



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for March 1<sup>st</sup>

### **15 Feb - Update + New Writing by Chelsea Manning**

*We're including a book review, new article, and link to an audio interview with imprisoned military information leaker Chelsea Manning.*

#### **MORE:**

#### **February 15<sup>th</sup> - Listen to Chelsea's story: In her own words**

Chelsea Manning was the subject of the second episode of Amnesty International's podcast In Their Own Words <<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/podcast-in-their-own-words-chelsea-manning-michelle-hendley>>, a brand new series featuring the stories of human rights activists around the world.

One of the most trying aspects of Chelsea's imprisonment has been the inability for the public to hear or see her; prison restrictions do not allow any kind of photographs, visual or audio recordings. The most recent photo we even have of Chelsea was taken by the prison in February of last year, and Chelsea had to file a Freedom of Information Act request to even receive it!

And yet, our voices and our image have always been an integral part of our identity. Our humanity. Chelsea has said, "I feel like I've been stored away all this time without a voice."

In this episode, Amnesty finally gives Chelsea a voice, for the first time in years, employing actress Michelle Hendley to speak and breath new life into Chelsea's words. Through Michelle, we finally hear Chelsea tell us who she is as a person, what she's been through, and what she's going through now.

"I have to say, I cried a few times listening to this," said Chelsea, after a Support Network volunteer played the podcast for her over the telephone. "Hearing her speak, and tell the story. She sounds like me. It sounds like the way I would tell my story."

Since its release on Feb 5, the podcast has already been listened to over 10,000 times, passing up Amnesty's first episode voiced by actor Christian Bale by over 4,000 listens. It received attention from Vice's Broadley, BoingBoing, Pink News, Fight for the Future, the ACLU, the Advocate and numerous other online blogs and tweets.

#### **February 16<sup>th</sup> - Prison keeps us isolated**

by Chelsea Manning (*The Guardian*)

Prisons function by isolating those of us who are incarcerated from any means of support other than those charged with keeping us imprisoned: first, they physically isolate us from the outside world and those in it who love us; then they work to divide prisoners from one another by inculcating our distrust in one another.

The insecurity that comes from being behind bars with, at best, imperfect oversight makes us all feel responsible only for ourselves. We end up either docile, apathetic and unwilling to engage with each other, or hostile, angry, violent and resentful. When we don't play by the written or unwritten rules – or, sometimes, because we do – we become targets. It's easy enough to make us go away; it's easy enough to make us "someone else's problem".

The unique problem for transgender women in prison is that our health and welfare are also the responsibility of those charged with overseeing us. We live in an environment in which the same staff given the job of keeping us in prison for lengthy periods of time and occasionally "teaching us a lesson" are

the same ones given the job of ensuring our transitions, when we're allowed to transition at all. The first job always takes precedent over the other, seemingly more annoying one.

The day I first arrived at the United States Disciplinary Barracks in Leavenworth, Kansas on 22 August 2013, I announced my status as a trans woman intent on transitioning as soon as possible. At the time, the idea of a trans woman in a US military prison was considered unprecedented and even outlandish to the military brass and the outside world. However, when I arrived at the prison – and for nearly a year afterward – I was not the only trans woman at the facility, nor was I the first one to make such requests for treatment.

In 2009, another trans woman (who I'll call Alice) had arrived at the same prison. She was not the first openly trans woman to arrive at the prison either, but she was the first woman to have documented a request for hormones and other treatments. Unsurprisingly, her requests were ignored and even mocked by the very same staff members who today oversee the decisions about the conditions of my transition.

Though Alice had multiple diagnoses of “gender identity disorder” – which was changed to gender dysphoria in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) – the medical and mental health providers at the prison acknowledged and denied her request. They told her what they told me four years later: the Army and the US Disciplinary Barracks do not provide hormone treatments or other gender-confirming healthcare.

Without any financial resources, personal support inside or outside, any knowledge of the legal complexities of making such a complaint and “exhausting” all administrative hurdles before doing so, any access to lawyers with knowledge of trans issues in prisons, or even knowledge that such resources existed, Alice stopped trying to get the medical treatment she deserved.

That was, of course, until I made my announcement: after seeing an outpouring of support for me and my request, Alice restarted her battle.

After spending about 40 days in a “reception” status in a self-contained portion of the prison, I finally met Alice in October 2013. She hurriedly and excitedly approached me in the prison dining area and described at machine-gun speed her own battle to receive healthcare, and how her enthusiasm to continue was re-ignited by my own efforts.

Alice told me the rest of her story, about her diagnosis and about how she had been ignored for all these years. I felt sick hearing her speak about being forced to live so many years without medical care; I tried to keep the tears, the concern, the anxiety, and the anger from boiling out of me.

I told Alice that I would do everything that I could to help her out. She smiled, and then she frowned and said “I don't want a lot of attention.” I told her that I understood, but that I could help not by shining a media spotlight on her, but by showing her how to make another formal request, how to appeal the expected denial – an arcane and required bureaucratic process that many prisoners don't understand – and how to petition for a change of name.

I didn't tell her then, but Alice was one of the few trans women with whom I had actually interacted with for more than a few fleeting moments. And then, even though we were housed in different parts of the prison, she instantly became my closest friend and confidante.

Over the next six months, we bonded more and more. As promised, we started Alice's paperwork and, by the beginning of 2014, she finally started seeing a psychologist in the prison regularly.

She then began the same evaluation process that I had gone through earlier in late 2013. Because she was without any money or meaningful way of earning it, I also showed her how she could file for recognition of her indigence before a state court as part of her name change petition.

Though Alice had years of frustration and despondency behind her, she was starting to feel better. She became more outgoing and vocal as a person. Before, she told me, she had just given up and “stayed quiet”. From what I saw, though, she was clearly not going to be doing that anymore.

Unfortunately, our friendship and the assistance I gave her created a problem for prison management: instead of only having to deal with one legal challenge over gender-confirming healthcare, the prison and the military had to deal with two. And, to make matters worse for administrators, Alice’s documented request dated back over four years earlier.

Fearing the possibility of potential liability and providing healthcare for which they had no existing expertise, the military prison sought to transfer me to a civilian prison in April through July 2014. At the same time – unbeknownst to either of us – Alice was considered for a similar transfer.

Still, we moved ahead with our requests and, in July 2014 after exhausting all of my administrative appeals, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) began representing me and submitted a demand letter to the senior prison and military officials.

A few weeks later, my best friend and ally at the prison was suddenly approached by prison officials on her way to work one morning. They pulled Alice aside and told her that she was going back to her cell to gather her belongings and “pack out”. She was being transferred to a federal prison.

I happened to be walking by as a guard led Alice to the same area for people being processed in and out from the prison. She was pushing a large cart filled with what few belongings she had, looking scared but confident. I asked her what was going on and she explained the transfer. I stalled her, trying to say a longer goodbye, but the guard escorting her told her to start moving again. I wanted to hug her, but the best I was allowed was a quick high five, a sad head-nod and a little wave.

In my cell during lunch break, the reality that Alice was gone and that I would probably never see her again sunk in. I broke down and cried behind my closed door for at least an hour: I wanted her to get the treatment that we both need to survive, but I also wanted us to be able to be friends.

I often still think about Alice and wonder how she is doing in a civilian prison. The times we spent together make me smile; the thought of seeing her with an uncertain look on her face pushing that big cart makes me sad.

While we came from different backgrounds and had different access to resources, we faced the same system. Alice started to become more confident and empowered once she became connected with more support and resources on the outside; that power she found from our friendship and from the hope that she might finally get the medical treatment she needed made prison administrators nervous, and they took it away from both of us.

But even though helping Alice ended up limiting my time with her, I have but a single regret: I wish I’d told her that I love her as a sister. I wish I could tell her that I still do.

**February 16<sup>th</sup> - True Stories From the Hole**

*Book Review: Hell is a Very Small Place*

by Chelsea Manning (*Medium*)

During the weekend after New Year's Day, I read an advance copy of *Hell Is a Very Small Place*, a book just published by The New Press in February.

To put it mildly, it was one of the hardest books for me to read in years.

Compiled by three different editors, this book is an engaging compilation of works on the experience and practice solitary confinement. One of the editors, Sarah Shourd, is best known for her experiences in solitary confinement when she was detained by Iran near the Iran-Iraq border, and then held for trial there for many months.

*Hell* is a moderate read, with just under three hundred pages. It took me about six hours, over two afternoons, to read. The first part of *Hell* contains moving articles by prisoners who describe in extraordinary detail their experiences of being held in some of the most sterile and extreme prison conditions in the world. The second section contains analysis by experts on the effects of solitary confinement. They walk us through—in straightforward language—the damage that these conditions inflict upon tens of thousands of people every year.

The personal accounts by prisoners contained in this book are some of the most disturbing that I have ever read. There were many points throughout the book when my emotions became very overwhelming, and I had to pause and catch my breath. These accounts seemed so much like what happened to me—and brought up all of the feelings I had been trying to avoid for so long. I was often caught off guard and needed time to reflect.

This book captures many of the thoughts and feelings that I am afraid to talk about. I was held in extreme solitary confinement for just under 11 months. First, in an 9" by 9" cage in Kuwait. Then, in an 8" by 6" cell stripped of all material items in Quantico, Virginia. I was watched by at least two people at all times.

I confess, I'm afraid of talking about the pain. Rather than re-experience it all—as I had to do in a hearing in December 2012—I would rather forget that it ever happened. But many of these prisoners have bravely written that experience for me. They write in a language that is more eloquent than I feel I am currently capable of.

If you really want to know what being held in a sterile box for months or years on end is like, then I recommend that you read this book.

**17 Feb - Jeremy Hammond Article From Maximum Rocknroll Issue 384**

*We recently received a couple of articles written by Jeremy Hammond for mainstay punk magazine Maximum Rocknroll. They are from older issues, so we're reprinting one in each of the upcoming packets of these updates and announcements. This is the second of two articles.*

**MORE:**

2,500,000 and counting: A column by Prisoners - *Maximum Rocknroll* issue #384 (May 2015)

Condemned, deprived, silenced: millions of people stolen from friends and family, sent to prison where we lose basic rights to privacy and freedom of speech, having to endure terrible food, orders barked at you from country ass COs, ducking the haters and jailhouse snitches, and having to constantly fight for respect and dignity. Perhaps worst of all, you can't bring your music collection with you.

There're no tapes, CDs or records in the federal prison system, but the prison commissary does sell battery-powered radios.

When I was locked up in NYC fighting my case, there were dozens of badass stations, everything from Caribbean to underground hip hop. I listened to Crucial Chaos every week. And WBAI Pacifica community radio had all kinds of great talk shows, independent news.

Here in Manchester, KY, our selections are limited to country, bluegrass, and golden oldies, classic rock at best. No Democracy Now!, no Al Jazeera, not even NPR, but all the Rush Limbaugh and other right-wing conspiracy talk shows you can stomach on AM. I can't stand it, but it probably clicks with the former boss at my prison laundry service job who defends the cop who murdered Michael Brown. He plays in a "southern rock band" at local bars—"like Ted Nugent."

Most prisons are isolated, in small rural areas away from friends and family, and the feds can designate you anywhere in the country—I was arrested in Chicago for hacking a private security company in Austin, was tried in NYC and sent to Kentucky to do my time. These prisons are sold to these small towns with promises of creating jobs, tax bonuses, and other benefits, and end up with nothing other than the stain of being known as a "prison town." One of the effects—or perhaps the primary motivation—is to create a psychological disconnect between law abiding, white country guards and prisoners who are mostly people of color from the cities. It is easier to punish and dehumanize those whom you have no hometown or cultural connection, like how they sent the National Guard to Ferguson (the real "outside agitators"). The military does the same psychological training to make the "enemy" seem less than human so there are no reservations pulling the trigger.

The wave of "tough on crime" antidrug hysteria in the late '80s and early '90s gave an exponential rise in prison population and sentence lengths: coupled with other measures, like the Zimmer Amendment discussed in my last column, makes for some hard time in the feds.

Token efforts at rehabilitation and programming dwindle and it is difficult for prisoners to keep up with changing culture and advancing technology. But in recent years there've been signs that the Bureau of Prisons is looking to the future.

Sometime after I finished my first bid in 2009, the BOP introduced an electronic messaging system known as TRULINCS / CORRLINKS. These terminals cost five cents a minute to run locked-down software that allows you to exchange text messages with up to 30 contacts: no images, attachments, formatting, or links. It's not quite email, and obviously does not have access to the wider internet, but it's better than nothing.

TRULINCS is also integrated with an electronic law library which has access to case law, BOP policy, USC, code of federal regulations, etc.. This way they are no longer required to maintain a physical library of law reference materials. The search function is an immense help, but we still have no word processor capabilities: people use old electronic typewriters to put together legal appeals and motions.

Finally, the BOP introduced the MP3 program: you can buy a cheap-ass dollar store MP3 player specially manufactured by SanDisk and use an iTunes-like music store built into the same email terminals. Many recreation departments have also been playing newly released rented DVDs from Netflix (PG-13) and streaming satellite radio stations (paid for our "trust fund" money skimmed off the top of the already skimmed commissary profits).

I wasn't able to use any of this in NYC when they rolled it out because they put me on restriction, worried I'd hack the planet or steal MP3s. I was also put on commissary restriction for a year and loss of visits for

two years for dropping dirty on a drug test. But after being sentenced and arriving here in Kentucky, they enabled it and I was able to buy an MP3 and use email (though incoming/outgoing messages are delayed by days).

The music selection itself is something like iTunes: mainstream signed bands, no explicit lyrics. I was unable to determine what kind of relationship they have with the record companies to provide the music, so here's some samples to give you an idea of what they got:

They do have: Against Me!, Against All Authority, NOFX, Green Day, Buzzcocks, Bad Religion, Germs, Cramps, Anti-Flag, Rise Against, Ramones, Refused, Sleater Kinney, Bad Brains, Leftöver Crack.  
They do not have: Crass, Conflict, Bikini Kill, Dead Kennedys, Minor Threat, Fugazi, World Inferno  
Friendship Society, Minutemen, Subhumans, Aus Rotten, MDC, Dystopia.  
Definitely do not have: any bands mentioned in MRR.

I always try to shell out some bucks for a local or touring band, but I am an old school pirate, downloading music from FTP and IRC Fservices before there was Napster. It is insulting to have to pay \$1.50 a song for some Walmart BS when they only pay us \$5 a month here, not even enough for a whole album, when on the streets you can freely download the entire Tupac discography on BitTorrent in less than an hour. I don't buy a whole lot of songs and instead generally listen to the maximum number of free 30-second samples every day, but I had to cop out and buy a few tracks when they added Operation Ivy last month.

It may seem like a strange juxtaposition: rows of prisoners lifting weights and doing burpees, smoky poker tables, segregated chow hall like it's the '50s, quiet, tense moments in the yard like some shit is about to pop off, then you got computer terminals for checking emails and downloading MP3s. Some state prisons got it even better—Kentucky got in-cell TVs, PlayStations, and U-TAB e-book readers. Why would they want to make our time easier? Just like in the streets, filling us with movies and music acts as a sedative: prison administrators vastly prefer we chill in our cells plugged into a TV not getting into trouble, not rebelling, but staying quiet and complicit. There are times when the dayroom is so damn quiet 'cause you got a hundred people watching the same TV show.

The transition to email is obviously designed to help monitor and censor our communications. Instead of having to read thousands of incoming and outgoing letters a day, they store it all in perpetuity where they can run keyword searches, etc.. Even with snail mail, we can no longer handwrite the address on the envelope—we have to enter our "contacts" into TRULINCS and print a mailing label: this way, they can more easily create an NSA-like map of our lives. They routinely run algorithms which check who is receiving money from whom, which prisoners have shared contacts, who's making three-way calls, contact with people in other prisons, or third party unauthorized communication with the "general public." They also watch who has friends to update their Facebook account and sends Facebook notices to get them shut down for Terms and Services violations because, apparently, Facebook lets a friend run your account when you die, but if you're locked up they delete your account.

The BOP computer system running the MP3, email, and inmate funds is outsourced by the Treasury Department through a noxious contract with Bank of America, who subcontracts the work out to DynCorp (controversial private military corporation also operating in Iraq and Afghanistan) and Advanced Technologies Group which is owned by Keefe Commissary Network. Keefe is the nation's largest prison commissary provider, frequently accused of price gouging and kickback schemes, and is also the brand of instant coffee I drink several times a day—nicknamed "Barbara Bush" because of the widespread prisoner perception that they are behind Keefe.

It all comes down to the cash: they really don't care what kind of crimes we committed, the time is not meant to punish or rehabilitate, it's all about reaping profits from mass incarceration, especially from increasing privatization and outsourcing of prison labor. If you've ever been locked up, you've probably had to use stab-proof toothbrushes or wear paper sandals made by Bob Barker. Or had to eat shitty food provided by Aramark, which has contracts with over 600 facilities. Maybe you were at one of the hundreds of private prisons run by Correctional Corporation of America or GEO Group / Wackenhut / G4S. Or had to pay extortion prices to use the phone through companies like Securus, Global Tel\*Link, or ICSolutions, rates so high and kickback schemes so rampant the FCC had to get involved. And name-brand Fortune 500 companies use outsourced prison labor where there is no minimum wage or right to form unions. Extracting profits from the warehousing of human beings like cattle, they don't want to see anyone go home, and lobby for harsh sentences through groups like ALEC.

Meanwhile on the streets, the cops, pigs, the bootboys of the 1% routinely get away with brutality and racism, enforcing a repressive "broken windows" and "quality of life" policing philosophy, resulting in criminalizing entire segments of the population, and even getting away with straight-up murder like Michael Brown and Eric Garner. It's not isolated but systemic: folks in St. Louis recently filed a lawsuit against Ferguson for disproportionately targeting black residents for BS tickets and misdemeanors.

Court fines and fees are the second largest source of income for the city, and if you can't pay, they issue warrants and you go to jail.

The courts, cops and politicians work together to maintain this crooked system, so we can't wait for their false promises of slow reforms: we gotta escalate the struggle to abolish the prisons and free all the prisoners. Resistance can take many forms: public protests, letter writing and books to prisoner programs, writing songs and attending benefit shows to raise money for our comrades locked up, efforts to stop construction of new prisons, and targeted direct action against manufacturers of police and prison gear and "tough on crime" politicians.

I was really excited to see the coverage and participation of folks at MRR of the ongoing anti-police brutality actions across the country—it is great to have something in print to distribute and discuss with other folks in prison. UP THE REBELS!!

## **18 Feb - Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa explains David Rice is not his name**

*Mondo we Langa explains his African name from inside the Nebraska State Penitentiary.*

### **MORE:**

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, more commonly simply Mondo, was formerly named David Lewis Andrew Rice. Mondo, the target of the infamous, clandestine COINTELPRO counterintelligence operation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is serving a life sentence at the Nebraska State Penitentiary for the August 17, 1970 murder of an Omaha policeman. Mondo denies any role in the death of Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr.

Mondo is no longer David Rice after a name change in prison. “After several years in the penitentiary I decided it didn’t make any sense for me as an African to have a European name. I had to improvise.”

“My name basically means wild, natural man-child of the sun in four African languages,” Mondo says. What I did was once I decided what my name was going to be, I then got in contact with people from different parts of the continent to give me one component of that name in their language. The reason for

that was if somebody asks any African in this country who was born here and whose parents and grandparents were born here, “What is your nationality?” he or she doesn’t know.”

“My name, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, is from the Kwanyama, Gikuyu, Ibibio, and Hausa languages which means Wild Man Child of the Sun. In African languages, typically there aren’t first and last names as in English. Though since colonialism, this has become a feature of many of the languages,” explains Mondo.

“The problem is that Africans in this country for the most part have no concept of nationality for a number of reasons. One, most of the nations in Africa are essentially products of European political pragmatism, the division of the continent. The dividing of Africa in nice little pieces for Germany, for England, for France, etc. So the nations and their borders are in a sense artificial. That is one issue.”

Mondo elaborates: “Another is, as descendants of people who were enslaved, most of us know little more than most of our ancestors came from western Africa. So the question of identity gets real cloudy with hundreds of different ethnic groups.”

“What I wanted to do was in choosing a name was to not only talk about me as a person but to identify me as someone who had an African origin,” says Mondo. “I chose my name from different parts of the continent. The process is really backwards because a traditional African name is chosen shortly after birth. So I was some thirty years behind.”

Mondo says his time with the Black Panthers was about love of community. “My joining the Party had something to do with the competition with the police thing but mainly had to do with the fact that this was a group of black power experienced people who loved their people and were trying to do things for their people.”

“This is why I joined, the business about the confrontations with the police came with the territory, but was like one of the components. I imagine it kind of romanticized the violence. You know, like this cops and robbers and cowboys and Indians and all this shoot ‘em up stuff. But for me, the idea of someone knocking at your door at five o’clock in the morning, “Brother, my momma just got fired from her job, could you come with me?”—that is the beauty of it.”

In a prison interview, Mondo summed it all up. “For me it was about the brotherhood and sisterhood.”

### **18 Feb - Jay Chase court date update**

*At Jared (Jay) Chase's most recent status hearing his public defender attempted to get Judge Wilson to issue a court order regarding how Jay is shackled during transport because the way they are currently shackling him is dangerous due to involuntary shaking and movements due to his Huntington's disease.*

#### **MORE:**

Judge Wilson would not do so, and insisted this is the jurisdiction of the IDOC and would need to be addressed with them, and he would only issue orders regarding shackling within his courtroom. He mentioned that issues regarding IDOC shackling could also be addressed via a federal lawsuit.

Jay has one more pretrial hearing on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9am in Room 303 at 26<sup>th</sup> & California. He will go to trial in the same courtroom on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

Jay looks very thin and gaunt, and his health is visibly not well. Thank you to everyone who came out to support him and show solidarity.

Please help pack the courtroom on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. While prisoner supporters have employed the tactic often to stand up when the defendant's name is called in various cases, Judge Thadeus Wilson issued an injunction in the NATO 3 case preventing supporters from doing so, and does not respond kindly to this. So please remain seated when Jay's name is called, as protest tactics or standing up only backfires on Jay.

See you in court March 23<sup>rd</sup> and please write or send softbound books to Jay in the meantime to show him your support.

Drop the charges! Free Jay Now!

Send invites to his next court date:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1653651321550163/1658495737732388>

### **19 Feb - Albert Woodfox (Angola 3) is Free!**

*On his 69<sup>th</sup> birthday Albert Woodfox, the last remaining Angola 3 prisoner still held, was freed. We're including a few related articles below. Welcome home, Albert!*

#### **MORE:**

#### **February 20<sup>th</sup> - Albert Woodfox speaks after 43 years in solitary confinement: 'I would not let them drive me insane'**

by Ed Pilkington (*The Guardian*)

In 1951, scientists at McGill University conducted an experiment in which they subjected male graduates to solitary confinement in a simulated prison cell, to see how they would cope with prolonged isolation. The study was intended to run for six weeks but was abruptly terminated after only seven days because several students began hallucinating and suffering from severe mental breakdowns.

Albert Woodfox has been held in such conditions of extreme isolation in Louisiana prisons and jails not just for seven days, but for 15,000. On Friday, after 43 years and 10 months of almost continuous captivity totally alone in a 6ft by 9ft cell, America's longest-standing solitary confinement prisoner finally walked free.

So how did he do it? How did Albert Woodfox remain sane for more than four decades in the bleakest and most inhumane of circumstances, which have been denounced by the United Nations as a form of torture and have broken the will of lesser mortals in a matter of days?

In his first interview since being released from West Feliciana parish detention center in Louisiana, Woodfox told the Guardian that in 1972, when he was put into "closed cell restriction", or CCR, he made a conscious decision that he would survive. He and his comrades from the so-called Angola Three, Herman Wallace and Robert King, made a vow to be strong.

"We made a conscious decision that we would never become institutionalized," he said. "As the years went by, we made efforts to improve and motivate ourselves."

The key, he said, was to stay connected to what was happening in the outside world.

“We made sure we always remained concerned about what was going on in society – that way we knew that we would never give up. I promised myself that I would not let them break me, not let them drive me insane.”

So he kept his brain engaged, avidly reading newspapers and magazines for at least two hours each day and watching documentaries and current affairs programmes on the small TV he was allowed in his cell. In recent months that meant following the rise and rise of Donald Trump – a helpful subject for Woodfox as it easily riled him, driving out other less healthy thoughts.

“Donald Trump has exposed the systemic racism in America,” Woodfox said. “He has catered to the worst elements in people, encouraging us to be selfish and see things only through our own eyes.”

The newly released prisoner is aware that when it came to surviving life in a solitary cell, he was one of the lucky ones. Over 43 years he saw many others who were not so resilient.

Many solitary confinement prisoners were unable to read and write, and so had less intellectual muscle to keep them going. The results were not pretty.

“Some of the guys found the pressure so great that they just laid down in a foetal position and stopped communicating with anybody. I’ve seen other guys who just want to talk and make noise, guys who want to scream. Breaking up manifests itself in any number of ways in individuals.”

Woodfox spent almost all of the 43 years in lockdown, much of it in Louisiana’s notorious Angola prison, in a 6ft by 9ft cell with concrete bunks and a metal toilet and sink. The cell had iron bars at the front which at least allowed him to hear other prisoners.

His most recent lockup in West Feliciana parish jail, where he was awaiting a third trial for the 1972 murder of a prison officer of which he has always professed his innocence, didn’t even have that facility. It had a solid steel door that enclosed Woodfox entirely as if in a tomb. The only view out of the concrete cell was a tiny slit of window that presented a sliver of sky.

For more than four decades he was held in these cells alone for 23 hours a day. The remaining hour was spent in the “exercise yard” – a rather attractive way of describing a concrete box lined with barbed wire fencing which he could walk around shackled and entirely on his own.

Despite his vow to survive, the years took their toll. He went through bouts of claustrophobia and panic attacks.

For one three-year period, Woodfox suffered such intense claustrophobia that every time he lay down he felt he was being smothered. So he took to leaning his mattress against the wall, wrapping himself in a blanket and sleeping sitting up.

“The panic attacks started with sweating. You sweat and you can’t stop. You become soaking wet – you are asleep in your bunk and everything is soaking wet. Then when the claustrophobia starts it feels like the atmosphere is pressing down on you. That was hard. I used to talk to myself to convince myself I was strong enough to survive, just to hold on to my sanity until the feeling went away.”

There were times when he came close to the edge. Losing his great friend and fellow political traveller Herman Wallace was very difficult. Wallace was released from a Louisiana prison in 2013, but not until he

had reached the end stage of terminal liver cancer. He died two days after being set free, having endured 41 years in solitary confinement just like his buddy Albert Woodfox.

The nearest Woodfox came to losing his mind was when his mother died and he wasn't allowed to attend the funeral.

"That was the closest I came to cracking," he said. "All my strength I inherited from my mom. I was thankful she lived long enough for me to tell her I loved her and that she was my real hero."

Psychologists have known about the serious adverse effects of prolonged isolation for at least 60 years, from studies including that aborted 1951 McGill experiment. More recent research on longtime solitary prisoners has recorded the severe side-effects suffered by many, including hallucinations and perception disorders, panic attacks, loss of memory and paranoia amounting to a form of delirium that can often lead to suicide attempts.

Such medical evidence led the UN to declare lockdown a potential form of torture and to demand that all countries ban it except in very exceptional circumstances.

Yet despite the clear scientific warnings, the practice continues to be widespread across the US. The most authoritative recent survey found that in 2014 up to 100,000 prisoners were put in "disciplinary segregation" or some other form of solitary.

Barack Obama has taken a personal interest in the problem and has ordered attorney general Loretta Lynch to conduct a review of solitary confinement across US prisons. Last month, he used his executive powers to ban isolation for juveniles in federal prisons.

Woodfox was convicted to a life sentence for the killing of a prison officer Brent Miller in 1972, having already been imprisoned for armed robbery. He insists he and Herman Wallace were framed for the murder because they were members of the Black Panther movement and were actively campaigning against the racial segregation that still existed in Angola prison in the 1970s.

Woodfox also made himself unpopular with white prison guards by speaking out against the brutal conditions to which black prisoners were subjected when they were sent out to the sugar cane and cotton fields to work as virtual slaves.

"Our political activities marked us and that's why they locked us up in solitary confinement, where I remained until yesterday," he said.

His release was secured through a plea deal in which the state of Louisiana agreed to drop the threat of a third trial for the Brent Miller killing – two previous ones were struck down by the courts on grounds of racial discrimination and ineffective legal representation – in return for Woodfox pleading "no contest". Woodfox stressed that the terms of the agreement mean he holds on to his innocence.

"I am innocent. The fact that I was convicted the first and second times had more to do with racism in the American judicial system than with innocence or guilt."

He says he hopes to use his newfound freedom to seek proper medical treatment for a raft of health problems, and to reacquaint himself with his family.

"Hopefully I can become a part of my family, and remain socially active," he said.

Woodfox says he wants to be a “voice for those who have no voice, be a shield for those who can’t protect themselves”. Above all, that means using whatever strength he has left to press for an end to solitary confinement in America.

“It’s an evil. Solitary confinement is the most torturous experience a human being can be put through in prison. It’s punishment without ending.

“We have got to stop this, and having been a victim of it for so long myself, that’s what I’m going to do.”

### **February 21<sup>st</sup> - For 45 Years in Prison, Louisiana Man Kept Calm and Held Fast to Hope**

by Campbell Robertson (*New York Times*)

A hotel door, a short elevator ride, a stroll through the lobby and the urge to take a walk were all that separated Albert Woodfox from the great wide world.

This had been the case only for less than 24 hours.

On Friday morning, Mr. Woodfox, who had just turned 69, was released from prison as part of a plea deal with Louisiana prosecutors. He pleaded no contest before a state judge to charges of manslaughter and aggravated burglary in the 1972 death of a corrections officer. In return, he turned his back on the 45 years he had spent in Louisiana’s custody, nearly all that time in a 50-square-foot cell, perhaps the longest time in solitary confinement of any prisoner in United States history.

Now on Saturday morning, he was sitting in a hotel suite alongside one of his brothers and members of the legal team that had worked for years for his release. He was calm, composed, steady as a surgeon, but one imagines that survival would have been impossible without this sort of disposition.

“I don’t think I ever felt that I would die in prison,” Mr. Woodfox, who is black, said. But he acknowledged: “As the years passed, it became more difficult to feel that way.”

The Louisiana State Penitentiary, the 18,000-acre prison in an elbow of the Mississippi River, is known familiarly as Angola. This was the name for the cotton plantation that once occupied the same grounds, itself named for the part of Africa where the plantation’s slaves had come from. It is the largest maximum-security prison in the country, and in the early 1970s it was possibly the bloodiest.

“Almost every day, somewhere in the prison, somebody was getting stabbed or killed or beat with an iron pipe,” Mr. Woodfox recalled.

When Mr. Woodfox arrived at Angola in 1971, it was his second time there. Raised by a barmaid in New Orleans, he had taken to the street life and had the lengthy criminal résumé to show for it.

Two years earlier, already facing a 50-year sentence for armed robbery, Mr. Woodfox escaped from the Orleans Parish courthouse using a smuggled pistol and made his way to New York City. Before long, he was in jail there, too, awaiting extradition but also becoming a part of the Black Panther Party, which was growing in the nation’s jails.

When he returned to Angola, he was a different sort; his fellow inmates at first laughed at his new talk of politics and revolution. But prison officials referred to him as a militant, he said, and kept him on what was known as “the Panther Tier,” where he organized protests of prison conditions.

The morning of April 17, 1972, Mr. Woodfox said, he was on his way back from picking up some papers from an inmate paralegal when rumors began spreading that a white corrections officer had been murdered. Guards pulled Mr. Woodfox and other inmates into a room where they were strip-searched. After a night in a solitary cell called “the dungeon,” Mr. Woodfox and a fellow Black Panther, Herman Wallace, were charged with murder and sent to the one-man cells where they would spend the next four decades.

The officer who had been killed was Brent Miller, a former standout high school wide receiver who had just turned 23. At the time, his father also worked at Angola, overseeing the crops and livestock and his brother was a corrections officer at the prison. Brent Miller knew the prison was overcrowded, understaffed and dangerous — another officer had been set on fire the day before. When Brent Miller was found on the morning of the 17th, he had been stabbed 32 times.

“Do I believe he did it?” Stan A. Miller, another of Brent Miller’s brothers who at one time worked at the prison, too, said when asked about Mr. Woodfox. “Hell yeah, I believe he did it.” Mr. Miller said an eyewitness told him as much in 1995.

Still, that witness, Leonard Turner, testified in 1998 that he had not seen the murder and then in 2002 signed a statement for Mr. Woodfox’s lawyers saying that he did see the murder but that he knew “for an absolute fact” that Mr. Woodfox had not been involved.

Mr. Turner’s is only one of the problematic witness accounts on which the case rested; no forensic evidence was found that tied Mr. Woodfox or Mr. Wallace to the murder. Mr. Woodfox’s lawyers highlighted not only the inconsistency of the accounts but also incentives that in some cases were undisclosed by prosecutors before trial: an unusual furlough for one witness, a governor’s pardon for another and for one, a transfer to a custody situation with such minimal security that he was able to rob three banks while still under state supervision.

Mr. Miller’s widow eventually came to doubt the guilt of Mr. Woodfox and Mr. Wallace, creating something of a break with her former in-laws, who remain convinced that he did it.

At a 1973 trial, Mr. Woodfox was convicted. Mr. Wallace was convicted the next year. And so they sat, alone.

State prosecutors have pushed back at the description of Mr. Woodfox’s confinement as “solitary.” For most of his time at Angola he was kept alone in a cell, 6 feet by 8 or 9 feet with bars on one end, allowing limited conversation with other inmates when the industrial fans did not drown out all talk. He was allowed out for one hour a day.

Former inmates said it would be impossible to describe this as anything other than solitary.

“I’ve seen grown men turn into babies — you know, they just lay in their bed in a fetal position and don’t talk,” Mr. Woodfox said. “I’ve seen guys who can’t stop talking. I’ve seen guys that scream all day.”

“ “You play this game: ‘I’m Superman, there’s nothing you can do to hurt me.’ Then at night time when the lights are out and everybody’s sleeping, you sit down and cry or whatever and you realize, ‘I’ll survive another day.’ ”

In a 2008 filing about bail, the state laid out its case for labeling Mr. Woodfox a “dangerous inmate.” Six incidents over the preceding two decades were listed, including hollering and shaking the bars of his cell in 2002 and threatening to start a hunger strike in 1999. In none of the cases was anyone hurt, though officials

said in 1992 that he had been found with the makings of a homemade spear. (George Kendall, a lawyer for Mr. Woodfox, said it had been made of paper.)

Mr. Woodfox did calisthenics in the morning, and in the afternoon he wrote letters and read newspapers, law books and political literature — Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, James Baldwin. Little about his day changed, even in recent years when the outside world learned of him, Mr. Wallace and Robert King, a third inmate who spent a long stint in solitary. The men collectively became known as the “Angola Three.” Mr King was ordered released in 2001.

In 1992, Mr. Woodfox’s conviction was thrown out on the ground that he had not had effective assistance of counsel. He was convicted at a second trial in 1998, though that conviction was overturned in 2013 because of discrimination in the selection of the grand jury foreman.

Mr. Wallace’s conviction was overturned the same year on similar grounds. Dying of lung cancer, Mr. Wallace was ordered released by a federal judge.

“He died three days later,” Mr. Woodfox said, his voice breaking. “But he died a free man.”

Mr. Woodfox was indicted last February for a third time. So the preparation for a trial — one in which all the key witnesses were dead — began again. But the election of a new state attorney general in November restarted negotiations, leading to Friday’s plea agreement. It counts as a conviction, but is not an admission of guilt, something that angers the Miller family.

“They lied to us,” Stan Miller said of the state attorney general’s office.

When someone is in a cell for four decades he measures things differently: time, certainly, but also freedom. Asked to recall his last trip as a free man, as a 22-year-old on the run to New York, Mr. Woodfox said he did not remember it as a feeling of freedom. True freedom he discovered much later, he said, after years of reading of brave men.

“When I began to understand who I was, I considered myself free,” he said. “No matter how much concrete they use to hold me in a particular place they couldn’t stop my mind.”

The interview ended, and Mr. Woodfox asked about his little brother, who had stepped out for a moment. Together they were planning to visit their mother’s grave. A flash underneath the sleeve of Mr. Woodfox’s jacket revealed a gift that his brother had given him a few hours earlier to celebrate his first morning as a free man in 45 years: a watch.

### **February 25<sup>th</sup> - Please Give To Albert's Fund**

As we celebrate that ALL THE ANGOLA 3 ARE FREE please join us in laying the foundation for Albert's new life. We'll never be able to make up for over four decades in solitary but those of us in minimum security know how costly life out here is. 100% of all donations will be given directly to Albert.

You can donate online through the A3 Coalition's fiscal sponsor, Community Futures Collective, designating "Albert" in the memo. If you prefer to send a check, please make it out to "Community Futures Collective" and write "Albert" in the check's memo section. Mail it to:

**Community Futures Collective**  
**221 Idora Avenue**

Vallejo, California 94591

**19 Feb - New Poetry From Connor Stevens (Cleveland 4)**

*We have four new poems from Connor Stevens to share.*

**MORE:**

February 19th - Weeping in the final Hour

Caressing

the contours  
of the Alamin,  
i am reduced to weeping

May God grant me strength

enough to endure  
the flash flood of tears  
that swell the rising oceans  
of misery  
upon contemplating  
the innocence of children, women, starving . . .

And there are endless processions of faces  
of her, of boys, of mothers weeping  
of starving children in deserts drowning in the blood of the earth  
-- have you not heard, they are irrigating the deserts  
with blood and oil --  
a newborn, deformed, cries out in some agony we cannot know  
and always the mothers weeping.

Brothers, put down your weapons.  
This dying patch of green  
on this drop of blue  
suspended in all this vast darkness  
is too quickly fading.

Brothers, were you not told?  
One God, one Community, one Book.  
Why are you cutting out your own eyes?  
Holding your hand in this flame  
will not move God,  
it will not undo Divine Will.

Brothers, i dare say that is Satan  
who is tossing whispers gently  
in the darkness of your minds  
And none of this -- volumes of poetry! --  
will change a single stroke of what is Written.  
But brothers, have you not heard, we have free will  
and besides, i cannot remain silent.

God is Great!

If nothing else, we owe it  
to the children  
the orphans  
the sick,  
for did God not tell you  
that they are He  
that He is they,  
and God knows best.

**February 19<sup>th</sup> - futile wanderings in a white abyss**

In this intimate space,  
this darkness between the dumb white of the page  
and the blinding light of being  
i must make a confession.  
i hate writing poetry.  
It is like a ghetto riot  
like a thorough war  
like a night of drunkenness  
like a

wet dream  
like some sticky cathartic process  
that leaves me feeling empty,  
drained  
robbed

Where have my tears gone?  
What wretched force has dammed up my weeping?

Perhaps if i abandoned poetry  
like i have abandoned intoxication  
like i have abandoned hopelessness  
like i have abandoned godlessness  
like i have abandoned self-indulgence  
Then i would be able to go on weeping  
and teeth-gnashing  
all through the night  
until i could all but feel God  
bearing down  
upon me.

**February 24<sup>th</sup> - All Creation bends**

What can i offer  
across this void  
that thirsts endlessly  
What will be left  
as a gift  
beneath your eyelids?

What is this Abyss  
that cannot be traversed  
even by ten thousand nights  
of weeping?  
It would be easier  
to enter Paradise  
than to give  
you of my  
self  
across this hungry void  
that swallows up my breath  
and evaporates all tears  
That turns ink  
into the absence  
of light,  
electric,  
And even my blood,  
however much i spill,  
cannot give you warmth.

And yet, dear  
it is to this void  
that you give  
countless precious hours  
When all around you  
children's eyes overflow  
with the light of God's Mercy  
And how many of us yearn  
for your affection  
As all of Creation bends  
in worship to the One,  
Who even now Harkens.

It is not too late.

**February 24<sup>th</sup> - Ten Thousand Suns Are Blooming and We Will Not Go Blind**

-- All Glory is to God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful --

I.

The people of the Book  
die eating bark and shoeleather  
in the blackened deserts,  
irrigated with their blood  
for to grow phantom buds blooming confusion.

Man-eating, child-molesting adulterous  
locust rain down a buzzing cacophony  
of death  
upon smiling children  
sighing orphans  
praying mothers

rejoicing believers . . .

The gutters are clogged  
with suicides  
and the alleys are  
awash with dream-chasers

Insects devour men  
and water  
is more precious  
than blood  
And some seem to think  
the taller their buildings  
the closer they are to God

And every time the sun  
sets it is as though  
God is telling all who may  
hear:  
Hasten unto Me, for  
the Hour is Near.

II.  
Surely, the dogs of hell  
have been unleashed  
They are pouring the foundations  
for the vile palaces  
of the Antichrist.

Enemies of God  
on every side  
throw fuel on the fire  
Burning the flesh of believers,  
even as they are condemned as infidels.  
Everywhere the blind have risen to power.  
Witness the signs, dear friends.

There can be no sense  
in reasoning with a hellhound  
And so, if God Wills it,  
my words are for those  
who have not yet cast their lot:  
Harken to the Supreme Guidance of God  
and His Messenger, Muhammad.

You cannot control the Storm. Not even a little.  
Do not lose yourself in that maddening Abyss.  
Hold tight to the Rope of God  
and even if it drives you to starvation,  
deny the hellhounds and their master.

III.

Through the Will of God,  
No light shines brighter  
than the smile of a believer  
And no river on Earth  
runs deeper  
than the love between Muslims.

Verily, what could be greater  
than the Mercy of God?  
What could be more worthwhile  
than giving praise  
to the One Who has Created Everything?

As the night is stretched thinly  
upon the dry bones of the Earth  
the compassion of the Prophet Muhammad  
shines brighter than the full moon  
Even this late into the night.

He who forgave  
the murderer of his own daughter  
He who forgave  
the murderer of his own uncle  
He who put forth all that he had  
for his people, the Muslim,  
And delivered to the Earth religion perfected  
for all humanity to embrace --  
Witness his example! Come closer, all who may see.

Can we claim to know the horrors of the Fire?  
And yet he always greeted us with a smile.  
Can we claim to know the weight of Prophethood?  
And yet he always showed us an overflowing compassion.  
Can we claim to know what it is like  
to worship our Lord until our feet swell  
or what it is like to feel the weight of humanity  
bearing down upon us, or the tribulations  
of intestines being thrown upon us, being choked and  
cursed and hunted like a wild animal?  
And yet, no man in all history proved more pious,  
more tolerant, more impactful, than the Prophet Muhammad --  
May the Peace and Blessings of God be upon him!

*"I believe, as every Muslim does, that every nation had its superman, the luminary who gave it light, the reformer who inspired it with noble ideas, the Prophet who raised it morally. But Muhammad, may peace and blessings of God be upon him, is par excellence THE PROPHET, because he is the Prophet not of one nation but of all the nations of the world, because it was he who declared belief in all the prophets of the world as an essential of the faith he preached and thus laid down the basis of a lasting peace among different nations, because 'he is the greatest of all*

*reformers,' having brought about a transformation unparalleled either before or after him and, lastly, because 'he is the most successful of all the prophets and religious personalities' (Bosworth Smith). Every man ought to be judged by what he does, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad accomplished within twenty years what centuries of the labours of Jewish and Christian reformers could not accomplish, notwithstanding the temporal power at their back. He swept away centuries-old idolatry, superstition, credulity, ignorance, prostitution, gambling, drinking, oppression of the weak, internecine war and a hundred other evils from a whole country. History cannot show any other reformer who wrought so wonderful and complete a transformation on so large a scale within so short a time. 'Never was reform more hopeless than at the advent of the Prophet,' as Muir has remarked, 'and never was it more complete than when he departed.' In the words of Carlyle, 'it was a birth from darkness into light.' A life so great cannot be devoid of potentialities as great for the future; it cannot but inspire into any heart the noblest ideas of the service of humanity. If there is any one trait of his character which is more marked than another, it is his care for the orphan and the widow, his support of the weak and the helpless, his love of labour and work for the distressed. It is the life of a man who lived for God and who died for God. 'If ever man on this earth found God, if ever man devoted his life to God's service with a good and great motive, it is certain that the Prophet of Arabia was that man.' (Leonard)."*

-- Maulana Muhammad Ali, 1923

## **20 Feb – Writing by Mumia Abu-Jamal**

*We're including a significant backlog of commentaries by Mumia Abu-Jamal. As always, they provide poignant insight with an economy of words.*

### **MORE:**

#### **January 30<sup>th</sup> - MLK: Enemy of the State**

The name, Martin Luther King, Jr., has become an American talisman. Politicians, who have spent their entire careers ignoring or attacking the lives, rights or interests of African-Americans, erupt in praise of King, some even using choice quotes to support their positions, as if King would've supported any of them.

The truth is Martin Luther King was targeted by the U.S. government; by high officials, and by federal police at the FBI.

One of the highest officials in Edgar Hoover's FBI called King "The most dangerous...Negro leader in the country" [p.57]

As the nation celebrates King, let us not forget the role of the U.S. government in his destruction. Specifically, let us remember the now forgotten Church Committee Hearings, of winter 1975, when, in open committee, senators and congressional staff members discussed FBI attempts to replace Dr. King, as shown by the following discussion between staff member Mike Epstein and Senator, the Late Walter Mondale, of Minnesota:

Mr. Epstein: I might add, Mr. Chairman, I do not have the document in front of me, but the document that recommended the discrediting of Dr. King and the appointing of a new leader which was in January of 1964, which was the recommendation from Mr. Sullivan, and he was soliciting in that memorandum the Director's authorization to pursue that possibility further, a recommendation that approval be given for him to explore this whole matter in greater detail, as set forth above, and underneath it is "ok, H."

And then there is the note from the Director which says, "I am glad to see that light has finally, though dimly delayed, come to the Domestic Intelligence Division. I struggled for months to get over the fact that the Communists were taking over the racial movement, but our experts here couldn't or wouldn't see it. H."

Senator Mondale: That was the memo in which it was proposed that King be destroyed, as a Civil Rights leader, and that the FBI ought to sponsor his replacement, by another person not in the Civil Rights Movement.

Mr. Epstein: That is correct.

Senator Mondale: And Hoover personally appreciated that suggestion; is that correct?

Mr. Epstein: He Ok'd it.

That's from the U.S. Senate Hearings into Government Operations, popularly known as The Church Committee Hearings, (after Sen. Frank Church, the Committee Chairman from Idaho); Nov 19, 1975; Vol.6, p.59.

Think about that the next time you hear some politician quote Dr. King, or cry crocodile tears over his martyrdom. The U.S. government, at its highest levels, tried to destroy him—and replace him.

Yeah. Happy King Day.

**January 30<sup>th</sup> - The MOVE Sisters. Freedom. Now.**

It's a fact that the U.S. is an Ahistorical society. If we go more than 20 minutes down time's road, most Americans will have forgotten all; in a few weeks; a month?

Forget it.

Americans long for the new, best thing. And truth be told, what passes for history these days are usually lies. Y'know, about freedom-loving 'Founding Fathers', and so forth. Truth? Almost all of them were wealthy slaveholders. It's hard to even say, 'Freedom' when you own other people.

Let's go back, but not so far. August 8th, 1978. That's the last date that MOVE sisters Debby Sims Africa, Janine Phillips Africa and Janet Holloway Africa saw freedom. That's the date Philly cops attacked MOVE's house in West Philadelphia, and again, truth: they shot one of their own – and charged 9 MOVE men and women with murder.

Yet how do you murder someone, shoot someone, without using, or even charging them with possessing a weapon?

For 38 years, the MOVE sisters have been wondering about the same thing.

Truth: They were prosecuted for being MOVE members.

They were convicted for being MOVE members.

They have repeatedly been denied parole –for being MOVE members.

The struggle for their long-denied freedom is heating up, as more and more people learn about their unjust plight.

These beautiful, thoughtful women are model prisoners.

They help other women at Cambridge Springs 'Correctional' Institution navigate the horrors of imprisonment.

It is criminal that they've been in prison for one day, much less 38 years!

Join the campaign to Free the MOVE Family;

Contact [causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9.com](http://causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9.com)

### **February 4<sup>th</sup> - For The Youth: Hope**

The U.S. Supreme Court issued another landmark ruling recently when it announced, in *Montgomery V. Louisiana*, that life imprisonment without parole was unconstitutional for juvenile prisoners, and that they should be granted new sentences or parole eligibility, in accord with the U.S. Constitution.

In a 6-3 decision, the Court extended its ruling from other cases, specifically the 2012 *Miller V. Alabama* decision, by making it retroactive and applicable to the states.

The recent *Montgomery* opinion, written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, was joined by the Chief Justice, John Roberts, as well as other associated justices from what is considered its more liberal wing.

And while a 6 person court formed a majority, the 3 remaining justices fought it bitterly. Justice Antonin Scalia ridiculed the majority's 'sleight of hand' decision-making, a case of the Latin term 'ipse dixit' they said it, and it is so.'

But *Montgomery* rides in on a string of recent precedents, all limiting the exposure of juvenile prisoners to harsh sentences, because, as children, they've not reached the age of majority, and are intrinsically, not possessed of maturity.

The *Montgomery* decision means that juvenile lifers (the majority of which are in Pennsylvania, by the way), now have a chance of leaving prison one day, by parole or resentencing.

Pennsylvania is distinct from many other states because it carries life sentences for first, second, and third degree, (under some conditions), murder.

When I was back in the infirmary, a man named Nash (I hope he'll forgive me for using his name), was entering his 7th decade of life. He was arrested as a teenager. Today, he has spent over 55 years in prison.

When he got arrested, Dwight D. Eisenhower was President!

His body has failed him. A wheelchair is his only way to move; and his strength ebbs daily.

Pennsylvania has more juvenile lifers than any other jurisdiction in the world: over 500!

Today, some of that number can dream again.

They'd better hurry -- before the door shuts again.

### **February 6<sup>th</sup> - FLINT: Water War against the Poor**

If ever one wondered about the efficacy of a state government agency imposing officials on local governments, Flint, Michigan has answered that question forever.

In April, 2014, the state-appointed emergency manager, in order to save money, ordered that the city's water source be changed from Lake Huron to the notoriously polluted Flint River.

The switch unleashed a citywide disaster of disease, destruction, and death. Flint was a toxic river, rich in lead, a major pollutant that has devastating effects on brain development, speech and I.Q. levels in children. As soon as it was pumped into municipal water systems, the corrosive waters leached lead from the old pipes, and sped it to some 90,000 homes into the city.

Flint is now a poisoned city, because of its toxic water.

It also illustrates how officials from afar can cause a catastrophe at home. Now, tens of thousands of children who drank the water, and were bathed in the water, may suffer life-long problems – skin diseases, cognitive impairments, speech deficits and more.

The state, being penny-wise and pound foolish, has created a problem that may last for generations. The state's emergency manager created an emergency.

The Michigan examples of the politics of austerity will cause problems that will cost billions of dollars to resolve.

The politics of ignoring the problems of the poor erupt like lava – demanding National attention.

Michigan, by the way, is named after the Chippewa words, mici gama, meaning “Great Water.”

Michigan governor, Rick Snyder, will be remembered, not for “Great Water” – but for toxic water.

### **February 6<sup>th</sup> - FLINT: Crimes of Capital**

From the beginning of human communal time, people built cities adjacent to rivers, for water, fresh water, was the source of life.

Cairo (and before it grew into Cairo, Fustat), relied on the Nile; London (and before that, the Roman colonial city of Londinium) was built upon the banks of the Thames; Paris (originally known as Par-Isis, or the House of Isis) grew from the flow of the Seine; Rome rose to become an empire along the banks of the River Tiber.

Cities feed upon, and grow from, the waters beside them.

Flint, Michigan is named after the Flint River, for the hard, dark flint stones that formed its river bed.

For decades, General Motors drew from it, and then poured into it, its chemical wastes and effluvia, until it became the corrosive, toxic brew that it is now. Indeed, after the waters became so acidic that it damaged automobile parts, GM bailed out, closing their operations there.

These are the waters that Michigan officials, under so-called emergency management powers, to save money, routed into Flint homes: waters that damaged and dissolved metals, were found fine enough to feed the population of human beings in a modern American city.

Thousands; tens of thousands of people, poisoned, for profit.

Why is that not a crime?

Why was it not a crime to poison a river in the first place?

For the same reason that it is not a crime today to order the poisoning of thousands of people for corporate and state profit.

Thousands of people – many of them children – poisoned in their brains, their livers, their kidneys, their lungs, their bones – for life, in many cases, and even the talking heads on corporate media outlets are speaking of lawsuits and civil damages – more money – that can't cure.

When is a crime not a crime?

When corporations do it. When governments do it.

The U.S. government, through its military, committed genocide in Iraq, destroying one of the oldest civilizations on earth, based on lies, ignorance and arrogance. It tortured Iraqis in American-run hellholes, and busted a few low-life guards.

It opened up a torture chamber in Cuba, and suspended the Constitution – and called it justice. (Theirs' actually a joint called Camp Justice in Guantanamo Bay – I kid you not)

In a capitalist society, only capital matters. It's all about the Benjamins – bucks over bodies. Profit. Period.

In Michigan's prisons, there ain't a single prisoner who committed a more vicious crime than the Governor of that state.

Their crimes, no matter what, were retail. The government, for a few bucks, committed crimes against thousands –wholesale.

But these are crimes of the powerful.

They don't count.

These are crimes of capitalism.

### **February 12<sup>th</sup> - Sundiata Sadiq, Gentle Warrior**

His name was Sundiata, and for over 40 years, he fought for the freedom of his people.

Headquartered in Ossining, New York, Sundiata worked in, or led, a number of groups working for Black Liberation and Social Justice.

To list them all would exhaust our time, but just to mention a few: He chaired CORE in Rockland County back in 1968 and '69; in the 1970s, he chaired the Ossining Black Liberation Front; and later he led the NAACP's Ossining chapter in suits against police brutality and he helped spark the nation's first environmental racism suit against a notorious Ossining waste transfer station.

He shined not just as a leader, but as an organizer, working for freedom for political prisoners.

His quiet, reassuring manner attracted younger activists, who came to admire and respect Sadiq, for how he invited them into the Movement –and taught them about struggles before their time(s).

Sundiata Sadiq was, despite being a warrior for freedom, a truly gentle man. He talked to people with respect and dignity; he welcomed them; he cared about them – and they could feel it.

MOVE's Pam Africa always spoke highly of him, and when she said, "That's a good brotha," you could feel it, for he was.

When I met him a few years ago, it seemed like we'd known each other for years.

He was kind, gentle, determined – and he loved his people.

He was a Freedom Fighter, who will be sorely missed, by his partner, Debra James, his family, by his comrades, and by his people.

Sundiata Sadiq – born July 1, 1955 – returned to his ancestors, the 29th of January, 2016.

Peace, good brother.

### **February 12<sup>th</sup> - Angela Speaks**

Her name, Angela Davis, is known to millions – still.

After the '60s – era uproar over her sensational trial and subsequent acquittal, for people of a certain generation, she is remembered for rocking an outrageous Afro, her fist raised in naked defiance of the system.

For many years, she taught at University of California Santa Cruz, and worked in the Prison Abolition and Social Justice Movement.

Now, today, thanks to Haymarket Books, you can read her speeches and interviews; speeches that address the Black Lives Matter Movement, Palestine, the failure of Black politics and gender struggles that are bubbling up from below.

It is vintage Angela; insightful, curious, observant and brilliant, asking and answering questions about events in this new century – (and that look surprisingly similar to the last century)

The new book, hot off the presses is Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement. The title draws on a heartbreaking dirge from a Negro spiritual, sung many years ago in her native South, the long, unrelenting struggle for freedom; one that still animates her. (The title also reminds one of former Black Panther, Kiilu Nyasha, who hosted a show on public radio by the same name)

At times, history lesson, political education world studies, and gender theories, Angela Y. Davis gives us all a lot to ponder.

It is a slim volume – 158 pages –but well worth the read. So check out Freedom is a Constant Struggle at Haymarket Books.org, by Angela Y. Davis.

### **February 18<sup>th</sup> - Judicial Fury**

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its *Montgomery v. Louisiana* decision, ruled that its earlier 2012 ruling in the *Miller v. Alabama* case, (limiting life sentences when it came to juvenile defendants) was indeed retroactive and thus applied to all under the age of 18 when their crimes were committed.

At least four states (Michigan, Minnesota, Florida and Pennsylvania) determined that *Miller* wasn't retroactive, a decision that affected more people in Pennsylvania than any other state.

That's because Pennsylvania has more juvenile lifers than any other state in the Union. As a matter of fact, Pennsylvania has more juvenile lifers than any other jurisdiction on earth.

More than China.

More than Russia.

More than Saudi Arabia.

Seriously.

And why is this so? Are kids in Pennsylvania more vile, more devilish than kids anywhere else on the planet?

I don't think so, but perhaps their political leaders are.

The same might be said for State judges -- and justices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, I might add -- who seem to have been busy sending smut to each other, and to their colleagues in the State Attorney General's office -- too busy to care about juvenile lifers, apparently.

In October, 2013, the PA Supreme Court, voting 4-3, decided its *Com. V. Cunningham* case. And determined that *Miller* didn't apply to the almost 500 men who were juveniles when their crimes were committed.

Amazingly, the *Cunningham* majority cited *Miller's* dissenting opinion ( the view of the *Miller* court's minority) to announce that "determining the appropriate sentence for a teenager convicted of murder presents grave and challenging questions of morality and social policy" [558, citing *Miller*, 132 S.ct. at 2477].

By citing the dissent, the *Cunningham* court ignored the central holding of *Miller*: that "children are different".

Attorney Marc Bookman, director of the Philadelphia-based Atlantic Center for capital Representation has called *The Roper*, *Graham*, *Miller* and *Montgomery* lines of cases a "juvenile revolution" in law; and so it is.

But the Pennsylvania courts seem hell-bent on staging a counter-revolution, to reflect the political views of politicians who have wrought this long war against the young, like Clintonian former DA and later, Governor, Edward Rendell, and former Governor Tom Ridge, and the many politicians who built more prisons than schools, and fueled the dead-end phenomenon of mass incarceration.

Back in the 1990s, conservative scholars launched into a mad tangent against juveniles, with some notables warning about the sinister rise of the so-called ‘super-predators’ -- Black and brown kids hyped on crack, wilding on society, attacking them - eating them, it seemed.

But such nightmares never materialized, for they were based on little more than racist fears and fantasies.

Today there are no super-predators (that is unless you count the politicians, judges and scholars who preyed on the young)

### **February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Freedom and Medical Care for Leonard Peltier**

For 40 years, former American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Leonard Peltier has been in the clutches of the U.S. prison system –The Iron House of the whites, as indigenous people call them – on trumped up murder charges. Now, as he suffers poor health and an abdominal aortic aneurism, time is no longer on his side.

The aneurysm, diagnosed just weeks ago, threatens his very life, so supporters of Leonard are demanding his freedom, so he doesn’t perish in the Iron House.

Decades ago, when Bill Clinton was president, he visited Pine Ridge, South Dakota – once Peltier’s home – and told people there, “Tell Leonard I won’t forget about him.”

A promise from Clinton proved as empty as any politician’s promise: gas, air, wind. (He musta forgot, huh?)

So Peltier languished in the Iron House as decades passed. He wrote. He painted – and he awaited white justice.

He’s still waiting.

His supporters want people to write to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), demanding his health care and release. The International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee needs you to write and call on Leonard’s behalf. Contact [www.bop.gov/inmates/concerns.jsp](http://www.bop.gov/inmates/concerns.jsp).

Refer to Leonard Peltier, 89637-132, and his home jail, USP Coleman I.

And while you’re at it, contact the White House and demand Leonard’s executive clemency.

Leonard Peltier needs freedom now; and Native Peoples need him to return home.

### **22 Feb - How A Former Black Panther Could Change the Rules of Solitary Confinement**

*The case of Russell Maroon Shoatz, who spent nearly 30 years in solitary confinement, could set a precedent for others held in prolonged isolation.*

#### **MORE:**

by Victoria Law (*The Nation*)

By his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2013, Russell Maroon Shoatz had spent nearly 30 years in extreme solitary confinement. A prisoner in Pennsylvania’s Restricted Housing Unit (RHU), Shoatz spent 23 hours each day confined to a 7-by-12-foot cell. He ate all his meals alone inside that cell. He slept under lights that were

never turned off. He was not allowed any educational, vocational, or group programming. Five days a week, he was permitted to spend one hour in a fenced-in exercise cage. Each time he left his cell, he was strip-searched and placed in shackles. When his family came to visit, he was placed in a booth and made to communicate with them from behind plexiglass. He could not hug his children or hold his grandchildren. Shoatz remained in handcuffs and leg irons during visits.

In 2013, Shoatz filed suit against the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC). He sought not only an end to his indefinite solitary confinement but also to receive monetary damages for decades of pain and suffering. He argued that prolonged placement in isolation deprived him of numerous basic human needs, including environmental stimulation, social interaction, psychological health, emotional well-being, physical health, sleep, exercise nutrition, and fundamental human dignity. He also argued that the prison had violated the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment and his 14th Amendment right to due process. The DOC argued that Shoatz was subjected to the same conditions as any other prisoner in solitary.

On February 12, federal judge Cynthia Reed Eddy of the US District Court of Western Pennsylvania ruled that Shoatz's suit should be decided by a jury trial. "While Shoatz may have been subjected to the same conditions as other inmates on administrative custody status, the fact remains that Shoatz endured these conditions for 22 consecutive years," she wrote in her decision. Furthermore, she noted that the Supreme Court had stated, in *Hutto v. Finney*, that solitary confinement may be unconstitutional "depending on the duration of the confinement and the conditions thereof."

Shoatz's is an individual lawsuit, meaning that, on the surface, the outcome affects him and him alone. But it will also be the first trial by jury that challenges long-term solitary confinement as cruel and unusual punishment for any and everyone, not just vulnerable populations such as the mentally ill, juveniles, or pregnant people.

"Courts have failed to set strict and enforceable limits to solitary confinement," noted Bret Grote, Shoatz's attorney and legal director of the Abolitionist Law Center, adding that previous cases have been defeated or settled. (In 2009, prisoners who had been held for decades in the Security Housing Units at California's Pelican Bay State Prison, filed suit challenging their prolonged solitary confinement. They were granted class-action status in 2014 and was scheduled to go to trial late this year. However, the suit was settled in September 2015.) The outcome may set judicial precedent that others can cite when bringing their own litigation against being held in solitary for long periods of time. According to a 2014 study, between 80,000 to 100,000 people are held in isolation, so the impact of his suit may be far reaching.

In 1970, Shoatz, a 27-year-old member of the Black Panther Party, participated in an attack on a Philadelphia police station in which one officer was killed and another injured. In 1972, Shoatz was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole. Five years later, he escaped from prison, remaining at large for one month. In 1980, he escaped again. Each time he was returned to prison, officials placed him in the RHU.

In 1982, Shoatz was released from the RHU and allowed to live in general population with other men. He became involved with the Pennsylvania Association of Lifers (PAL), the prison's group for people serving life sentences. He advocated for PAL members to work with their families to lobby lawmakers to repeal life without parole. The men must have been interested—membership ballooned from 12 to nearly 100. The following year, PAL members appointed Shoatz interim president. That same night, prison officials placed him in the RHU where, with the exception of a 19-month period (1989 to 1991) in which he was transferred to a federal prison and allowed to live in general population, Shoatz has spent nearly 30 years in isolation. Twenty-two of those years were consecutive.

Prison officials reviewed his placement every 30 to 90 days; each time, they stated that Shoatz was an escape risk and would remain in RHU. In 2004, the DOC placed Shoatz on its Restricted Release List, meaning that the DOC secretary had to approve his release in writing. But to make it to the secretary's desk for consideration, the prison's superintendent first had to recommend a prisoner for release. The superintendent never did. And even though Shoatz's daughter and attorney personally met with Secretary John Wetzel in 2012, he never reviewed his placement. Shoatz remained in the RHU until 2014.

Those years have taken a toll. Shoatz's daughter Theresa has spent two decades driving as many as seven hours from her home in Philadelphia to the prison, SCI Greene, for a four-hour visit. Despite the plexiglass window separating them, she and her father frequently had heated political discussions, sometimes incurring a warning from prison staff. "They'd say, 'Shoatz family—too loud!'" she told *The Nation*. When Theresa's son wanted to drop out of high school, Shoatz convinced him not to.

Five years ago, she began noticing a marked difference in her father. He no longer smiled during visits. He lost interest in the outside world. "He'd say, 'I don't give a hell about that. That's happening outside. I'm stuck here in solitary,'" she recalled. He seemed sadder and more distraught. Shoatz later told Dr. James Gilligan, a psychiatrist with over 47 years of experience evaluating and treating people in prisons, that he had considered suicide many times, contemplating ways to kill himself as quickly and painlessly as possible. Only the lack of access to the means to do so stopped him. Some mornings, he was so depressed that he was unable to get out of bed.

In September 2013, four months after filing suit, Shoatz was placed in a step-down program to eventually be released from solitary. In February 2014, he was moved to general population.

Theresa recalls their first post-RHU visit. They sat side-by-side with not even a table between them. She was able to buy him food from the prison vending machine for the first time. ("He ate a hoagie," she remembered.) Not only was she able to hug her father after more than 20 years, but her 22-year-old son was able to touch his grandfather for the first time in his life.

But the debilitating effects of isolation linger. In January 2015, Dr. Gilligan evaluated Shoatz about the effects of prolonged isolation.

"At first, after leaving solitary, I used to shun people. I would not want to leave my cell," Shoatz told him. "I am very reticent about shaking hands or hugging people. I have trouble being emotionally close to people." In 2013, while still in the RHU, Shoatz had proposed to his girlfriend. But the following year, he ended their relationship, explaining to Gilligan, "I was infantilized for so long. I had to deal with very few people. I developed no skills as to how to be in a relationship. I felt relief from the ending of my relationship with her. Nothing painful—I just don't care."

In his evaluation, Gilligan concluded that Shoatz's emotional numbing and his incapacity for intimacy are "among the primary symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndromes" caused by his prolonged isolation. He concludes that Shoatz "suffered serious and significant emotional, mental and psychological damage from the conditions to which he was subjected by the defendants in their official capacities in the Pennsylvania Department of Correction."

Juan Mendez is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture. He has stated that he believes that more than 15 days in "complete 24-hour isolation" constitutes torture. In January 2015, he interviewed Shoatz and concluded that Shoatz's prolonged isolation "constituted cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment

under customary international law standards. They violate solemn commitments of the United States under customary law and also as a party to the UN Convention Against Torture.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Correction declined to comment. Documents filed with the court show that the prison’s superintendent had also identified other reasons for Shoatz’s continued isolation, including his alleged involvement “with radical militant groups, his former association with the Black Panther Party, and his current political views and activities via mail and phone, his ability to organize others,” reasons that Shoatz’s attorney states that he had been unaware of. At deposition, the superintendent stated that his main concern for keeping Shoatz in the RHU was a fear of “retribution against staff.”

Now it will be up to a jury to determine whether prolonged isolation—regardless of age, mental health, or pregnancy—constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. “If Shoatz prevails at trial, it will mark the first ruling against prison officials that solitary confinement constitutes cruel and unusual punishment when imposed for excessive duration,” said Bret Grote, Shoatz’s attorney and legal director of the Abolitionist Law Center. “It will allow others in similar circumstances to cite this case as a precedent in challenging their own conditions.”

“No amount of money can make up what he went through,” Theresa reflected. Noting that advocacy efforts to limit solitary have largely focused on specific vulnerable populations, she added, “Hopefully this gives hope to others in solitary confinement and opens to door to the entire Pennsylvania prison population.”

### **23 Feb - New Jersey Supreme Court denies parole for Sundiata Acoli**

*The northeast is playing hell with our comrades, denying parole left and right. Please remember that when we include corporate news articles, like the one below about Sundiata Acoli, they are to be read with a critical eye. They have an agenda, so please read between the lines.*

#### **MORE:**

by S.P. Sullivan (*NJ.com*)

The state Supreme Court on Tuesday reversed a lower court decision ordering the parole of a man convicted — along with longtime fugitive Joanne Chesimard — in the 1973 murder of a New Jersey state trooper.

Sundiata Acoli has been serving a life sentence for his role in a shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike that ended in the death of Trooper Werner Foerster.

An appeals court in 2014 found Acoli was wrongly denied parole and ordered his release, but the state Parole Board and the Attorney General's Office petitioned the state's highest court, asking them to throw out the ruling.

Their 4-1 decision means Acoli will have to appear before the Parole Board for a full hearing before he is eligible for release.

In a telephone interview Tuesday, State Police Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes praised the decision.

"It's a victory for law enforcement, and it's a victory for the Foerster family, who have been foremost in our minds all this time," Fuentes said. "We were sitting on the edge of our chairs on this one."

Acoli's attorney, Bruce Afran, said he was "disappointed" in the decision, adding he would ask the board to hear Acoli's case within 30 days.

"It's not a victory for anyone," Afran said. "Trooper Foerster's gone, his family suffered. Sundiata Acoli's family has suffered. And 43 years in prison is enough."

Acoli, then known as Clark Edward Squire, was convicted alongside Chesimard, also known as Assata Shakur, who later escaped prison and fled to Cuba, where she remains New Jersey's most wanted fugitive.

Court documents show that Acoli's gun went off while he struggled with Foerster after another trooper pulled over a white Pontiac containing Chesimard, Acoli, and James Costan in the early hours of May 2, 1973.

The three were associated with black nationalist groups including the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army.

There were conflicting accounts of who shot whom, but state prosecutors claimed Chesimard shot and wounded the other trooper, James Harper, before executing Foerster with his own gun.

Costan, also known as Zayd Malik Shakur, was shot and killed at the scene.

Acoli, now in his 70s, has been repeatedly denied parole. In 2011, a two-member parole board panel rejected his latest bid before he could appear before the full board for a formal hearing.

But the appeals court found that the panel had ignored evidence in Acoli's favor. Court records show a psychologist testified in 2010 that Acoli had "expressed regret and remorse about his involvement" in the killing and was at "low to moderate risk" of re-offending.

The appellate panel ordered the board to "expeditiously set conditions for parole," but the state petitioned the Supreme Court, claiming a convicted murderer could not be released under state law without the approval of the full board.

In the majority opinion, Justice Jaynee LaVecchia agreed.

Sen. Robert Menendez calls on Cuba to return Joanne Chesimard U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, joined by Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., calls on Cuba to return fugitive Joanne Chesimard who was convicted of first-degree murder following a 1973 New Jersey Turnpike shootout in East Brunswick that left one New Jersey State Trooper dead and another critically wounded. Dec. 18, 2014.(Robert Sciarrino | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

New Jersey's law, Lavecchia wrote, "requires a full hearing before the Parole Board on his suitability for parole release and shall permit the victims of Acoli's criminal acts to be heard, if they wish, by the Board prior to a decision on his parole."

In his dissent, Justice Barry Albin wrote there was precedent for the parole of a convicted cop killer, citing the case of Thomas Trantino, who was paroled in 2002 — four decades after he murdered two police officers.

"Acoli committed the most heinous crime: the murder of a law enforcement officer — a crime, which, if committed today, would result in a life sentence without parole eligibility," Albin wrote. "But even the most despised inmate is entitled to the protection and enforcement of the law."

Acoli could still be released. The decision is now in the hands of the state Parole Board, said Lee Moore, a spokesman for the state Attorney General's Office.

"The statute provides for a full Parole Board hearing with the benefit of input from, among other individuals, Trooper Werner Foerster's surviving loved ones," Moore said.

According to court records, Acoli told the psychologist in 2010 that he was no longer associated with black nationalist groups and was eager to return home to his daughters.

While he has apologized for his role in Foerster's murder, Acoli has claimed he was grazed by a bullet and blacked out during the shootout, and couldn't remember the exact sequence of events.

Fuentes, who recently spoke at the dedication of a monument in Foerster's memory, said there was no evidence Acoli had been grazed by a bullet and that he presented a high risk to the public if released.

"I don't see him as really changing his stripes over the years — his feelings, his ideology and politics, or his attitude toward law enforcement," Fuentes said. "He may say he's remorseful and apologize for his role, but then he hides his role."

Acoli's attorney contended his client had reformed, adding that he was "confident" the board would approve parole because of his clean prison record.

"Today Sundiata Acoli is one of the most praised and model inmates in the federal prison system," Afran said. "He is as far removed from the person he was in 1973 as possible."

Chesimard, meanwhile, remains one of the FBI's most wanted fugitive terrorists, with a \$2 million reward being offered for information leading to her capture.

She was granted political asylum in Cuba, and her status there has been a cause of tension between U.S. and Cuban officials as the two nations seek to restore diplomatic relations.

### **23 Feb - Eric King Update + New Poetry**

*For a variety of reasons outlined below, anarchist prisoner Eric King needs a little extra support these days. Please take the time to send him a card or letter.*

#### **MORE:**

Eric has been trying to get a new lawyer assigned to his case. However, today in court the judge denied him the opportunity to seek new legal counsel. On top of this unfortunate news from a difficult day in court, it has come to our attention that CCA Leavenworth is now under lock-down. These lock-downs where prison cells are searched one by one typically last for a week, during which prisoners are not permitted to speak to their loved ones. It's times like these when small acts of solidarity can make the biggest difference. Please take a few minutes to send Eric a postcard or letter to remind him that folks have his back.

Here is his address:

Eric King  
27090045  
CCA Leavenworth  
100 Highway Terrace  
Leavenworth, Kansas 66048

If you would like to send Eric something from his Amazon wish list:  
<http://www.amazon.com/registry/giftlist/OEWNQ9RMQGZ>

**February 23<sup>rd</sup> - They build walls to hold**

They build walls to hold  
to separate and destroy  
They build prisons to enslave  
to rip hearts to shreds  
They build planes to attack  
and build plants to make bombs  
They build borders to differentiate  
between right & wrong, good & bad  
We build songs to give a helping hand  
and ease a burned heart  
We build communities to shelter  
from hatred and abuse  
We build support to give strength  
to withstand the burden of the state  
They build up police and we fight them all  
The build up division and cruelty  
We build friendship and solidarity  
most of all  
We build love

**February 25<sup>th</sup> - Eric has been placed back in segregation**

It has come to our attention through Eric's attorney that he has been placed in the hole again during the shake-down of the facility. He has been told that he will have a disciplinary hearing next week to determine if he will remain in segregation. We ask for continued solidarity in blasting Eric with cards and letters.

**February 28<sup>th</sup> - Eric's Plea Signing Date 3/3/2016**

After almost a year and a half of pre-trial detention in shitty conditions, court battles and other legal woes, and facing threats of forty years in prison, Eric King has finally decided to accept a non-cooperating plea agreement to ten years in federal prison.

If you live nearby, please consider attending Eric's hearing in Kansas City, Missouri next Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:30p.m. The media and cops are likely to be well represented, and it would be a meaningful moment to show Eric that he is not alone. Having supporters there may also create some pressure for the court to conduct itself better. It will also be useful to Eric and his support crew to have more people in attendance taking notes and keeping an eye on the proceedings.

The hearing will be:

**US District Court, Western District of Missouri  
400 East 9th Street, Room 7662  
Courtroom 7E  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106**

Please note that valid photo identification is required to enter the courthouse and all persons and belongings are subject to search. Also, we'd like to encourage everyone who's planning on attending the March 3<sup>rd</sup> court appearance to dress nice, and conduct yourself appropriately in the court room out of respect for EK, the person we are there to support.

Even if you cannot attend on this short notice, please consider donating some money to Eric's new support fund . He urgently needs funds to prepare for his long prison term as well as immediate support needs. You can also send him a book or a letter. Check out his Amazon Wish List for ideas. Eric is currently in the hole and needs all the reading material he can get.

Sometime in the next couple months, Eric will have a sentencing hearing where the judge will officially determine his sentence, after which he will be transferred to a federal prison. Please keep your eyes open for another call out asking supporters to attend.

Make no mistake; neither Eric nor his support crew takes the decision to accept this plea lightly. Despite being far better than the other legal options available, ten years is way too long for our friend and comrade to be stolen from us. Eric is being steamrolled by the state and its functionaries, and there is very little we can do about it. Yet we can and will remain in solidarity with him.

From the beginning, Eric has been concerned about accepting a plea that may establish a legal precedent that other anarchists may have to deal with in the future when facing similar charges. Therefore, he has seen this legal battle as impacting not only himself, but all of us. Nonetheless, facing the possibility of a thirty or forty year sentence, Eric has determined that this is the best possible outcome that is available to him.

We are proud of Eric for how bravely he has faced these charges. He has refused to cooperate with the state, worked hard to maintain a vegan diet, and stood up for himself and his friends in prison in the face of violence and intimidation by the guards and administration. And he has done it with contagious laughter, joy and poetry. We now face the long, hard road of supporting our friend and comrade for the next ten years of his life. Please take some time to donate and write Eric a letter.

### **25 Feb - Mutulu Shakur 2016 Legal Update on Denial of Release**

*Below is a letter written by Mutulu Shakur following the recent turn of events that has kept him from being released.*

#### **MORE:**

Like many of you, I was of the belief that I was to be released from prison, effective February 10, 2016. That belief was based on the 30 years I was required to serve. I have fulfilled that commitment while following all rules and regulations like any other prisoner would be expected to. Having been sentenced under federal statute 4205(a), any person serving more than 45 years must serve 30 years to receive mandatory release.

For the past 30 years my target release date has been February 10, 2016. Whosoever had legitimate concerns had the same time to come forward to argue that I should not be released.

To deny me release at this stage the Parole Commission must determine that I have either "repeatedly or seriously violated the rules of the institution, or there exists a great probability that the inmate will commit any federal, state or local crime following his release."

The Parole Commission's function is now limited in scope. The idea is that the society as a whole is represented by the Parole Commission. Hopefully the broader society has embraced a willingness to heal and move towards reconciliation. We have an obligation to ensure that the Parole Commission's process is informed, fair, impartial and as unbiased as possible.

Many of the individuals that have opposed my release and question my resolve to be a productive member of society have had the benefit of mainstream media to project their views. I have endured the disadvantage of not having that benefit. My story has not been heard through the mass media. But I hope my call for reconciliation has been heard by some, and has had an impact, especially on young people.

What we have been tasked with is difficult and victory will have been hard fought. This is yet another stage of the struggle, but also an opportunity for our voices to be heard. I am hoping your messages can be shared with the Parole Commission as it makes a decision regarding my release or further incarceration.

Incarceration can be a catalyst to produce individuals that emerge with a newfound moral compass. I have been privileged to witness that growth and development in many other prisoners throughout my incarceration. As a result, there have been many good works produced, both inside and outside of these walls.

I would not be who I am today without all of you and I can only hope to have been a positive influence in your lives and in the lives of young men who have been incarcerated with me. It will be helpful to gather your thoughts and memories of our experience, and to share your sincere observations with the Parole Commission.

Please feel free to circulate this letter and my request to others who have had similar experiences that they would like to share.

Please address letters to the Parole Commission [specific instructions are below] but email them to both my attorney Peter Schey at pschey@centerforhumanrights.org and my family at mutulushakur@hotmail.com for review before they are forwarded to the Board. I will not be personally reviewing letters.

My son Tupac acknowledged in the context of the struggle to overcome oppression that, “we’ve come so far, but still have so far to go ...” To that I say, we must continue to be guided by the essence of our circumstances that has brought us to these points; which encourage us to be principled, honest and continue to search for the truth

Brotha Kendrick Lamar taught us “to pimp a butterfly.” From that we must always remember that we can evolve and to have faith in the power of transformation, that has been evident throughout the saga of our journey.

I thank you in advance for your continued love and support.

### **25 Feb - Eddie Africa Denied Parole**

*When The Move 9 became eligible for parole in 2008 The Pennsylvania Parole Board took on the responsibility of officials of this system in keeping innocent Move Members in prison for the rest of their lives.*

#### **MORE:**

From 2008 up until as recently as this past week all of The Move 9 have been denied parole. We received a call last night from our brother Eddie Africa who was calling to let us know he was denied yet again by The Pa Parole Board and was given a two year hit where he would not go before the board again until 2018.

The Parole Board has cited the issue of Eddie being a risk to the safety of the community. At Eddie's parole hearing the parole board was presented with a petition of 300 signatures of members of the community who would welcome him on parole into the community and who in fact felt no threat to their safety with Eddie in the community. It's obvious that this community that the parole board is talking about is none other than the law enforcement community across the country that have mobilized against parole for Move Members.

This clearly shows that The Parole Board has no regard for the community and their input on anything, as they only value the input of law enforcement officials who they are obviously working in conjunction with to keep our family in prison.

Eddie sounded strong as always and this has not deterred him and neither are we. The fight continues to win parole for our family as we prepare for our sisters May 2016 parole hearings. There will be more information to follow in the next couple of days on the next steps we are taking.

In the meantime we urge people to sign The Petition we aimed at US Attorney General Loretta Lynch as we demand that The Justice Department investigate the wrongful and ongoing imprisonment of The Move 9. People can go to <https://www.causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9>.

Also for more info people can go to [onamove.com](http://onamove.com) and [move9parole.blogspot.com](http://move9parole.blogspot.com)

### **29 Feb - Kevin Olliff Sentenced: Only 3 more months in prison!**

*This morning, after spending over a year in state custody and then more than another year in federal custody awaiting sentencing, Kevin finally had his federal sentencing hearing.*

#### **MORE:**

In August of 2013, Kevin Johnson (aka Kevin Olliff) and Tyler Lang were arrested and charged with possession of burglary tools while driving in rural Illinois, and each served time in state custody. The next summer, they were both indicted under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act — federal charges related to the same allegations as the state charges — for allegedly releasing thousands of mink from a fur farm and painting “Liberation is Love” on the side of a barn on the farm. Kevin and Tyler both accepted non-cooperating plea agreements in which they plead guilty to conspiracy under the AETA.

Kevin was sentenced to 36 months, with credit for time served (both state and federal time) — which means that Kevin is expected to be out of prison in about three more months! Following that, he will be on three years of supervised release.

Leading up to this point has been a long road for Kevin, already having served time in multiple facilities, dealing with many sentencing delays, and being away from family and friends. Now that his sentencing has happened, Kevin is able to prepare for what lays ahead with a few more months in prison followed by supervised release and recreating life outside of the walls of prison. And now is also the time that we need to prepare to support Kevin through this process. Please continue to support Kevin through letters and donations, which are still critically needed to help him through the rest of his time in prison as well as to help him when he is released.

It is time to continue to show that we will take care of each other through rough times, to look forward to welcoming Kevin home, and to care always about the animals.

Tyler Lang, Kevin's co-defendant, will have his sentencing hearing on March 23.

## **29 Feb - Solidarity with Antifa who stood up to KKK in Anaheim!**

*As many of you have now heard, over the weekend a KKK rally was militantly confronted by antifascists in Anaheim, California.*

### **MORE:**

In the clashes that followed Klansmen stabbed various antifascists before being run off. The police, showing their true colors, arrested 7 antifascists and eventually released all of the Klan members detained that day. A call for support and a fundraising page has been put together by Copwatch Santa Ana and the LA Anarchist Black Cross in order to support those arrested, and to help with much needed legal and medical expenses.

Donate at <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/d16d89>

### **Total Solidarity with the Anaheim Antifascists! Death to the Klan!**

From the Fundrazr page:

*Donate to the anti-fascists/anti-racists who put their lives on the line to stand up against white supremacy.*

*On February 27, a courageous group of anti-fascists gathered to counter protest the KKK rally in Anaheim, California. The pigs ended up targeting and arresting the counter protesters, many of them were Brown and Black people, and not the racists who instigated the confrontation in the first place.*

*The anti-fascist comrades who got arrested are in urgent need of some real solidarity! That's why we need to raise BIG MONEY for them. Your donations will go towards any medical or legal costs associated with their injuries and arrests from that day.*

*Copwatch Santa Ana and the Los Angeles Anarchist Black Cross will work together with other local anti-fascist/anti-racist groups to divide the money appropriately to the arrestees.*

*All donations, however big or small, are greatly appreciated.*

## **5 Mar - Benefit Show For NYC ABC and The Base**

**WHAT:** Concert

**WHEN:** 8:00pm, Saturday, February 5

**WHERE:** Aviv - 496 Morgan Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11222

**COST:** \$8-12, sliding scale

### **MORE:**

Mad Diesel & Ipsum Present:

**Mad Diesel** (Beatdown Powerviolence, NYHC) - <https://maddiesel.bandcamp.com>

**CLAW** (Punk/Hardcore/D-beat out of MD) - <https://clawmd.bandcamp.com>

**Lucid Terror** (Brooklyn Thrash Death Grind) - <https://lucidterror.bandcamp.com>

**Miscegenator** (NYC Punk) - <https://miscegenator.bandcamp.com/releases>

**Folklore** - <https://soundcloud.com/cuckcave/track2-rough-vox>

## **11 Mar - Inside the Activist Studio Premier Episode 1 with Sekou Odinga**

**WHAT:** Video Premier

**WHEN:** 6:30-9:00pm, Friday, February 11

**WHERE:** National Black Theater - 2031 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue New York, New York 10035

**COST:** Free

**MORE:**

This event will feature clips from episode 1, a discussion with Sekou, host Robyn Spencer, and the production crew on the importance of culture and their experiences with this project, and an art showcase.

Inside the Activist Studio is a project of the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home. It is an interview based video series and each new episode will feature a different community activist/organizer.

Our goal with this project is to contribute to a culture of resistance by highlighting the lives and activities of contemporary activists and organizers. Specifically, we seek to document and explore our stories of courage, love, and commitment in order to learn the lessons of struggle and help inspire a new generation of organizers and activists who want to build a better world.

**11 Mar - NYC Free Peltier Film Series**

**WHAT:** Flicks for Freedom

**WHEN:** 7:00pm, Friday, February 11

**WHERE:** Freedom Hall - 113 West 128<sup>th</sup> Street New York, New York 10027

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

*Warrior: the Life of Leonard Peltier*, a film by Suzie Baer

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

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

Fresh popcorn will be served

nycfreepeltier@gmail.com 646.429.2059

**11 Mar - A Fundraiser in Solidarity with Trans**

**WHAT:** Concert

**WHEN:** 7:00pm, Friday, February 11

**WHERE:** The Silent Barn - 603 Bushwick Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11206

**COST:** \$8-15 sliding scale

**MORE:**

All donations will go to Black & Pink <<http://www.blackandpink.org>> and the bands include:

**Material Support** - <https://materialsupport.bandcamp.com>

**Glittered and Mauled** - <https://glitteredandmauled.bandcamp.com>

**There Are Four Lights** - <https://therearefourlightsnyc.bandcamp.com>