



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for June 23rd

18 May - If You're in Wyoming, Don't Take Pictures of Cattle Ranches

A new bill in Wyoming has environmentalists afraid they could face jail time for collecting a water or soil sample or taking a photo, not just from privately owned land but even on lands open to the public.

MORE:

by Meredith Hoffman (*VICE*)

A new bill in Wyoming has environmentalists afraid they could face jail time for collecting a water or soil sample or taking a photo, not just from privately owned land but even on lands open to the public.

Under the legislation, known as the Data Trespassing Bill, a person can be arrested for collecting "resource data," which includes pictures and soil and water samples, on private land without prior permission. But the bill also suggests gathering information on "open land" — that is, any public land outside a city or town that might be leased by ranchers, for example.

Critics told *VICE News* the bill could quash scientific research done by laypeople, often called citizen science, and serves to hide environmentally harmful practices, much like "ag-gag" laws in many states prevent whistleblowers from exposing hazardous work conditions, animal abuse, or possible food contamination within factory farms and slaughterhouses.

"This is an effort to make it illegal for citizens to gather truthful information about all the people using natural resources," Wyoming attorney Justin Pidot told *VICE News*. "It has a significant chilling effect on citizens who want to gather information about public land."

Under the law, a person could spend up to one year in jail and face a \$1,000 fine if he "enters onto open land for the purpose of collecting resource data" without a license or permission. Resource data is information "related to land or land use," such as "agriculture, minerals, geology, history, cultural artifacts, archeology, air, water, soil, conservation, habitat, vegetation," the bill says.

The law was passed in March and prompted Pidot to write an editorial about it in *Slate*.

"This serves a variety of political forces in Wyoming," Pidot told *VICE News*. "It serves the ranching community by preventing information about the environmental harm of their practices from being gathered — and it serves the mining industry in that same way."

The bill comes on the heels of a lawsuit by a group of cattle ranchers, who claim the environmental group Western Watershed Project (WWP) trespassed on privately owned land while collecting water samples. The project's test results found elevated levels of *E. coli* in streams, which the group attributes to cattle. The lawsuit is ongoing.

Connie Wilbert of Wyoming's Sierra Club told *VICE News* the bill's wording was vague and could result in a person inadvertently breaking the law. She speculated that even a student conducting field research could be penalized under the new regulations.

"Our fear is that it could be interpreted quite broadly and have severe ramifications that inhibit citizens from doing citizen science on public land," Wilbert told *VICE News*. "We're really concerned. We don't believe there is a strong legitimate need for this bill — Wyoming already has bills that prohibit trespassing on private property."

But agricultural representatives and elected officials told *VICE News* the law was the only way to preserve fundamental privacy rights, and environmentalists like Pidot were exaggerating its scope.

Republican state representative Tyler Lindholm told *VICE News* that people would have no problem if they photographed or took samples on public land.

"The argument that this protects people who are doing something environmentally degrading is a farce," Lindholm told *VICE News*. He added that, as a rancher, he feels "personally concerned" that environmentalists could survey his property.

A spokesman for Wyoming Governor Matt Mead told *VICE News* Pidot, who represents WWP pro bono in an unrelated suit, used "inflammatory rhetoric" in his article and had misinterpreted the law. The spokesman clarified that a person could only be arrested if he trespassed on private land to reach the public land.

"In order for a person to run afoul of this law, that person must have trespassed on private property," the spokesman, Seth Waggener, told *VICE News*. "Trespass is as old as the common law from which it stems, and this statute ensures against it."

Rancher Jim Magagna, Executive Vice President of Wyoming's Stock Growers Association, praised the law and said it was critical for fending off groups like WWP.

"We have a Department of Environmental Quality in our state and they have the authority to come on land and test it," Magagna, whose group is a party in the lawsuit against WWP, told *VICE News*. "We're not preventing that data from being collected — we're saying a third party doesn't have permission."

And Ken Hamilton of the Western Farm Bureau echoed Magagna's stance that the bill served to protect landowners.

"We've had reports of people collecting data for no reason and the landowner doesn't even know they're out there until this data shows up," Hamilton told *VICE News*.

Will Potter, an investigative journalist who has written extensively on government attempts to clamp down on environmentalists, told *VICE News* the Wyoming bill had the potential to be enforced as broadly as Pidot and Wilbert fear because the wording gave room for a myriad of interpretations.

"The answer to both conflicting sides is, yes, the environmentalists have every reason to be concerned, and the state is also somewhat true," Potter told *VICE News*. He said the Wyoming law followed a trend of states shielding the agriculture sector against scrutiny of their environmental impact.

"Over and over again I've seen promises by politicians that legislation is not going to be used in X, Y, or Z way but it doesn't play out that way," Potter warned. "Once you put laws like this on the books they can be pushed to their limits."

8 Jun - Animal Rights Activist Being Sent to Jail: "The Animals Have it Far Worse."

Amber Canavan is spending the month of July in jail. Her crime? Entering a foie gras facility, where tens of thousands of ducks are intensively confined and force fed through metal pipes, and rescuing two of them.

MORE:

by Donny Moss (*Their Turn*)

“We still live in a world where people who commit the abuses are victims and those who expose them are criminals,” said Ms. Canavan. “I don’t want to go to jail, but my time there will be a cakewalk compared to what animals are forced to endure in foie gras factories.”

In 2011, Ms. Canavan and another activist whose identity she has protected paid a late night visit to Hudson Valley Foie Gras in upstate New York, the largest foie gras producer in the United States. While there, she documented the “deplorable” conditions in which the ducks are kept. The footage she captured was used in a foie gras exposé produced by the Animal Protection and Rescue League and narrated by actress Wendy Malick.

In February, the New York Times published a lengthy story about the incident, which linked to the video and informed readers about the “force feeding” required to produce this “controversial” dish. “I take comfort in the fact the NY Times article and the footage that I took have helped to expose the atrocities being committed against these animals,” said Ms. Canavan.

After several weeks of intensive care, the two ducks rescued by Ms. Canavan recovered from their injuries and are “flourishing” at a sanctuary, where they have access to fresh air, proper care and water for swimming. Ducks and geese are aquatic animals, but they have no access to water in foie gras factories.

The campaign to expose foie gras cruelty and hold restaurants that serve it accountable has intensified in recent years. Since 2014, activists in the U.K. with Hertfordshire Animal Rights and London Vegan Actions (LVA) have compelled at least 10 restaurants to stop selling foie gras. In recent months, LVA has staged provocative disruptions inside of establishments that refuse to remove the “delicacy of despair” from the menu.

Amber Canavan will complete her jail term at the end of July, but her punishment won’t stop there. For the next five years, an order of protection – a penalty intended to protect victims of stalkers or domestic violence – will prevent her from campaigning against Hudson Valley Foie Gras. Ms. Canavan hopes that the court’s breach of her civil liberties and “heavy-handed” jail sentence backfire by triggering activists to convince as many restaurants as possible to drop foie gras.

Ducks are aquatic animals, but they have no access to water at Hudson Valley Foie Gras and other foie gras producers. These two were rescued by Amber Canavan.

Your Turn

Amber sacrificed her safety, freedom and financial security to expose the plight of animals exploited and killed for foie gras. Now, she needs help. Please make a tax deductible donation to her legal defense fund at <http://www.aprl.org/contribute.html>

June 8th - Animal Rescue legal defense info

Below is the message that was sent out right after the plea deal happened.

Since then, a support Page has been set up, which will be kept updated with info until everything is officially resolved in August:

<https://www.facebook.com/supportforamber>

Please help by sharing with any groups you think would be interested in my story.

~Amber

First of all, thank you for the support you have all given me over the past 3(!) years of this legal battle.

After months of hard work by my attorneys, and the input from the literally tens of thousands of people who wrote, called, and signed the change.org petition to the District Attorney on my behalf, we finally managed to bring enough arguments to the prosecution that they significantly capitulated from their original demands.

A few key points from today's proceedings:

1. Instead of felony burglary and petty larceny (each of which could incur significant jail time and other sanctions) I plead guilty today to misdemeanor trespass.
2. I testified in open court that I visited the farm in early 2011. While there, I conducted a sort of wellness exam on as many ducks as I could, given the thousands of individuals and the poor lighting. All of the ducks appeared ill or injured in some way, but some more egregiously than others. Some ducks were removed and delivered into lifesaving veterinary care.
3. I will not be compelled to inform on anyone else in the videotape, and the prosecution will not attempt to hunt them down.
4. I will not have to pay any kind of restitution to the farm, nor does the farm want the missing ducks returned to them.
5. The farm was granted an Order of Protection against me. I am forbidden to contact HVFG in any way, and cannot go near HVFG property for five years.
6. I will be sentenced to 45 days in county jail, of which I will actually serve thirty. Ironically, I will be released the day before my 30th birthday. Details on prisoner support (vegan meals, commissary funds, visitation hours, sending reading material, and pen pal info will not be known until I am in custody.

What you can do to support me:

I went through all of this to bring some relief for the animals. I would much rather you do something for the animals in my honor than anything else. You can:

Go to amazoncruelty.com to sign the petition to get Amazon.com to stop selling foie gras. As the world's largest online retailer, they are a top distributor of foie gras across the country.

Research which restaurants in your area serve foie gras on yelp.com and contact them about removing it from the menu. You can find more info and resources on stopforcefeeding.com

We still have significant costs to cover. You can:

Make a tax deductible donation by choosing "Animal Cruelty Investigator Legal Defense" at www.aprl.org/contribute.html

Purchase a cute legal defense fund baseball tee from my etsy shop to support me as well-
<https://www.etsy.com/listing/233632257/liberation-is-love-legal-defense-fund>

I have a next court date set, on which day I will be turning myself in to the Sullivan County Courthouse to serve my jail sentence. We ask that people come out to the courthouse to support me. We will meet for lunch at a restaurant down the block, and then gather at the courthouse. There may be media present. Please wear court appropriate attire. Updates on this event will be posted in the Facebook event listing.

This is long from over, but we are getting there. Thank you.

9 Jun - North Carolina's Ag-Gag Law Might Be the Worst in the Nation

The North Carolina legislature has approved a law that proponents say is aimed at protecting businesses from property theft. But critics of the law say it is actually meant to silence whistleblowers who want to expose wrongdoing on factory farms and other businesses.

MORE:

by Rob Verger (*VICE*)

The North Carolina legislature has approved a law that proponents say is aimed at protecting businesses from property theft. But critics of the law say it is actually meant to silence whistleblowers who want to expose wrongdoing on factory farms and other businesses.

Known as ag-gag laws, bills like North Carolina's have historically sought to protect meat and poultry producers against employees who document health or safety violations inside slaughterhouses.

North Carolina's new law is "deceitful," said Matthew Dominguez of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), which fought its passage.

"It's a very broad and dangerous ag-gag bill because it doesn't just affect agriculture. It affects nursing homes, daycares, veteran facilities, anywhere where you have people that are vulnerable," Dominguez told *VICE News*.

The law prohibits employees from recording in "nonpublic" areas of their workplaces. And, say critics, it implies that releasing any footage to the public would be a violation of what the legislation calls an employee's "duty of loyalty to their employer." Whistleblowers could be fined up to \$5,000 per day. The law also singles out data and document theft, planting surveillance equipment, and "organized retail theft."

"This bill was designed to chill the ability to do whistleblowing exposes into factory farms," Dominguez said. "The fact that they expanded it into other businesses was to really be the wolf in sheep's clothing — they wanted to provide a talking point, and say, 'Oh, this isn't just about agriculture,' when that was their prime reason for it."

North Carolina is the country's second largest pork-producing state, lagging only behind Iowa, according to the most recent US Department of Agriculture (USDA) statistics. In 2012, the state's pig sales were worth \$2.9 billion.

Ag-gag laws are a response by industry to undercover investigations. One of the most famous was a 2008 HSUS expose about a Chino, California slaughterhouse, which spurred a recall of over a million pounds of beef.

"Just in the last four years over 30 ag-gag laws in more than 15 states have been introduced across the country," Dominguez added. Most of those failed, but North Carolina follows Iowa, Missouri, Utah, and Idaho in the passage of such laws.

Nationwide, ag-gag laws have evolved, says Will Potter, who documented government surveillance and prosecution of environmentalists in his book *Green Is the New Red*.

"Originally these laws were explicitly targeting animal welfare groups and explicitly prohibiting photography," he told *VICE News*. "That didn't go [over] very well with the public."

But legislatures have continued to discuss bills on whistleblower activity, said Potter, and have tried to include requirements that job applicants disclose if they have worked for animal rights groups. Other ag-

gag laws proposed to require workers to submit to their employers — or the police — any footage they had taken.

North Carolina's law doesn't mention agriculture, specifically, and instead focuses broadly on businesses.

"That's all bullshit," Potter said. "This is about undercover video and they're just trying to package it in a new way to try to sneak it through."

The legislature passed the bill — HB 405 — by overriding a veto from the state's governor, Pat McCrory.

"The veto of HB 405 publicly exposed its flaws of not fully protecting current employees who report illegal practices in our businesses, including nursing homes, child care centers and veterans treatment facilities," McCrory said in a statement.

North Carolina Representative John Szoka, a Republican who sponsored the legislation, said it's wrong to call it an ag-gag bill.

"There are ag-gag bills out there, but this is not one of them," Szoka told *VICE News*. But he added: "It certainly does cover food processing."

The aim of the bill, he said, is to stop corporate espionage — like someone stealing information from a rival business. He says the 1992 Food Lion case, in which ABC News reporters posed as grocery store employees, was a motivation for the law. A court later decided that the ABC employees had acted illegally by secretly filming in the stores. Szoka said the investigation hurt Food Lion's business and was bad journalism.

For scenarios like witnessing physical abuse in nursing homes or health and safety violations in a slaughterhouse, workers should go to the proper authorities, like the police or the USDA, he said.

"That's the part where nobody has explained to me enough to convince me that it's better going to a news organization than it is to the authorities to stop whatever they see going on right then and there," he said.

9 Jun - Albert Woodfox Mega-update

A judge ordered unconditional release and banned a retrial of Angola 3 prisoner Albert Woodfox. Then the state stepped in to halt this decision. We've got selected articles below and will keep on top of this information.

MORE:

June 9th - After 4 decades in solitary, Albert Woodfox's release ordered by federal judge

by Emily Lane (*The Times-Picayune*)

A federal judge in Baton Rouge has called for the unconditional release of Albert Woodfox, the only remaining imprisoned member of the Angola 3.

For more than 40 years, Woodfox, 68, has been in solitary confinement at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, and other state prisons, for reasons related to the 1972 murder of prison guard Brent Miller. Woodfox has twice been convicted of Miller's murder, but courts later overturned both the convictions.

U.S. District Judge James Brady issued a ruling Monday (June 8) afternoon calling for the unconditional release of Woodfox from state custody and barring a third trial of the murder charge.

Woodfox has always maintained his innocence, claiming he was implicated in the murder of the 23-year-old guard to silence his activism as an organizing member of the prison's Black Panther Party chapter.

His attorney Carine Williams said Woodfox would spend Monday night at a pretrial detention center in West Feliciana Parish, where he's been since February. He was transferred to the parish facility from a state prison after a grand jury there handed down Woodfox his third indictment in the 43-year-old murder case.

Aaron Sadler, spokesman for Louisiana Attorney General Buddy Caldwell's office, said Brady's order "arbitrarily sets aside jury decisions" based on "faulty procedural issues."

"With today's order, the Court would see fit to set free a twice-convicted murderer who is awaiting trial again for the brutal slaying of Corrections Officer Brent Miller," he said in an emailed statement.

In his ruling, Brady denied the state's request for a stay. But Caldwell's office is seeking an emergency stay from the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, Sadler said, "to make sure this murderer stays in prison and remains fully accountable for his actions."

Countering Sadler's remarks, a statement from Woodfox's attorneys said there was "nothing arbitrary about the federal court's ruling, which is carefully considered and relies on firmly established law. ...The federal court further recognizes that the State has now had two chances to secure a valid conviction against Mr. Woodfox and has been unable to do so."

In the 27-page ruling, Brady said it is more customary to issue "conditional" release based on the outcome of a retrial. However, he gave five factors in Woodfox's case that qualify as "exceptional circumstances" to merit barring a third trial.

"The five factors include: Mr. Woodfox's age and poor health, his limited ability to present a defense at a third trial in light of the unavailability of witnesses, this Court's lack of confidence in the State to provide a fair third trial, the prejudice done onto Mr. Woodfox by spending over forty-years in solitary confinement, and finally the very fact that Mr. Woodfox has already been tried twice and would otherwise face his third trial for a crime that occurred over forty years ago," he wrote.

Woodfox's lawyers and lawyers for the state will meet Tuesday (June 9) with Brady in a closed-chamber setting in Baton Rouge before Brady determines how to proceed, whether it be the logistics of Woodfox's release or a stay of the release during appeals.

Williams said she and Woodfox's other attorney, George Kendall, delivered the news to their client in person, around 7:30 p.m. Monday. By then the ruling had been issued hours earlier. Woodfox was expecting a visit from the New York-based lawyers to discuss his civil case about the conditions of his solitary confinement. He did not expect news about his habeas corpus petition.

"He was neither jaded nor excited," initially, Williams said. "I think he was more shocked."

While Woodfox grew "guardedly optimistic" about his potential release, Williams said, he is "very seasoned, unfortunately, about (Louisiana's) courts." He knew the state would seek any means to keep him incarcerated.

Williams said Woodfox was curious if they had told his family about the ruling. "He mostly wants to talk to his brother."

Among Woodfox's health problems, which Brady referenced in his ruling, is a diagnosis of Hepatitis C. The late Herman Wallace, another member of the Angola 3 implicated with Woodfox in Miller's murder, also had Hepatitis C, Williams said. Wallace was released from prison in October 2013, at age 71, after his conviction was overturned. He died days later of untreated liver cancer. A risk factor of Hepatitis C is an increased risk of developing liver cancer.

Additionally, Woodfox suffers from diabetes, renal failure and a history hyper-tension, Williams said. "He a host of issues that elderly people commonly face, but his are in (the) context of (solitary confinement)."

Woodfox's designation as a member of the Angola 3 stems from what the group's supporters believe are wrongful convictions for prison murders in which Woodfox, Wallace and Robert King were implicated in retaliation for organizing an official Black Panther Party chapter inside the prison, which led hunger strikes and other demonstrations opposing inhumane prison conditions. Those conditions, in the early 1970s, included continued racial segregation, corruption and "systematic prison rape," Tory Pegram, the manager of the International Coalition to Free the Angola 3 Pegram, has said.

Amnesty International, a major human rights organization, has called for Woodfox's release and has decried conditions of his solitary confinement, which a November 2014 editorial in The New York Times called "barbaric beyond measure."

The slain prison guard's widow, Teenie Rogers, has said she believes Woodfox and Wallace were not involved in her husband's death and has previously called for their release. In 2008, she told The Los Angeles Times, under the last name from a previous marriage: "If I were on that jury, I don't think I would have convicted them." In 2013, she attended a rally with Angola 3 supporters at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge demanding the state halt its attempts to keep Woodfox incarcerated for her late husband's murder.

Woodfox, of New Orleans, was originally sentenced to prison at Angola on charges of armed robbery. That sentence would have expired decades ago, Pegram said. He was at Angola only a few years before he was implicated, along with Wallace, in Miller's murder.

Case developments

Woodfox was first convicted of Miller's murder in 1974. That conviction was overturned in 1992 by a state court due to "systematic discrimination."

He was then re-indicted in 1993 by a new grand jury and reconvicted five years later, in 1998.

Robert King, the third member of the Angola 3 who was convicted of killing a fellow inmate, was exonerated and released from prison in 2001, after 29 years in solitary. King remains active in the campaign to release Woodfox from prison and end the practice of solitary confinement.

Brady overturned Woodfox's second conviction in 2008, stating Woodfox's defense counsel was ineffective. The state appealed, and the case made its way to the Fifth Circuit.

Once there, the court reversed Brady's ruling and determined that while his 1998 trial "was not perfect," Woodfox couldn't prove there would have been a different outcome with different counsel.

Woodfox's attorneys then focused in on the discrimination issue, arguing there were also problems with the 1993 indictment because black grand jury forepersons were woefully underrepresented in West Feliciana Parish in the previous 13 years.

Brady agreed Woodfox's 1998 retrial was constitutionally mired by racial discrimination in the selection of the grand jury foreperson. In May 2012, he overturned Woodfox's conviction a second time. The case was kicked up to the Fifth Circuit after the state appealed.

The Fifth Circuit, in a November 2014 ruling, agreed with Brady that the conviction should be overturned.

On Feb. 3, the Fifth Circuit denied the state's request for a review of its decision by a full panel of judges. On Feb. 6, Woodfox's attorneys filed a motion seeking his conditional release. On Feb. 12, the state's attorneys announced a West Feliciana Parish grand jury had indicted Woodfox for a third time in the decades-old Angola prison murder. Woodfox was then transferred from David Wade Correctional Center in Homer to the West Feliciana Parish facility -- Angola's jurisdictional parish.

Brady's ruling on Monday calling for Woodfox's release comes about three months after Woodfox entered a federal court hearing in Baton Rouge with shackles and graying hair, wearing a black-and-white jumpsuit and dated eyeglasses.

"We are optimistic that Louisiana will comply with the federal court's ruling," his attorneys' statement continued. "We look forward to Mr. Woodfox going home to his family; getting much needed medical attention; and living the remainder of his days in peace."

Meanwhile, Woodfox is still being held in solitary confinement at the parish facility in St. Francisville. While he was afforded an hour outdoors every day at the state prison in Homer, hour-long breaks have dropped to three times a week at the St. Francisville facility.

There's a TV in his cell, which is different for Woodfox, Williams said. But instead of prison bars lining a wall, the door to his cell is solid steel.

It remains unclear, she said, how soon Woodfox could possibly be freed if the state fails in its efforts to thwart his release.

June 10th - Fifth Circuit Issues Temporary Stay of Judge Brady's Ruling to Release Albert

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has just issued a temporary stay of Judge Brady's order to give Albert's attorneys time to respond to the appeal.

Though there will be no freedom for Albert tonight, we remain confident that Judge Brady's ruling is rooted in strong legal precedent and that justice will finally prevail for Albert sooner than later.

We will do our best to keep you updated as things develop.

June 12th - A Visit This Week With Albert Woodfox: "They Call Me The Last Man Standing"

Five years and eleven months ago yesterday, I first laid eyes on Albert Woodfox. He was still in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola then, where he had been locked up in solitary confinement almost continually since April of 1972. I had been a prison abolitionist myself for thirty-eight years at that point, so it was not surprising that we found each other. Despite the 6 X 9 foot cell in which he had been held so long, hundreds, maybe thousands, of people around the world had already found him before me. But

unknown to him, when he turned 62 in February, 2009, I threw him a birthday party and invited students on the Louisiana university campus where I teach to come.

As a sociologist and long-time activist, I consider it one of my principle roles to introduce students not only to what is really going on in the world so they can become conscious of social injustice, but also conscious of the option to develop a dedicated willingness to work for positive social change. A few came out and ate some cake and learned a little about Woodfox, but I had only been at the school for three semesters and this was hardly business as usual there as yet. Still, I thought it would only be appropriate to send him a short letter and tell him what we had done.

I didn't fully realize who he was until he answered that first letter, which I didn't really expect, though I had written many prisoners over the years and they always write back. It was then that I did what journalists do and looked the man up on the internet. Reading his whole story, I was stunned. Here was a real live Black Panther Party organizer and hero ninety minutes away from me, living in a cage at the whim of a States' Attorney with what seemed to be a remarkably personal vendetta against him. I was fascinated. I almost immediately decided this was too romantic not to be kismet.

Albert Woodfox, with humility and grace, declined the offer of my heart, recommending that I read *The Prisoners' Wife*, instead, a painfully honest book about how prison relationships can grind the soul. I read it, but I was insulted and suspected that he was not taking me seriously or that I had simply not met his standards in some way. I did not yet understand the effects of four decades of solitary confinement, but I came to. More importantly, I eventually came to know the extraordinary person that Albert Woodfox is.

In any case, I soon gave up the fantasy of being a political icon's love interest -- but not without some chagrin and more than a little embarrassment, which he kindly never mentions. And we became close friends. We have shared forty visits -- or more -- since then, even when they moved him from Angola to a smaller prison five hours away and cut the visits to a couple of hours each. I drove it in the pouring rain (which I loathe doing). I drove it when they put him behind a glass shackled to the floor (for no reason). I even drove it while we were arguing about gender issues for a while. And yesterday morning, I drove the ninety minutes to the Parish jail where he's been held in more recent months to share with him what could very likely be his last visiting day in prison.

I arrived at the West Feliciana Parish Detention Center, a squat white building surrounded by a chain link fence I suspect even I could scale. I entered at 10:11 am and left at 11:14, though visiting hours were over at 11 and all the other visitors were ushered out promptly on time. He told me he had already heard I was coming, which I found odd since I didn't really make my decision on the matter until I woke up in the morning to unexpectedly perfect travel weather and a fierce need to make sure he was doing okay.

The reason I was concerned was that on Monday afternoon, more than 43 years after Albert Woodfox entered solitary confinement for a murder even the victim's widow no longer thinks he committed, a federal judge issued what is sometimes called a "unicorn decision" -- a decision so rare most legal minds think it doesn't really exist. Judge James J. Brady, who stepped down as Chief Justice not all that long ago and may well retire relatively soon, who has been hearing legal arguments related to Woodfox' case for a very long time, ordered that he be released immediately and further ordered that the State be banned from re-trying him. And there it was. After 43 years. The door.

We all knew instantly that he wouldn't simply waltz out of the place. We had been warned many times, most often by Albert himself, that these legal battles can last a lifetime. Indeed, Herman Wallace, another member of the Angola 3, was released in October, 2013, only days before his death from liver cancer. And we knew that, while Albert has become a political icon to so many, he is still just a man -- or as he is wont

to say at times, "an ordinary man who has found himself in a set of extraordinary circumstances." In phone calls, he was admitting to members of the Campaign that his feelings were "all over the place" (about as strong a statement as he ever makes, especially about himself). And I knew no one else could make it Wednesday, the only regular visiting day all week. So that meant that, other than lawyers, he was going to be alone with his thoughts.

Sure enough, the State jumped on that decision like a starving lion on a prey in a trap, in hopes that the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals would put a stay on Albert's release while they spent as much time as they could attempting to get the Appellate Court to reverse Brady's elegant, air tight, carefully worded 27-page decision, however unlikely that seemed to be. The Court agreed to give the State a temporary stay until Friday, June 12th, at 1 pm, when it will hand down its decision on whether or not it will order a longer stay.

So that left Albert sitting in a closed front cell alone for three more days, contemplating how close he is to freedom without having it. Not a good space to be in while trying to keep your wits about you after 43 years of waiting.

I remember him saying one time, "Can you imagine what it was like for me as a kid in my twenties, sitting on the floor of my solitary confinement cell surrounded by law books I could barely read, trying to figure out how to save my own life? For the first twenty years of this sentence, I didn't have a big campaign supporting me. I didn't get twenty or thirty letters a day like I do now. My drawers were hanging off the elastic and I had no reason to believe it would necessarily ever be any other way."

I couldn't leave him there alone. I didn't realize until I arrived at the jail, though, how different I felt about it now. I entered the building looking at the correctional officers like my team had won and theirs had gotten skunked. I didn't have to rub it in. They knew. And there was a new respect in the air.

The "visiting room" at this particular jail is a 7 X 10 foot area with six little backless round metal stools facing six cloudy little windows containing little mesh rectangles through which you have to speak to be heard. Four of the stools already had visitors perched on them when I got in there and the hub-bub in the room killed any ability to sit back far enough to both see and hear the prisoner on the other side of the glass. So I spent the bulk of the visit with my ear as close to the mesh I could get without actually touching it because, once I sat down, it occurred to me in a blinding flash of the obvious that this was going to be a very special visit. This man, who so many around the world have grown to love so much, might very likely be leaving prison in a matter of days and I was in a position to capture this moment for history.

You could tell, after we exchanged greetings and the initial "can-you-believe-this" exaltations, that he realized I was moving into interview mode. He knows I write. And this was too important for us to waste our hour on gossip or talking about the elections or whatever. Yet with no pen or paper, we were going to have to trust that I would remember whatever he said. We've had many hours of conversation, after all, over these six years. So I know how he says things and there wasn't any choice, so we were going to have to make the best of it. All of a sudden, in his characteristically gentle way and with no prompt from me, he gave me a shy smile and said, "You can just fill in the holes with the way I talk..." And I became determined to memorize his every line.

"How did you first learn about the decision?" I asked.

I already knew that George Kendall and Carine Williams, Albert's lawyers, had brought him the news late Monday afternoon, but I wanted to hear the details from his perspective.

"Well," he began. "I figured George and Carine were just coming to discuss the meeting Tuesday morning about the civil case, so I didn't think much about it. We met in the usual little room and they didn't act like anything special had happened. Even their facial expressions didn't tip me off. And then Carine just took out the decision, opened it to the judge's signature on the last page, and dropped it in front of me. I read it and then she turned back to the page just before it and let me read that one, too. And that was it."

He paused, returning to the moment in his mind.

"How did you feel right then?" I had to ask him three times before I got an answer.

"I was shocked!" he responded, the emotion suddenly showing on his face to match the statement. "I always knew it could happen, but I was just shocked that it had."

"Later," he continued, "I noticed these strange lights flashing and when I looked out the window, all I could see all the way down the street was news vans from all over the place -- different channels and AP and all of them were out there -- and equipment set up with bright lights aimed at the jail so they wouldn't miss anything."

Members of the core Campaign to Free the Angola 3 had been waiting for this day for varying lengths of time. Some have been involved for decades, some for only a few years. Some have written Albert for a long period of time without ever actually meeting him. And some travel considerable distances -- even from other countries -- to spend a few hours with him. Some family members, formerly estranged, have reached out in recent years to create relationships with him, but only his brother Michael has visited him at least monthly for virtually the duration.

"Michael was on his way back out into the Gulf to work when he heard," Albert recalled, "but when he said he was just going to turn around and come back, I told him no, don't do that. Go on with your life. We have no way of knowing how this is gonna go. Jackie [a woman who created an art project around Herman Wallace's dream home] is in Paris. She told me if she hears I'm getting out Friday, she's gonna spend the \$800 to come back. I said, don't do that. Everybody should just keep doing what they're doing."

Returning to the topic of the decision, he explained a bit more about his own -- and the legal team's -- excitement.

"When you win a case, the judge lets the winning side write the order for him to sign. He still writes the decision, but the winning lawyers get to write what they want the judge to include in the actual order. So George and Carine crafted the order to include that, even if the Fifth Circuit grants the State a stay while the case is appealed, bail will be set. And the judge signed it exactly as it was written."

"You mean he's already ordered bail if you need to go that direction?" I asked, elated.

And as Albert nodded yes, I beat out a fast rhythm on the glass with both hands as if playing a conga, a frenzied type of behavior I would never normally have allowed myself in such a situation, but which I returned to repeatedly during our visit, apparently incapable of containing my emotions.

"So how are you going to use your next 48 hours?" I queried.

He looked puzzled and it dawned on me -- again -- that it hasn't entirely sunk in yet.

"I don't usually eat breakfast," he began. "The grits come in one big lump and I would never eat oatmeal in prison. So I usually just exercise instead."

The court case has been graphic about Albert's health issues, including Hepatitis C, diabetes, and the other health concerns documented to be directly related to his long-term incarceration and his decades in solitary confinement. In fact, Judge Brady specifically mentioned his need for better quality and more comprehensive health care in the decision released Monday. But Albert has continuously tried to mitigate these issues to the extent he can. He has been committed to outliving the State's determination to see him die behind bars. So he turns to forms of exercise he can do in a cell, like push ups and jumping jacks and stretches of various kinds.

"I eat some lunch while I watch the news or the History Channel," he went on. "And I'm reading a book about socialism and the prison-industrial complex right now. The next one I'm planning to read is The Burglary -- about J. Edgar Hoover."

It occurs to me as I listen that he might not be doing any of this routine much longer, but I don't interrupt.

"I got to see George [Kendall] and [Angola 3 member Robert] King talking to Amy Goodman on Democracy Now! about the decision. They did a good job, I thought. And," he grinned at this point, "I could hear the guys yelling, 'Free Albert Woodfox! Free Albert Woodfox!' until a guard came down and said, 'Can you hear that? They sound like they're gettin' out.' Some of the guys have called down to me, 'When they let you out, can you come shake my hand?' and I tell 'em I'll do my best."

He paused here and flashed another soft smile. "You know, they're calling me The Last Man Standing."

It's not just the prisoners who are boldly showing their respect either. At one point on Tuesday, Albert said, the Warden came down to his cell and tapped politely on the door.

"You dressed?" he called out.

And when Albert said he was, the Warden entered the cell with another man, who he introduced as the new Warden.

"I've been doing this for more than thirty years," he told Albert, "and this man is the one who'll be taking my place."

The new Warden, an African-American, stepped over and offered his hand for Albert to shake. And after he told me the story, we sat for a moment looking at each other, processing the new world order, as it was.

"I've been talking to King about what it's like to get out and all," he changed topics. "You know, all this time I've been thinking about what it would be like to be outside, what I'm going to do when I'm outside, it never occurred to me that I'd be leaving jail."

As if he still couldn't begin to wrap his head around this thought, he repeated it again, sounding incredulous, trying to make a point I would never truly understand. "It never occurred to me that I'd be leaving jail."

His incredulity isn't surprising when you consider the fact that Albert has spent three-fourths of a fairly long life incarcerated. Asked what he wants to do first, he looked for a minute like a man hanging from a cliff.

"Well, of course, first," he finally answered, "I want to visit my mother...and my sister...and my brother-in-law, who was my childhood friend..."

These are the ones who died without his being able to say goodbye.

"And then," he returned to less emotional and more logistical matters, "if I go out on bail, I'll be going to a half-way house in New Orleans..."

There was a pause while a mischievous gleam appeared in his eyes and a sly grin replaced his usual studied composure.

"But if I'm just released, I can go anywhere I want. We might be having our next visit at my place."

Our hour was coming to an end.

"You said this is the closest you've ever been to freedom since this journey first began," I said as I approached my last question. "So... are you satisfied?"

His answer was vintage Albert Woodfox: "I'm satisfied with who I've become as a result of all I've been through. But I'm not satisfied with the way things are in this world. I won't be satisfied until racism disappears in this country and Black people are treated like full citizens in the land of their birth. I won't be satisfied until poverty doesn't put entire generations into prison to live like I've had to live. I won't be satisfied until there's a different distribution of wealth in this country and capitalism is replaced by a system that supports and sustains the common good. Then...I'll be satisfied."

As I walked away from the building, I turned to give it one more look. I may be seeing it again tomorrow. I would love to get to meet my brother at the door. But no matter how it comes down, when it comes down -- and it will -- Albert Woodfox will be the freest man in the world.

June 12th - Appeals court says last "Angola 3" prisoner must remain behind bars

by Mark Berman (*The Washington Post*)

A federal appeals court said Friday that Albert Woodfox, the last of the "Angola Three" prisoners still behind bars, must remain remain incarcerated for the time being.

The decision comes four days after a judge had ordered Woodfox freed after four decades in solitary confinement in Louisiana. In that order, Judge James J. Brady of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana also barred a third trial for Woodfox, who had been convicted twice before (both convictions were overturned).

Woodfox was sent to solitary for the killing of Brent Miller, a prison guard at the Louisiana State Penitentiary who was stabbed in April 1972. Woodfox and two other men became known as "Angola Three," a group that was the focus of international efforts rallying against their solitary confinement and the conditions of their imprisonment.

But the state of Louisiana quickly fought the judge's order, with Louisiana Attorney General James D. "Buddy" Caldwell filing an emergency stay motion with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit trying to prevent Woodfox's release.

Aaron Sadler, a spokesman for Caldwell, said the judge's order "arbitrarily sets aside jury decisions and gives a free pass to a murderer based on faulty procedural issues."

The appeals court granted a temporary stay Tuesday and, on Friday, extended the stay to allow the state to appeal Brady's order. The court also said the appeal should be expedited.

"We are pleased with the court's decision that this inmate should remain in custody as the state pursues its appeal," Sadler wrote in an e-mail Friday. "It has always been the state's priority to ensure justice for the brutal slaying of Brent Miller and to hold accountable this murderer who has an extensive history of violent crimes."

Attorneys for Woodfox said they were optimistic that the appeals court would eventually uphold Brady's order.

"This is the rare, exceptional instance in which it is appropriate for the federal court to step in and prevent the state from attempting to mount an unfair trial," George Kendall and Carine Williams, attorneys for Albert Woodfox, said in a statement e-mailed to The Post on Friday.

In his order Monday, Brady pointed to the case's legal history and said there were multiple other factors that caused him to determine that Woodfox should be released and not allowed to stand trial for a third time. (Woodfox was indicted in February for the same crime.)

Among other things, he pointed to Woodfox's age and medical issues, his decades in solitary confinement and the fact that it would be tough for him to mount another defense since so many of the case's witnesses have died. In addition, Brady wrote that the evidence against Woodfox is not overwhelming and said he lacked confidence that the state could "provide a fair third trial."

The appeals court, however, was not swayed by concerns about evidence or the fairness of a third trial. "No showing has been made that any state retrial (or any appeal) will be improperly handled," the circuit court wrote.

And the judges wrote that "there is a substantial interest in staying the release of a person, twice convicted of murder, from being released from a life sentence without the possibility of parole."

Woodfox and Herman Wallace were convicted of murder in Miller's stabbing and placed in isolation, along with Robert King, who had been convicted of another crime. King was released in 2001, while Wallace was released in 2013; he died of cancer four days later.

In a 2011 report, Amnesty International decried the legal case against Woodfox and Wallace. "No physical evidence linking the men to the guard's murder has ever been found; potentially exculpatory DNA evidence has been lost; and the convictions were based on questionable inmate testimony," the report stated.

9 Jun - From the Cages: Statement From Krow After Bail Jumping Charges Dropped

Jailed environmentalist Krow has written her first public statement, in time for June 11th.

MORE:

High Fives and hugs to all fellow defenders of the land/bioregions out there and Happy June 11-the two year anniversary of the raid on the Penokee mine site which I'm currently incarcerated for, as well as International Solidarity with eco-prisoners Day. A continued decline of taconite (low grade iron ore) in conjunction with continued resistance to industrial mining in the Ojibwe territory of the northwest Great Lakes Bio region in Wisconsin will keep air, land and water colonialists at bay for now, but there's constantly wild to defend and re wilding to do around every corner. As the word "resources" in this context connotes pretentious anthropomorphism, I will continue to refer to miners as "air, land and water colonialists"

There's always so much happening and so many things to say and not say, so let's start with the fun and obvious one: Fuck the State, the FBI, the NSA, more often than not the DNR, state repression, oppression of all kinds, snitches, police and all their lackey affiliates, liberal reformists, modern day work, many symbolic actions, pacifism and finally fuck totalitarian style agriculture and all that it supports, such as the military and endless urban and industrial expansion of western consumer culture. May creative resistance to eco-cide continue and the fires against police brutality rage on, as the first line of resistance against our resistance is usually the cops.

That being said, though I am making the most of my current situation, I despise being caged and feel deeply for all my rad comrades who have endured or continue to endure prison/jail sentences, as it can be a lonely place emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. I was an anti-domestication advocate prior to incarceration and even more so now because of it. We must not forget our comrades in lock up, as prisoner/jail support pre and post release is of the utmost importance, having advocates in the relatively free world makes a big difference for the wellness of those in lock up. I want to extend a big heartfelt thanks to all who've written and supported me the past five months, as three of those were spent confined to the indoors. Utilize your "freedom" to keep up the fight, let's work towards a future where jails and prisons are abolished.

Though I disdain pacifying tools and techniques utilized by these institutions, such as television, unless all prisons and jails burn down tomorrow, we need to advocate for jails to be required to offer outdoor time to all inmates (it's already mandated in prisons) and also offer a more diverse and healthy selection of foods. Ex inmate congrats on your release! Eric Mc David suffered pericarditis from being denied his request for vegan food (thus his denying of the "stock" food) and folks such as my old cellmate developed a diagnosed thyroid disorder from a vitamin D deficiency, stemming from a lack of adequate outdoor exposure to the sun. WTF?

As I never want to see any of my fellow comrades incarcerated and we want to strive to be as effective as possible, not just symbolic, we need to be more creative than the average "lock down." What the rad cats in the Mattiolo forest had going on last summer in the coastal "Nor Cal" bioregion was rad as fuck and we could all learn something from it.

A lot of us have also left the full time traditional workforce long ago to make a better and more productive use of our skills, time, happiness, thus are constantly diabolically opposed to many counselors, lawyers and programs that aim to "get us back on our feet." Utilizing our personal agency as individuals-and as a collective to resist financial and "work" entrapment putting a damper on our greater resistance efforts is always something to improve upon as well.

Getting back to issues regarding "Corrections" institutions, it should be noted that while communication and media exposure are monitored and often censored, correspondence between myself and other inmates in regards to the Uprisings in Baltimore, oil spill around Santa Barbara and blockade of the Port of Seattle have been stifled, if not shut down completely by the prison systems. I've received five "return to sender"

letters, three from Wisconsin, one from Texas and one from an Oregonian correctional institution stating that the content of letters was “not” approved inmate to inmate communication or “potentially elicits illegal activity or violence.” It’s clear that “authorities” prefer inmates to remain in the dark and not organize those or any issues. All of my correspondence that was denied delivery thus far, happened to be addressed to black prisoners whom I will continue to attempt to correspond with. If people do not understand why we should be organized/raging against the police and furthermore do not understand why the “Black Lives Matter” campaign has gained so much momentum, they serve as reminder about how much decolonization there is yet to be done and how many privileged ideas there is left to smash.

I have a new found respect for anyone who has attempted to organize themselves or other inmates, as the stakes are high-your freedom and aspects of it. Various forms of repression can be bestowed upon you, i.e. solitary confinement, loss of various “privileges” communication declination, and sometimes people on the outside cannot find out easily. My outdoor privileges were revoked for three weeks just for verbally defending my cell mate.

At any rate I could go on and on, so instead I will make a list of messages, points, and preferences I want to drive home in no particular order.

You don’t have to travel to find something to fight for or against. Evil roads, evil farms, industrial projects and spaces to defend or re wild exist in your respective bio region.

Foraging (urban and wild) permaculture and re wilding NOT farming of any kind or totalitarianism over the land.

Defenders of bio regions NOT Activists.

Comrades and Accomplices NOT “allies”

Struggles NOT Movements

Effectiveness over Symbolism

Multiple insurrections NOT singular revolutions

Don’t trust liberals as far as you can throw them; I am incarcerated partially because due to the misguided and self important actions inadvertently made by liberal snitches and I want to share this because I want people to learn from my experience.

All of our struggles are connected but it doesn’t always make sense to combine them; diversity and diverse execution of tactics should be recognized and respected.

“Elders” are folks who have earned the title, not all advice is wise advice and everyone is subject to critique.

Tell the IWW that industry, regardless of whether it’s owned and operated by a ‘liberated’ work force or not, only feeds further oppression of the land and people and perpetuates destructive consumer culture...In the meantime “general strikes” can still be very effective but we should be working towards exchanging the concept of work with “productive play” and abolishing industry altogether.

So, I study Spanish pretty much all day long in one way or another. I speak it now, as well as immerse myself in Spanish television, music and books. Not only has it become important to me on a personal level, but my mind now craves the challenges of learning it. And in the process it is awakening a pride in my ethnic identity that I have never felt before.

Are you listening to any music these days?

Always. Music is food for the soul. I have an MP3 player which I have loaded with a diverse array of music. I enjoy Reggae, Reggaeton, Salsa, Old School Hip Hop and Straight Edge Hardcore to name only a few genres I enjoy.

What do you like to read these days?

Thanks to my supporters I have been able to read nearly any book I have ever wanted to read. These days I am so wrapped up in study that I seldom read subject type material. I appreciate anything contemporary that I can get my hands on in the Spanish language, magazines, newspapers, comics etc.

Do you still want a subscription to the weekly Colombian magazine “Semana”?

Yes, I would like that very much. I used to be housed with another inmate that had a subscription and I really enjoyed reading the current and back issues. <http://www.semana.com/seccion/edicion-impresa/60>

Are there any Animals at the prison?

Yeah, through the fence I can see deer out in the field. We also have cats, raccoons, skunks and overhead hawks and vultures. There is a really big and beautiful tree line that is fairly close to the prison and I really enjoy just watching the trees sway in the breeze and the different colors of the Sky and Earth. For the last five years I have been either locked up in a control unit for so-called domestic terrorists or in county jails. In both places I was cut off completely from even the limited freedoms of prison. I remember that I would sometimes miss looking at the Sky or Trees so much that it hurt in my soul. For the first few years I didn't mind so much but it started to lead to serious depression after awhile.

How is your health?

My health is good. I don't have any ailments and I take no medication, I think my teeth could use some work though. For 39 I'm doing well.

How is your handball game?

Depends on the day, I love to play. I'm one of the better guys on the court but some of these guys have been locked up and playing for decades, so the competition is stiff. Handball is an incredible workout but it is also really hard on your body. I love playing though, I'm addicted.

What about life interests you most?

Vegan Straight Edge and Animal Liberation Whatever It May take! ¡Como Siempre!

11 Jun - June 11th News Roundup

On June 11th, folks from around the world show solidarity with Marius Mason and “longterm” anarchist and eco-prisoners. Below is some of what's taken place this year. There have also been illegal actions—from property destruction/attacks on eco-destroying industries to banner hangs to animal liberations, reported from all over the world.

MORE:

June 11th - June 11th Statement By Marius Mason

Solidarity and greetings to you all! Thank you for coming together to celebrate our respected comrade's regained freedom, as well as the many transitions that have taken place this past year. First and foremost,

I'd like to wish both Eric [McDavid] and Jenny every possible happiness, and to express how grateful I am to their dedicated and capable legal team. This kind of victory should be savored and taken to heart as a lesson in solidarity and perseverance. While it's a travesty that Eric lost 9 ½ years of his life unjustly, still, despite a social climate of hysteria and hype over domestic terrorism, our movement was able to come together to support Eric and to keep fighting until he was returned to his family and loved ones. We have to be in this struggle for the long haul, but this important win proves that we can make change when we remain committed.

But our solidarity work cannot end here, as reentry is a difficult process for any prisoner returning to the free world. We should make every effort to support Eric's transition back into society, to help him get the education and training he needs to live a decent life (as he so well deserves). He has earned our help, support and gratitude with his life's work and his integrity. I know that I am grateful for his work defending this Earth and for promoting compassion through veganism.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who has written a card or a letter, sent a song, a photo, or an article to me this year. It's a constant regret of mine that it's not possible to write back to everyone (though I do try to add folks to the contact list whenever I can). But I want to step up my efforts at staying in contact, as well as to thank folks for the many books I receive. Look for a new post once a month on the support website that will focus on book reviews, current events and poetry and paintings.

I'm happy to announce that with the cooperation of The Base and other community bookstores, and my dear friend Letha, the books that have been sent here (and have been shared around) will be sent on to a new round of sharing in the free world. I'm really, really glad to have this opportunity to spread this wealth around. The library at the prison here would no longer accept donations, so this was an excellent way to save these great books from the dumpster.

This year has been my hardest yet in prison. As the years go on, it gets harder to maintain important friendships, to keep up with the changes in my (now grown) children's' lives. I'm far from home, and visits are hard to set up and expensive. Incarceration unweaves the fabric of all families, and mine is no exception. My mother, Karin Mason, passed from cancer in December 2014. Her illness was sudden and intense. While I will always be grateful that my sister could care for her at home for hospice, it was really painful to be separated and barely able to be in contact during her weeks in hospice. My grief at her loss incapacitated me for quite a while. Many, many thanks to those who sent their sympathy and comfort during this time. Your kindness meant a great deal to me.

This has also been a challenging year because of my decision to transition, publicly, as male-identified. I came out to family first in the spring of last year. I feel incredibly fortunate that my family has maintained their loving connection with me. This is a gift of love and I know it. Coming out to friends over the next few months was awkward at times – laughter being a pretty common response – but went well, all in all. Coming out on the Unit was harder, as there was some social fall-out, and there still is some. In August, 2014, I finally spoke to the Warden to request medical help with transitioning. Warden Upton's response was, and has consistently been, to be humane and to be in positive compliance with the BOP's new policy. This is also very fortunate, and from reading in Prison Legal News, kind of unusual as a response.

So far, I have gone through the psychological interviewing process to get an official diagnosis of gender dysphoria and to have begun the medical screening process for future access to hormone therapy. I am requesting compete SRS, but right now it is unclear as to what medical procedures are permitted under the new policy. I'm trying to stay persistent and positive. Though I cannot at this point legally change my name in Texas (which is awkward) still the BOP has allowed mail addressed in my chosen name to be delivered

to me (as long as it has my register number and last name). I have been issued boxers now, as part of my transition process – which feels like a small victory, a tangible sign of things changing.

I want to acknowledge all of the work, struggle, and sacrifice that other transfolk have made before me. I can't tell you how sad I was that Leslie Feinberg passed. We lost them too soon. I know that whatever human rights I now enjoy were dearly bought, and I am grateful. I'd like to specifically thank the folks at Black and Pink for their publication. Several folks here get it, and it has made talking about my situation much, much easier.

I also want to thank all of the wonderful folks who wrote to pass on their wishes of support for my transition process. Though things have changed a lot since the mid90s when I had first wanted to come out, still social concepts always move at a glacial pace, and for much of society; gender, orientation, and race remain contested terrain. We still have a lot of work to do, but it can be done.

In conclusion, I have to end with a special shout out to my very own hero this year. What my advocate and friend, Moira Meltzer-Cohen, has done for me is nothing short of saving my life. Thank you, Moira, for believing in me, for getting me through the worst moments, and for patiently showing me the real power of solidarity. There are no words adequate to express my admiration, gratitude, and respect. Thank you all for being there for me – trust and believe that I'm in here for you. Love and solidarity, Forever.

June 11th - “poem about darkness” by Eric King

This poem was written by Eric in solidarity with all of the long-term eco and anarchist and trans prisoners, it was inspired by his solitary confinement experience.

I may never open these eyes again
who knows maybe I'm already dead
three inches of sunlight sure feels nice
when the sun goes
so do my eyes
traces on the walls shifting
can't tell if I am falling or lifting
no reading
no thinking
thoughts of a vacation underground
always mad, always broken
is this actually happening
or did something snap
one phone call a day
drags me out of this cellar
what if tomorrow it doesn't
break this darkness

June 12th - From Eco-Prisoner Support to Eco-Resistance Against Prisons: Reflections on June 11 and its Potential

by Panagiotti (*Earth First! Newswire*)

Hopefully by now you've returned safely home from a quaint letter-writing potluck or an epic road blockade in solidarity with the incarcerated environmental activists and eco-revolutionaries of the world. Perhaps you're now ready to sit and reflect, and maybe even start thinking about what we should do next year. If that sounds like you, please read on.

Let's start with the history

It's been 11 years since the first time that activists coordinated an international day of solidarity action around the case of environmental prisoner Jeff Luers. Luers was charged with a relatively small crime damaging several SUVs in a car dealership lot, but sentenced to 22 years in prison with the explicit intention of sending a chilling message to the environmental movement. It's a history that could easily be forgotten, given how quickly the webpages that document these things tend to come and go. It felt lucky to find an existing link on Portland IMC that so thoroughly captured that event (and it felt disconcerting that the majority of hyperlinks embedded in there were dead.) The date in that call-out was actually June 12, and people planned actions throughout mid-June in response to that call.

The article included Report backs from 23 events including places as far as Russia, Norway and Australia, with a focus on the event in Jeff's hometown prior to incarceration, Eugene, OR. His parents showed up to greet a crowd of several hundred with this message:

Good evening... Thank you all for coming... Today is intended to be a day for public education and awareness about Jeff and his case... The FBI, in its bulletin to law enforcement agencies, has chosen to make it sound like an ELF (Earth Liberation Front) call to action. That's wrong, but it got Jeff and his case some good publicity in places such as Morgantown, West Virginia and Palm Beach, Florida that may not have developed otherwise... My wife, Judy, and I want to thank all of the organizers and attendees at this event and similar events around the world designed to bring attention to the injustice done to our son, Jeff "Free" Luers.

Aside from getting Jeff's parents to turn out for it, there were some other unique and important components to the first "June 11" event. For one, people from diverse struggles attended and spoke at the event, making connections between the repression of Black and Indigenous communities and rise of repression against environmentally-motivated action that Jeff's case represented. In addition, the event included an explicit position on the broader issue of mass incarceration and specifically opposition to Oregon's "Measure 11" mandatory-minimum sentencing guidelines. For participants who knew of Jeff's case from his environmental motivations and local involvement, this discussion of prison policy was likely some new territory. But environmental activists in that region were headed for a crash course on the politics of repression and incarceration.

The year 2005 would become a very significant moment in both the environmental and the prisoner support movements. This was the year that the Green Scare hit the headlines, with dozens of environmental activists being arrested or indicted and accused of domestic terrorism, unveiling what the FBI called Operation Bite Back for what amounted essentially to high-dollar vandalism cases (with no physical injuries to people even alleged.)

"We have seen a trend of using the terrorist label and federalizing a lot of criminal activities that would have gotten a far less stringent sentence before," said the former director of the National Lawyers Guild, Heidi Boghosian, referencing the status of the Green Scare cases in 2009.

Regardless of how one felt about the particular actions that individuals were charged with in Green Scare cases, the point that many observed was that the punishment for the environmentally-motivated actions was disproportionate with punishment for comparable non-political, non-environmental acts.

In 2009, Jeff was released in a re-sentencing hearing. Upon his release, he lent his support to the continuation of June 11 as a day of solidarity with other eco-prisoners. Although there have been some significant disagreements on how June 11 has been presented—largely related to differences in political semantics—momentum around this day has been maintained. For the past 5 years, there have consistently been 30+ events in a dozen different countries honoring June 11.

As a result, the concept of an environmental prisoner, or eco-prisoner, has begun opening an arena of political activism to a broader audience by connecting efforts for ecological protection with work towards prisoners' rights, criminal justice reform and civil liberties. Efforts like Daniel McGowan's fight for the Good Time Bill and exposing the CMU that he was in or, more recently, Kevin Oliff's support for the fight against book bans and exorbitant phone rates for prisoners have been amazing moments of building cross movement relationships.

Not to mention, eco-activists were starting to learn a thing or two about prisons.

Enter the Prison Ecology Project

Earlier this year, a new development arose in the arena located at the intersection of environment and incarceration: the Prison Ecology Project (PEP). The project was initiated by Paul Wright of Prison Legal News and the Human Rights Defense Center.

While much of the June 11 organizing around eco-prisoners has centered on support for individuals charged with ecologically-motivated actions, the PEP offers the potential to expand the connections between environmentalism and the mass incarceration policies that eco-prisoners have gotten the misfortune to witness first hand.

PEP offers guidance for environmental activists to take a step towards fighting the prison system that put those people there, alongside 2 million-plus other people.

June 11 wedged the door open on this intersection between prisoners and environmentalists. Similar to the way that organizers with the Civil Rights Movement of the 50's and 60's got to see the jails and prisons from the inside and as a result push forward the movement for prisoners' rights, the PEP could help to propel an environmental anti-prison movement forward.

In short, the PEP is an opportunity for environmental activists to join the effort of challenging the prison industry, bringing the skill sets of the ecology movement into this long-standing movement for prisoner's rights, criminal justice reform and prison abolition.

The following are a few initial, practical ways to plug into this concept:

1. Organize against the construction of new prisons and jails, like this one in eastern Kentucky, or this one in San Francisco, for example.
2. Tell the EPA to recognize environmental justice impacts to prisoners in their EJ 2020 plan.
3. Support organizations who are fighting existing facilities, like the Abolitionist Law Center dealing with prisoners getting sick from a coal ash dump next to the prison in Pennsylvania, or the Black Warrior Riverkeepers fighting sewage pollution coming from an overcrowded prison in Alabama.

Proposal for June 12 2016: Day of Eco-Action Against Prisons

Hopefully the main point is coming across here, but to reiterate: the June 11 tradition of writing letters, raising money, and doing symbolic actions in the name of eco-prisoners is important. Strategic, effective organizing against the prison industry is also important. We understand the two are inseparable, but we need to find ways we can manifest this understanding.

One way to do so is to view the constant flow of environmental and health violations flowing from prisons around the country as a weak point in the system of mass incarceration. By June 12 next year, let's figure out what we can do with that.

In closing, some words from Jeff Luers' letter to the crowd gathered in Eugene, Oregon 2004:

Look around you. The people you see are your hope. They are your community, they are your allies and they are your source of strength. One person in this room has the power to make a difference. Imagine the difference you can make by working together. You want to be free from the control of multinational corporations that only care about profit? You want to be free from a police force that protects the corrupt? Do you want an alternative to a society and civilization that is destroying its own world? Then take the initiative and create it, build it, and fight for it. Lead by example. If you want change, then take it street by street, community by community until power has been reclaimed.

11 Jun - New Poetry By and Update On Eric King

The first of the following poems was written in solidarity with the Baltimore rebels.

MORE:

They couldn't take the heat
egos as fragile as their power structure
bones break, convictions never
they think the lions been put down
more thorn in the paw
they strike what they fear
murderers and brutes, for our safety
our skulls are crunched
you are not the victim
you are a revolutionary
battle tested joining good company
confused pig bastards
forgot that you're the shark
and the blood is in the water
their violence validates further
the struggle that forces the beast
to view its true self
reflections of hatred and spite
battle tested, keep holding that mirror

June 17th - A poem about freedom

One day the water that feeds
 the grass
Will wash away the stain
 of captivity off me
The clouds will open their arms in a
 Warm embrace
Years of hurt and abstract existence
 will be wiped clean
I can't smell freedom but one day
 we all might
Days can't be bought on the free market
 But they can be stolen at gun point
Trees can't grow in a day, but we clean
 out forests in mutilating seconds...
One day the water that feeds the world
 will purify my soul

June 21st - New Federal Trial Date (10/26) and Update

A quick update for supporters around the world. A continuance has been filed for Eric King's federal trial, pushing the trial date back from July 13th to October 26th. We will keep you updated on the progress of his case and reach out when we're starting to prepare to pack the court for his trial.

In the mean time, Eric remains housed in segregation at CCA Leavenworth.

We ask for all your love and solidarity while he continues to fight for medical care, including outside testing for an increasingly serious medical situation. We will update everyone as we get more information about his health.

Right now, Eric's nutrition is of the utmost importance and we want to be able to help him achieve proper nutrition to keep his body as healthy as possible. We need help sending him commissary each month so he can buy adequate amounts of vegan food and vitamins in addition to other necessities. Any donation helps! The link to the fundraiser is here! <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/0yoZc/sh/a4jVK6>

13 Jun - Mumia Health Update and New Commentaries!

Johanna Fernandez visited Mumia this past Saturday, June 13.

MORE:

June 13th - NSA Anyway

Since the disaster of 9/11, the so-called Patriot Act (one of the most mis-named laws in recent memory, given its content), has been an obscenity burrowing through the Constitution like a boll weevil through cotton.

The Patriot Act was perhaps the most un-patriotic law in modern history, for it was based on fear not reason, as perhaps best exemplified in the words of Michigan's veteran Senator, John Conyers, who told a broadcast audience on a BET news program (you know, back when BET had news programs!), that he voted the bill into law without reading it, saying "we were scared."

The law gave a treasure trove of snooping powers to federal agencies to look everywhere – for everything – lest terrorist lurked.

It strengthened –immeasurably – a new branch of government, The National Security State.

And government, empowered by the law turned its lenses, its mikes and attention to its central subject: You.

Since the '70s, the era of the Vietnam War, the Peace Movement, the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements, the Women's Movement and Student Movements, the government waged an illegal and secret war against American citizens, including figures like Martin Luther King Jr., comedian Dick Gregory, the Black Panthers and beyond.

Government officials and agents committed crimes vast and small, including murder (remember Chicago's Panther Leader, Fred Hampton, killed in his very bed?!)

But these government violations were criminal, and the Church Committee Hearings exposed them to light, forcing them to run like cockroaches.

But government officials ever desirous of their lost powers, put their hopes and demented dreams of unlimited surveillance into a so-called Patriot Act, and awaited the proper time to spring it on the nation.

9/11 provided the perfect moment – the infection of fear.

The Patriot Act, even with its recent minor changes under the so-called USA Freedom Act, remains an obscenity – a blatant violation of the Constitution, in life and spirit.

Reform is not enough – it must be abolished.

June 17th - We need to bring Mumia home!

by Johanna Fernandez (*San Francisco BayView*)

Mumia was in good spirits. We talked about the happenings of the world, and he shared a lot about his stay at Geisinger Medical Center.

Here is what I saw and heard. Mumia came to the visiting room in a wheelchair and I wheeled him around. Although he tried to wheel himself around, he couldn't do so with ease.

Mumia's skin, while better, looks really bad. His skin remains really, really dark and leathery – from head to toe. At least two of his fingertips have visibly cracked lesions that look painful.

His face seemed a bit swollen and darker than I've ever seen it. It was so dark that I asked him if he had been in the sun. He said, "No," that he has not been out to yard since January when he started to get sick.

Mumia still has bandages on his legs because he still has open wounds, and his feet and toes were very swollen. I asked him about it, and he said the doctors in the prison infirmary said that when the body is healing itself it releases fluid. I'm no doctor, but I gave him the side eye when I heard this.

Mumia explained that when he was at Geisinger, the nurses covered him up from head to toe with a steroidal cream, which they alternated with vaseline and then covered him from head to toe in wet wraps. They did this like clockwork every four hours. The specialists and nurses at the hospital said that they had never seen a case like his, and as we know he left this second hospitalization without a diagnosis.

Mumia has remained in the prison infirmary since his discharge from the hospital and expects to be in the infirmary for at least two weeks. In retrospect, I should have asked why he thought two weeks. He also reported that the prison infirmary is administering vaseline and wet wraps twice a day.

It is clear that the hospital contained the spread of skin lesions that were out of control, and in so doing contained the worst symptoms of a serious skin disease. But the skin disease itself remains active all over his body and undiagnosed.

It is especially worrisome that he still has open lesions on his legs. And isn't the body supposed to breathe through the pores of the skin? Anyone who looks at his skin can see that there is no breathing happening through the leather patch that now covers all of his body.

He also mentioned that one major problem of concern is that his hemoglobin levels have been going down steadily for some time, and they can't figure out why.

I couldn't help but think that we need to pick up the pace on his diagnosis, which means demanding that he be freed immediately; Mumia should never have been imprisoned in the first place.

Mumia needs to be taken to the best hospital for skin disease and blood disorders in the U.S. At the very least, he needs to see different specialist doctors who have experience diagnosing and treating both these problems.

On a positive note, he reports that his diabetes is under control without medication. He is reading a book on diabetes and is watching his diet to the extent that he can.

He does not have a special diet in the prison. No prisoner does. On the day of my visit, watching his diet meant that he ate half of the big white bun of the fish sandwich I bought him and drank water rather than juice.

About his experience at Geisinger, he said with a chuckle that when they began to wrap him up in the wet wraps, the nurses and doctors said jokingly that he looked like a mummy and poked fun at the similarities between what he looked like and his name, Mumia. He shared, over and over again, that they treated him with respect and like a human being.

My sense from listening to him was that because he was almost killed in the prison infirmary – by doctors whom he believed were doing right by him but weren't – he has been living through one of the most vulnerable and physically painful periods of his life. Following this second hospitalization, which was due to open lesions in his legs, it meant the world to him that the staff at Geisinger treated him like a human being.

Mumia also reported that at some point a nurse in the hospital asked him what he wanted to eat. And he said, "Wait a minute, stop the press. I can actually order what I want to eat?" And when she said, "Yes," he went to town and even ordered ice cream at some point. He said that she would check the computer and if his diet allowed it she would give him whatever he ordered, and if it wasn't allowed she would offer him an alternative.

Listening to Mumia tell the story of his food exploits at the hospital and his sense that he was treated like a human being brought joy and pain to my heart. So many thoughts rushed through my head, including that there is so much that we take for granted here on the outside. And of the damned prisons – in their attempts at stripping people of their dignity and health, they are simply barbaric.

As you know, despite the respect he was afforded by doctors, Mumia had a leg and an arm shackled to the bed throughout his stay at Geisinger.

Mumia has been through war, he survived an attempt at his life, he is still very sick and we need to bring him home.

June 19th - Dynasty

It seems almost unbelievable.

Once more, a Bush or a Clinton aspires to the highest political office in the land: President of the United States.

It is a measure of the decadence of American politics, what with its privileged place for the wealthy, that one or two families of former presidents can be so close to returning to the White House, based more on sheer name recognition than true merit.

Of some 320+ million Americans, are these the only families able to field seemingly serious candidates?

To be sure, these are families of extraordinary wealth. Millionaires, to say the least.

Where the law (ala Citizens United) has defined money as speech, and opened the door for the sale of politicians to the highest bidder, it is a small step for a wealthy politician to cut out the middle man and buy power for him – (or her)- self.

Why should this surprise us in a nation where the Senate is overwhelmingly a millionaire's club?

America, which boasts incessantly of the freedoms of average Americans, is in fact for sale to those who can afford offices of prestige and power.

For average Americans, this is little more than a mirage.

We dwell, all of us, in a post-NAFTA, post-manufacturing world.

Most Americans try to get by on dreadful service economy wages. Fighting to survive economically, they can barely dream of political office.

That's for the American Dynasties, the rich and the super-rich, to buy as new, glittering baubles for the family tree.

June 20th - Mumia's Skin Disease and Mass Incarceration as Lethal Threat

by Mark Lewis Taylor (*CounterPunch*)

Mumia Abu-Jamal's fight today for his physical health exposes the pervasive inhumanity of US mass incarceration's very nature. It is a lethal system.

Abu-Jamal is currently incarcerated in a Frackville, Pennsylvania state prison, serving a Life Without Possibility of Parole sentence (LWOPP). That began after nearly 30 years on death row for a death sentence that courts ruled unconstitutional in 2011.

But Abu-Jamal's imprisoned body is now confined in another way. He is encased from head-to-toe by a skin disease that has remained undiagnosed since January. Dr. Johanna Fernandez, Fulbright Scholar and historian at Baruch College/CUNY, who has visited Abu-Jamal regularly for over a decade saw him this past Saturday, June 13, and her report includes these descriptive phrases:

- *A leather patch now covers Abu-Jamal's whole body
- * He is told his hemoglobin levels have been going down
- * His skin . . . is "really, really dark and leathery" from head to toe
- * His face seemed a bit swollen and darker than I've ever seen it
- * Two finger tips have visibly cracked lesions that look painful
- * He still has open lesions on his legs
- * His feet and toes were very swollen
- * Prison infirmary doctors tell Abu-Jamal, "when the body is healing itself it releases fluid"
- * Nurses and specialists at the nearby Geisinger Medical Center, where Abu-Jamal received professional and humane treatment for a brief time in May, report they "have never seen a case like this before"

Abu-Jamal's tightening and painful leather encasement of his body is a kind of prison within the prison for him. Indeed, for nearly all the confined, especially for the sick and elderly, the chronic systems of medical mistreatment in US prisons forge another imprisoning sphere, one of sickness, desperation and dying.

Moreover, stunningly, no diagnosis for this condition has been given to Abu-Jamal, his family or attorneys. For 6 long months, the prison has proven incapable of diagnosing this serious attack on Abu-Jamal's health. Along with the skin disease, he developed diabetes triggered by prison doctors' experimental application of steroidal cream. Despite documented, elevated levels of blood sugar in the prison infirmary, doctors there did nothing to address the fatally high blood sugar spikes until he collapsed and went into diabetic shock. His blood sugar registered at 779, accompanied also by a catastrophically high sodium level."

Not surprisingly, though, the prison has been quite capable – indeed relentless – in keeping Abu-Jamal's weakened body in custody. Only national and international advocacy successfully forced his transport from his guarded prison infirmary to outside medical centers. Even then, he was kept hidden from family, friends and lawyers. He was monitored 24/7 by a full six prison guards while at the hospital, where he also was kept shackled to his bed, even during medical testing.

In short, prisons prioritize security procedures over medical care. They know no other way.

This is mass incarceration's war on life and health. University of California law professor Jonathan Simon writes in his 2014 book, *Mass Incarceration on Trial*,

. . . the very things that define mass incarceration as a distinctive mode of punishment – its scale, its categorical nature, and its prioritization of custody over reform or rehabilitation – all predict that intensified health crises will be an inherent problem (88).

Simon's words are about California, a state where even the courts now have found persistently incompetent medical care to be a form of torture and a violation of the Eighth Amendment against "cruel and unusual punishment" (89). Simon emphasizes that in California "litigation had begun for the first time to define mass incarceration as the source of unconstitutional conditions" (108, emphasis added).

Any who may have desired Abu-Jamal silenced and dead – and Pennsylvania officials have made no secret about the strength of this desire – have only to wait upon the prison system to do its work. Mass incarceration kills. This is not death by old age. Mass incarceration makes one "elderly," unduly vulnerable to disease and debilitation. It is the manufacture of premature high-risk aging. Analysts argue that by age 55 one should be categorized as "elderly" in prison – many lower that age to 50 for all who are incarcerated more than 10 years. The ACLU's in-depth analysis "The Mass Incarceration of the Elderly" calculates that by 2030 the number of those 55 and over in US prisons will skyrocket to over 400,000, this being a 4,400% increase in elderly prisoners since 1981 when mass incarceration rates began to rise exponentially.

This chronically lethal system, though, also includes prison guards who assume their own right to torture and kill prisoners. They have been known to intentionally handle patients roughly. Bureau of Justice statistics report that prison guards and staff are responsible for as much as half of sexual assaults in prison. Court-mandated studies document "systematic hostility of correctional officers to medical treatment for prisoners and to those who provide it" (Simon, 101). Prisons themselves are lethal cultures, simmering with a tension that Columbia University Law Professor Robert Ferguson describes in his book, *Inferno*, as always prone to violence, a violence that guards come to desire (95-137). Prison personnel can kill for various reasons, as in Florida of 2014 where there occurred murders of 346 prisoners by law enforcement and prison guard personnel.

The *New York Times* ended a 2014 editorial, "The American experiment in mass incarceration has been a moral, legal, social, and economic disaster. It cannot end soon enough."

But no one has written about precisely these matters for so long and as directly, eloquently and for so diverse a set of audiences as has Abu-Jamal himself. Across eight books – a new one being published just this year – and thousands of essays in venues as diverse as Street News, Forbes, and the Yale Law Journal, Abu-Jamal has opened the public’s eyes to the multiple ways of the US killing state.

It is Abu-Jamal’s powers of pen and voice for exposing the state’s ways of death and torture, and for a mass readership among the poor and voiceless, that has driven US officials to seek his death for decades – first by execution, and then, failing that, now by the prison system’s own chronic modes of lethal assault. Abu-Jamal is an effective catalyst for change because he is marked as a “public enemy no. 1” figure by the U.S. killing state while remaining a catalyst for a wide-array of social movements against the state’s structural violence.

The people for whom Abu-Jamal writes have kept him alive. Winning his release now would be a public event of value to any justice-loving people. Abu-Jamal will need well deserved rest and restoration. But with his release must come also a coalition of social movement work – to end mass incarceration. This means ending its torture of hundreds of thousands of elderly in its clutches. It means ending the warehousing of the mentally ill, more of whom are in jails and prisons than reside in state psychiatric care facilities. It requires terminating the brutal culture of death that mass incarceration institutionalizes. In short, it is time to dismantle the US killing state that uses its prison system to control and terrorize anyone whose revolutionary work means building truly alternative institutions that can safeguard a comprehensive freedom – especially for the long colonized, exploited black and brown communities and for the growing numbers of the poor today.

This all can begin with the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal today.

15 Jun - Christopher Monfort’s life at stake when penalty phase opens Tuesday

As always, please read corporate news articles with a critical eye. Sadly, that’s the only media covering the case of Christopher Monfort.

MORE:

by Seattle Times staff (*Seattle Times*)

The penalty phase of Christopher Monfort’s trial, which begins Tuesday, will determine whether he will face life in prison or death for killing Seattle police Officer Timothy Brenton in 2009.

Monfort’s defense team plans to call 47 witnesses to help argue for mercy for Monfort, who was convicted June 5 of aggravated first-degree murder, two counts of attempted first-degree murder and one count of first-degree arson. The King County jury deliberated for about three days before reaching the verdict.

The same jury will now decide Monfort’s punishment. Jurors must be unanimous to impose the death penalty.

In contrast to the lengthy list of defense witnesses, the prosecution will call only Brenton’s brother, Matt Brenton, to testify. Under state law, the prosecution is allowed to call one witness per victim to testify about the impact that person’s death had on loved ones left behind.

During Monfort’s trial the defense did not dispute Monfort’s guilt, but they argued he was and remains mentally ill, suffering from a delusional disorder. His attorneys said Monfort believed if enough police officers were randomly killed, the deaths would put an end to police brutality.

Related

Timeline of Christopher Monfort case

In addition to killing Brenton, Monfort, 46, was convicted of trying to kill two other police officers and setting fire to police vehicles and detonating pipe bombs at the city's Charles Street maintenance yard on Oct. 22, 2009.

Nine days later, on Oct. 31, Monfort stalked and ambushed Brenton and his then-rookie partner Britt Kelly (née Sweeney) as they sat in a patrol car in Seattle's Leschi neighborhood. Brenton was killed instantly and Kelly suffered a minor wound.

On Nov. 6, police responded to Monfort's Tukwila apartment to investigate a car that matched the description of a vehicle seen after Brenton was killed.

Monfort tried to shoot Seattle police Sgt. Gary Nelson in the head, but his handgun failed to fire because a round hadn't been chambered. Police shot Monfort, leaving him paralyzed below the waist.

The cost of prosecuting Monfort is approaching \$7 million.

Through the end of March, the cost of defending Monfort had reached \$5.8 million, according to the King County Department of Public Defense. The prosecutor's cost was just over \$1 million on April 30.

16 Jun - Marius Mason In Solitary Confinement

On June 16th, we received notification from Marius that he has been transferred to the SHU—or Special Housing Unit, also known as solitary confinement—for, we believe, 30 days as a result of an alleged violation of prison disciplinary rules.

MORE:

We still do not know the basis of these allegations, but we believe they involve a violation of his right to counsel. At this point, Marius does not have all of his property in the SHU, and his normal phone privileges and all e-mail privileges have been suspended. Marius's lawyer, Moira Meltzer-Cohen, has not yet received the incident report, but based on what she has heard from prison officials, she believes the disciplinary action to be unjust.

Marius is currently in good spirits, but solitary confinement is a terrible and dispiriting form of punishment. Marius can still send and receive letters, so please show your support and solidarity by dropping him a line!

Please be aware that any mail sent to Marius will be under even more scrutiny than it was before, so we ask you to be cautious in writing to him about his situation. Also, mail addressed to "Marius Mason" has been getting rejected, so we ask you to address envelopes to "M Mason" in your correspondence.

17 Jun - Online Petition to Free the MOVE 9

While online petitions may in fact do little, they take only moments to sign and add to multifaceted campaign. So take a moment to sign the following petition for the MOVE 9.

<https://www.causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9>

17 Jun - Barrett Brown In Solitary Confinement

We now have an update on the reason why Barrett Brown is in the SHU, also known as the hole, solitary confinement or special/security housing unit. Thanks to everyone who has followed this situation and expressed their concerns.

MORE:

Someone made hooch (alcohol) and a bunch of inmates had been drinking it. Officials came and gave them all breathalyzers, and they all passed. Then they searched Barrett's locker (his only) and found a glass he had hidden in there. So that's his infraction. In his defense he says that everyone was doing it but he was singled out.

- * He was taken from his cell Wednesday (6/17) evening and not allowed to bring belongings, including his file of legal papers and his prescription.
- * He doesn't know how long he'll be there for.
- * He has repeatedly asked for his medication but no one is responded, so he's going without.
- * He asked for a pencil but they said they are out of pencils. He was able to borrow his roommate's and use paper from mail he has received.
- * He's pretty sure that he only gets two phone calls per month.
- * He is fine, the cell is air-conditioned, and his cellmate is okay.
- * They get to have one hour of exercise time outside the cell five times per week (on weekdays).
- * He is waiting for all of his belongings/property including his other books, stamps, paper and pencils. He keeps asking but doesn't know when he'll receive them.
- * He intends to continue his writing.
- * He is still receiving mail, including new books people recently ordered off the Amazon list

Express your concerns to the Bureau of Prisons here: <http://www.bop.gov/inmates/concerns.jsp>

27 Jun - Victory Bus Project Rides

Victory Bus Project is a project of the Freedom Food Alliance and the VROOM Bus Cooperative. The name comes from Herman Bell's Victory Garden's Project, where farmers in Maine grew organic vegetables to be distributed for FREE in the Bronx, Brooklyn and parts of New Jersey. Herman Bell continues to inspire the work we do from inside the prison walls.

MORE:

The goal of this project is to provide affordable transportation for families in urban areas going to visit their love one's in rural prisons for a box of fresh fruits and vegetables, making farm produce accessible. During the rides we engage families on how we collectively address the prison industrial complex and food sovereignty. Pushing folks to demand FARMS NOT PRISONS.

Pick up's are available in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Westchester. Servicing 15 prisons in the Hudson Valley.

NEXT SCHEDULED TRIPS:

Saturday June 27th and Sunday June 28th - Greene, Coxsackie and HudsonPage