



Updates for January 20th

8 Jan - Eric McDavid Released From Prison

In an amazing surprise, Eric McDavid was released from prison on January 8th. We're including press releases, news articles, and a note from Eric below.

MORE:

January 8th - Sacramento Prisoner Support Press Release

It is with bursting hearts that we write to tell you some amazing news. Today, January 8, Eric was ordered released from prison. It has been almost 9 years exactly since he was arrested in Auburn, California, on January 13, 2006.

Eric's release came about because of the habeas petition that he and his legal team filed in May 2012. Because the government withheld important documents from the defense at trial, Eric's original judgment and sentencing were vacated and he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge that carried a five year maximum sentence. This means Eric has already spent four years longer in prison than could have been required under the statute for the charge he pleaded guilty to. He received credit for time served and was ordered released.

Eric's projected release date - until today - was February of 2023.

We are beyond thrilled that Eric will soon be back home with us, where he belongs. But nothing can change the fact that Eric and his loved ones have had 9 years stolen from them by the state. At times, this fight seemed almost impossible. Eric endured hunger strikes, solitary, the separation of hundreds of miles from everyone and everything he loved, and the isolation and cold walls and wire of prison. These things were meant to break him - but the state has utterly failed in this endeavor. Eric remains steadfast and strong. Eric fought the charges against him 9 years ago because he knew it was the right thing to do. He has maintained his integrity all of these years by staying true to himself and to the things he believes in. But he has not done this in a vacuum. Thank you to everyone who has shown their love and support these last nine years. It has made all the difference. To everyone who has ever written a letter, sent drawings of dragons or pictures of fairies, or included pictures of something as simple as a blade of grass... you have given Eric's life color, fire and connection these past 9 years. You have proven that our solidarity is our strongest weapon.

We are anxious to celebrate! But we also must remember that Eric's case is just one among many - and it is by no means the most egregious. Since 9/11 the state has engaged in political prosecutions of hundreds of people in this country - the majority of them from Muslim communities— for their religious and political affiliations. And our comrades continue to be targeted and arrested for daring to dream. We are overjoyed that Eric is coming home. But we also know that we must never rest until all are free.

Eric has been released from Sacramento County jail, but his struggle is far from over. He received two years of supervised release and will be under their watch during that time. Coming out of prison is a complicated and difficult journey, but it is one that we are excited and ready to begin.

Thanks again to all of you, and a big shout out to Eric's lawyers— Mark Vermeulen and Ben Rosenfeld, who have worked tirelessly and passionately on his case for years, pro bono.

We will be in touch in the coming weeks. Until then - celebrate! Struggle! And as Eric would say...Find UR Joy!

So much love to you all.

Until all are free!

January 8th - Federal Government Releases Environmental Activist Eric McDavid From Prison

On Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015, United States District Judge Morrison C. England granted a joint request by defense attorneys and the Dept. of Justice and ordered Eric McDavid released from prison with time served, because the government withheld documents from the defense at trial. McDavid was arrested on Jan. 13, 2006 and convicted by a jury on Sept. 27, 2007 for conspiring to damage or destroy property by fire or explosive (18 U.S.C. § 844(n)). No such property destruction occurred. He was sentenced by Judge England on May 8, 2008 to 235 months in prison – almost the 20-year maximum. On Thursday, Judge England accepted an alternate plea by McDavid to general conspiracy under 18 U.S.C. § 371 with a maximum sentence of 5 years. Because McDavid has already served 9 years, he will be released forthwith. In exchange for the reduction, the government insisted McDavid waive all claims for civil damages.

McDavid has always asserted he and his two codefendants were entrapped by an overzealous FBI and its then 19 year old informant, “Anna.” “Anna literally herded the group together from around the country, paying for their transportation, food, and lodging,” said Ben Rosenfeld, one of McDavid’s attorneys. “And when they failed to show enthusiasm for her schemes, she berated them and threw fits,” Rosenfeld said. “Any conspiracy that existed was hers not theirs.”

Anna admitted at trial that the FBI trained her to exploit McDavid’s romantic feelings for her by telling him: “We need to put the mission first. There’s time for romance later.” However, she downplayed his feelings as a “slight indication that he might have been interested in me.” In fact, McDavid sent Anna love letters. But the government concealed this and other correspondence from the defense, turning over one letter and ten emails for the first time only this past November. Records reveal that the FBI gave the missing correspondence to a special unit to “analyze...for behavioral insight into Eric McDavid.”

Additional government documents which surfaced only after trial show that the FBI urgently ordered then inexplicably cancelled a polygraph examination of Anna, and that extensive surveillance of McDavid prior to Anna’s influence over him failed to reveal any predisposition to commit the charged offense. “If the government had provided the missing information to Eric’s trial counsel, as should have been done, counsel would have used it to question Anna’s veracity and to show Eric was entrapped. He never would have had to spend nine years in prison,” said Mark Vermeulen, attorney for McDavid.

“Since 9-11, the United States government has mercilessly entrapped people, destroying their lives just to make political examples of them, especially in Muslim communities,” said Jenny Esquivel, Eric McDavid’s partner and an organizer with his support committee. “The government has targeted leftists and anarchists with similar fervor. This, like so many other alleged conspiracies the public hears about, are FBI inventions from the start,” Esquivel said.

“We are thrilled beyond words that Eric is coming home to us after nine years in prison,” Eileen McDavid, Eric’s mother, said on behalf of their family. “We never stopped believing he was wrongly accused. Blessings to all those who made his early release possible.”

January 8th - Convicted ‘eco-terrorist’ freed amid claims FBI hid evidence

by Denny Walsh and Sam Stanton (*The Sacramento Bee*)

Until this week, the federal government officially considered Eric Taylor McDavid a threat to the nation, a radical eco-terrorist who plotted to bomb or torch the Nimbus Dam, a U.S. Forest Service lab and cellphone towers in the Sacramento region.

The former college student and house-framer from Foresthill was so dangerous that, after a 10-day trial in Sacramento in 2007, he was sentenced to nearly 20 years in federal prison in a case touted by the FBI as a shining example of its success in fighting domestic terrorism.

Then, the government changed its mind, conceding that thousands of pages of evidence that should have been given to McDavid's defense attorney years ago – including love notes to a young woman who turned out to be an FBI plant – had instead been secretly held in an FBI file in Sacramento until recently. The best course of action, the government ultimately decided, was to set McDavid free.

The result was an extraordinary hearing in federal court Thursday morning in Sacramento, during which a judge ordered McDavid released from custody after demanding answers from prosecutors about how such a lapse could have occurred.

"I've never heard or seen of anything like this," said U.S. District Judge Morrison C. England Jr., who originally sentenced McDavid. The judge ordered him released in accord with an unusual agreement between prosecutors and his appellate attorneys.

McDavid, now 37, spent three days shy of nine years in custody and agreed Thursday to plead guilty to a lone conspiracy count that would have earned him, at most, a five-year prison sentence.

In essence, the deal was crafted between the two sides to make the whole mess go away, and England reluctantly signed off on it.

McDavid had been housed at the Sacramento County Main Jail since Tuesday night, after being brought from his prison cell at the Terminal Island federal prison near Los Angeles in anticipation of England approving the settlement. His first taste of freedom came about 4 p.m. as he emerged from the federal building downtown and fell into the waiting arms of his parents, George and Eileen McDavid; his sister Sarah; and his girlfriend, Jenny Esquivel.

McDavid left custody looking far different than the young man who stood trial while his two alleged accomplices took plea deals and testified for the government at his trial. He is gaunt, most of his hair is gone, and he has grown a bushy orange beard.

He left without speaking to reporters.

His mother said she had asked him earlier if he wanted to sleep in his own room at home.

"He goes, 'Mom, I don't care, I will just sleep on the front lawn or something,' " Eileen McDavid said.

Despite Thursday's guilty plea, his supporters say McDavid was never guilty of anything more serious than falling for a comely 18-year-old woman he met at an Iowa meeting in 2004, a woman who later prodded him to take violent action against government targets with promises that they would later consummate a romantic relationship.

The woman, named in court documents and at the trial only as "Anna," turned out to be an FBI informant and played a critical role in McDavid's arrest, as well as his release Thursday.

Although her identity was never formally confirmed, some activist websites have posted her name and she once posed for photos for an Elle magazine piece on the case. Court documents spell out in detail how "Anna" provided money, transportation, housing and food to McDavid and his two co-defendants over an 18-month period, evidence his lawyers say shows the entire case was about entrapment rather than stopping terrorist attacks.

Sacramento attorney Mark Reichel, who represented McDavid at his trial and was given the informant's true name during the case, sputtered outside court Thursday when asked about her.

“I hope she’s not ruining someone else’s innocent life,” said Reichel, who joined with McDavid’s family to wait for his release.

For years, federal prosecutors have rejected claims that McDavid was wrongly convicted or that critical evidence was withheld.

But in recent months, as McDavid and his appellate attorneys, Mark Vermeulen and Ben Rosenfeld, continued fighting for documents they say should have been turned over long ago, the government began producing some of that evidence, and talks began about how to deal with the explosive disclosure.

Despite the deal worked out, England insisted he be given details of how the materials could have been kept from defense lawyers in the first place.

“I sat through the 10-day trial of Mr. McDavid,” a clearly exasperated England said, sometimes stopping to hold his head in his left hand.

“I know he’s not necessarily a choirboy, but he doesn’t deserve to go through this, either. It’s not fair.”

McDavid, who stood between his two attorneys in an orange jail jumpsuit with his hands shackled to his waist, listened quietly as the judge persisted.

“This is huge,” England said. “This is something that needs to be dealt with, and I want to know what happened.”

The hearing drew top brass from the U.S. attorney’s office to the courtroom to advise Assistant U.S. Attorney André Espinosa as he tried to satisfy an unrelenting England.

Espinosa, who joined the office in August and had nothing to do with the case until it was dumped on him in September, said the documents were not included in the case file or the discovery material handed over to the defense, and added that he had questioned the two trial prosecutors, who both said they had never seen the documents.

Espinosa and John Vincent, chief of the U.S. attorney’s criminal division, said the documents had remained in the FBI’s possession in a file in Sacramento.

“We don’t know exactly why they weren’t turned over,” Vincent told the judge.

The government contends that, even if the documents had been handed over, McDavid might still have been convicted.

But prosecutors and McDavid’s attorneys fashioned an agreement that allowed McDavid to walk free after pleading guilty to the conspiracy count.

Reichel insisted, as he has for years, that his client was not guilty of anything. The attorney said McDavid entered the guilty plea Thursday to get out of prison.

Reichel added that he fought for the materials that were withheld, but was rebuffed. “I asked for this stuff,” he said. “They said, ‘Mark Reichel’s crazy, it doesn’t exist.’”

“I knew they had to have more on the informant, but they just denied it and there was nothing I could do. It’s a great day to be alive.”

January 12th - An Update and a Note From recently released Political Prisoner, Eric McDavid!

We just wanted to send you a quick update from/about Eric. Below you will find info about how to write Eric, how to donate to post-release funds, and a note from Eric!

The outpouring of support we have received from all across the world has been incredible. Thank you all so much. We are in tears several times a day from reading your kind notes, emails and texts full of love and solidarity.

So many of you have asked what you can do now to support Eric post-release. Thank you for knowing and understanding the importance of continued support!

If you would like to write Eric or send him care packages, you can send them to:

Eric McDavid
c/o SPS
Post Office Box 163126
Sacramento, California 95816

We are still accepting donations through the PayPal account on Eric's website. You can find a link at: <http://supporteric.org/howtohelp.htm#Fundraising>

Thank you all for your continued love and solidarity!

And now...

i cannot begin this without an overflowingly gushing heartfelt thanks for the amazing support, aid, and solidarity provided by so many people from so many places - seeing me through these past 9 years to bring me home... tears of release and joy will continue to wet my cheeks - i don't wipe them away...the folks at Sacramento Prisoner Support have never wavered in going above and beyond while enduring all the pressures that come from moving contrary to what the FBI had considered a closed case - i love you all so dearly. to my habeas attorneys, mark and ben, your work on this process certainly hasn't changed my view of the legal system - but it has proven to me that humyns can actually survive the bar with their strong and beautiful hearts intact, still connected, and persevering as a guiding force in their lives = 'thank you' will never be enough, i love you both...surviving these last 9 years has brought me to a new understanding of patience and how it can be passionate, thereby sustaining the need for a longer view; one that will continue to help me as i move into aiding those still held behind razor wire fences, concrete, and steel...so many others have cases as ridiculous as my own - some much worse, and have been in for decades; a number i met personally and others i dream of meeting upon their release. thank you all so much for all of your love and support as i begin to move into this next phase of my life. i'll be in touch again soon. for now i hope to focus on spending time with my loved ones and reconnecting with the community that i love and have missed for so long.

too much love.

find UR joy

January 13th - Role of FBI informant in eco-terrorism case probed after documents hint at entrapment

by Ed Pilkington (*The Guardian*)

On the surface, she blended in very well. With a skull tattooed on her shoulder, a black-and-white keffiyeh around her neck, a shock of bright pink hair and her standard-issue dress of camouflage skirt and heavy boots, the energetic 17-year-old looked every bit the radical eco-activist she worked so hard to imitate.

But "Anna", as she called herself, was no ordinary eco-protester. Really, she wasn't one at all. She was an FBI informant under instructions to infiltrate fringe green groups and anti-capitalist networks and report back on their activities to the US government.

Now “Anna”, in her role at the center of a high-profile prosecution of alleged eco-terrorists in 2006-7, has been put under the spotlight following the embarrassing admission by the US Department of Justice that it failed to disclose crucial documents to defence attorneys at trial.

On Thursday, Eric McDavid, a radical green activist aged 37, was allowed to walk free after having served nine years of a 19-year federal prison sentence. Prosecutors had alleged that he was the ringleader in a small cell of eco-terrorists connected to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) conspiring to bomb the Nimbus Dam in California, cellphone towers, science labs and other targets.

Last week’s dramatic scenes in a courtroom in Sacramento, California, have focused attention on the FBI’s use of undercover informants and prompted claims that the agency lured unsuspecting activists into criminal activity through blatant entrapment.

But last November, the US attorney’s office in the eastern district of California admitted that it had “inadvertently” failed to disclose numerous documents that went to the very heart of the case. Crucially, those previously undisclosed files included correspondence between “Anna” and McDavid that suggests that, far from being the neutral intelligence-gatherer portrayed by prosecutors, she might have entrapped her prey by encouraging him to behave conspiratorially in the hope of romantic fulfilment.

‘I think you and I could be great’

Among the files are a letter and 10 emails written by McDavid to the teenaged woman he thought at the time to be his friend, peer and potential sexual partner. The writings have been seen by the Guardian and extracts of them are published here for the first time.

In the letter, McDavid declared his love for “Anna”, though he coyly added that he was not sure whether his feelings for her amounted to “just infatuation, a crush, or whatever box anybody has for this emotion”. Scrawled diagonally across the page in spindly script, his words expressed the trepidation of someone unused to venting openly his emotions. He feared that unless he shared his feelings, they would “eat me from the inside out”.

“I hope that my forwardness w/expressing all this doesn’t scare the shit out of u,” he wrote, “cause I know if I got this letter I’d probably trip out a bit, to say the least ...” Having opened his heart, he blurted out with palpable relief: “Fuck that feels soooooo much better.”

At McDavid’s 2006 trial, his defence team presented evidence to the jury that McDavid had fallen in love with the woman who would turn out to be his downfall. What wasn’t known at that time, and what is revealed by the newly disclosed documents, was that “Anna”, in her guise as a fellow radical, clearly reciprocated.

In an email dated 27 June 2005, six months before McDavid’s arrest, “Anna” responded explicitly to his previous amorous advances. She said: “I think you and I could be great, but we have LOTS of little kinks to work out.” She went on to say: “I hope in Indiana we can spend more quality time together, and really chat about life and our things.”

The tone of romantic encouragement in the email had an immediate impact on McDavid. He replied three days later, using the ungrammatical language of texting: “hey cheeka, so far as us B’n great, that i think is an understatement... along w/the ‘LOTS of little kinks 2 wk out’... but if u aint learning, u aint live’n... & I do think we could learn a lot from each other.”

In subsequent emails, McDavid continued to express his feelings for her, sending her “big hugs” and saying “miss you much”. Only one of “Anna’s” replies to McDavid is included among the new batch of documents disclosed after so many years. In it she wrote intimately about her hairstyle: “I took out the braids. : (They were hurting my head SO BADLY by the last night in philly that I was just getting pissy. I’ll do it again, but I think I

want the loose pink hair, like I told you about; and I can DIY that. But pain isn't worth that much – besides, identity is so fluid... but that's another convo, hopefully for IN. :)”

The tone is almost flirtatious. McDavid evidently took it to be such, because he replied: “sad & glad 2 hear about the braids, glad 2 hear they Rn't hurting u'r head anymore, sad 2 c them gone... they were pretty damn cute, & that princess laya thing was 2 hot (inside shiver)”.

McDavid's treatment: 'not fair' or an 'inadvertent mistake'?

It took McDavid's defence team and his large band of devoted supporters seven years after he was sentenced to extract from the Justice Department those 11 precious documents. They were finally released on 6 November last year, fully two years after reference was made to their existence in a court declaration by “Anna's” FBI handler, special agent Nasson Walker. That two-year delay alone belies the assurance made by the US attorney's office in Sacramento to the New York Times after last week's hearing that “the documents were produced to the defendant promptly after their discovery.”

At the hearing, federal judge Morrison England expressed astonishment and dismay that such game-changing documents had not been shown to the defence at the 10-day trial over which he had presided in 2007. “I've never heard or seen anything like this,” he said, adding that McDavid's treatment was “not fair”.

The judge demanded to be told how such a flagrant breach of disclosure – under the 14th amendment of the US constitution, the prosecution must turn over potentially exculpatory evidence to the defence – could have occurred: “This is huge. This is something that needs to be dealt with, and I want to know what happened.”

McDavid's current lawyers, Mark Vermeulen and Ben Rosenfeld, said the documents they battled for years to wrestle from US prosecutors would have transformed the trial had they been available at the time. “If the defence had the evidence it has now – that ‘Anna’ encouraged Eric's romantic advances, leading him to believe that sexual fulfilment would be conditional on him following her plans – that would have confirmed in the jury's mind that she entrapped him. He would have been acquitted, it's as simple as that,” Rosenfeld told the Guardian.

The Justice Department continues to insist it was all an “inadvertent” mistake. But that narrative does not cut it for McDavid's legal team and supporters. “They took nine years of Eric's life away from him and they shouldn't be able to gloss over that with a press release – there needs to be a detailed explanation,” Rosenfeld said.

Concerns raised by the McDavid case about the use of undercover informants will resonate today given the FBI's continued reliance upon infiltration as a major plank of its counter-terrorism strategy. Its paid moles, especially those planted within Muslim communities in the wake of 9/11, are regularly accused of crossing the line from observation into entrapment.

Rosenfeld said that McDavid's story was a warning for today's justice system: “When people see the TV news and hear of the latest foiled terrorist outrage they think ‘Wow! The FBI is so good at its job.’ But so many of these apparent plots are complete inventions of the government in the first place – they are creating and then solving their own conspiracies.”

'I wanted to get a conversation going with everyone'

Throughout almost a decade of legal wrangling over the McDavid case, the mysterious “Anna” has been a constant factor. In her only known interview, for a 2008 article in Elle magazine, she posed for photographs in her normal outfit of jeans, T-shirt and suede jacket, her hair by then faded from lurid pink to its natural brown.

She told the magazine that 9/11 had motivated her to engage in counter-intelligence. A year after the attacks, when she was just 15, she contacted the Militarywomen.org website to inquire about enlisting in the army.

At a community college night class in Miami she tried to impress her professor by sneaking into a meeting of anti-free trade protesters for what she called “anthropological observation”. The report she presented to class so struck a police officer who was also taking the course that he passed her details to the Miami police department, which in turn quickly recommended her to the FBI.

Within months, she was going undercover among protesters at the G8 summit of leading economic powers in Atlanta. Over the next two years she was given more than 10 federal assignments, including infiltrating protest groups at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions in Boston and New York respectively, and delving into the world of radical environmental activism.

At the G8 she met an anarchist named Zach Jenson, and through him fellow eco-activists Lauren Weiner and McDavid who she first met in 2004. All three were eventually arrested, though Jenson and Weiner cut a deal with prosecutors in which they gave evidence against their co-defendant in exchange for a lesser sentence.

“Anna” told the jury at McDavid’s trial that she had been scrupulously impartial, sticking closely to legal guidelines for informants that forbade her from playing a leadership position in the group or from pushing anybody to do anything. Yet under cross-examination, she described some of the proactive steps she took to bring the “cell” together.

She bought plane tickets for Weiner to fly her to McDavid’s house for a group meeting. “I wanted to get a conversation going between everyone,” she said.

Later, she drove Weiner and Jenson across the country to meet McDavid, using a ’96 Chevrolet paid for by the FBI and kitted out with recording equipment. When Weiner showed signs of losing enthusiasm for the project, “Anna” sent her an email saying: “There’s no going back ... I don’t want to be dilly-dallying around forever, which I know I could do and fall into that trap but I want to avoid you doing that too.”

In email correspondence that is included in the newly disclosed documents seen by the Guardian, “Anna” wrote to Weiner in September 2005, telling her “I’ve made some more contacts in Philly, esp with the animal liberation movement, which I’d like to bring you and the rest of teh (sic) crew more into. I already talked a little bit about it with [McDavid] – we could make a big difference on multiple fronts.”

In a later email, also to Weiner, she said: “I’d love to start helping you and the rest of the Philly kids in whatever your hearts find to do.”

The FBI also paid for a cabin in Dutch Flat, California, heavily rigged with surveillance devices, where “Anna” assembled the group, telling them she had earned the rent money working as a dancer-cum-escort. There she presented the others with a “burn book” containing six recipes for concocting firebombs, though she told the jury the devices were designed by the FBI to be duds.

‘The government owes it to Eric – to tell the truth’

As these final planning meetings for a potential attack on a science lab were taking place, the FBI appeared to grow jittery about an operation that depended entirely on “Anna”. In November 2005, just weeks before the three activists were arrested at the cabin, a formal request was made to subject her to a lie-detector test.

The request form says the purpose of the polygraph would be to “confirm veracity of [“Anna’s”] reporting prior to the expenditure of substantial efforts and money based on source’s reporting.”

The polygraph was disclosed to McDavid’s defence team under freedom of information laws in 2012, five years after the trial. A small, but potentially significant, footnote to the request form reveals that a senior federal prosecutor (AUSA) approved the test, though the identity of the official is redacted on grounds of “personal privacy”.

The emergence of the polygraph test, and of the romantically tinged correspondence, has incensed Mark Reichel who acted as McDavid's lawyer at trial. He tried to mount an entrapment defence, having been told by his client of "Anna's" amorous behaviour, but was ultimately stymied by lack of evidence.

Before the trial began Reichel filed a motion to dismiss the case on grounds of an improper romance between informant and defendant. In it, he accused "Anna" of having "encouraged and urged him on, to write love letters and emails to her". The US government's response to the motion left no room for doubt: "The defendant's claim of a romantic relationship between him and the informant is categorically untrue".

"I demanded to see the love letters before the trial, but the government told me they didn't exist," Reichel said. "They wanted the world to see they had captured a member of ELF. He was innocent, they knew that, but they couldn't let it be seen."

The revelation of the newly disclosed documents is likely to prompt a flurry of litigation. Jeffrey Weiner, Lauren Weiner's attorney (and cousin), told the Guardian that he was considering legal action to have her federal conviction lifted.

He said that "Anna" had encouraged a strong and intimate personal relationship with Lauren that was "so intense and continuous she literally took over Lauren's will. 'Anna' chose the most gullible people that she could find and stopped at nothing to persuade them to commit criminal acts. I'm not saying my client did nothing, but her crime was created by the US government."

For McDavid, too, this story is not at an end. As part of his release deal, he pleaded guilty to a single conspiracy charge with a terrorism enhancement attached, meaning that although he is a free man he will continue to labour under the stigma of a serious federal conviction.

Nor is the full extent of the official deception yet known. In 2010 the Justice Department released 2,500 pages relating to the case under freedom of information rules, but it refused to hand over a further 900 pages. What nuggets of information those pages contain, particularly among "Anna's" replies to McDavid's emails – most of which remain hidden – only the US government knows.

McDavid's current partner, Jenny Esquivel, who has been a leading member of his support group, said she feared the remaining documents would never see the light of day. "The government keeps trying to frame this as a mistake, but they are the only people who knows what happened and they owe it to the American people – and to Eric – to tell the truth."

She said that in the five days of freedom he has enjoyed, McDavid has reveled in being reunited with his family and spending time with his two nieces, both of whom were born while he was in prison. "The girls were overjoyed when they heard the news that he was coming home. It was almost impossible to pull them away from him while they were here," she said.

Amid his joy, McDavid hasn't lost sight, Esquivel said, of those who remain in the clutches of FBI entrapment. "The travesty is that so many people are dealing right now with exactly the same problem. Hundreds are serving decades in prison for crimes that never happened."

8 Jan - Preliminary Injunction Filed to Prevent "Silencing Act" from Stopping Prisoners' Speech

On January 8th, a motion for a preliminary injunction was filed today in the ongoing lawsuit, Abu-Jamal v. Kane, challenging a Pennsylvania censorship law intended to silence Mumia Abu-Jamal and others convicted of personal injury crimes.

MORE:

The Abolitionist Law Center, Amistad Law Project, and the Roderick and Solange MacArthur Justice Center at Northwestern University School of Law filed the preliminary injunction motion to stop enforcement of the law. The law firms represent Mumia Abu-Jamal, Prison Radio, Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Kerry “Shakaboona” Marshall, Robert L. Holbrook, Donnell Palmer, Anthony Chance, and Human Rights Coalition in the lawsuit filed November 10, 2014 against Attorney General Kathleen Kane and Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams. The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania (ACLU) filed a similar lawsuit and preliminary injunction today.

The Silencing Act, also known as 18 P.S. § 11.1304, allows the Attorney General, county District Attorneys, and victims of personal injury crimes to bring a lawsuit in civil court against the person convicted of the personal injury crime to enjoin conduct that “perpetuates the continuing effect of the crime on the victim”. The actions that could prompt a lawsuit include “conduct which causes a temporary or permanent state of mental anguish.”

“This law is unconstitutional,” said David Shapiro of MacArthur Justice Center. “The facts are on our side and the law is on our side. The Silencing Act targets a huge amount of constitutionally protected speech based on who is speaking.”

After a prerecorded commencement speech by journalist and prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was played for graduates at Goddard College in Vermont, the Pennsylvania legislature passed and outgoing Governor Corbett signed into law the Silencing Act on October 21st, 16 days after the commencement speech.

Abu-Jamal has spent 33 years in prison, 29 of which were in solitary confinement on death row after being convicted at a 1982 trial that Amnesty International said “failed to meet minimum international standards safeguarding the fairness of legal proceedings.”

Robert L. Holbrook, who is serving a death by incarceration, life without parole, sentence he received as a child, had this to say about the law:

“there are people in prison who will stop writing, stop publishing, stop speaking out because of this law.”

“Silencing prisoners is one more way of dehumanizing them,” said Amistad Law Project Policy Director Nikki Grant. “We need the voices of the marginalized to shed light on injustice.”

8 Jan - There’s Nothing Wrong With a Little Get-Back by Jeremy Hammond

Jeremy was recently placed in the Segregated Housing Unit (SHU), known as solitary confinement, for two weeks. This is the situation that led up to that stay in SHU, in Jeremy’s own words.

MORE:

The most obvious form of prison exploitation in the federal system is UNICOR: Federal Prison Industries, more commonly known as the military sweatshop in nearly every institution. It’s a quasi-public corporation that produces everything from armor plating and camouflage uniforms to office supplies. Because they are not bound by pesky things like minimum wage laws, they are frequently criticized for cutting prices and outbidding other free-world competitors for government contracts. The UNICOR here at FCI Manchester employs hundreds of prisoners sewing all-purpose combat uniforms used in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. UNICOR is the highest-paying job on the compound, taking home \$50-\$200 a month.

In addition, because the BOP does not want to pay for additional officers, prisoners maintain nearly every aspect of the institution ourselves: cooking, food, washing dishes, cutting grass, mopping floors, fixing plumbing and electricity, and so forth. This means that, fortunately, there are other jobs available if you do not want to participate in the imperialist genocidal “war on terrorism.”

In addition to garnishing our wages to pay for court fines and restitution, “maintenance” pay is \$5.25 a month, barely enough for soap and deodorant. Any additional money we earn through our “jobs” is given right back to them at the company store where you can purchase Ramen noodles and terrible instant coffee at 30% markup from street prices. What kind of life is this where we are forced to choose between hygiene or a 15-minute phone

call?

It's bad enough they rob us of years of our lives behind razor-wire fences, they then make us work in their facilities for pennies an hour to maintain our own imprisonment. Because of this, stealing from government becomes part of everyday prison life. There is solidarity among convicts; stealing from one another is frowned upon and can get you stabbed up, but stealing from the government is business as usual. We're just trying to get back some get-back.

There is a thriving black market: food out of the kitchen, new clothes out of the laundry, office supplies right off the officers' desks. Everybody has a hustle – smuggling tobacco and drugs, cooking wine, cleaning cells, selling phone calls, gambling, making custom birthday cards, etc. Necessity is the mother of innovation.

For the most part, the cops look the other way, either for laziness or sympathy. A CO [corrections officer] who goes out of their way to enforce each and every rule is universally despised by prisoners and staff alike. Balance and respect keeps tensions from resulting in fewer incidents and lockdowns.

I've been working in laundry services since I arrived at FCI Manchester nearly a year ago. It is an easy, sought-after job washing and folding clothes, adding prisoner ID tags to khaki uniforms, and some sewing here and there. Most of the time we sit around doing our own laundry, reading, and getting into lengthy political debates.

And stealing all the new clothes we could ever want.

Shirts sell for \$1. Socks or boxers, two for \$1. New institution boots, \$5. For me, it's not about the money, but making clothes available to those who need it. The prison only issues sets of clothes once a year, not nearly enough, especially if you have a particularly dirty work assignment.

For me and the other workers, all was going pretty well in laundry land except for one problem: the boss. Nobody likes the boss in prison, the streets, or anywhere, really, but this guy is the epitome of the right-wing redneck prison guard. We'd be kicking it, talking world news, the prison system, the new Nicki Minaj video, when he would jump in to share his racist rantings. Some classics include his justification for the murder of Michael Brown ("I'd blow his noodle off myself!") or his views on young immigrants ("Shoot 'em in the back of the head!"). I guess it is not out of the ordinary in the hills of Kentucky, the land of the Ku Klux Klan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Every time the boss regurgitated some GOP-manufactured controversy like Benghazi, Obamacare, or the IRS, I'd shoot him down and make him look like a fool in front of everybody.

It was all a laughing matter until he became angry and bitter and started taking it out on us. For a while, we couldn't wash our own clothes, until I went over his head to clarify policy. Then, he started marking my paychecks with the worst possible job performance ratings to dock my pay and set me up to be fired. "Unable to learn the skills required"? "Requires constant supervision"? I fold sheets all day! "He's gunning for you," everyone told me.

Enter the coffee machine.

For six months, every "town hall meeting" where we are given orders without hearing any input of our own, I had been half-jokingly complaining for a coffee machine. The commissary sells Keefe Corporation instant coffee ("that Barbara Bush"), but it's nothing like percolated street coffee. Other jobs on the compound have coffee machines, and the head supervisor already approved it, but the boss was just not going for it.

One day, the dumpster gods smiled on us and the trash cans outside the laundry birthed an officer's coffee machine. It was broken, but fixable. A few uncrossed wires later and it was working! Certified Hater #1 walks in and smashes it back in the trash, proclaiming, "Mark my words – you will never have a coffee machine!" At this point, the debates are over, replaced with shared fantasies of strangling.

It wasn't just the other prisoners, other CO's can't stand the guy either, and out of spite, one of them brings us a

brand new coffee machine. Boss is fuming mad. Victory never tasted so sweet!

I don't know why he chose to shake me down that same day. Maybe someone whispered something in his ear, or he was retaliating for the coffee machine, or it was just bad timing. He searches my bag and finds a whole bunch of new clothes. He's caught people stealing before. Sometimes he lets it slide, or he asks them to quit and find another job to avoid a write-up. Boss tells me, "I'm just going to take the bag and that's that." I don't believe it for a second. It's all over. He got exactly what he was looking for.

Sure enough, by the time I head back to the unit and pack up my property, they're calling for me. The package of Barbara Bush concealed in my boxers is discovered during the strip search entrance to the Special Housing Unit.

The BOP claims it does not practice "solitary confinement." It's called "Administrative Segregation," "Disciplinary Segregation," "SMU," "CMU," etc. We call it "the hole," "el hueco," "the box," "the bucket." It's a tiny cell the size of your bathroom you share with a cell mate and don't ever leave except for an hour a day for recreation in the "dog run" (a slightly longer caged area). You get a blanket, socks, boxers, shirt, orange jumpsuit, a bar of soap, and three meals a day. You get mail, but here, incoming books, magazines, and newspapers are considered a "fire hazard" and put in your property until release. A raggedy book cart wheels around to give you one book a week. I read a racist Tom Clancy novel, "Without Remorse." The "hero" is a CIA agent who, when he is not murdering Vietnamese "savages," is a serial killer vigilante who murders dozens of "degenerate scum" drug dealers. Clearly, solitary takes a strong mind to endure. No wonder every published study on solitary confinement reports negative psychological damage.

But we have no choice. Anybody doing any kind of time is inevitably going to spend some time in solitary. I'm only a few years in and I've been in the SHU some eight times for nearly everything they got: weed, tattoos, arguing with an officer, refusing to stand count. May as well add "226: Stealing government property" to the list.

For some reason, SHU time is easier to digest if it's for something you know you could get locked up for and you chose to do anyway, instead of some bogus, made-up write-up (like the time I was locked up in NYC during Hurricane Sandy). So these few weeks are no big deal to me. I'm chilling, waiting to see the DHO [Discipline Hearing Officer] to get my sentence, meanwhile doing hundreds of push-ups to stay warm and active and rapping with my cellie who was locked up for hip-tossing a CO. Turns out I could have punched the boss in the face and gotten the same severity 200-series shot. Good to know. [The Bureau of Prisons places different infractions into different offense "levels." In this case, possession of stolen government property is on the same "level" as it would punching his boss in the face, and he would receive the same punishment. You can read more about what the BOP calls their "inmate discipline system" here.]

Is it really possession of stolen property if the bag of clothes hasn't left the laundry yet? The Disciplinary Hearing Officer thought so and convicted me via video chat despite the other errors on the shot. (The boss misspelled "socks.") But it could have been worse. He did not put me on any additional phone, commissary, or visit restrictions. Instead, he took 27 good-time days. That's an extra month I'll have to stay in prison. They only award you 47 days off per year for "good behavior," and with all the other shots I caught, I've already lost nearly everything. I'm still paying off the two years worth of visiting restrictions for testing positive for weed in NYC. It's alright though. I'm back on the compound, raking leaves and mowing grass for \$5.25 per month.

There was nothing extraordinary about this incident, just an amusing story of getting caught stealing. This particular shot was not in retaliation for the administrative grievances I've filed against the mail room, which is an ongoing situation in and of itself. Just as often as they get you for something you may have actually done, they are twice as quick to put fabricated or trumped-up charges on you. As I am writing this article, they gave me a 296 shot. As crazy as it sounds, I was written up for "Circumventing Mail Monitoring Procedures" for allegedly emailing my letter of support of Barrett Brown to my friend with directions to forward it to his defense team. This bogus write-up probably is some sort of retaliation meant to put me on communication restriction to prevent me from posting angry, bitter rants online.

Regardless, I will continue refusing to be a "model inmate." I am not in prison for following the rules, and I will

never have any respect for their petty policies or their boot-boy enforcers.

Stay Strong, Stay Defiant, Stay Dangerous!

8 Jan - The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Jail: I Got Kicked OUT of a Prison

A week before Christmas, a half-dozen guards at the Seagoville Federal Detention Center pulled Barrett Brown from his cell, handcuffed him, and took him to the hole, where he was processed and put in another cell, before being ushered out and placed in the prison's receiving/departures section to await transport to a different jail, all for reasons that the administration did not quite manage to articulate.

MORE:

The act of suddenly transferring inconvenient inmates is referred to as “diesel therapy.” I noted a few months back that CIA torture-leaker John Kiriakou, who’s also been putting out a column from behind bars, reported being threatened with identical treatment after writing about prison administration misconduct. I, on the other hand, have been the very picture of discretion; it’s not as if I had publicly revealed, for instance, that Thompson, the pudgy white officer at Seagoville known for yelling incoherent threats at black inmates during evening prisoner count, and sometimes even locking them in the showers, is openly affiliated with a Fort Worth gang. So, frankly, I am a little hurt.

Anyhoo, I was shipped down the road to the Kaufman County Law Enforcement Center, one of the many smaller, rural lockups around the country that have been enlisted to house the perpetual overflow of federal jail inmates for periods of up to a couple of years in facilities that were never meant to hold anyone for any length of time whatsoever. During processing, I was provided the traditional free phone call (no small prize, as 20-minute calls here run about \$10, as opposed to the couple of dollars or so at more humanely operated facilities). So I rang up my mom, explained that I had managed to get kicked out of a jail this time, and asked her to have added to my Amazon wish list (graciously supplied by generous supporters) the four-volume biography of former president Lyndon B. Johnson by Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Caro. My mom long ago lost the capacity for astonishment at my increasingly bizarre and perilous circumstances and would not be especially fazed were I to call with the news that I had been shot into space, captured by the Swiss Guard, or declared myself Emperor of the Seagulls. Likewise, she had been kind enough to handle my research and book requests with dispatch, and without asking nosy questions about why it is that I need so many alchemical texts or Wikipedia printouts on the Symbionese Liberation Army, Jack Parsons, and MKUltra. And, really, it’s nobody’s business.

What I am willing to explain is why I wanted the Lyndon B. Johnson volumes. I have long prided myself on knowing absolutely nothing about the oft-vilified Texan, and would flaunt my ignorance of this terrible monster as a sign of my innocence and purity, very much in the manner of a well-bred Victorian girl who suddenly breaks into a parlor conversation on economics to make clear that she has no idea what a handjob is and certainly wouldn’t know how to go about giving two of them at the same time. Actually, I was more like the guy who doesn’t watch TV and makes sure everyone knows it, expressing loud mystification at passing references to sitcom stars with whom he is actually entirely familiar.

Elderly Fellow Texan: “Boy, that LBJ was a crooked sonofabitch. Did you ever hear how Bell Helicopter got him that –”

Me: “NO, NO, I WOULDN’T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE SORTS OF MATTERS.”

Elderly Fellow Texan: “Well, okay, but of course you know how we got into Vietnam –”

Me: “I’VE NEVER HEARD OF HER AND I WON’T HAVE YOU BESMIRCHING HER HONOR LIKE THAT. I’M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE.”

Elderly Fellow Texan: “But ... but this is my house.”

I actually did know a few things about Johnson, as you can't spend the bulk of your life being obsessed with Richard Nixon, as I have, without picking up a few Johnson tidbits here and there. I knew the basics: the stolen elections, his Austin radio station used for laundering favors, Lady Bird's unseemly bloodlust, the time he picked up that dog by the ears without wearing dog gloves. Just the outlines of a crude, ruthless man who possessed a preternatural understanding of what power really is and how it can be used to obtain more power. I, too, wanted to understand these things. Plus, having turned 33 this year, I felt I was finally old enough to learn the whole truth about LBJ.

As it would be a few days before the Johnson volumes arrived, I'd have to amuse myself in the meantime by finding fault with my new environment. This was distressingly easy. The food is insufficient, forcing inmates to rely on extra commissary snacks purchased themselves at 400-percent markups. Detainees live together in overcrowded single cells with no day room. There is no law library, and restrictions on incoming mail approach gulag levels of absurdity; one is not permitted to receive photos, say, of one's family, or anything "computer-generated" which, I was amazed to learn, includes any and all typed letters or documents. It's a regimen that ensures federal defendants are largely incapable of participating in their own defense or even managing their own lives. To be fair, though, when you consider how much the feds pay these facilities for each of us versus what is actually spent on our upkeep, it's clear that at least three or four people are making a great deal of money off of all this, so it's not like the misery is going to waste.

The staff is nice enough, with the usual handful of exceptions. But I'm not convinced that this particular jail is quite ready for prime time. No one received mail for nearly a week at Christmas, because one of the officers took the only mailbox key home with him over his vacation. A couple of my fellow inmates asked after the nail clippers, only to be told that "we had a pair, but it broke." After two weeks of further inquiries, we were finally able to find someone willing to admit that there existed another pair of nail clippers that we might aspire to use at some future date. Feeling under the weather one morning, I asked a nurse for some ibuprofen. "We never give out ibuprofen for pain," she explained, and then gave me ibuprofen for my pain. The next day I asked a different nurse, who did a somewhat more competent job of refusing me, and then yet another nurse, who advised me to submit a medical form, which I did that evening. The next day, I received a typewritten response to the effect that my request for ibuprofen had been denied, and then, an hour later, some more ibuprofen tablets. Thereafter followed two days in which I received ibuprofen from two different nurses without asking for it, which was really nice, except it kind of bummed me out, as I had been planning to amuse myself by turning in grievance forms in which I would make a series of increasingly inappropriate and abstract complaints. ("I don't feel as if I possess any real influence over the music industry"; "There are too many slobs in the world these days.") But the good-heartedness of the nurses just spoiled some of my fun for now.

So I decided to watch television. I mean, really watch it, take it all in. (Actually, I had little choice insomuch as I live in a single room in which the TV is never out of earshot.) My seven drug-dealer cellmates were big on the Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and the History Channel, although none of these networks were quite as I had remembered them, and about half of the programs now seem to involve Alaska, which I find ominous. As most of us speak Spanish to some degree, we also watch a lot of Telemundo, which shows some good films. The Selena movie came on the other day.

"Who was it that killed Selena, again?" I asked the Hispanic drug dealer next to me.

"Her manager."

"Right, right. And why did her manager kill her?"

"Her manager was a lesbian."

I nodded. Typical lesbian assassination.

I am too emotionally fragile to absorb much 21st-century television — I hide under my blanket when they put CNN on, for instance — so I spent most of my time sitting on the floor on the other end of the cell with my

notepad and pen, writing little scenarios in which I have to break bad news to various founding fathers. To wit:

Benjamin Franklin: “It was among my fondest dreams that my beloved Philadelphia would someday grow into one of the world’s great centers of high culture, and become a by-word for the gentlemanly arts. Tell me, has this come to pass?”

Me: “Uh ...”

Finally I started receiving some mail, including shipments of my book requests, starting with the second volume of Caro’s LBJ series, *Means of Ascent*, which centers on the stolen 1948 senatorial election. I figured I was a hard fellow to shock by this point, but fuck me dry if this isn’t the most fascinating goddamned book I have ever read in my entire life. (Also, I can’t seem to stop cursing now. President Johnson really can be a bad influence on one.)

I was so astounded that I made a \$10 call to my dad, questioning him about all of this wacky Texas political activity in the 20th century. His uncle, I recalled, had worked for Johnson in some capacity, back in the day. As soon as I started asking about that and some other nefarious accusations made against the former president, my dad began to sound nervous, as if this were not the sort of thing to be discussed on an open telephone line. All he would say was, “You don’t cross Lyndon Johnson.” He actually spoke in the present tense. That Johnson died 40 years ago does not seem to have lessened anyone’s fear of him. Maybe this isn’t altogether unreasonable. Johnson is the sort of guy who, right before dying, would direct his cronies to establish some sort of shadowy, well-funded syndicate by which to intimidate and discredit anyone who dares to threaten his legacy. And, come to think of it, doesn’t that sound a lot like the LBJ Presidential Library?

Still, my own fear goes well beyond such conventional academic thuggery, extending into the outright supernatural. For instance, there was the incident just last summer, when I was being held in the hole at Seagoville. I was minding my own business one afternoon, lying back on my bunk, and thinking about how much I hate Charles Krauthammer, when there suddenly appeared on the other side of the cell door window grill, a wide pale face — the face of Lyndon Johnson. He looked right into my eyes, broke out into a great, big frightening grin, and then disappeared. Thirty seconds later, after my heart had resumed beating and I had regained control of my legs and bowels, I leaped onto the floor — catlike, every muscle taut — and crept silently to the door before slowly raising myself up enough so that I could look through the grill. There he was, just down the hall, grinning into someone else’s cell window. Then he left, no doubt to return to his stasis chamber at the corporate headquarters of Kellogg, Brown & Root.

A few days later, I learned that the fellow wasn’t actually Lyndon Johnson at all, but was in fact the prison’s finance manager, or something like that, and was just helping out in the hole that day. Now, that’s all well and good, but it would have been courteous of the administrators to put up some sort of warning sign about this, like: “Attention Inmates: Be advised that we employ a man who strongly resembles Lyndon Johnson. Note that he is not actually Lyndon Johnson but, we repeat, merely happens to look like him. Rest assured that he cannot actually get into your cell and kill you, as the doors are made from reinforced steel and we do not provide him with access to the keys, lest he actually turn out to be Lyndon Johnson, but we do this simply out of an abundance of caution.”

Is it so much to ask that Seagoville Federal Correctional Institution should cater to my various surreal neuroses, even the one that I’m probably just making up for comic effect? Alternatively, they could, say, stop putting people in the hole on phony escape accessory charges because they made a jump rope, or perhaps fire some of the more specifically racist and gang-affiliated guards, such as that Thompson chap, or perhaps refrain from putting Jewish inmates into isolation cells with Aryan Brotherhood members, who promptly beat them up, as happened there a few years back, resulting in a lawsuit. I mean, I feel like I’ve thrown out several really promising ideas here.

9 Jan - Humanist Sociologists Vote to Support the Release of Black Panther Activist Albert Woodfox

Featured below is the full text of a public statement just released by the Association for Humanist Sociology.

MORE:

The membership of the Association for Humanist Sociology, an organization dedicated to scholarship and action in the service of justice and peace, has voted to call for the immediate release of the last “Angola 3” prisoner, Albert Woodfox, from the Louisiana Department of Corrections where he has been held in solitary confinement for more than forty-two years for the murder of a prison guard in 1972, a deeply flawed conviction that has now been overturned three times.

No physical evidence linked Woodfox or his co-defendant, Herman Wallace, to the crime. A man claiming to be an eyewitness for the prosecution was released from a life sentence as a serial rapist in exchange for his testimony. And potentially exculpatory DNA evidence was lost under questionable circumstances. Today, the widow of the murdered guard has said that she believes the State failed in its mandate to bring her husband’s true murderer to justice.

In the years just previous to the guard’s murder, Woodfox and Wallace had organized the first prison chapter of the Black Panther Party, working to desegregate Angola State Penitentiary, end systematic rape and violence among the prisoners, stop routine corruption and brutality by the guards, and demand better living conditions in the institution. Even from solitary confinement, Woodfox has continued to win legal suits related to prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners, encourage and empower others, and affect change in the community in which he resides. Nevertheless, States Attorney Buddy Caldwell has called Woodfox “the most dangerous man in the world.” And Angola Warden Burl Cain has stated that until Woodfox disavows his Black Panther principles, he belongs in solitary confinement whether he did anything or not.

Herman Wallace died of cancer a few days after his release on habeus corpus in 2013. After Woodfox’ conviction was overturned by the courts for the third time that same year and the Appellate court upheld the 5th Circuit ruling in November of 2014, the State has continued its ongoing commitment to keep Woodfox incarcerated. Nevertheless, a petition with more than 25,000 signatures from around the world has been delivered to Governor Bobby Jindal, beseeching the State of Louisiana to release Albert Woodfox forthwith and without delay.

The Association for Humanist Sociology stands with Amnesty-International-USA, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (a coalition of 325 organizations committed to end torture and cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment), Juan Mendez (the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture), and Rep. John Conyers, in supporting the petition.

9 Jan - Art fundraiser for Jarrod Shanahan

Jarrod Shanahan is facing time for allegedly assaulting a cop during a bridge takeover after the failure to indict an NYPD cop for the murder of Eric Garner. One of his comrades is taking art commissions to raise funds for Jarrod’s legal defense.

MORE:

I have never solicited commissions before but I figured this was as good a reason as any.

Paypal \$25, your address and a subject of your choice to nate.mcdonough@gmail.com and I’ll draw and/or paint you a good looking full color finished piece on 5x7 bristol and mail it to you. Turn around will be quick. This is presently the top priority in what is a real quiet time of year for me.

I linked to the article where he’s described as “the sweetest, nicest young man and absolutely delightful to be with,” because it is fully and sadly the truth. Every cent goes to Jarrod. Thank you.

9 Jan - New writings by Mumia Abu-Jamal

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

MORE:

January 9th - Out of Afghanistan

With the passing of flags and banners, an era ends in the life of Afghanistan, and in the U.S., as well.

With the recently announced end to combat, 13 years of imperial war comes to a close.

What began in bombast and braggadocio ends with virtual silence, the promises of politicians, the predictions of military domination, naught but wind.

Afghanistan, the legendary 'graveyard of empires', still sits, hardly changed - or at least hardly changed for the better.

A deeply xenophobic country upon invasion and occupation, it remains so today, perhaps more so.

Perhaps it is more corrupt, what with over \$1 trillion in U.S. bucks flooding the country.

But that was virtually guaranteed when the U.S. chose an Afghan refugee, Hamid Karzai, gone from the country nearly 30 years, before being reinserted by the Americans.

As the U.S. closes the door to war, it leaves a nation still on the brink of the abyss, for the Taliban, a U.S. CIA, Pakistani, ISI, and British M15 creation, remains a power-in-waiting in Afghanistan, more loved by Afghans than the hated foreigners.

In 2008, in conversation with a top NATO general, Karzai said. "I wish I had the Taliban as my soldiers." And while he later said he was 'misquoted', he had a point. For, less than 6 months after he made these comments, the Taliban struck the nation's second-largest city, Kandahar, and paralyzed it for some 30 hours.

Two years later, it ran a parallel government, complete with judges and councils, a rebuke to the central government, know and reviled for its corruption and incompetence.

The end of combat operations by U.S. and NATO forces doesn't mean the end of war; it means the beginning of the end for U.S. puppets.

It means the Taliban's time has come.

It also means the waste of a trillion U.S. dollars, thousands of American military casualties, and tens of thousands of Afghan lives, as well.

It means the end of an imperial dream.

January 13th - A World Of Mess

It's been over a decade since the U.S. launched its 'crusade' against the Forces of Evil in the East, and it has only succeeded in creating disaster after disaster, and more enemies than we could count.

It has consistently backed governments in the Arab world that could double as the Mafia that rule by repression, torture and the 'divine right of kings'.

It has mouthed words of democracy, and just as quickly swallowed them whole, as their chosen allies have ridden roughshod over their people, fighting them like foreign enemies.

Israel has been armed and unleashed to torment Palestinians into submission to so-called 'peace deals' that would make the Vichy-French (collaborators with the Nazis during World War II) blush with shame.

And while they have spent over a trillion bucks to stitch together their bevy of indigenous 'allies', things bubble

on a caldera of lava, and social forces rage with contempt and hatred for their rulers.

Things are not well either in the Middle East or at home, for the crowns of neo-colonialism do not sit easily on the heads of U.S. allies.

The wasted billions, and hundreds of billions; the thousands of soldiers dead - equally wasted; and the wasted hopes of the invaded and occupied, have been the payment for this mad mission to 'remake the Middle East'.

Wars have a way of returning home, in the most unexpected of ways.

We have seen that tragically in France.

Perhaps we shall see similar events here, at home.

January 17th - Bro. Phil Africa

He was born William Phillips, on Jan. 1, 1956, but few people called him by that name.

Most people knew him as Phil, and after joining the revolutionary naturalist MOVE organization in the early 1970s, most called him Phil Africa.

He was part of the confrontation of Aug. 8, 1978, in Philadelphia, where nearly a dozen MOVE members were charged in connection with that conflict, in which a cop likely died from friendly fire – but MOVE members were charged.

Among them, Phil Africa. Phil was among 9 MOVE men and women charged with murder, and convicted in a hotly disputed trial, of third degree murder. So disputed, in fact, that several days after the trial, Judge Edwin Malmed would admit, in a locally broadcast interview, that he 'Hadn't the faintest idea'...."the faintest idea" (his very words) ...who killed the cop.

The 9 MOVE members were sentenced to 30 to 100 years: the longest in Pennsylvania history since third-degree became law in PA. Judge Malmed reportedly acknowledged the illegality of such a sentence, telling those sentenced that it may be reversed on appeal, but, for now, it would hold them. It appears Malmed believed the State Appellate courts were fairer than even they believed.

But not to people named Africa it seems.

For today, 37 years after the events of August, 1978, the fact that 7 remaining men and women are still in prison is nothing short of a scandal.

The MOVE men and women should've been free, at least 7 years ago, when they reached their minimums.

But this is Pennsylvania, where madness passes as normality.

Phil lost a son back in the mid -'70s, when police trampled his child, Life Africa.

On May 13, 1985, when the police bombed a MOVE home, another son, Little Phil, was among the 11 people shot and burned to death.

Phil was an extremely talented artist and painter. He was a man with a gift of lightness, a witty sense of humor, and an ever-present smile.

Phil Africa, MOVE member, will be long loved and remembered by his wife, Janine Africa, by his brothers and sister in MOVE, and by many, many prisoners across the state, whom he counseled over the years.

Phil lived through 59 cycles of planet earth, before being returned to his Mother.

10 Jan - The Empire Hits by Bill Dunne

Gov. Here is The Empire Hits!, a recent piece by Bill Dunne which is very much related to his 15 year hit.

MORE:

The U.S. Parole Commission conducted a hearing for a 15 year reconsideration of my case on 5 November 2014. The last 15 year continuance (“hit”) was set to expire in December. The hearing examiner went through the usual things: offender characteristics; the circumstances of my 1979 offenses; a 1983 escape attempt; ancient disciplinary infractions. I was thinking a good outcome would be a one year date, a bad one, five years (and, having long experience with the agency of repression, expecting the worst!). Then the examiner went unusual. He unleashed a tirade about anarchist connections and anti-authoritarian views. He recommended another 15 year hit on the basis thereof. Four weeks later, I got a Notice of Action (NOA) from the commission adopting the recommendation and setting my next reconsideration for November of 2029.

The commission made much of the facts that I was on parole and the 1979 conspiracy included three armed bank robberies to finance the escape of a federal prisoner who had killed a customs agent. It also changed the assault of a Seattle police officer during the escape to attempted murder, using this change to raise my offense behavior category and guideline range. It did so notwithstanding that I was not at the scene of the shooting, the shooter was paroled ten years ago, and having established the old category in 2000 and defended it through seven hearings and appeals. The real reason for the higher offense behavior category is that its guidelines have no upper limit. I’ve already served more than the top guidelines under the previous, lower category.

The commission then added a specific amount of time to my parole guidelines for each disciplinary infraction I’ve had. That came to (erroneously, but ad arguendo) 32-132 months. Next, it singled out five of those infractions from 31, 31, 30, 25, and 19 years ago (attempted escape, knife, handcuff key, “uncompleted” handcuff key, escape paraphernalia — the second and last bogus) as indicative I was a more serious risk than my parole prognosis showed. These infractions, the commission alleged without saying why, further justified exceeding the guidelines by so much as the 15 year hit. It thus used the infractions to both raise and exceed the guidelines contrary to its own rules.

The commission required my codefendant to serve some 198 months on identical charges stemming from the jailbreak conspiracy, and our offender characteristics are virtually identical. The 132 month maximum the commission’s rescission guidelines say should be added to my parole guidelines thus suggests a sentence in the range of 330 months for me. The commission and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) both agreed I had 344 months in at the time of the hearing. (I actually had 421 months in, but they say the other 77 months went to the state time I got as a result of the same events.) The commission also ignored the statutory injunction that “old law” prisoners like me should be paroled after 30 years, which would put me out no later than 18 March 2016, even under their erroneous calculation.

The commission shifted into political police mode, saying, “the Commission finds your continued association and affiliation with anarchist organizations is evidence you still harbor anti-authoritarian views that are not compatible with the welfare of society or with the conditions of parole.” The NOA says zero about what it means by “anarchist,” “association,” “affiliation,” or “anti-authoritarian views” or why they might be problematic for society or parole. The examiner did mention a few specifics and waved some printouts, but did not explain what was so wrong with their content. He said I’d get copies, but so far I have not. There is no BOP or commission rule forbidding information by or about prisoners being published on the net.

The commission’s hearing examiner mentioned three sites: Prison Radio, LA-ABCF (Los Angeles Anarchist Black Cross Federation), and Denver ABC. None of them advocate violence or criminality. They are posted by mostly working class and poor people who want to make their communities and world better places. The examiner denounced “Running Down the Walls,” but did not say why. RDTW is a running event sponsored every year by LA-ABCF for more than the last 20 in which people from many communities participate to express their opposition to the overuse of incarceration, especially for political purposes. The Prisoners’

Committee of the ABCF, of which the examiner also disapproved for no stated reason, advises the ABCF on effective ways to support political prisoners, none of which involve illegality. Nor is the committee's advice always solicited or followed. Prison Radio produces broadcasts of news and information about prison issues from a radical left perspective but advocates no violation of the law. All of these web sites post information about particular cases, prisoners, situations, and events their operators think the bright light of public scrutiny would help reach a more positive resolution. They make their posts based on their own analysis and choices; they are self-directed and independent. As for anti-authoritarian, that's supposed to be the position of the government itself: "anti" authoritarian regimes such as Putin's Russia, etc., and pro democracy. The commission's decision was the reverse.

The commission also said efforts to contact my codefendant were evidence I am likely to "reengage in similar criminal activity" if released, but does not say how so. My codefendant was released from prison 10 years ago and from parole five years ago. I don't think he's had so much as a traffic ticket in that time. One would think the commission would want me to learn from him whatever it was he did to convince them to release him from both prison and parole. No hearing examiner could tell me, and I asked at many hearings.

The commission apparently feels anything it deems anarchist — and, by implication, any radical left-political activity or connection warrants denial of parole. It denied me because it feels I am thus involved. I've already served more time than could be reasonably assessed for my offense behavior and disciplinary record. My codefendant's offense role and offender characteristics are virtually identical. Hence, the time demanded of me should be comparable plus prescribed disciplinary time. That total would be less time than I've already served. Nor is politics any basis for parole denial. The notion that mere correspondence with anarchists or my codefendant evidences criminal intent is simply frivolous: no print or pictures or audio to felonious intent were ever alleged, and there are no rules against such contact. Nor has the commission ever objected before to these long-standing connections, and the BOP approved them. Neither the "anarchist organizations" nor my codefendant has any criminal history during the relevant times.

The commission's blatant use of such demonstrably inadequate and inappropriate reasons to deny my parole is remarkable. I have already filed an administrative appeal and will continue the appeal via habeas corpus against both the BOP and commission. Not only are the unsupported, conclusory, and irrelevant claims cited for denying me parole a violation of the commission's own rules, their use constitutes a gross infringement on the First Amendment. That use violates what remains of my right to hold and express positive, progressive politics as well as that of the people and groups whose speech and association are undermined by such government attacks on political expression via the internet. I am confident that I and any comrades who have supported me by putting information by or about me or my politics into the public domain to protect me from the depredations of power have done so in good faith and not in any way that could legitimately be construed as "not compatible with the welfare of society." I'm confident we will not cave to such pressure to self-censor.

10 Jan - Phil Africa of the MOVE 9 Dies in Prison

On Saturday, January 10th Phil Africa, revolutionary, John Africa's First Minister of Defense, and beloved brother, husband and father, passed away at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas, Pennsylvania.

MORE:

On Sunday, January 4th Phil Africa wasn't feeling well and went to the prison infirmary. Though he wasn't feeling well, other inmates saw Phil Africa walking, stretching and doing jumping jacks. Hearing that Phil was in the infirmary MOVE members drove up to visit him and were denied a visit by the prison. While they were visiting with Delbert Africa, Phil was secretly transported to Wilkes Barre General Hospital where he was held in total isolation, incommunicado for five days.

Prison officials at SCI-Dallas wouldn't communicate about Phil's condition. They told MOVE that Phil was at Wilkes Barre General hospital and the hospital denied he was there. The hospital and the prison behaved very suspiciously denying Phil the ability to call family members or his wife of 44 years, Janine Africa, stating that she was not a blood relative. The hospital and prison received hundreds of phone calls in support of Phil from around the world. When they finally submitted to pressure and allowed Phil to call Janine on Thursday, January

8th he was heavily drugged, incoherent and couldn't even hold the phone to talk to her.

On Friday, January 9th Phil was sent back to the prison infirmary and placed in hospice care upon arrival. On Saturday, January 10th Ramona and Carlos Africa were granted permission to visit Phil in the prison infirmary. When they reached him he was incoherent and couldn't talk or move his head to look at them. An hour after they left Delbert called with the news that Phil passed away.

Inmates in the infirmary and others in the prison were shocked when they heard the news. They had witnessed his vigorous health for decades in the prisons, had just seen him stretching and doing jumping jacks six days earlier. This rapid decline all occurred while he was being literally held incommunicado from his MOVE family at Wilkes Barre General Hospital or Dallas prison or wherever these conspirators were holding him with murderous intent.

The fact that Phil was isolated for the six days before he passed, that he was in such better health before he was taken to the hospital, and that the hospital refused to release his medical information is beyond suspicious.

This is another example of how the system hates MOVE and will do anything to stop MOVE. You can look at the example of August 8th, 1978 when the MOVE 9 were illegally imprisoned, and May 13th, 1985 when the government dropped a bomb and intentionally murdered 11 MOVE members to see this point clearly. When Merle Africa died in prison on March 13th, 1998 the conditions were very similar. She had been one way in the prison, but within hours of being forced to go to an outside hospital she was dead.

Phil made a deep impression on people all around the world. He was constantly writing, often dozens of letters a day, encouraging solidarity and strength, and warmly advising hundreds of people. Phil worked hard to learn to paint and created countless paintings which he sent to supporters for free to draw attention to issues, get ruffled off for the struggle, and bring people together. Phil took his commitment and work as a revolutionary very seriously, but was often smiling, laughing, and giving people hugs and encouragement. He was a warm father figure to many in the prison where he taught inmates how to box, to think, and how to get stronger. Despite having two of his children murdered by the system and being separated by prison, Phil was a father figure to many. He was separated from his wife Janine for over 36 of the 44 years they were married, but he worked hard to stay connected with her even though they were so callously isolated by the system.

It's this system's intention for MOVE people to die in prison. The MOVE 9 never should have been imprisoned at all, and according to their sentence they should have been paroled over six years ago. The death of Merle and Phil Africa rests directly at the feet of this government! Phil will never be forgotten. He is dearly missed, but his strong example should inspire everyone to fight harder for the freedom of the MOVE 9 and all political prisoners! This latest government treachery will be the fuel needed to motivate people to step up the pace for this revolution.

January 14th - Phil Africa, of Black-Liberation Group Move, Long in Prison, Dies at 59

by Sam Roberts (*New York Times*)

Phil Africa, a high-ranking member of the Philadelphia-based black-liberation group Move, who was serving a 30- to 100-year sentence in the 1978 fatal shooting of a police officer, died on Saturday at the state prison in Dallas, Pennsylvania, near Wilkes-Barre. He was 59.

A prison spokeswoman, Robin Lucas, attributed the death to unspecified natural causes.

Move is best known for the 24-hour siege at one of its houses in Philadelphia in 1985 that ended when the state police dropped a bomb, touching off a fire — the worst in the city's history — that left 11 people dead and destroyed more than 60 homes. Phil Africa was in prison at the time.

Born William Phillips on Jan. 1, 1956, he adopted the surname Africa, as did the other eight defendants in his case, which stemmed from an earlier effort to oust Move from its West Philadelphia headquarters.

At that time, the administration of Mayor Frank L. Rizzo demanded that the building be vacated because of sanitary and building code violations. Members of the group responded by arming themselves and transforming the building into a fortress. Phil Africa was convicted of third-degree murder in a shootout that followed months of conflict.

In addition to the officer who was fatally shot, James Ramp, four officers and five firefighters were injured.

“Rehabilitation in this case would be absurd,” Judge Edwin S. Malmed of the Court of Common Pleas declared in passing sentence in 1981. “Anyone not revolted by the events of that day just doesn’t have a sound mind.”

Ramona Africa, a spokeswoman for Move, said on its website that Mr. Africa was the second of the nine defendants to die in prison, and described his death as suspicious.

“This is another example of how the system hates Move and will do anything to stop Move,” she said, adding, “Phil was a father figure to many.”

Ms. Lucas, the prison spokeswoman, said Mr. Africa had been in the prison infirmary for about a week.

Information on his survivors was not available.

11 Jan - Kevin Olliff Moved to MCC Chicago

Kevin Olliff was recently transferred to Metropolitan Correctional Center, a federal facility in Chicago. According to his support crew, this move is bound to be better overall for Kevin, as he’ll have cheaper commissary, better quality vegan meals, much more generous visitation rules, and access to a variety of reading materials (e.g., magazines).

MORE:

Kevin and Tyler’s case is, of course, still being fought. Because the prosecution won their motion to deny Kevin bail on the AETA indictment, we don’t know how much longer he’ll be in custody. Being kept in this limbo has been hard on him, but in true Kevin fashion, he’s managed to keep a good perspective on the situation and an optimistic spirit.

What’s helped Kevin through this long and uncertain period has been your support. So please take a moment to send him a book, a letter, or a donation. And spread the word about his and Tyler’s case—this is an historic moment for the animal rights movement and for activists all over the country.

How to Send Kevin a Book

IMPORTANT: All books must be sent from the publisher, Amazon, or BarnesandNoble.com.

It’s not clear yet whether Kevin can receive hardcover books, so until we find out, please make sure any books sent are paperback only.

Magazines are allowed—if you’re a magazine or zine publisher, please feel free to send Kevin copies of your publication.

Address book orders to the following:

Kevin Johnson #47353-424
MCC Chicago
71 West Van Buren Street
Chicago, Illinois 60605

How to Send Kevin a Letter

The usual general rules for inmate mail apply at MCC Chicago: don't send anything that could be construed as pornographic, threatening, or otherwise problematic to the people who inspect the mail. And remember your correspondence will be monitored by the prison.

Computer print-outs are allowed and are really appreciated by Kevin. He likes to keep up on what's happening in the news and in the movement.

There is no limit on pages that can be sent—but use good sense and remember that your mail can be rejected.

12 Jan - Utah prosecutors dropping controversial 'ag-gag' charges

Utah prosecutors are dropping charges against four animal activists filed under a controversial law known as "ag-gag."

MORE:

by Lindsay Whitehurst (*The Salt Lake Tribune*)

The activists from California and Maryland will still each face one misdemeanor count of criminal trespass, said Iron County Attorney Scott Garrett on Monday. Prosecutors received the case after the four activists pleaded not guilty last week.

The charges being dropped came under a law that makes it a crime to conduct undercover investigations of slaughterhouses and factory farms. It's being challenged by activists who say it was designed to prevent exposure of unsafe practices.

Six other states have similar measures, but the only other person to face charges was also from Utah, according to Matthew Liebman, a lawyer from the Animal Legal Defense Fund, a group suing to strike down the law.

Police say the four activists from the Farm Animal Rights Movement drove onto private property at southwestern Utah's Circle Four Farms in September and took pictures. Their lawyer says they were on a public roadway and only captured images of farm buildings, not workers or animals.

Attorney T. Matthew Phillips has said his clients were trying to retrace the pigs' path to a California slaughterhouse, not trying to provoke an arrest. They are Sarah Jane Gage, 43, of Los Angeles; Robert Penney, 64, of Laguna Beach, California; Harold Weiss, 34, of Pasadena, California; and Bryan Monell, 50, of Mount Rainier, Maryland, according to court records.

Phillips didn't immediately return a message seeking comment Monday.

Circle Four Farms is part of Murphy-Brown LLC, the livestock production subsidiary of the world's largest pork producer, Smithfield Foods Inc. The Utah farm raises and markets about 1.2 million hogs per year and employs about 450 people.

Members of the Bethesda, Maryland-based Farm Animal Rights Movement want to end the use of animals for food, according to the group's website, and promote a vegan lifestyle with advertisements and occasional dramatic protests.

14 Jan - Suitcase of many colors is at center of COINTELPRO murder mystery in Omaha

What color was the suitcase bomb that landed Black Panther leaders Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa (former David Rice) in prison for life? Nobody knows is the answer in the COINTELPRO-tainted case.

MORE:

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

The suitcase bomb that killed Omaha policeman Larry Minard, Sr. on August 17, 1970, put two Black Panther leaders in prison for life. Doing hard time at the maximum-security Nebraska State Penitentiary, Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa (then David Rice) are known as the Omaha Two, where both men continue to deny any

guilt in the crime.

The Omaha Two were convicted following a controversial trial which featured conflicting police testimony and withheld evidence. A FBI Laboratory report on the identity of the anonymous caller that led police to an ambush bomb was withheld under orders of J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Hoover ordered the FBI Laboratory director Ivan Willard Conrad to not issue a written report as part of the illegal COINTELPRO program, a clandestine counterintelligence operation which targeted the Black Panthers.

In the months leading to the deadly blast Hoover had put increasing pressure on Omaha FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Paul Young to get the Omaha Two off the streets. In December 1969, Hoover told Young in a stern COINTELPRO memorandum to be “imaginative” in devising a counterintelligence actions against the two Black Panther leaders.

The two week trial in April 1971 was filled with contradictory and conflicted testimony but nothing was in greater dispute than the color of the deadly suitcase bomb itself.

Duane Peak, the fifteen-year old confessed bomber, who got off on a juvenile delinquency charge after implicating the Omaha Two, said the suitcase was “gray, real dark gray” in a police deposition. Of course the young killer is not the most reliable witness and also gave several different stories about where he got the suitcase.

Raleigh House, the man Peak testified at trial supplied the suitcase and dynamite, was never charged in the case. House’s lenient treatment by prosecutors has led many to suspect House was a government informant. There is no direct evidence against House except for the testimony of Peak. While House was briefly in police custody he was not checked for traces of dynamite.

Several police officers stepped over the suitcase as they entered a vacant house looking for a screaming woman. Although it was dark and they were in a hurry, the police officers disagree on the color of the suitcase. Four of the surviving officers saw the suitcase but gave conflicting descriptions.

Patrolman James Sledge said at trial, “It was black vinyl.” However, Sledge told one officer for a police report that the suitcase was green and told yet another officer that it was brown. Patrolman Michael Lamson wasn’t sure at trial, “It appeared to be a kind of a light tan or gray in color.” Lamson had earlier reported the suitcase was green. Meanwhile, Patrolman Kenneth Tworek said in a police report the suitcase was brown.

Patrolman John Tess kept changing the color of the suitcase. Tess was interviewed at a hospital shortly after the bombing and said the suitcase was “blue or gray.” At trial, Tess said the suitcase was “light gray or a light green.”

Delia Peak, the bomber’s sister, didn’t know what color it was even though it sat in her living room. Delia did note, “It looked like it was new.”

Raymond Britt, Delia’s boyfriend, helped Duane Peak remove the suitcase from a car trunk. Britt didn’t know too much at trial either but said the suitcase was a “light color.”

Was the suitcase gray, tan, black, green, brown, blue, or a light color? The Omaha World-Herald described the suitcase for the public in an article the day after the bombing: “In the hushed blackness of the vacant house at 2867 Ohio Street, a light green suitcase stood on the warm floor.”

Perhaps the color of the suitcase bomb is unimportant to the guilt or innocence of the Omaha Two, but the widely differing colors by eyewitnesses hints at some of the difficulties Edward Poindexter and Mondo we Langa encountered in trying to establish their innocence in the COINTELPRO-manipulated trial, unable to disprove alleged facts against them.

What color was the suitcase bomb? It was the color of injustice.

15 Jan - Mass Outreach Project to Introduce Anarchist Ideas to General Public

NYC ABC will be sending copies to all of the prisoners we support and we're excited to support this project.

MORE:

Today, Thursday, January 15, the underground publishing group CrimethInc. launched To Change Everything, a multimedia outreach project intended to introduce anarchist ideas to the general public. The project consists of a free, full-color 48-page print publication, a video by Submedia.tv, an interactive website in many different languages, and a sticker and poster campaign. Participating collectives in 19 countries across five continents have prepared two dozen different versions of the project, each tailored to their local context. To view the To Change Everything website, video and text, see: <http://www.tochangeeverything.com>

“Anarchism is the idea that everyone is entitled to complete self-determination,” To Change Everything asserts. In place of state and corporate power, anarchists seek to create horizontal, voluntary networks as the basis of all social organization. The 21st century has seen a resurgence of this philosophy, ranging from peer-to-peer networks to globally linked protest movements.

Anarchists erupted onto the world stage at the turn of the century, famously participating in the demonstrations against the 1999 summit of the World Trade Organization in Seattle. Over the past seven years, anarchists have played a leading role in revolts from Greece to the Arab spring, gaining further prominence in the US through Occupy and #blacklivesmatter. “As successive waves of dispossession and disillusionment sweep new demographics into social movements, interest in anarchist ideas and practices is growing,” explains CrimethInc. spokesperson Cesar Dmitri. “To Change Everything is a harbinger of things to come.”

Promotional events for the project have already taken place in Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Germany, Croatia, and Slovenia. Drawing on a Kickstarter campaign that raised tens of thousands of dollars, CrimethInc. has printed 185,000 copies to distribute in North America and the United Kingdom, including 25,000 in Spanish. Three thousand copies are earmarked for prisoner support groups to send to some of the 2.5 million people behind bars in the US.

CrimethInc. is a publishing group that functions as the hub of an international network of anarchists and aspiring revolutionaries. For 20 years, CrimethInc. has produced books, magazines, posters, and other resources by and for participants in social movements: all copyright free, composed collectively and anonymously. In 2002, CrimethInc. published an anarchist primer entitled *Fighting for Our Lives*, ultimately distributing 650,000 copies. “Many activists I’ve encountered credit *Fighting for Our Lives* with introducing them to anarchist ideas and changing the course of their lives,” says Rae Valentine of Agency, an anarchist PR project. “With faith in government and capitalism at an all-time low, the time is ripe for a meaningful vision of social change. To Change Everything steps into the breach.”

15 Jan - Norberto Gonzalez Claudio released from prison!

On January 15th, 2015 Norberto Gonzalez Claudio was released from prison, and began his journey back home to Puerto Rico, and when he arrived he was welcomed by a crowd of supporters! Welcome home, comrade!

MORE:

Supporters of Puerto Rican independence are welcoming the return of a 69-year-old man who has completed a prison sentence for his role in a 1983 holdup in Connecticut carried out by Puerto Rican militants. It was the largest heist in U.S. history at the time.

Norberto Gonzalez Claudio arrived Thursday in the U.S. territory just hours after he was released from a prison in central Florida. Some 150 supporters raised fists in the air and waved Puerto Rican flags as Gonzalez emerged from the airport.

He pleaded guilty in June 2012 to charges including foreign transportation of stolen money and conspiracy to

rob federally insured bank funds.

Gonzalez had eluded the FBI for decades until he was arrested in Puerto Rico in May 2011.

15 Jan - New Federal Supermax Prison Will Double Capacity for Extreme Solitary Confinement

Amid growing controversy around the use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails, and in advance of an audit of its own prison "segregation" practices, the federal government is quietly moving ahead with a plan that would significantly increase its capacity to house individuals in long-term isolation.

MORE:

by Aviva Stahl (*Solitary Watch*)

The 2015 Omnibus Appropriations bill passed by Congress in December contained funding for the continued activation of Thomson prison, a currently disused facility in northwest Illinois.

It has been years since Thomson dominated the headlines with news of mainland-bound Guantanamo detainees. Yet its activation remains significant because of the prison's potential to alter the landscape of solitary confinement on the federal level. Reliable sources indicate that the Bureau of Prisons plans to use the facility to add 1,500 Special Management Unit beds and 400 more Administrative Maximum-rated cells. The latter increase would double the number of people held in conditions of extreme isolation like those at ADX Florence, a place that has been denounced by UN officials and human rights groups, and described by one former warden as a "clean version of hell."

The Backstory: How Thomson Came Into BOP Hands

In October 2012, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) purchased Thomson Correctional Center (TCC) from the State of Illinois for \$165 million. The facility was built in 2001 "as a state-of-the-art, maximum-security prison," but due to budget cuts, it never became fully operational.

By all accounts, the Obama administration originally envisioned Thomson as a new home for the men held at Guantanamo Bay. In late 2010, however, Congress foiled Obama's plan by voting to prohibit the use federal funds to transport detainees onto American soil. And while the President has been moving aggressively in recent months to transfer detainees out of Guantanamo, serious obstacles remain in terms of the political feasibility of closing the prison camp.

From the beginning, Justice Department officials insisted that regardless of Gitmo's fate, they also intended to use Thomson to alleviate the overcrowding crisis within the BOP's highest-security institutions. Overcrowding (e.g. incarcerated population above rated capacity) reached 55 percent in federal high-security facilities by 2011. For BOP officials in search of more high-security housing, the Thomson purchase was a steal, since the cost of building a high-security facility from scratch was estimated at \$400 million.

Ironically, the two Illinois elected officials who championed the federal purchase of Thomson are both known for challenging solitary confinement. Then-Governor Pat Quinn closed down the state's notorious supermax prison, Tamms, while Senator Dick Durbin is the first member of Congress to hold hearings critical of solitary.

The reasons for their support of the Thomson sale are not difficult to discern. According to a press release issued by Illinois Senator Dick Durbin at the time that Thomson was purchased, "annual operation of the facility is expected to generate more than \$122 million in operating expenditures (including salaries), \$19 million in labor income, and \$61 million in local business sales." Along with infusing cash into the state's coffers and offloading the cost of maintaining the facility, the sale and eventual activation of the prison is expected to create more than 1,100 jobs.

Durbin is also a staunch supporter of Cheri Bustos, who represents the 17th Congressional District in which Thomson is located. During the 2011 campaign cycle, The Sauk Valley News interviewed a competing

Democratic candidate in the district, who said that Durbin had met with him personally and asked him to withdraw from the race. When Bustos squared off with her Republican contender, both took vocal stances on the best strategy for securing the sale of Thomson—an issue made pressing by the economic fallout the district experienced when the facility failed to open.

“This area has been looking at an empty prison for twelve years now,” Thomson Village President Vicky Trager told Solitary Watch in a phone interview. “The state of Illinois constructed it and then couldn’t seem to find the funding to activate it. So there were a lot of local business, not just in Thomson but in the entire surrounding area, that had invested in properties or constructed buildings in anticipation of the uptake in population and visitors to our area. And when that didn’t happen, they were very badly affected.”

But it is not just local businesses that have suffered. Last week, the Quad-City Times reported that the village is struggling to pay off a \$4 million bond—a debt taken on by Thomson to finance the water and sewer improvements that the prison required.

Once Thomson was purchased, the Bureau of Prisons still required a steady stream of funds to activate it, and Senator Durbin and Representative Bustos have advocated aggressively in Congress for the money. In FY2014, the facility received \$43.7 million for equipment and staffing, and an additional \$10 million for renovations. And the prison is set to receive an additional \$58.7 million from the FY2015 Omnibus Appropriations bill passed in December.

“Both personally, and from the standpoint as Village President, I can’t say enough for the efforts and the support that we have received from both Congresswoman Bustos and Senator Durbin,” Trager told Solitary Watch. “Having met them both personally, I feel encouraged and confident that they do care about getting it activated and getting it open and we’re grateful for that.”

The Road to Activation

The Bureau of Prisons has projected that Thomson will be fully activated by 2016. For now, however, the process of activation appears to be proceeding slowly. In August, the BOP named a warden for the facility, Donald Hudson, who most recently headed up the Federal Correctional Institute in Schuylkill, Pennsylvania. About a month later, the prison held its first job fair.

Yet a host of questions remain about who will be held at the prison and in what conditions of confinement—questions for which the BOP has failed to provide clear answers.

In its FY 2014 budget request, the US Department of Justice referred to the facility as “ADX USP Thomson,” seemingly an indication that the prison would function at least in part as a second Administrative Maximum facility (along with ADX Florence). A little more than six months later, when Warden Hudson was appointed, the Bureau of Prisons instead called the facility “Administrative United States Penitentiary (AUSP) Thomson—an odd move, given that no existing federal prison facility holds the same designation. Thus far, federal prisoners given high-security designations have been housed in “United States Penitentiaries (USPs)”; prisoners perceived as requiring the highest level of security—like those with terrorism convictions—are placed in Florence ADX.

The BOP’s press officer did not respond to repeated requests from Solitary Watch for clarification of Thomson’s designation.

Of all prisons and jails across the United States, Florence ADX is generally considered to have the most extreme conditions of isolation, with most individuals receiving all meals and programming in their cells, and even taking their showers in-cell at timed intervals.

According to an August 2014 report on prison activation published by the Government Accountability Office, the “BOP plans to move some of the most dangerous SMU inmates housed elsewhere to Administrative USP Thomson.” It also details, “Administrative USP Thomson has a rated capacity of 2,100 beds—1,900 high-

security SMU beds and 200 minimum-security beds at the onsite camp—and according to BOP officials, the potential to use some of its high-security rated capacity to house up to 400 ADX inmates.”

The BOP sends people to an SMU, or Special Management Unit, if they are alleged to have participated in gang activity or have a history of serious disciplinary infractions; the program is supposed to consist of a four-level, 18-to-24 month step-down program, but many remain for significantly longer.

Individuals held in SMUs also live in continuous isolation, with only five hours per week out of their cells for exercise, and two phone calls and four visiting hours each month. Some SMU cells meant for one are currently double-bunked. As of May 2013 the SMU population in the BOP rested at 1,960 prisoners and 1,270 cells, meaning the activation of Thomson will more than double the number of SMU cells.

Solitary Watch also requested information about how SMU prisoners will be selected for transfer to Thomson, and whether any individuals currently held at ADX Florence would be moved to the facility, but received no reply.

The BOP’s decision to also functionally double its number of nationally available ADX-cells—from 400 to 800—does not seem to answer any systemic need. Unlike the USPs, ADX Florence has consistently been operating below capacity. And Administrative Maximum-level housing requires much greater spending and staffing per prisoner than high-security housing.

Creating an ADX-level unit may also require some significant internal renovations to Thomson prison. David Maurer is the Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues for the GAO, and the author of several reports that examine Bureau of Prisons activities. He told Solitary Watch that when the GAO toured Thomson in March 2014 prior to the release of a report on prison activation, they asked the BOP about the different physical requirements for the layout of ADX cells as opposed to high-security ones. “When you go to the control unit in ADX, the cells are configured in a certain way. The cells at Thomson are not currently configured in that way.” Maurer said the BOP “said they would take that into consideration.”

Malcolm Young toured Thomson in 2008 when he served as the Executive Director of the John Howard Association of Illinois, a prison reform organization. He told Solitary Watch that none of the cells at the prison have built-in showers, and nor are any double doored—both of which are known to be standard features in ADX cells. Young also specified the cells were built to hold one individual, with the beds poured with cement or cement-like material, but that a second bunk could be added if necessary.

To the touring members of the John Howard Association Thomson seemed like a “far superior facility” than other maximum-security prisons operating in the state, Young said, adding that his team’s assessment was predicated on the assumption that people would be single-celled. “That would change everything. It should not ever be double celled.” In addition, few of the positive features cited by Young—which included dayrooms, cafeterias, and classrooms—would be of any use at all in a supermax prison where there are no congregate activities.

The BOP declined to provide any information about what renovations will be conducted at Thomson or when they anticipate the construction will be completed. In response to queries from Solitary Watch about why the agency would be adding additional ADX-level beds when Florence is running under capacity, the press officer stated that the BOP declined to comment.

Prison “Overcrowding” and the Pushback Against Solitary

Advocates and policy makers are not merely awaiting news about Thomson’s future—they are also anticipating the publication of an audit of the Bureau of Policies on segregation, expected to come out early next year. The audit was performed by an outside team contracted through the National Institute of Corrections, following the 2012 Senate Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on solitary confinement, chaired by Dick Durbin.

Solitary Watch asked Durbin's office how the Senator balanced his concerns about solitary confinement and his commitment to opening Thomson. "Thomson prison will be a federal maximum security prison and will help alleviate massive overcrowding within the Federal prison system," his press officer wrote in response. "Overcrowding which has created grave safety concerns for both inmates and prison officials."

"Senator Durbin's efforts to secure the purchase of Thomson prison, reform solitary confinement practices, and encourage smarter sentencing practices are all consistently aimed at improving the safety, rights, and treatment of inmates, prison guards and the broader community. He will continue his work to ensure that all prisoners, whether in Thomson or elsewhere in the Federal system, are treated humanely and that no one is housed in segregation unnecessarily."

Many prison advocates contest the BOP's assertion that the "overcrowding" problem is a result of lack of capacity.

Alan Mills is the Legal Director of the Uptown People's Law Center, a community-based legal organization in Chicago. He told Solitary Watch that the real problem in the federal system is not a lack of high-security cell space, but locking up people for too long and over classifying prisoners as "maximum security." Mills also contested that notion that isolation makes prisons safer, commenting that "psychologists have known since the 1920's that packing lots of people into small spaces and giving them nothing to do inevitably leads to violence."

A 2013 GAO report on segregation in the federal prison system documents the dramatic rise in the use of isolation and takes issue with the BOP's claim that solitary is both necessary and effective. The report summary states, "...without an assessment of the impact of segregation on institutional safety or study of the long-term impact of segregated housing on inmates, BOP cannot determine the extent to which segregated housing achieves its stated purpose to protect inmates, staff and the general public."

But little came of the report, and with Thomson's activation seemingly inching towards reality, advocates are left wondering when things will change. "If they build it, they will fill it," said Reverend Laura Markle Downton, the Director of the US Prisons Policy & Program at the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, in an email to Solitary Watch.

Downton calls the activation of Thomson "an immoral, unjustifiable move on the part the BOP, antithetical to rehabilitation and in violation of international human rights. The overwhelming consensus amongst people of faith and conscience nationwide, from a broad array of political persuasions and religious traditions, is that the isolated confinement found in ADX-level and SMU-housing is torture."

Amidst the debates on rural economies, prison overcrowding, and government audits, the voices of survivors of solitary confinement can sometimes be hard to hear. Ray Luc Levasseur is a former political prisoner who spent over fifteen years in solitary confinement.

"I was one of the first prisoners sent to ADX, the federal supermax, a prison designed from the ground up for sensory deprivation," he told Solitary Watch. "The projected activation of another supermax in Thomson, Illinois makes me feel like a survivor of abuse that's watching the abuser receive rewards and impunity. And I fear for those who'll be confined their cages, and those in the communities to which they'll someday return."

16 Jan - Tsutomu Shirosaki released from U.S. prison, set to be deported to Japan

Tsutomu Shirosaki, convicted of a 1986 mortar attack on the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, is being held by U.S. immigration authorities for deportation after spending nearly two decades in federal prison. Below is a corporate news story about his release.

MORE:

Tsutomu Shirosaki, 67, fired two mortar shells at the embassy on May 14, 1986. He was arrested in Nepal in 1996 and later found guilty of attempted murder and other charges in U.S. federal court.

He was released Friday from the low security federal prison in Yazoo City, Mississippi, said Public Information Officer Marica Arp.

Shirosaki had been sentenced to 30 years but was released early for good behavior.

According to Bryan Cox, spokesperson for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Shirosaki is now being held at an immigration facility. Privacy laws prevent the agency from releasing the location as Shirosaki did not agree to disclosure of his information.

Typically immigration detainees in the region are sent to holding facilities in Louisiana.

Immigration proceedings are complicated and can take several months or more, depending on whether the person challenges their deportation in court.

Japanese authorities plan to arrest Shirosaki once he is deported to Japan on charges he also fired on the Japanese embassy in Jakarta on May 14, 1986, sources familiar with the investigation said.

Shirosaki is a Toyama native who dropped out of Tokushima University before joining the leftist terrorist group.

In the 1970s, he was sentenced to ten years for an attempted bank robbery but was freed early in 1977 along with other extremists in exchange for hostages the group was holding after hijacking a Japan Airlines jetliner in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Fusako Shigenobu, 69, one of the founders of the Japanese Red Army, said the group was disbanded after her arrest in 2000. However, Japanese police believe it continues to operate as seven members remain at large.

18 Jan - A Mother's Loss by Jalil Muntaqim

Read the latest from Jalil Muntaqim, his ongoing critique of systemic, white supremacist police brutality.

MORE:

(For the Mothers who lost a child from an unjustified police shooting)

To lose a child under any circumstances is heart-wrenching for any parent. This is especially true when it is done by a representative of government. When the police kill, particularly a child, more specifically a man-child of color, it raises many questions about justification. As the rash of such police killings has created a national debate, it is important to recognize law enforcement in America has evolved into a militarized institution. Like many American institutions, it has been awarded with various forms of immunity, a type of exceptionalism. The contradictory dichotomy between becoming a hero or villain is based on the intent of the police officer who takes a civilian life, and how the law interprets that intent. The problem is that, when a person takes and passes the civil service exam and is sworn in as law enforcement personnel, they are granted the presumption of immunity. Yet the philosophy endemic and common to all law enforcement agencies is that they are guardians of a social order, as defined by law. Impressed upon this philosophy is the evolving of an ideology and a culture that reinforces an ideal, almost a belief system. Such a belief system creates a socio-political environment of a "them" and "us" paradigm, setting them apart and above the civilian population. Here is where the problem begins, which is especially significant when the horrific history of race is added to this evolving institutionalized culture. Just as all police officers are not villains or heroes, the culture of the Blue-line makes it difficult to distinguish them apart, especially when they consistently rally around each other whether right or wrong. Within a known racially biased judicial system, they in essence protect the ideal of their immunity and the sanctity of their institutionalized culture.

It is with this understanding that a Mother must know when they lose a child to a police shooting, it is more than the individual cop they have to confront, it is the culture and institution that they represent. In this regard, while it is not necessary here to offer insight into the well-documented historical relationships between the system of slavery and the development of the police system, I must quote from Steve Martinot, "White Identity,

Constitutionality, and its Double Legal System,” where he recounts:

“Both the police and the impunity of slave masters belong to the same paradigm of dual system of law, sanctioned by the law, in producing the subjection of people of color. What contemporary juridical procedure has done, by valorizing police impunity, is to regenerate the double system of law of the slave system ... Thus, both manifest the component elements of white racial identity: paranoia ... violence ..., and white solidarity ...”

Hence, the reality of the situation is our community is not confronting individual cops or police agencies, but a historical cultural dynamic that has been institutionalized, not unlike the prison industrial complex and the school to prison pipeline as trinity of repression. It is apparent that these oppressive conditions are not circumstantial, it is policy driven and codified in law. For example, the well-known disparity in sentencing for crack possession compared to cocaine possession, or the number of Black folks stopped and arrested for marijuana possession compared to white folks being stopped and arrested. As a recent Times/CBS poll discovered, 45 percent of Black people, compared to 7 percent of white people, believed they had experienced a specific instance of police discrimination because of their race. Such is the case that 31 percent of white folks recognize police are more likely to use deadly force in Black neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods. If there is to be a remedy to this national problem, it is essential that Mothers of children lost to unjustified police shootings create a national database to identify the extent of the problem. To ensure a national dialogue on this problem demands congressional hearings on how best to De-Centralize and De-Militarize police forces across the country.

In this way, this struggle has the potential to demystify the invincibility of the police culture of impunity and immunity. Obviously, this debate needs to strengthen the argument the police are to represent the interests of people above the profits of the capitalist system. Essentially, Mothers who have lost children to police killings and the community must take a position that law enforcement is not above the law. Secondly, passing a civil service exam does not exempt law enforcement personnel from prosecution for the unjustified killing of innocent civilians. Since the culture of law enforcement supports the impression they are above the law, people must argue that legislation be passed that Community Review Boards have investigative and subpoena power, and are capable of demanding the prosecution and/or firing of police officers who have been found to violate people’s civil and human rights. In this way, the community, especially Mothers of lost children, will be able to take control of the narrative in defining the relationship between the community and law enforcement. This may seem extreme; however, Martin Luther King, Jr. is reported to have instructed: “The question is not whether we will be extremists but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?” I believe all will agree there is nothing more extreme than the unjustified killing by police of Black children and men.

I am sorry for all the losses of these children, and Black boys, based on the failure of the Black Panther Party to pass on to the next generation lessons from the Cointelpro onslaught on the BPP. It is extremely unfortunate that such an important institution (police force) embedded in our community maintains a culture that seemingly epitomizes a “them” and “us” dysfunctional relationship. Obviously, community policing, in which police officers live and work in the community, would be best to engender a better relationship with law enforcement. But because of all that has been expressed above, the potential for that to happen is a far-fetched ideal. However, the fight for community policing empowers the community to take control of crime and punishment in the community. We can only hope that by virtue of Mothers’ losses and the struggle to remedy such tragedy, we will win a more improved and appreciated relationship by lessening dependence on the police, and not cultivate negatively perceived belief in the police as an occupying force to keep the natives in control.

I would like to close by making one other observation. There is a need for the inhabitants of our community to take control of the community to lessen the need for police patrols. Street violence and drug dealing that puts everyone’s lives in jeopardy, including cops, is the responsibility of the community. This is a collective failure, despite all of the political and socio-economic policies and decision-making that reinforce impoverishment, joblessness, homelessness and hopelessness ... crime in the community is a principle enemy. Collectively, we must confront Black on Black crime to preserve the future of our youth. This means that our youth must be recruited and trained to become community activists in the fight opposing political policies that disenfranchise

and impoverish the community. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense held that criminal activity in the community was reactionary, and potentially counter-revolutionary. We have lost several generations since the Cointelpro destruction of the Black Panther Party to prison and the grave as a result of police repression. We must make every effort as part of challenging the current wave of police killings to eliminate the need for police entrenchment in the community. This requires the community's responsibility to end Black on Black crime.

This is the hard discussion that must be held as part of the national debate to eliminate these police killings, further eliminating the need for the overwhelming police presence in the community. A Mother's loss of a child to police or street violence makes this demand on all of us, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. instructed: "Every step toward this goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

The First Line of Defense IS Power to the People!

Fist Up! Fight Back!

Remember: We Are Our Own Liberators!

18 Jan - Eric King Update

Eric King facing up to 24 months in solitary at CCA Leavenworth.

MORE:

This evening supporters received a call from Eric King, anarchist prisoner from Kansas City, Missouri, letting them know that he was currently in the hole. He had been participating in a boxing club with a few friends for many weeks. The guards decided to crack down on the boxing club, Eric was beaten and now sits alone in a cell still covered in pepper spray that leaves his skin with residual burning even 5 days later.

Eric is strong in spirit, but facing 24 months of solitary confinement is obviously terrifying for him. It is unlikely he will serve more than 7 months as he is at this facility awaiting his case to come up at court and then sentencing after which he will move to another facility. The thought of him spending the remainder of his time at CCA alone is heartbreaking. He had just recently told supporters about getting closer with a friend on the inside who had similar politics and the reading they had been doing together.

He desperately needs and desires your letters and cards during this time! Because of the strict restrictions at CCA and in solitary, he is only allowed one call and 5 stamps per week. This severely limits his ability to respond to all letters that we hope he receives.

Eric has received little support from his home community in KCMO and has mentioned this leaves him feeling pretty sad. Support from afar is keeping him focused, spirited and ready to fight from the inside; He desperately needs that. Thank you for sending what love, solidarity, letters, books and inspiration you have already! Now we just all need to step it up and keep him flooded with all of our loving rage and solidarity!

Here are the details on writing Eric courtesy of supportericking.wordpress.com

Eric King #27090045

CCA Leavenworth

100 Highway Terrace

Leavenworth, Kansas 66048

Here are some instructions for sending mail to Eric's facility (taken from the disgusting Corrections Corporation of America website):

Envelopes with mail must include the inmate's name and federal register number. Those without a number will be returned to sender. There is no limit on the number of letters an inmate may receive. Inmates may receive photographs, but they must not show any nudity, penetration, crime, gang signs, drugs or drug usage. Polaroids

are acceptable as long as they are not damaged and/or concealing any contraband. Stamps, blank paper, envelopes, blank cards, self-addressed envelopes, calling cards, credit cards, stickers of any kind, cards with sound and fake cash are not accepted and should not be mailed in. Publications must be sent directly from a nationally recognized publisher or book store and must be accompanied by receipts. No used books or magazines are allowed. No more than three books and/or magazines may be received in any one shipment.

For now you can check supportericking.wordpress.com for further updates. Though, we hope to have a website up very soon that will be more regularly updated.

18 Jan - The Balance of Terror by Abdul Haqq

Here's the latest by Animal Liberation Front prisoners Abdul Haqq, writing about his experiences imprisoned in a Communication Management Unit (CMU).

MORE:

Ever since I arrived in this counter-terrorism prison unit known as the CMU (January of 2012) I have heard a couple of things that I don't feel are accurately portrayed to the outside world.

When these units were originally opened they housed an overwhelming amount of Arab Muslims (and still do). To balance out the equation and not appear racist or biased it is believed that many non-Muslim, non-Arab people were brought to the CMU's specifically to "balance" and give diversity to these prison units. However true this may have been several years ago. This is not the reality of the CMU's today.

The reality is that Animal Rights activists (and others deemed to have threatening or subversive beliefs) such as myself that have been branded terrorists by the federal governments "Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act" (AETA for short) are actually viewed as "domestic terrorists", "violent extremists" and "fanatical activists" by the system. It's not a joke, a ruse, or a tactic to demonize the movement. It is actually how the US government views groups such as the Animal Liberation Front. We are not kept on these units merely to fill a quota in a government office. I cringe every time I see mention of the CMU's in the media and then hear of the "balancers" that are also placed here. even though some of these "balancers" have been here over 7 years now!

The truth is that when it comes to the AETA and the CMU if you are convicted of it, or housed in it (whichever the case may be) you are deemed, considered and treated as a domestic terrorist threat. Not as a paper dragon or an extremist in the governments new anti-terrorist affirmative action program. I live here and could very possibly spend my entire prison sentence, a decade straight, in this prison within a prison. Where I have my every breath and movement monitored and analyzed scrupulously. I don't say this to frighten or sound severe, but I don't want those in the forefront of speaking out against these secret prison units or against the AETA to make light of it as if it's all a government charade. Nor should they think that accounts of what it was like in the CMU years ago explain accurately what it is like today.

And the fact is I am not a terrorist. I think that people, anyone, that murders, maims or kills innocent bystanders to make a point, protest, or create fear and panic in the populace is wrong. I think terrorism is sick and evil and I have never, would never, and will never, agree with it. No matter what the U.S. government labels me as, or any other freedom fighters for social justice!

We live in a world that is currently teeming with human indignity, or rather the indignity of humans. I don't have all the answers. Honestly, on most days I don't have any answers. But I know as time progresses and world events unfold that there are a lot of problems I don't want to be a part of. War, corporate greed, imperialism, racism, police brutality, religious intolerance, Animal abuse, Earth's exploitation and devastation are all problems that holding signs and signing petitions are not going to change. But brutality, violence, intolerance and the specter of terrorism are not only the wrong way to address the ills of the world but are, in fact, simply new forms of the same sickness of the soul that has plagued mankind since the beginning.

23 Jan - POETS AGAINST THE POLICE STATE Benefit

WHAT: Anti-repression fundraiser

WHEN: 8:00pm, Friday, January 23rd

WHERE: Verso Books 20 Jay Street, Brooklyn, New York

COST: \$10-25 suggested donation (no one turned away for lack of funds)

MORE:

A poetry reading to raise legal funds for our comrades, featuring Ariana Reines, Jackie Wang, Dawn Lundy Martin. Drinks and books will be available for purchase, to help raise funds for the Can't Touch This NYC Anti-Repression Committee legal fund.

23 Jan - Punk Rock Karaoke for Just Info

WHAT: Fundraiser

WHEN: 8:00pm, Friday, January 23rd

WHERE: Pine Box Rock Shop - 12 Grattan Street, Brooklyn, New York 11206

COST: \$10 suggested donation

MORE:

New York, it's simply been too long. We're back and better than ever, with a ton of new tracks. We're also partnering with Just Info <<http://nylawcollective.com>>, a project that provides free support and information for anyone impacted by the legal system in NYC. Proceeds will benefit this amazing organization!

NEW SONGS in the style of Sleater-Kinney, Iron Chic, Ska-P, The Avengers, Dos Minutos, Dress Bessy, Reincidentes, Pretty Girls Make Graves, and much more!