



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for June 9th

14 May - The FBI Continues to Snoop on Environmentalists

FBI agents in Texas kept tabs on opponents of the Keystone XL pipeline for months before deciding their group wasn't a security threat, the latest case of federal surveillance that has environmentalists feeling hassled by authorities.

MORE:

by Matt Smith (*VICE*)

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) says it was only conducting an "assessment" of a potential threat to existing infrastructure and closed the book on the matter after deciding no threat was posed. But that's little comfort for advocates who say the top US law enforcement agency is wasting its time snooping on peaceful protesters.

"This is really business as usual for the FBI," Will Potter, whose book *Green is the New Red* documents federal probes into environmental groups, told *VICE News*.

Members of the Houston-based Tar Sands Blockade have chained themselves to construction equipment in protests aimed at stopping work on the southern end of the pipeline, which would carry heavy crude extracted from the tar sands of western Canada to refineries in coastal Texas. The Obama administration is still weighing whether to approve the project's northern end, which would speed one of the heaviest and most carbon-intensive sources of fuel to market.

Using documents obtained under the US Freedom of Information Act, the British newspaper *The Guardian* and the US-based *Earth Island Journal* reported this week that the FBI's Houston field office had spied on the Texas activists as part of its assessment. An FBI memo called the pipeline project "vital to the security and economy of the United States" and warned that "environmental extremists" were gearing up to oppose it.

Ron Seifert, a spokesman for Tar Sands Blockade, said the group held dozens of demonstrations in Texas and Oklahoma during that time, with about 130 people arrested for trying to block pipeline work. Seifert said the documents are heavily redacted, but indicated at least one person in the group discussed its actions with the FBI.

"We were running such a public direct action campaign we could only assume we would attract attention of the state in that regard," he said. But the FBI documents read like they're "straight off the script" of *TransCanada*, which he said paint pipeline opponents as "dangerous and violent and threatening."

"Of all of those 130-plus arrests, not a single charge anywhere along the line has anything to do with property destruction, anything to do with violence or assault or anything like that," Seifert said. "They were all nonviolent charges, simple things like trespassing by and large."

FBI rules allow agents to use publicly available information, government records, interviews, and "observation or surveillance not requiring a court order" as part of an assessment, a kind of preliminary inquiry.

The monitoring stretched from late 2013 into mid-2014, according to the documents cited by the publications. And it apparently ran afoul of the bureau's own rules by not being approved by the top agent or lawyer in Houston, though the bureau told *VICE News* that those officials signed off later.

"While the FBI approval levels required by internal policy were not initially obtained, once discovered, corrective action was taken, non-compliance was remedied, and the oversight was properly reported through the FBI's internal oversight mechanism," the bureau said in a written statement. "At no time did the review find that the initial justification for the assessment was improper."

Once the error was found, the top officials in Houston approved the assessment, which continued "under full compliance" of the Justice Department's guidelines, the FBI statement said. Oil and gas installations are "part of the critical infrastructure of the United States" and may be the targets of terrorists or spies, it added.

But it's at least the second time this year opponents of the proposed pipeline were the objects of FBI inquiries. Anti-Keystone campaigners in the Northwest reported getting visits from agents who wanted to learn more about a radical group that has called for sabotaging infrastructure, Toronto, Canada's *The Globe and Mail* reported in February.

And in January, an eco-activist who spent nearly nine years behind bars was released after his lawyers uncovered thousands of documents that showed the FBI withheld evidence in his trial. Eric McDavid had been convicted in a plot to bomb a California dam, based mostly on the testimony of an FBI informant who infiltrated his group and urged it to adopt more aggressive tactics.

Tar Sands Blockade did not return messages seeking comment. But Greenpeace researcher Connor Gibson told VICE News that spying by both government agencies and corporations "is something the environmental community has dealt with for a long time."

Greenpeace has been targeted by governments and corporations alike since its founding in 1971. But Gibson said the Texas case is interesting "because there's such an overlap between corporate and government spying." The Guardian reported that FBI officials met with TransCanada several months before the Houston office opened a file on Tar Sands Blockade.

"At this point, there's been a repeated pattern of our government siding with a big oil company against people concerned about the effects big oil has on their lives," he said.

Potter said the FBI's interest in environmental activists has undergone a "seismic shift" since the 1990s, when movement radicals claimed responsibility for the burning of a ski lodge in Vail, Colorado and fires and sabotage at car dealerships and construction sites in other states. Even after the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, when much of the bureau's resources shifted toward fighting terrorism, the bureau has kept an eye on the greens.

"At first, the assessment investigations were justified based on the specter of causing a loss of human life, that eco-terrorists were somehow going to kill innocent people," Potter told VICE News. "That's never happened. Then the justification became more and more that the FBI was investigating potential property destruction, and increasingly that doesn't happen either."

Now, with environmentalism much more mainstream, the FBI says it's trying to prevent economic damage. But activists "aren't threatening lives and property, they're threatening money," Potter said.

In 2003, an inspector-general's report urged the bureau to leave probes of environmental and animal-rights activists to its criminal division. But Potter said the FBI never made the recommended changes, even when it was urged to pursue "more credible and dangerous" threats after 9/11.

"What started as a corporate-driven agenda to label protesters as eco-terrorists has become institutionalized," he said. "This has really become standard operating procedure, and I think that's what's most disturbing about this."

26 May - Eric King Eight Month Update

An 8 month update from The Eric King Defense Committee.

MORE:

Eric is facing four felony counts at the Federal level:

Count 1: Used a dangerous instrument to cause death or danger [18 U.S.C. § 111(a)(1) and (b)]—maximum 20 years in prison

Count 2: Attempted to damage or destroy a building by fire or explosives [18 U.S.C. § 844(i)]—minimum 5 years, maximum 20 years in prison

Count 3: Explosive used in commission of a felony [18 U.S.C. 844(h)]—maximum 10 years in prison (to be served after any other sentences are complete)

Count 4: Possession of an unregistered firearm (i.e., Molotov cocktail) [26 U.S.C. 5861(d)]—maximum 10 years in prison

The state alleges that Eric was responsible for an attempted firebombing on a Kansas government building. If convicted he faces anywhere from 5 to 30 years in Federal prison. His trial is set for Monday, July 13th at 9am.

The state exists to dominate and oppress the people. Rebellion exists to challenge and ultimately destroy the state. When the state singles out people to punish for acts of rebellion, we must support them as part of our struggle against this oppressive apparatus.

The state also has a long history of suppressing the anarchist movement and targeting anarchists. In this case, the affidavit states that the Kansas City cops claimed to have identified Eric on surveillance footage in an investigation of "anti-government/anarchy graffiti" and alleges that he made social media posts talking about a group purportedly called "KC Fight Back Insurrectionist Collective." [Note: To our knowledge, the KC cops have not charged Eric with any graffiti-related crimes.] The state targeting Eric is just a part of this war against political dissidents (and those the government deems to be dissidents or threats).

For these reasons, we support Eric and all targets of state repression. In Eric's case, he is facing up to 30 years behind bars for an alleged action in which there is no victim. We do not need to go into details about the absurdity of this potential punishment in contrast to the violence of the state, such as the way the police suffer little to no consequences for summarily executing people in the streets—primarily people of color and young black men in particular. Clearly, the state is not interested in punishing violence, but in punishing even the faintest signs of rebellion against their authority.

As Eric has been singled out to receive this punishment, we are stepping up for his political defense against these charges and in support of rebellion against the state and all systems of oppression. We invite you to join us in this effort!

Eric King has spent the last 8 months in pre-trial detention, and we'd like to take this opportunity to help everyone get to know this individual we are all in solidarity with. Since his arrest in September of last year

he has faced much adversity there at CCA Leavenworth, but he has maintained his principles, and still he pushes forward. For the first 7 months even though he is vegan the prison refused to give him a vegan tray. He came together with comrades and with the help of Vegans In The Prison System he was able to win a cruelty free diet. He is housed in the segregation unit and is currently fighting for medical care for some potentially dangerous symptoms. We hope there's something you might find in what follows that will help you out if you are someone who has wanted to engage but is having trouble writing that first letter or even if you're someone who has a correspondence with Eric already.

Prior to his arrest Eric had spent a good deal of time traveling and organizing for many causes and passions. For a brief period, he helped run a free-if-you-can't-pay daycare. He was licensed and wanted to do his part to even the playing field of privilege and make sure that low-income families have a chance to get by. Class struggle has always been something that he holds dear to his heart. He has been vegan for 10 years and animal rights has always been a passion for him as well. He has also been active in trans rights activism and anti-racist organizing.

Eric is interested in science and astronomy. He loves to read about the universe and the stars! He is an avid reader and loves books ranging from radical ideology to comedy, to science and beyond. Additionally, he has a deep love for art and loves receiving all types of art! He also loves to get articles and stories about resistance struggles from around the world.

At the age of 17, Eric lost his father. The passing of his father was life changing for him, as he was thrown into a period of grief and soul searching. Eric spent a year in seminary. He had great dreams of being a revolutionary priest but didn't find an environment for that in seminary. He also boxed in his youth and won many titles. He still regrets not taking his boxing career pro. Even though he is left-handed, 30 of his boxing matches were fought right-handed! He still has a passion for boxing and loves hearing about matches! Eric also has a love for soccer, he has passionately followed Manchester United since he was a child of spending time in the UK. His uncle lives in Glasgow and has been a great influence in his life. He loves talking about United and following their season and games.

For the future, he dreams of settling in and building a life with his partner. He also wants to see the Redwoods, various mountains across the occupied territories commonly referred to as the United States, and blue whales in the Pacific Northwest. He also wants to finish visiting all 7 continents (he still needs to cross Antarctica off his list!), write a book, and see old friends!

July 13th is less than two months away and we are really hoping to pack the court room once Eric King's trial begins. We'd like to show the federal court of Kansas City, MO that there are people who support Eric and are willing to be there for him from the Midwest and other parts of the country as well, but most importantly we'd like to be there with a good number of folks, to raise Eric's morale and to show him that we have his back. Please get in touch with us if you'd like to come to join the court support efforts on July 13th by contacting us at erickingsupportcrew@riseup.net.

Also, please do not forget that the crowd funding website to support Eric King is still live. So, visit it here; <http://fnd.us/c/0yoZc/sh/a4jVK6> and donate if you can, but whether you can or can't donate please pass it along and help us by making sure it reaches every corner of the world. Be on the lookout for support t-shirts to be added to the fundraiser soon.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Eric King thus far by handing out a support Eric King flyer , making a donation, no matter how small or large, writing a letter of support , committing to attend a court date, or sharing his story far and wide to help Eric gain support from all over.

Let's continue to show the world that Eric King is not alone!

26 May - North Carolina Ag-Gag Fiasco

We often relay information about legislation that directly impacts activists. Below are a couple of articles about an Ag-Gag law in North Carolina.

MORE:

May 26th - North Carolina Could Become Fifth State With an Ag-Gag Law

by Zoe Loftus-Farren (*Earth Island Journal*)

Whistleblowers beware. Last week, the North Carolina senate passed HB 405, a controversial “ag-gag” bill that would make it illegal to document unethical or illegal practices on industrial farms in the state. Passed by the House in April, the bill has been presented to the Governor, who has five more days to veto it. If he does nothing (or signs it) before the end of the week, North Carolina will join Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, and Utah as the fifth state with a law criminalizing undercover investigations of factory farms.

The North Carolina bill would stifle would-be whistleblowers by making it illegal for employees to record or remove employer data or records, to record any images or sound on their employer’s property, or to place an unattended camera to film the property. It would also make it illegal to seek employment for the purpose of exposing animal abuse, environmental harms, or food safety issues on farms, or for anything other than a “bona fide intent of seeking or holding employment.” If the bill is signed by Governor McCrory, employees could be sued for breaching the “duty of loyalty” to their employer, and liable for \$5,000 per day they are found in breach, court costs, and any actual damages caused by the breach.

In addition to North Carolina, ag-gag bills are also currently under consideration in New Mexico and Washington.

Animal welfare advocates are particularly concerned about HB 405 because of North Carolina’s prominent factory farm industry. The state ranks second in the country for the number of factory-farmed hogs, second in turkey production, and sixth in production of factory-farmed broiler chickens. (In North Carolina, factory farm chickens outnumber people nine to one.)

“For a state like North Carolina to be really shut down from investigations is very detrimental and would put billions of animals at risk,” says Matt Dominguez, public policy director for the Human Society of the United States’ farm animal protection campaign.

Although the North Carolina bill appears to be geared towards the agriculture industry, the duty of loyalty extends to employees beyond the agricultural sector. Opponents say the law would also apply to whistleblowers trying to document abuse at nursing homes and day care centers. Dominguez believes this was intentional, allowing legislatures to disguise the fact that it is an ag-gag law, and in practice making it “the broadest [ag-gag law] that will be on the books.”

Since the early 1990s, ag-gag bills have been proposed in more than 20 states, with a resurgence of these whistleblower suppression bills in the past few years. Although most of these bills have failed, four states have enacted ag-gag laws in various forms. Idaho’s law criminalizes any unauthorized recording inside agricultural facilities. Iowa and Utah have laws that make it illegal for an applicant to lie on an application for agricultural employment. (Many industrial farm applications now include a question specifically asking if applicants are affiliated with an animal rights organization, news organization, or labor group.) Missouri has a “quick reporting” law that requires any evidence of animal abuse be turned over to authorities within 24 hours, making prolonged investigations documenting patterns of abuse nearly impossible. The Utah and

Idaho laws are currently being challenged in court by a coalition of animal protection, environmental, labor, civil liberty, and labor rights organizations on First Amendment grounds.

Whichever form they take, these ag-gag laws limit transparency within the food system and shield factory farms from exposure for potential abuse of animals, workers, or the environment. According to Dominguez, the poultry industry is the primary backer of HB 405.

Although there are few examples of people being prosecuted under ag-gag laws, prosecution isn't necessarily the point. "The purpose of these laws aren't really ever to prosecute anyone," says Dominguez. "It is to cause a chilling effect."

Pointing to the Humane Society and other animal welfare organizations, he adds, "We operate within the law when it comes to our investigations, and the factory farmers and people that are supporting these ag-gag laws know that if a law passes we will be unable to do investigations. We would never put our investigators or our organization in a position to break the law."

The North Carolina Senate passed the ag-gag bill just days after Compassion Over Killing, an animal welfare group based in Washington DC, released undercover footage inside North Carolina's Montaire Farms. The video, filmed in April, shows chickens being violently thrown across the room and punched by frustrated employees. In 2013, Los Angeles-based Mercy for Animals exposed routine abuse of turkeys at several Butterball factory farms in North Carolina. And a 2007 undercover investigation by PETA documented employees beating and otherwise abusing pigs at Murphy Family Ventures, LLC in North Carolina.

A recent survey, commissioned by the ASPCA and conducted by Lake Research Partners, found that 74 percent of likely voters in North Carolina support undercover investigations of animal abuse and food safety hazards on industrial farms. Sixty-three percent would oppose a law that would deter these investigations.

Governor McCrory has until the end of this week to veto the legislation. If he does nothing before May 29 (or if he signs the bill), HB 405 will become law.

May 29th - #AgGag Victory! North Carolina Governor Vetoes Bill

by Will Potter (*Green Is the New Red*)

North Carolina's governor, Pat McCrory, has vetoed an ag-gag bill that would make it illegal for whistleblowers and journalists to expose abuses in a wide range of industries.

North Carolina's House Bill 405 would have allowed business owners to sue employees who record damaging activity in the workplace without their boss's permission.

The bill was part of a national "ag-gag" trend to stop undercover investigations of factory farms by animal welfare groups. One group, Compassion Over Killing, recently documented workers at Mountaire Farms punching, shoving, and throwing chickens.

But the bill wasn't limited to factory farming. Groups like AARP have opposed it because it "applies to any business's employees who may seek to reveal illegal and unethical practices."

That includes "nursing homes, hospitals, group homes, medical practices, charter and private schools, daycare centers, and so forth," the group says.

The public is overwhelmingly against ag-gag laws. A recent survey by the ASPCA showed that 74 percent of residents in North Carolina support undercover investigations by animal welfare groups.

Ag-gag laws are currently being challenged as unconstitutional in Utah and Idaho.

Governor McCrory said he the bill would have made it more difficult to expose abuse:

“While I support the purpose of this bill, I believe it does not adequately protect or give clear guidance to honest employees who uncover criminal activity. I am concerned that subjecting these employees to potential civil penalties will create an environment that discourages them from reporting illegal activities.”

4 Jun - Exposing Cruelty in Nursing Homes, Factory Farms, Daycares Now a Crime in North Carolina

by Will Potter (*Green Is the New Red*)

Despite opposition from a wide range of groups, including AARP, veterans, journalists, and animal welfare advocates, North Carolina lawmakers have overridden the governor’s veto of their ag-gag bill.

The bill, which becomes law one week after the veto override, lets businesses sue employees who expose what happens on the job, even if it what they are exposing is illegal.

The bill is part of the ag-gag trend, in that it is primarily focused on animal welfare advocates who expose factory farm cruelty. But the bill is so broad it affects all workplaces. That’s why veterans’ groups and the AARP have come out in opposition.

“To give one relevant example, allegations surfaced last year that employees at Veterans Affairs facilities in North Carolina had been retaliated against for whistleblowing,” wrote Steven Nardizzi, chief executive of the Wounded Warrior Project. “As an organization dedicated to honoring and empowering injured service members, we are concerned that this legislation might cause wrongdoing at hospitals and institutions to go unchecked.”

Domestic violence groups have spoke up as well. The N.C. Council for Women and the Domestic Violence Commission noted that undercover investigations — exactly the conduct criminalized in this bill — were used to prosecute human sex trafficking.

In short, this ag-gag bill isn’t just about agriculture. It’s a sweeping attack on any whistleblower who speaks up for the most vulnerable.

It’s hard to wrap my head around what North Carolina is thinking with this one. But keep in mind these are the same lawmakers who also voted to override the governor’s veto of a discriminatory marriage bill.

In both cases, these are prime examples of people on the losing end of history; they reflect the death throes of anti-gay bigots and factory farmers who just refuse to change with the times.

27 May - Chelsea Manning writes on 5 years in confinement in new Guardian op-ed

May 27th marks five years since Chelsea Manning was ordered into military confinement while deployed to Iraq in 2010.

MORE:

by Chelsea Manning (*The Guardian*)

“The years since I was jailed for releasing the ‘war diaries’ have been a rollercoaster.”

It can be difficult, sometimes, to make sense of all the things that have happened to me in the last five years.

I find it difficult to believe, at times, just how long I have been in prison. Throughout this time, there have been so many ups and downs – it often feels like a physical and emotional roller coaster.

It all began in the first few weeks of 2010, when I made the life-changing decision to release to the public a repository of classified (and unclassified but “sensitive”) documents that provided a simultaneously horrific and beautiful outlook on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. After spending months preparing to deploy to Afghanistan in 2008, switching to Iraq in 2009 and actually staying in Iraq from 2009-10, I quickly and fully recognized the importance of these documents to the world at large.

I felt that the Iraq and Afghanistan “war diaries” (as they have been dubbed) were vital to the public’s understanding of the two interconnected counter-insurgency conflicts from a real-time and on-the-ground perspective. In the years before these documents were collected, the public likely never had such a complete record of the chaotic nature of modern warfare. Once you come to realize that the co-ordinates in these records represent real places, that the dates are our recent history and that the numbers represent actual human lives – with all of the love, hope, dreams, hate, fear and nightmares with which we all live – then you cannot help but be reminded just how important it is for us to understand and, hopefully, prevent such tragedies in the future.

A few months later, after spending months poring over at least a few thousand classified US diplomatic cables, I moved to also have these documents released to the public in the “cablegate” archive. After reading so many of these documents – detailing an exhaustive list of public interest issues, from the conduct of the “global war on terrorism” to the deliberate diplomatic and economic exploitation of developing countries – I felt that they, too, belonged in the public domain.

In 2010, I was considerably less mature than I am now, and the potential consequences and outcomes of my actions seemed vague and very surreal to me. I certainly expected the worst possible outcome, but I lacked a strong sense of what “the worst” would entail. I did expect to be demonized and targeted, to have every moment of my life re-examined and analyzed for every possible personal flaw and blemish, and to have them used against me in the court of public opinion or against transgender people as a whole.

When the military ordered me into confinement, I was escorted (by two of the friendliest guys in my unit) to Kuwait, first by helicopter to Baghdad and finally by cargo plane. It was not until I arrived at the prison camp in Kuwait that I actually felt like I was a prisoner. Over the succeeding days, it only got worse as the public and the media began to seek and learn more about what happened to me. After living in a communal setting for about a week, I was transferred to what amounted to a “cage” in a large tent.

After a few weeks of living in the cage and tent – not knowing what my charges were, having very limited access to my attorney and having absolutely no idea of the media firestorm that was beginning to swirl in the world outside – I became extremely depressed. I was terrified that I was not going to be treated in the dignified way that I had expected. I also began to fear that I was forever going to be living in a hot, desert cage, living as and being treated as a male, disappearing from the world into a secret prison and never facing a public trial.

It didn’t help that a few of the Navy guards delivering meals would tell me that I was was waiting for interrogation on a brig on a US cruiser off the coast of the horn of Africa, or being sent to the prison camps of Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. At the very lowest point, I contemplated castrating myself, and even – in what

seemed a pointless and tragicomic exercise, given the physical impossibility of having nothing stable to hang from – contemplated suicide with a tattered blanket, which I tried to choke myself with. After getting caught, I was placed on suicide watch in Kuwait.

After being transferred back to the US, I was confined at the now-closed military brig at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia. This time was the most difficult for me overall, and felt like the longest. I was not allowed to have any items in my cell – no toothbrushes, soap, toilet paper, books, paper and on a few occasions even my glasses – unless I was given permission to use them under close supervision. When I was finished, I had to return these items. At night, I had to surrender my clothing and, despite recommendations by several psychiatrists that I was not deemed suicidal), wear a “suicide prevention” smock – a single-piece, padded, tear-proof garment.

Eventually, after public outcry regarding the conditions of my confinement at Quantico and the resignation of PJ Crowley, the former press secretary of the Department of State, I was transferred to medium custody and the general population at an Army prison. It was a high point in my incarcerated life: after nearly a year of constantly being watched by guards with clipboards and having my movements controlled by groups of three-to-six guards while in hand irons and chains and limited contact with other humans, I was finally able to walk around and have normal conversations with human beings again.

The government pressed forward with charges of “aiding the enemy” – a treasonable offense under the US constitution – and various charges under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. Over nearly two years of hearings, I witnessed firsthand just how much the the government was willing to invest in my prosecution: the stacks of money spent; the gallons of fuel burned; the reams of paper printed; and the lengthy rolls of personnel, lawyers and experts.

For over 100 days, I watched the lawyers who prosecuted my case present me as a “traitor” and “enemy of state” in court and then become friendly people giving greetings and making chit-chat out of court. It became clear to me that they were basically just decent people doing their jobs. I am convinced that they did not believe the treason arguments they made against me – and was, even as they spoke them.

The verdict and sentencing at the end of my court-martial was difficult to predict. The defense team seriously worried about the aiding the enemy charge and the very wide range for a sentence, which was anything between “time served” and life without parole. After the judge announced my 35-year sentence, I had to console my attorneys who, after years of hard work and effort, looked worn out and dejected. It was a low-point for all of us.

After years of hiding and holding off because of the trial, I finally announced my intent to change my name and transition to living as woman on 22 August 2013 – the day following my sentencing – a personal high point for me, despite my other circumstances. However, the military initially declined my request to receive the medically-mandated treatment for my diagnosed gender dysphoria, which is to live as a woman and receiving a regular regiment of estrogen and androgen blockers. Just like during my time at Quantico and during my court-martial, I was subjected to a laborious and time consuming legal process. Finally, just under four months ago – but nearly a year and a half after my initial request – I began my hormone treatment. I am still fighting for the right to grow out my hair to the military’s standard for women, but being able to transition remains one of the highest points for me in my entire life.

It can be hard, sometimes, to make sense of all the things that have happened to me in the last five years (let alone my entire life). The things that seem consistent and clear to me are the support that I receive from my friends, my family and the millions of people all over the world. Through every struggle that I have been confronted with, and have been subjected to – solitary confinement, long legal battles and physically

transitioning to the woman I have always been – I manage not only to survive, but to grow, learn, mature and thrive as a better, more confident person.

28 May - Oscar López Rivera: Will Obama Pardon This Political Prisoner?

As the campaign to free Oscar López Rivera grows, so do articles about his case.

MORE:

by Dahr Jamail (*Truthout*)

"Mr. Margolis has said that there are democratic ways to struggle and get things done. He forgets to tell you that I have a history of precisely that. That I have marched. That I have taken part in demonstrations. I have begged and pleaded. I have a history that has not been presented here. I have marched alongside black people for their rights. I have marched in support of jobs. I have a history of that. I have marched for access to decent housing. I have a history of that. I have marched against the war in Vietnam. I am a veteran of that war. And I have a history of that. [...] Mr. Margolis does not know how it feels to be a Puerto Rican in this country. Mr. Margolis does not know how it feels to be black in this country. He does not know the indignation one feels when the police, who supposedly represent law and order, call us "spic" or "nigger" and then spit in our face. I have had people spit in my face for being Puerto Rican. And I have been arrested for participating peacefully and legally in public demonstrations. So that which Mr. Margolis alludes to does not exist. [...]"

"If I am standing here today, it is not because I lack the courage to fight, but rather because I have the courage to fight. I am certain, and will reaffirm, that Puerto Rico will be a free and sovereign nation."

- Oscar López Rivera, at his trial for seditious conspiracy, 1981

Oscar López Rivera, a decorated Vietnam War veteran and respected community activist, is now one of the longest-held political prisoners in the world.

In 1981, López Rivera was convicted in the United States, in truly Orwellian fashion, of the thought crime of "seditious conspiracy," despite never having been accused of causing harm to anyone, let alone taking a life. Having been deemed dangerous by the US government, López Rivera was imprisoned. His release date, without a presidential pardon, will be 2027, when he is 84 years old. May 29, 2015, is the 34th anniversary of his arrest.

In the late 1970s, López Rivera and other young Puerto Ricans, inspired by guerrilla movements around the world, committed themselves to working toward the independence of Puerto Rico in a clandestine fashion. He was a well-respected community activist and an independence leader for many years, having helped create both the Puerto Rican High School and the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. He was also involved in the struggle for bilingual education in public schools and to force universities to actively recruit Latino students, staff and faculty. But López Rivera was eventually convicted of "seditious conspiracy" and other charges stemming from his participation in the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN), a Marxist-Leninist organization that sought to transform Puerto Rico into a communist state during the 1970s.

Jan Susler, López Rivera's attorney who works with the People's Law Office in Chicago, told Truthout she believes his imprisonment based on "seditious conspiracy" is "overtly political" and is both harsh and disproportionate.

"It's important to see Oscar not as an isolated case, but as the latest example of a long trajectory of Puerto Rican resistance to US colonialism and the extent to which the US will go to try to maintain its colonial control over Puerto Rico," she said.

Twelve and a half years of López Rivera's imprisonment have taken place in solitary confinement, including within supermax prisons. López Rivera has been routinely held in conditions not unlike those at the military prison at Guantánamo Bay - conditions which the International Red Cross has called "tantamount to torture."

Most of the people arrested with López Rivera were granted clemency by President Bill Clinton on his last day in office, and released on parole. He too was offered conditional clemency by Clinton in 1999, but rejected the offer. His sister, Zenaida López, said he refused the offer because on parole, he would be in "prison outside prison." The only other FALN member remaining in prison thereafter has subsequently been released.

As Barack Obama's term as president winds down, the question of whether he will grant clemency to López Rivera is in the air. Given that the political prisoner's release might very well increase Democratic Party support from the Puerto Rican communities in the United States, a decision by President Obama to pardon him could well have implications on the 2016 presidential campaign, and beyond.

To Pardon or Not to Pardon?

On the island of Puerto Rico there is unanimous support from all sectors for López Rivera's release, from Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla to the Puerto Rican Independence Party.

Governor Padilla has visited López Rivera in prison and publicly called for his release. So have the Puerto Rican Senate and House of Representatives, the Puerto Rican Bar Association, the Puerto Rico College of Physicians and Surgeons, universities, churches and the vast majority of Puerto Rican civil society.

"Oscar represents the finest tradition of Puerto Rican history, and his people - even those who don't support independence - are very proud of his example and outraged at the injustice of his continued incarceration, which they see as an affront," Susler said.

For example, a recent editorial in Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper, titled "The Ongoing Imprisonment of Oscar López Is a Betrayal of Democracy," led with this paragraph: "At 71 years of age and having served 33 years in remote prisons, far away from his country, accused of seditious conspiracy, but never having been found guilty of shedding any blood, Oscar López Rivera is the symbol of a flagrant dishonor for his jailers and an affront to democracy that fails to respect human rights."

Other national and international organizations calling for López Rivera's release include the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, the Permanent Conference of Political Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Coalition of Latin American and Caribbean Men and Women Religious, Nobel Peace Prize laureates, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the Service Employees International Union executive bureau (SEIU), American Federation of State, Councils, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Region of the Americas.

The United States, while paying ample lip service to the ideals of justice and freedom, continues to hold its political prisoners longer than nearly every other country on earth.

Susler sees no legitimate reason for López Rivera's ongoing incarceration.

"All of his co-defendants are out and living productive, law-abiding lives, fully integrated into civil society, respected by their nation," she said. "There is no legitimate penological objective for keeping him behind bars."

After visiting the prisoner in October 2014, Governor Padilla penned a column for Puerto Rico's main daily newspaper, stating:

Oscar López Rivera has been in prison for 33 years. He hasn't been accused of committing any violent act. He hasn't been connected to any violent act. He was accused of conspiring. The line that divides "conspiring" from "thinking" is very fine. I don't think Oscar would be a danger for the future of our country, of our community, or of our family. His sentence, far too excessive, violates the most elemental principles of humanity, sensitivity and justice. Oscar López Rivera owes no debt to society, and if he ever did, he paid it a long time ago.

A Pan-Latino Issue

Alejandro L. Molina is a member of the coordinating committee of the National Boricua Human Rights Network, and has been active in the defense of Puerto Rican political prisoners since 1976.

"This is a pan-Latino issue," Molina told Truthout of López Rivera's case. "Oscar's figure has become a point of unity for Puerto Ricans. Five Latin American presidents and five Nobel Peace Prize laureates have all signed on for his release."

Molina believes it is now more important than ever for López Rivera to be released because his freedom would be a significant step toward resolving Puerto Rico's status in relation to the United States, and it would be a move toward US willingness to move forward with its stated mission of realigning its relationship with both Latin America and the Caribbean.

"In a practical manner, [freeing López Rivera] will send the right message about resolution of the history of the US government's repression of dissident movements," Molina added.

He went on to point out a case in which FBI Director Louis Freeh admitted to Rep. José Serrano (D-New York) during a House Appropriations Committee hearing that the FBI operated Cointelpro in Puerto Rico, and also confessed that the program "did do tremendous damage to many people, to the country and certainly to the FBI."

Molina pointed to this as just one example of the harms done by the US government to Puerto Rico.

"This, according to scholars, experts and activists on the subject, included discrediting targets through psychological warfare," Molina said. "They smeared individuals and groups using forged documents and by planting false reports in the media, harassment, wrongful imprisonment and illegal violence, including assassination."

Molina's conclusion is clear: The time has come for López Rivera to be freed.

"There is no good reason not to release him, as there is absolutely no valid legal, ethical, political or moral reason for the continued imprisonment," he said. "After 34 years in prison ... with no blood on his hands and his co-defendants living successful lives, Oscar López Rivera should be released with no hesitation."

Molina has been organizing a large demonstration planned for Saturday, May 30 in New York City, where he expects thousands to rally to demand the release of López Rivera.

4 Jun - Oscar López Rivera: “I hope to come out of this place unscathed”

by María Peña (*La Raza*)

He has just finished his 34th year in prison, but Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera says that with the help of president Barack Obama, he hopes to “leave prison unscathed,” to kiss the land when he returns to the island.

López Rivera, 72 years old, is serving a 70 year sentence in the U.S. after being sentenced for sedition for his connection to the extinct independentista group Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). Since 1998 he has been in a prison in Terre Haute (Indiana).

In an exclusive telephone interview with this newspaper, López Rivera said he was aware of the acts of solidarity that took place in the past few days, demanding his release from prison, and described his plans for the future when he is finally released.

That is, if Obama grants his petition for clemency, which has been under review since 2011 by the Department of Justice.

If he does not grant the petition, and if no other president in the White House intervenes, the political prisoner who has served the most time in a U.S. prison will have to wait until 2023 to be paroled.

Although victims of FALN violence oppose his release, the majority of Puerto Ricans support it.

Q: Have you followed this weekend’s events demanding your release?

López Rivera: I made several calls, and I was able to find out what was happening in Puerto Rico and in New York. They gave me a play by play of the walk in Puerto Rico, of the march in New York. In Puerto Rico they walked in the rain, almost celebrating the rain, and I could hear the chants. I also spoke with several of the women who gather in Puerto Rico (the last Sunday of every month) to support me.

I know that presidents, several Nobel Laureates, and religious groups have become involved in this movement. For me this is something really beautiful, very emotional. They are very important efforts, and I am deeply grateful for them.

Q: What has been the most difficult thing about life in prison?

L.R.: Being a prisoner is never easy, but I am healthy and there is good energy, good vibrations. The hardest thing for me has been to maintain my family ties, that distance that exists between the family and you.

Also the separation from the people, because I always worked with the community, something I truly enjoyed.

Prison is a hostile environment, dehumanizing, that is robbing us of our human fiber, but I struggle to not become institutionalized: I keep a routine, a full agenda, because I don’t want to give my time to the jailers. I read a lot – reading is sacred time – I draw, write letters, exercise, and always stay in touch with my family, with people on the outside.

Q: You keep in touch with your family?

L.R.: I have good communication with my daughter, with my family. Almost every day we talk either on the phone or by email.

I spent 12 years and 4 months (when I was isolated in solitary confinement), where I could only have two 15 minute calls a month, and for my daughter the cost of traveling from Puerto Rico to visit me where I was being held was very expensive. Communication with my mother, my family, was very limited.

My granddaughter was seven years old when I could hug her for the first time.

Q: Do you think president Obama will grant you clemency before the end of his term?

L.R.: I live with hope, I have never lost hope. If (Obama) believes in justice, if he pays attention and studies my case, he could grant clemency.

President Bill Clinton did so, but I didn't accept the offer (of 1999) for two reasons: first, because when he offered it, it excluded some of my compañeros, and I don't leave anyone behind, and second, because it was a freedom with conditions.

Q: What is the first thing you will do when you return to San Sebastián?

L.R.: I don't like illusory optimism, but the first thing I will do is kiss my land. I have been far from my town for a long time.

I miss my family, I miss rice with pigeon peas, tostones...oh, and avocado.

I also want to work on several long term projects. I would like to work to forge unity between the Puerto Rican diaspora and Puerto Rico, so that we do not see ourselves as two separate groups, the 3.5 million in Puerto Rico and the 5 million in the U.S., but rather as a single force, because we have big hearts and we are compassionate, and we need to cultivate this.

I would like to work in educational programs, to achieve feasible things to gain the confidence that we can advance as a people.

Q: You have been compared with the deceased South African leader Nelson Mandela, and he underwent a transformation in prison. What has your transformation been?

L.R.: I can live with a clear conscience. I am a war veteran. I was in Vietnam, and I believe that human life is very sacred. I am against the death penalty. How could I support violence?

You have to contextualize Mandela's struggle against the apartheid regime, what he did and the evolutionary process he underwent, from the time he was a prisoner for 27 years to his release in the 90's. He changed radically (he abandoned armed struggle), but he also managed to struggle for the rights of the Black population ... the government ended up ceding to pressure.

I can give the example of the struggle in Vieques. The Puerto Rican people achieved the ouster of the U.S. Navy from Puerto Rico, without resorting to violence, and I think that indicates there has been a change.

Q: How do you see the current crisis in Puerto Rico?

L.R.: The crisis is a few years old already, and is per se economic, due to the debt, but has grave consequences. There is a brain drain, a forced migration because Puerto Rico isn't offering a future to its youth.

Puerto Rico is in no condition to pay the debt. Human resources is the most valued thing we have, and if people feel forced to migrate, the dynamism of the people, the national identity, is lost. That worries me. Puerto Rican political discourse must be overcome, to put truth ahead; it should be a healthy, ethical discourse that takes into account the dignity of the people.

I think that as a nation we must transcend the colonized mentality, work for national reconciliation, unity, work on the project of the country.

Q: What message do you have for the Puerto Rican people?

L.R.: The visits I've received from Puerto Rican leaders bring me much hope, energy.

I am deeply grateful for the solidarity that everyone has expressed, and I want to keep struggling for my country, for my people.

I hold my head high, and I hope to come out of this place unscathed.

June 22nd - The Second Oscar // Mandela March

We will be having our 2nd Oscar - Mandela Protest March on Monday, June 22, 2015. We will start peacefully marching at 9:00 AM from Hunter College on East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, to East 43rd Street and Lexington Avenue. We will then go East (turning left) to end up at the Ralph Bunche Park on First Avenue (across from the United Nations).

We will be at the park until 5:00 PM. We will be giving out flyers and talking to people about who Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera is. We will also be educating the public about Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the government of the United States (US).

Most people don't know that every year, usually on the Monday after Fathers' Day, the United Nations holds its hearing about the decolonization of Puerto Rico. The petitioners will usually join our protest after this meeting.

The UN determined in 1960 that colonialism is a crime against humanity. Since then, the UN has issued 33 resolutions asking for the US government to immediately decolonize Puerto Rico. The US government has ignored these resolutions. What kind of democracy is that?

The US government tries to keep these hearings a secret. What we are trying to do is to get them out of the closet. The UN is in its 3rd decade trying to make the world colony-free. Please help us!

Most people also don't know that the United States government takes out 14 times more money than what it invests in Puerto Rico. But, that is what colonies are for!

This savage exploitation impedes Puerto Rico's ability to provide opportunities for Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. That is why there are now more Puerto Ricans living away from Puerto Rico than in their homeland.

Oscar López Rivera has been incarcerated for 34 years for his struggle to decolonize Puerto Rico. Since colonialism is an international crime, international law gives Oscar the right to use whatever means necessary to decolonize his homeland. Nelson Mandela was incarcerated for 27 years for doing the same thing as Oscar. This is why we say, Oscar López Rivera is our Nelson Mandela!

United Partners for Puerto Rico Decolonization invites the public to be part of the tsunami of people that will be necessary to make the US government comply with the UN resolutions. These annual protests in

Puerto Rico and at the UN are absolutely necessary, because, those who maintain colonies, don't believe in justice for all!

29 May - Reminder and Thank You From Marius Mason

Marius wanted to reconfirm that the mail room is accepting letters addressed to "Marius Mason."

MORE:

Seeing his chosen name on envelopes and in letters gives him strength when he is denied the ability to legally change his name and he waits an indefinite time to begin transitioning medically. For more information on sending letters, please see the Writing Marius page.

Marius also wanted to let people know that the computer on his unit is down and it is unclear when it will be operational again. This limits his communication because he is unable to print off approved address labels to write letters. For this reason he asked to send a shout out to Sam and Adam, both of whom he was hoping to get back in touch with soon but his personal thank you will be delayed.

30 May - A Reportback on the No More Locked Doors Conference in Oakland

On Saturday, May 16th, the No More Locked Doors Conference took place in Oakland, California at the Qilombo radical community center. It featured tabling by various groups, workshops, an evening meal, as well as an ending panel comprised of former political prisoners.

MORE:

All social movements that confront the power of the State must deal with repression. From the campaign to free the imprisoned Paris Communards, the fight in America to release the Scottsboro boys against racist railroading, to the battle to free prisoners of various liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s, as long as there is resistance there has also sadly been political prisoners. In order to learn from past movements, we must bridge the gaps between generations of those who struggled, fought, died, and went to prison with current struggles for freedom and revolution. We must also come to view prisoner support as something that we must normalize amongst each other – not setting it aside or allowing it to be relegated to a set group. Also, we must never forget those that are still locked away; who still rot behind prison walls, and who still desperately need to be freed.

In preparation for the conference, the No More Locked Doors collective reached out to over 40 political prisoners from a variety of movements, asking them to fill out a questionnaire regarding what prisoner support meant to them. We sought to highlight the voices of current political prisoners and those who have spent time behind bars front and center. Prisoners, from those who have become revolutionaries while inside, to MOVE members, anarchists, Puerto Rican independence fighters, former Black Panthers, and earth and animal liberationists, all responded. The finished product is, "What is Prisoner Support?," which you can download and print out. We feel that this collection offers insight into decades of prisoner support and resistance, and offers a glimpse into how prisoners themselves view the invaluable work of solidarity.

At the conference, workshops took place on a variety of issues, prisoners, and struggles. From the ongoing fight to keep Mumia alive and release him, the history of the ILWU's support of political prisoners, discussions by former political prisoners such as Richard Brown, Raul 'Curly,' and Eric McDavid, presentations by members of both Mexico City and Denver Anarchist Black Cross, to an open discussion on the fight to free all aging political prisoners, such as Oscar Lopez Rivera. We also had the honor of a 45 minute call in Q + A with Bomani Shakur, who currently is on death row for his participation in the Lucasville Prison Uprising. Before the discussion with Bomani, attendees listened to a pre-recorded

interview made especially for the conference. Attendance at these workshops ranged from about 5-25, and discussion lasted throughout the two hour segments.

The former political prisoner panel (which was recorded and we encourage everyone to listen to), featured an amazing cast of militants from a variety of groups and movements. Richard Brown from the Black Panther Party and the San Francisco 8, “Bo” Brown from the George Jackson Brigade, Linda Evans from Weather, Sundiata Tate from the San Quentin 6, and Raul ‘Curly’ of the Young Lords and the Black Liberation Army. MCing the panel was recently released anarchist prisoner, Eric McDavid. Speakers discussed their radicalization and the early days of their involvement in the revolutionary movement, as well as their time during incarceration. They touched on the work that they were involved while inside prison walls, as well as their thoughts about what the current generation should do to free political prisoners. As Linda Evans said, the best thing that kept her going was, “Knowing that there was a movement still fighting for change.”

It was in prison that Sundiata encountered revolutionary ideas, through his friend and comrade, George Jackson. “When I first met him, it was about studying...He talked in terms of self-determination...Basically that what it was about, ruling ourselves.” “Bo” Brown, a white working-class woman, was radicalized after getting out of prisoner herself, and then joined the group, the George Jackson Brigade. She stated regarding prisoner support, “The most important thing people can do is write the prisoners and let them know that you are out here.” Also on the mind of those on the panel and the audience were the recent rebellions in Ferguson and Baltimore. Panelists spoke on the recent riots and offered support to the rebels resisting police terror. Curly commented, “Join those demonstrations, go there, you do not have to stand up and break anything if you don’t want to, but if you want to, go right on ahead. Just make sure that when you aimed that wonderful three pointed rock – that you’re going to throw [it at a target] has something to do with imperialism.” Curly went on to stress, “As Malcolm X said, ‘Revolutions, overturn systems. You shut down everything that gets in your way.’”

Richard Brown helped put the conference in an extremely sober perspective. “I wake up every morning and I feel bad. I’m free...[political prisoners] are not free, they languish in prison. I know every day, they must ask, ‘What’s wrong, why don’t people don’t come and get us? Why aren’t they fighting harder?’” Panelists urged those in attendance to take up the fight to free all political prisoners and build opposition in the streets and by getting organized amongst each other.

After the conference, we are left with many questions. What does it mean to support a prison rebellion when they explode? In what ways can we rebuild a prison movement on the streets that seeks to be in solidarity with prisoner resistance and also push for the release of all political prisoners? How can we place support for prisoners and against repressive state violence into our daily work as revolutionaries? These are all questions that we do not have the answers to yet, but we hope that this conference is a step in the right direction.

We thank everyone who participated in the No More Locked Doors conference and we hope to do it all again soon!

For the destruction of prisons and the system they uphold!

Free all prisoners!

1 Jun - Farms Not Prisons! The Victory Bus Project NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

The Primrose Hill Farm Collective recently launched an indiegogo campaign

<<http://igg.me/at/every-child-deserves-a-parent/x>> to support the ongoing

work of the Victory Bus Project.

MORE:

With the help of others within the Freedom Food Alliance and the mentorship of Herman Bell the Victory Bus Project was born a few years ago in an effort to tackle food sovereignty and prison issues that low-income urban families and their incarcerated loved ones face. At a low cost we provide farm fresh food and transportation to families visiting their loved ones in Hudson Valley area prisons. Our partnerships with several farms, including the Primrose Hill Farm Collective, who provide food for our weekly prison trips are key. The money raised through this fundraising campaign will help us to have a consistent supply of food for the families.

Below are a few things you can do to support:

1. Donate (every dollar counts!): <http://igg.me/at/every-child-deserves-a-parent/x>
2. Share link on social media (sample posts below): <http://igg.me/at/every-child-deserves-a-parent/x>

2 Jun - Mumia Abu-Jamal Update

Here's the latest health update we have for our comrade, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

MORE:

I saw Mumia for an extended visit this past Thursday, May 28. Mumia seemed much better able to handle a four hour visit than he had been when I last saw him, and had I not had to leave, it would have been an even longer visit. He was still in a wheel chair because his swollen feet and legs make it very painful to stand. Despite this pain he makes sure to walk at least a half hour a day. Though thin because of the huge weight loss, he looked a lot better than when I saw him about a month ago. He has gained some weight but is still way below his weight prior to getting ill. He is eating a great deal, ate much more than usual even during my visit, is still given a diabetic diet, and feels his body is trying to recover from the huge skin and weight loss. His face and right hand are completely clear. The rest of his body is not but the itching and pain are mostly gone.

Mumia spoke energetically and his mood was very positive. He spoke of how close to death he had been. Had there not been an international outcry about the lack of appropriate treatment, in fact AGAINST the "treatment" that was bringing him so close to death, he was sure he would not be alive today. He continues to be very grateful for the love and support he has received for several months now, and expresses graphically how he could feel it in the air. Once again, he was in awe of our movement, its power and effectiveness.

I had greeted him at the inmates' entrance to the visiting room because I could see him struggling, recognizing his shower sandal covered foot sticking out into the visiting room, and went over to help him maneuver the wheel chair in. Even a small thing such as getting through a doorway with a large wheelchair is not made easier by the prison staff. By contrast, Mumia spoke of the extraordinary kindness and gentleness of the inmates who help him with ordinary activities such as bathing in the infirmary.

Mumia remains in the infirmary. He continues to get the therapeutic baths prescribed for his skin problem. He is no longer taking ANY medication for the diabetic symptoms he had developed. Yet his sugar level which he monitors daily is in the 80's suggesting that the so called medical "care" he had gotten at the infirmary had brought on the diabetic crisis. Once the medication was discontinued he seems to have recovered significantly from that aspect of his illness.

The big news, which Mumia told me with great relief as soon as he walked in, was that the prison doctor had just told him, as he was coming out into the visiting room, that the biopsy results were all negative! This was cause to celebrate ... but with caution.

I say BIG CAUTION as all the reports Mumia is now getting are based on the prison doctors' oral diagnoses. They are interpreting the hospital reports, and neither Mumia nor his wife, lawyers, or consulting doctors have been given the actual medical reports. The Department of Corrections is refusing to hand over these reports, claiming that they don't have to do so because the case is now in litigation unless forced to by the courts. The health risks of not sharing the extensive hospital reports which were based on extensive testing are considerable as it is impossible for Mumia's private doctors to advise the prison doctors on how to treat Mumia without having those full reports. This is one of the demands we must make immediately: **RELEASE THE HOSPITAL RECORDS TO MUMIA, HIS WIFE, AND HIS LAWYERS** so that they can immediately be shared with Mumia's private consulting doctor. It is absolutely outrageous, and in violation of the Department of Corrections' own regulations, to withhold medical records and reports from the client, his closest kin, and his lawyers. It is clearly dangerous to Mumia's health for the DOC to be denying Mumia's basic rights on this issue of medical record availability. Mumia's lawyers have already challenged this latest threat to his medical care. We will keep you informed as we get additional information. In the meantime call and e-mail the DOC and demand that Mumia's hospital records be released to him, his wife, and his lawyers immediately

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, SECRETARY JOHN WETZEL

717.728.4109

E-mail ra-contactdoc@pa.gov

Wetzel's secretary: secyra-crpdocsecretary@pa.gov

We have definitely made some progress, but we have a long way to go. We still have no diagnosis of the diabetic picture, no diagnosis of the skin problem, and no diagnosis of the extremely swollen feet and legs. And, we have no hospital records. Most important, Mumia remains in prison where he cannot fully recover nor get the kind of care he needs. He never should have been in prison in the first place, but he surely should be released now.

June 4th - Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is Concealing Mumia's Medical Records

Mumia Abu-Jamal's will to live and his commitment to telling the truth is matched by our collective resolve to see him well and free.

Please take action again. Please know that your calls, letters, emails, and faxes (even the ones that they hang up on or seem to ignore) are the only reason that he was given diagnostic testing. Mumia is still weak, in a wheelchair, and his legs are bandaged heavily. He has **still** not been given a diagnosis or a treatment plan. Mumia needs a plan that will address the underlying causes of his chronic and potentially life threatening conditions. Please know that his mind is clear, and his energy is returning. He sends his love and his understanding- that because you took action, he is alive.

Mumia spent nine days Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania and is now back in the infirmary at SCI Mahanoy. Our actions today will ensure that Mumia receives the urgent diagnosis and medical treatment.

In the latest outrage, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is refusing to release Mumia's medical records. Their excuse- that Bret Grote from the Abolitionist Law Center and co-counsel Bob Boyle went to federal court to demand that his lawyers and family be allowed to advise and see him while he was

hospitalized. Holding Mumia's medical records is simply retaliation for exercising his constitutional right to access to the courts.

And it is a direct attack on his ability to get expert advice and care. They are preventing Mumia and his doctor from seeing these critical records, at a time when his condition, while stable, remains serious.

Act Now.

Call the Prison, the Governor, and the DOC. Demand that they release Mumia's medical records immediately (see numbers below).

Call, write and fax today!

John Kerestes, Superintendent SCI Mahanoy

Address: 301 Morea Road, Frackville, Pennsylvania 17932

Phone: 570.773.2158 x8102

Fax: 570.783.2008

Secretary John Wetzel, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Address: 1920 Technology Parkway, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania 17050

Phone: 717.728.4109, 717.728.2573

E-mail: ra-crpadocsecretary@pa.gov

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf

Address: 508 Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Phone: 717.787.2500

Fax: 717.772.8284

Email: governor@pa.gov

3 Jun - Parole Support Letters Needed For Delbert Africa

We are encouraging people to write letters on Delbert's behalf in support of Parole for him.

MORE:

First we would just like to take the time to thank all the People who have taken the time to make calls to a The Pennsylvania Parole Board this week in support of our Brother Delbert Africa. The Parole Board is feeling a tremendous amount of pressure over the issue of parole for Delbert and the Move 9 overall. Due to the amount of pressure over the calls they are now trying to divert people's attention towards letters so that the calls will stop. We urge people to keep making calls and don't stop if the Pennsylvania Parole Board has such an issue with us calling then they should grant parole for Move Political Prisoners bottom line.

In the meantime we are encouraging people to write letters on Delbert's behalf in support of Parole for him.

People can write to:

Chairman John Tuttle

Pennsylvania Board Of Probation And Parole

1101 South Front Street, Suite 5300

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17104

The deadline for letters is Friday June 12th 2015. So let's get as many letters there as possible in support for Parole For Delbert (Orr) Africa #AM4985 and if you can't write a letter continue to make your calls at 717.772.4343 and let's keep the pressure on.

For More info people can go to
onamove.com
move9paroleblogspot.com

5 Jun - From Leonard Peltier – My life is in your hands

Please read the latest from Leonard Peltier. He needs your help.

MORE:

Greetings friends, supporters and Native Peoples.

I would like to begin by saying thank you to those of you who have been with me over these nearly 40 yrs, I know some have passed and we all miss them. Many of them gave their all to help Native nations.

Those of you still around have seen a lot of changes with the ILPDC. Most of the good volunteers had to leave for their own careers or health reasons and some just wanted to move on. But before they did go, they did some awesome things in building the Committee. Then there were, I must admit, a few who came along who had their own agenda. In the end, I was the one who lost out as a lot of the work done by others was lost. That is the situation with the Committee now.

So when my son Chauncey came to visit me after I hadn't seen him for over 16 yrs, I asked him if he would like to help me I needed someone to take care of my art work and to hire a good lawyer. We needed to reopen the Defense Committee, too. Chauncey said he would love to help me. Chauncey has been working hard. Please check out peltierart.com. If you can afford to purchase artwork, it would be a big help. The available art isn't bad, I'm told :-)

Together with Peter Clark and a new Board, Chauncey is also rebuilding the Committee as quickly as he can. But I can't wait for the Committee to get back working at full strength as time is running out for me to file a clemency petition. So I have to ask you supporters around the world for help.

I hear some people claim I don't need lawyers. That's not true. And it's important for supporters to understand that some of my attorneys work for free, but they have expenses the Committee needs to cover. Not all of my attorneys work for free, though, and some are very expensive.

I also hear that supporters think all my celebrity supporters have donated to the Committee? They rarely do and when they do their donations are far less than you might imagine.

No. The fact is that it's always been you supporters who have kept my hope for freedom alive. Now more than ever before I need and want your support.

But I don't just need funds. I need you to keep contacting President Obama. My life is in your hands. Please do your part to help convince the President to let me go home.

Thank you.

5 Jun - Christopher Monfort Convicted of First-Degree Murder

After a four month long trial, Christopher Monfort has been found guilty of fatally shooting a Seattle cop in October 2009. NOTE: The following is a corporate news article, so please critically read it.

MORE:

by Levi Pulkkinen (*Seattle Post Intelligencer*)

A King County jury has convicted cop killer Christopher Monfort on charges stemming from an anti-cop rampage that saw one Seattle officer killed in an ambush meant to terrify police.

Dismissing insanity claims put forward by Monfort's attorneys, the jury convicted Monfort of aggravated first-degree murder in the Halloween 2009 death of Officer Timothy Brenton, as well as some of the other crimes related to a string of attacks on police that fall.

Monfort, who has made repeated outbursts in court, showed no emotion as the verdicts were read.

In addition to the murder charge, he was found guilty of two counts of attempted murder and one count of arson. He was found not guilty on one count of attempted murder.

Monfort's guilt established, the same jury will now be asked to judge whether the unrepentant killer should be spared the death sentence requested by prosecutors. Empaneled since January, the jury likely faces several months of testimony related to Monfort's mental state as the defense tries to show he deserves life in prison without the possibility of parole, the only other punishment available for his crime.

Monfort's attorneys had claimed he was insane during the deadly spree, that he was – and remains – locked in a delusional belief that police are a “lawless gang” that can only be stopped by violence. They compare him to someone compelled by a bizarre delusion, seeing demons or hearing voices; Monfort, they say, is equally committed to the view that cops must die.

Public defenders representing Monfort say he believed himself a revolutionary, like the Founding Fathers. His cause, they say, is ending police brutality. All parties agree he still holds these beliefs.

Offering closing arguments, Senior Deputy Prosecutor Jeff Baird described Monfort's attacks on police as “clear-headed and cold and calculating.” Baird argued Monfort, though strange, was not insane. He knew what he was doing, the prosecutor said, and knew society saw it as wrong.

“The question isn't whether Mr. Monfort is normal,” Baird said. “No one who commits premeditated murder is normal. ... They know that society considers it emphatically, unequivocally wrong.”

Shaped by racist bullying and an unstable family as a youth, Monfort seemed to be flourishing in the years before he Brenton's murder. Monfort, a truck driver for UPS, attended Highline Community College and went on to graduate from the University of Washington.

Monfort's grand plan was a string of murderous attacks against police aimed at forcing officers to stop tolerating police abuses. Those violent ambitions were most evident in the Oct. 31, 2009, attack on Brenton and Officer Britt Kelly. Monfort leveled an assault rifle at the police officers, who had parked in Seattle's Central District, and fired on them.

Brenton was fatally wounded in the shooting. Monfort escaped only to be shot by police during his arrest a week later. Shot in the head, he has been unable to walk since.

Monfort's upbringing and mental state will be the focus of the second phase of the trial, which is expected to begin in coming days.

Death penalty prosecutions in Washington amount to a pair of trials back-to-back before a single jury. Jurors are first asked to decide whether a defendant committed the charged crimes. Having returned a guilty verdict, the jurors must then decide whether there is any persuasive reason not to impose a death sentence. Prosecutors are asked to prove the negative – that there's no compelling reason for leniency.

As a practical matter, a death sentence means little in Washington at present. Gov. Jay Inslee imposed a moratorium on executions, which had been proceeding very slowly even before Inslee took executive action.

Since reinstating the death penalty in 1983, five men have been executed in Washington. The most recent – Cal Coburn Brown – died by lethal injection in September 2010, 19 years after he abducted, tortured and killed 22-year-old Holly Washa.

12 Jun - Punk Rock Karaoke for Marius Mason and Longterm Anarchist Political Prisoners!

WHAT: Punk Rock Karaoke

WHEN: 7:00pm, Friday, June 12th

WHERE: ABC No Rio – 156 Rivington Street New York, New York 10002

COST: \$5-20, sliding scale (it's a benefit y'all).

MORE:

Every year in New York City, founding members of Marius Mason's support group and NYC Anarchist Black Cross have hosted an event for the Day of Solidarity with Marius Mason, Eric McDavid, and All Longterm Anarchist Prisoners, and this year Punk Rock Karaoke NORTHEAST is getting in on the action!

We once again will storm the venerable punk halls of ABC No Rio for a night of punk rock sing-a-longs! All money raised will benefit Marius Mason and Eric McDavid.

This event is BYOB. We will be selling set-ups (cups, ice, and mixers) so all you have to do is bring a bottle — we'll handle the rest. We will also be selling incredible vegan baked goods — sweet and savory.

Tell your friends and come ready to have an awesome time!

More info on the benefit:

Marius Mason is serving a 22-year sentence for acts of environmentally motivated property destruction and is fighting to gain access to gender-affirming health care after announcing his transition last year.

Eric McDavid was originally sentenced to almost 20 years in prison after being entrapped by an agent provocateur, and after a surprise ruling by the federal courts, was released this year after almost a decade of incarceration. Building a new life for himself is the next phase of struggle for Eric, and we are committed to continuing our solidarity with him post-release.

Short talks from:

Lawyers who represent Marius Mason

Members of his support group

Former political prisoners on what support means to people on the inside

For more information visit June11.org supportmariusmason.org supporteric.org

Punk Rock Karaoke is a DIY, fund-raising event that benefits a different community group each time.

Featuring songs from:

Against Me!, Bikini Kill, Black Flag, Bratmobile, Buzzcocks, Choking Victim, The Clash, Circle Jerks, Crass, Dead Kennedys, Descendents, Devo, Flogging Molly, Fugazi, Gogol Bordello, Gorilla Biscuits, Jawbreaker, Joy Division, Minor Threat, The Misfits, NOFX, Operation Ivy, Pixies, The Pogues, Ramones, Rancid, Screeching Weasel, Sex Pistols, Sham 69, Sleater-Kinney, The Smiths, The Specials, Stiff Little Fingers, Wire, X, X-Ray Spex + More!!!

12 Jun - Human Rights Watch Film Festival

WHAT: HRW Film Festival

WHEN: June 12-21

WHERE: Multiple locations, see <https://ff.hrw.org> for details

COST: \$14

MORE:

This year, there are a couple of films in the Human Rights Watch Film Festival of note. On June 12, at Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater, see *3½ Minutes, Ten Bullets*-- As the deaths of Jordan Davis, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner galvanize the public and begin to shape national dialogue and policy, the intimate and moving *3½ Minutes: Ten Bullets* brings the conversation back home—to the impact felt by families across the country for whom reform can't come fast enough.

On June 21, at IFC, see *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*-- a feature documentary that includes eyewitness accounts from the first members who joined the organization, rank-and-file members in cities like Chicago, Oakland, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as the voices of lawyers, journalists, scholars, police officers, and former FBI agents.

13 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 13th and Sunday June 14th - Sullivan, Woodbourne, Eastern and Ulster

Saturday June 20th and Sunday June 21st - Green Haven, Downstate, Fishkill Wallkill and Shawangunk

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