

Updates for August 19th

5 Aug - Luke O'Donovan Update

On August 12th, Luke O'Donovan accepted a plea agreement that means he'll spend two years in prison and eight on supervised release. The prosecution was seeking a sentence of 110 years. We've included updates on the case below, including some things that were written pre-trial to give better context.

MORE:

August 5th - Luke's Trial Begins August 11th

The case has moved slowly through the court system. In April, Luke was re-indicted with an additional charge, and now faces five charges of felony aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and one charge of attempted murder. After over a year of waiting, Luke's self-defense immunity hearing occurred in July of this year. Luke was denied immunity, but the defense feels that the hearing went well for Luke.

At the immunity hearing, the prosecution made a series of ludicrous claims in order to prop up their case. They made a point of asking every witness whether or not the term "faggot" was offensive, or just a synonym for other "non-offensive" terms like "pussies or bitches," and later used the word "nigger" as another example of a "non-offensive" term. The prosecution's attempt to neutralize such blatantly homophobic words make it clear that the New Year's incident is not a singular event, but part of a greater social problem of homophobia.

Since the May 13th immunity hearing, one of the so-called victims in Luke's trial was seen in footage of a horrific transphobic attack which occurred just outside of the Stratosphere skate shop in Little 5 Points, a neighborhood in northeast Atlanta. This attack captured the interests of media outlets and provoked outrage in many Atlantans. Just a few weeks prior to this attack, two trans women were accosted, beaten, and stripped nude on a MARTA train by a group of men while on their way home. We find these attacks disturbing and wrong — and hope that the incident involving Luke will be understood as a part of this larger context. Following the denial of immunity, the case will now move on to trial by jury. Although Luke was denied immunity, we are still hopeful that the trial will proceed favorably for Luke. While the burden of evidence for the immunity hearing rested upon the defense (Luke and his lawyer and witnesses), the burden of evidence for the trial will rest on the prosecution. At trial, arguments for self-defense can still be made. We have just received notice that the trial will begin on Monday, August 11.

In the year and a half since the incident, much has been accomplished: the original media narrative which painted Luke as a deranged aggressor was successfully challenged; over thirteen thousand dollars have been raised; and people across the country and the world have displayed their support.

August 12th - Luke Accepts Plea Deal – Two Years in Prison, Eight Years Probation and Exile

Today, Luke accepted a negotiated non-cooperating plea deal and was sentenced to two years in prison and eight years of probation. As a last minute addition to this plea deal, Judge Markle added that Luke was to be banned from the state of Georgia, save one county, for the duration of his probation. Luke was taken away from us to prison immediately after court.

This end to the case surprised many of us. It was only two weeks ago that we were alerted to the fact that Luke's trial would begin this soon. After that notice, events continued to unfold rapidly and chaotically. The prosecution officially offered Luke this plea deal last Thursday. Luke was placed in a very difficult position, facing decades in prison if convicted by a jury. He decided not to risk such a long sentence, but rather to accept the manageable sentence of two years in prison, and eight years of probation.

For those who are unfamiliar with plea deals, the conditions of a plea are negotiated between the prosecution and the defense prior to court. The judge is expected to sentence the defendant according to those agreed upon conditions, but has the ability to alter that sentence once the defendant has entered a guilty plea. If the judge's sentence is different from the agreed upon conditions, the defendant then has the opportunity to change his plea and take the case to trial.

When Luke and more than fifty of his supporters entered court together this morning, we expected Luke to be taken away on the negotiated conditions. The prosecution began with an articulation of the incident from their point of view, which included equating the word "faggot" with the "non-offensive" sentiment "babies", and painting Luke as a malevolent aggressor. Following this, Luke's attackers and their family members were given time to speak. Three of the attackers spoke extensively about their medical conditions following the New Year's incident. Their mothers then went on the stand to appeal to the judge for a harsher sentence. Throughout, the prosecution indignantly dismissed the portrayal of the incident as a queer-bashing. The crux of this trial centers on whether or not Luke was queer-bashed. While the prosecution maintains that Luke's attackers aren't homophobic, a recent video showing one of the "victims" standing by, laughing, while a transwoman was beaten in Little 5 Points reveals their true character.

When the time for sentencing came, Judge Markle revealed what side he was on: not ours. He went so far as to explicitly state that he was "having second thoughts" as to whether he should have allowed the plea deal at all. The two years of prison time that Luke will serve is remarkably low given the 110 years of prison he faced. The judge said that he allowed the plea deal only because he had previously stated that he would back whatever agreement the defense and prosecution made. Judge Markle then sentenced Luke to the pre-negotiated plea, but added several conditions: According to Judge Markle, following his prison time, Luke will be banned from the state of Georgia, with the exception of Screven County; his probation cannot be terminated early at any point; he is not eligible for non-reporting probation; any probation violations are to be referred to Judge Markle; and Luke will be forced to undergo weekly drug and alcohol tests for the full eight years. While Luke could have chosen at this point to change his plea and move on with a trial, he chose to enter into the prison system under Judge Markle's stipulations.

We understand Judge Markle's addition of harsher conditions as a direct attempt to intimidate Luke out of the plea deal and into a trial, which would have carried with it the risk of 110 years of prison time. We understand Luke's acceptance of the plea deal and his admission of guilt as the direct result of coercion by the State. Furthermore, we understand the banishment from the state of Georgia as a direct attempt by the judge to separate Luke from the power and strength of his supporters. The fact that Luke is surrounded by an impressive community of support was absolutely obvious to anyone in court today, including the judge. There wasn't a single spare seat in the sections set aside for Luke's supporters. It is the role of the state to separate each of us from one another, and the judge was clearly interested in extending his reach as far into Luke's life as possible — not only will Luke be separated from us in prison, he will be separated from those of us in Atlanta for many years after his release.

We are deeply saddened by the fact that Luke was taken away from us. As always, we believe that Luke is not guilty of the crimes with which he has been charged. Nevertheless, as Luke remains strong on the inside, we will do our best to remain strong on the outside. For us, this means that we will continue to support Luke in every way possible, including continuing the struggle against the greater social context that allows events like the attack on Luke to occur daily. He has asked that we publish the following statement on his behalf:

My name is Luke O'Donovan. In the early morning of January 1st, 2013, I was attacked by a group of men at a party because of my sexuality. In an attempt to defend myself from the attack I thought could end my life I stabbed 5 of them, while also being stabbed 3 times myself. It is regrettable that anyone had to come to harm, but given the choice of whether to lose my life to a hateful attack or fight for the chance to live, I will always choose the ferocious refusal to go quietly into the night. This refusal was not fueled by hate for my attackers, but by my love for life. It is this passion for life that came in conflict with my attackers, and this same passion that was arrested by the cops and is being punished by the courts. It is this passion that they are trying to chain, to cage, to rehabilitate me away from, but it is this passion that will pull my gaze – always forward – through the dark. I can

already glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel. I'll be home soon.

Luke will enter the prison system first at Fulton County Jail in Atlanta, GA, where he will spend the first thirty to sixty days of his sentence. He will then be transferred to Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson, GA for between thirty and sixty days, during which his long-term location will be determined. Luke will serve out the remainder of his sentence — between twenty and twenty two months — at a location that is yet unknown to us.

August 13th - Prison and Exile for Luke O'Donovan: A Price of Fighting Back Against Gay Bashers

by Natasha Lennard (*VICE*)

Exile is not a punishment commonly doled out by the contemporary US justice system. Cages, not banishment, have long been the order of the day.

Not so for Luke O'Donovan. A 21-year-old queer anarchist living in Atlanta, O'Donovan learned on Monday that he will spend the next two years in a Georgia prison, and then the following eight years on probation in what can only be described as exile. While his sentence — which I will expand upon later — is peculiar, the ordeal that led to his receiving it is sadly too common.

O'Donovan was the victim of a homophobic attack by a group of men on New Year's Eve. Having seen the young man dancing with and kissing other men at a party, a group of men numbering between five to 12 hurled homophobic slurs at O'Donovan and physically attacked him. According to his supporters, a number of witnesses saw members of the group stamp on O'Donovan's head. O'Donovan himself released a statement Monday saying, "In an attempt to defend myself from the attack I thought could end my life I stabbed five of them, while also being stabbed three times myself." One man required surgery following the fight, and no injuries were fatal. Only O'Donovan was charged — five counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Facing up to a 110-year sentence if convicted by a jury, O'Donovan agreed to a plea deal Monday. He is far from alone in foregoing a trial by jury in fear of decades behind bars if found guilty. Approximately 95 percent of all criminal cases in this country end in plea deals. Prosecutorial overreach and aggressive minimum sentencing laws mean our legal system is structured to coerce admissions of guilt. "We understand Luke's acceptance of the plea deal and his admission of guilt as the direct result of coercion by the State," noted a statement from O'Donovan's supporters.

As I see it, his case is the latest in a series in which LGBTQ individuals have been heavily punished by the legal system for daring to defend themselves in the face of discriminatory violence and abuse. Like CeCe McDonald, the trans woman who was jailed for fatally stabbing a man during a vicious transphobic attack on her and her friends, O'Donovan faced charges while his aggressors were deemed "victims." In July, a judge denied O'Donovan immunity from his charges on self-defense grounds.

To shed some light on where the sympathies of the Atlanta court seemed to lie, the sentencing hearing on Monday included testimonies from the mothers of the men who attacked O'Donovan. Judge Todd Markle told O'Donovan outright that he would have liked to put him in prison for more time than the plea deal entails. The prosecution argued that the word "faggot" was as "non-offensive" as teasingly calling someone a baby.

To be clear, I write here in support of O'Donovan. If you smell a whiff of bias in my depiction of this case, I haven't gone far enough: There should be a stench of anger at a system that defends queer bashers and punishes their victims. George Zimmerman claimed self-defense in shooting dead unarmed teen Trayvon Martin and was found "not guilty." O'Donovan, himself stabbed three times, is imprisoned and sentenced to exile.

The exile stipulation in the sentence is unusual, and points again to Judge Markle's desire to extract as much punishment as possible for O'Donovan out of the plea deal. Specifically, the stipulation demands that after he leaves prison, during O'Donovan's eight years of probation he is banned from the state of Georgia except for one county, Screven. Since an individual on probation is also not permitted to leave the state in which he or she is sentenced, O'Donovan is effectively banished from everywhere in the world for eight years except Screven

County — which, by the way, has a population of just over 15,000 and boasts “small town living.” The nearest cities, Savannah and Augusta, are 60 miles away and are outside the space O’Donovan in which will be permitted to exist.

Banishment laws, archaic as they seem, are on the books only in Georgia, Tennessee, and in Washington, D.C. Some legal scholars have described such punishment as cruel and unusual. On the whole, banishment is reserved for sex offenders, or deployed in efforts to keep gang members away from their bases. The decision to remove O’Donovan from his community for years after he serves prison time smacks of cruelty. Tellingly, the judge added the exile stipulation to the deal O’Donovan and the prosecutors had reached. To use a grimly appropriate idiom, the probation condition twists the knife in O’Donovan’s wounds.

Within months of videos emerging online showing two separate incidents in Atlanta of trans women being brutally beaten — stomped on, punched, and stripped — O’Donovan’s sentencing sends an insidious and troubling message to victims of queer and trans bashing — namely, don’t fight back. It is a message deserving of firm and collective rejection.

Even facing prison and exile, O’Donovan again asserted the importance of fighting back. In a post-sentencing statement he wrote: “It is regrettable that anyone had to come to harm, but given the choice of whether to lose my life to a hateful attack or fight for the chance to live, I will always choose the ferocious refusal to go quietly into the night.”

Since the institutions of justice align with homophobia and transphobia, the fight to end this violence also entails a fight against this justice system, this prison system; in short, the state.

August 17th - Luke O’Donovan Needs Vegan Food!

Luke O’Donovan is currently serving a two-year sentence for defending himself during a gay-bashing. He is vegan and is currently not receiving vegan food in prison, despite repeated requests from him and his lawyer. We are asking for a national call-in to the jail. Please call **404-613-2000** (jail), **404-613-2264** (kitchen) and **404-613-2002** (jail) and demand an adequate vegan diet for Luke—and please forward this to like-minded friends.

5 Aug - New writings by Mumia Abu-Jamal

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

MORE:

August 5th - August 8th - Again

An admission: I hate writing about August 8th, 1978.

Why?

It reminds me that 8 living MOVE members are still in prison today, over 33 years after the events of August 8th, 1978.

On the one hand, MOVE men and women, are model prisoners, and should’ve been paroled years ago. On the other, if they were anyone else, they would’ve been paroled long ago.

They are in prison today precisely because they are MOVE members -- the same reason they were originally imprisoned.

They are thus doubly punished for their beliefs and affiliations; those facets of personhood said to be protected by the First Amendment.

But the continued imprisonment of MOVE people has nothing to do with the constitution and everything to do with politics.

For politicians have risen to high office on MOVE, and they wish to continue to do so.

And lost in these images are real and decent people like: Eddie Africa, Janine, Phil, Janet, Delbert, Debbie, Chuck and Mike Africa. Grandfathers, fathers, sons; grandmothers, mothers and daughter - real people. Beautiful, good and decent men and women.

There's another reason why I hate writing about August 8th, 1978.

How many of you know that at least 4 of the MOVE people - all of the women and at least one of the men (Eddie Africa) - were never convicted of weapons charges? (I said at least 4 -- there may be more!)

I hate writing about August 8th, 1978 because it angers me. And it angers me because it is a case of naked injustice.

And we all know it.

The courts know it. Lawyers know it. Journalists know it. And politicians know it - - and no one does a damn thing about it.

And these people continue to suffer unjustly.

We need a Movement on behalf of MOVE, to write a new ending to this monstrous injustice.

August 7th - Journalism: Activism or Profession?

When we consider the historic role of journalist among Black people, we are left with the deep conviction that, for Black people, the necessities of the time demand that activism must play a role in the performance of the profession.

It must be so, I argue, then - in our not-too-distant past - and now, in our troubled present, for to fail to do so leaves our people at the not-too-tender mercies of a system that has demonstrated a kind of vehemence and animosity that few populations in America have suffered from.

For ultimately, a profession is just that - a claim to act a certain way in the world, according to certain stated norms and codes that a certain area of employment must abide by.

Except in the long history of Black America, we know better.

We must know, as did the esteemed Black journalist, Frederick Douglass, that a constitution written on parchment would differ greatly from government and legal practice, when it came to Black people. They were promises: promises broken and unfulfilled for over a century, after the Supreme Court decided in the Plessy decision that 'separate but equal' was good enough. Black journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett worked long and hard to bring light to the lies used to justify lynching's against Black people. So much so that, according to recent scholarship, she was shunned and avoided by leading lights of the early civil rights movement, who regarded her as 'too militant' too outspoken.

Meanwhile, under the Hayes-Tilden gentlemen's agreement, white terrorism, expressed by lynching was the peculiar American custom that wasn't spoken of in polite society. So, quietly (except for Wells) Black bodies hung and burned by the thousands -- across America, the courts and law deeming it mere local custom, beyond their control.

When we enter the modern era, we see a panorama of Black pain that is as unprecedented as it is silent. I speak of mass incarceration, the targeting, imprisonment and criminalization of dark people in ways (and in numbers) the world has never seen. For decades.

And, until recent days, the silence -even among Black journalists - has been deafening. Recently the New York Times has editorialized against it. How many Black newspapers have done so?

Why not? Professionalism? A false objectivity?

The late historian, Howard Zinn, for years decried the notion of professionalism. In a speech in Colorado in 2006, Zinn said:

‘We all go into professions where you’re supposed to be professional. And to be professional means that you don’t step outside of your profession. If you’re an artist, you don’t take a stand on political issues. If you’re a professor, you don’t give your opinions in the classroom. If you’re a newspaperman, you pretend to be objective in presenting the news. But, of course, it’s all false. You cannot be neutral.’

In Zinn’s words, “You can’t be neutral on a moving train.”

As journalists, the choices before you are actually quite clear. Follow the dictates of your bosses; or serve the interests of your people.

Black America, in the main, lives a life of hell - daily. For them, freedom is a word, but prison is inevitability. For them, civil rights are a mirage, and daily humiliations are a certainty.

For all the powers of the State are arrayed against them.

They know this - as do we, but such lived realities rarely flow from our pens, our mouths or our fingers.

So, we write dross on the life-styles of the rich and famous. Or some blathering from a politician.

While our people suffer.

The choice, for any journalist, should be clear.

Thank you, NABJ.

August 7th - Eulogy for Eddie Ellis: Prisoner-Scholar

For New Yorkers, the name Eddie Ellis drew admiration, respect and even some awe.

For he was a man of passion, action and brilliance, as shown by his many lives as a Black Panther, a prison lifer, and a scholar who worked as an activist among youth to turn their lives away from the dead-end of prison.

He was also a broadcaster on WBAI for many years, on their weekend “On the Count” show produced by ex-prisoners.

He was also (yes, also) an organize, who founded the nonprofit Center for Nu Leadership On Urban Solutions, a criminal justice think tank bringing new thinking to outmoded theories that don’t work in the real world.

Ellis lectured globally in such issues, from Harvard to Stanford, from London to South Africa.

During his 25 years in prison, Ellis devoted his time to education, earning 2 Associate Degrees from SUNY Sullivan County Community College in Paralegal Studies; a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from Marist College; and a Master’s Degree, summa cum laude, in Theology from New York Theological Seminary.

He used his skills to bring hope and life to youngsters in Harlem- and indeed, the 7 neighborhoods in New York that feeds and swells the state’s prisons.

In fact, it was his thinking, with other prisoner-scholars in Green Haven Prison in Stormville, NY, in 1979. that uncovered the 7 neighborhood notion of where 87% of state prisoners come from.

Edwin 'Eddie' Ellis spent 25 years in prison for a murder he didn't commit, and left to continue serving the people's most precious hopes - it's children.

Ellis, a member of the Harlem branch of the Black Panther Party, returned to the ancestors, after 72 years of life.

August 7th - ISRAEL: Settler, Colonialist, Apartheid State

Six years ago, when Israel launched its blitzkrieg against Gaza, it left only after some 700 Gazans: men, women and children, were dead.

This occurred under George W. Bush, with the U.S. neocon administration winking, nodding and blowing kisses of approval.

Today, under neoliberal rule, we see that something indeed has changed under President Barack Obama: It has gotten worse.

For, this time, Israel may double the death toll from July, 2008. It's already close, with 1,350 deaths of Palestinians.

When one looks at the news, one must remember the old adage that, 'In war, the first casualty is truth.' For despite the P.R. war that projects Israel as 'avoiding civilian casualties' in their battle against the government of Hamas, the fact is Israel intentionally targets civilians, which is a war crime.

Don't take my word for it.

Zeev Schiff is Israel's preeminent military analyst, and he has stated in Ha'aretz newspaper, "...The Israeli Army has always struck civilian populations."..Schiff added that they did so "purposely and consciously."

Schiff explained that the Army "has never distinguished civilian (from military) targets... (But) purposely attacked civilian targets." *

One wouldn't know this listening to U.S. news coverage, which makes Palestinian suffering virtually invisible, while privileging Israeli voices and perspectives, even when absurd.

Lost too, is the real source of this carnage; over half a century of Israeli violations of international law, by massive land theft, water theft, and the imposition of a cruel military occupation by a settler, colonialist State which had no use for the indigenous peoples of Palestine, and yet lusts for its lands.

Gaza has become an open air prison - the largest on earth, presided over by and apartheid government, that kills its inhabitants like its killing chickens.

Obama, echoing his predecessor, Bush, talks about Israel's massacres by saying, 'Israel has the right to defend itself.'

But, one wonders.

Doesn't Palestine have the same rights, as well?

August 12th - Fears of the Outside World

As an ineffectual Congress gives voice to howling throngs decrying the influx of Central American children, it's helpful to learn that this is not a new feature of American immigration; but as old as the country itself.

From the time of the first European colonial settlements in North America, there was a tendency to declare these arrivals natives, while questioning and challenging the nationality of successive immigrants.

That challenge often took the form of challenging the “Americaness” of the new arrivals, who were often ridiculed and socially marginalized for speaking with ethnic accents, eating certain foods, or wearing certain clothing deemed ‘un-American’.

While such behavior reveals a real insecurity among so-called nativists, it also betrays uncertainty about what ‘American’ is, for it substitutes what is popular for that which is deemed ‘American’, or acceptable.

Over decades and generations, Irish, Italians, Germans and Jews faced cultural and social rejection, not to mention other groups, who, as deemed ‘non-white’, were exposed to deep prejudices for failing to make the grade.

When Catholics arrived in huge numbers in the 19th century, they were damned as “agents of Popery”, who were threats to American democracy.

They were called “serpent[s]” and “enemies” to America.

Hatred of Catholics was an important element in the growth of the Ku Klux Klan and similar anti-foreigner groups.

Over time, such powerful feelings have dissipated, but as we are witnessing today, it doesn’t take much to spark it up again, as we see with the children of Central America.

Every generation, anxious about their place in this turbulent society, gives new arrivals hell, for they challenge their sense of security.

August 12th - With ‘Mediators’ Like These...

As guns, rockets and bombs from fighter planes, go silent, the real war begins between the apartheid state, Israel, and the embattled occupied state of Hamas, on behalf of the captives of Gaza.

This is the war of words.

How can we say that words are more real than bombs?

Because, under the pressure of Arab states, the U.S., and Israel, Hamas is being urged to sell their souls - as has already been done by the so-called Palestinian Authority of the West Bank.

Hamas, hammered by the bombs given to Israel by the Americans, is quietly being urged to sell out the interests of the Palestinians, a people besieged like few populations in the world, by a racist, tyrannical state that pummels and kills them if they dare to resist their bludgeoning.

Today, the Palestinian Authority has been trained by the Zionist and Americans to keep their people in line, and quiescent while Israelis scoop up more and more Palestinian lands, water supplies, and anything else of value.

It is a crime, under Israeli apartheid law, to even mention the Occupation, and these crimes are prosecuted by the Israeli military, where Palestinians, - even juveniles - face military judges, under military law.

These courts are only for Palestinians - not Israelis.

It is a mirror of the Bantustan system that once reigned in South Africa.

South Africa’s Anglican Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, speaking of his visit there, said:

I have been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land...it reminds me so much of what happened to us blacks in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about (Finkelstein xxxviii)

Now, as words replace shrapnel, the U.S., Israel's armory and its bank, proposes to play the role of mediator.

In what world can that even begin to look fair?

August 16th - Night of Pain, Night of Rage

Once again, a Black unarmed youth has been killed by a cop.

And while the facts surrounding the shooting are presently unclear, what is clear is that a cop shot 18 year old Michael Brown 8 times.

According to at least one eyewitness, Brown was shot as he stood with his hands up in the air.

To anyone who knows American history, this is not a rarity.

It is the result of a systematic function of police across the country, to repress, track and target the nation's Black population.

That has been the case for generations.

We shall see voices trotted out to call for calm, as outrage arises in Black hearts in response to outrageous treatment. Never do those calling for calm become voices calling for true justice, for justice is equality; and who dare demand that cops be treated like the people that they oppress?

For they have no influence over the repressive forces, and in fact, no political office in America does. They have been bought off, paid off – or both.

Listen to the voices of 'Black' politicians.

Indeed, listen to the voices of white politicians.

Listen to the raging silence.

Needed in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri – and in every Black community in America – are independent, and uncompromising Black revolutionary collectives – determined to protect the lives and wellbeing of Black people –period.

Existing political structures – silent in the face of these outrages –have failed us, and cannot be made to serve our interests.

It's time to learn from this, and build for our future necessities.

5 Aug - Appeal filed for Transform Now Plowshares seeks reversal of convictions

Two years after Megan Rice, Greg Boertje-Obed and Michael Walli entered the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee to issue an indictment against the continuing production of nuclear weapons components there and to oppose plans for a multi-billion dollar Uranium Processing Facility which would produce thermonuclear cores for US weapons, and fifteen months after their conviction in federal court in Knoxville, Tennessee on charges of sabotage (at which point they were held in jail), and six months after they were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to five years, lawyers for the Transform Now Plowshares resisters have filed an appeal in the Sixth Circuit court of appeals in Cincinnati, Ohio challenging the

government's use of the Sabotage Act, and the prosecutions efforts to prejudice the jury by inappropriately presenting testimony of prior offenses and invoking a comparison of the nonviolent demonstrators to 9/11 terrorists.

MORE:

The appeal (you can access it below or under the Legal Arguments button above) asks the Sixth Circuit to reverse the defendants' convictions. The arguments articulate what many of us who witnessed the proceedings firsthand felt during the trial—the prosecution sought to twist the law in a way that would achieve a conviction and, in so doing, subverted justice. “How can this be?” we wondered.

It turns out it can't be, at least not legally. The appeal cites *Berger v. United States* in pointing out that “a prosecutor's interest is not simply to ‘win a case, but that justice may be done.’ While he (sic) may strike hard blows, he may not strike foul ones.”

The appeal asserts that the prosecutor knowingly and wrongly conflated harm with the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex with harm to the national defense, and the court failed to distinguish between the symbolic action of the Transform Now Plowshares resisters and previous Plowshares actions that damaged actual apparatus of nuclear attack. The appeal also notes that motive—wishing to advance the cause of global nuclear disarmament—is not the same as an intent to disrupt Y12 operations.

The appeals team asks the sixth circuit to hear oral arguments. The appeal was prepared by the law firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP with assistance from Bill Quigley and Anna Lise Lellilid-Douffet from the original defense team.

6 Aug - Sekou Kambui Update

Sekou Kambui, freed after 40 years in prison at the end of June, sends his Thanks, Love, and Appreciation to those that continue supporting him so generously.

MORE:

After having surgery to remove a cancerous tumor, Sekou is scheduled to be released back to halfway house in the next few days. He will continue receiving health care as an outpatient.

Sekou Kambui has been released from the hospital after undergoing surgery to remove a tumor. He is living and receiving home care in Dothan, Alabama, and will know of any ongoing treatment to be administered within the month. More updates to follow. Here is to his continued health and well-being!

6 Aug - Exclusive: For hacker Jeremy Hammond, prison is a temporary inconvenience

The political activist and Anonymous hacker has big plans after his release from prison, scheduled for 2020.

MORE:

by Lori Jane Gliha (*Al Jazeera*)

Dozens of websites – many belonging to law enforcement organizations – escaped planned destruction and defacement when the FBI arrested high-profile hacker Jeremy Hammond in 2012.

“I was at the peak of my work,” Hammond told *America Tonight* from a medium-security, federal prison facility in Kentucky. “It's a shame I got caught when I did.”

The political activist and computer whiz said he had already breached dozens of vulnerable websites and was “halfway finished” with preparations for a full-fledged cyberattack when federal authorities disrupted his plans. He said he was going to launch new online attacks every week. Most of his targets never even knew they were his would-be victims.

“F*ck FBI Friday,” he chuckled. “It was only heating up by the time I was arrested.”

Hammond, who associated with online activist group Anonymous and the hacker group LulzSec, is serving a 10-year prison sentence for a 2011 cyberattack that exposed tens of thousands of consumer credit card numbers and millions of private emails affiliated with the global intelligence firm Strategic Forecasting, or Stratfor. He also admitted to hacking, destroying and releasing confidential information from various other websites, including one belonging to the Arizona Department of Public Safety in 2011.

“I intentionally and maliciously tried to destroy as many government websites ... as I could,” he said. He added about his decade-long sentence: “It’s fair game, they maxed me out.”

With the time he has already served, Hammond’s scheduled release is Christmas Day 2020. He considers it a temporary inconvenience.

“Something they can never take, our determination, our principles, our passions,” he said. “These things are more valuable than a temporary loss of freedom.”

He is already setting goals for his life at age 35 – the time of his release.

Inside and offline

Hammond, dressed in olive-brown prison garb, didn’t smile when I shook his hand. He had uncombed, wavy brown locks, a scraggly goatee and an anarchy symbol tattooed near his thumb. Pull-ups and arm and chest exercises have helped him gain 40 pounds since entering the facility. The former vegetarian estimates that he now stands at 6 feet tall and weighs a solid 180 pounds.

I met Hammond in the visitor center at the Federal Correctional Institution Manchester – about two hours outside of Lexington, Ky. The facility houses nearly 1,100 male offenders, many of whom, Hammond said, have committed felony drug and firearm crimes. He said he currently shares a cell with two other men – one of whom is doing time for a crack cocaine conviction. The other just moved in.

For months, prison authorities restricted Hammond’s visiting privileges because of behavioral trouble at New York City’s Metropolitan Correctional Center, where he was housed prior to sentencing. While there, he “tested dirty” for marijuana and frequently received discipline “tickets” for other rebellious behavior, he said. His behavior is better in Kentucky because he has more freedom, he said.

Hammond talks to his twin brother on the phone about every two weeks. But since his transfer to Kentucky, the only family members to visit him are his grandparents.

“It’s nice to spend time with them in their elder years,” he said.

There are plenty of prison activities to keep Hammond distracted. He holds a job in the laundry department, plays softball and chess, studies Spanish and works out every day. He also stays busy with books, mostly about politics plus autobiographies of revolutionary leaders and science fiction. Access to news is limited.

“It pleases me very much to read the newspaper or watch the news and see that a big company got hacked,” he said.

Other inmates have learned of Hammond’s computer genius and have tried to recruit him to help them sneak on to Facebook. But as part of his punishment, Hammond isn’t allowed Internet access – something he considers a human right.

“We are kept in the dark,” he said.

Hammond is only permitted to use a Web-based messaging system called Trulincs. According to the federal Bureau of Prisons, inmates are only able to send and receive electronic messages from individuals on their

approved contact lists. Hammond said his messages often take days to reach their final destination.

“I’m lucky to have it,” he said.

Although he enjoyed the challenge of hacking, living without Internet isn’t the end of the world for Hammond.

“It wasn’t really my life,” he said, explaining that he was more of an activist than he was a computer guy. No remorse

A self-described revolutionary, anarchist and hacker, Hammond fully understands why he is kept in the dark. Even eight months after his sentencing, he isn’t sorry for the online attacks that affected thousands of people he never personally knew.

“I don’t feel any remorse for what I did,” he admitted. “I feel good about what I did.”

Hammond’s actions exposed data related to 860,000 Stratfor clients and flaunted 60,000 credit card numbers, leaving them vulnerable to \$700,000 in fraudulent charges.

Most of the time he was hacking, he said, he was at a coffee shop, using a university network or in an abandoned building, borrowing wireless Internet from a place across the street. He said his failure to stay mobile made him easier to track.

“Considering the gravity of the work that I was doing, I was really foolish,” he said. “I should have been underground.”

When asked whether all of it was worth it – considering the sentence he received – he didn’t hesitate.

“Oh yeah,” he said. “I had a good run.”

His hack on the Arizona Department of Public Safety website leaked thousands of pages of documents, passwords, schedules, phone numbers, emails and other information, including confidential law enforcement strategies.

“I targeted law enforcement systems because of the racism and inequality with which the criminal law is enforced,” Hammond said in a court statement on the day of his sentencing.

However, in Arizona, it was the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, not the Arizona Department of Public Safety, that came under fire amid accusations of racial profiling and large immigration sweeps.

“I did take a look at their site,” Hammond said of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office. “Clearly I would’ve preferred to go after [Sheriff Joe Arpaio] personally. That would’ve been a prize.”

He added: “Maybe I could’ve [hacked into it] if I spent more time.”

Ultimately, he found a vulnerability in an Arizona Fraternal Order of Police website that led him to the Department of Safety hack. And any law enforcement website was a worthy target for Hammond, a prison abolitionist, who said he would prefer a world without police. He considers law enforcement the “armed wing of the 1 percent” and he says any officer of the law is a participant in a “machine of injustice.”

“If you get a badge and if you take the oath, I think you are fair game,” he said. “I shed no tears for any of these people.”

Looking back

At the time of sentencing, a judge used Hammond's own chat room language against him to prove that his motivations behind the cyberattacks were more than just political, one of his key defense arguments.

"It is, in fact, clear that [Hammond's] aim was to break into critical computer systems, steal data, deface websites, destroy files and dump online the sensitive personal and financial information of thousands of individuals, all with the objective of creating – in Mr. Hammond's words – 'maximum mayhem,'" New York-based U.S. District Judge Loretta Preska said prior to handing down Hammond's sentence, referring to a remark Hammond made in a chat room about the destruction he hoped to cause his targets.

"These are not the actions of Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, John Adams or even Daniel Ellsberg. In the Stratfor hack, Mr. Hammond disclosed an enormous amount of confidential information, not even remotely in the public interest."

Does Hammond regret his word choice?

"Absolutely not," he said, calling the word "mayhem" youthful, Internet slang. "I am all for mayhem, for real."

Although he maintained multiple online screen names to disguise his true identity, Hammond said he became sloppy when he revealed too many personal details about himself to a fellow hacker, which ultimately led to his downfall. He partly blamed his own consumption of weed and acid for allowing his guard to drop.

That fellow hacker would turn out to be an FBI informant, Hector Monsegur, who helped authorities capture Hammond. Online, Monsegur went by the nickname Sabu.

"I had never even heard of Stratfor until Sabu brought it to my attention," Hammond said during his sentencing. "At the time, Sabu was encouraging people to invade systems and helping to strategize and facilitate attacks. He even provided me with vulnerabilities of targets passed on by other hackers, so it came as a great surprise when I learned that Sabu had been working with the FBI the entire time."

For a moment at the Kentucky prison, Hammond's voice went silent at the mention of Monsegur's name.

"I have no interest in engaging in dialogue with him," Hammond said.

In May, after serving a total of seven months, Monsegur was allowed to go free – sentenced to time served – followed by a year of supervised release. Monsegur received the reduced sentence for cooperating with federal authorities and helping take down other high-profile hackers, like Hammond.

"I'm kind of upset that people are apologetic toward him, trying to justify what he did," Hammond said. "He sold out his friends ... He set us back so much. We were really on the tip of the iceberg. There is no way to justify what he did."

Hammond said he has many unanswered questions about Monsegur's involvement with the federal investigators. He said Sabu asked him for help hacking into government-run websites, affecting thousands of domain names in nearly a dozen other countries.

"Was he directed to specifically ask me to do these things?" Hammond wondered. He said everybody wants to know if the NSA was involved in the hacks he was encouraged to perform.

"We really decimated the Turkish networks," Hammond said. "It would be the NSA's wet dream."

When he's released, Hammond isn't certain what he'll end up doing. He said he wouldn't mind working as an online developer of tech infrastructure for activist groups, and he is considering a move to South America. But right now, good food, coffee and music are at the top of his list for when he gets out.

There are a lot of things Hammond said he misses from the outside: friends and family, making music, biking along the lakefront, going to punk rock shows, reading obscure critiques on blogs and looking over code.

Will there be future hacks upon his release?

“There will be mayhem and mass havoc,” he laughed, but then clarified that he knows all eyes would be on him.

“I’m not going to be back in the life of breaking the law,” he said, adding: “It’s best to keep them guessing as to what I’m going to be doing.”

7 Aug - An Excerpt From Barrett Brown’s Keep Rootin’ For Putin

The following is an excerpt from Barrett Brown’s book “Keep Rootin’ for Putin: Establishment Pundits and the Twilight of American Competence.” The book is available on the official Free Barrett Brown website.

MORE:

Certain things are obvious, or at least seemingly obvious after having been pointed out. The implications of these obvious things, though, tend towards obscurity.

In April of 2009, Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen expressed some concern over America’s ongoing debate on the subject of torture, a discussion he worried had been “infected with silly arguments about utility: whether it works or not.” Those silly-billies who believe that it does not work, we are told, are simply being gloomy gusses. “Of course it works—sometimes or rarely, but if a proverbial bomb is ticking, that may just be the one time it works,” he hypothesized, or something.

Fair enough; there are quite a few commentators who believe likewise, and Cohen is certainly entitled to his opinion. In fact, he is apparently entitled to two of them. In another column written just a couple of weeks later and in which Cohen again talks torture on the occasion of Cheney’s latest declarations in defense of such things, our latest chapter subject suddenly goes from confirmed Jesuit to open-minded agnostic. “I have to wonder whether what he is saying now is the truth—i.e., torture works,” he wonders, allegedly. Perhaps his earlier certainty that torture does indeed work had simply slipped his mind at this point; two weeks is, after all, a long time in which to maintain a very strong opinion, or even to remember what that opinion might be. More likely, he was hoping to suddenly cast himself as undecided on the issue in order that he might portray his end-of-column contention that torture may indeed work as something he’s come to suspect just recently, and only after having given due consideration to some new and very convincing insight that should presumably convince the reader as well.

Looking back to 2007, we find Cohen proposing that the real concern everyone should have had about Hillary Clinton “is not whether she’s smart or experienced but whether she has—how do we say this—the character to be president . . . In a hatless society, she is always wearing a question mark.” Throughout 2007 and 2008, in fact, Cohen had plenty else to say about Clinton. She “would, it seems, rather be president than be right.” More damningly, “She is forever saying things I either don’t believe or believe that even she doesn’t believe.” All in all, he tells us, “She is the personification of artifice.” Fair enough, and we may even agree with Cohen on this—but if we do, we’re in for a rhetorical beating from Cohen himself, who has more recently decided that those who said in 2008 that “Clinton had no integrity, no character,” and “lied about almost everything and could be trusted about almost nothing” are guilty of having perpetrated “a calumny, a libel and a ferocious mugging of memory itself. But it was believed.” By, uh, Cohen, who in this case is very much akin to a narc who hands you a joint and then arrests you for having it, except that the narc is doing his job.

In July of 2005, Richard Cohen alerted his readers to the perils inherent to our age:

I am forever coming across columns I’ve totally forgotten writing and I now, routinely, have to check to see if I have already staked out a position on some matter of importance—and what, exactly, it may be . . .

I yearn for the freedom to be what I want to be. I don’t want to lie, but I want to be comforted by my own

version of the truth. I want to own my life, all of it, and not have it banked at Google or some such thing. The trove of letters that some biographer is always discovering, the one that unmask our hero and all his pretensions, has been moved from the musty attic to sleek cyberspace. I am imprisoned by the truth, a record of what I wrote and the public's silly insistence on consistency—a life sentence without hope of parole. For me, the future is the present. It's not that I cannot die. It's rather that I cannot lie.

In the months running up to the arrival of the year 2000, a number of feature articles appeared in various American news publications in which the technological innovations of the last century were summarized and put into context. Many of these began with an anecdote involving a U.S. Patent Office employee who had resigned at the end of the 19th century, complaining that there was nothing left to be invented. There is no evidence that any such amusing incident actually occurred, and in fact *The Skeptical Inquirer* had investigated and debunked the story in 1989. The freelancers in question surely meant no harm; neither the *Inquirer* article in question nor any summary thereof was easily accessible at that early point in mankind's collective effort to organize its cultural products into a searchable database, a project that would have been virtually impossible just a half-century ago but which was foreseen by some and which is now quite famously coming into fruition. A decade after the myth was ubiquitously touted as fact—just a few days before the onset of 2010, that being the time of this writing—it took me less than 30 seconds to check on the veracity of that claim and find it lacking.

In writing and researching this book, I have read hundreds of op-ed columns and nearly as many articles on the subjects discussed therein. I have studied eschatology, the politics of modern Russia, the history of false flag attacks on the part of nation states, the U.S. elections of 2006 and 2008, New Age mysticism, the chronology of a half-dozen military conflicts, federal documents relating to crime rates before, during, and after Prohibition, the interlocking structure of American Evangelical political action committees, trends in wheat production and consumption in China from the turn of the century to the present day, and early French pulp fiction, among other subjects—a regimen of research that would have been prohibitively time-consuming were it not for the nature of our nascent century. I have also run comparisons of various keywords by columnist—"Krauthammer," "Arab," and "democracy," for instance—in order to discover any hypocrisy or even simple confusion on the part our subjects on such occasions as I have had reason to suspect such things. Such a book as this could not have been written just 15 years ago, at least not in any way that would have accomplished its purpose.

Any individual who decries the arrival of the communications age on the grounds that the truth has become more accessible is an enemy of truth and of man's ability to discover it. Still, anyone whose assertions are confused, whose facts are false, and whose opinions are occasionally composed in service to the expedience of the moment rather than some steady guiding principle is correct to despise the dynamics of our rising era, just as the lion would have been correct to despise the spear.

There is an exception to this, as there are dangers inherent to the universal accessibility of certain sorts of information, particularly the sort that informs us in the methodology of killing as many people as possible. The second part of the 20th century was in some part defined by this exception; our own age will likely be defined by it to an even greater extent.

When top Cheney aide Lewis Libby was indicted on half a dozen counts of wholesale malfeasance, Richard Cohen knew this to be simply a manifestation of the left-wing id. "An unpopular war produced the popular cry for scalps and, in Libby's case, the additional demand that he express contrition—a vestigial Stalinist-era yearning for abasement." Indeed, Stalinism reigned supreme in the dark days of 2005, when federal prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald stalked the land in search of new victims with which to fill his minimum-security gulags. "At the urging of the liberal press (especially *The New York Times*), he was appointed to look into a run-of-the-mill leak," summarized Cohen, who occasionally gets "the liberal press" mixed up with "the CIA," that being the entity which actually requested the investigation in the first place. After the dust had settled, Cohen wrote, Libby was "convicted in the end of lying." Actually, Libby was convicted on one count of obstruction of justice, two counts of perjury, and another count of making false statements to investigators, but then Cohen was probably just trying to save space.

Still, Cohen wrote, "This is not an entirely trivial matter since government officials should not lie to grand juries,

but neither should they be called to account for practicing the dark art of politics.” The problem, one may suppose, is that both Fitzgerald and the jury were unaware of the little-known “dark art of politics” clause whereby anything that can be characterized as such by a notable columnist is perfectly legal. If only Richard Nixon had been reanimated as some sort of zombie, the defense could have brought him in to explain all of this on an amicus curiae basis. Of course, someone would have to explain to him how it came to be that a liberal columnist for The Washington Post has necessarily excused Watergate by way of the accidental implications of what he’d stupidly written; that Zombie Nixon would already be drunk would only add to the confusion.

Better yet, they could have brought in Richard Cohen himself, who has the uncanny ability to determine the guilt or innocence of a given party simply by virtue of being Richard Cohen. Amidst the 2007 investigation into whether or not Justice Department officials had been practicing the dark art of politics in conjunction with the suspicious firings of several U.S. attorneys, among other things, Cohen explained to his readership that Alberto Gonzalez, Karl Rove, and George W. Bush had “unforgivably politicized the hiring and firing of U.S. attorneys—and Congress is not only right in looking into this but also has an absolute obligation to do so.” But “looking into this” is where the “absolute obligation” should end, explained Cohen, who worried that anything more substantial than peeking could result in something unthinkable, like actual jail time for someone working in the Beltway. Justice Department Deputy Director Monica Goodling, for instance, was in danger of having to answer to Congress for crimes that she may have either witnessed or conducted herself and just then opted to plead the Fifth lest she potentially incriminate herself. At the time, Cohen noted that “some thought has to be given to why Monica Goodling feels obligated to take the Fifth rather than merely telling Congress what happened in the AG’s office.” Many of those less astute than Cohen had assumed that Goodling had pled thusly in order to avoid any real accountability for the crimes she had committed, in the same sense that one might bring an umbrella outside on a rainy day. But Cohen knew better; Goodling, as he explained with the same degree of certainty he’d felt about Clinton’s dishonesty (before later concluding that she was honest) and about the obvious utility of torture (before later pretending that it wasn’t obvious after all), was completely innocent, but still at risk of having her life destroyed in some Stalinist purge of the sort that had already brought down the likes of Lewis Libby and . . . well, he was the only one. As Cohen concluded, “She’s no criminal—but what could happen to her surely is.”

Contrary to the conclusions of Cohen’s non-investigation, Goodling did indeed turn out to be a criminal (and I should note for clarity that I use the term “criminal” to denote someone who has committed crimes, in contrast to Cohen’s usage as a term denoting someone who has committed crimes while also not being important enough that Cohen himself might run into such a person at some cocktail party). After Congress agreed to grant her immunity in exchange for information, Goodling herself told the nation that she “may have gone too far in asking political questions of applicants for career positions, and I may have taken inappropriate political considerations into account on some occasions,” adding that she had “crossed the line” in these and other respects. And so by her own admission, she had violated the Hatch Act, which makes it a federal crime for civil servants to take political affiliations into consideration when making hiring decisions; this was also the conclusion reached after a later investigation conducted by the Department of Justice, the officials of which seem not to have realized that Cohen had already declared her to be innocent.

But Cohen’s concern never seemed to hinge on whether or not any crime had been committed. Rather, he worried aloud about the chilling effect that would result from the possibility that Very Important People could be punished for violating something as irrelevant as federal law. “Now,” he wrote, “only a fool would accept a juicy federal appointment and not keep the home number of a criminal lawyer on speed dial,” particularly if that person intends to violate federal laws barring partisan cronyism while serving with a government entity that concerns itself with federal crimes. Worse still, “ordinary politics—leaking, sniping, lying, cheating, exaggerating and other forms of PG entertainment—have been so thoroughly criminalized that only a fool would appear before Congress without attempting to bargain for immunity by first invoking the Fifth Amendment.”

Cohen knows foolishness, having studied the subject since at least 2003, when he proclaimed that Colin Powell had recently proven “that Iraq not only hasn’t accounted for its weapons of mass destruction but without a doubt still retains them” and putting the issue to rest thusly: “Only a fool—or possibly a Frenchman—could conclude otherwise.”

Conveniently enough, this brings us back to where we began, with Cohen ruminating on the possibility that Cheney is right about torture's utility. Being a left-of-center columnist, though, Cohen feels obligated to attack the former vice president a bit first, recognizing that a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down. "Cheney is a one-man credibility gap," Cohen wrote. "In the past, he has said, 'We know they [the Iraqis] have biological and chemical weapons,' when it turned out we knew nothing of the sort." By "we," Cohen is presumably referring here to fools and Frenchmen, and not to Cohen himself, who knew all of this just as well as Cheney did and who gleefully mocked the vice president's opponents for not knowing this as well.

But Cohen has as much contempt for Cheney as he does for those who once deemed Clinton to be untrustworthy. "As a used car dealer," he quips, "he would have no return customers." It's hard to see why not; The Washington Post still has subscribers.

8 Aug - Senses of Freedom: Poetic/Hip Hop Day of Action for Sundiata Acoli

The Sundiata Acoli Freedom Campaign (SAFC) is calling for a national poetic/hip hop day of action for former Black Panther, former NASA mathematician, and political prisoner Sundiata Acoli on September 22, 2014.

MORE:

Because Sundiata Acoli, in addition to his many other accomplishments, is also a poet and painter, we are calling for organizations and individuals to plan writing workshops and/or poetry readings/hip hop performances across the country and around the world for Sundiata. Sundiata's writing prompt people are asked to respond to for the workshop and at the poetry readings is:

Sense(s) of Freedom: What would Freedom feel, look, taste, smell and sound like to you after the Revolution?

Sundiata will also create a new poem based on this prompt that can be shared at both kinds of events.

We keep an updated list of events happening across the country – here on this website.

If you are interested in having an event in your city added to the list, please email thesafc@gmail.com.

HAIKUS FOR SUNDIATA

The Poetic/Hip Hop Day of Action follows and builds on the very successful May 2nd Haikus for Sundiata, a social media event that resulted in hundreds of haikus inspired by Sundiata (you can read them here: <http://haikus4sundiata.tumblr.com/>).

Sundiata himself wrote two new haikus for the occasion, and other participants included journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal; poets Jessica Care Moore, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and Marc Bamuthi Joseph; Charlotte and Pete O'Neal (former Black Panthers currently in exile in Tanzania); hip hop artists Sticman (from dead prez), Rebel Diaz, Kiwi Illafonte, and Gabriel Teodros.

BACKGROUND

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 the crossfire. Sundiata was tried in an environment of mass hysteria and convicted.

Sundiata is 77 years-old and has completed his sentence serving almost 40 years in prison. Despite having a clean disciplinary record and the fact that the recidivism rate for senior citizens is almost nonexistent, Sundiata has been denied parole numerous times. Currently we are waiting to hear back from the New Jersey courts on an appeal on the last parole hearing.

8 Aug - book of political prisoner's art to benefit the Rosenberg Fund for Children

Tom Manning is a freedom fighter, political prisoner and prolific artist. His paintings are stories that jump off the page, revealing the outlook of people who struggle for liberation around the world.

MORE:

by Robert Meeropol

For Love and Liberty, a collection of photographs of Tom Manning's paintings was released last week. I was eager to see the finished product. I have a remarkably multi-faceted relationship with Tom Manning, given that we've never met.

Tom was one of the Ohio Seven (one single person and three married couples, each with three children), charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government. The trial took place in my then-hometown of Springfield, MA during 1988 and 1989. I became peripherally involved in their defense and saw him in court from time to time, but we never spoke.

The fate of the defendants' nine children gnawed at me. I was most disturbed that Tom's three children, aged three, five, and 11 at the time of his arrest, were confined and held in isolation from all family members for several weeks while the eldest was repeatedly interrogated. I was shocked to learn this. Bad as my childhood had been after my parents' arrest, I had never been confined or interrogated. The treatment of the Ohio Seven children is what inspired me to start the Rosenberg Fund for Children, and two of Tom's children became its first beneficiaries.

Since then, Tom and I have exchanged a few letters. I shared my memoir with him in 2003 and he reciprocated by sending me two of his oil paintings. They hung on my RFC office wall for over a decade. My favorite was of Cassandra Wilson. She stared out at me as she turned away from her piano with the sheet music of Strange Fruit, which she introduced to a new generation in 1990's, in the background. Now a photograph of that painting, and some 80 others, fill this beautiful book.

The photographer, Penny Schoner, contacted me in late 2012 and asked if I'd write the preface for the collection. I was honored, but put her off until after I retired as the RFC Executive Director; it was the first project I completed after my daughter, Jenn, took over as Executive Director last September. My opening lines were, "I'm overwhelmed by the talent, indomitable will, and purity of heart displayed here. To say that I am awed by this book does not do it justice."

Tom Manning helped begin and end my RFC leadership. He closes his autobiographical essay in the book with this quote "The revolution is never begun anew, only continued where others left off..."

11 Aug - New Campaign: Welcome Home Jason Sutherlin (Tinley Park Five)

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

MORE:

From j.mp/JasonSutherlin:

"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.

Jason Sutherlin is the LAST of the five to be released, rejoining us in September. Bloomington ABC, NYC ABC, Denver ABC, and Sacramento Prisoner Support have launched a campaign to start a release fund for Jason. By the time Jason is released he'll have been locked up for almost 2.5 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 Jason pay costs of living and support his family while he gets back on his feet."

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 Jason offline, please make the check payable to Jason Sutherlin and mail it to:

Sacramento Prisoner Support
Post Office Box 163126
Sacramento, California 95816

If you'd like to write to Jason 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:

Jason Sutherlin M34023
East Moline Correctional Center
100 Hillcrest Road
East Moline, Illinois 61244

Donate at j.mp/JasonSutherlin and get more information at tinleyparkfive.wordpress.com.

Free Refreshments

Please RSVP to: [aidge AT peoplesjustice.org](mailto:aidge@peoplesjustice.org)
For more info: www.peoplesjustice.org
or call: 212.614.5343

12 Aug - ACLU preparing to sue Army over Manning's gender treatment

The ACLU, the ACLU of Kansas and Chelsea Manning's civilian defense counsel, David E. Coombs, sent an official letter of complaint (PDF) to officials at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Ft. Leavenworth, and also notified Defense Secretary Hagel that they intend to take legal action if the Defense Department does not provide her with proper medical treatment for her previously diagnosed Gender Dysphoria.

MORE:

Nearly one year ago, Chelsea Manning announced that she is female and planned to seek treatment for her diagnosed Gender Dysphoria while incarcerated. Ms. Manning requested an evaluation and treatment immediately after she arrived in August 2013 at the Disciplinary Barracks at Ft. Leavenworth and in September 2013 was again diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria by military doctors. Though a treatment plan was recommended by several military doctors and approved by the command at Fort Leavenworth, no treatment was initiated. Today we informed the Department of Defense that we will initiate legal proceedings if Ms. Manning does not receive appropriate treatment.

"The continued failure to provide Ms. Manning with this treatment is inconsistent with well-established medical protocols and basic constitutional principles," said Chase Strangio, staff attorney with the ACLU's Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Project. "Our constitution requires that the government provide medically necessary care to the individuals it holds in its custody. It is cruel and unusual punishment to withhold from Ms. Manning the care that the military's own doctors have deemed medically necessary. The Army is withholding her care for political reasons, which is simply not permitted by our Constitution."

From a medical perspective there is nothing complicated or controversial about Ms. Manning's diagnosis or the treatment recommended by her doctors. Gender Dysphoria is a serious medical condition and hormone therapy is part of the accepted standards of care for this condition. Without necessary treatment, Gender dysphoria can cause severe psychological distress, anxiety, and suicidality. For this reason, the National Commission on

Correctional Health Care and the American Psychological Association have issued policy statements in support of providing treatment to prisoners diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria in a manner consistent with community standards of care.

The official policy of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and most state agencies is to provide medically necessary care for the treatment of Gender Dysphoria, and courts have consistently found that denying such care to individuals in detention for non-medical reasons violates the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution.

21 Aug - Direct Action Everywhere

WHAT: Social Movement Talk and Workshop

WHEN: 7:00pm, Thursday, August 21st

WHERE: The Base – 1302 Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11221 (directions below)

COST: Free, but donations are appreciated.

MORE:

What if everything we think we know about social change... is wrong?

The growth of the Arab Spring, global LGBTQ rights, and the animal rights movement in notable countries around the world (which have, in some cases, seen up to 15% vegetarian surges in a single year) are powerful examples of sudden and systemic change. Can we achieve the same incredible mobilizations for progressive causes in the US?

Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) co-founders Wayne Hsiung (former behavioral law and economics scholar and long-time social justice activist) and Ronnie Rose (cinema expert and student of critical theory) are taking to the East Coast to answer that question.

Based on the pioneering work of the greatest thinkers in sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, their talk has already triggered incredible buzz out West, including at the national animal rights conference in L.A. It just might upend your views on social change. Topics include:

- the essential elements of successful social movements;
- how the conventional wisdom in environmentalism, animal advocacy, and other progressive causes has fallen short (e.g. focus on individuals over systems, neglect of ideas, and fear of being unpopular);
- what Justin Bieber can teach us about social change (seriously); and
- what DxE has learned from successful movements to create empowered activist networks... and push toward real and permanent change

Whether you are a leafleter, an admirer of the ELF, or both, there will be much to learn and discuss. Moreover, there will be insights useful for both seasoned activists and newcomers. Please join us in thinking hard about how to make a better world!

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.

From the J Train:

Myrtle Avenue Stop: Transfer to the M train and follow the above directions.

24 Aug - Remembering Sacco and Vanzetti Exhibition

The exhibition, hosted by Word Up Bookstore, 2113 Amsterdam Avenue at 165th Street extends through September 1st.

MORE:

On Sunday, August 24, 3-5 p.m., the bookstore will host a discussion of the historical period surrounding the case, led by Professor George Stevens and Marc Shanker. A dramatic reading of selections of Sacco and Vanzetti's prison letters will also be performed.

30 Aug - Black August Film Festival and, the Black August Art Exhibit

WHAT: Film Festival

WHEN: 3:00-10:00pm, Saturday, August 30th

WHERE: National Black Theater - 2031 5th Avenue, New York, New York 10035

COST: \$10

Films:

Free Angela by Shola Lynch

Afraid of Dark by Mya B Herman's House by Angad Singh Bhalla

Hip Hop is Bigger than the occupation by Nana Dankwa & existence is resistance

Art By:

Elton Leonard

Austin Greene

Shabaam Sahdeeq

Marthalicia Matarrita

7 Sept – Running Down the Walls 2014!

WHAT: Running Down the Walls – 5k Run/Walk/Jog/Bike

WHEN: 2:00-7:00pm, Sunday, September 7th

WHERE: Prospect Park– Lincoln Road/East Lake Drive, east of the Terrace Bridge

COST: \$10 registration (includes food and drinks afterwards)

Every year, prisoners and supporters of political prisoners organize solidarity events with Running Down the Walls. In recent years, we had runs in Albuquerque (NM), Arcata (CA), Ashland (OR), Bellefonte (PA), Boston (MA), Denver (CO), Elmore (AL), Inez (KY), Los Angeles (CA), Marion (IL), New York (NY), USP Navosta (TX), Pelican Bay (CA), Phoenix (AZ), Tucson (AZ), and Toronto, Ontario. This year we hope to expand the amount of runs in prisons and other cities, as well as increase the amount of funds raised for community projects. NYC ABC's goal with this year's run is \$2,000.

This year's run will take place on Sunday, September 7th at 2:00pm in solidarity and conjunction with runs that will take place in cities and prison yards across the country at the same time.

REGISTER AS, OR SPONSOR, A PARTICIPANT

To raise our goal of \$2,000, we need your support.

* Run/walk/bike/roll in the 5k – We need participants who can run/walk/bike/roll the 5k and are able to collect financial pledges to offer as donations to the run. Download the brochure, complete with registration and sponsor form right here.

* Volunteer for the run – We need folks who are willing to staff a registration/literature table, hand out water, bike the route as street medics, and help chalk the route beforehand.

* Donate to the run/sponsor a participant – If you are not able to attend, but want to support this fundraising effort, please mail donations to:

NYC ABC
Post Office Box 110034
Brooklyn, New York 11211

Your donation of \$10 or more entitles you to the celebratory picnic after the event.

Each year, we split proceeds between the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Warchest Program and a local organization. This year's partner group will be Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP).

The Warchest Program:

The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) has initiated a program designed to send monthly checks to those Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War who have been receiving insufficient, little, or no financial support during their imprisonment. The Warchest program was initiated in November 1994. Its purpose is to collect monthly funds from groups and individual supporters, and send that money to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POW) via monthly checks. Over the last decade, the ABCF warchest has dispensed over \$70,000 to political prisoners in the United States. For more information, visit: <http://www.abcf.net/warchest-program>

RAPP:

Release Aging People in Prison/RAPP works to reduce the number of elderly and infirm people in New York State prisons. The number of people over age 50 in New York State has risen 84% since 2000; it now exceeds 9,000—more than 17% of the total incarcerated population. For more information, visit: rappcampaign.com

Directions:

From the Q train, get off at the Prospect Park stop. Walk to Lincoln Road and turn right into the park. We'll be about 700 feet away.

The event will be two laps around what is known as the Inner Loop, and will total five kilometers.

Of course, if you have any questions, e-mail us at nycabc@riseup.net