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Updates for March 15<sup>th</sup>

### **28 Feb - Times Square rally to free Puerto Rican political prisoner**

*Supporters behind a movement for Puerto Rican independence rallied in Manhattan Sunday, urging President Obama to free a prisoner who has been in jail nearly half his life over the issue.*

#### **MORE:**

by Andy Mai (*NY Daily News*)

Nearly two dozen protesters demonstrated in Times Square for 34 minutes, one minute for every year that Oscar López Rivera has been in jail.

López Rivera, 73, was convicted and sentenced to 55 years in federal prison for seditious conspiracy, conspiring to oppose U.S. authority over Puerto Rico by force.

He was also accused of being a member of the FALN, the Armed Forces of National Liberation, which claimed responsibility for more than 100 bombings to call attention to the colonial case of Puerto Rico.

“What they’ve done to him is wrong,” said protester, Rosario Vera, 62. “He been there for 34 years now and soon to be 35 years. It’s basically putting a muzzle on the independence movement in Puerto Rico. His life was basically cut short.

### **March 7th - The Retributive Incarceration of Oscar López Rivera**

by Juan Cartagena (*Huffington Post*)

Oscar López Rivera is a political prisoner who at 74 years of age has served 34 years in American prisons, 12 of them in consecutive solitary confinement, because of his ideas. Sentenced to 55 years for seditious conspiracy in 1981 and an additional 15 years for conspiracy to escape in 1987, López Rivera has never been convicted of a violent act.

His only idea, overarching as it is, is the independence of Puerto Rico. His continued incarceration today, as the nation ponders the ills of disproportionate criminal sentencing, can only be justified by gross punishment and retribution.

Why else keep a 74 year old man whose release is supported by Nobel Peace Prize recipients Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchu and Mairead Maguire, among thousands of others, behind bars for this long? Punishment - that enduring characteristic of American exceptionalism, plain and simple -- is the only justification.

For our sake, President Barack Obama, please release him. Now.

The two consecutive criminal sentences totaling 70 years, shout out disproportionality thereby reflecting this country's illogical and unnecessary criminal justice policies -- which the Obama administration is trying to correct. Equally important, because Mr. López Rivera is widely considered to be unjustly sentenced for his political beliefs and his advocacy for the independence of Puerto Rico, his continued incarceration is inconsistent with this nation's values.

Seditious conspiracy in 1981 really had no parallel in the nation's courts since it appears that at that time the only persons even accused of the crime were exclusively persons advocating for Puerto Rican independence. Thus, 55 years for that conviction - where Mr. López Rivera has already served 34 -- is

disproportionate especially considering that he was never convicted of any violent crime or crimes that caused injuries to others.

His 1987 conviction for conspiracy to escape also belies any fair notion of just sentencing upon receiving 15 consecutive years of imprisonment far more than any other members of the conspiracy. Again, Mr. López Rivera was not convicted of actually escaping or even actually attempting to do so.

The facts and circumstances of his conspiratorial acts were all part of the public record when President William Clinton offered Mr. López Rivera executive clemency in 1999, noting that the sentences were "out of proportion." Mr. López Rivera chose not to accept the offer in light of the terms of the offer for his other co-defendants -- but that has nothing to do with fair sentencing.

In fact, the best practices of sentencing reform in the modern era were recently highlighted by the National Research Council of the National Academies in 2014 in "The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences."

That body of academics concluded that incarceration in America should be balanced by four guiding principles:

1. Proportionality (criminal offenses should be sentenced in proportion to their seriousness);
2. Parsimony (the period of confinement should be sufficient but not greater than necessary to achieve the goals of sentencing policy);
3. Citizenship (the conditions and consequences of incarceration should not be so severe or lasting as to violate one's fundamental status as a member of society); and,
4. Social Justice (prisons should be instruments of justice and their collective effect should be to promote, not undermine, society's aspirations for a fair distribution of rights, resources and opportunities).

When applied to a 74-year-old man who has spent nearly half of his life imprisoned for his political beliefs, these principles underscore how unjust this case really is. The sentences, as noted above, are patently disproportionate and given that Mr. López Rivera spent 12 consecutive years in solitary confinement they go beyond any sense of justice.

The sentences are also well beyond frugality or parsimony; belie any sense of the value of citizenship given Mr. López Rivera's age and his life expectancy; and run counter to any modicum of social justice. Under these principles his sentences serve no value except, at best, retribution and we should be well beyond that debilitating and corrosive mind-set in modern sentencing reform.

The Obama administration knows better. It has been steadfastly advocating for sentencing reform of late. The President visited a federal prison, an historic and welcome first, while simultaneously speaking to the scourge of racial profiling, and addressing juvenile justice on the one hand, and enduring collateral consequences, on the other. The growing support for the release of Mr. López Rivera has unified each of the major political parties in Puerto Rico who along with clergy, unionists, activists and elected and community leaders have made his cause well within the mainstream.

Moreover, such a request is not outside the propriety of the power of the executive since granting presidential clemency for prisoners who advocate for Puerto Rico's independence is not a complete rarity. President Harry Truman, Jimmy Carter and William Clinton have all done it.

Instead, what America has in Oscar López Rivera is a beacon of freedom and a symbol of what needs to be rectified at the earliest possible moment in order to restore our standing in the world community and to make palpable the very criminal justice and sentencing reform that has wisely guided this administration.

In addition to the support López Rivera receives from Nobel laureates it was President Obama's memorable speech in South Africa in 2013 at the commemoration of the life of Mr. Mandela that raised real hopes for his release. The President spoke of Mandela's activism for freedom, inspiring both him and the whole world and then he spoke of Mandela's reconciliatory outlook: "It took a man like Madiba to free not the prisoner, but the jailer as well ... to teach that reconciliation is not just a matter of ignoring a cruel past, but a means of confronting it with inclusion, generosity and truth."

I personally met with Oscar López Rivera in his prison in Indiana in 2015 as part of a delegation of three attorneys, including his own, the incomparable Jan Susler. López Rivera held no rancor, and was the picture of peace and benevolence. His mind was clear and spirit intact. His return to his cell that day as I exited the visiting room was an affront to everything I have learned about justice in our country.

Should President Obama commute his sentence it will not only free Oscar López Rivera, but also the very system that unjustly jails him.

### **29 Feb - Leodus Jones in Holmesburg**

*We've including the latest commentary by Mumia Abu-Jamal below.*

#### **MORE:**

When Black History Month rolls around, many are tempted to tell great stories of great heroes and heroines, Black warriors fighting for freedom against vile racists.

This isn't that kind of story.

Years ago, when I was a reporter for Public Radio, I received a call from a man I knew from the Black Liberation Movement. He wanted to meet with me, but wouldn't discuss it on the phone.

When I arrived at his apartment that night, his woman greeted me at the door and he ushered me into the bedroom. He took off his shirt, and turned on a weak light. When I saw his skin, I stepped back in shock, for there; from the nape of his neck to his thighs was riot of discoloration like I'd never seen before or since.

His body looked like that of a leopard; spotted, flayed, pocked with splashes of dark and light skin, kind of like a broken checker board of his torso.

In his dark eyes fought fury and shame, for years before, as a young man, he spent time in Holmesburg Prison, where, to make a few bucks, he volunteered for a University of Pennsylvania medical study. He signed up for what was called 'the patch test', where tape and bandages were applied to his body with chemicals in them.

The tapes would rip the flesh raw, and the wet bandages would be applied to this now open skin.

Men like him would get \$10, \$15, \$20 or \$25 added to their books for candy bars, cigarettes and commissary.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of men, mostly Black men, participated in these tests and thought little of it – until years later.

The pittance of money would be long gone, but the scars and patches of those days lasted for years.

His name was Leodus Jones – and I’ll never forget his words –“I can’t even get with my woman, man,--I can’t let her see this stuff.”

Thousands of men, from the 1950s to the 1970s, -- a true captive audience – participated in these experiments some went mad, others suffered for years.

The project head, meanwhile, made millions of dollars, as did the University, from discoveries gleaned from these experiments.

For example, have you ever heard of Retinol-A? It’s a cosmetic used to erase wrinkles.

It made Dr. Albert M. Kligman wealthy, as well as his partners.

The poor fellows who contributed their skin, their health, their well-being, got pennies – and pain.

Captives & Capitalism – and Exploitation – perfect together, eh?

So when I think of Black History Month, I think of those many men – grandfathers, perhaps, scarred for life, tortured in some cases, so that others could profit from their suffering.

### **3 Mar - The Short Story of How I Got Here: Casey Brezik**

*Anarchist prisoner Casey Brezik explains his case and gives a brief personal history.*

#### **MORE:**

I was just going through some of the letters I’ve received over the years in an effort to minimize clutter, and I realize that in one there was a post someone had printed off for me in which one of my comrades was attributing the acts that led me here to my “mental illness.” I presume this to be a common opinion shared by several due to media reports surrounding my case. None of which have I ever known to be accurate and certainly not unbiased on this case.

Contrary to what’s been reported, at the time of the incident I did not mistake the dean as being the governor. I was only led to believe this later. To think otherwise is ridiculous and not to mention demeaning. However, even though I hadn’t marked him as the governor, I was able to mark him as one of the more important people in the room at the time. Let me start from the beginning though. All of this happened at a strange time in my life, so some backstory is warranted.

As I mentioned in my last post, my first post, the first anarchists I was ever able to clique up with were in Kansas City. After a sequence of events I was left without a place to stay within the city. I knew it was only a matter of time before I would have to leave—I just wanted it to be on my terms. That day came when I had an argument with my, then, girlfriend (she was far too good for me anyway). I hopped the first train and headed south towards warmer weather. I should’ve known more about hopping before I did so because I put myself in a lot of danger without realizing it at the time (though I’m not sure it would’ve made a difference to me) by doing dumb things while riding. I got off somewhere in southwestern Kansas and walked to a truck stop in an attempt to hitch a ride further south. A man told me he would give me a ride to Tulsa. I thought it would be perfect because the only other anarchist I knew by name was out of Oklahoma City.

Once in Tulsa, I hung around the Greyhound station. I’d seen someone sneak onto one when I first left Springfield. With nothing to lose, I considered I should give it a try. Late at night I made my move.

Initially, the bus would've taken me all the way to LA, but I didn't know anyone there. Nor did I know where I'd get busted before then. So, I got off in OKC.

I remember walking for a short distance in OKC before I spotted someone walking that looked as though they might be able to point in the right direction towards finding the person I knew. Sure enough, he walked me to the arts district. From there I held a sign, supposedly for a "clandestine" organization, which I came to find out later pissed some people off, some macho men. The irony is that this "clandestine" organization didn't seem to have existed beyond their stupid little dance party.

Anyway, the sign yielded no results. Ultimately, it was a helpful server at the coffee shop that provided me a pamphlet with the OKC info shop's address on it, which was meeting later that night. That's where I met some pretty solid dudes. They had my back when I needed them later on down the road. I didn't stay with anyone in OKC, but I was shown an abandoned building I could use for awhile.

I'd arrived in time for the 3rd Friday, a monthly art walk. I remember one exhibit in particular that took images from Abu Gharib prison in Iraq and turned the people and situations into cartoon characters, with smiling faces. There were also plenty of condoms available with devil packaging. I grabbed a handful in case I was ever lucky enough to have an opportunity to use them, but it never came. Still, I spoke with the artist and expressed my indignation of how he could portray such dark scenes with light and humor. He told me he had done it in order to bring a difficult topic to the people in a way that wouldn't make them uncomfortable and cause them to turn away from it. He claimed it's easier for people to see things like that in cartoon form rather than their true form. In retrospect, I think he was more likely trying to justify what he was doing without having to resort to revealing his true intentions to avoid his ego taking a critical hit. Ultimately, the exhibit and the way it was presented were intended to appeal to the privileged within our society.

Shortly after the exhibit, while chillaxin' with these new people I'd met, I blew up our chill spot by taking a small clay flowering pot filled with dirt and smashing it into a thousands tiny pieces on the ground. That was my vent for all my frustrations I was feeling. I ran off.

I remember sharing the beers I'd jacked off a delivery truck with these people. I'd jacked CD's to give them. I even ditched a watch one of them was able to make use of. I never tried to force my way into their clique, but I was still told I wasn't welcomed inside their house anymore...because my smashing the flower pot was "too agro." My connection was cut in OKC. The person I was looking for was headed northward with someone out of KC anyway. There were a few from the Northeast whom I was able to gather some vague info from, in case I were ever able to stop by sometime. That did actually happen. For the moment, they showed me a few pointers on hopping and I headed south to Mexico.

I spent about a week hopping trains, trying to get out of Texas and across the border. The moment came when I thought I'd finally managed to do it, only to find I was in El Paso. However, I'd only travelled a couple of blocks when I saw a sign for "Pedestrian Border Crossing." After dumpstering some burritos I made my way toward the crossing. It cost \$.35, but the night guard was cool and let me across anyway. It must've been around 1:30 or 2:00 am because the clubs were letting out.

When I crossed it was a little bit of a culture shock. However, for the sake of time I'm going to save my adventures in Mexico for another post in the future. For now it will suffice to say that I was extradited for violating my parole and entering the country illegally (can't stray too far south without papers—at least you're not supposed too). I then had to serve the remaining year of my 3-year sentence for my first charge here in Missouri, possession of marijuana.

I was released from prison May 13th, 2010. I remember reuniting with anarchists in KC. One particular that I've always been fond of actually ran to give me a hug. That still makes me feel good when I think about it. Never have I felt so cared about as I did in that moment. I met with everyone and tried to sell a far reaching and poorly thought out plan for expanding operations. It felt good to see everyone.

It wasn't long before I tired of trying to find a job and took off for the G-20 summit in Toronto. Again, this is a topic for another post. After I was deported, I reunited under some pretty unbelievable chance circumstances with some friends I met in OKC. I even hopped a train to see a friend perform in her punk band while on tour. From there my intent was to catch my friend's trial, in order to show support, down in Appalachia. Again, another post for another time. From there, I hopped along the Gulf Coast and wound up in New Orleans.

Eventually, I was back in Kansas City to start attending community college. 2 weeks in, I received my financial aid. I used it to buy items I thought I might need in the future, including some clothing. I also went back to Springfield to return something familiar, have once again been distanced by the anarchists in KC. I partied for the entire weekend without sleep. I came back to KC to attend school on Monday. I made it home just in time to see my packages delivered (the items I'd bought online). One these items was my bulletproof vest.

I'd already gone shopping with my financial aid money prior to going to Springfield for the weekend to party with old friends. Now, I was left to "party" on my own in Westport. Really, this amounted to my getting drunk and walking around. Nothing more. I ended up sleeping in an abandoned apartment building not too far from my hang out spot. Actually, I was too paranoid to sleep, as is often the case. It seemed like the building I was in could be used for all sorts of things at night, so I stayed awake listening my MP3 player in the dark until sunrise. Then, I walked to school.

I arrived early and hung out downstairs in the student center. I just chilled until it was time to go to class. Probably, due to lack of sleep and the combination of drugs and alcohol I was still reeling on, I momentarily forgot I had class on Tuesday. Eventually, I made my way to the computer lab for my Comp. Sci 101 course. That's when I saw the podium with the State seal on it. I backtracked and asked the receptionist what it was there for. She told me, excitedly, that the governor, Jay Nixon, was coming to speak. I found this unbelievable. When I asked her why we weren't informed, she just shrugged her shoulders.

It was at this moment I remember laughing a sinister laugh, unable to believe what was transpiring. I'd been wearing my vest since the day prior and I generally try to carry a knife on me. Circumstances seemed to be smiling on me.

I remember grabbing a computer as close to the podium as possible. The setup was all very close quarters, so I was more than 4ft from it. However, someone came and told me I'd need to move in a little while before the governor arrived. He also gave me the ETA. With that, I stepped outside to smoke a blunt I'd rolled earlier that morning in the women's restroom that was closed for repairs downstairs. I bummed a light and walked out to the pavilion. I stood there overlooking everyone as they moved about and considered: 1) what I was about to do, 2) how I was going to do it, and 3) the consequences that I might face for even attempting what I stood there contemplating.

At one point, I specifically remember realizing just how insane I was being and reminded myself that I could still just walk away. However, as I turned to do so, I realized that doing so would mean I would have to live the rest of my life knowing that when it came to act on my principles (which I'd so adamantly advocated for in my travels), I chose to be a coward. I couldn't live with myself knowing that I'd become

one of the hypocrites I was so much against. That was enough to settle my mind. I could live my life in prison, or I could die today, so long as I know I stayed true to myself.

At this, I returned to the computer lab, determining enough time had lapsed. I actually ran to the wrong class at first. I then ran to the computer lab. Not being the “ninja” several people reported me as being, I was unable to wield my butterfly knife as though it were a natural extension of my hand. I wasn’t about to try, so my knife was already drawn when I entered the lab. It became obvious the governor had not arrived when I saw no security present. In fact, very little had changed since I left. I’d jumped the gun.

It didn’t take but a moment for me to have the entire room’s attention as my knife was already drawn. Everyone, but two people so caught up in the conversation, noticed me. I noticed the news cameras, though. I decided not to waste the moment and attempt an impromptu speech. To do this I thought it was necessary to have everyone’s attention, including the two men still conversating. This also served to buy me time as I tried to contemplate what I’d say.

I approached these two men and waved my knife in their faces to get their attention. There was a look of sheer terror that I remember (correctly or not, I’m not certain) creeping across one of their faces. This man was the dean, who I later chased down and stabbed. There was no way I’d mistaken him as the governor at this point. After I had their attention I went to the podium and started with “Mic check, one, two” (lol). Again, I was trying to buy time as none of this was really planned. All the while, I was hoping the cameraman would turn on his camera and start filming (he waited until I was being arrested). At this moment, three people ran out of the room. Due in part to instinct because they were running and partly due to my need to find a distraction to save me from the rather embarrassing moment that was only bound to get worse, I chased after them.

My mind was already made up on bloodshed, even if it meant my own. I took this moment as an opportunity to strike. Ultimately the dean got stabbed because he was the slowest. No other reason. As soon as I struck him, I was tackled to the ground and apprehended.

That’s the story of my arrest in a nutshell. Afterwards, I was left in shackles for 24 hours in a solitary cell. Eventually, the police interviewed me. It was intended as an interrogation, but I was more than happy to tell them my ideologies and my conceptions of a better tomorrow. Throughout this “interrogation,” they led the conversation a lot of places and like a dummy my ego followed. Throughout it all they led me to believe I had actually killed my intended target, which I admitted was Jay Nixon. This confused me at first, but I’ve encountered stranger things in life, so I went with it. I didn’t refute it, not seeing their reason behind suggesting otherwise. However, at the end of the “interview” they revealed that not only was the man I attacked not the governor, but he also wasn’t dead.

Why they did this, I’m still not sure. I can only speculate it was for the news. They wanted to paint me as being more psychotic than I felt at the time. Maybe they needed to reaffirm their suspicions because it was the only way they were able to reconcile my actions. The opposing idea, that I was within my full faculties (without being given all the details), could only mean something more sinister and difficult for people to cope with. Possibly this is also why no attempt was ever made to interview me. My being “mentally ill” meant the problem was isolated and contained. They were free to ridicule me at will and go back to their lives. By the same reasoning though, possibly, if only for a brief moment, I made them pause and contemplate something they couldn’t easily comprehend. Surely he must be mentally ill.

I wont sit here and try and convince you I was all the way within my right mind when I did what I did. I was high on drugs, alcohol, and hadn’t slept at all for 3 days. There’s no way my decision-making faculties were fully functional. I didn’t regret making the decision to act. I knew, to be right with myself I’d have to.

But, I do regret the way in which I acted. The dean was not my intended target and there was certainly no reason for him to get hurt. That part was senseless.

Shortly after my arrest, my attorneys were able to find reason to send me to the State psychotic hospital for a 6-month evaluation. However, the psychiatrists determined that I was not only competent, but also had no diagnosis for me. My attorney requested that I stay longer for a second opinion. The second evaluation produced the same results. I came back to the county and after a series of judge changes, I was able to request a bond be set. Not because I planned on making one, but more so because I wanted to know what to expect from this judge when I changed my plea to guilty. I hadn't been offered a plea deal, and at that point I wasn't expecting to be.

When it came time for my attorney to deliver my change of plea, the prosecuting attorney opted to offer to have my second 1st Degree Assault charge dropped to a 2nd Degree Assault and have both my ACA's (armed criminal action charges) ran in together with their respective assaults. Ultimately, this did nothing by way of limiting how much time they could give me. So, more than anything, it served as a notch on the prosecutor's plea deal record. He still pursued life and the maximum sentence at my sentencing hearing.

I should explain that my second assault charge came from the chancellor of the college. He's the one who tackled me. He had a small cut on his chest. I'm not certain where it comes from, nor that he didn't do that himself. It's worth mentioning that aside his having 17 years experience in law enforcement, including ATF and Missouri Highway Patrol, he was the former director of Homeland Security for the state. Undoubtedly, him and Nixon knew each other prior. This might serve to explain why Nixon made such a surprise appearance that day. I'm not sure. I won't speculate now.

I will say that I considered Governor Nixon's decision to hold a surprise appearance a little suspicious. I actually considered that he was trying to get something over on us. As though he may have felt we were easily unsuspecting victims for one of his predatory schemes. I considered he may have felt that he could make an appearance, hold a photo-op with smiling faces and disappear before anyone was any the wiser. So, in a sense, I felt I was defending not only my dignity, but in a much broader sense, all those that wind up being exploited by the hands of our government. I was making a stand. This goes back to what I was saying in my first post about believing in self-defense.

It's no secret that there's a war being waged against every single one of us in an attempt to gain our compliance. The more you resist, the more evident this will become. For those of us whom have never dared to defy the rules or norms of society in favor of treading our own path in life, that statement means nothing. For those of us that have never dared, they're just words on paper, void of any significance. For those who that have dared, it rings true on many levels.

For sometime prior to my actions that led me back into this cage, I became determined to stop treating life as though we weren't at war. I didn't want to be complacent to their program only at those times when they were "overly" aggressive or "out of line." The notion that we're at odds with them and subjected to "use of force" any time we're not complacent or passive should be enough to be considered "out of line." They'll resort to violence without need and still be considered justified.

This is why I wore a vest. For fear of my life being taken at the hands of the police. At the time, the media poked at me for that, but now, after they've decided to broadcast all over mass media that police can and will kill us at will and with impunity (to scare us into complacency?) maybe people can comprehend my feeling the way I did, even then. I didn't need the media to tell me what I already knew.

However, despite being so privy to what was “really” happening out there—a perspective that seems to become increasingly clear the further you remove yourself from the “acceptable” norms of society—as an effect, the more you resist. I failed to find a means to bring this type of conscious assessment of the world into the minds of others. Some seemed to agree, but when it came to taking action none felt the atmosphere was right. They say an enemy inside the gates is always more dangerous than those still waiting outside. Hence, the reason it’s important to keep those inside pacified and complacent. I felt I had to try to create an atmosphere somehow. There was no one else. No such thing happened, despite my best efforts.

I felt so alone and distraught, it didn’t matter where I was if it meant my existence could only amount to that type of hopelessness. Also, the reason for cheesy sayings I posted on Facebook without much thought or concern with how they’d be perceived. I’ve since discovered that I’m not alone, nor was I, even then. There were others. There are others, still. Having discovered this amongst other things makes me have no regrets about coming in here.

Sometimes I struggle with the fact that I assaulted the dean unnecessarily, but when I heard about how the attack changed him, I couldn’t help but understand that I burst his bubble that allowed him to feel safe and secure. He knows and understands now that the world around him isn’t as safe as he’d like to believe. He’s aware now of what many of us have been living with for sometime. Possibly, that can serve to help him later in life. I realize too, that his former mentality was borne from a life of privilege that many of us are not afforded, regardless of whether we choose to resist or imitate the ways of society. Many of us, a great many of us, are simply left trying to hang on to the edges society. A great many of us are left behind before we ever found the strength to pick ourselves up and walk away.

One last thing. I want to thank everyone that’s shown support in so many ways. I’ve never felt alone and humiliated as I did the day I was sentenced to those 12 years. As part of my defense, my attorney called on my family to show me as a disturbed and misguided youth that had always struggled through life. This was in front of a packed courtroom. The only five people that were there for me were my immediate family members and in their testimonies it seemed as though they were demeaning me, but that was part of my attorney’s strategy. It was the most humiliating day of my life, and despite my hoping that some anarchists would be there to support me, no one showed up. I definitely felt alone then, but I don’t feel so alone now. So, thank you for that with all of my heart.

### **3 Mar - Eric King Accepts Non-Cooperating Plea Agreement for 10 Years**

*On March 3<sup>rd</sup> in court, Eric King accepted a non-cooperating plea agreement to a federal felony charge that carries a sentence of 10 years in prison. Eric also really needs your help right now as he struggles to get enough calories to survive. Information for how to help is below.*

#### **MORE:**

The charge is 18 U.S.C. § 844(h), use of explosive materials to commit arson of property used in or affecting interstate commerce. Eric was arrested in September 2014 and has fought his charges since then, suffering through terrible conditions in the private prison he’s been held captive in since his arrest.

Throughout the last year and a half, he has been assessing his situation and figuring out how to handle his charges without putting other anarchists at greater risk through setting a dangerous precedent. He has continually held the best interests of other anarchists in the forefront of his decisions and has been clear that he would never resolve his case in a way that entailed cooperation with the state or putting others at risk. He stood firm on that line today as he admitted to the charges and accepted that he will spend the next 8.5 years in federal prison.

His non-cooperating plea agreement specifies that he will be sentenced to 10 years in prison (the statute is weirdly worded to say that both the minimum and the maximum sentence is 10 years). He will receive credit for the time he has already served, including the time between today and his sentencing hearing. We expect his sentencing hearing to be sometime this summer, but do not have a certain date yet. We will let you all know that date as soon as we know it.

Eric was confident and in good spirits in court today, despite the terrible situation and the reality of the situation crashing in on him. He smiled at the supporters who had made it through the courthouse security to support him. People came from both Kansas City and other parts of the country to be with him through this part of his ordeal.

You can continue to support him, even from afar, by writing to him and donating to his support fund. He is currently in solitary confinement, so he will be returned to the hole after leaving the courtroom. Receiving your letters, cards, and books will help him feel connected and supported when the state is doing everything possible to make him feel isolated, alone, and abandoned.

### **March 8<sup>th</sup> - Urgent support needed-Call into CCA Leavenworth**

Eric has been held in disciplinary segregation since February 24th after being accused of throwing his shoes at a guard during a shakedown of the cells while the whole prison was on lockdown. At the subsequent disciplinary hearing, Eric was sentenced to 60 days in the hole (solitary confinement).

While in segregation, Eric is on commissary restriction, meaning that he cannot buy extra food from the commissary to supplement the meager vegan food tray. Trying to eat only the food they provide him is leaving him hungry all the time.

We gathered from Eric a full report of the food he is being provided and, running it through a nutritional analysis, found that it is totally inadequate. Eric is being fed approximately 940 calories per day, way under the recommended daily intake of 2,400-2,800 calories per day. Eric is literally starving.

We are asking all supporters to call the prison and demand that they find a way to provide Eric more food—either by giving him access to commissary or adapting their vegan food menu. If the following bureaucrats do not pick up, please leave them a message.

Please call:

The Warden's office at 913.727.3246 ext. 101

Eric's caseworker Mr. Spears at 913.727.3246 ext. 37

Here is a sample script for your call:

“Hi, I'm calling about Eric King, number 27090045. He's being held in disciplinary segregation right now and is on commissary restriction. Because the vegan tray that Eric gets is so inadequate, and since he can't supplement it with commissary, Eric is starving.

We calculated that Eric is getting approximately 940 calories per day from the vegan tray. This is way under the recommended daily intake of 2,400-2,800 calories per day. Something must be done to get Eric access to more food right away. This can be done by giving him access to commissary or by immediately improving the vegan tray that you provide.

Eric is getting dizzy, having trouble concentrating and feeling hungry all the time. We need to address this situation immediately. Thank you.”

If leaving a message, feel free to leave a name and call back number, but you don't have to.

Please pass this post far and wide. Eric is in the very beginning of his 60 day sentence in disciplinary segregation, so it's important that we prevent the prison from starving him right away.

**March 9<sup>th</sup> - Updated Call-in Info & Keep the Calls Coming!**

CCA's phone system has been disconnecting people, so you can dial the main number at 913.727.3246 and press 0 to ask for the Warden, Mr. Spears (Eric's unit manager) or Chief Quinn. Eric's inmate number is 27090045.

When folks have been able to talk to prison bureaucrats, they have mostly been saying that they can't do anything about Eric's situation until he files a grievance. He has filed grievances and has done so regularly ever since getting arrested because the conditions at CCA have continually been abysmal. Don't let them distract you with their lies—demand that EK get an adequate vegan tray and access to commissary so he can purchase additional food items!

One bureaucrat claimed that it's impossible to make the vegan tray equally nutritional as the standard tray because vegans do not eat meat. This is, of course, a lie. While the standard trays are not adequately nutritious for anyone, CCA is required to provide vegans with a food tray that is equally nutritious as the standard tray. That's not something they can opt out of because they can't imagine how vegans could possibly eat without eating meat. Per the federal standards that CCA is held to as a private for profit prison "Federal Performance Based Detention Standards" CCA is held to provide "nutritionally equivalent approved substitutes" and they are failing miserably. Make sure they know that they are in violation of these standards.

Help us call CCA on their bullshit and demand that EK get an adequate vegan tray and access to commissary so he can purchase additional food items!

**March 10<sup>th</sup> - "Walk away or fight"**

People say to be strong  
but never say or mention  
where to absorb strength from  
is it strength that risk of the hole  
over a lack of vegetables  
or reckless rebellion  
maybe its principle  
facing our fears & embracing our weaknesses  
maybe our greatest triumph  
or fuckup  
stand yer ground, feel it quake  
arms so brittle, legs so weak  
struggle to recall the point of this  
still willing to go for whatever the point is  
forgotten what home smelt like  
vividly recall what choking on fumes felt like  
nothing is ever black and white  
options are always more than  
just walk away or fight

## **6 Mar - Solidarity for Jay's court hearing on March 23**

*Jared is being targeted by the same prosecutor (Anita Alvarez) he faced during the Nato 3 trial for alleged assault charges pinned on him by guards while he awaited trial for two years back in 2012-2014.*

### **MORE:**

These same guards were allowed to testify against him during the NATO 3 sentencing in a somewhat successful attempt to bring a harsher sentence and now they will likely testify against him in this case.

As some of you may know Jay was diagnosed with Huntington's disease while in captivity in Cook County Jail and the ongoing brutalization and isolation he has faced has contributed to a noticeable and alarming deterioration in his health. In fact, at his last court date, Jay came to court with noticeable bruises and a black eye. When the Judge asked him what happened, he said he 'had a bad week'.

This trial is not just about a few extra years being tacked on to his current sentence which is coming to an end in May. The State has made it very clear through this obviously vindictive prosecution that they want to ensure Jay lives out his days in their cage.

Please be there and show the State that we stand with Jay and let Jay know that we have not forgotten him or his struggle. He needs our love and support as he stands in defiance of this ongoing persecution.

9:00am

Cook County Criminal Courthouse  
2650 South California Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60623

## **9 Mar - Forensic expert suspected ATF of planting evidence in Omaha Two case**

*Famous FBI whistleblower Fred Whitehurst examined the Omaha Two case for Nebraskans for Justice. Whitehurst was suspicious that ATF agent Tom Sledge had "salted" the evidence with dynamite particles.*

### **MORE:**

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

Retired FBI Laboratory supervisor Fred Whitehurst provided professional consultation to the Nebraskans for Justice beginning in 1999. Whitehurst, a sixteen-year FBI veteran, was for a number of years the FBI Laboratory top explosives expert. Whitehurst turned his forensic investigative skills to the Omaha Two cases of Edward Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa (former David Rice).

Whitehurst ended his career with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1998 as a whistleblower against sloppy science at the FBI Laboratory. Whitehurst's disclosures uncovered and reported scientific misconduct which forced the Bureau to adopt forty major reforms, including an accreditation process.

Mondo and Poindexter were leaders of Omaha's affiliate chapter of the Black Panther Party called the National Committee to Combat Fascism. The two men were also named targets of the clandestine COINTELPRO counterintelligence operation conducted by the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover. The Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division was in a fierce rivalry with the FBI over the investigation of bombings and had also targeted Mondo and Poindexter under the so-called Midwest 22 investigation.

Agents of both the FBI and ATF joined the Omaha Police Department in making a case against the two Panther leaders for the August 17, 1970 bomb murder of Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr. One of the key pieces of evidence used against the Omaha Two were purported dynamite particles in a shirt pocket of

Poindexter and pants pocket of Mondo. ATF agents took custody of the clothing and sent the garments to the ATF Laboratory where the dynamite trace was allegedly found. Both Poindexter and Mondo tested clean for dynamite at the time they were booked.

Whitehurst wrote a series of email messages to the Nebraskans for Justice about the pocket particles. Whitehurst wrote, "It is strange to me that "particles" of dynamite were found in clothing."

"Dynamite is not a loose material," explained Whitehurst. "When you stick a blasting cap into a cartridge of dynamite you don't open the cartridge up. You poke a hole into the cartridge and put a cap into it....Something ain't right here."

ATF Agent Thomas Sledge, a former Omaha policeman, was in charge of the evidence. Sledge also spearheaded the Midwest 22 investigation, a four-state conspiracy case the United States Attorney later ordered dropped. Seven of the witnesses at the Minard murder trial were also subjects of Sledge's Midwest 22 investigation. Sledge's brother, James Sledge, an Omaha patrolman, was injured at the scene of the Minard bombing.

"I am troubled by the fact...Thomas Sledge was allowed to conduct this investigation. It is not even short of outrageous," wrote Whitehurst. "This Sledge thing really has me shaking my head....It would seem that Sledge could have very well wanted the interpretation that he felt was needed to make this a Panther bomb."

"Why did Sledge run the investigation? Why was he allowed to be involved in the investigation. At the WACO crime scene, ATF was replaced by outside agencies so that there would be no question concerning bias in the investigation."

Whitehurst was also troubled over Sledge making repeated trips to Washington to meet with ATF Laboratory personnel: "Why was Sledge involved in this investigation and why was he allowed to travel back to DC to conduct these interviews? He seems to have had a personal agenda which very understandably he could have had."

"There is mention of dynamite particles found. I still find that suspicious. The dynamite is in cartridges that don't need to be opened ever except to punch a hole in them and stick a blasting cap in them. But there are dynamite particles in many places. This is not right."

"There seems to be something wrong with the fact that dynamite particles were found on the evidence items," wrote Whitehurst. "When I read the literature from the period of time that this case took place, the ATF is saying that they can and do find such particles. And yet finding those particles did not continue in the literature nor in the experience that I have at the FBI lab."

Fred Whitehurst summed up his suspicions, "Something doesn't add up here unless that evidence was salted."

### **11 Mar - After 33 Years in Solitary Confinement, Russell Maroon Shoatz Will Have His Day in Court**

*Russell "Maroon" Shoatz, a former Black Panther who escaped from Pennsylvania prisons twice in the 1970s, was held in solitary confinement for nearly thirty-three years, including twenty-two consecutive years, from 1991 to 2014.*

**MORE:**

by Jack Denton (*Solitary Watch*)

During that time, Shoatz was confined to his cell, in complete social isolation, for 23-24 hours a day. He contends that his time in solitary has led him to develop severe mental health issues, including chronic depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and more—and that the length of time he was held in isolation was based, at least in part, on his political beliefs. But as of last month, Shoatz is one step closer to potential legal remedy for his decades in solitary confinement.

Since 2013, Shoatz has been engaged in a legal suit against the secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the warden of State Correctional Institution at Greene (SCI Greene). The suit alleges that Shoatz's Eighth Amendment right to be protected from cruel and unusual punishment was violated by the extreme duration and conditions of his stay in solitary confinement, and that his Fourteenth Amendment due process rights were violated by the prison's administrative review process, which Shoatz's lawyers say made his release from solitary confinement back into the general prison population nearly impossible.

On February 12th, federal Judge Cynthia Reed Eddy ruled that the civil suit will go to trial in the US District Court in Western Pennsylvania. The case had been up for a potential pre-trial ruling known as summary judgment. Both Shoatz and the defendants, Wetzel and Folino, had filed opposing motions for a summary judgment. In her denial of summary judgment, Judge Eddy wrote that while Shoatz and the Department of Corrections are in agreement about Shoatz's criminal history and the duration of his solitary confinement, "beyond these facts, the parties agree on little else." She also noted that the Supreme Court, in *Hutto v. Finney*, has expressed concern about the possible unconstitutionality of solitary confinement, "depending on the duration of the confinement and the conditions thereof."

Shoatz's case is not a class action suit, so any eventual trial decision will only apply to him. However, the precedent that the case will set could have wide reverberations for the 80,000 to 100,000 Americans who are still held in solitary confinement, many for long periods of time—and most without the benefit of the type of diligent legal counsel that Shoatz has recently had. Shoatz's case has avoided a pre-trial dismissal on the grounds of technicalities, unlike thousands of other similar cases brought forth without representation. Such dismissals have been extremely common since the passing of the 1995 Prison Litigation Reform Act, which makes it extremely difficult for imprisoned people to sue the government.

One of Shoatz's lawyers, Bret Grote of the Abolitionist Law Center, was unsurprised that Judge Eddy chose not to give a final ruling without allowing the case to go to trial. "I'm not surprised she denied our motion [for summary judgment]," he said. "She would have been getting farther ahead than any of the other federal courts in ruling what is excessive solitary confinement without fact-finding during a trial."

Grote further noted that two of three similar cases challenging the duration of solitary confinement in recent years have been found to have sufficient cause to go to trial. Grote cited the summary judgment of the Angola Three case as "a seminal opinion that laid out a roadmap for Shoatz's case."

Shoatz, has been in prison since 1972, when he was found guilty of a first-degree murder that was part of a 1970 Black Liberation Army attack on a Philadelphia police station, which resulted in the death of one officer and the injury of another. In 1977, Shoatz and several other prisoners overtook a cell block, injuring several guards with a knife, and escaped from prison. While he was on the run, he went to the home of a prison guard and eventually forced the guard, his wife, and child into the woods, where he left them tied to a tree for several hours. Back in prison after his re-apprehension, Shoatz was diagnosed with paranoid-schizophrenia and depressive disorder and transferred to Fairview State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. In 1980, he was able to briefly pull off an escape from Fairview. When he was caught and put back in prison, he began the first of his many long stints in solitary confinement.

Shoatz served two years in solitary confinement, from 1980 to 1982, until a hunger strike that he and others in solitary confinement had organized resulted in their release back into the general prison population. However, his time outside of solitary was short lived. Back with the general prison population, Shoatz began peacefully organizing with the Pennsylvania Association of Lifers, attempting to get family members of imprisoned people to lobby their state legislature to repeal life without parole sentencing. One day in early 1983, Shoatz was named interim president of the Lifers group, and was placed in solitary confinement that night. Save for a nineteen month period from 1989 to 1991, Shoatz was kept in solitary confinement from that night until 2014.

While in solitary, Shoatz was kept in a 7 x 12-foot cell in the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU), an official euphemism for the block of cells used for solitary confinement. Rubber strips surrounded the sides and bottom of the cell door, effectively making his cell a sensory deprivation chamber. The light of this cell remained on 24 hours a day, a practice that Dr. James Gilligan, a psychiatrist serving as an expert witness before the court, called “a well-known method of torture,” in his declaration for the court. Prisoners in the RHU were prevented from talking to each other, increasing the extreme social isolation beyond that which is inherent in physical isolation.

Shoatz was only allowed out of his cell for one hour a day, five days a week, to exercise in a cage not significantly larger than a cell. This limited recreation time required an intrusive strip search, which made Shoatz anxious and caused him to rarely leave his cell during the small window of time he was afforded to do so. He was also moved to a different cell every thirty to ninety days. Shoatz wrote in his declaration for the court, that “this increased my anxiety because I could never settle into one place, and nobody ever told me why I was being moved. I also had heightened anxiety because I was concerned that my property would be taken during cell transfers, since it was searched upon leaving one cell as well as when entering the next, and periodically items such as approved reading materials and my own writings would be confiscated during cell transfers.”

Through the twenty-two consecutive years of solitary, Shoatz’s mental health deteriorated tremendously, according to evidence presented in the lawsuit. Dr. Gilligan concluded that years of extreme isolation and the specific conditions of his time in solitary confinement led to a menagerie of mental health problems. Shoatz’s mental health issues have continued to persist since his release back into general prison population, and include chronic depression, despair, intermittent suicidal ideation, problems concentrating, short-term memory loss, and insomnia. During the last six years he was in solitary confinement, he could not sleep for more than four hours a night. Despite his apparently deteriorating mental health, entire decades passed without the prison giving Shoatz a mental health evaluation.

The extreme isolation, Shoatz claims, also left him emotionally numb and unable to form intimate relationships. Though he is no longer confined to his cell, he rarely leaves unless he is required to do so. Speaking during his evaluation about his time in solitary, Shoatz told Dr. 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 [his former fiancé]. Nothing painful – I just don’t care.”

In 2004, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections created the Restricted Release List (RRL), which kept those with RRL status in solitary indefinitely. The list also prevented anyone placed on the list from being released from solitary confinement in the RHU without the DOC Secretary’s approval. For the secretary to consider this approval, the prison’s warden had to recommend him for release. A grievance committee heard from Shoatz every one to three months, but they only had the ability to make minor changes, like providing an extra blanket to a prisoner. Neither the committee, nor anyone else, ever

provided Shoatz with a rationale for his continued solitary confinement in RHU. Shoatz's lawyers called the review system "seriously Kafkaesque."

Still, each time he met with the committee, Shoatz asked to be released from solitary confinement. Despite being made aware of Shoatz's condition, including meeting with Shoatz's daughter in 2012, Secretary Wetzel never reviewed Shoatz's RRL status from 2004 until his release from solitary in 2014. In a document provided to the court, a 2012 SCI – Greene staff document admitted that at 68 years old, Shoatz himself was not a serious escape risk, but argued that his history of political organizing "poses a substantial risk to the staff and the security of our institution."

Standard international rules for the treatment of prisoners have been in place since the 1950s, but that the UN clarified them last year, laying out what are now called the Nelson Mandela Rules. Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, who also provided expert witness in Shoatz's suit, told Solitary Watch that under international and US law, that more than fifteen days in solitary would constitute cruel and unusual punishment, but that the duration of Shoatz's stay in solitary "violates international law and is definitely torture."

Amy Fetting, Senior Staff Council at the ACLU's National Prison Project and the director of the Stop Solitary Campaign, placed the developments in Shoatz's case within a growing trend of resistance to the widespread use of solitary confinement. "What we're seeing right now from the public, from corrections itself, and from the judiciary, is a recognition that solitary confinement is overused and abused in this country. There's a growing consensus that we need to be doing something different. The open question is what."

Asked about the Shoatz case, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections responded: "We decline to comment on ongoing litigation."

Judge Eddy has set a trial date for July 11, 2016.

### **12 Mar - Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa has passed to the ancestors**

*Sadly, one more political prisoner has completed a life sentence only to be freed from prison to a grave. Mondo passed at 11:55 pm on March 11, 2016. Peace be with you Mondo.*

#### **MORE:**

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa died on March 11, 2016 of respiratory failure at the maximum-security Nebraska State Penitentiary. Mondo was serving a life without parole sentence for the 1970 murder of an Omaha policeman, a crime Mondo vigorously denied all the way to his prison deathbed.

Mondo was born in Omaha, Nebraska, as David Lewis Andrew Rice on May 21, 1947. Educated in parochial schools, Mondo was a young Catholic activist in high school, testifying to the Nebraska legislature about the pernicious influence of pornography on youth. Mondo was a member of several church youth groups and became active against housing and employment discrimination. Mondo led a pray-in at the Douglas County Courthouse to oppose discrimination.

A performance artist, Mondo became active in guitar masses at Holy Family Church and was quick to volunteer for community activities. Mondo began writing for "underground" newspapers and monitored complaints against Omaha police. Mondo's work with welfare rights groups led to his employment at Greater Omaha Community Action as a neighborhood outreach worker.

As a young man, Mondo seemed to be everywhere, doing everything. Then racial riots in Omaha and the 1969 police shooting of fourteen year-old Vivian Strong sharpened Mondo's focus and Mondo joined the Black Panther Party. Serving as an officer in the United Front Against Fascism and later the National Committee to Combat Fascism, Mondo attracted the unwanted attention of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover who ordered Mondo and his colleague Edward Poindexter removed from the streets.

The August 17, 1970 bombing murder of Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr. was the perfect opportunity for FBI agents working under directives of the infamous clandestine COINTELPRO counterintelligence operation. Mondo and Poindexter were blamed for directing fifteen year-old Duane Peak, the confessed bomber. The FBI Laboratory withheld a report on the identity of the anonymous 911 caller that lured Minard to his death. The Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division, in a fierce rivalry with the FBI, processed the evidence and claimed Mondo had dynamite powder in his pants pocket. Unknown to jurors, who never heard the 911 recording, the ATF evidence had been tampered with after Mondo surrendered. An Omaha World-Herald photo of Mondo with his hands, which tested clean, jammed into his pockets at the time of his surrender proves the dynamite particles were added after Mondo was in custody.

Mondo and Poindexter were convicted after an unfair trial in 1971. Mondo appealed to federal court and U.S. District Judge Warran Urbom ruled Mondo's rights had been violated and ordered a new trial or Mondo's release. A three-judge federal appellate panel upheld the order for a new trial. However, the United States Supreme Court used Mondo's case to restrict prisoner appeal rights and retroactively applied the restriction on Mondo. Justice William Brennan called the decision "profoundly disturbing."

Mondo's case returned the Nebraska Supreme Court that ruled Mondo ran out of time to appeal while he was in federal court. Mondo never received the new trial four federal judges had ordered. Mondo's last appeal to the Nebraska Supreme Court was denied without even a written decision.

Mondo was repeatedly recommended for parole back in the mid-1990's but was denied eligibility by the Pardon Board. A sticking point in Mondo's efforts for freedom was his refusal to admit to any role in the Minard murder.

While in prison, Mondo gained the respect of inmates and guards alike. Mondo abandoned Christianity and became a Muslim. Finally, Mondo evolved to his own religious views best described as an agnostic pagan and adopted a vegetarian diet. Mondo painted and wrote poetry, essays and plays and while in prison wrote several books.

Mondo was a mentor to many prisoners over the years as he tried to move them from a life of crime to one of commitment to community. Mondo edited the Harambee Flame, a prison journal of his pan-African beliefs and philosophy.

"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," explained Mondo. "My name basically means wild, natural man-child of the sun in four African languages."

Wopshitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa and Ed Poindexter, now called the Omaha Two, have been in prison forty-five long years. Failed by the justice system, Mondo was not bitter. Mondo's body was caged but his mind was free:

"Today, too many of our young people—in particular, males—are slaves to guns, slaves to violence, slaves to the idea that their African lives aren't worth anything, slaves to the idea that their lives aren't worth

living. Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to counter the messages being delivered to our children and youth by school curricula, television, movies, video games, the music industry, and other institutions that are making slaves of our youth to violence, materialism, etc. Today, we should be reflecting on what to do to free ourselves from the invisible chains that bind our heads and spirit.”

**March 13<sup>th</sup> - "When It Gets To This Point" (the last poem written by Mondo we Langa)**

Michael Brown?

I had never heard of him  
had never heard of anything he'd done  
before the news of his death came  
whoever he might have become  
whatever he might have achieved  
had he lived longer  
not been riddled lifeless by  
bullets from Darren Wilson's gun  
and crumpled on the pavement of a ferguson street  
for more than four hours in  
the heat of that august day  
and before  
I'd never known of Trayvon Martin  
had known nothing of who he was  
until I learned of his demise  
and cause of death  
a bullet to the chest  
George Zimmerman, the shooter  
a badge-less, pretend police  
with a pistol  
and fear of the darkness  
Trayvon's darkness  
and after a while  
the pictures, the names,  
the circumstances  
run together  
like so much colored laundry in the wash  
that bleeds on whites  
was it Eric Garner or Tamir Rice  
who was twelve but seen as twenty  
Hulk Hogan or The Hulk  
with demonic eyes it was said  
who shrank the cop in ferguson  
into a five-year-old who  
had to shoot  
and John Crawford the third  
in a walmart store aisle  
an air rifle in his hands he'd picked up  
from the shelf  
and held in the open  
in an open-carry state  
was it John or someone else  
killed supposedly by mistake

in a dark stairwell  
I know Akai Gurley fell  
I hadn't heard of him before  
nor of Amadou Diallo or Sean Bell  
prior to their killings  
which of these two took slugs in the greater number  
I don't recall  
my memory is too encumbered  
with the names  
of so many before and since  
the frequent news reports of  
non-arrests, non-indictments,  
non-true bills  
and duplicitous presentations by "experts in the field"  
the consultants put out front  
to explain away  
that which is so often plain as day  
to coax and convince us that we're the ones  
who can't see straight and  
can't hear clearly  
who are the ones replacing facts with spin  
to mislead and mystify  
as the beatings and the chokings and shootings  
of our boys and men  
by these wrong arms of the law  
proceed in orderly fashion  
before the sometimes sad  
sometimes angry faces of  
our uncertain  
our hesitant  
disbelief.

### **14 Mar - Certain Days Call For Submissions**

*A call for art and article submissions on sustaining movements for the 2017 Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar.*

#### **MORE:**

Deadline: May 15, 2016

The *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar* collective ([www.certaindays.org](http://www.certaindays.org)) is releasing its 16<sup>th</sup> calendar in the Fall of 2016. Over the years, we've turned our attention to various themes: grassroots organizing, resisting repression, and visions of justice. The theme for 2017 is focused on what it takes to sustain our movements.

We are looking for 12 works of art and 12 short articles to feature in the calendar, which hangs in more than 2,000 homes, workplaces, prison cells, and community spaces around the world.

We encourage contributors to submit both new and existing work.

## **THEME GUIDELINES**

Social justice movements face formidable challenges, from state repression to internal conflict to organizer burnout. Yet there are movements that manage to thrive and grow over time, welcoming new participants and contributing to ongoing struggles.

What do these sustained movements have in common? What does it take to keep on keepin' on, over many years and hurdles? What groups can we look to and learn from as we try to find ways to strengthen our work? What lessons can we draw from liberation movement history? How can we envision our work spanning several generations?

Artists - is there a visual way to represent sustained struggles over time? What visual images from movement history prompt us to engage with these questions? (Both new and archival works are welcome).

As one of our editors Herman Bell writes, “[We need to] review the way we, the progressive community, do our business: In other words, review how we organize, how we elicit support from other groups in support of our particular issue(s); what do we say to them, how do we foster stronger support from them and they from us.”

We welcome both artwork and articles that explore this theme.

We encourage submissions from prisoners – please forward to any prison-based artists and writers.

## **FORMAT GUIDELINES**

### ***ARTICLES:***

1. 500-600 words max. If you submit a longer piece, we will have to edit for length.
2. Please include a suggested title.

### ***ART:***

1. The calendar is 11” tall by 8.5” wide, so art with a ‘portrait’ orientation is preferred. Some pieces may be printed with a border, so it need not fit those dimensions exactly.
2. We are interested in a diversity of media (paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, computer-designed graphics, collage, etc).
3. The calendar is printed in color and we prefer color images.

## **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

1. Send your submissions by May 15, 2016 to [info@certaindays.org](mailto:info@certaindays.org).
2. **ARTISTS:** Please send images smaller than 10 MB. You can send a low-res file as a submission, but if your piece is chosen, we will need a high-res version of it to print (at least 300 dpi preferably 600).
3. You may send as many submissions as you like.

Chosen artists and authors will receive a free copy of the calendar and promotional postcards.

Because the calendar is a fundraiser, we cannot offer money to contributors.

## **ABOUT THE CALENDAR**

The *Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar* is a joint fundraising and educational project between outside organizers in Montreal, Toronto, and New York, in partnership with three political prisoners being held in maximum-security prisons in New York State: David Gilbert, Robert Seth Hayes and Herman Bell. We are committed to doing work grounded in an anti-imperialist and anti-racist perspective. We work in solidarity with anti-colonial struggles, Political Prisoners and the rights of

undocumented citizens and migrants. We are queer- and trans- liberationist. We raise awareness of Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War in the United States and abroad, many of whom are now in their fourth decade of imprisonment. People on the streets should understand the history of today's social justice movements and how that history is linked to solidarity for PPs/POWs. In addition to building that historical awareness, we emphasize the ongoing involvement and continued commitment of PPs/POWs in these same movements.

Proceeds from the calendar will be used for direct support work for Political Prisoners and anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles in the U.S. and Canada.

### **19 Mar - Rally against Donald Trump March 19th**

**WHAT:** Street Demonstration

**WHEN:** 12:00pm, Saturday, March 19

**WHERE:** Columbus Circle, NYC

**COST:** FREE

**MORE:**

The first of many demonstrations and actions against Trump from our friends Cosmopolitan Antifascists.

Donald J. Trump has made headlines in recent months with his divisive rhetoric, hate speech, and extremist plans to "make America great again". We, in fact, believe this will do the opposite to this nation. Trump's policy threatens many of us in the Latino, Muslim, LGBT, and other communities. These policies and this type of speech has no place in this country, and certainly does not have a place in the city that Trump grew his empire in, which is considered such a melting pot and home for many of the same characters Trump continues to wage war on. Join us at Columbus Circle as we march to Trump Tower as we say no to hate, no to divisiveness, no to fascist policies, and most importantly, no to Donald J. Trump.

### **20 Mar - The Role of Culture in Social Change**

**WHAT:** Panel Discussion

**WHEN:** 2:00pm, Sunday, March 20

**WHERE:** Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Auditorium, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn Museum - 200 Eastern Parkway Brooklyn, New York 11238

**COST:** Free with Museum admission.

**MORE:**

An intergenerational conversation among activists from the 1960s to today, from the Weather Underground to #BlackLivesMatter. The discussion will focus on the central role the arts have played in many social movements. From Miriam Makeba, Pete Seeger, and Emory Douglas to Kendrick Lamar, Beyoncé, Eugene Jarecki, and Usher, artists, past and present, contribute to social justice efforts.

Come hear a compelling discussion with Kathleen Cleaver, law professor and former Communications Secretary for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense; Monica Dennis, New York Organizer for Black Lives Matter; Jamal Joseph, filmmaker, author, professor at Columbia University School of the Arts, and youngest member of the Panther 21; Carmen Perez, Executive Director of the Justice League; and Laura Whitehorn, organizer for RAPP, former editor of Poz magazine, and former member of the Weather Underground. The discussion will be moderated by Soffiyah Elijah, Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York. Part of the ongoing Sackler Center series "States of Denial: The Illegal Incarceration of Women, Children, and People of Color."

## **20 Mar - Benefit for Rojava w/ Brian Chippendale & Greg Saunier, SHARABI, and Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog**

**WHAT:** Benefit for the Ishtar Women & Family Center in Kobane, Rojava

**WHEN:** 9:00pm, Sunday, March 20

**WHERE:** Trans-Pecos - 9-15 Wyckoff Avenue, New York, New York 11385

**COST:** \$12-25 sliding scale at the door.

### **MORE:**

Please help spread the word! this is a crazy lineup of amazing experimental, post-rock, and klezmer musicians that you'll never see on the same stage again!

Hosted by Rojava Solidarity NYC: [supportrojava.org/solidarity](http://supportrojava.org/solidarity)

### **ABOUT THE ISHTAR WOMEN & FAMILY CENTER**

The Ishtar Women & Family Center is located in Kobanî, Rojava. It is the first women and family shelter in the war-torn Canton of Kobane. It is housed in an old school. It is collectively managed by the participants who are women who are either fleeing domestic abuse situations or have been widowed by the war. The Center not only provides shelter but also has various projects to create economic autonomy for the women. They also partner with the Kobane Academies to provide essential educational courses.

### **ABOUT ROJAVA**

The world watched in horror last autumn as the ruthless Islamic State (commonly referred to as ISIS) marched on the small city of Kobanî in northern Syria. No one expected the city to survive the attack. But it did. Mixed-gender militias with small arms held one of the most feared armies in the world at bay. The smoke cleared, and Kobanî still stood. And western media attention moved on. The YPG and the YPJ, the militias who held the city, were fighting for their lives and their land. But even more than that, they were fighting to defend their revolution: the Rojava Revolution. When the Assad regime began to fall, Kurds and other ethnic minorities in northern Syria carved out pockets of liberty and started one of the greatest social experiments the world has ever seen. Based on their own history of struggle and on the writings of social ecologist Murray Bookchin, the people of Rojava have developed an anti-state and anti-capitalist way of life. It's a way of life that values feminism, direct democracy, ecological stewardship, and ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism.

And right now, 2.5 million people are trying their hardest to defend their revolution against ISIS attacks from the south and an international trade embargo ruthlessly enforced by Turkey to the north. Between language barriers, cultural barriers, and an international trade embargo, it can be hard to understand what is happening there or how to be in solidarity with a struggle that may seem far away. We hope that this benefit can be a bridge, even for one night, where we come together in solidarity with the people of Rojava, and celebrate their continuing success in the face of so much terror and violence.

All Ages, full bar with 21+ ID. Advance tickets: <http://www.ticketfly.com/event/1120765>

9:30 PM Marc Ribot's Ceramic Dog <http://marcribot.com/ceramic-dog>

10:15 PM SHARABI w/ Frank London & Deep Singh <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPN0IshFu8>

11:30 PM Brian Chippendale (Lightning Bolt) & Greg Saunier (Deerhoof) + special guests. First show since releasing their LP/video/pitchfork documentary! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muTzT4pfxlk>

Images from Rojava by Joey L.

<https://www.joeyl.com/blog/all/post/guerrilla-fighters-of-kurdistan>