



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for December 8th

20 Nov - The Real Walking Dead by Russell Maroon Shoatz

Russell Maroon Shoatz writes on food security in his latest.

MORE:

If you have not accepted that we are experiencing a mass extinction, like the one that wiped out the dinosaurs, then count yourself amongst The Real Walking Dead.

Admittedly, this is a subject that is so mind-boggling, even those who are courageous enough to face the fact that there is an almost airtight scientific case leaving little room for doubt, generally themselves succumb to an overpowering fatalism, leading to escapism.

But those who profess to have “grabbed the bull by the horns” must, at minimum, strive to replace their dependence for food on the very system that is driving this destruction of life as we know it. If you are not moving towards food security, then face it: you too are one of the The Real Walking Dead!

As a Political Prisoner, I know that I’ve been forced into that class...

Yet others who are not trapped in these hell holes, and who are not growing food in gardens, on urban or rural farms, and/or raising some livestock to lessen the hold these death dealers have on them and others, can be roughly equated with the downtrodden masses of Haiti, who at one time were at least able to feed themselves, but have been forced into what an associate of mine has termed a “post apocalyptic” Real Walking Dead state.

By comparison, after Cuba lost billions in yearly subsidies after the Soviet Union broke up, and long before Venezuela began to take up some of the slack, the Cuban masses participated in a campaign, little known outside of Cuba, to lessen their own dependence on government-regulated food provisions. They did that by learning to grow food on urban farms, gardens, and in creative ways on tiny outdoor and indoor plots. This had the cumulative effect of offsetting and diverting a food crisis, as well as greatly improving the eating habits of millions of Cubans.

The Haitians were reduced to eating dirt, mixed with lubricants, dried and fashioned to resemble cookies! The United Nations and NGOs provided some handouts, but the subsequently starving and tormented Haitians have since been kept under control by an ongoing, little-publicized regime of terror, imprisonment, and indiscriminate massacres.

Attempts to escape to the U.S. by sea almost always ended in tragedies on a scale that the refugees presently fleeing to Europe by the thousands have yet to experience. The Haitians’ only other outlet was to try to sneak into the neighboring Dominican Republic in much reduced numbers, which now also has come to an end.

Things in Cuba remain very challenging. Yet the successful effort to get millions to strive towards food security there has kept that population from joining The Real Walking Dead.

Ask yourself where do you fit: Are you moving towards the Cuban model (or better), or are you continuing to rely on the dominant system to sustain you and those you care about, until Climate Change causes another Hurricane Katrina or Super Storm Sandy to endanger your lives, leaving you to search for food and water?

Even if you and yours are fortunate enough to avoid such a catastrophe for a while, unless you are rich, or start growing as much of your own food as possible (in small groups or in partnership with a community) and/or raise livestock, the sweet and salty “junk food” that are the stock-and-trade of most of the outlets that the majority of working and lower class people are forced to rely on will guarantee that your health prospects place you amongst The Real Walking Dead; rendering your knowledge about Climate Change and your ability to struggle to survive this extinction of very little value.

24 Nov - Omaha woman reveals Omaha Two defense lawyer was impaired by alcohol

Black Panther Ed Poindexter not only had to battle COINTELPRO but he had to do it with a lawyer who drank too much.

MORE:

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

An Omaha woman, Bonnie Cosentino-Welsch, has broken years of silence to speak out on excessive drinking by Edward Poindexter's defense lawyer, Thomas Kenney, now deceased. Poindexter and Mondo we Langa, then David Rice, were targets of the illegal COINTELPRO operation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1970 when they were charged with the bombing murder of Omaha Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr. Kenney had been assigned to defend Poindexter.

The clandestine COINTELPRO counterintelligence operation of the FBI under Director J. Edgar Hoover made Poindexter and Mondo, now known as the Omaha Two, targets to be neutralized. The pair were leaders of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, a Black Panther affiliate group. A FBI Laboratory report on the identity of an anonymous 911 caller that lured Minard to his ambush death in a vacant house was ordered withheld by Hoover to make a case against the two men.

Bonnie had dated Kenney for several months in 1970, and soon learned of excessive drinking by the young Assistant Public Defender. Bonnie was recently shown deposition testimony by Kenney, given in 2004, which revealed his inexperience in defending a capital murder case. Douglas County Attorney Donald Knowles sought the death penalty for Poindexter and Mondo.

In a written statement Bonnie said, “Around the second month of dating Tom, I received some rambling late night phone calls from him, and it was very obvious to me that he had a drinking problem.”

“Tom Kenney told me in one of these late night, inebriated conversations that he either "didn't believe Ed", or "didn't know if he believed Ed." I don't remember his exact wording, but I remember the emotion I had about his statement at the time. I felt like Ed didn't have good or even adequate counsel in Tom Kenney, and there was too much at stake for Ed to have a public defender who was an alcoholic, by my estimation, coupled with being a person who doubted him.”

“It's impossible to say how much Tom's drinking affected his work during that time, or how severe his drinking problem was, but I thought, how could this man be up late at night, be this drunk, and not be hung over the next day when he was working on this important case?” Bonnie continued, “I have always felt that Ed was very crippled by the quality of his legal representation. Tom Kenney was obviously drunk consistently on week nights, rambling, slurring words at 1 and 2 a.m. I wouldn't want an attorney handling my case, especially one this serious, who was up drinking to this degree the night before.”

“Even though I was very concerned about Tom Kenney and his ability to represent Ed, I didn't know what to do about it at the time, or who to talk to about it. I did not go to any of Tom Kenney's superiors with my

concerns. I was in my early twenties then and didn't ever get to know Tom Kenney long enough, or well enough to make any claims about his ability to do his job. I had no idea about his effectiveness in the courtroom, or the ability to assess that, even if I had seen him at work,” explained Bonnie.

Kenney had two supervisors during the time he worked on Ed Poindexter's case. Public Defender A.Q. Wolf assigned Kenney to Poindexter's case, along with his regular “heavy” caseload. Kenney was out of the office at court or visiting prisoners at the jail most of the time. With no office investigator and limited clerical staff, Kenney was forced to work on the case in his off hours. Besides law school, the only training Kenney had was a one-week course at Northwestern Law School. This was Kenney's first murder case.

Three months before Poindexter's trial, Wolf resigned to become a judge and former Governor Frank Morrison was appointed Public Defender. Although Morrison was well liked and an excellent orator, he had no criminal defense experience. Morrison handled civil matters when he wasn't holding political office. Morrison told Kenney he would co-counsel the case.

To the public it seemed like Poindexter had a strong defense team led by a former governor, in reality, Poindexter was stuck with two inexperienced novices. The two lawyers failed to raise an objection to a “unified” trial, where the jury was tasked with determining guilt or innocence and determining a penalty if guilty based on the same testimony. Unified trials were later determined unconstitutional and other defendants obtained new trials. Poindexter did not get a new trial because of the lack of objection by his lawyers. Kenney commented on his failure to object.

“No, we didn't object to it. It was a thing—it was how things were done, and it never occurred to us to enter an objection. There's—there's so many issues in this case, and that's one that we missed,” said Kenney.

Morrison did realize that Kenney needed more time to work on the rapidly approaching trial and reduced his caseload. Kenney was tasked with finding expert witnesses, an assignment he failed. Unable to locate a laboratory or forensic expert, Kenney unwisely decided to become his own expert. Kenney told of his efforts in the 2004 deposition. Kenney said gave himself a crash-course on forensic technology by “reading books, and manuals, and things” to make up for no scientific expert.

“I did all the footwork and stuff, that investigators would have done.” Kenney said, “I went back to DC and went in their laboratory, and they showed me how they conducted the experiments, and I looked through the microscope of the tool mark comparisons....and it was a perfect match.”

“What I saw matched, but I had no way of knowing what the sources of the two surfaces of what they were comparing, what they were,” said Kenney, unaware that the “perfect match” had twenty-five points of dissimilarity. As a result of Kenney's trip to the ATF Laboratory, he did not conduct a rigorous cross-examination of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division witnesses at the trial. The dissimilarities were only brought to light because Mondo we Langa insisted his attorney ask about the test that Kenney had witnessed.

Frank Morrison issued a public apology to Ed Poindexter in 1997 and urged his release from prison.

“In my opinion, it is just as important for the state to protect the innocent as to prosecute the guilty. As Public Defender of Douglas County, it was my official duty to represent Ed Poindexter. He told me then that he was innocent of this crime, and I still believe him. We did not have the resources in the Public Defender's office to get all of the facts in this case.”

Morrison wrote, “I feel both I and the system failed Ed Poindexter.”

Bonnie Cosentino-Welsch remains haunted by the case. "Like many people, I will always wonder if I could have done anything to help this situation of horrible injustice."

25 Nov - "Crossing the Rubicon" by Connor Stevens

Please read the latest by Cleveland 4 prisoner Connor Stevens.

MORE:

As we move into the Winter season, the North Wind, i realize i am about halfway through my time in prison. This is a rather inspiring notion, as the time is passing swiftly.

I have been quite blessed throughout this time, in terms of support and circumstance, in more ways than i know. This has been an incredible learning experience for me, albeit often to my detriment. i am often reminded of the Johnny Cash line, about prison making him "a wiser, weaker man."

And then there is the Italian love song which states "the flower of youth dies in prison."

There is much truth to this. And the prison does not end at the walls of these facilities.

Alas, i have a few requests. First i want to extend my thanks to all the love i've recieved in the form of books and reading material over the years, and in terms of commissary funds, letters, etc.

My hope is that, at this halfway point, i'll be able to purchase a new pair of shoes (\$70), some new underwear (about \$10 for three pairs), and a new MP3 [mine has recently begun malfunctioning... (\$88.40)]. Music (of my choosing) makes such a huge difference throughout the day... These are all purchases that will last me the rest of my bid. So, i feel they are worthwhile investments. Please, if you can donate any money, i will be immensely grateful. Such concrete things make all the difference in my life at this point, like the difference between having coffee and going without. Prison is miserable, but these things allow us some semblance of serenity.

And if you send me any letters with return addresses, i will respond! Please be patient. i know a few folks have been waiting for some time now...

i will also be doing more writing for the interwebs soon, and if folks want me to write poems specifically crafted to them, just get in touch.

Much love,
With a gentle strength from a hard place

25 Nov - New writings by Jason Hammond

Tinley Park 6 antifascist prisoner Jason Hammond written too many pieces for the public, so we're happy to offer the following...

MORE:

November 25th - Don't Eat the Fucking Turkey

After almost 10 months of being locked up at Vandalia "Correctional" Center one gets pretty tired of eating the same damn thing week after week; old canned vegetables, bread baked without yeast, mystery meat mixed with dubious soy, the cheapest food the state can legally get away with feeding us. When commissary comes around once, maybe twice a month, inmates scramble to get to the front of the line, like

pigs at the trough but twice a year they treat us to a special holiday dinner, Thankstaking being one of them, but I will tell you one thing — I won't eat the fucking turkey.

I'm not grateful for the bloody and continuous legacy of colonialism celebrated on Columbus Day (Indigenous People's Day), nor do I see Patriots Day (9/11) as a day to remember anything but how the government is quick to condemn the actions of their enemies but easily dismiss the atrocities of their own.

I'm not grateful about how they cancelled 4 out of the 8 college/vocational classes here at Vandalia, with rumors that the last ones are next on the chopping block. If they do cancel them that would only leave basic education and the G.E.D. program (just recently reinstated this year), as the few opportunities people have to attain Earned Good Time off their sentences. In and out of prison they set us up to fail. They haven't cancelled the meat or milk plants though, functions to keep the prison running. Also, the Good Conduct Time, reinstated in 2012, is received by practically no one; I have only seen one person my whole time here get any time off.

All this shows how despite all the hype in the mainstream media and lip service by liberal politicians about prison reform, nothing has changed but the loosening of the chains. Even if the 6000 inmates the Federal Sentencing Commission released from Federal Prison, we'd still have 2.5 million locked up and 7 million on parole or probation at any given moment. Yet this country claims the moral high ground as a beacon of freedom to justify their right to invade and impoverish other countries.

They always say the state is broke, they should just fucking let us go!

If they have enough resources to escalate the conflict in Syria with US special forces on the ground and invest in Arctic drilling to extract fuels and raise global temperatures to apocalyptic levels, they can cut their plans for austerity on the poor and increase social spending in the public sector.

So I will fast on Don't Eat the Fucking Turkey Thankstaking Day and encourage others to do the same. I know it seems largely symbolic. It never seems like inmates, or even free range inmates (we are all imprisoned under state capitalism) can do much to stop the rich and powerful. Every time there is an international conference of world leaders on climate change, many promises are made, but quickly they all go back on their words and it's business as usual. The government's future for us is endless war, wage slavery, white supremacy, police violence, cuts on healthcare and education, gentrification, deportation and incarceration. We'll see the waters rise and the rich in their houses on the hill and the poor with nowhere to go.

We have nowhere to go but to overthrow this cannibalistic culture. If we all stopped working for the state and resisted, we could bring the prison system to its knees. Eating that turkey will be the desertification of the soul. I refuse!

Instead let's tell the stories of anti-colonial resistance that day. Let's talk about the Seminoles, Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, John Brown, I.W.W., the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground, the Zapatistas, the Rojava Revolution, Assata's Daughters, Black Lives Matter, Occupy, ELF, ALF, Idle No More, the Arab Spring and the many rebellions past, present and future.

And don't forget the day after raise hell on #buynothingday #furfreefriday #fuckFBIfriday #blacklivesmatterfriday!

November 25th - What's up good people!?

What's the difference between Donald Trump and the Hindenburg?

One is a flaming nazi gas bag and the other is just an old blimp from the 40s.

What's up good people? It's been a few seasons since I've written anything so here is a small update about my happenings behind the gates of Vandalia "Correctional" Center.

I'm coming up on 5 months left in prison of a 42 month sentence at 50%, followed by parole for some more time. I have been managing to stay busy, despite the lack of opportunity to do anything productive or mentally stimulating. I recently finished a horticulture culture class which cut my time in here by 2 months and I was able to get into another vocational class, building trades, which will knock off some more of the time I have left.

Everyday I reflect on my actions of why I'm in here and day after day I do not regret them, despite the intentionally mundane helpless aura of thousands of people warehoused with little to do, my rebel heart burns happy and hot. With all of the amazing support from my friends and comrades on the outside, I can keep it real all by myself. I have plenty to read and can better my understanding of revolutionary history and theory, an ironic privilege many don't have time for in the "free" world.

As I sit here doing prison time for the work that all white people should be doing to fight against systematic white supremacy, my message is to never give up the fight for a fair and just society. But time is running out, will we be coal burning dinosaurs in a war-torn world of deserts and dust? The answer to this question is found only in our actions. For now, I'll be playing chess and strategizing, staying sucker free as can be in the gulag.

25 Nov - Isis shouldn't dictate how we address refugees - or Privacy: op-ed by Chelsea Manning

Some want to exploit the Paris attacks in order to justify seizures of power to meet their own political ends. We should not let that happen.

MORE:

by Chelsea Manning (*The Guardian*)

Following the horrific attacks by Isis terrorists in Paris and Beirut, we have rapidly seen blatant pandering to xenophobia on a disturbing scale and scope. Leaders throughout the US and Europe have demanded that authorities stifle the flow of migrants seeking asylum, and to increase the size and depths of intelligence and law enforcement powers in the US and Europe.

I don't have all the answers – but I do know that blaming minority groups, refugees and immigrants, investing in gigantic surveillance platforms and calling for expansive legal authority and the creation of a neo-Gestapo and panopticon-style police state aren't one of them.

Even in the weeks and months before the attacks, rightwing parties in Europe – most notably the National Front in France – have attempted to exploit a rising xenophobic sentiment following this year's influx of migrants seeking refuge from Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. Immediately following the attacks such fears have "gone viral" in a way that is disturbing and frightening.

In Canada, the plans to exclude unaccompanied male refugees from resettlement make me fear – in addition to the broader problems of severing young people from their existing support systems – for those queer and transgender folk who are fleeing from being hunted down and murdered indiscriminately.

In the US, federal lawmakers and dozens of state governors have called for the US to stem the flow of those seeking asylum from Syria, culminating in the quick passage of legislation in the US House making the approval of Syrian refugees into the US administratively difficult, if not impossible – even though approvals of such refugees numbered less than 1,700 in 2014.

The CIA director, James Brennan, described the ongoing controversy over the intelligence communities' mass surveillance and bulk record collection of US citizens and non-citizens as “a lot of hand-wringing over the government's role in the effort to try to uncover these terrorists”.

However, what the intelligence community and law enforcement authorities in the United States and Europe failed to acknowledge is the fact that even before and following the attacks in Paris and Beirut, none of their agencies had lost any of the capabilities that they had previously or that the reformed USA Freedom Act had not even taken effect.

The demands for more power by the powerful were described by Naomi's Klein “Shock Doctrine” principle: people and organizations often exploit crises in order to justify seizures of power to meet their own political and economic ends. The inevitable xenophobic and pro-surveillance responses of the US, EU and Canadian governments were likely, as other analysts have pointed out, part of the strategy calculated by the very organization (Isis) that perpetrated the ghastly atrocities.

The leaders of Isis are canny strategists with a solid understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the west. They expect politicians and military leaders in the US and Europe – particularly in the case of France and the United Kingdom – to overreact in response to successful attacks in the US and Europe and territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, and they use those responses to recruit Europeans and Americans in their call to arms.

Like many other attacks, the attacks in Paris were tragic, horrific and coldly calculated. They may or may not have been preventable – it's simply far too soon to know, assuming that we ever will. However, stoking the fears about a shadowy wave of terrorists coming from everywhere that there is warfare and strife is a disturbing, alienating and disproportionate response.

The people of France were the ones who delivered the Statue of Liberty to the US nearly a century and a half ago. Beside the statue for many years was a massive immigration station on Ellis Island. Describing the site of the statue as it was erected, the American poet Emma Lazarus wrote that the statue silently demands:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

It is a poem that defines America – and we and the EU would do well to remember it, especially in such turbulent times.

26 Nov - Leonard Peltier: Day of Mourning

The following is Leonard Peltier's statement for the 46th annual National Day of Mourning organized by the United American Indians of New England.

MORE:

It makes my heart happy to know so many of you are keeping this Day of Mourning event going.

I hear there is going to be a National Geographic movie this month called "Saints and Strangers" about the REAL Thanksgiving. I want you to know that I believe... I KNOW this has only come about from your continued protest and determination to expose what really happened. But, damn, huh has it ever taken so long! :(Let's hope this film DOES tell the truth. I, for one, thank you very much, as this is what it was and is all about—getting the real history told about the genocide that was committed against us as a race of people and against our Nations. If we don't do this, then it can and will happen again until we have all been exterminated.

I'm so proud of you young People out there too, all over the country, standing up for our Nations and taking over because some of us can no longer get out there to stand by your sides—or to stand there with you and shake your hands.

February 6, 2016, will make it 40 straight years in here. Under the laws I was indicted with, a life term was seven years. I have served over six life sentences! As you know, I was sentenced to only two. To Native Peoples this is also not surprising. In fact, this is something that happens on a regular basis throughout Indian Country. And, as always, this is not acceptable to us. So we protest, and we protest some more.

Over the last four decades, I have been supported by people of all backgrounds, races, and religions. As we approach the one-year mark on President Obama's remaining time in office, it is crucial for my survival that everyone who has ever supported my release to please contact my official Committee that works on my behalf, and coordinate and organize with them.

In 2008, when asked about my case, then Senator Obama supposedly said, "Show me the support." If all of you dedicate some of your time in 2016 to support my bid for clemency, I believe this President has the courage to do the right thing and let me go home.

Remember, too, that we have brothers and sisters who are themselves wrongfully incarcerated, and I ask that we all coordinate to put an end to these injustices.

I wish I could lie to you and tell you I'm doing O.K., but that would not be fair to you. Today, I have another call out to the prison clinic. I guess some of the results must have come back from my last blood work. I know I'm not feeling very well. It seems as if there are so many things wrong with me... I don't know what to do or say to you, or even where to start. Hell, I cannot even sit for any length of time. When I get up my plexis area hurts so bad, I cannot walk but very slowly and while hanging on to someone for support. But after a few steps I'm O.K. So I move right along with the crowd. :) But those first few steps are awfully painful. I asked for a cushion, but was told they don't have any here—and to make one myself from a blanket. Well, news flash. I did this and every time I did they took it away. Yep, for some reason this is illegal. Then I have to deal with the other medical problems. So, yeah, this is my Sundance. But you know what? You're all worth it and I would not hesitate to suffer for any of you again and again.

Well, I better end this before you get bored with me. :) So, again, thank you—all of you—for being decent loving human beings.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse...

December 6th - Support Leonard Peltier!

Last week, there was a spiritual Rally for Leonard Peltier in front of the White House, part of a series of vigils and actions in DC. The International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee included the following call for support among those who could not attend in person:

You can help support this important series of events. Clemency now!

Call President Obama for Leonard Peltier: 202.456.1111 or 202.456.1414; email President Obama: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments>; post a comment on Obama's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/potus>; send a tweet to President Obama: @POTUS; and/or write a letter to: President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500

27 Nov - Court Support for Nicole and Joseph

On Monday, December 21st at 2pm, Nicole Kissane and Joseph Buddenburg have a scheduled court appearance for a motions hearing.

MORE:

A trial date is also expected to be set at this court appearance. We are organizing court support on their behalf. It's time again for the community to rally around these two as prepare for another day in court. Please be in attendance.

When: Monday, 12/21

Where: US District Court, Souther District of California

Courtroom 14A (Judge Burns)

Suite 1410

333 West Broadway

San Diego, California 92101

28 Nov - Update on Robert Seth Hayes

Seth has been in the infirmary at Sullivan since he got back from the hospital, hasn't even been allowed to have a change of clothes, and it is difficult to make phone calls.

MORE:

They are giving him Glucerna twice a day, which is causing his blood sugars to be high (despite the fact that Glucerna is prescribed for diabetics).

The swelling in his legs and feet has returned. His cough has also returned.

Has only seen the doctor once, when he came back from Albany Medical Center.

They have increased his blood pressure medication and they are monitoring his blood pressure.

5 minutes of oxygen 4 times a day.

Still does not have a diabetic diet. When he was in Albany they reduced his Levamir. They were also giving him less insulin. Now that he is back in Sullivan, they have returned to giving him the same amount of Levamir and insulin they were giving him before he went to the hospital.

Seth's lawyer Eve Rosahn will be visiting him on Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2015, so hopefully we will have more info after this legal visit.

We know ultimately Seth needs to come home to get healthy. Prison life is not meant for health. He goes to the parole board in June 2016 for the 9th time, not including other parole appeal denials in between the two year hits.

Being outside prison, Seth could receive true medical, family, nutrition and other related aspects of life that can contribute to the immense healing process that is needed.

It would be heartening for Seth to receive get well wishes at this time. Write to Seth and let him know he is in our hearts and on our minds.

29 Nov - The Great Disconnect by Abdul Haqq

Please read the latest from animal liberation prisoner Abdul Haqq.

MORE:

One of the major problems with the modern day manifestations of the Animal Rights Movement And the Straight Edge lifestyle seems to be a disconnect between rhetoric, speech and creed versus behavior, practice and reality. this disease of hypocrisy effects modern civilization at large and is part and parcel of the schizophrenia, neurosis and perversion that pervades and infects most of our lives.

A large cross section of activists in general and Animal Rights/welfare activists in particular pretend at concern and respect for Animals lives while simultaneously dining on their dead bodies, drinking cow secretions and eating the scrambled, poached and calcified menstruation cycles of chickens.

Many of those that critique technology and civilization do so from their computer screens and outside of postulating on paper they often have more real world experience as a technophile than a survivalist, Luddite or even the basic country or mountain dweller. Many a Vegan I have known medicates themselves with drugs both legal or illegal that are currently or have been tested on Animals. Under the guise of medicine, stress relief or outright addiction, exactly like the rest of the masses that sit on their asses!

These blatant hypocrisies breed weakness and defeatism while also undermining the purity and strength that a righteous life has to offer. And in the end it is the system that profits at the expense of the oppressed and downtrodden. The system could care less about your philosophies, what books you read, or the bulk of your internet viewing or social media posting. Sure the system will monitor them for purposes of safety and security but the content itself is largely of no interest to the powers that be. So long as what you purchase and the way you live is in keeping with the system's wants and needs it could not care less about the latest fashions and trends under the guise of resistance. As long as you partake in popular culture, they know, they have you.

The reason being is that what you do is much closer to what you believe than what you say or display. And what you do (as well as refuse to do) will have a far more altering effect upon your outlook, worldview and personality than contemplation and speculation. Furthermore, those who believe or espouse one thing and then do the other (in short most people today in western civilization) when faced with a serious threat of violence, prison, fear or even denial of their petty vices will most often do an about face, turning on everyone and everything they claim so emphatically to hold dear. These are largely symptoms of the sick and degenerative times in which we now live.

Of course hypocrisy, con men, and soothsayers have always existed but now it's expected, as a given, that consistency is 'dogmatic' and 'unrealistic' or altogether unnecessary. This is because our society pushes quantity over quality. The greedy, fat and gluttonous always prefer the prospect of 'more' over 'better'...I don't.

I suppose I am a bit of a relic, perhaps a tad archaic in my thinking, but I'm alright with that. I'm one of those that values consistency, I tend towards it, whether it is attainable in the absolute or not. Because a consistent and determined approach to life breeds success in our actions and endeavors. Any educated or smooth talking showman can parrot words, rabble rouse or make a career out of sounding good. All protest movements these days abound with sellouts and old peaceniks that live lucratively making sure that outrage at social injustice is only channeled into ridiculous and ineffective displays of symbolic gesture. It's better to have a courageous heart and a silent resolve than it is to have the non-existent wherewithal of a coward and a flake!

Along with the great disconnect between belief and action comes this paint-by-numbers brand of protestation. These mimics and templates of so-called resistance. Hold a sign, chant a slogan, have a public temper tantrum, get on the evening news, join a group, write a letter, table an event, lockdown/hold hands etc. All these tired and played out versions of activism have the same thing in common. They all play more to the emotional needs of the activist than their cause of concern.

In the case of Animal they do not help at all. Animals in cages, in laboratories, in slaughterhouses, in circuses and all other places of use and abuse, captivity and torture are not the least bit aware of people yelling at a wall while holding up a sign. Even if you sat a television in front of their cage to show them the protest movement that exists on their behalf (one which shows its concerns purely in human centric ways that only hold significance to a small number of people) it is doubtful that any non human Animal could understand or psychologically benefit in anyway from these charades done in their name. This is often the reason why many folks at large think animal welfarists/activists are either insincere, or a little off in the head. Because it's obvious that the modes of activism are pretentious and /or somewhat detached from reality.

At the end of the day if you really care about Animals or are sensitive to the ways in which they are bred, exploited and murdered you can decide not to take part in their oppression in every consumer decision you make by going Vegan. If you want to do more you can help actual Animals, The world is teeming with the Animal victims of human exploitation, manipulation and apathy. If you want to go further then you can decide your own level of involvement and intervention on their behalf. And all of this will have a direct impact on strengthening your belief, resolve and desire to do still more, which is good for the Animals.

It's long past time for those concerned about the Earth, Animals and all Innocent Life to put down these failed and outmoded forms of protestation that are more focused on busy work to fill the psychological needs of the activist personality type (along with the largely irrelevant and divisive rhetoric of anarchism and hyper-leftism) and focus on how we can help save Animals and the Earth today! Or how we can intervene against those destroying or diminishing all Innocent Life with their poisonous and toxic lifestyles of filth and greed.

It's time for a return to the morality, ethics, edification, justice and compassion in action that has always traditionally separated the Vegan Straight Edge from the regressive and diluted hippie-crits that soften and plague the cause for Animal Rights. Along with this we need a return to sincerity, anonymity and action. Coupled with a digression from the selfish displays of activism that are merely designed to be a pressure valve to the activist community at large. Rather the movement needs to become an effective lightning rod against the status quo.

Animal Liberation, Whatever It May Take!!!

30 Nov - A Visit with Mumia, Building Toward December 18th, New Writing, and More

Please read "Politicians = Corporate Whores of Babylon" by Mumia Abu-Jamal and an update on him, check out the December 9th international day in solidarity with him, and prepare for his upcoming court date.

MORE:

November 30th - A Visit With Mumia

I just came back from visiting Mumia two days ago, and am witness to the fact that we have all experienced a miracle. Sisters and brothers, comrades, and friends, we are saving Mumia's life. He looked so healthy and radiant, so much like he used to, and he sounded so good. We both celebrated, again and again, his survival from the biggest threat to his life that he had yet experienced.

Mumia and many of us thought for sure, that he was going to die. Didn't he look like he was about to die? Remember those ghoulish frightening pictures with Mumia sitting in a wheelchair, looking like he could hardly hold up his head? THEY WERE TRYING TO KILL HIM AND ALMOST SUCCEEDED. But the power of our movement, and the thousands who called, wrote, demonstrated, and prayed for Mumia's life, defeated this monstrous enemy that wanted him dead, that wanted him destroyed before our very eyes. Mumia says that even when he was at his sickest, he could feel that love and energy of the people fighting for him and wanting him so badly to live. He says it gave him such strength.

No, Mumia is not cured. He still itches and still experiences pain, he's still in the infirmary where for about six months he has never gotten any fresh air or sunshine, he still needs to cover his body twice or three times a day with Vaseline and another cream to ease the itching, and he continues to need the palliative baths he takes two or three times a week. Plus, that itching could get worse again because the underlying problem of Hep C has not been addressed.

Now having nearly succeeded in killing Mumia, these evil spokespeople and enforcers say that Mumia is not sick enough to receive the drug that's known to cure more than 90% of the people who have Hep C and follow the 60 or 90-day regimen. No, of course Mumia is not "sick enough", as the Department of Corrections (DOC) is claiming, for those who wanted him DEAD and nearly succeeded in killing him.

Remember, Mumia only got Hep C because the police tried to kill him in 1981 when they shot him in the lungs, and beat him mercilessly after he was shot and en route to the hospital. He need emergency surgery and blood transfusions. It was then that he was infected through those infusions.

Subsequently, while in prison on a death sentence, they tried to execute Mumia three times, once in 1994 but the peoples' struggle got Governor Casey not to sign the warrant. Then in 1995 and 1999 Governor Thomas Ridge signed two more death warrants and in both cases set an execution date. Ridge campaigned for office on a "Kill Mumia" platform. He subsequently became head of Homeland Security and now, in the post-Paris era, is a cheerleader for increased repression.

We finally got Mumia off Death Row in 2012, and that was a great defeat for them. They had to scramble for a new strategy. They tried keeping him in isolation. But we went straight to DOC headquarters with a sizable group and threatened to come back and fight this relentlessly. The next morning they put Mumia in general population.

Maureen Faulkner, mourning Mumia's release from Death Row, issued a thinly veiled invitation for other prisoners to "take care" of him. But Mumia's fellow prisoners love, respect, and protect him. He's received amazing support from those like Major Tillery who confronted the prison warden with a demand that Mumia get medical attention when he was very sick and still in general population, for which he paid a high price: thrown into isolation and transferred to another prison. Others have shown care and love for Mumia throughout his sickness.

In 2014 the State resumed a deadly strategy. We don't know all the details. We can only guess what their evil plans were. We can only conclude that for almost a year they were again trying to execute Mumia, not by medical NEGLIGENCE as has been said, but by medical MALEVOLENCE. Those of us who visited Mumia during his illness could hardly avoid noticing how much his skin looked as though it had been radiated. We remembered only too well that Puerto Rican Nationalist leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, was actually exposed to radiation while in prison for fighting for his people's independence, until he developed cancer and died.

Mumia developed a medically induced diabetes through the Department of Corrections' treatment for his skin problem. They gave him a medication that the minute he took it felt like his whole body, including his head, got blown up to the point that he felt he had to straighten his head as much as possible in order to be able to breathe. Through this same 'medical' malfeasance Mumia, who had never had diabetes before, suddenly had such a high blood sugar level that he was rushed to the hospital in a near-coma state. He almost died from a diabetes they induced but did not tell him he had until he was rushed to the hospital with a dangerously very high blood sugar level. The medical personnel at the infirmary had actually known of the high blood sugar weeks earlier when they did screening tests upon his admission but neither told him or his family of this threatening condition.

And now these very same perpetrators of attempted murder are saying Mumia is not sick enough to get this medication. Does he need to die before they will consider him 'sick enough'? Mumia is still not out of danger. He has Hepatitis C which could cause other symptoms to emerge, including the reemergence of the unbearable painful itching, or the increased damage to his liver, or some other development that they themselves could cause. Are we supposed to accept the Department of Corrections' (DOC's) saying that Mumia is not sick enough to get this drug when Mumia's consulting doctor, Dr. Joseph Harris, has stated unequivocally that Mumia needs this treatment as soon as possible? We have consulted with dozens of other doctors who have agreed that Mumia should get this treatment right away. Even the American Liver Association has made it clear that this new medicine should be administered as soon as the illness is detected, in other words as soon as possible. Are we supposed to give the DOC another chance to kill our beloved and precious brother?

NO WAY! WE DEMAND TREATMENT NOW FOR MUMIA AND THE 10,000 OTHER PENNSYLVANIA PRISONERS WITH HEP C!

We demand that the DOC recognize the basic human right, established internationally and even in the US, that those in state custody, in this case in prison, are entitled to the medical care they need. We will accept nothing less.

JOIN US IN SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA ON DEC 18TH!!!

WHEN: 10:00am, Friday, December 18TH

WHERE: William J. Nealon Federal Building - 235 North Washington Avenue Scranton, Pennsylvania 18503

For more information Philadelphia: 215.724.1618

For more information in NYC, especially regarding travel: call 212.330.8029

December 2nd - Mumia's Rare Day In Court

We have a rare, one-time opportunity to get Mumia the medical attention he desperately needs. Please join us in and outside of the court in Scranton, PA on Friday, December 18. A bus and caravans are leaving from New York and Philadelphia.

US Federal District Court Judge Robert Mariani will conduct an extensive public hearing on Mumia's medical crisis and he has asked for a testimony from Mumia. Credit for this victory is due in no small part to the public outcry.

Our attorneys and the attorneys of Department of Corrections will present arguments.

Our attorneys will argue that Mumia has the right to immediate life-saving treatment for his chronic and active Hepatitis C.

The other side will insist that treatment be withheld until the final stages of the condition. In other words, until it's too late to save him.

A legal victory in Mumia's case will also be a victory for the other 10,000 PA prisoners afflicted by Hep C who have filed a class action suit.

A bus and caravans will leave from New York on
Fri, December 18 at 5:45AM sharp

To secure a spot, please email us immediately with your name and contact info at
bringmumiahome@gmail.com

We will be leaving from Local 1199, 310 West 43rd street and will remain in Scranton until the court hearing is ended for the day, probably at 4 or 5 o'clock.

When: Fri, Dec. 18, 2015
Caravan Leaving From NY: 5:45AM
Email us: bringmumiahome@gmail.com

December 5th - Politicians = Corporate Whores of Babylon

Sometimes –sometimes – the primaries, the silliest season of American political life, yields fruit, fresher than the candidates intended.

This was seen when the majority of presidential candidates, responds “NoWay!” when asked about the minimum wage.

Why such animosity? Isn't this idea popular among the poor and working class in the country? Yes, but to politicians, it's the interests of the rich that matter – not the People.

The loud and empty verbiage over so-called Obamacare is of the same stuff. A clone of the Massachusetts program under former governor, Mitt Romney, Obamacare blew air kisses to the drug and insurance companies, by closing the door to the program long supported by most Americans: single payer.

As long ago as 1985, some 61% of Americans, according to a Harris/Harvard School of Public Health poll, supported the Canadian-style health system – of universal coverage (Zinn 389).

But who dominates American politics? American majorities or corporations.

You guessed it.

And guess who won?

Millions today still remain uncovered.

Now, with corporations in control of the funding of U.S. politics (and of course, politicians), candidates outdo themselves in their subservience to the investor class.

What Americans want is not only secondary; it's really quite irrelevant. No one cares. Not even those sworn to "represent" them.

Once again, -- even in election years – average Americans are on their own.

December 9th - International Day of Solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal

WHAT: Speak Out

WHEN: 6:00pm, Wednesday, December 9th

WHERE: West 125th Street at 7th Ave/Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard

MORE:

In cities across the globe, Mumia supporters will mark this day as they have for over three decades—— in the streets, in forums, in teach-ins, in film showings. In New York, we will gather at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building (formerly the Harlem State Office Building) at 163 West 125th Street (corner Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard). We'll have our banner, our signs, and our spirit—— calling for appropriate health care for Mumia Abu-Jamal and demanding his release from prison! JOIN US! For information, call: 212.330.8029.

1 Dec - Support Parole for Herman Bell: Letters Needed

Herman Bell has been to the New York state parole board six times and has been denied each time. His next parole board appearance will be in early February 2016.

MORE:

Each time, the board – always made of up former law enforcement personnel and former prosecutors — reviews his very impressive record, the Bachelor's and Master's college degrees he has attained since being locked up, his job offers, his numerous letters of support from family, friends, and community members from many walks of life. They have before them evidence of all the ways Herman has helped so many people throughout the course of his confinement and is still leading a positive and progressive life despite being locked up now over four decades. And then they deny him parole based on their opinion that to release him would "deprecate" the serious nature of his charge of conviction. Is this rationale not, in effect, an illegal re-sentencing to life-without-the-possibility-of parole? When one goes to trial, there is a prosecutor, one's defense attorney, a judge, and a jury. When one goes to the parole board, there is only the prosecution.

Here's how you can help:

Herman has taken responsibility for his part in the Black Liberation Movement's resistance to racist authority. He has paid a great price – 42 years of imprisonment, thus far. He is going to the New York state parole board for the seventh time in February 2016 and deserves to be paroled, to come home to his family and community.

1 – Please write your letter to the parole board on professional letterhead. Your letter should be addressed to: “To Whom It May Concern” or “Dear Parole Commissioner”. The subject line should be “Herman Bell, 79C-0262.”

2 – Please indicate how you know Herman, or if you don't know him personally, how you know of him.

3 – Please sign your letter and mail to Herman's attorney:
Robert J. Boyle, 277 Broadway, Suite 1501, New York, NY 10007.
Herman very much appreciates your efforts and your support.

Message from Herman Bell Fall 2015

I've been told it's good that you should hear my voice, hear something direct from me. So where to begin, what to say?

A pal of mine, I met him in here, went home after 32 years of imprisonment. He left me a note as he departed. He wrote:

“It appears my number has come up. You witnessed firsthand how corrupt and confusing the Penal/Parole System is . . . I will be forwarding you a redacted copy of my minutes so you'll know exactly how trifling the system is. Listen to me preaching to the choir . . .

“Anyway, you have seen a hundred decent guys get out. It breaks my heart that they think of you as a threat to society because I know you personally and it has been a pleasure to be in your presence, as you always maintain a positive outlook, even during the most painful times. The Herman Bell that I know is a warm, caring human being that understands how life works, understands that he cannot change what took place almost half a century ago. Yet, you smile, hold your head high, and gave me invaluable advice, genuine concern, and let a few knuckleheads know I was a friend of yours, which I hold dear to my heart. Your friendship is valued beyond words. In a real world setting, I believe you would be a fine addition to society. If the Board could see what I see.

“I value your friendship and am always an ear for you and a shoulder to lean on. Be safe, stay strong, and know you have a real friend out there.”

My thought is that your curiosity might want to hear what he says of me, as I want you to connect with me, want you to feel my hand in yours, want you to see and experience my journey.

I've been locked in a prison cell for 42 years; have spent more time in prison than I have on the streets. I need your support to get

me out so I can go home. I'm as ordinary as your neighbor next door. No different than you are. I have a wife, children, and two lovely school-age granddaughters. I value hard work, fair treatment, social justice, transparency and accountability. You can say I'm a “people's” person. I believe strongly that people should help people, that “to each according to his or her needs and from each according to his or her ability.”

You see, I am not a criminal in the strict sense of the word. I never posed a danger to civil society. I never sought personal gain from my political actions; never robbed, never threatened, coerced, nor intimidated anyone in civil society. I never sold drugs. But I did, as did others, militantly resist the unrelenting structural violence of white racist domination and control that has afflicted the Black community since Black people were brought here as slaves.

Accordingly, in early February 2016, I will appear once again before the New York State Parole Board, my 7th. I'm eligible for parole release every 2 years. I've done the time on a 25-to-life sentence. I have satisfied all structural requirements over these long years and have had no serious disciplinary issues. Yet each time I appear before the Board, I'm denied parole "due to the nature of my offense;" the assassination of two NYC policemen.

The nature of my sentence of conviction arose from the immense social turmoil of the '60s and '70s and the f.b.i.'s infamous counter-insurgent program known as COINTELPRO that sought through diverse and insidious means to destroy the Black Panther Party founded in Oakland, CA in 1965, that I was a member of. This government program sought to deny Black political and economic self-empowerment. Destruction of the B.P.P., in the words of then f.b.i. director Hoover "by any means necessary," was paramount to this design. Nationally, Cointelpro enlisted the aid of local and state police agencies in this campaign. It was a push to maintain the levers of racist political power in this country that has dominated and controlled the lives of Black people through terror, bloodshed, lashing and lynching since its founding. (The rage and sorrow of Black people had sat in the darkness far too long.) And we pushed back in defense of our community: against that tradition of domination and control that has persistently fed off Black people in this country longer than they have been freed. It was an unapologetic direct attack on and resistance to the racist power structure in this country that has so historically maltreated and shamelessly exploited Black people as though it were a national birthright. It gratified some and astonished others. And as unfortunate and regrettable as it often is in civil conflict, violence and bloodshed on both sides are bound to occur. You may find my sentence of conviction inexcusable. You may likewise find the government's actions during those times inexcusable too. We Panthers were imprisoned. F.b.i., state, and local police agents and their provocateurs went unindicted for their unprovoked attacks on the Black community.

"Slavery by Another Name," a book by American author Douglas Blackmon, says of America: "We formed in molds twisted by the gifts we received at the expense of others. It is not our 'fault.' But it is undeniably our inheritance." Current f.b.i. director Comey admits that "the history of law enforcement in this country was not only part of the architecture of oppression but also a brutal tool of that system."

This history, these events, are what I'm up against whenever I go before the Parole Board. The NY police union (PBA) have a close connection with the NY tabloids and each time before I go to the Board, newspaper articles opposing my release is a front page story and online the PBA circulates a petition opposing my release, creating the impression of groundswell opposition to my release, when it's just the PBA.

You can write the New York State Parole Board and tell them how you feel. By writing the Parole Board supporting my release (because I've done the time, have satisfied all legal requirements, and deserve to be released) does in no way mean that you advocate, support, or intend to mimic what I did myself. It simply mean you think I've done enough time and should be allowed to go home.

2 Dec - From the Louvre to Louisiana

While the National and International community rally to the support of Albert Woodfox, time seems to have stood still in Louisiana where the long struggle to achieve freedom for Albert Woodfox after four decades in solitary confinement for a crime he did not commit drags on nearly three years after a federal judge once again overturned Albert's conviction.

MORE:

In France, the newly released "Cruel and Unusual" updates "In the Land of the Free" and digs more deeply into the arcane mode of punishment that reaches new levels of abuse in the United States- decades of solitary confinement and the results there of.

Meanwhile, Amnesty chapters both nationally and internationally urge their members to Write for the Rights of political prisoners with a special focus on twelve prisoners world-wide, including Albert Woodfox. There will be kick off events globally and Robert King will be urging letter writers on via Skyped interviews with student sections in Holland and the U.S.

As the year draws to a close, a year we were certain we would see Albert released- we pray for many things- world peace, homes for the dispossessed everywhere and freedom from fear, racism and hatred at home and abroad and finally, finally, finally.... freedom for Albert Woodfox and the too many political and economic prisoners held in gulags around the country.

December 2nd - Woodfox wants U.S. Supreme Court to weigh in on his request to be freed and block a third trial in 1972 killing

by Maya Lau (*The Advocate*)

Albert Woodfox, the high-profile accused murderer from New Orleans who's fueled a national debate over solitary confinement, is taking his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

One of Woodfox's attorneys, George Kendall, said Tuesday he plans to file a request to the nation's high court to hear the case, nearly a month after a federal appeals court ruled the inmate can be tried a third time in the slaying of a prison guard. Woodfox's request will join the 10,000 petitions the Supreme Court receives each year, some 80 of which are heard.

Also Tuesday, the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals filed the necessary paperwork to finalize its Nov. 9 decision that overturned a lower court judge's sweeping ruling in June that sought to free Woodfox and bar him from being retried.

Woodfox, 68, was twice convicted in the 1972 stabbing death of Brent Miller, a guard at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. Both convictions, in 1973 and 1998, were thrown out, first due to Woodfox's ineffective counsel and the next time, because of racial disparities in the grand jury.

Woodfox has become a lightning rod in the controversy surrounding solitary confinement, a practice opponents say is a form of unconstitutional imprisonment generally defined as being held alone in a cell for at least 23 hours a day. Having served four decades, Woodfox is believed to be the longest-jailed inmate in solitary in the U.S.

State officials have previously challenged the description of Woodfox's imprisonment as solitary confinement, citing his access to television and ability to converse with other inmates despite only being allowed to leave his cell one hour a day.

Aaron Sadler, a spokesman for State Attorney General James “Buddy” Caldwell, who is prosecuting Woodfox, said Tuesday he can’t discuss the issue of solitary confinement because it’s the subject of ongoing litigation.

In Woodfox’s petition to the U.S. Supreme Court, attorneys are expected to argue that U.S. Middle District Court Judge James J. Brady had appropriate authority when he ruled in June that the inmate’s situation was so exceptional that a fair trial would be impossible.

The unusual elements to Woodfox’s case include his advanced age, faltering health, and the fact that many of the witnesses to the killing for which he’s accused are dead, Brady found.

“The American trial assumes that a certain number of critical witnesses are going to show up at the courthouse, raise their right hands, testify and be subject to cross examination. There’s no dispute anymore. That can’t happen in this case,” Kendall said.

“The central, important role the jury plays is to look at the witnesses ... and say, ‘Who do we believe and who do we not believe?’ ” he said, adding that critical testimony should not be delivered by actors reading a script in court.

Sadler said the state agrees with the 5th Circuit’s ruling last month, which found the problem of dead witnesses would be best addressed at retrial by a state court.

“This case,” wrote 5th Circuit Judge Carolyn King in the 2-1 decision with Judge Priscilla Owen, “does not present a constitutional defect that cannot be cured at retrial.”

Fifth Circuit Judge James L. Dennis dissented, aligning himself with Brady.

Woodfox is the last remaining member of the “Angola 3,” a group so named for the members’ long terms in what they’ve argued is solitary confinement.

3 Dec - A brief history of secret prisons in the United States

Secret prisons reflect a parallel legal system for prisoners who are denied access to communications, deprived of their due process rights, and hidden from public scrutiny.

MORE:

by Will Potter (*TED*)

Secret prisons are operating in the United States today. Many Americans I speak with don’t believe this could possibly be true, and think that such human rights abuses only occur in foreign countries. But the reality is that the United States has a dark history of disproportionately punishing people because of their political views, a history that has largely been ignored or forgotten.

Today, under the ever-growing banner of national security and the “War on Terrorism,” that trend has continued in secrecy.

Let me be clear about the term “secret prisons,” though. I don’t mean facilities the public has absolutely zero knowledge about. After all, even Soviet gulags were known both within the country and internationally. Secret prisons are those that operate under a separate standard from traditional prisons. They reflect a parallel legal system for prisoners who, whether because of their race, religion, or political beliefs, are denied access to communications, deprived of their due process rights, and hidden from public scrutiny.

Here, then, is a brief look at that history, from institutions started in the 1940s to those that are operating today.

Japanese internment camps

Perhaps the most notorious use of this parallel legal system was the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. All Japanese adults were required to complete a questionnaire to evaluate their “Americanness,” and the final two questions directly assessed their loyalty to the United States.

Leading up to the internment, the government had begun using a “Custodial Detention Index” to identify and surveil political activists, including those in the Japanese community. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI carried out arrests of many of these individuals and sent them to detention camps as well.

Alcatraz

Around this time, Alcatraz was becoming a household word. The former military garrison was described as the “end of the line” and the nation’s most repressive prison. It housed the so-called “worst of the worst,” including gangsters like Al Capone. But Alcatraz was more than that. It was a new spectacle of retribution and secrecy. It was an island far removed from public oversight, both geographically and politically. Prisoner accounts detailed widespread brutality, and said that most torturous of all was Warden Johnston’s “silence rule,” which prohibited all communication by prisoners. It reportedly drove several prisoners insane.

Public perception of Alcatraz was that it housed violent prisoners unworthy of public consideration. It also housed some of the most controversial political prisoners of the era. Morton Sobell, for instance, was a co-defendant of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—who were executed for conspiracy to commit espionage against the United States—and the focus of public outreach and media efforts to secure his release. Rafael Cancel Miranda was an influential figure in the Puerto Rican independence movement. Like prisoners in the modern-day Communications Management Units I visited, Cancel Miranda was only allowed visits between glass and conducted in English. He was not allowed to see his children.

USP Marion

In 1963, USP Marion was created as a high-tech replacement for Alcatraz, and 500 of its prisoners — including Miranda — were transferred there. In 1968, prison officials began a behavior modification program at Marion called the Control and Rehabilitation Effort, with the Orwellian acronym of CARE. Prisoners characterized CARE as psychological attack sessions. When prisoners protested the beating of a fellow inmate in 1973 by organizing a work stoppage, prison officials created an even more extreme program at Marion called the Control Unit.

Over the years, the Marion, Illinois, prison became infamous for this Control Unit, which kept prisoners in solitary confinement on lockdown for twenty-two hours at a time. There were accounts of widespread brutality. National organizations called the “Marion Model” tantamount to psychological torture, but the Bureau of Prisons claimed that it was necessary to maintain safety.

Like Alcatraz, though, the Control Unit did not house prisoners solely based on their propensity for violence. As former warden Ralph Arron told Mother Jones in 1990, “The purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and the society at large.” After a prison-wide

strike and then the murder of two guards at Marion in the early 1980s, the entire prison effectively became a Control Unit. Later, government officials called for an even more extreme facility, and the Supermax ADX-Florence was built in Colorado.

Lexington HSU

In the 1980s, a similar unit was created for women. The High Security Unit in the federal women's prison in Lexington, Kentucky, was created to house political prisoners belonging to any organization that, according to the Bureau of Prisons, "attempts to disrupt or overthrow the government of the U.S." The unit housed Susan Rosenberg, a radical activist who supported the Weather Underground and Black Liberation Army, and Silvia Baraldini and Alejandrina Torres, who supported Puerto Rican independence struggles.

The Lexington HSU existed belowground, in total isolation from the outside world and with radically restricted prisoner communications and visitations. The women were subjected to constant fluorescent lighting, almost daily strip searches, and sensory deprivation. The purpose of these conditions, according to a report by Dr. Richard Korn for the ACLU, was to "reduce prisoners to a state of submission essential for ideological conversion." The Lexington HSU was closed in 1988 after protest by Amnesty International, the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights and religious groups.

Barrington Parker, the judge in this case, said that the prison units were illegal because they disproportionately punished political dissidents. "The designation of prisoners solely for their subversive statements and thoughts is the type of overreaction that the Supreme Court has repeatedly warned against," he said in his ruling.

Communication Management Units

And yet the closure of the HSU was hardly the end of the story. Today, Communications Management Units, or CMUs, are the modern extension of the Bureau of Prisons' history of operating pilot programs outside the confines of the Constitution. In April 2006, the Justice Department proposed new rules for "Limited Communication for Terrorist Inmates." Proposals included limiting prisoner communication to one fifteen-minute telephone call per month, one six-page letter per week and one one-hour visit per month. During the required public comment period, civil rights groups protested that the program was inhumane. The backlash prompted the government to drop the proposal. Or so it seemed.

A few months later, the Justice Department quietly opened the first CMU in Terre Haute, Indiana. Two years later, they opened another in Marion, Illinois.

In October 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons reported that federal prisons house 362 people convicted in terrorism-related cases. However, the government will not disclose who is housed in the CMUs, why they were transferred there or how they might appeal their designation. CMUs are intended to isolate prisoners with "inspirational significance," to use the government's language, from the communities and social movements of which they are a part. These secretive prisons are for political cases the government would rather remove from the public spotlight.

Even federal judges sometimes don't know about the CMUs. Attorneys for environmental activist Daniel McGowan, sentenced in 2007 to seven years in jail for his role in two acts of arson, argued in court that if he was sentenced to prison as a "terrorist," he could end up in a secretive prison unit. Judge Ann Aiken replied, "Now, defendants raise the specter that anyone with a terrorism enhancement is automatically doomed to a dungeon, so to speak, at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. It's a very emotional

argument, but nothing more, because it's not supported by the facts." In a way, Aiken's comments are true. The argument was not supported by facts, because it was incredibly difficult to learn the details of these prison units.

That's still the case today. I was able to visit Daniel McGowan in the CMU, making me the first and only journalist to visit the facility. As I detailed in my book, *Green Is the New Red*, prison officials threatened to punish McGowan if I interviewed him, and later punished him for writing about the units for the Huffington Post.

Black sites

Secret prisons aren't only housed within the United States. Abroad, the CIA has operated "black sites" — facilities that were used to interrogate and torture people outside the scope of the American judicial system. The Guantánamo Bay detention camp, which has become synonymous with indefinite detentions and human rights abuses since it was opened in 2002, is likely the most famous of these. A 6,700-page government report details the scope of these operations and the CIA's use of torture. But right now, the report is being kept hidden, even from members of Congress and government officials. As the *New York Times* noted, "the Justice Department has prohibited officials from the government agencies that possess it from even opening the report, effectively keeping the people in charge of America's counterterrorism future from reading about its past."

Homan Square

This notion of a parallel legal system has crept into local law enforcement as well. In Chicago, the police department is operating an interrogation compound called Homan Square. It is off the books, which means that Americans locked inside are not listed in police databases and cannot be found by friends and family.

As Spencer Ackerman reported for *The Guardian*, arrestees are denied access to attorneys, and some have reported police beatings. The facility is a nondescript warehouse on Chicago's west side, where people are held in interrogation rooms for between 12 and 24 hours. Unlike at the police precinct, no one is booked and charged here, and lawyers are turned away at the door.

"It brings to mind the interrogation facilities they use in the Middle East," said arrestee Brian Jacob Church, one of the so-called NATO 3 arrested in the leadup to mass protests in Chicago in 2012, who spent 17 hours in the facility. "It's a domestic black site. When you go in, no one knows what's happened to you."

There is a common thread between all of these secret prison units, both foreign and domestic, past and current. They reflect the slow, steady dissolution of core constitutional rights in the name of national security.

When the CMUs were opened, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Harley Lappin, testified before the U.S. Congress that they were for "second-tier" terrorism inmates. "We do not have to have them as restricted, but we want to control their communications," he said. This benign characterization of these prisons is a chilling reflection of how, bit by bit, year by year, post-9/11 rhetoric of terrorism and national security have swelled into a form most Americans think can only occur in other countries.

If there is one thing that should be learned from history, from governments that have gone down this path, it is this: secretive prisons for "second-tier" terrorists are often followed by secretive prisons for "third-tier

terrorists” and “fourth-tier terrorists,” until one by one, brick by brick, the legal wall separating “terrorist” from “dissident” or “undesirable” has crumbled.

This pattern is easier to identify when it occurs elsewhere or in history books. Restraint and reason have a way of surfacing with distance and time. The true challenge, though, is for Americans to shed this skin of exceptionalism we have worn, acknowledge that we, too, are vulnerable, and confront what is happening right now, at home.

6 Dec - Another date change for Tyler’s sentencing hearing...

We’ve received word that Tyler Lang’s sentencing has once again been delayed.

MORE:

We will post additional updates as we receive information about when the new hearing date is set for. In the meantime, please continue to support Tyler and Kevin as they deal with the stresses and emotions of awaiting sentencing.

16-20 Dec - A Monument to Oscar Lopez Rivera, a Puerto Rican Political Prisoner by Bread & Puppet Theater

WHAT: “A Monument to Oscar Lopez Rivera, a Puerto Rican Political Prisoner”

WHERE: Theater for the New City at 155 1st Avenue at 10th Street

WHEN: Wednesday through Sunday December 16th- 20th, at 8pm.

COST: \$18 general, \$13 students/seniors, \$10 kids under 12, Kids under 2 free. Wednesday December 16th is “pay-what-you-can” night! Tickets are available at <http://www.theaterforthenewcity.net>

MORE:

Watch out, because it’s time once again for Bread & Puppet Theater to descend upon New York City! Our 2015 run at Theater for the New City is ONE WEEK ONLY this year. Come see Bread and Puppet Theater's newest show about Puerto Rico's longest held political prisoner, Oscar Lopez Rivera.

31 Dec - NYC/NYE – Noise Demo Against the Prison Industrial Complex, In Solidarity with PPs and POWs

WHAT: Noise Demo Against the PIC, for the Liberation of PPs + POWs

WHEN: 9:00pm, Wednesday, December 31st

WHERE: Metropolitan Correction Center (MCC, the federal prison in downtown Manhattan); Pearl Street, between Cardinal Hayes Place and Park Row (J to Chambers Street or 4/5/6/ to City Hall)

BRING: Noisemakers, air horns, drums, anything that is loud!

MORE:

On the noisiest night of the year in New York City, come help us remind folks locked up that they are not alone. NYC Anarchist Black Cross, in response to an international call for noise demonstrations outside of prisons, is asking folks to join us outside of the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in lower Manhattan. Come, not to appeal to authority, speak truth to power, or any other contrivance, but rather to stand arm in arm with comrades and show direct solidarity to those on the other side of the wall.

The state, writ large, is targeting anarchists all across the United States and abroad. This will be both protest and celebration. To keep the cold at bay, comrades will again be on hand with hot cocoa that will keep the vocal cords nice and warm.