



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for September 1st

14 Aug - Memorials for Hugo Pinell

With the death of Hugo “Yogi Bear” Pinell, many have written memorials. We’ve included some below.

MORE:

August 14th - Beloved political prisoner Hugo ‘Yogi Bear’ Pinell, feared and hated by guards, assassinated in Black August after 46 years in solitary

by Dr. Willie and Mary Ratcliff (*SF BayView*)

Black August adds another hero and martyr to the roll.

By some accounts, it was his first day on the yard after 46 years in solitary confinement when Hugo Pinell, affectionately known as Yogi Bear, was assassinated Aug. 12. The news sparked a victory celebration by prison guards on social media: “May he rot in hell” and “Good riddens” (sic), they typed. Yogi was the only member of the San Quentin 6 still in prison, and his role in the events of Aug. 21, 1971, the day George Jackson was assassinated, has earned the guards’ incessant enmity ever since.

“This is revenge,” declared his close friend, fellow Black Panther veteran Kiilu Nyasha, on Hard Knock Radio Aug. 13. “They hated him as much as George Jackson. They beat him constantly, kept him totally isolated for 46 years – no window, no sunlight – but they could never break him, and that’s why they hated him.

“The only way he survived was that this man was full of love.”

Isolated in the Pelican Bay SHU from 1990 to 2014, Yogi supported his SHU comrades’ campaign to end solitary confinement. He participated in the hunger strikes and applauded the Agreement to End Hostilities, authored by 16 of his comrades, Black, Brown and White, and dated Aug. 12, 2012, three years to the day before he was killed. It has nearly erased racial violence from California prisons.

The comrades who conceived and wrote the agreement were following Yogi’s lead.

“There was a time in the prison systems throughout the United States,” according to a story headlined “The Black Panther Party and Hugo Pinell” in The Black Panther newspaper of Nov. 29, 1971, “when the prisoners themselves were divided, not only white against Black, but Latinos against Blacks. This – the result of racism in every area of U.S. society – was particularly apparent in California prisons.

“Blacks and Latinos fought, stabbed and killed each other in the yards, cell blocks and dining halls of every prison camp from Tehachapi to Tracy. This is always the case when the racist white prison guard, under administration orders, pits one man struggling to survive against another.

“It is the easiest way for the prison to assure almost absolute control over its inmate population. After all, only an idiot would believe he could control 100 men with one man, unless the 100 were divided. Quite often men were paid to start fights between two men. ...

“(B)rothers and sisters across the country inside the maximum prisons began to awaken to the fact of their oppression. They began to realize, as Comrade George Jackson would say, that they were all a part of the prisoner class.

“They began to realize that there was no way to survive that special brand of fascism particular to California prison camps except by beginning to work and struggle together. ... The prisoner class, especially in California, began to understand the age-old fascist principle: If you can divide, you can conquer.

“There are two men who were chiefly responsible for bringing this idea to the forefront. They helped other comrade inmates to transform the ideas of self-hatred and division into unity and love common to all people fighting to survive and retain dignity. These two brothers not only set this example in words, but in practice.

“Comrade George Jackson and Comrade Hugo Pinell, one Black and one Latino, were the living examples of the unity that can and must exist among the prisoner class. These two men were well known to other inmates as strong defenders of their people.

“Everyone knew of their love for the people, a love that astounded especially the prison officials of the state. It astounded them so thoroughly that these pigs had to try and portray them as animals, perverts, madmen and criminals in order to justify their plans to eventually get rid of such men.

“For when Comrades George and Hugo walked and talked together, the prisoners began to get the message too well.

“In a well-planned move, the state of California and the U.S. government carried out the vicious assassination of Comrade George Jackson, field marshal of the Black Panther Party, on Aug. 21, 1971. Their plans to slaughter Hugo Pinell are now in full swing.”

What happened on New Folsom Prison’s B yard on Aug. 12, 2015?

In California, the prisons are abundantly funded, but the billions of taxpayer dollars are spent in secret, as the media are prohibited from covering prisons. So the stories coming from the mainstream media about Yogi so far are based on press releases from CDCr, the Corrections Department, not from reporters who go inside to hear from prisoners.

Highly paid prison guards and their CCPOA (California Correctional Peace Officers Association) are called the most powerful lobby in the state. Guards at New Folsom, located in a suburb of Sacramento, the state capital, likely exert much of that influence. Is that why Yogi was sent there after more than 23 years at Pelican Bay?

“Once a man declares that he will retain his dignity, that he will not forfeit his manhood, then he has in essence declared war against the prison,” The Black Panther reported on Nov. 29, 1971. “He has declared war upon the guards, who operate on the smallest amount of intelligence and human understanding, and upon the prison and state officials, whose every move is planned and calculated to help in this government’s last feeble attempts to quell the desire of the people to see power returned into the hands of the people. Hugo, from the very beginning of his imprisonment, made that declaration.”

Yogi’s enemies were not his comrades in the prisoner class – though he reportedly died at the hand of one or two prisoners, said to be white, though their race is unconfirmed. He was no threat to other prisoners. It was the guards who loathed him and loath the Agreement to End Hostilities, which he exemplified and set in motion over 40 years ago.

Did they have him killed to demolish the agreement, to rekindle all-out race riots? Riots are job insurance for guards.

Several of the authors of the agreement have also been transferred to New Folsom, where they have been educating other prisoners to understand and wield its power. A prisoner on the C yard, Hakim Akbar-Jones, P-85158, wrote this to the Bay View in July:

“Let this be understood: At CSP Sacramento on the C yard, the End to Hostilities Agreement is in full effect. Even though the summertime is here, there is rhythm and harmony amongst respective class members. There are diligent efforts made on all fronts to work hand to hand in solidarity to build a better future amongst the prison class. With this said, we stand fast and salute all conscious guerrilla revolutionaries whose concepts have been brought forth and come to fruition, those in solidarity who support the movement, thus bringing on and creating positive change for the oppressed.”

Does this sound like a place where Hugo Pinell, the legend, the giant amongst conscious guerrilla revolutionaries, would not be protected? Did the other prisoners even know that Yogi would be joining them on the yard on Aug. 12?

What else are the guards afraid of?

Three initiatives are underway that could empty the SHUs and empower the remaining prisoners, and the guards, fearing for their jobs, are fighting them. A reasonable assumption is that the guards expect that the assassination of Hugo Pinell will see a return of the bad old days of racial violence to “justify” filling the SHUs and guaranteeing job security and top pay for guards:

Black Guerrilla Family – According to family members of prisoners who have been negotiating the hunger strikers’ demands with CDCr administrators since the hunger strikes began in 2011, CDCr has decided to remove the Black Guerrilla Family from the list of eight prison gangs because it’s a political not a criminal organization, but reportedly the guards and their CCPOA are furiously opposed. If BGF is not a prison gang, then all the Black prisoners “validated” as BGF “gangsters” would have to be released from SHU.

George Jackson University – Abdul Olugbala Shakur (s/n James Harvey) recently settled a suit to legitimize George Jackson University, which 25,000 prisoners signed up for when he and other prisoners and outside supporters founded it years ago. Guards are adamantly opposed to the distribution and study of books that prisoners might find mentally and spiritually liberating and have prevented the prisoner-led institution from taking root. Though the settlement terms have not yet been revealed, guards are undoubtedly fearful.

Class action lawsuit to end solitary confinement in California – Currently in settlement talks with CDCr are the attorneys for the plaintiff class of prisoners who have been held in the Pelican Bay SHU for 10 years or more. The attorneys are led by Jules Lobel, president of the very prestigious New York based Center for Constitutional Rights, the public interest law firm that also represents many of the hunger-striking prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. The New York Times is giving the case multi-media coverage, including a recent video showing some of the plaintiffs describing how they survive the torture of long term solitary confinement. If the case doesn’t settle, trial is set for December.

These initiatives, bolstered by the awakening in the court of public opinion to the evils of mass incarceration and solitary confinement, are driving efforts by California prison guards and their “union,” CCPOA, to demolish the carefully constructed Agreement to End Hostilities and revert to racial warfare

that divides and conquers prisoners of all colors so that the guards can rule over them as cruelly as they want without getting their hands dirty.

We call for a full independent investigation immediately

The Bay View, joining a consensus of prisoner family members and advocates, calls for investigations into Yogi's death at both the state and federal level. We challenge California Attorney General Kamala Harris, now a candidate for U.S. Senate, and U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch to demonstrate they believe this Black life – the life of Hugo Pinell – matters. Harris, whose office acts as the attorney representing CDCr, needs to counsel her client to reign in the guards, especially the gang investigators.

We also call for the full and fair investigation of all deaths in jails and prisons, where incarcerated people are routinely abused and tortured and even killed. Begin with Sandra Bland and Hugo Pinell.

Yogi's attorney, Keith Wattley, says his family is planning a wrongful death lawsuit.

Honor our fallen comrade

Long live Hugo Pinell, who showed us the power of the human spirit, that love can survive and overpower hell on earth.

To anyone tempted to avenge Yogi's death against another race, remember the wisdom of the Panthers: "If you can divide, you can conquer." Ever wonder why the Bay View calls our prison section Behind Enemy Lines? The prison system, not another prisoner, is the enemy that hopes you won't get out alive.

Embrace Yogi's spirit and read the words that follow from current and former prisoners who loved him back.

August 17th - San Quentin Six on the assassination of Hugo Pinell

Hugo Pinell was assassinated at new Folsom State Prison. This is another example of the racism people of color inside those prisons are confronted with on a daily basis. Like Comrade George, Hugo has been in the cross hairs of the system for years. His assassination exemplifies how racists working in conjunction with prison authorities commit murderous acts like this. We saw it on the yard at Soledad in 1970 and we see it again on the yard at Folsom in 2015.

His life was a living hell. We witness the brutality inflicted on him by prison guards as they made every effort to break him, he endured more than fifty years of sensory deprivation, for decades he was denied being able to touch his family or another human being, as well as attempts on his life. This is cruel and unusual punishment! Hugo is not the monster that is being portrayed in social media/news media. The CDC is the real monster.

During the six trial we really got to know Hugo. He was as we all were under a lot of stress. His stress was heavier than mines because he had the additional load of being beaten on regular occasions. We saw the strength of his of his spirit, and through it all he manage to smile. We mourn the loss of our comrade brother, yogi. We have been hit with a crushing blow that will take some time to recover from. We must expose those who under the cover of law orchestrated and allowed this murderous act to take place. The prisoners who did it acted as agents of the state. It comes at a time when prisoners are collectively trying to end decades of internal strife. Those who took his life have done a disservice to our movement; their actions served the cause of the same oppressor we fought against! No longer do you have to endure the

hatred of people who didn't even know you and never dared to love you. You have represented George & Che well, and we salute you!

SQ SIX

David General Giap Johnson

Luis Bato Talamantez

Willie Sundiata Tate

August 17th - Rest In Power Hugo Pinell (Freedom Archives)

We are saddened by the news of Hugo Pinell's death. Hugo Pinell always expressed a strong spirit of resistance and worked tirelessly as an educator and activist to build racial solidarity inside of California's prison system.

At the time of his death, Hugo had been locked behind bars for 50 years yet his spirit was unbroken.

You can learn more about Hugo's life and contributions to the movement by visiting our tribute page at http://freedomarchives.org/Hugo_Pinell.html

August 18th - Death and Life of Hugo Pinell by Jaan Laaman

It was with true sadness that, on August 13th, I received the news that legendary California prison activist Hugo Pinell was killed in a California prison. This is Jaan Laaman, your political prisoner voice and let me share a few thoughts about the life and death of this extraordinary man.

I never personally knew Hugo Pinell. The simple reason for that is because Hugo Pinell was locked up in California state prisons for 50 years! That is insane. It is hard to wrap your mind around the reality of someone being held captive for 50 years. Even more insane, for most of those years he was held in isolation-segregation cells.

Hugo was just released from segregation and it is being reported that he was killed by two white prisoners. There was a serious uprising or riot that also took place at this time.

Hugo Pinell spent decades teaching, advocating and struggling for Human Rights, justice and dignity for prisoners. He taught and fought for racial and revolutionary unity among all prisoners. Locked up in 1965, like many other prisoners at that time, Hugo became politicized inside the California prison system. In addition to exploring his Nicaraguan heritage, Hugo was influenced by activists like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, as well as his comrades inside, including George Jackson. His leadership in combating the racism and brutality of prison officials made him a prime target for retribution and Hugo soon found himself in the notorious San Quentin Adjustment Center.

While in San Quentin, Hugo and five other politically conscious prisoners were charged with participating in the August 21, 1971 rebellion, which resulted in the assassination of George Jackson by prison guards on that day. Hugo Pinell, Willie Tate, Johnny Spain, David Johnson, Fleeta Drumgo and Luis Talamantez became known as the San Quentin Six. They had a very public 16 month trial. The San Quentin Six became a global symbol of unyielding resistance against the prison system and its violent, racist design. Hugo spent decades in segregation, but continued to work for racial unity and human rights for prisoners.

Personally, I am of course upset that a brother like Hugo was killed, by what I have to assume were some reactionary fascist minded prisoners. But truly what I mainly feel is sadness, profound sadness at this news.

Hugo Pinell is gone. His bid, his sentence is now ended. After 50 years of captivity, that is not a bad thing. Even as an elderly person, in his 70's, Hugo Pinell died in the struggle. The hands that struck him down, it is reported, were prisoners, but the actual force that killed him was the capitalist police state prison system that holds 2.2 million men, women and children in captivity.

Hugo Pinell, we will remember you brother and your strong life long example of resistance. We will continue this resistance and this struggle for Freedom.

August 21st - Support for Hugo "Yogi" Pinell, Our Fallen Warrior

This fund will be the initiator of our future fund for a secular memorial celebration of Yogi's life, and meets approval from his immediate family.

<http://gogetfunding.com/bala>

ANOTHER MARTYR TO BE REMEMBERED DURING BLACK AUGUST: We recently received news that one of our stalwart comrades, Hugo "Yogi Bear" Pinell who has spent the past FIFTY (50) years fighting and resisting behind prison walls, was assassinated August 12, 2015 at New Folsom Prison near Sacramento.

"Black August Resistance" was originally started in the California prisons system to honor three fallen comrades: Jonathan and George Jackson, and Khatari Gaulden. It was and remains a means of reflecting upon - and renewing a commitment to - the Tradition of resistance to oppression and repression faced by Afrikan peoples around the world. Here in Los Angeles, "Black August Resistance" comprises a month of activities for the collective mind, body and spirit in honor of the sacrifices of Our Ancestors, their Fighting Spirit of Resistance, and those who continue to resist while behind prison walls.

Hugo Pinell now joins this list of Ancestors we honor for their Fighting Spirit of Resistance.

Our hearts are heavy, but our resistance and resolve are steeled. With this in mind, we have decided to transition our remaining fundraising efforts to support what we regret to say is another fallen comrade. Monies raised here from this date until the end of Black August will go towards a public memorial for Hugo "Yogi Bear" Pinell.

Donations are tax deductible via FACTS Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization and the fiscal sponsor for this fundraiser.

Thank you for your contribution.

16 Aug - "Writing on the Wall": Editor Johanna Fernández on Mumia Abu-Jamal's New Book + Writing and Updates

Writing on the Wall collects more than 100 unpublished Mumia essays, many written in solitary confinement on death row.

MORE:

by Susie Day (*truthout*)

For decades, Mumia Abu-Jamal has written from prison about injustice, racism and the struggle for a better world. Filled with the author's insight, revolutionary perspective and hope, the subjects of these essays range from Rosa Parks to Edward Snowden, from the Trail of Tears to Ferguson.

Johanna Fernández first heard of Mumia Abu-Jamal - the Philadelphia journalist whose sonorous commentaries from death row had made him world-famous - as an undergraduate at a protest in the early 1990s.

Mumia's analysis of racism and class exploitation immediately spoke to Fernández. The daughter of working-class immigrants fleeing poverty and the Dominican Republic's Trujillo dictatorship, Fernández grew up in the Bronx during the crack epidemic and got her working papers at 14.

She went on to become the first person in her family to graduate college. By the time she was doing graduate work at Columbia, Fernández had become a revolutionary socialist and considered Mumia "the Che Guevara of our time." When Fernández moved to Pittsburgh, to teach at Carnegie Mellon, she started visiting Mumia.

So began a friendship and collaboration destined to last well beyond the publication of *Writing on the Wall*, a new collection of commentaries by Mumia Abu-Jamal, which Fernández edited.

Fernández now teaches history at New York's Baruch College, and Mumia's death sentence has been commuted to life without parole - though he's facing serious illness in prison. I asked Fernández about the book and their work together:

Susie Day for Truthout (SD): What was it like the first time you visited Mumia?

Johanna Fernández (JF): I was petrified. Like, what the hell am I going to tell Mumia Abu-Jamal - on death row? But before long I was visiting him and about 10 other men on death row at SCI Greene. I became part of a cohort of people whose work consists mostly of visiting prisoners, including Mumia. I also taught a course at Carnegie Mellon that included Mumia's book on the Black Panther Party, *We Want Freedom*. That was where we did the first "Live From Death Row" conversation in the classroom with Mumia.

My Carnegie Mellon students are big nerds and tech geeks. They helped me figure out how to have Mumia call into the classroom. He talked to the students and the students talked to him - it was transformative. I still have students from that class tell me how that changed them. And Mumia was changed. I remember their last question: "Do you think you've risen above this tragedy? Because yes, you're imprisoned, but you're known around the world and you've touched so many lives."

Mumia answered, "I am not a martyr. I don't believe in martyrdom." Then the phone cut us off.

SD: Yes, I often sense that Mumia's supporters feel required to objectify him as an exemplar of "the struggle." We forget that, for all Mumia's accomplishments and courage, he's also one more person among over 2 million others in US prisons.

JF: Well, here's the thing. I needed to have visited him. I met Mumia, and he's this ordinary guy who has no ego - I mean everybody has an ego - but he's cool and approachable, and he goofs around about a million things. We laugh; he curses.

Visiting prisoners grounds you. It puts things in perspective. I was petrified about meeting Mumia because it was like I was going to visit Jesus Christ. And Mumia was this ordinary man without airs. He's an incredible conversationalist. He rejects the identity of an icon.

SD: Good. Because I think seeing people as icons distorts your own self-image ...

JF: But I do think Mumia's case is important because he's the target of the state. The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) has identified Mumia as the world's most infamous "cop-killer," and they go after him rabidly. Because of that and because of Mumia's unrelenting revolutionary writing - that's part of why he's a target - a victory in Mumia's case would blow the cover off, not only political imprisonment but also the crisis of mass incarceration. Not to mention the role of police in society.

SD: In the book's Introduction, you say the Fraternal Order of Police is "the most powerful police organization in the world." Really?

JF: The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest police organization in the world. Go to its website. They fund the legal expenses of cops who kill civilians. The FOP uses Mumia's case to advance its right-wing agenda at every turn. From Marilyn Zuniga, the third-grade teacher in New Jersey, who was fired for mailing her students' get-well letters to Mumia, to the takedown of Debo Adebile, who was Obama's nominee to lead the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, the FOP is a powerful and insidious organization.

SD: How did you decide to put together this collection?

JF: What do you do when you visit a prisoner? You tear the world apart and then build it back up, with humanity's highest aspirations leading the rebuilding process. So after a decade of visiting Mumia on death row, sometimes two and three times a week, I thought, "We should put some of these ideas in writing."

Also, as a historian, I wanted to see how Mumia's writing changed during his 33 years in prison. And to understand the post-Civil Rights era through Mumia's writings, because that's the period I study. Second probably only to Manning Marable, who had a column titled "Along the Color Line" during the same period, I don't know anyone who looks at America through the lens of race and racism but also has a revolutionary critique of capitalism and imperialism.

SD: I'd never read the essays Mumia wrote just after his 1981 arrest. Have these appeared anywhere before?

JF: You know, Mumia believes in movements and the power of ordinary people. So back then he hand-wrote his commentaries on carbon paper, making three copies. One he kept; two he sent out to women who were the telegraphers of his words from death row.

Some of these pieces were published by a local newspaper, The Scoop USA, which is a local circular. It was then literally an 8½-by-11 mimeographed paper you could find in barbershops and local dives in North Philly. The first nine of these commentaries were published later in the 1980s by activists, in a pamphlet titled "Survival Is Still a Crime."

SD: Why did you include such old essays?

JF: In one piece, Mumia unequivocally declares his innocence. That's important because the Fraternal Order of Police wrongly repeats over and over again that Mumia has never declared his innocence; that he confessed in the hospital to killing Officer Daniel Faulkner. For that essay, Mumia actually lifted part of his statement of innocence from the public record. He'd already declared in court, before his sentencing: "I am innocent of these charges that I have been tried for ... I am innocent despite what you 12 people think ..."

SD: This book includes 108 of Mumia's commentaries. How did you pick them?

JF: Mumia has written thousands of pieces, so choosing only 108 was very difficult. Someone helped me whittle it down to around 600. I wanted a variety, so after the 600 or so were selected, I went off and found others that addressed the politics of the Caribbean, Haiti, Africa, Puerto Rico ...

The book's objective was to place Mumia in the context of the Black Radical tradition and with other prison writers. That's important for this new generation of young people coming to political consciousness. I also wanted to include "10 Reasons Why Mumia Abu-Jamal Should Be Freed." That's what's different about this collection; it addresses the case.

SD: I notice you included some essays on Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

JF: Part of what it means to be in the Black Radical tradition is to defend the colonized and the oppressed. It would have been dishonest and unprincipled to exclude Palestine. This is one of the most important crises of our time. It's the terrorizing and displacement of a people and their demonization by their oppressor - we forget this has a deep resonance in the African-American experience. I can't imagine Mumia approving a book without these commentaries.

SD: Isn't Mumia as a journalist - even with resources most people don't have in prison - still operating at a huge disadvantage? How do you think his work might be different if he were allowed access to the world?

JF: I think Mumia is enamored of people's stories, of struggle. His work would probably benefit from being able to interview the people he writes about. He really enjoyed going into the field and talking to people. In fact, that's how he got into this crisis. He was the only journalist in Philadelphia who actually talked to the MOVE people and got their story from their perspective.

SD: As his collaborator, is there any constructive advice that you'd give Mumia about his writing?

JF: Well, because Mumia's used to writing short form, sometimes I want him to deepen his analysis. I push him to do that.

SD: Yes, often there are little nuggets of gobsmacking information tucked away in his essays. In one, he mentions offhandedly that "members of the Abolition movement were seen as the 'crazies' of the day, and Lincoln made jokes about shooting them!" Mumia could make that an essay in itself.

JF: Exactly. And he welcomes feedback. I mean he pushes back because he's trained in this journalistic haiku. But you know this is also a product of his isolation. Writing is about rewriting; it's about sharing your work with a community of writers and people you trust. Mumia doesn't have that.

Part of the issue now is that Mumia's very ill but the demands on him to write are still immense. He's constantly writing. And writing these commentaries, recording them, giving speeches hither and yon, this keeps him alive.

SD: It's now public that Mumia has hepatitis C. Do you know anything more at this point?

JF: Mumia's condition is horrific. His skin, from head to toe, looks like elephant hide. So the movement managed to get a doctor to visit and eyeball his condition. Even though this wasn't a formal exam - he just made a regular prison visit - the doctor thinks that Mumia's condition is a complication of hepatitis C, which Mumia acquired when he was transfused in 1981 after he was shot by Officer Faulkner. The doctor,

who's traveled internationally with Doctors Without Borders, also noted that this same condition was studied in Egypt among predominantly Black patients.

SD: Back in 1981, I'm guessing that, if a police officer had shot and killed Mumia Abu-Jamal, there would have been no outrage of the kind that erupted after Officer Faulkner's death. Mumia would be another statistic. Why should a cop's life be more important than a civilian's?

JF: I don't think it should be. I think Eddie Conway said that, in the post-Civil Rights era, the killing of a police officer by a Black man is the new unspeakable act, similar to the rape of a white woman by a Black man.

It's also how police, in the aftermath of the Black Power era, have reacquired legitimacy in American society. In many ways, the cops were exposed and delegitimized in the 1960s by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. They had to launch a campaign to regain respect, which they've gotten on the backs of political prisoners, of Black political prisoners.

This term "cop-killer" is part of that campaign. It's elevated the life of a police officer over that of an ordinary person. That's dangerous because, when you enter that kind of territory, you're living in a police state.

SD: So Mumia's not a martyr. But you've said that with his fame and his writing and the art other people make about him, Mumia's still an icon. How do you get people to see beyond that?

JF: When I was working on the film *Justice on Trial*, I interviewed Mumia's sister. She started talking about the role Mumia played in their family. His mother had been orphaned and didn't show much affection. His sister tells how Mumia would just grab their mother up - she was a very small woman - and would force her to hug him. She told me all these stories about the ordinary Mumia in a family unit.

I thought, "Oh my god, this is how they're able to warehouse so many African-American men." Because, if they're political prisoners, we imagine them as icons. If they're not, they're free agents, disconnected from friends, family, partners. And I realized that one of the most important things we can do is simply to humanize incarcerated people. Political prisoners, all of them.

The problem is that the state is always on the attack. It has prison activists constantly in a frenzied state, such that we can't think long-term. For me, there's always some emergency, and the challenge is to step back, to figure out how we're going to bring Mumia home.

August 24th - Mumia Abu-Jamal's Legal Team Files for Immediate Treatment & Injunctive Relief
Medical Neglect nearly killed Abu-Jamal in March; Now the DOC refuses lifesaving treatment

Attorneys for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal filed a motion for preliminary injunction in "Abu-Jamal vs. Kerestes" today with Judge Robert Mariani in the Middle District of Pennsylvania seeking a federal court order to ensure that prison medical staff provide immediate life- saving hepatitis C treatment to Mumia Abu-Jamal. Abu-Jamal is incarcerated at SCI Mahanoy in Frackville Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) medical staff and DOC counsel have refused Abu-Jamal's demand for treatment and denied letters from his lawyers and independent doctors documenting the critical need for immediate treatment. Medically necessary treatment for hepatitis C consists of new antiviral drugs that have a 95% cure rate, and consists of one pill per day over the course of 12 weeks with minimal side effects.

Blood tests for the hepatitis C viral load done in July at the insistence of Abu-Jamal, his lawyers, and consulting doctors have confirmed that Abu-Jamal has active hepatitis C, which is most likely the underlying cause of his year-long, escalating health crisis.

Mumia Abu-Jamal remains weak and sick in the prison infirmary. He is currently not receiving treatment for a persistent and debilitating skin condition that is itchy and painful. Mr. Abu-Jamal has already suffered two hospitalizations, one a near fatal episode after SCI Mahanoy's medical staff refused to treat or even monitor his dramatic and dangerously excessive blood glucose level, leading to diabetic shock. Every day that medically indicated treatment is denied carries the significant risk of continued and irreversible injury.

Background:

On March 30, 2015, Abu-Jamal was rushed to the hospital after losing consciousness and going into diabetic shock. Although prison medical staff was aware that Abu-Jamal had a dangerously high blood glucose level of 419 on March 6, they failed to treat, monitor, or even inform Abu-Jamal of his condition. Glucose levels like those that Abu-Jamal had can result in diabetic shock, diabetic coma, and death.

Abu-Jamal's diabetic shock came in the midst of an escalating year-long health crisis that began with a rash in August 2014. The skin condition grew in intensity over the course of the next several months, eventually covering most of his body with a painful, severe rash that is resistant to conventional treatments. The skin condition is abnormal in its duration and intensity, and has led to lesions, open wounds, and swelling.

Hepatitis C:

Advances in Hepatitis C treatment in recent years have revolutionized the way the disease is treated, with new direct-acting anti-viral medications that have had over 95% success rates in curing the illness in clinical trials. The medications, however, are extraordinarily expensive in the United States due to monopoly pricing practices by the pharmaceutical companies that have patented them.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has yet to promulgate a new protocol for treating Hepatitis C with the new medications, meaning that the estimated 10,000-plus people in DOC custody who have Hepatitis C are not receiving any treatment.

This issue is the subject of a class action lawsuit filed in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania federal court in June 2015.

Abu-Jamal is represented by Bret Grote of the Abolitionist Law Center and Robert J. Boyle of New York.

August 25th - Messing With Major

His name is Major - (his real name); Major Tillery of West Philadelphia.

Although he had a reputation as a gangster, in prison such things matter little. It's as a jailhouse lawyer that he shook the prison walls in the case known as Tillery v. Owens, a ground-breaking prison conditions case where double-dealing (or the placement of four men in a cell) was declared unconstitutional. The prison medical department was declared unconstitutional and living conditions in part of the prison were declared a violation of the constitution.

Shortly after his glorious win, Major Tillery was sent to a prison in another state; Retaliation? Sure looks like it.

Several months ago, Major saw me in the library, and expressed shock at my appearance, my carriage, and my level of wakefulness. He argued with me, insisting I go to the prison infirmary.

I resisted, saying I was ok, or would be in a few days. Major said, “Dude - I’m looking at you - your skin is shedding; you are so tired you can’t stay awake. You ain’t cool, Mu!”

He went further. He walked up to the prison superintendent, warning him that if Jamal wasn’t hospitalized immediately, he might die.

The warden responded, “I suggest you worry less about another prisoner, and more about yourself.”

Major responded immediately: “That’s what I’m doing, cuz that’s my brother - and I want for my brother what I want for myself!”

From that day forward, Tillery was hit by daily harassments, daily shakedowns, and he was removed from his job of Peer Facilitator.

He was transferred - first to the other side of the prison, and soon thereafter, to nearby SCI- Frackville. Once there, he got another surprise: he received a misconduct for drug-trafficking (of suboxone), using stamps. He was given 6 months in the hole!

Here’s the only problem with such a charge. At Frackville (as in Mahanoy), all stamps are ripped off of envelopes by the mailroom before prisoners receive their mail.

Tillery demanded he be charged by the State Police to prove the falsity of the charge. The prison refused to do so.

Retaliation?

Sure looks like it.

To make matters worse, Major Tillery, and dozens of other men, are also suffering from skin rashes and getting little relief.

Major is in the hole not because of drugs, but because of something prison administrators hate and fear above all things: prisoner unity; prisoner solidarity.

On Sept. 5, 2015, Tillery will turn 65 years old, in the hole for blatant retaliation.

17 Aug - Wishlist for Joseph Buddenberg

Currently, Joseph Buddenberg is on house arrest and can only leave the apartment for very specific engagements, never to stray from the path taken to get there. Therefor, his supporters have organized a wish list for him.

MORE:

Fortunately there is a supportive network that exists in the Bay area to pick up certain items he may need from week to week. Here is one more way we can support Joseph while he is going through this tough time. All you have to do is follow the link to his Amazon.com wish list that was set up, and find something that you might like to order for Joseph, or pass it along to a friend.

Thank you, and stay tuned for more updates on Nicole and Joseph's case and ways you can plug in to support them.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/1HGPMNHJ7KB6B>

18 Aug - Remember the dead - Solidarity for the living by Brandon Baxter

Please read the latest from Cleveland 4 prisoner Brandon Baxter.

MORE:

Every day we spend in these cages is a day of our lives we will never get back. They are limited in the same way that there are only so many fingers on our hands; limbs on our bodies.

All the cherished memories we will never have.

All the moments we won't have to hold onto.

Each day, a piece of our lives, torn from us, like cutting off our fingers, one knuckle at a time.

The police once killed with impunity. Today they answer to the mob, The People's Justice.

But the sad reality is that if Michael Brown were arrested and given a life sentence Ferguson would have never burned. He would have been mutilated, one day at a time. No one would have known his name, not even when he died in prison.

As of writing, the oppressed riot in Baltimore over the death of Freddie Gray at the hands of the police. The Left will, as always, attempt to recuperate this momentum. Indeed, I have read articles by these liberals defending looting as a legitimate form of protest.

...of protest...Is that all this is? Demanding reform; police accountability? Is this a problem to be solved by taxing the People hundreds of millions of dollars to put a body camera on every cop on the beat?

That's the narrative we're up against. And if the mob isn't challenged to make a deeper analysis of the web of oppression it's beginning to fight against, that is the reality we will face: more cops and an even more omnipresent surveillance state.

If Freddie Gray hadn't died but were sitting in a holding tank, would there be any less reason for what's taking place in Baltimore today?

We must remember the dead. But the living are dying.

Every day.

Let's try being a little less reactionary (it makes us predictable, taking away the advantages of spontaneity).

Let us channel this righteous fury into concise decisive strategy in our fight for the living.

18 Aug - Albert Woodfox Update

After a summer of back and forth briefing on paper, on Wednesday morning, September 2nd, in the East Courtroom a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans will hear oral arguments on whether Federal Judge James Brady's June 8th "unconditional writ" officially overturning Albert's conviction, ordering his release, and barring a retrial (a ruling he presented as "the only just remedy") will stand.

MORE:

As usual, the public is welcome to attend. Though we don't know for sure what time our case will be heard, doors open at 8am and court convenes at 8:30am. Arguments are expected to be short (usually each side only gets about 45 minutes) and for those unable to attend audio recordings are posted on the 5th's website by close of business that same day.

A decision from that Court is expected sometime later this fall. If Judge Brady's ruling is upheld, Albert will be released and a retrial banned. If reversed, the Fifth Circuit does not have the power to reinstate Albert's overturned conviction, but can put limits on the terms of Judge Brady's Writ and release order.

New Orleans Mural of Albert Woodfox

We are excited to announce that a 25-foot-tall mural of Albert Woodfox has been unveiled in New Orleans at 537 South Claiborne Avenue, near the Superdome. The new mural was painted by artist Brandan "BMike" Odums in conjunction with Amnesty International USA's Art for Amnesty program.

The black and white portrait depicts Albert against a white setting sun striped with prison bars. Text beside the mural reads: "4 Decades of Solidarity, 43 Years of Injustice." Odums is best known for his pair of masterpiece public art installations "Project Be" in 2013 and "Exhibit Be" in 2014 that featured images of African-American political figures painted in unoccupied low-income housing apartments.

18 Aug - Last Court Date For Dante Cano

For folks who have been following Dante Cano's case, he has decided to take a non-cooperating plea agreement and will have his sentencing date on Thursday, September 10th.

MORE:

We want to thank locally all the people that showed up through this process to support Dante in court, as well as the comrades near and wide who sent letters, money, and let others know what was happening with the case.

Please stay tuned, because we will have to raise a lot of money to pay Dante's restitution.

18 Aug - Can a Federal Prisoner Be Too Old to Jail?

Federal agencies are rethinking criteria for a program that lets elderly and infirm inmates out of prison early.

MORE:

by Lisa Peng (*National Journal*)

When you're locked in federal prison, how old do you have to be to count as "aging"?

That's the question two federal agencies are grappling over, and the answer they pick will determine how the government spends more than \$800 million in public funding for prisons. And for tens of thousands of federal inmates, it could mean the difference between becoming eligible for a late-life release program and spending their twilight years behind bars.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is struggling to adjust to an aging prison population, a product, in part, of criminal-justice reforms of the late 1980s that dramatically reduced federal parole and imposed mandatory minimum sentences for some offenses. In fiscal 2013, the Federal Bureau of Prisons spent nearly 20 percent of its \$6.9 billion budget to incarcerate inmates aged 50 and older. And without a policy

intervention, those costs are set to rise: Inmates aged 50 and older make up the fastest-growing segment of the prison population, according to Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz.

To meet those costs, the Bureau of Prisons is requesting a 6.1 percent increase in funding for fiscal 2016, an increase from the bureau's \$6.9 billion budget in 2015.

But in a report released in May, the Justice Department Office of the Inspector General suggested the Bureau of Prisons consider an alternative solution: expand a "compassionate-release" program that reduces the term of imprisonment for elderly inmates.

To be eligible for the reduced sentencing program, inmates must have "chronic or serious medical conditions relating to the aging process" that "substantially diminish their ability to function in a correctional facility" for which "conventional treatment promises no substantial improvement," according to a statement from the Bureau of Prisons. They must also have served more than half of their sentence. For inmates looking for early release under nonmedical circumstances, the time-served bar is higher: "the greater of 10 years or 75 percent of their term."

"As with all compassionate-release determinations, the BOP considers whether the offender poses a danger to the safety of another person or to the community," the statement said.

But for any of the above criteria to be considered, the inmate must be aged 65 or older.

The Inspector General report did not explicitly call on the Bureau of Prisons to lower the limit in its May report. Instead, it recommended the bureau reconsider the age bar and noted the potential advantages of setting it at age 50.

The lower threshold would cut incarceration costs and relieve prison overcrowding without significantly increasing recidivism rates, the report said. The report notes several ways in which prisoners 50 and over differ from the rest of the prison population. Older inmates cost an average of 8 percent more to confine, but they are also less likely to end up back in prison after release. While the recidivism rate among all prisoners is 41 percent, for those released after age 50, the rate falls to 15 percent.

According to the Inspector General report, lowering the threshold age from 65 to 50 and instituting a 5 percent release rate for only those inmates in minimum or low-security institutions or medical centers could reduce incarceration costs by approximately \$28 million per year.

Federal prisons with the most aging inmates spent "five times more per inmate on medical care" and "14 times more per inmate on medication" than institutions with the fewest aging inmates, the report said.

The 65-or-over bar for the program is relatively new, set in 2013 in an effort to clarify the release program's eligibility criteria following a separate Inspector General report released earlier that year.

The two agencies split over how effective the program has been since that time. The Inspector General report said that between August 12, 2013, and September 12, 2014, only two of the 348 inmates who were qualified to make requests were let out.

The Bureau of Prisons said that the Inspector General report does not present "the full picture." From August 2013 to August 11, 2015, 21 elderly inmates without medical conditions and seven elderly inmates with medical conditions have been released under the program, the bureau statement said.

For now, it's unclear whether the Bureau of Prisons will lower the minimum age for its compassionate-release program.

In its response to the May Inspector General report, the agency said it would "raise the issue with relevant stakeholders for further discussion." It also, however, noted that the Inspector General report wasn't explicitly recommending a lower age, instead only recommending that the change be considered. In other words: "As the recommendation only calls for the consideration of new criteria (rather than the adoption of new standards), we request this recommendation be closed."

19 Aug - Chelsea Manning found guilty of prison infractions, but no solitary confinement

After a four-hour disciplinary board hearing, the United States Army has punished Chelsea Manning for possessing books and magazines having to do with LGBTQ and political issues.

MORE:

by Kevin Gosztola (*Shadowproof*)

The Army has also punished her for having an expired tube of toothpaste and for brushing food off the table and refusing to talk to a guard after she was accused of misconduct.

For these actions, the Army imposed 21 days of recreational restrictions. She will not be allowed to go the gym, library or outdoors. And, more significantly, these "charges" will be part of her permanent record.

Manning declared after the hearing, "Now these convictions will follow me [through] to any parole/clemency hearing forever." She said she had expected to be moved to minimum custody in February, but now it could be years before that happens.

The Army had threatened Manning with solitary confinement. Fortunately, she did not receive that punishment.

"When I spoke to Chelsea earlier today she wanted to convey the message to supporters that she is so thankful for the thousands of people from around the world who let the government know that we are watching and scrutinizing what happens to her behind prison walls," Chase Strangio, her ACLU attorney, declared. "It was no doubt this support that kept her out of solitary confinement."

Her ACLU attorney condemned the fact that Manning faced the disciplinary board hearing alone—after being denied access to the prison's legal library—and was also prohibited from having legal counsel.

"[Chelsea] will now be punished for daring to share her voice, [which] sets a concerning precedent for the remaining decades of her incarceration," Strangio added. "Not only does this punishment mean the immediate loss of library and recreation for Chelsea, but she also will carry these infractions through her parole and clemency process and will be held longer in the more restrictive custody where she is now incarcerated."

"No one should have to face the lingering threat of solitary confinement for reading and writing about the conditions we encounter in the world. Chelsea's voice is critical to our public discourse about government accountability and trans justice and we can only preserve it if we stay vigilant in our advocacy on her behalf."

Over one hundred thousand people signed a petition, which was delivered by Fight for the Future, RootsAction.org, Demand Progress, and CodePink to the Army the same day of the hearing.

“It’s absurd that Chelsea was found guilty, and that she has to endure any additional punishment beyond being wrongly imprisoned, but now the U.S. government knows that the world is watching their treatment of Chelsea closely,” Evan Greer, campaign director of Fight for the Future, stated.

The ACLU created a graphic, which includes each item confiscated by the Army.

That anyone in any prison would be punished for LGBTQ magazines, including a Vanity Fair magazine with Caitlyn Jenner on the cover, a copy of Cosmopolitan in which she was interviewed, and a book about transgender issues is ridiculous. This is especially appalling when considering how the Pentagon grabs headlines for moving toward more inclusion of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and even transgender people.

Even more ludicrous is the fact that she was punished for having books like I Am Malala, Law’s Empire and Justice for Hedgehogs. U.S. officials could not possibly do enough public events with Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai. The other two books are works of philosophy available in college and university libraries throughout the country.

And, aside from the tragedy and farce of punishing someone for an expired tube of anticavity toothpaste, it is shameful that Manning is being punished for having an executive summary of the Senate intelligence committee’s report on CIA torture.

Not a single person involved in authorizing policies of torture has gone to prison or faced criminal prosecution. Yet, someone like Chelsea Manning, who possessed a report which U.S. agencies themselves refused to read, is going to have a “charge” that will follow her forever because she dared to show interest and care about what brutality the CIA committed against detainees.

20 Aug - COINTELPRO Warrior Dhoruba bin Wahad attacked

Former political prisoner Dhoruba bin Wahad was recently attacked by members of the New Black Panthers who broke Dhoruba's jaw in three places.

MORE:

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

A bruised and battered Dhoruba bin Wahad (former Richard Moore) and Kalonji Jama Changa held a news conference on August 18 in Atlanta, Georgia, to denounce the New Black Panther Party. Members of the group assaulted the two men and four others in an Atlanta hotel ballroom ten days earlier. Changa is the coordinator of the Free the People Movement and was leading several of his members in a protest against the New Black Panthers.

Dhoruba served nineteen years in prison for the May 1971 attempted murder in a drive-by shooting of two New York City policemen guarding the home of Manhattan District Attorney Frank Hogan. Dhoruba was released after he obtained exculpatory evidence withheld by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While in prison, Dhoruba won the release of 300,000 pages of FBI documents including secret COINTELPRO directives.

Operation COINTELPRO was a clandestine and illegal counterintelligence program directed against political activists from 1956 to 1971, under J. Edgar Hoover’s close supervision. Dhoruba’s activism made him a target of the COINTELPRO operation. Dhoruba is one of the few persons who fought COINTELPRO in court and won.

In 1995, Dhoruba was awarded \$400,000 by the Federal government. In 2000, Dhoruba was awarded \$490,000 by the city of New York.

Many consider Dhoruba an elder statesman of the Black Power movement and he has continued his activism after release from prison. Dhoruba was interviewed by Examiner.com last year on his views: "The pitfalls of opportunism and reactionary politics are always present so we can claim no certain victories just yet. It was the racist and deceptive brutality of America's law enforcement establishment that was deployed against the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the sixties. COINTELPRO and similar repressive programs carried out by the federal government did not initiate and maintain "racial profiling" and a militarized police presence in African-American communities - it was local police departments and local prosecutorial agencies who did the dirty work of infiltration, disruption of grass root activists and who were responsible for controlling the fires of Black rebellion in America."

Dhoruba considers the New Black Panthers to be a hate group, heavily infiltrated by the FBI, and serving to divide the black community in a modern-day COINTELPRO operation. On August 8, when the group decided to hold a rally in Atlanta, Dhoruba felt it was his duty, as a former Black Panther and political prisoner, to confront attorney Malik Zulu Shabazz who headed the New Black Panthers until 2014.

A news release from New Afrikan Press International offered initial details. Dhoruba and the others were jumped by two dozen members of the New Black Panthers at the "Power Belongs to the People Conference" where Shabazz was speaking.

According to witnesses, Dhoruba Bin Wahad and the others approached the side of the stage where Shabazz was speaking. Shabazz shouted "Wahad! We'll deal with you later!" Dhoruba replied "You can deal with me now."

Shabazz then ordered the group to expel Dhoruba, which attacked the elder activist with chairs breaking Dhoruba's jaw in three places and leaving him bloody and swollen with bruises. One of the others with Dhoruba was choked unconscious and another received a head wound that required staples. Dhoruba's injuries required a six-hour operation to repair his broken jaw.

Earlier this year when Dhoruba moved from New York to Atlanta Clayton County Deputy Ryan Hall beat him in May at his home. Hall was fired over the attack, captured on a cell phone camera, and was indicted by a grand jury on July 29.

Dhoruba bin Wahad continues to advocate for political prisoners, particularly aging imprisoned victims of COINTELPRO operations.

20 Aug - Barrett Brown out of solitary, still under restrictions

Finally out of segregated housing, Barrett is still prohibited from accessing the phone, email, commissary and visitors.

MORE:

Barrett Brown has been moved out of solitary confinement, known as the Segregated Housing Unit, and back into the general compound. Barrett had been in solitary for more than two months, since around 17 June 2015, a duration far exceeding that which psychologists and the United Nations say constitutes torturous treatment. Barrett turned 34, his third birthday in jail, while in solitary confinement last week.

However, Barrett is still prohibited from using the phone, accessing email, purchasing commissary items and receiving visitors until 18 October. The email prohibition will last even longer unless his appeal succeeds.

We'll continue to report on Barrett's condition and access to various prison privileges as restrictions are eventually lifted.

August 24th - The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Prison

Last time I mentioned that I'd been thrown into the hole, otherwise known as the Special Housing Unit (SHU), after a "random" breathalyzer test that I passed was nonetheless followed by a "random" targeted search of my locker, not unlike the "random" drug test for which I just happened to be selected out of 350 inmates in my unit a few months back, shortly after filing a complaint against prison officials regarding — wait for it — retaliation. In fairness, they did find a cup of homemade alcohol in my locker this time, the clever rascals, but I was only going to use it to drink a toast to the Bureau of Prisons and wish the agency luck in defending itself against the various lawsuits that have been filed against it lately. Also I wanted to look cool in front of the bigger kids.

Getting put back in Disciplinary Segregation was actually in some ways fortuitous, as I'm now able to make a long-overdue inspection tour of this institution's Special Housing Unit. (I'm very much the Eleanor Roosevelt of the federal prison system.) The timing is grand, too, as the nation's tendency to keep prisoners in these sorts of 23-hour-a-day lockdown settings for no good reason has come under a rare spate of scrutiny in recent months. But going to the hole isn't all champagne and roses. By policy, one doesn't receive one's property, including legal papers, until after two weeks of confinement. And by negligence, one is usually left without one's prescribed medications for at least three or four days. Bizarrely enough, there was also a shortage of the little pencils we're supposed to receive upon arrival, and so it took me a while to get one of my very own. And after over a month of confinement, despite countless requests to the ranking lieutenant, I've still yet to receive a high-end gaming laptop loaded with a Super Nintendo emulator, a complete set of Super Nintendo ROMs, and the latest stable release of Dwarf Fortress, although I guess I can see how this might be regarded as a not altogether reasonable demand.

But the most jarring aspect of going to the hole is always that period between arrival and the point at which one is able to get one's hands on a worthwhile book. Some previous occupant had left a couple of paperbacks in my cell, one of which was an early '90s thriller called *The Mafia Candidate* in which a major presidential contender turns out to be a tool of the mafia and not of Northrop Grumman or Booz Allen Hamilton or Lockheed Martin or Bell Helicopter or Kellogg Brown & Root, like the more respectable candidates. As the story begins, an undercover FBI agent joins some suspected drug runners on a Caribbean yacht cruise in order to gather evidence, rather than simply lying to a grand jury to obtain a warrant like a real FBI agent would do. Alas, the narc's cover is blown and he's held at gunpoint by the mob henchmen. "If this were an Indiana Jones movie, he might throw himself to the floor and roll under the table while all these guys with cannons blazed away at each other," explains the author. "But this wasn't the movies and things like that didn't happen in real life. Or real death, either."

Proud though I was at having discovered the worst line ever written, I was now in full-on lit-crit final form blood frenzy battle mode, and so instead of resting on my snide and pompous laurels, I went ahead and picked up the other paperback. This was *Holiday in Death* by Nora Roberts, a contemptible writer who appears to have amassed an unwarranted fortune for herself and her foul publishers by catering to the gauche sexual fantasies of the American soccer mom, cursed among demographics. Having already written every possible combination of English words that can be jammed into a conventional 300-page romance novel and having thereby churned out some 900 trillion bestsellers, this arch-priestess of darkness next saw

fit to concoct an entirely new genre, “futuristic romantic suspense,” of which this “Holiday” title is listed as being just one of two dozen in a series.

The setting: New York, 2043. The hero: a female cop who just happens to be married to THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD WHO IS ALSO RUGGEDLY HANDSOME. As the story begins, our pig protagonist is feeling sad because THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD WHO IS ALSO RUGGEDLY HANDSOME is on a business trip to space, presumably to attend the ribbon-cutting for the Palantir-Pentagon Joint Orbital Omniscience Satellite Army or something of that nature. But then he picks up the space phone and makes a space call to tell his jack-booted thugger that he’s coming home early because he just misses her so much. So he heads back to earth, perhaps catching a space ride on one of Elon Musk’s space yachts along with Palantir chief Peter Thiel and the biomechanical meta-clone of Admiral Poindexter that serves as Thiel’s handler. (I should probably explain that I spent a pleasant afternoon creating a dystopian geopolitical backstory for Roberts’ setting whereby the U.S. and its client states have fallen under the dual control of DARPA’s Office of Perpetual Data Supremacy and the Shadow Council of Misguided Tech Billionaires. I wish I could say that this took a great deal of imagination.) When he gets home he takes his little cop wife by the hand, and what do you suppose he tells her? He tells her this: “The wanting of you never stops.” Rather than do the only decent thing by shooting him in the back and casually tossing her taser next to the body in support of a falsified police report, this wanton cop-tart actually responds positively to her space husband’s deranged and over-written declaration of space lust. There follows what is likely intended to be a sex scene, though it’s all rather abstract so they might just be doing Tai Chi in a humid room.

Among the various tacked-on elements by which Roberts occasionally sees fit to remind us that this is the future, a list of the contents of someone’s apartment will usually include an “entertainment unit” or some such thing. Science fiction authors have been pulling this shit for literally 80 years now, sprinkling their projected futures with “comm units” and “food preparation units” and whatnot. It’s time to accept that no one is ever going to market their consumer appliance as any sort of “unit.” Things like that don’t happen in real life. OR REAL DEATH, EITHER.

Anyhoo, I spent much of the first couple of days talking to my cellmate. (Note that a stint in the hole doesn’t necessarily entail solitary confinement, which is not always viable due to overcrowding.) As far as SHU cellmates go, it would be hard to top the one with whom I was initially placed last time I was thrown into the hole a year ago, after allegedly inciting a demonstration: a white, red-bearded Texas Muslim with the words “Death Rain Upon My Enemies” tattooed across his back in Arabic, and who, when asked by a staff officer if he had anything to say to the disciplinary committee in his own defense, quoted Saddam Hussein’s reply from his war crimes trial that he did not recognize the authority of their court, and who enjoyed not only gangsta rap and PCP but also the work of Phil Collins and, I swear to God, Oscar Wilde. I wrote two whole columns about this guy and was crestfallen when he was shipped off to the maximum security prison which he has no doubt since claimed as a province of Islamic State. Indeed, the truly heartbreaking thing about federal prison is the absence of video cameras by which to fully document the almost supernaturally bizarre array of people that the FBI has managed to bring together.

To give you a better sense of this, my new cellmate here in the SHU snuck over to Dallas from Mexico when he was 15, became the leader of a gang, did a year in state prison for shooting another drug dealer with a shotgun, sometimes consulted a local television psychic called Indio Apache for intel by which to better plot his criminal strategy, and worships Santa Muerte, the skeletal narco-deity beloved throughout the Mexican underworld. He has three kids, is currently serving a 15-year sentence for conspiring to distribute methamphetamines, is listed on his indictment as having seven different aliases, and is, he tells me, “almost 20 years old.” In the federal system, this qualifies him as a moderately interesting person. And, yes, here in Texas dealing meth is 15 times more serious than shooting someone with a shotgun.

Panchito Villa, as I'll call him, is actually a very good cellmate. For one thing, he gives me the bread from our food trays, which is a big deal here in the SHU where one can't get commissary, and particularly at this prison, where the rations have been inexplicably reduced over the last two years. Apparently his old boxing coach weaned him off bread products during training and the lesson stuck. Also he drew some very impressive decorations on our cell wall, including a life-size depiction of what would appear to be Princess Zelda wearing a handkerchief over her lower face gangster-style and sporting the tag "Vata Loca" tattooed above her eyes.

One morning, the two of us discussed the possibility that, this being Wednesday, which is hamburger day, our lunch might perhaps include potato wedges — a relatively beloved dish that the prison manages to provide once or twice a month — instead of the potato chips that it pawns off on us more often than not. Panchito knelt before the photograph of a robed skeleton that serves as a makeshift shrine to Santa Muerte and prayed to her on our behalf, asking that she intercede in this matter. An hour later, we received our hamburgers accompanied by potato wedges, and afterwards Panchito led me in a Spanish prayer of thanksgiving to our benefactress. The sad thing is that, given the alternative explanation is that the prison administration decided to feed us a sufficient lunch in accordance with the national standards, and given how rarely this actually ends up happening on any given day under the reign of our jerk-off warden, Rodney Chandler, and also taking into account what I've already documented in prior columns regarding this prison's ongoing failure to meet a whole range of such standards on everything from hygiene to due process, there's a better than even chance that it really was Santa Muerte who got us the fucking potato wedges.

On a day when we happened to receive cornbread with our dinner, Panchito handed it over to me as usual.

"Are you sure you don't want this?" I asked. "I think cornbread isn't as bad for you."

"I don't want to risk it," replied the shotgun-wielding child soldier who makes pacts with demons for potato wedges.

Shortly after arrival I received my incident report in which the "reporting officer" relates, with some apparent effort: "ON JUNE 17 2015 AT APPROXIMATE 8:35 PM DURING A RANDOM BREATHALYZER TEST I DECIDED TO SEARCH INMATES BROWN 45057-177 LOCKER AND FOUND A COFFEE MUG FULL OF PRISON MADE INTOXICANT. OPERATION LT WAS INFORMED AND INMATE BROWN #45047-177 WAS ESCORTED BY THE COMPOUNP OFFICER TO THE SHU." How it was that the benighted man-child should have been taken by a sudden fancy to search, er, "INMATES BROWN #45047-177 LOCKER" in the midst of a "RANDOM BREATHALYZER TEST" that I passed is left to the imagination. Luckily I received a gratuitous confirmation that this account was nonsense a few days later, when a Special Investigations Service officer by the name of McClinton came by the hole to give me yet another drug test and to brag about how they knew the hooch was in my locker due to the informants they have watching me. That just leaves the mystery of how the reporting officer managed to render "compound" as "compounp." And if anyone out there is having trouble deciding on a name for their ska band, you could do worse than "PRISON MADE INTOXICANT."

There've also been some exciting new developments in my ongoing quest to get the BOP to explain why its D.C. liaison, Terence Moore, switched off my ability to email the public an hour after I used it to contact a journalist about wrongdoing by bureau employees. Recall that the Administrative Remedy coordinator, a fellow named McKinney, fraudulently back-dated receipt of my original complaint about this to indicate that he received it on June 4, when in fact his office received it on April 30. Then, he failed to reply within the allotted 20 days of his make-believe date of receipt (and likewise missed his other self-declared

deadline of June 29 for my second complaint regarding his failure to follow procedure on my first complaint, by golly!). According to the BOP's own guidelines, I'm permitted to take this failure to respond as a refusal of my claim, thereby finally allowing me to file a BP-10 form, which goes to the regional office. But — hark! — on June 30, McKinney belatedly filed for extensions on the illicit deadlines that he'd already missed, giving himself 20 more days to respond to both complaints. And then he missed his fake deadlines, too.

Meanwhile, the prison has failed to inform me immediately and in writing of the various media interview requests I've been receiving, as policy requires it to; actor and documentary filmmaker Alex Winter has even sent his latest application via certified mail, to no effect. It also turns out that I'm on the BOP's Central Inmate Monitoring system, billed in a BOP program statement as being used for prisoners who "present special needs for management," which is one way of putting it. Naturally, they've failed to "ensure that the affected inmate is notified in writing as promptly as possible of the classification and the basis for it," as is also required by policy. On a totally unrelated subject, I was sentenced recently to another 30 days in the hole beyond the month I'd already done, plus 90 days of phone, commissary, visiting and email restriction, which will certainly teach me to break BOP rules without first getting a job with the BOP.

Luckily I've gotten lots of nifty books in the mail from supporters, including *The Muqaddimah*, the 14th-century scholar Ibn Khaldun's treatise on world history. Early on, Khaldun presents us with an example of an old story he deems unreliable: "Sea monsters prevented Alexander from building Alexandria. He took a wooden container in which a glass box was inserted, and dived in it to the bottom of the sea. Then he drew pictures of the devilish monsters he saw. He then had metal effigies of these animals made and set them opposite the place where building was going on. When the monsters came out and saw the effigies, they fled." Ibn Killjoy goes out of his way to discredit this charming tale: "Now, rulers would not take such a risk. Any ruler who would attempt such a thing would work his own undoing and provoke the outbreak of revolt against himself, and be replaced by the people with someone else. ... Furthermore, the jinn are not known to have specific forms and effigies. They are able to take on various forms." Whatever, asshole.

20 Aug - Two Animal Activists Facing 6 Months in Jail for Protesting on the Sidewalk

Two animal rights activists in Utah are facing six months in jail for holding peaceful protests against an amusement park's treatment of animals without first paying \$50 and completing a "Free Expression Permit Application."

MORE:

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

On Tuesday evening, activists Jeremy Beckham and Lexie Levitt were visited at their homes by Salt Lake City Police detectives with court orders from nearby Farmington City.

Beckham says that when he saw a Salt Lake City detective at his door, his heart started racing and his body tensed; he quickly started filming, because he is familiar with animal activists being prosecuted as "terrorists" for things like chalking on the sidewalk.

He didn't know what was about to happen, but he thought it could be serious.

"I've been an activist a really long time," says Beckham, who is a board member with the Utah Animal Rights Coalition. "And I'm honestly shocked" at the charges.

The detective attempted to ask Beckham about other protesters, so they too could be served court orders, but Beckham remained silent and continued filming. He then said “I don’t have anything further to say.”

Lexie Levitt, an organizer with the animal rights group Direct Action Everywhere, says that when police arrived at her home, they pounded on her doors and windows. She didn’t know what was happening, she said, and at first she was too afraid to answer. When police returned, she learned she was being charged with protesting without a permit as well.

The charges say that the activists “did conduct, promote, manage, aid, solicit attendance at or participate in any advanced planned free speech expression activity without first obtaining a permit for the event.”

They are class B misdemeanors, punishable by up to six months in jail.

The Blackfish Effect

The activists had been protesting animal cruelty at Lagoon Amusement Park, where lions, pumas, elks, kangaroo, zebra, leopards, tigers, and other wild animals are kept in metal cages with concrete floors, without enrichment or stimulation.

Photos taken by the activists revealed animals in barren, filthy conditions as the “Wild Animal Kingdom” train ride passed by their cages.

And in 2013, an amusement park employee was gored by a wildebeest there.

Activists said that the award-winning film Blackfish, which exposed conditions that are dangerous to both animals and humans at Sea World, has resulted in a surge of public awareness about the dangers of animals in captivity.

As Sea World’s profits have plummeted by 84%, they resorted to using spies to infiltrate protest groups like PETA.

Lagoon Amusement Park has done it’s best to keep protesters away as well. When activists gathered outside their corporate headquarters with signs, Lagoon turned on their sprinklers — in the midst of a drought.

“No one should have to fear that the police will pound on your door at 8 o’clock at night to hand you criminal charges in connection with a peaceful protest,” Beckham said. “It is astounding the lengths that Lagoon is willing to go in order to shut up the caring people who are speaking out against their abysmal ‘zoo.’”

Jumping Through All The Hoops

Beckham says what surprises him most about the criminal charges is that the activists had gone to great lengths to ensure they complied with the law.

At the July 18th protest at the amusement park, for which Levitt is being prosecuted, there were about 20 protesters. They all stood across the street, because they did not want to accidentally trespass. They even went down to the courthouse and got a plat map to ensure they would be on public property.

At the July 16th protest at Lagoon offices, for which Beckham is being prosecuted, there were only four people in attendance, and they chose the protest location specifically because it had a public sidewalk where they could stand. (One of the other attendees was Levitt, and the other two were afraid of being identified for this story because they might be prosecuted as well.)

They held signs that said “Stop imprisoning animals,” “Sanctuaries not cages,” and “Lagoon abuses animals.”

The activists occasionally chanted, but never used megaphones or amplified sound.

During their many protests this year, police have driven past and taken photos of protesters, but they have never asked them to leave or threatened them with prosecution.

It appears their abundance of caution might have actually been used by the police against the activists. Beckham and Levitt had both been in contact with the city, alerting them about their protests in advance, and they suspect that’s why they were singled out for criminal charges.

“Free Expression Claim”

Just a few months after the September 11th attacks, Farmington City leaders used public safety concerns to justify a “Free Expression Activities Ordinance.”

The ordinance requires protesters to obtain a “Free Expression Activities Permit,” pay a \$50 fee, and obtain insurance before engage in constitutionally protected speech.

The form the city requires asks protesters to explain “reasons for your activity” and also their “free expression claim.”

At the time, the American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho said the proposal was full of “constitutional defects.” The city passed it anyway.

As the Deseret News noted, the ordinance was passed in advance of animal rights activists protesting the rodeo, in a clear attempt to stifle their speech.

Misguided Priorities

The prosecution—for purely First Amendment activity— was coordinated with multiple police departments in different cities, which is a rare occurrence for a class B misdemeanor.

A Salt Lake City Police Department detective visited the activists at their homes, multiple times, to serve them in person, when the paperwork could have been sent in the mail

And the investigation was led by the Farmington City Chief of Police himself. Chief Wayne Hansen, who was named Utah’s police chief of the year in 2014, authored the probable cause affidavit used in the prosecution, and noted it was based on his “personal observations” of the protesters.

“It’s sad that the Davis County Attorney and the police apparently care more about shielding Lagoon from criticism than they do the First Amendment,” Levitt said.

The police treatment of animal rights activists is radically different than the treatment of animal abusers. Recently, Utah animal rights activists made international news when they disrupted a “pig wrestling”

competition, and some of the confederate-flag-waving wrestlers attacked them and slammed them to the ground.

Those individuals are not being prosecuted.

As for Beckham and Levitt, they had another protest planned at Lagoon this Saturday. After speaking with their attorneys, they've decided to cancel that demonstration rather than risk additional criminal charges.

20 Aug - Submit Parole Letters for Political Prisoner Abdullah Majid

Abdul is a long time comrade and defender of prisoners, particularly Muslims and deserves all the support possible.

MORE:

Since his hearing has been postponed until October, there is still the time to submit letters to the parole board for political prisoner Abdullah Majid.

Guidelines for Parole Letters in support of Abdul Majid

These letters should not be form letters. They should be sincere and in your own words!

1. The letters should be addressed to **Moira Meltzer-Cohen, Attorney at Law, 11 Park Place Suite 914, New York, New York 10007**, but on the top left-hand side of the page, they should say TO: NYS Board of Parole, 1220 Washington Avenue, Building 2, Albany, New York 12226-2050. You must mail, not email letters!

2. Put the date on the letter

3. There should be a subject line that says Re: 2015 Parole Hearing for Abdullah Majid, DIN #83-A-0483

4. Your salutation can be Dear Honorable Members of the Parole Board:

5. Identify yourself, and where you live, explain who you are and what you do, and your relationship with Abdullah.

6. If there is any way in which you personally can help him acclimate and reenter society, explain your relationship to him, if any, or how you see yourself being able to help him if and when he is released.

7. Do not argue Abdullah's criminal case, or discuss the reasons that the state or the police are bad.

8. Do include in your letter the following:

- Abdul has spent more than three decades in prison for a crime he has always said he didn't commit
- The recidivism rate for people of his age is extremely low
- His disciplinary record is nonviolent and in the last decade has been extremely good
- He has a support system, skills, and a place to live
- He has a strong faith, and a strong faith community
- He spent his time in prison acquiring skills, for example:

- Associate's Degree in business administration,

- Several legal certifications,

- Participated in the Islamic Therapeutic Program, including classes for GED, substance abuse, Anti-aggression resolution, parenting, and anti-recidivism

- Participation in the African Cultural Awareness Organization, including classes on history, sponsoring community forums on reentry after incarceration, and fundraisers to give back to the community

- Worked with the Lifers Organization to propose legislation on sentencing reform, and teaching classes, including classes for young adults on adjusting to prison and coping with long sentences, legal research, and civics.

Thank you, everyone, for helping to support Abdullah.

Remember to sign your letter.

21 Aug - New Poetry From Marius Mason

Marius' latest poem is titled Wastewater Spill in Colorado.

MORE:

The River ran Yellow in Colorado
When the river ran yellow past
The outfitter's shack, kayaks lined up
Colorful, in Back
They could smell it coming first
Loaded with silt and clouds of poison
A heavy-hearted river full of sighs
Something rotten in the Animas
And coming downstream fast
The rainbow trout winking out like stars at dawn
And all the apocalyptic chemistry
Cascading and assailing invisibilia,
The magic microscopic lego-like pieces upon which
Everything is built
Begins a domino affect
A yellow light means caution, a warning
But Gold is King
So we careen through our intersection
With the world
Like a drunken teen in someone else's car
Will we beat the light this time,
Or be hit by natural consequences?
Brace yourselves for impact

Me, I'm Not
You, my friend, are a winner!
Ding, ding, ding
Happy happenstance in the living lottery
Genetically consistent maybe
Or just expected features
Yes, save that ticket, and no regrets
Watch local programming to see if
Circumstance graces your appropriate presentation,
and properly apportioned face
With its geranium kiss
At home in the temple of the soul
In fellowship, a member
Of the congregation at last
But me, I'm not
I'm just the beggar on the outside steps
Making everyone uncomfortable

So drop a coin in my bowl and meet my eye (I)
As you pass by
(and I do not)

22 Aug - New Poetry By Eric King

We have a few new poems by Eric King, as well as an update.

MORE:

August 22nd - We Forget

Hometown heroes forget we exist within morality
the person shooting up was once someone's everything
cuddly kids call the president a primate, cause they hate his pigment
not racist if it's politics just more social bigots
one pump of blood away from being a fleeting memory
once pump and pull away from an unwanted family
villains in our lives aren't just symbols they're existing
placing more importance on critical moments
instead of having joy in simply loving
rascal radicals ditching ethics and street battles
rather duplicate love w/bubble gum flavored capsules
loving all life in 8 hour segments
then rushing off to the bathroom to get in line for seconds
as soon as the crash begins re-up or we're all dead
every moment sober is a moment to forget
born with so much privilege we've forgotten how to live
all our positivity is wrapped with foil in the fridge
road splits to decency but we'll never cross that bridge
can't fight the state when our hands shake too much to make a fist
one more bump to get us going + we'll swear life is bliss
creating all our drama so we created this
to be happy in this moment to recall what love is

August 22nd - A poem about being institutionalized

There's no more bridges
roses, flowers or gardens
mutual friendship is foreign
a dream like a soft mattress
territorial beast w/out their homes
no take out, just shake downs
felt to be disowned
only madness to look forward to
calendar days an abstract time away
by the time they've parted the gates
the whole world has changed

August 25th - until we are free

My wrists are chained cold
but my heart beats pure lava
waiting for your image to grace
the 12 inch screen that contains my dreams

fingertips graze the screen, can you feel me?
60 minutes until lights go out
why can't I freeze time just once?
why can't we both have what we want?
I want to live in your deep almond eyes
somewhere safe where we can always hide
where we can turn off the pain & turn off the lights
panic sets in, when the thoughts begin
what if I never see my love again?
every second separated is its own lifetime
trying to focus now on every expression
cause goddammit when you are gone I need to remember
before we're staring at blanks and the clock reads zero
is your flight boarding to carry you away from me?
i'll see you in my dreams
until we are free

August 29th - New Support Material and Update on fundraiser

So first of all I would love to announce that our primary fundraiser goal has been met thanks to his amazing comrades! We are so excited overwhelmed by everyone's solidarity be it donating to the fundraiser, making sure Eric stays connected by dropping him a letter or even by sending him a book. We will continue to be taking donations and also "selling" t-shirts on his fundraiser.

<https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/0yoZc/ab/a4jVK6>

We received an amazing zine that was beautifully put together and sent to us by Causerie Publishing. We wanted to share it with all of Eric's supporters. Take a second to read it, pass it on, or print it out for tabling. It is a great collection of his poems and writings.

<https://supportericking.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/eric-king-writings-zine.pdf>

We do want to add that we had a little bit of outdated possible sentence info up and he is actually facing life. Luckily thanks to the group Supporting Vegans in the Prison System Eric never had to go on the hunger strike!

August 30th - Untitled

Living in open caskets
breaking down into fractions
if we're animals
are these our zoos?
if god loves us
are jails the pews?
asleep but i'm awaken
hunger strikes me
the earth is shaken
time is my only consumption
living in broken societies
breaking down into surrogate families
i'm hungry
for anything

22 Aug - Former Y-12 Plowshares Prisoners To Be Resentenced By Phone

The September 15, 2015 resentencing of Megan Rice, Michael Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed on their remaining deprecation conviction for their July 2012 Transform Now Plowshares action at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, will be held by teleconference according to Judge Amul Thapar.

MORE:

Bill Quigley sent an email to supporters today noting the prosecution has indicated it will NOT ask for more prison time. The three have already served more time than sentencing guidelines recommend for this offense. Quigley reported the prosecution does intend to ask for an extended period of probation, from one to three years.

Attorneys representing Greg, Megan and Michael, including Quigley, will ask the judge to forgo probation and to drop the restitution required in the original sentencing as well.

The Transform Now Plowshares activists were originally convicted of two charges—deprecation of government property and sabotage; the latter carried a heavier sentence. Because of the sabotage conviction, the three were immediately remanded to federal custody and were not eligible for parole or bond while their appeal was pending.

The sixth circuit court of appeals heard oral arguments earlier this year and, in May, overturned the sabotage conviction and vacated the sentences for both charges, noting the prison time served already exceeded the recommended sentence for the deprecation charge, hence the re-sentencing. The three were released on recognizance within a week of the appeals court's ruling.

24 Aug - Mass Incarceration vs. Rural Appalachia

Feds want to build a maximum-security prison on top of a former mountaintop removal mining site in eastern Kentucky.

MORE:

by Panagioti Tsolkas (*Earth Island Journal*)

The United States Bureau of Prisons is trying to build a new, massive maximum-security prison in the Appalachian mountains of eastern Kentucky — and there's a growing movement to stop it.

The prison industry in the US has grown in leaps and bounds in the past 20 years— a new prison was built at an average rate of one every two weeks in the '90s, almost entirely in rural communities. As of 2002, there were already more prisoners in this country than farmers. The industry seems like an unstoppable machine, plowing forward at breakneck speed on the path that made the world's largest prison population.

Today, about 716 of every 100,000 Americans are in prison. Prisoners in nations across the world average at 155 per 100,000 people. And in the US, Southern states rule the chart. Viewing these states as countries themselves, Kentucky ranks at lucky number seven.

“Sounds terrible...” you may be thinking, “But what does it have to do with the environment?”

Well, this seemingly impenetrable multi-billion dollar bi-partisan government-driven industry does have a weak point: it's a well-verified ecological mess. For a 10-year period of the Environmental Protection Agency's Prison Initiative, prison after prison that the EPA's inspected in the Mid-Atlantic region was

plagued with violations. Violations included air and water pollution, inadequate hazardous waste management and failing spill control prevention for toxic materials.

From the initial breaking ground on construction in rural and wild places to the inevitable sewage problem from operating chronically over-populated facilities — running a prison is dirty business. And when you factor in the plethora of environmental justice issues facing the prisoners, disproportionately low-income and people of color, it becomes an outright nightmare.

Knowing this, it should come as no surprise that the Bureau of Prisons' latest plan for a new maximum-security federal prison is on a former mountaintop removal coal mine site, which is still being drilled for gas, and which is located amid a habitat for dozens of endangered species. Where else but Appalachia?

The proposed half a billion dollar facility is to be located in Kentucky's Letcher County. If built, this would be the fourth new federal prison in eastern Kentucky, and the sixth federal prison built in Central Appalachia, since 1992, making the region one of the most concentrated areas of prison growth in the country.

In March of this year, the Human Rights Defense Center's new Prison Ecology Project joined the fight against the proposed prison. So far, opposition to the Bureau of Prison's plans have been led primarily by the statewide grassroots nonprofit Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), which is opposed to "prison expansion as a form of economic development."

The prison industry and its proponents say the prison will bring jobs and economic growth to Letcher County, which is one of the many regions in eastern Kentucky suffering from the decline of the coal industry. But past studies have shown that new prisons do not improve the local economy and in most cases appear to harm rather than benefit host communities. That certainly seems to be the case in Kentucky's McCreary, Clay, and Martin counties.

In 2013, when the Bureau of Prisons began seeking public input about the project, KFTC outlined a series of questions and concerns, including questions about the projected economic benefits, the stability of the reclaimed mine site, and possible environmental impacts of the new prison. In its statement to the bureau the KFTC said: "It's clear we need economic transition in our county and region, but history shows that prisons have not provided that. And, when we talk about transition, we desire a transition that is equitable to all people, not just those at the top."

But when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project was released earlier this year, it was clear that these concerns had fallen on deaf ears. In fact, the Bureau of Prisons went so far as to state that "scoping comments were in support of the project with no major issues or concerns raised." (Emphasis added.)

Luckily, attorney and criminal justice activist Stephen Raheer was among those who filed comments in 2013. A former co-coordinator of the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, Raheer has been tracking environmental issues related to the Bureau of Prisons facilities for over a decade. Perhaps the flagrant disregard for his input added some fuel to his fire, because Raheer then spearheaded a comment on the Letcher proposal that carried a passion rare in the world of administrative legalese. Leading with the quote by Caudill mentioned above, he tore into the Bureau of Prisons for taking advantage of the people and land of Appalachia with a new form of industrial exploitation:

"The EIS announces BOP's plans to continue with a new type of extractive activity. BOP's proposed project would take 1,200 prisoners, extracted from their homes and neighborhoods, and import them into Letcher County. Despite

the EIS's glib promises of employment and economic activity, Letcher County and surrounding environments would be forced to absorb the substantial environmental consequence."

Raher and HRDC staff co-authored the comment, which was signed by individuals and organizations from across the country. The Bureau of Prison's charade of full support was blown.

The comment highlighted regional water quality records which show a history of water contamination from sources that would provide water to the prison, including heavy metals associated with mining as well as fecal coliform from defective septic systems. It also noted heightened presence of radon in the area, which often associated with coal and gas extraction.

Additionally, the comment noted that the Bureau of Prisons indicates intent to build an e-waste recycling factory run on prison labor on the site, but provides no information about how it will deal with the hazardous waste that these facilities have a history of creating.

None of these concerns seemed to slow the Bureau down — If anything, the opposite. The agency turned its draft Environmental Impact Statement into a final EIS in record speed. By mid-summer, it was ready to plow forward with the project, once again ignoring essentially every concern brought forward. Now, the agency is rounding the final corner of the federal permitting process for the 700-acre project expressly aimed at reducing the Bureau of Prison's overpopulation problem. The agency's facilities nationwide have been operating at 51 percent over capacity.

The 1,200 people moved to this new facility from other overpopulated prisons would end up hundreds of miles from most of their home communities with no mass transit options, making visitation an extreme hardship for their families. It's this reality that's earned central Appalachia, simultaneous home to the nation's most biodiverse ecosystem and poorest rural economy, the title of America's own Gulag Archipelago.

On July 31, the agency announced — via US Representative Hal Rogers' office — its preferred site for the prison and the release of its Final Environmental Impact Statement. (Sadly, a majority of this document's 800+ pages are taken up by letters from the local economically depressed post-coal community begging for prison jobs.) There is now a very short window of time left for public comments on the project. On August 31 the Bureau of Prisons will be closing the record on public input and making a final decision on the plan.

In the Final EIS response to environmental justice concerns raised, the Bureau of Prisons stated that it "does not concur with the assertion that federal inmates of mixed backgrounds (as to ethnicity, race, and income) to be housed in the proposed facility constitute either a minority or low income population for the purposes of EO12898, the President's 1994 Executive Order on Environmental Justice. Nor that adverse health effects could result from living on top of a former mine site. The agency, however, provided no data on demographics, which is readily available from reputable sources such as the Prison Policy Initiative, nor on documented long term health concerns related to mountaintop removal mining sites.

The Prison Ecology Project is also opposed to the project on conservation grounds. As it outlined in a letter to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife commissioner, which was also signed by the Center for Biological Diversity:

This project could adversely impact 71 species known to live in Letcher County and recognized as threatened, endangered, or of special concern in Kentucky. This includes the Kentucky red-backed vole, sharp-shinned hawk, American black bear, eastern red damsel, mountain midget crayfish, and Cumberland arrow darter, as well as the

federally endangered Indiana and Grey bats, both highly imperiled species protected under the US Endangered Species Act. Protecting these species is integral to protecting the region's rich natural heritage for future generations.

We can stop this prison plan, protect Appalachian biodiversity, promote a just transition for the people of Appalachia who are reeling from coal company exploitation, and turn the tide on mass incarceration. But it will take your help.

25 Aug - Jeremy Hammond still in the SHU, now under investigation

Jeremy is currently being held in SHU without charge and with no firm end date in sight.

MORE:

As many of you know, Jeremy was placed in SHU (segregated housing unit) a little over a month ago as a result of a disciplinary infraction. He was told he would be in SHU for approximately 45 days, with his release date being on or around 20 August 2015.

For almost a week now, we have waited anxiously to hear that he has been released from SHU. Today, we got our answer, though it was not what any of us had hoped. In a letter dated 18 August that we received yesterday, he explained that he is still in SHU, and currently has no idea when he is going to be released. He had completed the time given to him for the disciplinary infraction and was preparing for release when prison officials informed him that he would be staying in SHU “pending SIS investigation.” “SIS” stands for “special investigative services,” and they function like an internal prison police unit. He was not told what they are investigating, nor how much longer he can expect to be there.

Prisoners can be held in SHU for up to 90 days without charge. If Jeremy is eventually charged with something as a result of whatever he is being “investigated” for, the time he spent awaiting charge will not count towards whatever punishment is handed down.

We are speculating that this new, mysterious “investigation” is in relation to another issue that has been ongoing for quite some time now. Shortly before he was sent to SHU in July, Jeremy’s phone and email privileges were taken away without warning and for reasons that, while not entirely clear, were obvious attempts to silence him. (His stay in SHU was not related to these issues, and, as stated, was the result of a disciplinary infraction.) While in SHU, his email privileges were reinstated just as mysteriously as they had been removed, and he was allowed to make a phone call, but the issue was never fully resolved. While no one but prison officials know for certain at this point, the vagueness with which this new SHU designation is being communicated to Jeremy is eerily similar to the vagueness with which his privileges were revoked, and could very well be related.

There is also a chance that Jeremy is being denied visits, as his grandparents report they were denied the opportunity to visit him several weeks ago for, again, unknown reasons. They have previously been able to visit him freely and without incident.

This is absolutely ludicrous and very discouraging. Jeremy has previously written about how time in SHU is always hell, but it’s at least easier to bear when you know you’re in there for something you legitimately did wrong. Holding Jeremy without charge, and without any firm end date in sight amounts to nothing short of torture. Please consider writing him a short letter of encouragement.

6 Sept - Running Down the Walls 2015

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

WHEN: 2:00-7:00pm, Sunday, September 6th

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

Bridge (see the below map for exact location)

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

MORE:

You can donate online by going to <https://gumroad.com/nycabc>

Every year, prisoners and supporters of political prisoners organize solidarity events with Running Down the Walls. In the last few years, we've had runs in Albuquerque (NM), Arcata (CA), Ashland (OR), Bellefonte (PA), Boston (MA), Denver (CO), Elmore (AL), Inez (KY), Los Angeles (CA), Marion (IL), New York (NY), USP Navosta (TX), Pelican Bay (CA), Phoenix (AZ), Tucson (AZ), and Toronto, Ontario. This year we hope to expand the amount of runs in prisons and other cities, as well as increase the amount of funds raised for community projects. NYC ABC's goal with this year's run is \$2,500. You can donate online by going to <https://gumroad.com/nycabc>

This year's run will take place on Sunday, September 6th at 2:00pm in solidarity and conjunction with runs that will take place in cities and prison yards across the country at the same time.

REGISTER AS, OR SPONSOR, A PARTICIPANT

To raise our goal of \$2,500, we need your support.

1. Run/walk/bike/roll in the 5k – We need participants who can run/walk/bike/roll the 5k and are able to collect financial pledges to offer as donations to the run. Download the brochure, complete with registration and sponsor form right here.
2. Volunteer for the run – We need folks who are willing to staff a registration/literature table, hand out water, bike the route as street medics, and help chalk the route beforehand.
3. Donate to the run/sponsor a participant – If you are not able to attend, but want to support this fundraising effort, please mail donations to:

NYC ABC

Post Office Box 110034

Brooklyn, New York 11211

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

Each year, we split proceeds between the Anarchist Black Cross Federation's Warchest Program and a local organization. This year's partner group will be Family and Friends of Maliki Shakur Latine.

The Warchest Program:

The Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) has initiated a program designed to send monthly checks to those Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War who have been receiving insufficient, little, or no financial support during their imprisonment. The Warchest program was initiated in November 1994. Its purpose is to collect monthly funds from groups and individual supporters, and send that money to Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War (PP/POW) via monthly checks. Over the last two decades, the ABCF warchest has dispensed over \$75,000 to political prisoners in the United States. Currently, there are ten imprisoned comrades who receive a monthly stipend as part of the program.

For more information, visit: abcf.net/warchest-program

Family and Friends of Maliki Shakur Latine:

Maliki Shakur Latine is a political prisoner, held in New York state. A former Black Panther, Maliki directly faced state repression and, after a 1979 incident with NYPD cops, was sentenced to 25 to life. We are raising funds to aid in the campaign to secure parole for this elder. For more information, visit justiceformaliki.org

Directions:

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

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

12 Sept - Screening Of "Warrior," About Leonard Peltier

WHAT: The Life of Leonard Peltier

WHEN: 7:00pm, Saturday, September 12

WHERE: Bluestocking - 172 Allen Street New York, New York

COST: Free

MORE:

Although not a new film, *Warrior* covers the story of Leonard Peltier, an innocent man, locked away for life in the U.S. prison system. Leonard is a Native American political prisoner, convicted of a crime that he did not commit during a bloody shootout on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. Around the world his trial and conviction have been denounced as a sham.

Please join us September 12 for this showing of *Warrior* and sign a letter to President Obama, asking that he grant executive clemency to Leonard Peltier.

Note: The nearest subway stop is the F train Second Avenue station. Allen Street is what First Avenue is called below Houston.

12 Sept – No New Animal Lab Tour

WHAT: Presentation and Discussion

WHEN: 8:00pm, Saturday, September 12th

WHERE: The Base – 1302 Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn, New York

COST: FREE, but we *will* pass the hat to cover touring costs.

MORE:

No New Animal Lab is a grassroots pressure campaign to stop international construction corporation Skanska from building a new underground animal lab at the University of Washington. If the new lab is built, thousands of animals will be tortured inside of it. People around the world are saying, "We Will Stop This Lab" -- and fighting to do so.

Join organizers of the campaign for a presentation and discussion in NYC -- home to Skanska's U.S. headquarters -- about the campaign and building the grassroots movement for animal liberation.