year on average, six months being about as long as I could go before forgetting if it had turned out that he had died several years ago or was in fact still living in whatever state Ford retired to — assuming he was retired and not serving as a board member of some hedge fund or being dead.

This nervous obsession with Ford’s mortality all began back in 2003 or 2004 or whenever it was that Reagan died. I was sitting there watching Reagan’s funeral — which, of course, was a very elaborate and high-imperial

affair fit for a pretend WWII veteran who single-handedly won the Cold War with his unflinching pro-anti-pro-nuclear arms policy — when suddenly I thought, “Oh, no! What if Gerald Ford dies next week?” My thinking was that it would be sort of mean to put on the paltry, by-the-numbers state funeral merited by a second-rate president like Ford just a week or so after the big Reagan send-off, in commemoration of which there had been proclaimed 100 days of gladiator fights and the forgiveness of all debts, and thereafter, as you’ll recall, the president’s finest weapons, surviving wives, and 10 yoke of oxen had been placed along with the perfumed corpse itself onto a longboat that was then set on fire and cast out to sea. How embarrassing would it be for the nation to follow all of this up with a Ford funeral, with the cheese-and-fruit trays picked up from Costco, the rows and rows of empty pews, and the inevitable, grueling six-hour keynote address by the ghost of Leonid Brezhnev? Alternatively, we could try to spare the Ford family’s feelings, pulling out all the stops on the decorations and hiring some professional mourners and maybe passing around the hat for \$400 to send off to that one company that will name a star after your loved one (although I can’t imagine where one gets the authority to just name stars after people), but somehow I think Betty Ford would have detected a false note.

I do remember that a decent interval passed after Reagan’s funeral without Gerald Ford characteristically putting everyone into another difficult situation by dying at the wrong time, and so gradually I was able to start living my life again. But I never was able to keep track of him after that. And then, of course, I was thrown in jail, and although this isn’t plainly written down in any federal guidelines or anything, it’s implicitly understood that one of the informal means by which federal inmates are punished is that they have no reliable method by which to find out what’s going on with the various ex-presidents. Really, you’re at the mercy of whatever asshole friends you can manage to get on the phone at a moment’s notice. One guy I know told me that George H.W. Bush had just announced that he has AIDS, and I went on believing this for several days. Another of my so-called “friends” gave me this whole bullshit story about how George W. is now painting people’s portraits. Needless to say I don’t appreciate this sort of thing.

Finally, the other day, I happened to see a piece in *The Economist* about an event at the LBJ Library commemorating the 1963 Civil Rights Acts. The article noted in passing that there are five men living who have held the U.S. presidency, which gave me a framework by which to finally work this out. Now, I knew Carter isn’t dead because his vitality is shored up by a never-ending regime of ecstatic prayer and sexual intercourse. I knew neither of the Bushes is dead because of the alchemical life-extension serum that all *Skull and Bones* members in good standing are given each year at *Bohemian Grove*. I knew Bill Clinton isn’t dead because Hillary Clinton hasn’t scandalized everyone with a hasty remarriage to another woman. And I knew Obama isn’t dead because then Biden would be the president, and Biden can’t be the president. That’s five living presidents. So, according to my calculations, Gerald Ford must be dead.

Come to think of it, I actually do remember Ford dying. We were all sitting at our desks, passing around some keen baseball cards and talking about how keen it was when Johnny took *Dead Man’s Curve* in his souped-up Hot Rod and making fun of Suzy for having polio when Teacher finally came in with a sort of dazed look on his face. Billy, the class clown, said, “Gee, Mr. Applethorpe, you look like you just traded your best pair of roller skates for a mess of wooden nickels!” It was the sort of biting, impeccably phrased bon mot for which class clowns of the mid-20th century were rightfully feared by all teachers in those days, and I thought Billy would get it for sure this time, just as certain as Uncle Joe Stalin has a keen mustache. But Teacher just sort of wandered over to him, not really seeing anything he was looking at, and patted Billy’s head. Then he went over to his own desk at the front of the classroom and sat down, started shuffling through the homework like he always did in the mornings — and then he just put his head down on the desk and began to sob. Me, I thought he’d gone crazy, but then the principal appeared in the doorway and announced, “Children, former President Gerald Ford is dead.” There were gasps all around, and soon we were all crying. Then Teacher pulled a revolver out from the desk, stuck it in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. They never did manage to scrape all the blood off the wall.

23 Apr - Previously-Secret Prison Docs Show Constitutional Violations in Experimental Prison Units

For the first time, hundreds of documents detailing the Bureau of Prisons’ process for designating prisoners to controversial Communications Management Units (CMUs) are public.

MORE:

The documents had been under a protective order in the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) lawsuit, *Aref v. Holder*, since CCR filed the case in 2010.

The CMUs were quietly opened in Terre Haute, IN and Marion, IL in 2006 and 2008, respectively, to monitor and control the communications of certain prisoners and to isolate them from other prisoners and the outside world. But the documents revealed today show that the BOP did not draft criteria for designating prisoners to the facilities until 2009 and that, even then, different offices within the BOP, each of which plays a role in the designation process, have a different understanding of the criteria. Other documents reveal that the reasons provided to CMU prisoners for their designation were incomplete, inaccurate, and sometimes even false. Discovery in the case also shows that prisoners were told they could earn their way out of the CMU by completing 18 months with clear conduct, but upon meeting that goal, their requests for transfer out of the CMU were repeatedly denied without explanation. Other documents show political speech was used as a factor in CMU designation. The documents made public today also show that 60 percent of CMU prisoners are Muslim, though Muslims comprise only six percent of the federal prisoner population.

“The documents revealed today show that CMU prisoners have been denied due process at every step, from designation to review,” said CCR Senior Staff Attorney Alexis Agathocleous. “The CMUs impose harsh restrictions on prisoners, including a ban on even momentarily hugging their families. Meanwhile, the BOP has denied hundreds of prisoners, who are mostly Muslim, the opportunity to understand or rebut the rationale for their placement, or a meaningful review process to earn their way out,”

The documents revealed today also show that decision-makers are not required to, and do not, document their reasons for selecting a prisoner for CMU placement. As a result, it is effectively impossible for prisoners to challenge their designation.

“I was told the reason I was moved to CMU was because of ‘recruitment and radicalization,’ but wasn’t told anything else. I tried to find out more about these allegations so I could challenge my designation, but to no avail,” said former plaintiff Avon Twitty, who has been released from prison since this lawsuit was filed. “Without knowing what I had allegedly done to land in a CMU, I was helpless to challenge those allegations and had no hope of being transferred out. This lawsuit is my first opportunity to get to the bottom of my placement in a harsh, restrictive, and secretive prison unit.”

In addition to heavily restricted telephone and visitation access, CMU prisoners are categorically denied any physical contact with family members and are forbidden from hugging, touching or embracing their children or spouses during visits. The plaintiffs in *Aref* spent years under these conditions without knowing why and were designated to CMUs despite having relatively or totally clean disciplinary histories; none of the plaintiffs have received any communications-related disciplinary infractions in the last decade.

For further information about CCR’s federal lawsuit around CMUs, visit the *Aref, et al. v. Holder, et al.* case page or www.ccrjustice.org/cmu.

25 Apr - ‘NATO 3’ Sentenced to More Jail Time After Prosecutors Rabidly Invoke Boston Bombing

On April 25th, the “NATO 3” were sentenced by a judge for mob action and possession of an incendiary device with intent to commit arson offenses. They each were given prison sentences, but they were much shorter than what prosecutors from the state of Illinois wanted.

MORE:

by Kevin Gosztola (*The Dissenter*)

Brian Jacob Church, Brent Betterly and Jared Chase, came to Chicago for protests at the NATO summit at the end of April in 2012. They were targeted by undercover police and arrested for their alleged involvement in making Molotov cocktails late in the evening on May 16, 2012. They were labeled terrorists by the State’s Attorney Office in a criminal complaint that was a fantasy of radical terror.

On February 7, after a rather lengthy trial, a jury found the the three men not guilty of all state terrorism charges including material support for terrorism, conspiracy to commit terrorism and possession and manufacturing of an incendiary device with the intent to commit terrorism. They were found not guilty of possessing an incendiary device with the intention to commit arson and not guilty of solicitation of arson. It was a huge victory for defense attorneys in the case.

The three men were found guilty of possessing an incendiary device to commit arson, a charge that carries a sentence of up to 30 years in prison. They also were found guilty of possessing an incendiary device with the knowledge that it would be used to commit arson and found guilty of lesser mob action charges, which jurors were able to select if they did not want to find the “NATO 3” guilty of terrorism.

The judge sentenced Church to 30 days in prison for mob action and five years in prison for the possession of an incendiary device charge. He sentenced Betterly to 30 days in prison for mob action and six years in prison for the possession of an incendiary device charge. He sentenced Chase to 30 days in prison for mob action and eight years in prison for the possession of an incendiary device charge.

“NATO 3” More Dangerous Than People Who Committed “Murder-For-Hire”

During sentencing, it was quite clear that the State’s Attorney of Cook County Anita Alvarez and others in her office were deeply upset that they had lost. And, to possibly salvage the case, they asked Judge Thaddeus Wilson to sentence each of the men to 14 years in prison.

Prosecutors argued in their sentencing memo that what the men had done was more dangerous than criminals who committed “murder-for-hire.” They also invoked the Boston Marathon bombing.

Assistant State’s Attorney Jack Blakey built upon his record of feverish statements in this case by referencing a “separate set of defendants,” who on April 15, 2013, used a “crock pot with marbles” and killed people including a child. They, too, had a bag of weapons that were used against the police. A police officer lost his life. These defendants also hijacked a car and attacked a police officer. This is what prosecutors believed the men would have done “if they had gotten their way.” And, if it were not for the “great police work,” the argument was that the city would have been hit with an attack similar to the Boston bombing.

This infuriated defense attorney Thomas Durkin, who represented Chase. He called them out for having the “audacity” to “compare this to Boston.” He “didn’t think for a minute” they would be “ignorant enough to compare this to Boston” and suggested prosecutors were like the Spanish Inquisition.

“Have We Forgotten About Homemade Bombs in Backpacks?”

But State’s Attorney of Cook County, Anita Alvarez, had invoked this real and actual terrorism attack after the state lost its terrorism case in February. “You know what? My job is public safety, and that’s exactly what we did. Have we forgotten about Boston? Have we forgotten about homemade bombs in backpacks?” She also asked a reporter for the Associated Press later if he wanted a Molotov cocktail thrown through his window.

Durkin explained that the prosecutors made him embarrassed to be from Chicago. He was “embarrassed to be in a world where facts get turned upside down for political purposes.” The prosecutors “still didn’t get the message no matter what the jury said.” They didn’t realize “the world has been laughing at them.”

Church made a brief statement in court and mentioned a letter he wrote to the judge. He had spent a few hours trying to figure out exactly what he wanted to say. He said he was not a perfect person. He like any other person made mistakes, but those who are wise learn from their mistakes.”

“I want to go home where I have a job, a family, a home to go to, a place to stay,” he said to the judge. He also felt compelled to add, “I do love my country,” and to be compared to “such an atrocity”—the Boston bombing —“hurts. It rips my heart apart.”

Judge Asked to “Ratify” This “Failed Prosecution”

A defense attorney for Church, Michael Deutsch, argued that the prosecutors wanted to convince the judge to “ratify overcharging” them. They wanted him to put a kind of stamp of approval on “terrorism charges that never should have been brought in the first place” by giving each of them 14 years in prison.

Deutsch further argued that there was no penological purpose in sentencing Church to any more time in prison. Church (along with the other two defendants) had been in prison all alone in each of their cells for over 700 days. He had time to mature and learn that what he did should not have been done. Anyone coming to Chicago now to commit property damage or any violent criminal act at a major protest would know that they would get charged with terrorism by the state and be put in the Cook County jail if they tried to do something like that. So, what was the purpose?

“Is it retribution?” Deutsch asked. Is it for revenge? Or, he added, “Some way to justify what the State’s Attorney’s Office did?”

Blakey claimed that there was “more than a risk of recidivism” in this case and they were a “disaster waiting to happen.” He continued to use fear to persuade the judge saying the judge needed to use the force of law to the fullest extent possible so Chicago would not look back and ask if he could have done more.

Prosecutors Use Genetic Neurodegenerative Disorder Diagnosis Against Chase

Perhaps, most vile was how he argued that Chase, who suffers from Huntington’s disease and is likely to die within the next ten years, is “more dangerous” because he has this rare genetic neurodegenerative disorder.

A doctor who conducted a neurological exam testified in court that Chase has been developing symptoms for at least the past five years. It is hereditary. It makes it hard to control behavior. It is in some ways responsible for his outbursts in prison, where he has thrown his food tray or squirted urine and feces at correctional officers.

This is who undercover police officers targeted and manipulated into playing probably the most active role in the construction of Molotov cocktails. Rather than show compassion, Blakey despicably said that if he was out of prison there would be nothing to “prevent him from filling [a] bottle with something else.” There would be “more than urine and feces at his disposal” when he was no longer in jail.

Prosecutors Say Betterly is No “Father of the Year”

The slimy character assassination continued with Blakey saying Betterly was no “Father of the Year.” He said Betterly would not “trust a UC to get in his way” the next time. So, the judge needed to give everyone in Chicago an opportunity for something different, “something different than what Boston suffered.”

Betterly had a son seven years ago. He delivered an impassioned statement in court where he sought to “refute assertions made about the person” prosecutors have suggested he happens to be. He talked about his “little boy” giving him a “sense of purpose in the world” and how he is “haunted” by his own failure. “His daddy is no monster,” he said.

The statement also articulated his political beliefs, responding to the way the prosecution had used anarchist in a way that was interchangeable with terrorist. He said he never planned any conspiracy that would have perpetuated the same cycle of fear and violence which he has opposed. He expressed a clear commitment to social justice and also stated that he had come to the city to protest and “join in solidarity with those who have experienced terror at the hands of NATO.”

Judge Agrees With Defense That This Case Was Not About Terrorism

When the judge announced his sentence, he opened, “A lot has been said about this case so to start I think it is important to say what this case wasn’t. It was not a case about anarchists. It was not a case about the 99% versus the 1%. It was not a case about criminalizing protest. It was not a case about fear mongering. It was not a case about the First Amendment. It was not a case about police entrapment.”

“It was not a case about terrorism,” he added.

Judge Wilson said the police officers should be “commended.” He said “peaceful protest is not synonymous with rioting,” and “as a society, in the face of threats, we don’t wait for a building or property to be damaged.”

“We don’t wait until runners are impaled by sharpnel as they cross the finish line,” and we “don’t wait for a police on fire,” he declared.

Seeing a Molotov cocktail—”That is terror.” It “might not be terrorism but it is terrorizing.” And Americans will not stand for the throwing of Molotov cocktails at police on the streets.

Never Missing a Moment to Crank Up the Fear

It was Durkin’s contention in court that the “NATO 3” were being punished for going to trial. The prosecutors pushed for a “heavier sentence because they dared to challenge authority.” Certainly, the prosecutors wanted these men to be terrorists so they could use funds left over from the NATO summit toward the prosecution.

The prosecutors never missed a moment to crank up the fear. They threw around all sorts of innuendo and insinuations and then, during the closing argument, outright called the “NATO 3” terrorists and the jury was not persuaded by any of it. After about an hour of deliberation, Durkin said, they were moving on to what to do with the other charges they had available to convict them. They recognized the evidence at issue was not evidence of terrorism.

What About the Chicago Police Department’s Spying on Activist Groups?

Now, what did come out in the courtroom that deserves more attention were details of infiltration and spying on activist groups ahead of the NATO summit. Like a modern-day Red Squad, the Chicago Police Department had an intelligence unit (which used to be named the counterterrorism unit) go out in search of any individuals, who were intent to commit criminal activity at the NATO summit.

The state of Illinois and the judge would have the public believe that it had nothing to do with targeting anarchists. But the unit had to focus their attention somewhere. They had some idea of who they believed would commit violence having viewed videos of the G20 in Toronto. They were on the lookout for “black bloc” or anarchists and went to concerts where bands that had anarchist fans were playing. They went hunting on Division Street, a main thoroughfare in the city, for signs of anarchist activity. They were at peaceful meetings organized by the Occupy movement where they took notes and they even ended up at the Heartland Cafe, known as a restaurant for hippies and leftists but probably not where anarchists meet to plan attacks on city property.

Alvarez overlooked the ramifications of this spying and surveillance after the sentencing. She said, “Police were doing their job. Chicago had never hosted NATO before. It was new to all of us. And they did their best to make sure that there wasn’t going to be violence.”

She was very pleased with the judge’s sentencing verdict. “It should send a message that we’re not going to sit back and wait for someone to get hurt. You know, and that’s the point about Boston. I think everybody would actually loved to have stopped. So we’re not waiting for someone to get hit with a Molotov cocktail.

“We’re not going to wait for a building to be destroyed. Why should we?” she added.

The state’s narrative ignored how present the undercover cops were in essentially goading and trying to get the

men to incriminate themselves. How dangerous would these men have been if they were left alone?

“Are You Ready to See a Cop on Fire?” – Prosecutors’ Favorite Incendiary Buzz Phrase

One of the most jarring, reprehensible and authoritarian parts of the trial was this consistent repeating of this phrase Church allegedly said, “Are you ready to see a cop on fire?” Many different variations of this were expressed, each time with the intent of creating a great dramatic effect in the minds of the judge, the press and the public. The only problem is whether Church ever actually uttered this incendiary buzz phrase.

Two undercover police officers that targeted the “NATO 3,” Officer Mehmet Uygun and Officer Nadia Chikko, met with Church on May 2. A surveillance team photographed him approaching the White Palace Grill where they met up and then, according to the two officers, he proceeded to take them downtown to show them how he would like to attack a Chase Bank branch building. But this is where the surveillance stopped. The officers were also not wearing wires yet. So, nobody else heard Church say, “Are you ready to see a cop on fire?”

What did get picked up on a recording was Uygun saying they were going to be up and out of the city of Chicago after they “terrorize[d] this mother fucker.”

“The Boy Who Cries Wolf Must Somehow Produce the Animal”

Civil liberties lawyer, author and director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s (ACLU) Project on Political Surveillance, Frank Donner, wrote in his book, *Protectors of Privilege*, about the political surveillance operations of the Chicago police in the 1960s and 1970s.

Donner could have been writing about this case:

Because their exalted “mission” to protect internal security contrasts so sharply with the dreary reality of their duties, intelligence personnel in the late sixties, almost as an occupational necessity, fantasized, Walter Mitty-style, about uncovering a subversive plot: in the nick of time they nip it in the bud and seize the plotters (already defined in the police mind by images of bestiality and terror) along with their weapons and explosives. They then testify in a dramatic trial, resulting in long prison sentences, and earn the undying gratitude of the nation, not to speak of promotions, publicity and awards. The happy ending of an arrest makes the dream complete, but even short of that, the fantasy of radical terror is consoling in itself because it vindicates the premise of threatened revolutionary violence that is, after all, the primary justification for the huge expenditure, the files, the days, months and years of boring surveillance, the bursting albums of police photographs, the informer networks and the minatory propaganda. The boy who cries wolf must somehow produce the animal if he is not to forfeit his credibility—and lose a promotion.

The State’s Attorney’s Office of Cook County in Illinois cried wolf about the “NATO 3” being terrorists. They could not produce the animal and were embarrassed by accounts in the press. Yet, sadly, in the prosecutors’ zeal to save face, three men are going to do more time in prison when whatever crimes and mistakes they committed have probably been punished enough already. They’ll do more time because their confirmation bias—their belief in the fantasy they created around the “NATO 3”—took priority over whatever care they should have for the human beings they were prosecuting.

1 May - May Day March: The Insurgent Workers Against Work

Our comrades from The Base are organizing for May Day. The details follow.

MORE:

WHAT: May Day March

WHERE: Union Square - 14th Street at Broadway

WHEN: 12:00pm, Thursday, May 1st

COST: Free

2 May - Haikus For Sundiata

Considering how much Sundiata loves art and poetry, particularly haikus, we are asking folks to write Haikus for Sundiata, to post and share them through social media (facebook, twitter, instagram, tumblr, etc.) on May 2nd using the hashtag #Haikus4Sundiata.

MORE:

On May 1st, 2014 former Black Panther political prisoner Sundiata Acoli will have an annual review before the New Jersey State Parole Board to determine the length of time he may have to continue to serve in prison.

We'll collect the poems shared and send them to Sundiata.

Sundiata will also be writing brand new haikus to share on May 2nd, so please look for them and retweet/repost!

On May 2, 1973, former Black Panthers Sundiata Acoli, Assata Shakur and Zayd Shakur were ambushed and attacked by state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike. Assata was wounded and Zayd was killed. During the gun battle a state trooper was shot and killed in self-defense. Sundiata was tried in an environment of mass hysteria and convicted.

Sundiata was sentenced to life in prison and has served the term ordered by the judge yet the New Jersey State Parole Board continues to deny his freedom. We want to support him and raise our voices in support of compassionate release of aging prisoners and political prisoners. Parole boards across the country infamously and unjustly deny parole to community ready folks every day. But there is mounting support for aging, elderly prisoners who deserve their freedom. Sundiata is 77 years-old and has completed his sentence serving almost 40 years in prison.

For more information on his case and history, please refer to Sundiata's website www.sundiataacoli.org.

For those who don't know, a haiku is a short three line poem, with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second and 5 in the third (5/7/5). For more information on haikus, see here:
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5782>

For those who want to participate in a day of action to show their love and support we look forward to collecting and sharing poetry from all who wish to join us. Poems should be focused on messages of love and respect, Sundiata's history and/or the ways his work and sacrifice are relevant to our history.

Haikus can be sent also via email to thesafc@gmail.com.

If Sundiata can keep love in his eyes and strength in his spirit, so can we! Don't worry if it's been a while since you've written a haiku or a poem. We'd love to see what your beautiful, creative minds can do!
#Haikus4Sundiata #FreeSundiata

3 May - 33 Men X Oscar

WHAT: Demonstration for Oscar Lopez Rivera

WHEN: 12:00 noon, Saturday, May 3rd

WHERE: Pace University, One Pace Plaza

COST: Free

MORE:

For later dates, see below. For more information, email Ana Lopez, the NY Coordinator for Oscar Lopez Rivera, at [<ALOPEZ@hostos.cuny.edu>](mailto:ALOPEZ@hostos.cuny.edu).

BACKGROUND on 33 Mujeres NYC x Oscar:

We are 33+ Boricua women from NYC inspired by the work that the 32 Mujeres x Oscar in Puerto Rico have been doing for the past year.

Our purpose is to work in solidarity with this network of women, create awareness among our communities here and help build a movement for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera. We will utilize our monthly demonstrations to distribute literature on our actions and Oscar, as well as to get petitions signed for his release.

Each woman who decides to demonstrate as a part of 33 Mujeres NYC x Oscar has committed to showing up at the demonstrations each month, the last Sunday of the month. Those who cannot be present, will need to find another woman to take their place. We are committed to demonstrating each month until Oscar is released.

Logistics:

1) The demonstrations will be held each month in a different location.

March 30 - 106 Street in El Barrio

April 27 - Bronx (Fordham Plaza)

May 25 - Loisaida Festival (Avenue C)

June 29 - Williamsburg, Brooklyn

July 27 - Coney Island

August 31 - Orchard Beach

September 28 - Queens

October 26 - Manhattan

2) The day of the demonstration will be consistent with the women in Puerto Rico, therefore we decided to also have the actions every last Sunday of the month beginning on March 30th from 4pm - 4:33pm. Oscar fasts this day as well. Therefore we felt it was best to be in solidarity with both.

3) Since April marks Oscar's 33rd year of incarceration, we decided to begin our activities as 33xOscar, with 33 mujeres instead of 32 women.

4) We will be using the same colors as the women in Puerto Rico to be consistent. Our t-shirts will be bright pink and the pañuelos will be light blue (the same blue as the Puerto Rican flag). We will not be meeting again as this is not an organization but a network of women. All logistics will be dealt with via email and our Facebook group and email google group.

10 May - Dear Norberto Gonzalez Claudio

WHAT: Letter-writing for Norberto Gonzalez Claudio

WHEN: 3:00-6:00pm, Saturday, May 10th

WHERE: Casa de las Americas - 182 East 111th Street (between Lexington and 3rd Avenues)

COST: Free

MORE:

According to El Comité de Apoyo de Norberto Gonzalez Claudio (The Norberto Gonzalez Claudio Support Committee in Puerto Rico), Norberto isn't receiving most of the mail sent to him. As of yet, there has been no justification for his mail being intercepted, which is a blatant violation of Norberto's rights as a prisoner.

El Comité has made a public call for Norberto's allies to send him letters, postcards and greeting cards. If they're going to throw away his mail, then we should inundate them with as much of it as possible.

We should make their job as inconvenient and troublesome as possible. Our thousands of pounds of mail should break their backs!

On the 3rd anniversary of Norberto's arrest, join ProLibertad for an afternoon of letter writing! Help us break their backs! We will have letter writing materials, refreshments, and music!