



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for October 13<sup>th</sup>

### **23 Sept - Black Panther PP/POWs Condemn NBPP Beating Of Dhoruba Bin-Wahad**

*We recently reported on the beating of former Black liberation political prison Dhoruba Bin-Wahad. Since then, several political prisoners and prisoners of war have condemned the beating.*

#### **MORE:**

Updated Statement From Black/New Afrikan Political Prisoners On the "New" Black Panther Party (NBPP) Attack On Dhoruba Bin Wahad

The undersigned current and former Black/New Afrikan political prisoners condemn the vicious assault perpetrated on our comrade Dhoruba Bin Wahad by the security team of group calling itself the New Black Panther Party at a public event on August 8, 2015 in Atlanta Georgia. We reject any justification or rationalization for this attack on an elder, himself a documented target of COINTELPRO and a former political prisoner who spent 19 years in the state's custody. The "New Black Panther Party" does not represent us; nor does it represent the legacy of the Black Panther Party of which we are proud to have been a part.

We fully support Dhoruba Bin Wahad and view this assault as one committed against all of us. We urge everyone to join us in condemning the attack. We wish our brother a full and speedy recovery.

Herman Bell  
Jalil Muntaquin  
Robert Seth Hayes  
Abdul Majid  
Mumia Abu Jamal  
Sekou Odinga  
Kazi Toure  
James Tarik Haskins

(List is still in formation)

### **25 Sept - "Resisting Repression:" Political Prisoners Speak Out**

*On September 24, 2015, the Anarchist Black Cross held an annual panel discussion called "Resisting Repression from the Inside Out: Former Prisoners Speak."*

#### **MORE:**

Held at the Tivoli Student Union in Denver, the panel featured former U.S. political prisoners. The talks focused on clarifying what a multi-generational struggle for liberation looks like, the evolution of resistance to state repression, and the personal horror of living inside of the prison industrial complex.

The full video can be viewed online at  
<https://livestream.com/accounts/12767816/events/4156501/videos/100187998>

The freedom fighting former political prisoners who spoke on the panel are:

#### **Lynne Stewart:**

Lynne Stewart, a radical human rights attorney who has devoted her life to the oppressed – a constant advocate for the countless many deprived in the United States of their freedom and their rights. Lynne was

falsely accused of helping terrorists in an obvious attempt by the U.S. government to silence dissent, curtail vigorous defense lawyers, and install fear in those who would fight against the U.S. government's racism, seek to help Arabs and Muslims being prosecuted for free speech and defend the rights of all oppressed people. She was arrested in April 2002 and arraigned before Manhattan federal Judge John Koeltl, who also presided over her trial in 2004. She was convicted, and received a 28-month sentence in October 2006. However she was free on bail until 2009, when the government appealed the sentence. In late 2009 Lynne was re-sentenced to 10 years in federal prison. Due to declining health from stage IV breast cancer, Lynne was freed from prison on December 31, 2013!

**Mark Cook:**

In 1967, Cook became active in a growing leftist paramilitary underground in Seattle, which perpetrated a series of high profile bombings and robberies. In and out of prison, he was co-founder of the Black Panther Party chapter in the Walla Walla State Penitentiary and served as its Lieutenant of Information for many years. In 2000, he was released after serving 24 years in prison for his participation in a bank robbery and jail break associated with the George Jackson Brigade in Seattle. The GJB was a leftist urban guerrilla group in the Pacific Northwest that carried out bombings, bank robberies and other actions to overthrow the U.S. government.

**Jihad Abdulmumit:**

Jihad is a community activist, motivational speaker, author and playwright. As a youth he became intensely involved in the Black Liberation Movement and Vietnam War protests. He joined the Black Panther Party at sixteen and eventually went underground in the ranks of the Black Liberation Army. In the mid-seventies prior to his incarceration, Jihad was also the Coordinator of the Rochester Federation of Youth in Rochester, New York – a youth organization that sponsored community economic development projects and weekly political education and black history classes, and worked with juvenile delinquents and high school drop outs. Jihad was a domestic political prisoner and prisoner of war and served 23 years of his life in prison for his involvement in the Black Liberation Movement.

**Kazi Toure:**

As a member of the United Freedom Front (UFF), Kazi was imprisoned for his role in 20 bombings combating Apartheid in South Africa and United States Imperialism in Central America. The UFF has been called “undoubtedly the most successful of the leftist [guerrilla groups] of the 1970s and '80s” and struck powerful blows to South African Airways, Mobil, IBM, Union Carbide, & various courthouses and US Military targets. Toure was convicted on federal charges of possession of firearms, and Seditious Conspiracy—conspiring to overthrow, put down, destroy by force and violence the US government. He is one of few, if any, New Afrikans to be charged of this act.

**Eric McDavid:**

Eric McDavid is a green anarchist who was entrapped by an FBI informant and charged with a single count of conspiracy to use fire or explosives to damage corporate and government property. After serving nearly 10 years in prison his judgment and sentencing were vacated when it became known that the FBI had failed to disclose potentially exculpatory evidence to the defense. Eric pleaded guilty to a lesser charge that carried a 5 year maximum sentence. He was released almost immediately. McDavid is a victim of a long history and concerted effort by federal and state entities in the United States to target anarchists and other radicals.

**Jerry Koch:**

Gerald “Jerry” Koch, a New York City anarchist and legal activist, was first subpoenaed in 2009, and again in 2013, to a federal grand jury investigating the same event. Jerry refused to testify both times and was found in contempt of court on May 21, 2013. He was imprisoned for eight months at Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan, and released on January 28, 2014, after his lawyers filed a “Grumbles motion” arguing that the sentence had become punitive and should be ended. The grand jury is a secretive tool of repression that aims to intimidate and punish those who refuse to collaborate with the State. Grand juries have been part of a new, escalating wave of repression against anarchists nationwide.

## **26 Sept - Leonard Peltier Update**

*Below is a statement from Leonard Peltier, an interview with his son, and an action alert regarding a current health crisis.*

### **MORE:**

#### **September 26<sup>th</sup> - Statement by Leonard Peltier, International Tribunal of Conscience**

As I look past my prison cell door, I contemplate the many doors and walls that are between myself and freedom. Despite having been twice recommended for transfer to a medium security facility since coming to USP Coleman I, I am currently warehoused in a maximum security facility in Florida. These maximum security prisons are each surrounded by a high wall. For us inside there is no horizon.

As I think about these physical obstacles to my own freedom, I wonder how many walls are between YOU and freedom. How many of these walls are invisible—like the imaginary borders created by colonizers, power brokers, and governments—that are nothing more than obstacles to the free migration of Indigenous Peoples?

I'm greatly honored to be an absentee participant in this International Tribunal of Conscience. I notice that the 43 disappeared students from the Rural Teacher's College in Guerrero have long since faded from the news cycle. It is imperative that these young people, who were mostly from Mexico's poorest Indigenous communities, are never forgotten. Perhaps the students involuntarily serve as a reminder that our collective struggles are far from over. Death squads are still prevalent, and it is always the poor and most vulnerable people who endure the most suffering and injustice. These death squads are the same around the world as they all serve the same master—greed—that spurs humans to torture, terrorize, and kill others, forgetting that we are truly all related.

One aspect of my case that is not widely known is that in the 1970's there were these same death squads on the Indian reservations. Corrupt tribal police, were armed and propped up by federal forces. Prior to the firefight on the Pine Ridge Reservation on June 26, 1975,—an incident for which I have now served nearly 40 years in prison—some 60 people who were connected with the resurgence of our traditional spiritual practices and renewed struggle for sovereignty were murdered or disappeared. During the preceding 5-month period, more incidents of violence were reported on the reservation than in the rest of South Dakota combined. In the subsequent search for my codefendants and myself, the people of Pine Ridge were terrorized by these paramilitary groups led primarily by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Innocent people were intimidated, threatened, and brutalized. To date, none of these acts of terrorism have been fully investigated.

On behalf of myself and the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, I wish to thank the organizers of the International Tribunal of Conscience, the National Lawyers Guild, and our hosts at New York University. I encourage all defenders of human rights to continue to work together on our common issues in the struggle for our existence.

#### **October 7<sup>th</sup> - NLG Sends Letter to President Obama Urging Clemency for Leonard Peltier**

Today, the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) in coordination with the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee sent a letter urging President Obama to grant Executive Clemency to 71-year-old political prisoner and Native American activist, Leonard Peltier. "Despite overwhelming evidence of FBI misconduct—including the coercion and intimidation of witnesses, the utilization of false testimonies, and the concealment of a ballistics test reflecting his innocence—Mr. Peltier has been denied a new trial and is long overdue for parole," the letter states.

#### **October 8<sup>th</sup> - Leonard Peltier Health Crisis: Urgent Call to Action**

After nearly a three-week lockdown at USP Coleman I, what we feared has occurred. Due to being served one warm meal a day and bread and water for the other meals during this period, Leonard Peltier's blood

sugar is high and out of control. The solution? The doctor gave Leonard a list of foods not to eat. But here's the problem: ALL the foods Leonard has been told not to eat are the only foods available to him.

Demand a transfer to medium security in a location that will afford Leonard Peltier, #89637-132 (be sure to include this number), quality health care. Do NOT contact the prison. Instead, contact:

**Charles E. Samuels, Jr., Director**  
**Federal Bureau of Prisons**  
**320 First Street, NW**  
**Washington, DC 20534**  
**Telephone: 202.307.3198**  
**Email: info@bop.gov**

Be respectful, but firm. The situation is life threatening. After many years of high blood sugar, Leonard is at serious risk for kidney failure and the need for dialysis, blood vessel damage in the eyes that can lead to blindness, and nerve damage in the feet that could lead to the need for amputation. Supporters should also remember that Leonard already suffers from a heart condition. Heart disease is, in fact, the number one cause of death in people with diabetes.

Leonard needs our help. Act now. Write or fax a letter. Make a call. Send an e-mail.

### **October 11th - An Interview With Chauncey Peltier**

American Indian activist Leonard Peltier was wrongfully charged with the murder of two FBI agents in 1977, and has been imprisoned ever since. His son Chauncey Peltier spoke with *Mask Magazine* about his father's case and the determined campaign for his release.

Until recently, I was unaware of one of the most botched trials in history – the 1977 case of *The United States v. Leonard Peltier*. To summarize: On June 26, 1975, two FBI agents died in a shootout at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Despite lacking sufficient evidence, the FBI accused Leonard Peltier of the murders. During the trial, the prosecution withheld ballistics evidence and presented false testimony, determined to frame Peltier for the incident. As a result, in April 1977, Peltier was convicted and charged with two life sentences. Later new evidence was gathered that would've proven Leonard innocent – a Mr. X even took responsibility for the murders – but he was never granted a retrial after his initial, and faulty, conviction.

Millions of people have called for the release of Leonard Peltier, or, at the very least, a fair appeal of his case, and Amnesty International has acknowledged him as a political prisoner. It's possible and many are hopeful that Leonard will be granted Executive Clemency during Obama's term. But there's only a year left for President Obama to grant clemency to Leonard and release him from his sentence of two life terms in prison with October 11th, 2040 as his projected release date. Leonard has been incarcerated for 40 years and is now 71 years old locked up in a federal maximum-security prison in Florida. Unless clemency is granted by President Obama, he will likely die behind bars.

Despite his unjust arrest, severe treatment in prison, and continual denial of parole and clemency, Leonard has managed to do a lot from inside his cell over the last 40 years. He's donated money to various causes on the Pine Ridge reservation, helping schools stay open after being defunded by the state. He's received six Nobel Peace Prize nominations, written a speech as the keynote speaker for The Evergreen State college's 1993 graduating class, given numerous interviews and statements (including this most recent one), and painted over 250 original works.

Leonard Peltier's oldest son Chauncey Peltier is the director of his art collection, as well as the co-director of the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee. He has made it his mission, through public speaking and curating his father's paintings, to garner support for complete executive clemency. The

money collected from painting sales goes towards legal funds and other causes Leonard chooses to donate to (like the schools in Pine Ridge).

A local sign painter and muralist in Olympia, Ira Coyne, heard Chauncey interviewed by Raven Redbone on his show *Make No Bones About it* on KAOS radio. When Ira learned Leonard was a painter, he looked up his work and was taken by the pink lion depicted in *Stalking*. He then reached out to Raven and Chauncey to turn this piece into a mural at our city's artesian well. Chauncey is now in Olympia for the week to work on the mural with Ira and anyone else who shows up at the well to lend a hand. (The official ribbon cutting for the mural will coincide with Olympia's Inaugural Indigenous Peoples' Day, this Monday October 12, at 12:00 pm by Olympia's Artesian Well.)

Throughout the first day's work of scraping away decades of paint, he shared many stories about his father and how the experience of growing up as a Peltier has shaped his relationships and life path. Unfortunately I didn't get to record them, but after dinner, I had the opportunity to record a brief conversation with him.

**Chauncey Peltier (CP):** I think this mural is going to make [my father's case] relevant for people again. It will remind them that Leonard is still in jail. A lot of people think Clinton let him out and that he's free. They'll ask me how my dad's doing, as if he's out. When I tell them he's still in prison they can't believe it! They'll usually try to get involved in some way, for example by signing the petition. Some people will say "I already signed a petition before." But I have to have a new set of petitions with each president. That's why I recommend that everyone call or write the White House again, because we need all the supporters we can get now – past supporters along with the new supporters. I want to start doing more outreach at colleges so we can get the younger generations in on this. A lot of people who are 20 or 30 years old don't know who Leonard Peltier is."

**Mask Magazine (MM):** Yeah, I didn't know about him until recently, and I'm 29.

**CP:** See? The newer generation is going to pick up the signs and protest. They're the ones that want to protect the earth. When I was down in New Mexico last, there were college kids protesting to protect the Apache flats (Oak Flat, a sacred site to the Apache — Ed.), which is being threatened because of its mineral value. They want to make a hole the size of the grand canyon in their sacred prayer grounds. I was amazed to see these kids out there protecting the land. That gave me hope that the younger generations might support Leonard too. I mean, this is one of the biggest cases of human rights violations in history.

**MM:** What kind of support do you need right now?

**CP:** Go to the website [whoisleonardpeltier.info](http://whoisleonardpeltier.info). It will teach you anything you need to know about the case and Leonard. It'll teach you how to start a support group, put together events, and other details about the case. Also, read *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* by Peter Matthiessen. Dad recommends that book to anyone who wants to learn about the case.

**MM:** I watched *Incident at Oglala* and that movie really schooled me on the severity of the situation. The severe mistreatment of Native people is something people often put in the past, but this documentary wasn't made that long ago. It's as if reservations have been a place where white supremacists and dirty cops can go to commit lawless crimes.

**CP:** [The reservation] was somewhere these killers could go where there were no consequences. A few of them may have been maniac killer police officers. I mean over 60 people died on that reservation at that time. That was more murders in that small area than in the entire state. And people don't realize it's still like that.

My brother still lives in Pine Ridge. I went out to visit him and said "Man, if I was you I'd move out of here. Pay the electric bill, get everyone some food, and go find some work," And he says, "Well, this is my home, this is all I know." A lot of people are stuck there because that's all they know, it's their livelihood but there's no work for them there. I know lots of people who move off the reservations because there are

no jobs. But as soon as they move off, the government's going to take that land. There's no reason there can't be jobs there but starving the reservations is one way of getting rid of the Native population.

There's another way too: A couple of my friends have been trying to get enrolled [as Native] for a long time. Their parents are Native, they've filled out all the paperwork, it should be a done deal but they've been fighting for two years and still can't get enrolled. My dad is Turtle Mountain Chippewa and my mom is a Ft. Totten Sioux. They're both over three quarters Native blood but I get my tribal card and it says I'm less than half Native blood.

**MM:** So they're trying to document Native blood out of existence?

**CP:** Yes, they want to weaken the bloodline. When there's less than about half Native blood on a reservation the state can take that land for their own. There's only a couple of reservations that call their own blood line.

**MM:** I'm thankful you're sharing and keeping your story alive. When people read your interviews, see Leonard's art, or hear about [whoisleonardpeltier.info](http://whoisleonardpeltier.info) it gives them a place to reach out and connect to.

**CP:** Yeah, I had a story in the Oregonian about Leonard's art. A reporter was up near my house doing a story on a new bird sanctuary and interviewed me. When he learned who I was he expressed interest in interviewing me about the art. I made the third page of the Oregonian, our main newspaper. Well, some of the guys down in Oregon State penitentiary get that paper. They didn't know Leonard Peltier had a son in Oregon so they got a hold of me through a friend of mine and asked me to go down there for sweat lodge.

**MM:** Wow, they have a sweat lodge in the prison?

**CP:** Yes in some of them, not all, but the inmates don't want someone from inside the prison to pour water for them. They want someone free, someone who isn't locked up and confined, for spiritual reasons. So, the first time I went and sweated with a friend, then I went to a powwow there, then they were short on guys to pour water for them so they asked me to come in and do it. I've been going in there every third Saturday of the month and pouring water for them. It helps me with my issues too, kind of like an AA class. I've come close to being there (in prison —Ed.) a few times myself. If I can help one of those guys, it'll help me through my sobriety too. It's a stepping stone in my journey. To survive in prison you have to leave your heart and feelings at the front door. If you get emotional, they'll tear you to pieces in there. The sweat lodge and ceremonies help them through their time there. I ask them not to leave that medicine when they leave the prison. I tell them "Your sage, sweetgrass, and feathers – take that with you. When you go into the world and leave your medicine behind, you fall off the path and end back up in prison. Don't just use the medicine for your sobriety in here, use it for your sobriety out there too." A lot of guys really appreciated that. I hope I'm doing some good.

**MM:** You're doing something good for sure, something amazing.

**CP:** I hope. When I go into prison, man that's some scary stuff and I ain't no slacker! (laughs) I've boxed and done karate but it'd be scary if I had to live in there. Can you imagine my dad, 71 years old in there? I used to build prisons. I did masonry for 30 years. If you go to Portland, all those 13, 14, 16-story buildings made of brick? I worked on probably 30 or 40 of those. I've built colleges, jails, prisons, and schools. Thirty years worth. When I did that I drank every day, but I've been sober for five years now. Now I'm really focused on my dad's art, doing events, and vending.

**MM:** I'm excited about this mural of your father's piece Stalking. Some people might not know that he spends a lot of time painting in prison.

**CP:** Yeah, a lot of people have appreciated his work and bought it over the years. The more you look at it, the more stuff you see in there. Dad is a very intelligent artist. This mural is going to bring the public out, they're going to see the plaque up there and investigate on their own. Let alone, it's just a great painting.

## **26 Sept - New Writing By And Updates On Mumia**

*Here is the latest commentary by Mumia, as well as an update on the fight to get him proper medical care.*

**MORE:**

**September 26<sup>th</sup> - Beating Bin-Wahad**

Who beats up a 71-year old man?

That question flashed in my mind when I heard about the vicious attack on former Black Panther Dhoruba Bin-Wahad during a speech before members of the New Black Panther Party (NBPP) in Atlanta.

While what sparked the attack may be unclear, the results aren't. Bin-Wahad, a lifelong revolutionary who has spent decades in the Black Liberation Movement, was beaten unconscious by NBPP members his jaw broken in several places.

He wasn't hit –or just punched. He was pummeled, kicked, stomped, and repeatedly assaulted.

Who beats up a 71-year old man?

Who beats up a 71-year old veteran of the Black Freedom Movement; a former member of the famed N.Y. Panther 21?

Who does that?

Apparently the New Black Panther Party (NBPP) does.

The New BPP is not to be confused with the original Black Panther Party, as the beating of Bin-Wahad demonstrates.

According to a letter circulated on the internet quoting Malik Zulu Shabazz (leader of the NBPP until 2014) Bin-Wahad threatened him. According to that document, the threat didn't happen at this meeting, but is alleged to have happened some time before.

There may've been some dispute as to speaking times, but that hardly justifies the attack on Bin-Wahad, who long has been known for his outspokenness. Bin-Wahad, since the days of his youth, has been a revolutionary – and he endured almost 20 years in New York State dungeons before proving, using FBI documents, the injustice of his trial and conviction.

When he left prison, he continued the struggle, writing, organizing, and campaigning, struggling for Black Freedom. One could always count on him for sharp analysis and principled resistance to the system's relentless attacks on Black life –years before the Black Lives Matter Movement emerged. That he should have to endure such an attack from the NBPP proves that, for some, Black lives don't matter much.

Not when you can beat a 71-year-old man unconscious.

**October 8<sup>th</sup> - We are standing on a precipice**

Middle U.S. District Court Judge Robert Mariani, is going to rule on whether Mumia gets medical treatment or not. The papers are on his desk.

Mumia Abu-Jamal remains in the infirmary; his health in danger. Bret Grote (Abolitionist Law Center) and Bob Boyle have filed their objections to Magistrate Judge Karoline Mehalchick's "Report and Recommendation" that Judge Mariani deny Mumia's request for a preliminary injunction, an injunction that would order the DOC to immediately treat his Hepatitis C and prevent irreparable harm.

The objections filed yesterday make clear that the Department of Correction's is NOT PROVIDING ANY TREATMENT for Mumia's active Hepatitis C in violation of its obligation under the Eighth Amendment

of the U.S. Constitution. Mumia is seeking a preliminary injunction that would order the state to immediately provide him with the antiviral drugs that have a 90+% cure rate. Defendants have 14 days to respond to the objections, then Mumia and his attorneys have 7 days to reply to their response, and then the judge rules.

You can watch the disease progress or you can cure it.

Seems pretty simple what the court should order.

Untreated active Hepatitis C is fatal in many cases. 60-70 of those infected experience Cirrhosis of the liver. Mumia's extrahepatic symptoms, that is symptoms of hepatitis C that appear outside of the liver, have been chronic and severe: extreme weight loss, edema (swelling), severe full-body skin eruptions, and diabetes.

We are going to win, it is just a matter of how many battles we will have to wage, but we are on the path toward freedom and justice. This campaign is about justice: all people deserve ethical and effective medical care.

## **26 Sept - Prison Ecology and the Pope**

*Pope Francis recently visited a prison with a history of environmental problems.*

### **MORE:**

by Panagioti Tsolkas (*Nation Inside*)

By now, much of the world knows that the Pope is going to visit a prison in Philly this weekend. On Sunday Sept. 27, he's set to meet with bishops attending the World Meeting of Families and inmates at the city's infamous Curran-Fromhold facility before a mass on the city's Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

While there has been some talk of the horrible condition in U.S. prisons and profiteering companies—including Corizon, Aramark, JPay, GTL, and Keefe Group—who specifically have contracts to provide services to Philly prisoners, few likely know that the Pope's prison visit was also one of the primary targets of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 'Prison Initiative.' Back in the early 2000s the EPA found a host of violations from the prison complex which threatened the regional Delaware River watershed with toxic industrial pollution.

Officials from the federal EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection inspected the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS) on June 7 and 8, 2001. As a result of the inspection, the EPA cited Philadelphia for the following violations:

1. Failure to prepare a SPCC plan to prevent and minimize spills from the prison's heating oil storage tanks, which have a total capacity of 101,975 gallons. The prison is adjacent to Pennypack Creek, which flows into the Delaware River.
2. Failure to obtain a hazardous waste storage permit, failure to properly label hazardous waste containers, and storage of hazardous wastes in open containers.
3. Servicing CFC-containing air conditioning units without certified CFC-recovery equipment.

The Pope may not yet realize it yet, but his visit to this prison comes at a unique time where the intersection of incarceration and the environment is beginning to get explored more deeply than ever before. While the issues of both mass incarceration and global ecology have risen to be among the top priorities on the agenda of grassroots social change activists nationwide, looking at the relationship between these two seemingly disparate issues has also become more common over the past several months.

The prison/ecology connection is not a new phenomenon—sadly, prisons have been documented causing pollution and health problems for several decades. But it's an intersection that's coming to represent the

harsh reality of how the most vulnerable populations in our society bears the brunt of industrial pollution, from toxic contamination of air and water to plethora of climate impacts associated with carbon emissions.

Brentin Mock's Sept 25 article "How Global Warming Makes Overcrowded Prisons Even More Dangerous," from The Atlantic's CityLab blog, out it like this:

*There is no population more captive to the effects of global warming than the incarcerated. And given the huge concentration of black and Latino prisoners in America, this is a classic case of environmental injustice, as these consequences fall widely on prisoners of color. A new study from Daniel W. E. Holt of the Columbia Law School's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law explains over 144 pages what the climate-change toll truly is on the two-million-plus bodies caged in our prison system.*

The Prison Ecology Project has highlighted over a dozen other stark examples of the connection between incarceration and the environment, including: prisons built on or near toxic landfills, military bases and mining sites; prisons dumping massive quantities of sewage into waterways nationwide; prison-labor factories releasing heavy metal contamination into surrounding areas; and multiple cases where prisoners were stuck in cages as the water literally rose around them during floods.

### **More about Philly's prisons**

The Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) was built on the strange and violent legacy of the Philly's criminal justice system, which maintains its own local prison complex, the PPS. CFCF is named in honor of Warden Patrick N. Curran and Deputy Warden Robert F. Fromhold, who were murdered at Holmesburg Prison on May 31, 1973. They are the only PPS staff known to have been killed in the line of duty. Curran-Fromhold opened in 1995 and is the largest PPS facility.

According to the PPS "Daily Census" report from its 6 prisons facilities, which all sit back-to-back on State Street, over 15,000 people are in the custody of PPS, half of which are juveniles.

Pennsylvania has a long, sordid history with prisons. On October 25, 1829, Eastern State Penitentiary became what was considered to be the world's first "true penitentiary." Eastern State's new system of incarceration, dubbed the "Pennsylvania system," supposedly allowed people an opportunity to correct themselves through the Quaker values of silence, solitude and reflection, with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon structure allowing a benevolent warden to oversee the prisoners and ensure their safety.

Now, almost 200 years later, we've watched the prison system nationwide turn into an industry based on warehousing poor people and repressing social movements. Surely not what the Quakers had in mind, as even the Vatican now seems unimpressed.

### **29 Sept - Maroon's Latest Writing**

*This month, we bring you Maroon's latest writing, a brief essay reflecting on some of what he's currently reading.*

#### **MORE:**

Maroon recently penned a brief essay reflection on some of the latest literature he's had an opportunity to read. He explores the current political realities in the Rojava region of Syria, celebrating the civil and political organizations that have led to an anti-state and anti-capitalist experiment valuing feminism, direct democracy, ecological stewardship, and ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism in the midst of ongoing military threat, as explored in the book *A Small Key Can Open A Large Door*, published by the Strangers In A Tangled Wilderness collective. He then touches on the dystopia of Octavia Butler's *Parable Of The Sower*, assessing the extent to which the current crises of climate change, late capitalism, and "sci-fi bio-tech" have made the landscape of Butler's novel far more factual than fictitious.

He writes:

**ROJAVA:** An autonomous region of over 1,400 square miles in war-torn Syria.

**Dystopia:** An imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and fearful lives.

Finally reading again.

Since the beginning of 2015, my health concerns have severely hobbled my ability to read and write as I would have otherwise been able. Between struggling to obtain proper treatment for prostate cancer, as well as cataract surgery, accompanied by the need to record, chronicle, and share most of that with family and supporters, I was left with little energy to do more than respond to legal matters and correspondences, then read news periodicals... that didn't require much effort.

With the cancer in remission, and having finally undergone the cataract surgery, I'm back to teaching myself "to walk and chew gum," something the sensory deprivation of solitary confinement left me unable to do. That's a subject I will tackle in the future. Stay tuned Torch Bearers, you're gonna need that knowledge...

Some of what I'm reading needs to be shared, namely *A Small Key Can Open A Large Door – The Rojava Revolution*, edited by Strangers In a Tangled Wilderness.

Then, since I've found it hard to indulge in fiction, I'm embarrassed to say that a close friend recently dropped a book on me that showed me how shortsighted that can be: the uncanny, futuristic novel penned over 20 years ago by the late Octavia E. Butler, *Parable Of The Sower*.

The news never misses an opportunity to highlight the tragic plight of the latest refugees who are fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East. Harrowing footage and frantic pleas are juxtaposed with the dramatic acts of desperate young men that are fodder for Hollywood screenwriters.

The wars and devastated societies they are fleeing are too numerous to discuss here, but *A Small Key Can Open A Large Door* gives us an inside look at one of those conflicts: ROJAVA.

This entity is comprised of three separated cantons, situated on the Syrian border with Turkey. Together they cover over half the border. Within are 380 cities, towns, and villages. The largest city contains 400 people. Three and a half million once inhabited the three cantons, but brutal wars have caused one million to join the desperate migrants trying to get into Europe and elsewhere. ROJAVA is populated by Kurds, Arabs, Yezedis, Assyrians, and Turkmens. The dominant religion is Islam, though small numbers practice Christianity and lesser-known spiritual traditions. Yet they all are in a life-and-death struggle with other "professed" Muslims of ISIS/ISIL, as well as Syria, Turkey, and those countries' allies who are agents of global capitalism and imperialism. A sometime confusing geopolitical mix that demands study and patience to understand.

Case in point is the ROJAVAN city of Kobane (in the canton of the same name). Its men and wimmin fighters have the distinction of defeating a determined siege and merciless assault by a much better armed and equipped ISIS/ISIL force. This victory has been much misunderstood due to the U.S. and its allies' bombings, which came very late during the battle, supposedly to help the ROJAVANS, but actually as a strategic means of manipulating them into serving as "boots on the ground" for the U.S. military and its allies in their war against ISIS/ISIL.

The civil and military organizations that have been functioning in the three cantons have little in common with those found in other conflicts, with the most outstanding being their rank and file, battle-hardened, semi-autonomous womyn militia, numbering 10,000, while thousands of other wimmin are in mixed militias or canton police, and special armed units that respond to allegations of male abuse (domestic or otherwise). In many other ways, the civil and political organizations of the collective entities have proven remarkable, even as compared to much, much smaller ones who face nothing like the physical threats the

ROJAVANS live with! Millions who are struggling to exist free from centuries of hate, domination, and exploitation practiced by nations and communities across the globe. A herculean undertaking indeed!

The ROJAVANS are breaking new ground and showing the world that they can and need to develop new ways of viewing many things, which will help us tackle and overcome the terrible situations we now find ourselves in. Justice cannot be done to their contributions here; you must look into that on your own.

On the other hand, the late Octavia E. Butler's *Parable Of The Sower* painted a portrait of what we all may face in this age of climate change, late capitalism, and "sci-fi" bio-tech's visionless "developments"... it had the effect of both scaring the hell out of me, while at the same time energizing me! Fear can do that (smile).

Now I'm an eco-warrior ever since I took the time to research the subject. Before then, I really couldn't say what the truth was. Even the harsh oppression I've experienced as a political prisoner failed to allow me to grasp more than the "academics" of what climate change and late capitalism would look like—since I was still provided with water, food, shelter, and clothing, etc. Octavia E. Butler's brilliance caused a true believer like me to stop "plodding along" and use my imagination to explore what we are headed for—up close!

So moved was I by that novel that I have since obtained four more of her novels: *Parable Of The Talents*, *Fledgling*, *Kindred*, and *Survivor*. And I plan to read everything by her I can get my hands on.

Even though the *Parable Of The Sower* is decades-old fiction, much of what Butler wrote is being played out in real life across the planet. And Hollywood blockbusters like *The Hunger Games*, its follow-ons, and similar 21st century dystopian movies, though thought-provoking and entertaining, are no substitute for the horrors in her work that are almost a mathematical certainty to befall us as things presently stand.

Check out that nexus between ROJAVA and Octavia's vision of dystopia. Then tell me how you see things...

### **5 Oct - Subject: Jalil Muntaqim's "Escaping the Prism ... Fade to Black" now out!**

*A new book from prisoner of war Jalil Muntaqim has been published!*

#### **MORE:**

Jalil Muntaqim is a former member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. For over forty years, Jalil has been a political prisoner, and one of the New York Three (NY3), in retaliation for his political activism.

*Escaping the Prism ... Fade to Black* is a collection of Jalil's poetry and essays, written from behind the bars of Attica prison. Combining the personal and the political, these texts afford readers with a rare opportunity to get to know a man who has spent most of his life -- over forty years -- behind bars for his involvement in the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Jalil's poetry deals with a range of themes -- spirituality, history, and the struggle for justice; depression, humor, and sexual desire; the pain and loneliness of imprisonment, the ongoing racist oppression of New Afrikan people in the United States, and the need to find meaning in one's life. At the same time, his political essays show him to be as eager as ever to intervene in and grapple with the events of today, always with an eye to concretely improving the lives of the oppressed.

As Walidah Imarisha states in her introduction, "This collection is not just about rebuke, but a commitment to living fully and loving completely. To exploring all aspects of humanity, all pieces that make up liberation ... *Escaping the Prism* defies the attempts of the state to silence political prisoners, to disconnect them from those on the ground working to create change. In the context of the international Black Lives

Matter movement, this roar for justice led by Black youth, Jalil's poetic voice, and the voices of all our political prisoners, are vitally necessary to continue the continuity of Black resistance."

*Escaping the Prism ... Fade to Black* also includes an extensive examination of the U.S. government's war against the Black Liberation Army in general, and Jalil and the New York Three in particular, by renowned scholar-activist Ward Churchill. In "The Other Kind: On the Integrity, Consistency, and Humanity of Jalil Abdul Muntaqim," Churchill traces this story from the FBI's murderous COINTELPRO repression of the Black Panther Party, through the NEWKILL operation which led to the NY3's incarceration, to the more recent Phoenix Taskforce which orchestrated the re-prosecution of Jalil and other veteran Black activists, in the case of the San Francisco 8.

With illustrations by revolutionary prisoner-artists Zolo Agona Azania and Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, as well as outside artist-activists Bec Young, Pete Railand, Rocky Dobey, and the We are the Crisis collective.

To order your copy, visit [leftwingbooks.net](http://leftwingbooks.net) or [akpress.org](http://akpress.org)

## **6 Oct - Kevin Olliff and Tyler Lang Plead Guilty to Terrorism Charges for Liberating Mink**

*This article was printed in the Earth First! Journal (Mabon 2015)*

### **MORE:**

by Grayson

We were driving south through central California when we got the call that Tyler had disappeared. He had been on the phone with a friend, waiting outside of a Los Angeles restaurant before a fundraiser, when he said "Agents are here, call my lawyer," and hung up. It had been half an hour since the phone call, and he hadn't picked up since. We were still three hours from LA, speeding down I-5, but the fundraiser was a short distance from my sister's house, so she went to see what was happening. When she got there, Tyler's car was still at the restaurant, but he wasn't.

We made calls to lawyers, and Tyler's name wasn't on any of the Los Angeles dockets for the day. But one document in the federal courthouse was still sealed.

After hours of interrogation by FBI and Joint Terrorism Task Force agents, where he refused to say anything but his name and birth date, Tyler was brought into a courtroom and indicted under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA)—a law that adds terrorism enhancements to crimes if they impact animal exploitation industries—for allegedly liberating mink and damaging property at a fur farm in Illinois. This was July 10, 2014. Tyler's friend Kevin Olliff (aka Kevin Johnson) was also indicted that day, while he was still locked up in state prison in Illinois.

Tyler had been released from Illinois' Woodford County Jail the previous November. He and Kevin had been serving time there for "possession of burglary tools" after they were pulled over near a fox farm in Illinois in August of 2013 and were found to have wire cutters and other suspicious materials in their car. Because of his lack of criminal history, Tyler was released after three months, while Kevin was still serving time. He was scheduled to be released from state custody in October of 2014.

So while Kevin was still serving time for the state charges, they were both now being indicted by the federal government. Each were charged with two counts of violating the AETA. Since the AETA became federal law in 2006, actions that would have previously amounted to theft and vandalism charges, such as spray painting a fur farm and releasing captive animals, are now classified as "terrorism," meaning that Kevin and Tyler face potential five-year sentences.

One year after these indictments, in June and July of 2015, Kevin and Tyler pleaded guilty to violating the AETA. Kevin had been in federal custody since his October 2014 "release" from state prison, while Tyler

had been out of jail but confined to Southern California. They await their sentencing, scheduled for November.

It is obvious to anyone who isn't in the pockets of the animal industry that the claim that Tyler's and Kevin's actions constitute "terrorism" are outrageous. The plea agreements that Kevin and Tyler took focus almost entirely on loss of profits to animal industries, and in no way suggest that Tyler and Kevin harmed, conspired to harm, or even could have accidentally harmed anyone with their actions. From Tyler's plea agreement, pages three and four:

*Mink Farm A is located in Morris, Illinois, and is in the business of raising and selling minks to furriers. On August 13, 2013, LANG and Johnson vandalized Mink Farm A. Specifically, LANG and Johnson spray painted the words "Liberation is Love" on the side of a barn located on Mink Farm A and poured caustic substances over two farm vehicles, causing significant damage to the barn and those vehicles. LANG and Johnson also released approximately 2,000 minks from their cages. LANG and Johnson had removed portions of the fence surrounding the mink farm in order to facilitate the release of the minks. They also removed and destroyed the breeding cards from the minks' cages, which identified their breed and are required for the subsequent sale of the minks to a furrier.*

*On August 15, 2013, LANG and Johnson were stopped by local police officers in Woodford County, Illinois. The stop occurred approximately ninety miles from Mink Farm A and only approximately eight miles from Fox Farm A. At the time they were stopped, LANG and Johnson were headed in the direction of Fox Farm A, a farm in the business of breeding and then selling fox to furriers.*

*LANG and Johnson were driving to Fox Farm A in order to damage it. To facilitate the vandalism of Fox Farm A, LANG and Johnson had equipment in their car, including bottles of muriatic acid, a bottle of aircraft paint remover, spray paint, bolt cutters, a scanner, two Motorola walkie-talkies, computers, several books regarding tactics to avoid law enforcement and terrorism, maps, rubber gloves, ski masks, and vehicle license covers for the State of Iowa.*

As a result of the vandalism Lang and Johnson committed at Mink Farm A, the mink farmers lost between \$120,000 and \$200,000, which includes the physical damage to the property, the replacement cost for the minks, and the lost profits from the farm's inability to sell the minks at their fair value. Because their "vandalism" cost an animal exploiter money, it's terrorism. Can we imagine this in any other setting? What if someone broke into a Walmart and stole \$200,000 of electronics equipment, ripped all the tags off the shelves to make the items more difficult to restock, and spray painted "Shoplifting is Love" on the outside of the building—what would the indictments look like then? Would anyone call them terrorists?

Tyler's and Kevin's plea deals also contain "Sentencing Guidelines Calculations," a complex numbering and labeling system used to calculate the amount of time the state will recommend Tyler and Kevin be locked in prison. The system adds together the defendants' "Offense Level Calculations"—determined by things like the amount of damage done while carrying out the "crime," and the amount of cooperation the defendant showed throughout the legal process—and their "Criminal History Category"—in which a "category" (represented by a Roman numeral) and "points" are determined by the defendants' previous arrests. These categories and points are added up, and Tyler and Kevin get various penalties and rewards based on the final number.

For example, Tyler's "base offense level" is six, but he pleaded guilty to causing "more than \$120,000, but less than \$200,000" in damage, which increases his offense level by 10. But, because he "timely notified the government of his intention to enter a plea of guilty," if the court determines that he is entitled to a two-level reduction for acceptance of responsibility, then he will be offered an additional one-level reduction to his overall offense level.

Seriously, this unintelligible and utterly arbitrary bureaucratic vomit is what determines the recommended amount of time that each of these two activists will sit in prison cells for freeing animals from cages. Tyler's sentencing guideline range came out to 15 to 20 months in prison, while Kevin's is 30 to 37 months. These are only recommendations, though, and each activist still faces a maximum of five years behind bars.

Apart from the terrorism enhancement, the rest of this dance of sentencing guidelines and plea deals is one that Kevin is fairly used to by now, and it's essentially the same situation in which everyone facing prison time finds themselves. People get stuck in an unjust, bureaucratic, nontransparent system, are forced to take guilty pleas in hopes of avoiding the maximum possible sentence, and then the next time they're arrested they have points counted against them for having a crime on their record that they only pleaded guilty to in order to spend less time in prison—resulting in a longer prison sentence. And this is all, of course, based on the premise that putting people in cages is somehow necessary anyway—bringing us back to the issue of the mink, and the foxes, and the bitter irony of Tyler and Kevin going to prison, “guilty” of “terrorism,” for freeing other living beings from prisons.

At least the state makes their agenda pretty clear.

The scales of the justice system are always tipped in favor of the animal exploiters, the forest destroyers, the oil spillers, the climate change deniers—basically, the people in power. Labels like “terrorist,” and even words like “violence,” are being used by the state and corporations to suit their agenda. This doesn't just affect environmental and animal rights activists, or even just activists; rather, this propagandic manipulation of language and the railroading through of corporation-protecting legislation affects everyone who isn't in power. Words and laws are used to “other” anyone who speaks out against oppression, while hiding—and subsequently erasing—the true violence and terror that motivates people to stand up to power in the first place, by raiding a fur farm, blockading a forest road, or defending their community.

Despite feeling the weight of an AETA prosecution, Kevin's and Tyler's hearts are still with the animal rights movement. They don't want their case to stop others from working to help animals—and we must not let it. Rather than let their case discourage us from taking action, it should be a reminder of how desperately we must all work to fight back against attempts to stifle resistance, for each other, and for the wild.

Tyler and Kevin could use your support, financially and otherwise. Their sentencing takes place in Chicago this November. See [supportkevinandtyler.com](http://supportkevinandtyler.com) for details and updates.

## **6 Oct - Stop Sending Me Jonathan Franzen Novels by Barrett Brown**

*Here's the latest “Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Prison” for The Intercept.*

### **MORE:**

As I not only live in a federal prison but am also currently being held once again in a 23-hour-a-day lockdown punishment cell due to my incorrigible behavior, I haven't been in a position to directly follow what I gather has been a very edifying net-driven controversy over Jonathan Franzen and his latest work, which really feels like another punishment in and of itself. Thankfully, though, I've received a couple of representative clippings in the mail, along with a copy of the book in question, *Purity*, which I've been asked to review.

Two things bear noting in the interest of full disclosure. First, this book revolves in part around the amoral antics of a character based rather closely on Julian Assange, while separately including references to Assange himself, most of them critical. I happen to have been an early and rabid partisan of Assange, and the two of us sometimes say nice things about each other in the press. Meanwhile, the criminal charges on which I've been imprisoned center on my fairly peripheral involvement in a 2011 raid by certain anarchist hackers of my acquaintance on the State Department-linked corporate espionage firm Stratfor, the stolen emails from which were provided to WikiLeaks. Second, and more to the point, I despise contemporary fiction almost as much as Jonathan Franzen despises women. In my view, the novel peaked with Dostoyevsky, and although I do admire, for instance, Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*, Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*, and Burgess' *Earthly Powers*, you'll note that the most recent of these was published almost 30 years ago. Now, I don't doubt that some worthwhile works of “serious” fiction are still being put out now

and again, but I wouldn't know how to go about finding them, as many of our nation's respectable outlets have apparently resorted to just hiring crazy people off the street to do their book reviews.

I have here, for instance, a copy of Los Angeles Times book critic David Ulin's recent review of *Purity*. This is just as well, as I needed a refresher on my Franzen lore, and Ulin opens with that very thing before promptly descending into some sort of fugue state. Naturally I was aware of the existence of *The Corrections*, which, Ulin reminds us, was "his masterful 2001 portrait of a Midwestern family," but I seem to have entirely missed the more recent *Freedom*, "a moving meditation on marriage and friendship." Nor was I aware that the author himself had reached the dual status of "both avatar and scapegoat." As Ulin explains, "By now, Franzen is often regarded less as writer than as cultural signifier, emblem of white male hegemony. That this has little if anything to do with the substance of his novels is (perhaps) the point and the tragedy; when it comes to Franzen, the writing is where we go last."

"Tragedy" may be a bit melodramatic in this instance (although it is indeed distressing to learn that the venerable old White Male Hegemony is now being fronted by Jonathan Franzen; we seem to have taken something of a plunge since Winston Churchill). After all, Ulin himself here admits that "that depth, that texture," which is said to mark the characterization in *The Corrections*, "can be elusive in *Purity*, which is a more plotted novel, sometimes to its detriment." And plotting, he concedes, "has never been the author's strong suit." Perhaps there's a good reason why the writing is where we go last? But no — Ulin still maintains that our timely reading of this poorly plotted novel filled with low-resolution automatons is our only chance of averting tragedy, because the writing itself is just that good. As proof, he actually cites the following snippet of monologue as delivered by a character named Tom:

*"Don't talk to me about hatred if you haven't been married," he tells us in the book's one extended first-person sequence. "Only love, only long empathy and identification and compassion, can root another person in your heart so deeply that there's no escaping your hatred of her, not ever; especially not when the thing you hate most about her is your capacity to be hurt by her."*

*That's fierce writing, and it does what fiction is supposed to, forcing us to peel back the surfaces, to see how love can turn to desolation, how we are betrayed by what we believe. It is the most human of dilemmas, with which we must all come to terms.*

Setting aside this sprinkling of third-tier lit-crit commonplaces that I blush even to reproduce, it's unclear to me exactly what "fierce" is supposed to mean in this context, although I can tell that the term is here being misapplied since it appears to be intended as a compliment. And though the passage itself isn't especially awful, it's alarming to be tasked with reading a 500-page tome in which that sort of overwrought prose is supposed to make up for bad plotting and notso-hotso characterization. It's also quite telling that Ulin manages to get his favorite passage wrong; the end of the selection actually reads, "her capacity to be hurt by you," not "your capacity to be hurt by her," and directly follows a key plot point that makes the distinction quite clear. But then, as the fellow said himself, the writing is where we go last. Shed we a tear for Franzen? Nay — shed we a tear for us all!

When I finally did get around to going to the writing last, I was relieved to find that *Purity* isn't a terrible book or even a very bad one. There is some clever use of language once in a while, yet Franzen resists the temptation to dip into the self-conscious attempts at "literary" phrasing that mark so much of his competition (our friend Ulin mentions that Franzen penned a 1996 Harper's essay on the state of fiction, inevitably titled "Perchance to Dream"; one might be better served in reading a piece *The Atlantic* ran a few years later, "A Reader's Manifesto," in which someone named B. R. Myers points out that a great portion of modern prose styling is conceptually fraudulent garbage). Characters will sometimes think clever thoughts or even say them out loud, but not so often that this becomes unseemly. Now and again we are even presented with snippets of real insight. One can see how Franzen could have written a much better book 15 years ago.

But one can also see how that book might have been a fluke. In *Purity*, marriages fail one after another in excruciating 50-page flashbacks. No one is particularly likable or even unlikable, though a few do manage to be insufferable. Toward the end we're treated to one great character, the cynical plutocrat dad of one of the dastardly feminists, but then he disappears from view and promptly dies. The megalomaniacal information activist is admirably complex, but as a megalomaniacal information activist myself, I found him unconvincing. The one murder that serves to kick off the plot is perpetuated against an otherwise minor off-screen character rather than one of the several main characters whom the reader might have much preferred to see murdered. Franzen is also rather hard on the ladies, whereas everyone would have been better served had he instead been harder on himself and maybe put out a better book.

It's worth reiterating, though, that this sort of subject matter is not my cup of tea to begin with, and I certainly don't want anyone to refrain from reading a novel that might interest them simply because I said mean things about it. If you're up for a "moving meditation on marriage and friendship," then you should probably read *Freedom* over and over again until your eyes bleed. If divorce and infidelity and guilt and trial separation is your thing, then you'd better get your ass over to the nearest book store and pick up a copy of *Purity*. You need not worry about what I think. But if you're curious anyway, what I think is that I hate you.

Just kidding. Ah, but there is indeed a major plot element interwoven into *Purity* that should be of interest to someone like me — that of Franzen's ersatz Assange, Andreas Wolf, and his leak-driven Sunshine Project. Let me put it this way. I was interested enough in WikiLeaks, state transparency, and emergent opposition networks to do five years in prison over such things, but I wasn't interested enough that I would have voluntarily plowed through 500 pages of badly plotted failed-marriage razzmatazz by an author who's long past his expiration date simply in order to learn what the Great King of the Honkies thinks about all this.

There are big ideas here, but none worth having, much less writing down. One big idea seems to be that Julian Assange has blood on his hands. Not even the Pentagon makes this charge anymore, but it's nonetheless raised almost in passing in an Oakland anarchist squat, of all places, by a transient Occupy activist, of all people, who proclaims: "But Wiki was dirty — people died because of Wiki," an assertion that goes unchallenged. To be sure, this is a bit character talking, rather than one of a handful of main characters whom we can be certain are speaking for Franzen when they start denouncing the Internet or women, but again, it sounds about as natural coming from a slum-dwelling anarcho-what-have-you as a declaration to the effect that the Multinational Imperialist State of Amerikkka must be brought to its knees by a re-energized Situationist International movement would sound coming from Mike Rogers. This, then, is the author speaking.

Not content to present discredited five-year-old anti-Assange Department of Defense talking points as if they were accepted facts even among Assange's own ideological constituents, Franzen has, again, also created this Andreas Wolf figure, unmistakably modeled on Assange — he's even escaped to a friendly South American country, as the real Assange is trying to do, and like Assange, he's in the habit of deploying a rather striking female emissary on secret missions around the world. And naturally, Franzen has made Wolf a near-sociopathic fraud, murderer, and cover-up artist who also has weird sexual hang-ups (although it's worth noting that most everyone in *Purity* has weird sexual hang-ups; one young lady can only achieve climax during a full moon, but then you know how feminists are). What's particularly interesting is the sort of cluttered presence of both the model of the real figure and the real figure himself, whereas generally a writer will content himself with one of the two. Do the inhabitants of this fictional world ever get suspicious, I wonder, concluding as they must that one of the two global celebrity leakers is clearly an unfair literary depiction of the other? Do they also notice that all of their mothers are psychotic and that their marriages tend to slowly collapse in the course of long, grueling flashbacks, and do they conclude that they're living in a Jonathan Franzen novel? This raises all manner of ethical questions that I will leave to others.

Rather than any measured objections to online activism as currently practiced or the social networking culture, we're treated instead to a moving meditation on how the Internet is a totalitarian system comparable to East Germany under the Stasi or the Soviets under Stalin. The gurus of the information technology field — the “New Regime,” as Franzen calls them — are very much the natural heirs to the politburo. Oh, there are a few differences here and there, of course: “But Stalin himself hadn't needed to take so many risks, because terror worked better. Although to a man, the new revolutionaries all claimed to worship risk-taking — a relative term in my case, since the risk in question was of losing some venture capitalist's money, or worse of wasting a few parentally funded years, rather than, say, the risk of being shot or hanged — the most successful of them had instead followed Stalin's example.”

So, at least in the sense that these wacky Internet people lack the moral authority conferred upon the Bolsheviks by virtue of risk, this, uh, otherwise useful comparison between the start-up crowd and the Stalinists does perhaps break down a little. But! But! It gathers new strength insomuch that “the most successful of them” often have recourse to terror, in this case the “terrors of technocracy,” which consist of “the fear of unpopularity and uncoolness, the fear of missing out, the fear of being flamed or forgotten.” So, there you go.

Just a page later, Franzen inexplicably switches gears and decides that the terrors of technology instead consist of “the algorithms that Facebook used to monetize its users' privacy and Twitter to manipulate memes that were supposedly self-generating. But smart people were actually far more terrified of the New Regime than of what the regime had persuaded less-smart people to be afraid of, the NSA, the CIA — it was straight from the totalitarian playbook, disavowing your own methods of terror by imputing them to your enemy and presenting yourself as the only defense against them.” Setting aside the demonstrably false and frankly bizarre claim that recent concerns over the intelligence community's unprecedented capabilities stem merely from some sort of clever gambit by tech firm CEOs who must resort to falsely “imputing” such things rather than, say, from documented and ongoing revelations about those agencies, it's hard to see how Franzen can actually believe that the misuse of personal information by powerful corporations should logically preclude “smart people” from also fearing the NSA, as their “less-smart” counterparts have been “persuaded” to do. It's likewise difficult to see how Franzen can be entirely unaware of the contention that's been put forth over and over again by many of the very people who have made sacrifices to bring these matters to attention — that we are concerned with the combination of state and corporate power exercised in secret, drawing upon advanced and little-known information technology, wielded in such a way as to narrow further and further the potential for truly private life while also contaminating the very information flow that a citizenry requires if it is to survive above the level of a subject population, defended by an opaque protocol of deception and retaliation, and aided and abetted by a dysfunctional establishment culture that was unequipped to even discover the problem without a great deal of help from outside that establishment, which has nonetheless studiously refrained from learning any lessons from all of this.

There's an old joke, which holds that in heaven, the cooks are French, the cops are English, and the engineers are German; whereas in hell, the cooks are English, the cops are German, and the engineers are French. We live in a sort of silly cultural hell where the columns are composed by Thomas Friedman, the novels are written by Jonathan Franzen, the debate is framed by CNN, and the fact-checking is done by no one. Franzen's nightmare — a new regime of technology and information activists that will challenge the senile culture of which he is so perfectly representative — is exactly what is needed.

### **7 Oct - Bloc Party: Report back from ABC Conference**

*A regular column for It's Going Down, the latest entry from Bloc Party is a bit of a recap of the recent North American ABC conference.*

#### **MORE:**

We here at Bloc Party have busy lives. Between the kids, bills, and our escapades as outside agitators, sometimes priorities must shift temporarily to accommodate busy work weeks. Being oh so career-oriented, our lives had to be taken up by our work over the last couple weeks. So we decided to just focus on a

humble reportback from this year's North American Anarchist Black Cross Conference this time around. Don't worry, we will be back in full capacity in two weeks!

Happening annually for five years, the North American Anarchist Black Cross Conference started off as it traditionally has, with a public panel and discussion from former political prisoners. There was a sizable crowd in attendance to hear the stories and share in discussion with five formerly imprisoned comrades from different struggles in the US. Immediately following the panel around 50 organizers and former political prisoners from across North America headed out to spend three solid days discussing their work, building existing networks of solidarity and creating new connections to further that work.

This year there was a notable and increased presence of collectives and groups working on broader issues of community defense and prison abolition, with many debates and conversations on how to further connections and working relationships between more general anti-prison struggles and political prisoner work. Shout outs to folks from the Free Alabama Movement, the Lucasville Uprising, Support Prisoner Resistance, WEBS of Support, and IWOC for the solid work and perspectives they bring to the table. While there have been victories in the fight to free political prisoners this year in the US, there have also been losses, as moments of silence and acknowledgement of the loss of Yogi Bear and Phil Africa, among others, were consistently on people's minds throughout the conference.

General legal and movement strategies were discussed around how to get political prisoners free, what legal methods have worked recently, and what ones haven't. There were also several positive workshops and discussions on the way internal dynamics can play out and effect the work that people do. Whether that is political disagreements and oppressive behaviors between prisoners and their supporters, or more internal to folks on the outside attempting to work together to support people on the inside. The discussions generally maintained a respectful and humble tone, with acknowledgement that for many, there are no easy answers to these questions. There seemed to be deepening analysis of State strategies to divide and weaken communities in resistance. Our enemies exploiting contradictions and conflicts internally to groups in struggle is something that more and more folks seem to have direct experience with, and this is a sign to your humble authors that these discussions need to be had more often, with more thoughtfulness and care for our comrades. Behind bars or not.

The work of prisoner support and prison abolition is a massive undertaking. All hands on deck are truly needed. Starting up some prisoner support in your town with your crew can be as simple as getting together a few times a month to write letters over coffee or food. But, if you're interested in connecting with ongoing organizing, check out some of the above mentioned projects, organizations or collectives.

### **7 Oct - "Military Haircuts" by Chelsea Manning**

*With her Guardian op-eds and Twitter account, Chelsea Manning has continued to find ways to speak out even while serving her 35-year prison sentence in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On October 7, Chelsea expanded her presence onto the media platform Medium, where she will continue to share more of her personal story.*

#### **MORE:**

The last few weeks have been particularly challenging for me. For the first time in years, I felt like giving up... then, I found my "second wind" to be human.

I wasn't sure I was ever going to write this article. Recently, on the evening of September 18, I finally decided that maybe I should quit, to give up on everything and everyone: my family, my friends, my supporters, my court-martial appeal, and my other legal battles—even my articles for the Guardian and my Medium debut. Basically, I nearly surrendered.

You see, that evening I found out that the military was going to force me to keep my hair cut very short, to the "male" hair standard.

I didn't take the news well. I felt sick. I felt sad. I felt gross—like Frankenstein's monster wandering around the countryside avoiding angry mobs with torches and pitch forks.

I wanted to run away. I wanted to close the door to my cell, turn out the lights, and shun the world outside. I did exactly that. And then I cried, and cried, sniffled a little bit, and then cried some more. This went on until around midnight.

I wanted to cry myself to sleep on the concrete floor, but a guard came by twice and started asking me if I was okay. "Yes, I'm fine," I said. I was not okay, though. It wasn't his fault; he was just a young guy, maybe 20 years old, I thought to myself.

Then I started to think really dark thoughts. You know, "emo"-goth stuff, like "black isn't dark enough of a color for me."

After five years—and more—of fighting for survival, I had to fight even more. I was out of energy.

I called Chase Strangio, my ACLU lawyer, and I cried. As my legal counsel, he represents me in this lawsuit to challenge the hair policy that makes and treats me like a monster or a problem. But I just wanted love and support, and someone to cry to when I was feeling alone. He did such a wonderful job just listening to me.

After feeling devastated, humiliated, hurt, and rejected—and after wanting to give up on the world—I found my "second wind" of sorts.

I can make it just a little longer. I just hope it's not too much longer.

### **11 Oct - Emails for Eddie Africa 10/12/15 thru 10/16/15**

*We are asking that during the week of October 12<sup>th</sup> through October 16<sup>th</sup> people email the Pennsylvania Parole Board <Ra-pbppoc@pa.gov> and let them know you want Eddie Africa paroled from prison.*

#### **MORE:**

Here are key points people can include in their emails to the Parole Board:

- (1) Eddie Africa has had an excellent prison record in which he has not had a disciplinary write up in over 16 years.
- (2) Eddie has completed all the programs required to make parole.
- (3) Eddie has a housing and employment plan set up if granted parole.

Also it is very important to stress the fact that not only are you monitoring the upcoming parole hearing for Eddie, but also that you are concerned over the conflict of interest with newly appointed Parole Board Chairman Michael L. Green. Green was first appointed to the Parole Board over ten years ago by then Governor Edward G Rendell, whose office as District Attorney of Philadelphia in the late 1970s early 1980s prosecuted Eddie Africa and the rest of the Move 9.

Again, people can email the Pennsylvania Parole Board at Ra-pbppoc@pa.gov and emails can be addressed to the attention of Michael L. Green, Chairman Of The Pennsylvania Parole Board, regarding parole for Edward Goodman Africa AM4974.

### **16 Oct - Art, Culture & Resistance for Abdullah Majid**

**WHAT:** Freedom Ain't Free benefit for Abdul Majid

**WHEN:** 6:00pm, Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** National Black Theatre - 2031 Fifth Avenue Harlem, New York

**COST:** \$12

**MORE:**

Abdullah Majid is a native of Jamaica, Queens, New York. He has been imprisoned for more than three decades. In the 1960s, Abdul worked in the Grassroots Advisory Council - an anti-poverty program - before joining the Black Panther Party (BPP), and then became a citizen of the Republic of New Afrika. Abdul was involved in many of the BPP's community-based survival programs which included free health clinics, free breakfast for children, the fight to decentralize the NYC public schools and NYPD. For this reason, he was targeted by the FBI's Cointelpro - counterintelligence - program, charged and convicted of murder and the attempted murder of a police officer. Abdul and his co-defendant, Basheer Hameed, were forced into three separate trials. The first trial ended in a hung jury - divided along racial lines; the second trial was declared a mistrial by the judge immediately after the jury acquitted Basheer of the murder charge; both were finally convicted in a third trial. Abdul was sentenced to 33 years to Life. Basheer Hameed made his Transition in prison.

In 2015, Abdul will appear before the parole board for the first time. He and his family are asking the community to write letters of support to the parole board urging for his release. The letters should reference Abdullah earning a college degree in Business Administration while in prison, mentoring youth as they make the adjustment to the prison environment, his helping young males to cope with long sentences, conduct legal research and providing civics training. It should also be noted that Abdul is well-known and respected for his work with the Lifer's Organization both inside and out the New York State Department of Corrections for facilitating classes, his teachings, leadership and counseling skills.

33 years is ENOUGH!!! We need your solidarity and support. Family and friends of Abdullah Majid ask that you write letters of support to the Parole Board urging his release. We also ask that call your elected representatives to demand his release. Abdullah Majid needs to be released so he can rejoin his 93-year-old mother, Mrs. LaBorde, who needs him by her side. Letters should be addressed to the NYS Board of Parole, 1220 Washington Avenue, Building #2, Albany, New York 12226-2050, but sent first to his attorney, Moira Meltzer-Cohen at 11 Park Place, New York, New York 10007.

Performances by M1 and Divine RBG (of Dead Prez), Peoples Army Collective, Verbal Artisan, Sulay Majid, Emperor (of New Rakrz) and more.

## **27 Oct - Parole Preparation Project New Volunteer Training and CLE**

**WHAT:** Volunteer Training

**WHEN:** 6:00-8:30pm, Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>

**WHERE:** NYU Law, Vanderbilt Hall, Room 210\* 40 Washington Square South

**COST:** Strongly suggested donation of \$15, although no one turned away for lack of funds.

**MORE:**

The Parole Preparation Project of the NLG-NYC Mass Incarceration Committee is hosting a training for new volunteers along with a CLE for interested attorneys:

### **PAROLE PREPARATION BASICS**

New York State's unjust parole system and how advocates and attorneys can support people in prison in their fight for release.

Snacks served at 6:00, program starts promptly at 6:30.

**Presenters:**

Mujahid Farid of Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP)

Scott Paltrowitz, Esq., of the Correctional Association and National Lawyers Guild

And members of the Coordinating Committee for the Parole Preparation Project: Andrea Bible, Esq., Nora Carroll, Esq., Michelle Lewin, 3L CUNY School of Law.

**CLE Information:** 2.0 CLE credits available in the areas of Professional Practice and Skills. Transitional or non-transitional credit available.

**Info about the Training:**

This training will be accessible to attorneys, non-attorneys, experts and folks who are new to this work.

Please note that people interested in becoming new volunteers with the Parole Preparation Project (see below for more info on the Project) must attend this training.

However, attorneys and other supporters who are interested in advocating for parole eligible people outside of the scope of the Project, will also benefit greatly from the program and the resources we have to distribute.

**Parole in NY State:**

In New York State alone, there are 10,000 people serving life sentences, approximately 3,000 of whom are already eligible to return home, but have repeatedly been denied release by the Board of Parole. The Board is known nationally for exceptionally low release rates, and is notorious for denying parole solely on the basis of the facts of someone's crime.

As a result, thousands of individuals -- disproportionately men of color from New York City -- who have served their minimum sentences, exhausted available programming, and done exceptional work to demonstrate their suitability for release, remain imprisoned, some for over 30 to 40 years. The majority of parole eligible people serving life sentences are over age 50, with many entering their 60s and 70s.

By denying release to people of color and aging people in prison, the Board amplifies the systemic injustices inherent in the criminal legal system. The prolonged incarceration of this aging population also means that our communities are deprived of our elders and parole applicants are left isolated in their fight for release.

**The Parole Preparation Project**

The Parole Preparation Project is an all-volunteer effort that advocates for people in New York State prisons who are seeking parole. We have trained over 80 volunteers to work alongside approximately 40 applicants, many of whom have spent decades in prison and have been repeatedly denied parole, despite their eligibility. The Project is founded on the idea that the transformation of the system needs to be guided and led by those most impacted by it. Therefore, by advocating for the release of parole eligible people from prisons, we are advocating for the release of those who are ultimately at the forefront of this movement to end incarceration.

\*The event is located at 40 Washington Square S, New York, New York 10012 (A/B/C/D/E/F/M to West 4th). Room 210 is on the second floor and is accessible by stairs and an elevator. At the front desk you may be asked for ID in order to enter the building. If you do not have ID or do not want to show your ID, email [mlewin12@gmail.com](mailto:mlewin12@gmail.com).