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Updates for April 26<sup>th</sup>

## **29 Mar – “I Do Not Care to Finish Reading This Mediocre Kissinger Biography By Niall Ferguson” by Barrett Brown**

*Somehow the latest in the series of “The Barrett Brown Review of Arts and Letters and Prison” slipped past us. Please read it now.*

### **MORE:**

I'd made it 375 pages into Niall Ferguson's newish first volume of a planned two-volume life of Henry Kissinger before receiving in the mail a copy of Greg Grandin's review of same, in which the author of last year's excellent Kissinger's Shadow sums up Ferguson's tome as follows: “The irony is that it has been Kissinger's sharpest critics who have most appreciated his acute sense of self, who have treated him, however disapprovingly, as a fully dimensional individual with a churning, complex psyche. In contrast, Ferguson, tone deaf to Kissinger's darker notes, condemns him to a literary fate worse than anything that Hitchens could have meted out: Kissinger, in this book, is boring.”

This is about as true a thing as has ever been written about any other thing, so much so that I feel both morally and professionally justified in simply abandoning this charmless book unfinished despite having promised to review it at the end of my last column (I would have figured out some other convenient justification for this regardless, but it's always good to be able to show your work). Nor am I being insulting to Ferguson simply because I disagree with the pro-Kissinger stance he's taken as the fellow's authorized biographer and ideological admirer; two years ago I reviewed Kissinger's own 1,200-page memoir, White House Years, which, though likewise betraying something of a pro-Kissinger stance, was also undeniably compelling and well-written. And while Kissinger is clever enough that one often needs to sort through a great deal of raw material in order to do a proper job of making fun of him, with Ferguson the threshold is somewhat ... lower. Here, then, is my review of Ferguson's 33-page introduction to Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist.

“A plainly unhinged woman writing as ‘Brice Taylor’ insists that, when she was a child, Kissinger turned her into a ‘mind-controlled slave,’ repeatedly making her eat her alphabet cereal in reverse order and taking her on the ‘It's a Small World’ ride at Disneyland,” writes Niall Ferguson, Harvard's Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History and a Hoover Institution senior fellow, who also scrutinizes Lyndon LaRouche's claim that Kissinger is a British agent and David Icke's assertion that he's a reptilian shape-changer from the lower fourth dimension before concluding, “No rational people take such nonsense seriously. But the same cannot be said for the allegations made by conspiracy theorists of the left, who are a great deal more influential.” The conspiracy theorists of the left, it seems, include not only Oliver Stone but also Howard Zinn and Hunter S. Thompson.

Before things get totally out of hand, as they're clearly about to, keep in mind that Ferguson was chosen by Kissinger to do this biography 10 years ago, which is to say that Ferguson had a decade to come up with some way of depicting the great bulk of anti-Kissinger sentiment as not only misguided but also malicious and at any rate beyond the pale of American political discourse as usually conducted, and that what follows is nonetheless the best that he could do.

Back to the text:

In his People's History of the United States, Howard Zinn argues that Kissinger's policies in Chile were intended at least in part to serve the economic interests of International Telephone and Telegraph. In place of evidence, such diatribes tend to offer gratuitous insult. According to Zinn, Kissinger “surrendered

himself with ease to the princes of war and destruction.” In their *Untold History of the United States*, the film director Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick refer to Kissinger as a “psychopath” (admittedly quoting Nixon). The doyen of “gonzo” journalism, Hunter S. Thompson, called him a “slippery little devil, a world-class hustler with a thick German accent and a very keen eye for weak spots at the top of the power structure” — adding, for good measure, “pervert.”

So Ferguson promises us influential left-wing conspiracy theorists, which we’re to understand are inherently silly things to be, as if one is not forced into theorizing about conspiracies when one studies a man who conspired to secretly carpet bomb Cambodia, and who did so under the aegis of a presidential administration in which was discussed the viability of assassinating a troublesome newspaper columnist by having LSD applied to his steering wheel.

Still, every allegation must be considered on its merits — something we are unable to do in the case of the single conspiracy theory Ferguson attributes to anyone by name, an allegation supposedly made by Howard Zinn, as Ferguson does not see fit to actually quote it for us. But he does find the space to quote Zinn deploying a disapproving metaphor to describe Kissinger’s decision to go to work for a man he himself had declared not long before to be unfit for the presidency. This, in Ferguson’s accounting, constitutes a “gratuitous insult” on Zinn’s part, whereas referring to another historian’s words as a “diatribe” without having the decency to even reproduce them is presumably not gratuitous at all.

If one bothers to check Ferguson’s footnotes, one comes across the first of several ethical oddities with which his introduction is dotted — for one finds that the “princes of war and destruction” remark is actually from another book written years after *People’s History*, and thus can hardly be said to constitute an especially good example of an insult offered “in place of evidence,” the place for evidence generally being in the vicinity of the allegation (but we’ll look at the actual evidence in a bit). We are not treated to any better examples down paragraph, where Ferguson quotes Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick quoting Nixon insulting Kissinger — out of bounds, gentlemen, out of bounds! — without this time deigning even to summarize what allegations the two of them may have leveled at Kissinger to get them thrown in with the likes of Crazy Old Howard Zinn. Hunter S. Thompson makes an appearance as well, unencumbered by anything approaching a reason for being included in what was originally billed as a paragraph detailing unfounded conspiracy theories directed against Kissinger by influential leftists; by now Ferguson seems to have resorted merely to trying to prove that some on the left have insulted Kissinger, or at least quoted Nixon insulting him. To Ferguson’s credit, he does indeed prove this.

Ferguson himself may be aware that he’s promised more than he can deliver here; it may also have occurred to him that he’s just accused several people of failing to back up their allegations with evidence while he himself fails to back up this very allegation with evidence and that this sort of thing might be frowned upon in some circles, if not necessarily at the Hoover Institution. But rather than just deleting this paragraph due to one or more of these several distinct problems, which each on its own makes it worthy of deletion, Ferguson decides to just make it longer. “One left-of-center website recently accused Kissinger of having been somehow involved in the anthrax attacks of September 2001, when anthrax spores were mailed to various media and Senate offices, killing five people.”

Here we have finally been provided with something on the order of an implausible conspiracy theory emanating from the left. And we will be satisfied with this so long as we are willing to overlook the fact that Ferguson promised us that the bearers would be “influential” and yet here cannot bring himself to name the author or even the outlet, presumably in hopes that we won’t realize that both outlet and author are somewhat obscure and that this is merely the same manner of accusation that can be found on any number of minor websites about any number of powerful men.

If we check Ferguson’s endnotes again, we find that he’s referring to a piece by a certain Kevin Barrett titled “Arrest Kissinger for Both 9/11s.” If we check the URL he provides, which comes in the form of a blind bit.ly link-shortener, we find that it’s a dead link. Fair enough; perhaps it’s been taken down since then. If we simply Google the title and author (or have someone else do it for us because we’re in prison),

we discover that the piece in question has appeared on a couple of sites, the most mainstream of which would seem to be [presstv.ir](http://presstv.ir), itself based on an Iranian host. If we go so far as to read the article, we find that the author does indeed accuse Kissinger of perpetrating the anthrax attacks. But he also accuses him of involvement in “the explosive demolition of the World Trade Center, and massacre of nearly 3,000 people in New York and Washington in 2001,” going on to denounce “Kissinger’s complicity in the coup d’état of September 11, 2001” and noting in passing that the former secretary of state was involved in “helping design the 9/11 shock-and-awe psychological warfare operation.”

One might ask why it is that Ferguson neglected to mention that this “left-of-center” website that’s supposedly mainstream enough to be worthy of inclusion in a paragraph with Zinn and Thompson actually went so far as to accuse Kissinger of involvement in 9/11 itself. After all, that would seem to be the smoking-gun proof that Kissinger really is subject to unsubstantiated allegations from influential leftists, an argument that Ferguson is plainly desperate to make. If we’re feeling gentlemanly, we might allow for the possibility that Ferguson is incapable of understanding what he’s reading — but then that would be something of a knock at Harvard, would it not? So wouldn’t it be even more polite to conclude, as is obvious anyway, that he left this out lest we realize that whatever site he’s taken pains not to name for us isn’t at all “influential” or even mainstream? Because, after all, Harvard?

As a sort of professional courtesy to himself, Ferguson pretends that his case has now been made. “All this vitriol is at first sight puzzling,” he writes presently. A page later, after listing Kissinger’s various awards won and offices held and treaties negotiated, he invites us to ponder with him: “How, then, are we to explain the visceral hostility that the name Henry Kissinger arouses?” That there is to the contrary nothing puzzling about anything Ferguson has shown us and no degree of hostility to be found in connection with the name of this particular American political figure that cannot be found associated with dozens of others of similar prominence becomes even more, rather than less, evident to the extent that one’s been paying attention to Ferguson’s own examples. Hunter S. Thompson famously used similar language about everyone from Hubert Humphrey to his personal acquaintances. Oliver Stone is probably not best known for his reluctance to accuse public officials of involvement in criminal conspiracies (not that we’ve even been told what, if anything, he’s claimed about Kissinger, but whatever). And Howard Zinn has of course been a consistent critic of the American government’s amoral conduct abroad. Indeed, until his death a few years ago, Zinn was probably one of the nation’s most effective mobilizers of popular opposition to the ends-justifies-the-means-and-oops-we-fucked-up-the-ends-too foreign policy establishment that’s so perfectly represented not only by Kissinger, but by such quasi-intellectuals as Ferguson as well. Perhaps this is why Ferguson felt the need to lie about him.

For Zinn did not, in fact, argue that “Kissinger’s policies in Chile were intended at least in part to serve the economic interests of International Telephone and Telegraph,” as Ferguson claims he did, nor does he even imply it. What he actually wrote in *People’s History*, a copy of which I had sent to the prison from which I now currently serve as an unpaid fact-checker for Penguin, apparently, was this: “And in 1970, an ITT director, John McCone, who also had been head of the CIA, told Henry Kissinger, secretary of state, and Richard Helms, CIA director, that ITT was willing to give \$1 million to help the U.S. government in its plans to overthrow the Allende government in Chile.” Elsewhere: “It was also learned from the investigation that the CIA — with the collusion of a secret Committee of Forty headed by Henry Kissinger — had worked to ‘destabilize’ the Chilean government headed by Salvadore Allende, a Marxist who had been elected president in one of the rare free elections in Latin America. ITT, with large interests in Chile, played a part in this operation.”

As these are the book’s only two references to ITT’s involvement in the Chile coup, and as Zinn does not in any way “argue” that those plans were originally composed or thereafter modified with any view to ITT’s economic interests whatsoever, and also taking into account that Ferguson refrained from actually quoting Zinn on this matter while having earlier given David Icke and his friends plenty of space in which to accuse Kissinger of being a shape-shifting lizard mage from the lower fourth dimension who forces children to eat cereal in an incorrect fashion, it’s difficult to avoid the conclusion that Ferguson has chosen to simply lie

about another historian who, being dead, is not in a position to defend himself (not that I'm angry about it; on the contrary, this was my original excuse for not finishing the book).

The alternative explanation, again, is that Ferguson is incapable of understanding his sources. But, again, Harvard.

Harvard!

But what about the two assertions that Zinn actually does make? Are they provided without evidence, as Ferguson would have us believe? Not at all. Both of Zinn's brief references to ITT and Chile, including his single reference to ITT and Chile and Kissinger, are clearly indicated in the text as being drawn from the various post-Watergate congressional investigations into the CIA and the Nixon administration; indeed, both of these Zinn quotes appear in passages that discuss the results of those investigations. The reader may have noticed, for instance, that one of those selections that Ferguson refrains from quoting begins, "It was also learned from the investigation that ..." Zinn, obviously, is not "arguing" anything at all, much less putting forth some novel and outlandish "conspiracy theory"; as with the rest of the book, he's drawing upon the public record — everything Zinn discusses pertaining to the overthrow of Allende, along with much else, can now be found among various online government archives.

At any rate, the Senate's findings that ITT offered through McCone to assist in the overthrow of Allende didn't entail any accusation to the effect that the overthrow itself was actually intended even in part to assist ITT; regardless of the extent to which any such offers were motivated by the firm's economic interests, or ideology, or just the pure joy of overthrowing a democratically elected government, no one involved accused anyone on the planning side, much less Kissinger in particular, of actually tailoring the plot to assist the firm's bottom line. The only person to have brought this up is Ferguson, in order to portray it as something made up by Zinn; for everyone else, the truth is sufficient.

So Ferguson has falsely accused Zinn of having made a supposedly outlandish claim about Kissinger, whereas in fact, Zinn was closely paraphrasing a Church Committee report published by the U.S. Senate, and implies that Zinn insulted Kissinger rather than providing the necessary evidence for his claim, whereas the "insult" was actually delivered in an entirely different book, and whereas of course no evidence is necessary because Zinn is merely relating an account of events derived from an official inquiry.

Even aside from this instance of outright libel, which has at least the pragmatic justification of being not easily detectable by the sort of toy fascist, National Review-subscribing scum who would presumably make up the central audience for an authorized biography of Henry Kissinger as written by a Hoover Institution scholar and who would be unlikely to have copies of Howard Zinn books lying around with which to check up on Ferguson's claims, this whole haphazard bid to portray Kissinger as being subject to outsized criticism relative to his actual conduct is also remarkable for how it occasionally collapses even without any need for research or in fact any particular knowledge whatsoever beyond the understanding that if X applies to A, B, and C, then X is not particular to B, and does not tell us anything about B by which we might differentiate it from A and C.

Ferguson himself notes, for instance, that David Icke's surreal allegations encompass pretty much everyone of socio-political prominence; Icke's "List of Famous Satanists," Ferguson writes, "includes not only Kissinger but also the Astors, Bushes, Clintons, DuPonts, Habsburgs, Kennedys, Rockefellers, Rothschilds, and the entire British royal family — not to mention Tony Blair, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Joseph Stalin. (The comedian Bob Hope also makes the list)." So why is it remarkable that Kissinger should be included? And what's the point of bringing up Lyndon LaRouche's allegation that Kissinger works for the British? Search LaRouche's name on YouTube and you'll find, among other things, a 1980s TV promo in which he denounces Walter Mondale as "not just a KGB agent in the ordinary sense" but also "wholly owned by the left wing of the Socialist International and the grain cartel interests." If you're wondering why I happen to have that memorized, the answer is that this was one of several amusing political clips I was in the habit of watching once a week or so prior to my arrest; the funny part is

that if Mondale were indeed under someone's control, the "grain cartel interests" is exactly the sort of lame-ass shit that he'd be fronting. Anyway, it's none of your business.

Having finished doing whatever it is that he thinks he's just done, Ferguson at last makes an effort to engage Kissinger's critics on the complex issue of whether or not Kissinger bears any responsibility for his actions. He now lurches into an overview of Christopher Hitchens's 2001 book *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, in which Hitchens "went so far as to accuse Kissinger of 'war crimes and crimes against humanity in Indochina, Chile, Argentina, Cyprus, East Timor, and several other places' (in fact, the only other place discussed in his book is Bangladesh)." Apparently Hitchens didn't think to just throw Hunter S. Thompson in there to round out his list, but then the old heretic apparently had worse problems than his well-known lack of imagination: "Hitchens was a gifted polemicist; his abilities as a historian are more open to question." It's the reverse with Ferguson, who's undoubtedly an accomplished sorter-through of archives but who cannot seem to make even an exceedingly dishonest argument come out in his own favor.

But Ferguson isn't done making dishonest arguments, and I'm not done making fun of them; we've really only covered three or four pages so far, after all. Next time we'll take a look at how Ferguson handles Hitchens and certain other Kissinger critics. (SPOILER: He does it dishonestly.)

Harvard!

Awkward Questions of the Day, for the Hoover Institution and/or Harvard University to Ask Niall Ferguson About His Various False and Misleading Statements Taken From a Single Paragraph of His Introduction to His Mediocre Kissinger Biography:

What was the website to which you linked in your bibliography that hosted the article "Arrest Kissinger for Both 9/11s"?

Why did you describe the website in question specifically as "left-of-center"?

Why did you refrain from quoting that article?

Did you fail to notice that the article — which, again, was titled "Arrest Kissinger for Both 9/11s" — accused Kissinger of perpetrating 9/11?

If you didn't notice this noteworthy thing, do you think it's possible that you misread other sources as well in the course of researching this biography?

If you did indeed notice this, why did you inform your readers that this article accused Kissinger of involvement in the anthrax attacks that killed five people, while refraining from informing them that it also accused him of involvement in the September 11 attacks that killed 3,000 people?

Do you now agree that you made a "mistake" in accusing Zinn of accusing Kissinger of basing his Chile policies in part on ITT's economic interests?

If not, what particular passage in *A People's History of the United States* would you cite that could most reasonably be interpreted as making that accusation?

If you do agree that you were mistaken, are you concerned that your book might include other serious errors in which individuals are mistakenly accused of serious misconduct?

Why did you refrain from quoting from the book in question?

Do you realize how angry Henry Kissinger is going to be when he learns that you resorted to deception in the course of trying to achieve your objectives? (NOTE: THIS IS A JOKE QUESTION, DO NOT REALLY ASK IT.)

(Make up your own question here! Maybe ask him about the time when he misrepresented some figures in a 2012 *Newsweek* article and he got called on it by a number of his colleagues but suffered zero consequences, and whether or not this emboldened him to make further misrepresentations, and whether maybe the fact that he's nonetheless managed to maintain his position at the heights of establishment academia is perhaps indicative of a larger problem in American public life! Or whatever! Be creative!)

**11 Apr - Leonard Peltier: For Freedom's Sake**

*With less than a year left in President Obama's term in office, the International Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee (ILPDC) has a great deal of work to do to secure the freedom of Leonard Peltier.*

**MORE:**

The reality is that much of that work cannot be completed without your active participation, as well as financial support. Please give what you can. Donate online at <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/home/donate/> or send your check or money order made payable to the ILPDC to P.O. Box 24, Hillsboro, OR 97123.

Due to your contributions, we've been able to initiate the following projects this year.

Resource distribution—We developed a business card sized handout with information for how supporters can ask President Obama to grant clemency to Leonard Peltier. Our nearly 25,000 card supply has been exhausted and we need to re-order. Quantities of these cards have been distributed to U.S. supporters free of charge at a cost to the ILPDC of \$3,000.

Postcard drive (See <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/home/store/send-a-postcard-to-the-white-house/>)—The drive has been hugely successful thus far with thousands of cards being signed online and over 12, 000 post cards distributed nationwide in the past nearly 3 months. We will need to reorder these cards within the next 6 weeks or so. Distribution of the cards has been done free of charge to U.S. supporters at a cost to the ILPDC of \$5,000, to date.

Soon an option to place bulk orders of a one-page fact sheet will be offered to supporters—again, free of charge. We will incur printing costs, of course, as well as postage for each order filled.

We hope to make the above resources available to non-U.S. supporters, as well. However, thus far and much to our dismay, the international shipping costs have been cost-prohibitive.

We also are planning events including a vigil and outreach in Washington, DC, to coincide with the annual White House Tribal Nations Conference; and an end-of-year series of events (possibly continuing into early 2017). Other strategies to advance the clemency campaign are being planned, as well.

Attorney fees are still owed (roughly \$30K) and, as always, there will be expenses incurred by attorneys and other Peltier representatives as they travel to Washington, DC, to influence a clemency decision, not to mention for trips to Coleman, Florida, for meetings with Leonard. Peltier representatives will also travel to important meetings and events to continue gaining active support for Leonard's freedom. As it was in 2015, travel will be a major expense for the ILPDC this year.

Ten percent overhead is generally considered to be an excellent level for an organization such as the ILPDC. So you know, the Committee's overhead is the lowest it's been for a long while—8 percent—and we continually look for ways to decrease our costs. Why? So that the majority of funds collected can be devoted to winning Leonard's freedom.

There's a myth about the ILPDC being wealthy. You've heard the gossip and false claims of Leonard's detractors. The Committee is not now and has never been wealthy and, contrary to what some believe, celebrity supporters don't generally donate to the ILPDC. For 40 years, Leonard's defense committee has been dependent on your generosity. Frankly, YOU are the reason Leonard's hope for freedom is still alive. Thank you.

We hope we can continue to count on your support. Donate online at <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/home/donate/> or send your check or money order made payable to the ILPDC to our receiving and distribution office: P.O. Box 24, Hillsboro, OR 97123. The ILPDC headquarters and program office is located in Albuquerque, NM, where our finances are managed by the

Indigenous Rights Center, a 501(c)(3) organization and fiscal sponsor. Your donation may be tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Again, thank you for your support and all you do on behalf of Leonard Peltier.

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> - Call to Action: Peltier Health Crisis**

As you know, some months ago, Leonard was diagnosed with an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA), a life threatening condition. How dangerous is an AAA? We invite you to read the TESTIMONY OF M. PIERRE BANCEL, who suffered a full aortic dissection.

To date, Leonard's condition is merely being "monitored." This is unacceptable. Leonard needs treatment now!

Do remember that Leonard is dealing with a bureaucracy like no other. It is our job to keep the pressure on the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to ensure that he gets timely and quality treatment of the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm.

Do please continue your efforts on Leonard's behalf and keep pressure on the BOP! Demand that Leonard be transferred to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota without delay.

Please visit <http://www.bop.gov/inmates/concerns.jsp>. Make reference to Leonard Peltier #89637-132 and USP Coleman I. Voice your concern about Leonard's medical treatment, and let the federal Bureau of Prisons know that the world is watching. We demand that Leonard receive the best possible care, that is, at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota.

Please also call the below telephone numbers. You can send emails to selected elements of the BOP too, but your message may result in a canned response from the BOP.

As you have perhaps discovered for yourself, for some time now the BOP has put a series of road blocks in the way of supporters when it comes to easily advocating for Leonard. This means that you should consider sending a letter by snail mail. But to get a letter to the BOP quickly, visit:

<https://faxzero.com> (US) or  
<https://faxzero.com/international> (International).

Send a letter via fax to each of the below elements of the BOP:

Warden Tamyra Jarvis  
USP Coleman I  
846 NE 54th Terrace  
Sumterville, Florida 33521  
Fax: 352.689.6012  
Telephone: 352.689.6000  
Email: [COA/PublicInformation@bop.gov](mailto:COA/PublicInformation@bop.gov)

Helen J. Marberry  
RO Southeast Regional Office  
3800 Camp Creek Parkway SW  
Building 2000  
Atlanta, Georgia 30331  
Fax: 678.686.1229  
Telephone: 678.686.1200  
Email: [SERO/ExecAssistant@bop.gov](mailto:SERO/ExecAssistant@bop.gov)

Thomas R. Kane, Ph.D.

Acting Director  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
320 First Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20534  
Fax: 202.514.6620  
Telephone: 202.307.3198

Be respectful, but firm. The situation is life threatening and Leonard is counting on us.

Again, thank you for all you do on behalf of Leonard Peltier.

### **11 Apr - Jay Chase pleaded guilty**

*On April 11, Jay Chase pleaded guilty and will receive a sentence of one year in the Illinois Department of Corrections. More details will be forthcoming.*

#### **MORE:**

#### **April 12<sup>th</sup> - Nato protester's prison term extended for throwing human waste at guard**

by Renée Feltz (*The Guardian*)

A 30-year-old Illinois prisoner diagnosed with a degenerative disease that destroys higher brain functioning will spend at least two more years behind bars for conduct experts say deserves treatment instead of disciplinary action.

Jared Chase was sentenced on Monday to an additional year in prison for squirting a shampoo bottle of his human waste at a correctional officer. At the time of the assault in 2013, he was in jail facing state terrorism charges related to protests against the 2012 Nato summit in Chicago.

In a high-profile trial in 2014 prosecutors argued that Chase and two friends planned to attack police stations, the mayor's house, and Barack Obama's campaign headquarters. Defense attorneys countered that the men were entrapped by two first-time undercover police officers who plied them with alcohol. Recorded audio of their drunken bravado was used in court. The terrorism charges failed to stick, and the three were instead convicted of felony possession of an incendiary device – four molotov cocktails made from beer bottles – and misdemeanor mob action.

Prosecutors sought a maximum punishment of 14 years, but judge Thaddeus Wilson sentenced the three to between five, six and eight years. Chase got the longest sentence after a correctional officer testified during the punishment phase of the trial that he had attacked him in jail – the same incident for which Chase was sentenced on Monday. The other men served half their time. Chase is the only one still in prison.

Dr Kathleen Shannon, an associate professor of neurology at Rush Medical College, testified during the 2014 trial that Chase had physical and cognitive signs of Huntington's disease, and that a genetic test had confirmed the diagnosis. The disease is hereditary and marked early on by personality changes, irritability, impulsiveness and impaired judgment. Physical symptoms appear later, such as slurred speech, and involuntary, jerky movements known as "chorea".

Shannon met with Chase twice, and testified he had a life expectancy of about 15 years, or a maximum age of about 39. Chase's father died of the disease while his son was awaiting trial.

When Chase appeared in court on Monday he was dressed in a brown jumpsuit worn by inmates in solitary confinement at Pontiac correctional center, a segregated unit packed with inmates who have mental illness. He was thin and struggled to speak. At a court hearing in December he was heavily bruised and explained he had struggled with guards.

Court records show that while in prison, Chase stored his human waste in cartons he hoarded in his cell, and would throw them out into common areas. Chase said in a letter that he acted out when he did not receive the special diet or vitamins prescribed for his disease.

In 2013, Dr Shannon testified that throwing feces and urine at people was “very common” for people with Huntington’s disease, and compared the outbursts to a toddler’s temper tantrum. Those who suffer from the disease often struggle to learn from their mistakes and may be compelled to repeatedly engage in behavior that is not in their best interest. .

A 2015 study by an international team of experts found that neurodegenerative diseases can “cause dysfunction of neural structures involved in judgment, executive function, emotional processing” and “lead to antisocial and criminal behavior”. It noted that while “they are able to understand their actions and sometimes even to verbalize that they were wrong” the patients they observed “lack the inhibitory circuitry in the orbitofrontal, anterior insular, and anterior cingulate cortex to prevent inappropriate behavior”.

It concluded that this made them “particularly vulnerable to legal systems” and that “these individuals should be treated differently by the law.”

Last year Anne Leserman, a social worker and assistant director of community services at Huntington’s Disease Society of America, wrote a letter to prison officials urging better treatment for Chase. She noted that, “in a stressful situation, like one that would be experience in a prison environment, these set of symptoms might be enhanced”.

But instead of prompting his release or additional treatment, Chase’s continued outbursts and resulting stints in solitary confinement have resulted in a loss of one year of “good behavior” time, which means he will serve at least one more year than the usual half-time of his eight-year sentence. His new one-year sentence for assault must be served consecutively.

For Brent Betterly, who traveled with Chase as an activist in the Occupy Wall Street movement and was a co-defendant in the Nato case who has since been released, Monday’s court hearing was “like watching my friend die before my eyes.” he said.

Betterly said Chase appeared to have lost more weight, and twitched repeatedly as he struggled to speak in court.

“Every year they add on is another nail in the coffin, so to speak,” he said. “At this point it is just vindictive what they are doing to Jay.”

### **11 Apr - The most recent one-on-one with Oscar López Rivera**

*Only when it's raining does Oscar López Rivera reject the opportunity to go out to the yard during the only hour in the day he is allowed to be outside the four walls of the prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.*

#### **MORE:**

by José A. Delgado (*El Nuevo Día*)

The rest of the time, it's either freezing cold or insufferably hot. Between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, López Rivera is breathing the fresh air of the U.S. midwest.

López Rivera, who has served 35 years in prison, avoids thinking about how much time he still has left to serve, in spite of the fact that president Barack Obama's term is coming to an end. His petition for executive clemency has been pending for four and a half years.

When he was arrested on May 29, 1981, López Rivera, a former militant in the clandestine group Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), never imagined he would have to spend 35 years in U.S. prisons.

The overwhelming consensus in Puerto Rico and internationally in support of the release of the longest serving political prisoner in American has not managed to accelerate a decision by president Obama.

After turning 73 years old last January, he thinks that under the Obama presidency the opportunity to be granted clemency and return to his hometown of San Sebastián won't happen until after the November elections.

In 1999 López Rivera rejected president Bill Clinton's offer of clemency, mainly because it did not include two of his compañeros. If he had accepted, he would have been freed in 2009.

Once Haydee Beltrán and Carlos Alberto Torres were released, in September of 2011 López Rivera submitted a petition for clemency to president Obama, an admirer of Nelson Mandela's struggles for the liberation of Black South Africans.

López Rivera spoke with El Nuevo Día by telephone on March 31, after the Bureau of Prisons once again denied the request for an in-person interview.

**Who has visited you recently?**

"My brother and Congressman Luis Gutiérrez were here on March 20."

**What did Gutiérrez say about your case?**

"We talked about a plan for activities (in support of his release) for September in Washington, including a concert. We also talked about the Puerto Rican government's debt."

**Other visits?**

"Wilma Reverón – co-chair of the National Hostosiano Independentista Movement (MINH) – and Noel Colón Martínez were also here. My daughter also came the following day."

**Did you think you would end up serving 35 years in prison? It's almost half your life.**

"I do not pay attention to the time. For me the important thing is how I use my time on a daily basis. I do not think about time like a prisoner."

**Did you think you would be in prison for 35 years?**

"I never imagined it would last so long. I thought maybe 20 years at most. But you come to realize how the system functions."

**Will the window for your release be closed after the elections?**

"We can go back to Jimmy Carter. I felt sure that Carter would release the five Nationalist heroes when he became president. First he freed Andrés Figueroa Cordero because of his medical condition. When Rafael Cancel Miranda's father died, he allowed him to attend the funeral. When things like that happen, they give us an idea that the person is sensitive. Bill Clinton never refused to discuss the issue of the release of the political prisoners. With president Obama, it has been different; he always leaves the topic ambiguous."

**The artist Lin Manuel Miranda advocated for your release when he was with president Obama. Different from other occasions, Obama said the issue is on his desk, which leads some to believe that the issue is already out of the Department of Justice.**

"I would not speculate. The president and the first lady admire this young man's creativity. I have never heard of a show that has had such an impact on the media as Hamilton has had."

**He's a special kid.**

"I've followed what he has done since "In the Heights." He seems like a person who is very sure of himself, really creative, and who loves his profession."

**Previously, film maker Tito Román recorded a video of all the gubernatorial candidates supporting your release.**

"These are really creative things that have an impact on the media and touch a lot of people."

**Like many, resident commissioner Pedro Pierluisi thinks that now the opportunity for your release is after the November elections, to soften the possibility of a very bitter partisan battle.**

"He is going to look for the moment when he will be the least compromised and least subject to attack. If he takes up the issue, he will do so after the elections, because he will definitely be strongly attacked. He is a person who doesn't like to be attacked."

**On March 30, president Obama pardoned 61 people with drug convictions. As on other occasions when the president grants clemency, people are bothered that he hasn't released you.**

"I have been able to talk with a lot of people who have been convicted or released. I have seen their documents and the crass injustices done to people who did not deserve to spend so much time in prison. I understand the concern of people in Puerto Rico. It was very frustrating for me as well during the time the Nationalists were in prison."

**Did you watch television coverage of Obama's historic visit to Cuba?**

"It is so very important that he went to Cuba. I think it is going to take some time, but the economic interests very strongly support opening that door. The future is going to be much better."

**It is said that the Cuban government has mentioned your case. Do you think they also called for the release of the Puerto Rican Ana Belén Montes? (Montes was convicted of espionage in 2002 for passing secrets to Cuba when she was an analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)).**

"I am sure that Cuba will raise (the subject) or already raised it in their conversations. What she did was great for Cuba. She is in prison for helping Cuba, and Cuba has been faithful to people who have helped."

**There is much controversy on the Island about the Republican proposal to create a federal fiscal control board, which would limit local autonomy even further.**

"I am completely opposed to it. It is the highest expression of colonialism and a sign of disrespect for the Puerto Rican people. This is a problem created by Washington. The problem is in Washington and Wall Street. The Puerto Rican people should not accept it. No Puerto Rican should doubt that we can solve our problems. To solve the economic problem, Puerto Rico needs to create an internal market."

**All this reflects a lack of political defenselessness.**

"What a fiscal board is going to do is impose conditions that are going to affect even more the economy of Puerto Rico. For Puerto Rico to move ahead there must be an internal market controlled by Puerto Ricans. That board does not at all change the colonial relationship with Washington, but it is also not an economic benefit for Puerto Rico. We need for them to respect the right of self-determination, and we need not to depend on the crumbs Washington gives us. John Paulson is in Puerto Rico because he knows he can extract huge profits. The same can be said for the hedge funds. What Puerto Rico should do is not accept the fiscal board."

**Do you perceive any interest in Washington to resolve the colonial problem?**

"Washington's practice is 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it.'" I do not think they see any reason to make changes in Puerto Rico."

**But could this debate set off a movement for change in the political-juridical relationship with the U.S.?**

"I think there is that possibility, if we get it together. It is a good moment for a change. The colonial relationship has become transparent. The ELA (free associated state) was not created to resolve Puerto Rico's problems. But neither the (federal) legislative or executive branch is willing to take a position on statehood. I think that (resident commissioner) Pierluisi has been honest in this sense. He has said either

annex Puerto Rico or decolonize Puerto Rico. I think there are a lot of people like him in both principal parties."

**In December in the U.S. Supreme Court, the attorney general recognized that the ELA (free associated state) never changed Congress' plenary powers over the Island. Isn't that a vindication of the clandestine independentista movements that struggled against colonialism?**

"Sure. But the problem is that it is still Washington that defines us. But if Washington does not think that (the colonial relationship) is broken, they are not going to move. They are not proposing the creation of a Puerto Rican structure so that Puerto Ricans are the ones who will deal with the problem."

**Will the U.S. Supreme Court, now divided between four liberals and four conservatives, solve it?**

"I do not see how the four conservative justices are going to make a decision that would be beneficial to deal with the status or that they can take a position against Congress."

**You are a fan of the Chicago Cubs in the U.S. major league baseball, and they say this year will be your team's year. Your defenders say this year will also be your year.**

"I hope that early in the season, as they have done, they show that they are a good team. Now I am a Cubs fan even though they are doing poorly."

**What other message would you like to send to Puerto Rico?**

"That people should stay strong, as we are a creative people. If we struggle, we can transform Puerto Rico, decolonize it and create a nation worthy of our people. I have no doubt about it. Puerto Rico has enough human resources to emerge from this crisis."

**April 29<sup>th</sup> - Tweet the following message to President Obama**

@BarackObama I add my voice to the thousands demanding: Free Oscar Lopez Rivera NOW!  
#FreeOscarLopez

## **12 Apr - Eric King Update**

*Everyone in the pod where Eric lives had their mail denied for a few days, with no explanation.*

### **MORE:**

When the prisoners demanded to know what happened to their mail, the guards said that it had either been lost or misplaced. The guards also told them to file grievances if they were unhappy about it. Eric reported that other pods have received mail, so he does not know why his pod is being targeted.

Whatever the reasons (if any), it is unacceptable for this vital lifeline to be cut off. Eric and the other prisoners in his pod need to receive the mail that's sent to them!

If the mailroom insists on "losing" mail, we'll give them more to have to deal with. Please write Eric a letter or postcard today! When you mail it off, email us to let us know that it was mailed so Eric can be expecting it and file grievances for anything that doesn't get to him. Our email address is erickingsupportcrew(a)riseup.net.

**April 14<sup>th</sup> - Mail is back, but there's more...**

Yesterday, April 13th, Eric and the rest of his pod received all the withheld mail.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the last call for support and sent off postcards, and letters to EK. Let's keep those letters and postcards coming though! As always the mail means so much to Eric while he's going through each and every struggle there at CCA Leavenworth.

In addition to the mail finally coming in yesterday it was also the day that Eric filed a grievance in regards to there not being enough chairs for everyone in the pod. This means that some individuals in his pod are

having to actually sit on the floor or on their bed when eating breakfast , lunch , and dinner. Today in response to the grievance, all of the chairs were removed from the pod and it was stated that nobody in the pod has medical clearance to be assigned a chair. Now everyone in the unit is having to eat while on the floor or on their bed. As per usual at CCA, a reasonable request is met with irrational and abusive responses.

This is what EK continues to go through, so let's let him know we are out here thinking of him , and fighting for him.

### **13 Apr - Stiff Resistance is a Human Right!**

*Please read the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement's statement on Mutulu Shakur.*

#### **MORE:**

On April 7, 2016 the US Federal Parole Board continued its blatant violation of the human rights of Dr. Mutulu Shakur by refusing to release him from federal captivity after 30 years of time served even though he is up for "mandatory parole release" based on the guidelines under which he was sentenced. While this is a major blow to our movement we are not surprised by the outcome. This refusal by the board to parole Dr. Shakur is evidence of the continuation of COINTELPRO low intensity warfare on the Black Freedom Movement and on our Freedom fighters held in captivity.

Though the board continues to frame its decision and the entire case as a legal issue of punishment for crimes, it is clear that this recent decision is a political one aimed at disheartening our people, weakening our movement and forcing us to submit to the ongoing colonization and domination of the US empire's will.

It is clear to us that the Parole Board had no intention of seriously considering Dr. Shakur's release on parole after 30 years. After allowing the prosecutor of the case, as well as family and friends of officers killed in the Nyack New York incident from which the case stems, to testify by Skype, the hearing examiner asked several highly charged political questions such as, "What do you mean when you sign off letters and statements with 'stiff resistance'?" He then proceeded to answer his own question, "It sounds like you mean stiff resistance against the Government." The examiner also asked Dr. Shakur, "Why do you think you are a political prisoner?" He then again responded to his own question, "you were convicted of murder and robbery, not political offenses." Based on these and other questions, the examiner declared that because Dr. Shakur does not take responsibility for his so-called crimes and he ends his letters with "Stiff Resistance" and he continues to claim to be a "political prisoner" he is likely to reoffend if let out into the community.

It is evident with this hearing that the State sees ongoing resistance to colonization and oppression of Black people as a threat. This is why the current strategy of the State is to criminalize resistance! The State is attempting to force Black revolutionaries to denounce the history of resistance and cry "uncle." This is a similar tactic that the South African government attempted to use on Nelson Mandela and other South African freedom fighters. The American government (the State) wants to eliminate the memory of our historic fight for freedom and self-determination.

It is important that we not allow political repression to silence our voices or frighten us into discontinuing our charges of human rights violations. We must declare to the world that there are Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War being held in US prisons. We must stand and defend our political prisoners and POWs and declare them to the world without submitting to the States intimidation! We have to continue to declare that there are PPs and POWs not only as a result of COINTELPRO but increasingly as the struggle heats up, new political prisoners and prisoners of war are being created as our people are once again taking to the streets. Already several activists from Black Lives Matter are being tried after actions carried out in Los Angeles, St. Louis and Baltimore. The State will not stop its oppression and imprisonment of our people and we cannot stop the fight for our liberation!

In the face of this blatant continued attack on Dr. Mutulu Shakur and our liberation movement, we say STIFF RESISTANCE and STRAIGHT AHEAD! We will not back up one step! We will continue to build a broad based national, and international human rights campaign that educates and exposes the colonial repression of the Empire not only against our nation New Afrika but also against the indigenous First Nations (American Indians) and prisoners like Leonard Peltier and the Puerto Rican nation and prisoners like Oscar Lopez Rivera. We are all colonized peoples and our freedom lies in telling the world and in moving Straight ahead with Stiff Resistance! Freedom for Dr. Mutulu Shakur and all the political prisoners and POWs of the American Empire!

We call on Black people and all people who love freedom and justice to continue to support the movement to free Dr. Mutulu Shakur and all of our political prisoners and prisoners of war. Continue to declare Mutulu is welcome here. Spread his name and image so that the world knows about Mutulu and about our struggle for human rights and self-determination. We call on artists to create cultural expression to educate the people about Mutulu. Write letters, sign petitions and organize actions in your local areas to educate the people and to encourage the people to take a stand for Mutulu's freedom and for the liberation of Black people! Stiff resistance is a human right. Like Malcolm we declare that we will have our human rights "by any means necessary."

### **14 Apr - Eco-Prisoner Rebecca Rubin Released!**

*Rebecca Rubin has been released and moved into a halfway house!*

#### **MORE:**

Sentenced in 2014 to five years in federal prison for numerous Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front actions—including the arsons of Vail Ski Resort and US Forest Industries, as well as liberating horses from and burning down BLM Wild Horse Facilities in California and Oregon—Rebecca is out of prison almost a year and a half before an expected release date of September, 2017. Glad you're out, Rebecca!

Don't forget Rebecca's birthday on April 18th! (Stay tuned for more information about Rebecca's situation, mailing address, and ways to provide support.)

Rebecca will likely still want to receive mail at the halfway house. Stay tuned for possible updates on her address.

### **17 Apr - Messages to the Palestinian people from Herman Bell, Jalil Muntaqim, and David Gilbert**

*In recognition of Palestinian prisoners, several U.S. held political prisoners sent messages to the people of Palestine.*

#### **MORE:**

##### **April 17<sup>th</sup> - Herman Bell's Message**

I have followed, supported, and I continue to follow and support your heroic struggle to rid Israeli occupation of your homeland. Almost daily we hear of Israeli tank shells and missiles firing into your homes, your hospitals, and school buildings; we see pictures of broken bodies being dug from the rubble. Whole neighborhoods and vital resources: food, water, electricity are decimated. So much death, bloodshed, and destruction when seizing and occupying other people's land, an old narrative that Indigenous people the world over know so well.

The international community does nothing throughout this occupation of your land; it sits on its hands, laments the destruction and loss of life and does nothing. I feel the beat of your seething heart. And during periodic lulls throughout this decades-long occupation, when even the occupiers seem sated from their bloodlust, you rise up from your magnificently dug tunnels firing off salvos of your own bootleg missiles

into the towns and hamlets of the occupiers. Your creative resistance to this occupation is so reminiscent of the Vietnamese people's spirited resistance to u.s. occupation during their war of national liberation. When having shot-down a heavy u.s. B-52 bomber, they built iron bars around it with a sign saying: "We caged this beast!"

Freedom loving people the world over support your struggle, support your courage and fortitude in resisting this occupation. For we know that while heads of governments in the international community posture, gesture, and pronounce empathetic words, they speak but one language, the language of the occupier, which is why they will neither condemn nor prevent this ongoing carnage and continued israeli occupation of your land. For that, the Palestinian people have to look to themselves.

But you don't fight alone.

Afrikan-American people here in North America support you and know occupation well. Here the local and national police force are our occupiers. Throughout some three-hundred years of tyrannizing the soul and body of the Black community, america's pervasive racism and cultural domination has overworked itself, yet our spirit remains unbowed. And we've been enslaved longer than we've been free. We suffer mass-incarceration, racial profiling and unrelenting, police violence. We endure; we bide our time. For we know nothing lasts forever. Thus we affirm that no daylight exist between the Afrikan-American and Palestinian struggle in resisting the racist, oppressive violence that occupies, that kills, that imprisons us here and you over there. Our struggle is one.

Accordingly, as we go forward, as you speak comparatively of israeli social policies that resemble the racist South African apartheid regime's social policies, I would urge that you speak also of the similarity between the Afrikan-America and Palestinian struggle. The comparison is effective; it resonates. Both our hardship and casualties originate from the same source; our communities are stressed; our men and women have been captured, tortured, imprisoned, or killed. Our families suffer; our children experience uncertain tomorrows. You don't fight alone; our struggle is one, and we build to win.

#### **April 17<sup>th</sup> - Jalil Muntaqim's Message**

As Salaam Alaikum

It gives me great pleasure to be able to share a few words of solidarity based on our mutual struggle opposing racism and colonial oppression.

I have been in U.S. prisons for 44 years, one of the longest held political prisoners in the world, for activities and involvement in the former Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army. Since my imprisonment in 1971, I continue to be active in terms of educating prisoners, writing books, essays and articles, and finding innovative ways to contribute in exposing U.S. imperialism and its insidious support of Zionism. Naturally, I support the movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions challenging Israel's occupation of Palestine that should be equated as Apartheid.

I was captured at the age of 19 years old, an expectant father, and am now a 64 year old great grandfather. I have been before the parole board 8 times, and each time denied release because of "the nature of the crime" – the death of two police officers, a situation that time will never alter. While I was sentenced to 25 years to Life in 1975, the continued denials are tantamount to life without parole. Obviously, the prison and parole system operates with impunity, and in violation of its own mandates. Hence, it is the political nature of the conviction that is the principle reason for these denials. I share these insights in my case in order to let you know my life struggle in many ways parallels the struggles of your own political prisoners.

Furthermore, as a revolutionary Muslim (note: I oppose the indiscriminate killing by ISIS and Al-Qaeda, et al.), the foundation of our solidarity bridges ideological and national boundaries of our struggles. We are mutual allies. Therefore, it is only natural for me to express solidarity, as we forge our common humanity to oppose racist and colonial oppression wherever it may be found.

May Allah (SWT) grant you mercy and success from your tormentors, strengthening your resolve to build a future of peace and love for the next generations.

Mas Salaam - Revolutionary Love and Unity.

### **April 17<sup>th</sup> - David Gilbert's Message**

As a Jew born at the end of World War II, the event that loomed over the very formation of my consciousness was the Holocaust. For me, for many of us, there was a paramount lesson carved deeply into the twin tablets of morality and history: racism is the greatest evil that leads to the most hideous inhumanity. Others drew the opposite conclusion and embraced Zionism on the basis that Jews need a state of our own regardless of the cost to others. While Jews had good reasons to build a foundation for survival and development, the necessary concessions were due from the imperial anti-Semitic powers. Never should such security be achieved by oppressing other people. Never. Identifying with the West, Israel, from its inception, has served as an aggressive forward military base for U.S. imperialism in the oil-rich Middle East--a spearhead for keeping reactionary regimes in power and promoting chaos and divisions throughout the region.

Zionism has been an ongoing process of occupation and colonization of Palestine. As the examples of the U.S. and apartheid South Africa show, settler colonialism generates the most fulsome forms and practices of racism. For Palestine that includes the over 5 million persons, half of their nation, living in exile; the thousands of people killed and wounded by the Israeli military; the criminal strangulation of the Palestinian economy and public health infrastructure; the turning of Gaza into essentially an open-air prison for 1.8 million people; the widespread illegal practice of preventive detentions; and more.

I can't even begin to grasp the results in terms of pervasive and mounting humanitarian crises that are so horribly painful. At the same time Palestine is an incredible inspiration as people have found creative and courageous ways to build resistance, including the brave resilience of the youth; the local demonstrations to tear down the apartheid wall erected to cut off Palestinian villages; and the resonating call by some 175 organizations of Palestinian civil society that initiated the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (EDS) of Israeli colonialism. This now global campaign includes demands to stop Israeli racism, end the occupation, and uphold the right of all Palestinians to return to their homeland.

The Palestinian struggle for self-determination and sovereignty is a matter of the most urgent and fundamental solidarity; it is also a front-line struggle for justice for all of us.

### **18 Apr - What Does It Look Like to Be An Environmentalist in Prison?**

*The reality of environmentalists in prison moved from the fringes to mainstream with the sentencing of Tim DeChristopher for his infamous interference as "Bidder 70" in a Utah oil and gas auction which paved the way for the first tar sands operation in the country.*

#### **MORE:**

by Panagioti Tsoikas (*Earth First! Journal*)

In the fall of 2015 the Prison Ecology Project (PEP) received an anonymous letter from a prisoner at the federal prison in Dublin, California explaining how the extreme over-use of rat poison was killing wildlife all around the prison and putting prisoners at risk of exposure to the toxic substance. Communications with the group Californians for Alternatives to Toxics confirmed that they have found the overuse of both pesticides and herbicides to be a common practice at prisons across the state.

After discussing this issue with other environmentalists in the region around the prison, which is just east of the San Francisco Bay Area, PEP found that the Dublin prison was already on the radar for some because, at the time, it was the residency of a well-known eco-activist, Rebecca Rubin, who was sentenced to seven

years for underground actions against genetic engineering in the late '90s. Rubin was released earlier this month.

While Tim DeChristopher's action could be viewed as sabotage-lite in comparison to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) arsons that Rubin was implicated in, the federal government's response would put them into similar categories.

As a result of cases like that of DeChristopher and Rubin, the contemporary environmental movement gained some first-hand experiences of its own with prison life. Like the labor movement at the turn of the century and the civil rights movement 50 years later, the environmental movement was getting a glimpse of how our government often deals with dissent. We also got a closer look at how toxic the prison system could be for prisoners and surrounding communities—what the Human Rights Defense Center coined as prison ecology.

Along with Rubin, several other activists also became environmental prisoners as a result of ELF actions in the Pacific Northwest during the '90s. Daniel McGowan, for example, served time in a federal prison located on a notorious military Superfund site adjacent to the Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge in Illinois. The prison, known as Marion, was also home to a Communication Management Unit, where Daniel was housed due to his political activism. McGowan was accused of domestic terrorism, though now one was physically injured by his actions. His story was featured in an Oscar-nominated 2011 documentary film *If a Tree Falls*.

Another former eco-prisoner, Eric McDavid, who was accused of plotting attacks on the Nimbus dam and cell phone towers (spurred on by an FBI provocateur) ended up doing time in Victorville FCI, a federal prison built on a military Superfund site. While the most severe of his charges were eventually thrown out in 2015 due to evidence being wrongly suppressed by the prosecution, he had already spent ten years in the pen... much of it on contaminated soil.

Marius Mason is an anarchist and an environmental and animal rights prisoner serving nearly 22 years in federal prison for acts of sabotage carried out in defense of the planet.

Additionally, there's Marius Mason, a transgender prisoner at the federal women's prison in near Fort Worth, Texas on the Carswell military base. Carswell is home to at least two superfund sites within a mile of the prison. One is a 760-acre plant that has manufactured military planes since 1942 resulting in soil and water contaminated with hazardous chemicals. The U.S. Air Force currently owns the facility; Lockheed Martin Corporation operates it. The other is located at "Building 1215." The EPA considers this to be an active site, with contamination continuing to impact the area. Mason is serving a 22-year sentence for his underground actions against logging and genetic engineering, again in which no one was injured. Carswell was also home to other prominent political prisoners, including anti-nuke activist Helen Woodson and activist-lawyer Lynne Stewart, both of whom were released in recent years.

More recently, hacker activist Jeremy Hammond was incarcerated for releasing information from security firm StratFor on their surveillance of environmental groups, among others. For this he was sentenced to 10 years in the Appalachian coalfields of Eastern Kentucky, in a federal prison called FCI Manchester.

In a March 2016 letter to the Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons (a group fighting a proposed prison on a mountaintop removal coal mine site in Letcher County, KY), Hammond wrote: "They say [FCI Manchester] was also a former coal strip mine site...and has two Superfund sites."

He continued, "I wish there was a way to get the water tested. The medical here is terrible—basically you got nothing coming unless it's life-threatening."

The following are excerpts from McDavid and McGowan reflecting on their incarceration, and specifically, what it looked like to be an environmentalist behind bars.

## **From Eric McDavid**

“It felt like there was a lot for me to share with other folks, and to surprisingly find my ideas well accepted.... There was that cultural shift of people trying to find healthier ways of being in their bodies and in their environment, so I was utilized as a source of information and ideas of different ways of eating and being healthy. Everybody in there appreciated nature and knew how fucked up it was to be held in prisons built on superfund sites, drinking water laden in heavy metals, breathing in toxic dust and forced to consume GMO saturated foods. There was the points of connection around just wanting to be outside, no longer held in the cells and buildings which were so tangibly oppressive. The classic part was that being out on the rec yard is one of the most dangerous places to be—where there was the highest chance of a fight spreading into a riot, where it was so wide open that it was a challenge to get your back up against a wall and have a fight come at you from only the front and flanks.”

### *On connections to nature*

“My connection to nature played a huge role in being able to maintain my heart and mind while in custody. While in Sacramento county [jail], those four 4” X 70” plates of plexiglass and the fencing of the rec-yard were like windows back into the real world for me. To watch the crows and other winged friends fly by, the people walking on the street, the Sun light, clouds, wind and rain, they were all a constant reminder of what I was doing and why. While at the Victorville Medium II facility I was forced to take solace in the quiet of the high desert. It’s sage covered landscapes and distant mountains with varying hues of browns and greys, the powerful winds of Winter (so strong I could smell the snow on the mountains they just gusted over to try and cut through to my bones); and the stark heat of Summer which dried the air and everything in it, scorching stone, sand and skin alike; and feeling the downpours of the August monsoons soak and rinse me to the core. Then to the low security at terminal island, which sticks out into the port of Long Beach, where there is a dog run on the way to the rec. yard that is about fifteen feet to the water’s edge. The first time I heard the waves on the rocks from a passing boat a stone’s toss away I nearly jumped out of my skin. The sounds of gulls, the sight of storm swells breaching the distant barrier wall, the fog rolling in so thick I couldn’t see 25 feet away, and the brisk Winter mornings to walk around the track as the sun slowly rose. All these things kept me close to myself, close to who I am...”

### *On Superfund sites*

“There was wide knowledge of the fact that we were being held on a superfund site at Victorville. Just across from the prison was ample evidence in the dilapidated military housing that stood vacant and in eye-shot of the rec-yard. People knew the water was contaminated and that the air was full of toxic particles swept up by the perpetual winds that tore over the surrounding mountains. There was constant talk about it without any effort to find ways of addressing it, I think because folks were so wrapped up in dealing with the stresses that came from dealing with their cases and doing their time in such an oppressive environment.”

## **From Daniel McGowan**

“It is actually quite difficult. On one level, you realize you are living in what used to be a wooded area. Every prison I had been in was surrounded by woods or farmland. The prison then is a rather ugly blight on that land and you are reminded of this reality every time you walk the yard. The other thing that always hit me was how much the prison wasted, whether it was the sheer amount of garbage created or the electricity and water used to power such an institution. Having mostly lived in cities and being a fastidious recycler etc, I was always pained by having no choice but throwing things out in prison. Obviously, there was no recycling but also, reuse was difficult as the cops have strict rules about stuff in your cells. People are inventive of course and find ways around this. I wrote my letters on scrap paper, paper bags, old flyers, whatever I could find.... [K]nowing that having a radio meant I would be contributing a very large share of

dead batteries to some landfill somewhere. An interesting thing about being an environmentalist is how when people would find out, invariably, they would ask, "What, like Greenpeace?"

*Is it possible to keep a connection to nature from behind bars?*

"To the extent you are not in solitary and have access to the yard, I think there are moments in which you can maintain some connection to nature. It's not like you are ever going to camp or have real quiet time, but I often walked many laps around the track and during the winter, there were only a few of us. At times, due to the poor shoveling, this certainly felt like hiking! One of the only pleasant things about rural prisons is having the chance to see the wildlife that comes up to the fence. I saw deer, rabbits and frogs often but the coolest thing I ever saw were the bats every single night at Sandstone (northern Minnesota) as the sun set. At Terre Haute, we often fed raccoon tiny hot dogs that were scavenged and most people fed the feral cats and birds at every spot I was at."

*Does it feel to you like there is potential for an environmental movement to grow inside the prison system? If so, how would you envision it? (If no, why not?)*

"I am unsure how that would look. I mean, on one level, from inside, you are often hamstrung in what you can do and what it would look like. I think one way is by talking to people about environmental issues in the news. I don't know if the goal should be to grow the environmental movement in prisons as much as having 'eco's fight prisons for what they are.

"There is the danger of myopia on this issue. Just look at how green LEED certified prisons are being lauded for how much energy and money they save. I don't want prisons to be showcases of green architecture. I want them gone!"

*About contamination surrounding Marion*

"People wrote me to tell me that Crab Orchard is polluted and that the water at Marion was bad. What could I do with this info? I had to drink water."

### **18 Apr - Finally Free by Jason Hammond**

*"After 16 months of imprisonment for raising hell against some white supremacists, I've been released on parole, and am back home in the Chi."*

#### **MORE:**

I would like to share my deepest thanks to all those who have supported me, y'all have made a shitty experience only barely sucky. Seriously though, major shoutouts to Anarchist Black Cross, the anarchists from St. Louis, the DOPE collective, Crimethinc Ex-worker, the peeps at WILDFIRE, the DIRT, IT'S GOING DOWN, all my friends and comrades in Chicago, and everyone who has sent me letters, books, cash, and kept me up to date with wtf is going on in the world - y'all are the best. My experiences have taught me how dire the situation is; 2.5 MILLION people are locked up in these stupid prisons at any given time in this country, the greatest number and among the greatest rate in the world. With the waters rising and the fires raging and fascism becoming more ubiquitous in the voting booth and the streets, it's more important than EVER to be asking hard questions and also to make total destroy!

Your friend for the rev,  
ANTIFA FOREVER!

#### **April 19<sup>th</sup> - Welcome home, Jason Hammond!**

We are thrilled to announce that after approximately 16 months in an Illinois state prison, Jeremy's brother, Jason Hammond has finally been released into the loving arms of friends and family as of 1 April 2016.

Jason, an ardent, lifelong antifascist, was imprisoned for his part in disrupting a meeting of white supremacists in a suburb of Chicago in May of 2012. In January of 2015, he took a non-cooperating plea agreement and was sentenced to 41 months in prison.

Of the action, Jason stated,

*“I went into this action following the principles of anarchy, equality and freedom which have guided my life. For many years I have been involved in different projects engaging social justice, from volunteering at social centers, community public libraries and food distribution programs. I have also supported and participated in anti-war, environmental and immigrant rights movements. Through these experiences I became more aware of how the system that governs this society depends on the mass exploitation of large parts of the population and in fact the Earth itself for the profit of the rich and powerful. I was inspired and motivated by the people I met in the movement to strive to make change at the root of the problem, even if it meant possibly sacrificing my own personal freedom. Throughout history, any movement that struggled to change this system was considered dangerous by the government and was met with immense repression and state violence. But there were successful moments within these movements not only because they were justified, but because people fought for them and despite how history is presented like a Disney movie, not all of their actions were non-violent.”*

Of his brother’s release, Jeremy says he is, of course, “stoked.” He has not seen his brother since his sentencing hearing in May of 2013, and misses him terribly. He supports his brother and his brothers brave actions unconditionally, and urges everyone to support other radical anarchists, antifascists, and prisoners in their fight against racism, oppression, and the state. Some suggestions for some lesser-known prisoners that could really use support are Eric King, an anarchist who just accepted a 10-year, non-cooperating plea deal for resistance against US imperialism, and Alisha Walker, and sex worker and woman of color who was convicted of murder for radical self-defense against a client who was trying to kill her.

Please remember that prison does not end when a comrade is released from prison. Jason is currently on a period of house arrest, which will be followed by a period of probation and supervised released. This will make is difficult for Jason to get a job, and pay for the expenses of daily living. He still needs our help. Please donate to his welcome home fund at [fundrazr.com/0w0Ma?ref=ab\\_94SfS3](http://fundrazr.com/0w0Ma?ref=ab_94SfS3)

## **22 Apr - Chelsea featured in “The New Progressives” issue of Interview Magazine**

*The following interview was featured in the April 2016 issue of Interview Magazine. Interview’s April issue was centered around “The New Progressives” and also featured interviews from emerging and well-known activists such as Susan Sarandon, Oliver Stone, Rick Owens, Cecile Richards and Jane Goodall.*

### **MORE:**

by Chris Wallace (*Interview*)

In late 2009 and early 2010, a 22-year-old Private First Class and Army intelligence analyst named Bradley Manning downloaded a mass of classified and confidential files, some to a CD marked “Lady Gaga,” and passed them to the online media outlet WikiLeaks. For many, the digital dump of this material, much of which came to be known as the Afghan and Iraq “War Logs”—and which included video of an American helicopter attack on a group unarmed civilians—was the righteous act of a whistle-blower seeking greater transparency of our military’s conduct. Some have even credited Manning’s leak of diplomatic cables with inspiring the progressive uprisings of the Arab Spring, which began shortly thereafter. In 2011, however, the Army charged Manning with, among other things, “aiding the enemy,” a crime akin to treason and potentially punishable by death (and for which she was ultimately found not guilty). For much of that year, Manning had been held in what amounted to solitary confinement—so as to prevent self-harm, it was claimed—in a military brig in Quantico, Virginia. And, on August 21, 2013, Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison and sent to the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

In an announcement made the day after sentencing, Manning came out as transgender, declaring her intent to begin living openly as a woman. The next year, she successfully petitioned to have her name legally changed to Chelsea Elizabeth Manning and, in February 2015, was allowed to begin hormone therapy. Since that time, Manning has written a column for The *Guardian*’s U.S. website, recounting the many

threats made against her during her more than five years in prison (that she would be sent away to be tortured at a black site or disappeared in Guantanamo, for starters), reflecting on her most dire moments, contemplating castration and suicide, and her hope for a sisterhood beyond bars with which she can claim communion, and to which she can give strength.

Growing up, Manning was bounced around, from Oklahoma to Wales and back, cared for as often by her sister, Casey, 11 years her senior, as by her parents—both of whom Casey has characterized as alcoholics. In Leavenworth, Manning, now 28, has access to psychotherapy sessions, radio, and cosmetics, but is strictly limited in access to visitors and cannot go on the internet. She cannot be photographed, interviewed on camera, or speak with journalists in person or on the phone, but can communicate by post. So, in January, I wrote her to tell her about our special April issue celebrating the pathfinders and conscientious among us who are creating new spaces for themselves and for others, and asked her to be a part of it. She very kindly accepted. Here is our correspondence.

**CHRIS WALLACE:** First of all, how are you? Is there anything that I—or anyone—can or ought to be doing for you?

**CHELSEA MANNING:** Thank you. I am pushing myself through at the moment. I have a lot on my plate currently: I'm waiting for the judge's ruling in my lawsuit challenging the military prison's hair-length restrictions; I'm still in the process of challenging what I believe to be an unlawful and discriminatory disciplinary board from last year; I've challenged the Department of Justice and FBI to release the investigative records related to my case; and, most importantly, I'm only weeks away from filing the brief in my court-martial appeal. It's an exhausting schedule. As for you and anyone else, I can only ask of those who care about me and the issues in my case to support me and spread the word about what is going on. Donations to my legal defense fund really help, and I think keeping me motivated and spreading the message are also very important.

**WALLACE:** You wrote recently about how tough the holidays were. How is your day-to-day life? Are there things you particularly look forward to, dread, or are surprised by?

**MANNING:** Day-to-day life is as simple as it is routine—though my days are often long and very busy. On weekdays, I wake up at about 4:30 each morning. I get dressed, have a cup of coffee, and go to the prison cafeteria for breakfast. Not long after dawn, we show up for work at our day jobs. I work at the prison wood shop. Any legal or medical appointments are scheduled during the workday, too. We have about an hour and a half break for lunch, which is when I make a lot of my phone calls. The workday ends around 4 p.m. When I get back to my cell, I usually have a stack of mail and laundry at the front of the cell. For about an hour, I sort and neatly fold my laundry and read my mail. On a normal day, this includes dozens of cards and letters from supporters, a newspaper, and a handful of magazine subscriptions. Before the evening starts, I eat dinner. The rest of the day is filled with recreation. This includes the library, where I type up legal papers, letters, and assignments for college correspondence courses. I also like to run and do HIIT-style exercises during gym and outside recreation hours—but I recently took a break for a few months because of the hormone treatments. I have only just started doing these routines again in the past couple weeks. There are very few distinctions between *el bueno* and *el malo en la prisión militar*. Instead of the good and the bad, there is the boring and *la repetición*—the repetitive. The routine is as endless as it is numbing. It's like *Groundhog Day* [1993], except that I am getting older.

**WALLACE:** What is your rapport like with other inmates and officers or wardens? Has it changed in the time since you've been there? Have provisions and accommodations changed to better suit you since you began transitioning?

**MANNING:** I don't have any issues with the inmates or the guard force here at the prison. Initially, I didn't have any problems with the senior staff, but that started to change last summer. Lately, I'm under a lot of scrutiny every day by those here that run the prison but don't actually walk inside except on rare occasions. It seems as though they press the junior staff to focus their attention on me—and not in good

ways. It is very exhausting. For the transition, I am being provided cosmetics, female undergarments, and a stable hormone treatment. I am still cutting my hair to a two-inch male restriction imposed by the prison, which I am fighting. I only want to have carefully groomed shoulder length hair meeting the standard of other female military prisoners. Yet, even the accommodations I have now were only provided after a year and a half of fighting. So I remain hopeful.

**WALLACE:** Are you able to sense how things on the outside have changed for the trans community in, say, the past five years? Are you hearing enough from people on the outside to be able to gauge that?

**MANNING:** Unfortunately, I don't sense that things have really changed for the trans community in the last five years. Sure, we are certainly much more visible than we were only a few years ago. Media outlets are more frequently using the correct names, titles, and pronouns for trans folks as well. Yet visibility is not equality. We are still in very, very bad shape. There are still many homeless trans folk wandering the streets. They are still harassed on the street by bystanders and police officers. We still face many administrative hurdles in every aspect of our lives. If anything, things are actually getting harder for us, because now there are people who are using our visibility as an excuse to say that we are already receiving fair and honest treatment, when the reality is that we are still in bad shape as a community.

**WALLACE:** How much do you think about perceptions of you personally? How would you like to be thought of, understood, perceived?

**MANNING:** You know, I really don't care how I am perceived by people on the outside. I am aware of—and endlessly grateful for—the support that I get through all of their letters, cards, statements of support, and petitions. Yet, none of this means that I want to be perceived in any particular way. Even if I didn't have the support that I have, I would still be fighting the same fights, and I would still be the same person that I am today.

**WALLACE:** What changes do you most notice about the world, about reporting, warfare, and intelligence in the time since your trial?

**MANNING:** The press and free speech landscape has totally changed. There is far less news reporting today. Instead, we have this endless stream of—largely meaningless and speculative—analysis by sideline commentators and self-proclaimed “experts.” This is because investigative journalism and reporting has become much more dangerous. This is especially true for journalists and sources in National Security—but it has been getting pretty bad for beat reporters and small outlets doing local reporting, too. Beyond the obvious crackdown on leaks under the current U.S. Administration, there has also been the passing of so-called “Ag-gag” laws in states, and the increasingly looming threat of civil litigation by large corporations following the lawsuit over ABC's 1992 report on Food Lion that have also made it harder for reporters to do their jobs. Disturbingly, the First Amendment, along with the Fourth Amendment—protecting against unreasonable searches and seizures, and requiring warrants—have been the major casualties of the shift in government policy in the last two decades. Unfortunately, I think that the biggest consequences of this tragedy won't be clear until it is far, far too late. I think that the next two generations of Americans will be grappling with the very real specter of finding themselves living in a new and bizarre kind of digital totalitarian state—one that looks and feels democratic on the surface, but has a fierce undercurrent of fear and technologically enforced fascism any time you step out of line. I really hope this isn't the case, but it looks really bad right now, doesn't it?

**WALLACE:** What are your greatest comforts? Are there any particular books, letters, etcetera, that have been great buoys for you recently?

**MANNING:** Absolutely! On my birthday, there was a campaign online to send me thousands of postcards. This really gave me a boost during the toughest time of the year—the holidays. Among these, I received about a hundred or so cards and letters from my trans siblings out there, including trans kids. I was moved

when I read their amazing words. It is amazing to feel such a powerful and tangible connection with other trans folks out there—they're just so gentle and genuine.

**WALLACE:** Are you still a fan of Lady Gaga? Are you able to listen to music, hers or otherwise? Or to watch movies or TV?

**MANNING:** I am. I have a very small plastic radio that only plays whatever's on the radio in Kansas City and in Lawrence, Kansas. So, I can listen to pop music. I also watch TV on occasion—but nowhere near as frequently as I listen to the radio. I'm also a huge fan of other pop icons today, not just Lady Gaga. I've been a fan of Taylor Swift for years—ever since I heard her song "Love Story." I'm also a really big fan of Selena Gomez—I really started listening to her a lot in the months before and during my court martial in 2013. It might sound absolutely insane to folks out there, but I can safely say that Selena kept me motivated through the toughest portions of the trial. Most of all, I absolutely love Adele! Her music is so overwhelming and relatable. I was so excited to hear "Hello" on the radio that I stopped what I was doing and sat down to listen. It made me very emotional. I really enjoyed the Saturday Night Live spoof of the video, too. I'm also still a huge fan of EDM. I listen to a lot of the popular stuff—Calvin Harris, the Chainsmokers, et cetera—for hours on Saturday nights.

**WALLACE:** You have criticized Caitlyn Jenner as "the grinch who stole (& sold out) the trans movement." How do you think she is misrepresenting trans people?

**MANNING:** Well, first I would like to point out that Caitlyn Jenner is not just a person—she is an institution. She has been surrounded by public relations experts who are carefully crafting and controlling the aspects of her public transition. When she—sort of, since she really danced around the subject—came out as trans in her interview with Diane Sawyer, I wanted to give her a chance. Unfortunately, as it became clear through the last year, it hasn't been natural for her. She just isn't up to the task of speaking on these issues. She does not understand, or even try to understand, the trans community as a whole. This is the most disturbing and, frankly, sad aspect of the entire affair. The PR folks are trying to rein in her messaging, but she, as a person, just isn't up to the task. She can't even fake it. I have heard—both directly and indirectly—from other trans women, just how tone deaf and distant Ms. Jenner has been with them in their interactions with her last year. But her major public blunders—not quote "getting" marriage equality and worrying about trans women not looking like a "man in a dress"—should make it clear to those who didn't interact with her personally that she simply has the wrong mind—set to be a spokesperson.

**WALLACE:** I have heard it said that her transition was "easy." I cannot imagine a single thing about your transition—at any stage—that could be called easy.

**MANNING:** I do not think that Caitlyn Jenner's transition was easy. Coming out and transitioning as a public figure—even for someone like her—is an extraordinarily difficult task to undertake. I might not agree with her on a couple of points, but I will refuse to say that her transition was easy. There is far more to transitioning in the public eye than money, public relations, and logistics. Fundamentally, it is a very real, very difficult emotional roller-coaster. I do not care whether or not you would be considered a hardened celebrity or public personality—you will have sleepless nights, you will have doubts, your mind will go to dark places. Anxiety, depression, and suicide don't discriminate based on how much money you have—though it might make it easier for you to get help. I think that it will be much easier for the next famous trans person to come out. I predict that such a person is very likely in the process of preparing to come out in transition publicly right now. I think this person is likely a famous actor who will come out as a trans woman in the next year or two. By that time, it will absolutely be a lot easier to transition than it was in 2013 or 2015. I guess we will see how it plays out when it happens. I support the next person fully, and I wish them nothing but the best of luck in their endeavors.

**WALLACE:** Do you find that you are able to comfort and give strength to others with your story? What, in turn, brings you solace and strength? Were there people who were particularly helpful to you along the way?

**MANNING:** The most important people for me, at least in the last couple of years since I came out, are my supersecret trans friends and confidantes. I think I need to come up with a code name for this circle. One of them in particular has been my lifeline during really tough moments—like during a rough period of anxiety and depression in May and June of 2015, about three to four months into my hormone treatment. I cried and cried over the phone, and yet these people were there for me when I was at my most vulnerable. It certainly made my struggle a lot easier. I have found hundreds, if not thousands of people who have written to me, or have spoken through people that I know, about the comfort and strength that they have gotten from my story. I must admit: It’s a little overwhelming! I immediately relate to all of them, though—which gives me a lot of strength and energy. I think it’s actually kind of sweet how there is a reciprocal effect that our stories can have on each other. They inspire me far more than they realize.

**WALLACE:** Can you tell me a little bit about your life before the Army? What were you into as a kid? In moving from one place to another, to Wales, back to Oklahoma, et cetera, did you have things that kept you tethered, inspired you?

**MANNING:** As a young kid, I spent a lot of time exploring the world around me. I lived a few miles outside of a tiny town in central Oklahoma. I would often run amok through the fields of wheat, the patches of trees, along the railroad tracks, and on red dirt roads. This had a profound effect on my view of the world—vast, open-ended, full of opportunity, and ready for exploration. I also had regular access to a computer, which was rare for kids in the early and mid-1990s. I think the embryonic digital world had the same affect on me as the openness of the old American frontier. While being tossed around the world from place to place as a teenager, I wasn’t really tethered to any place or anyone. I think the increased ubiquity of the internet and networked computing in general allowed me to have some tether no matter where I was geographically. I could log in to a computer from anywhere in the world and access the same information and the same people. It allowed me to transcend the physical differences. I didn’t really have anyone in particular who inspired me or that I found fascinating as a kid. It wasn’t until I was in my early twenties that I began to find people—and they were all historic figures—that I began to relate to and find some inspiration in. Today, there are a lot of pioneers in science and civil rights that I admire—people like Richard Feynman, Carl Sagan, Malcolm X, and Harvey Milk. This might strike some people as odd, but I feel a connection to them nonetheless.

**WALLACE:** From your *Guardian* columns, it seems to me that you have really embraced your position as a leader in advocacy for transparency as well as for inclusiveness and rights for trans people. Are you able to communicate with peers in other movements? Do you feel as though you are a leader, a touchstone, a pioneer to any causes? Do you have any specific ambitions or goals—levels of awareness or concrete legislation—that you’d like to see us achieve in the next five years?

**MANNING:** You know, I don’t think that I’m embracing any kind of leadership for transparency or trans advocacy. It’s not my goal to be a leader or spokesperson, or anything like that. I’ve certainly been given the opportunity to speak out on these issues and a few others. I am really passionate about transparency and trans rights issues, so I embrace these opportunities to speak. I try to stay in touch with those who are prominent in both the trans and transparency movements, but more often than not, I am speaking out on a particular issue on my own. I certainly hope that people listen to me and think about these issues. But regardless of whether I had a public venue to speak in, I would still be passionate about them. On a transparency front, I would say that I certainly dream of a world in which our local, state, and national and international governments and other organizations have a 21st century, digital-era transparency built into them by default. If an organization produces a document, it should be made public as soon as possible. I don’t believe that Freedom of Information laws, which have arbitrary time periods or broad blanket exemptions, meet the level of transparency that society needs today. There are just too many opportunities—and an increasing number of them—to hide systemic, institutional wrongdoing behind legal veils, legal theories, and arbitrary exemptions. I hope that we can start to chip away at this, but it sure looks like society is still sliding in the opposite direction. As for trans issues, I believe that the trans movement is at a crossroads. We have achieved an unprecedented level of visibility in the last couple of years. However,

as I said, that's not the same thing as equality. There is an awful lot of work to do to protect trans folks. We are still disproportionately poor and administratively and institutionally discriminated against at all levels of society. I think we can achieve meaningful change, but only if we demand that the institutions themselves change their behavior. I think that some of today's focus on freedom of information and trans rights have a tendency to focus on the actions of individuals and how they should be regulated by governments. However, I think it's important to remember that it is the institutions themselves—schools, tax collection services, banks, human resources decisions, health departments, police departments, prosecutors, courts, and prisons—where the most devastating and systemic problems occur today. The scale of these problems is simply unimaginable. That is why it can be so difficult to get people to think about systemic institutional problems. It is easier just to see the actions of one or two people and say, "That's wrong!"

### **25 Apr - Fund-raising effort for Chip Fitzgerald**

*Chip Fitzgerald, one of the longest-held Black Panther political prisoners, will have a parole hearing in the upcoming months. Chip has been in prison for 47 years – since he was 19 years old.*

#### **MORE:**

As former political prisoners and allies, we have joined together to support Chip and other comrades still remaining inside. We are asking for your support in raising money for an attorney to represent Chip at his parole hearing.

Chip has a good chance of release because of changes in California parole law. Currently, people over the age of 65 who have served 25 years or more are prioritized for release. The seriousness of the original offense is no longer enough to deny parole – "some evidence" of current dangerousness is required. And Chip's age at the time of his arrest – just 19 – is a factor to be considered at his hearing. Chip has also suffered from a stroke, and has had no incident reports since 2008 (when he was attacked by 2 young men and responded in self-defense).

Please join us in supporting this campaign to FREE Chip Fitzgerald, now 66 years old. Like all our political prisoners, he has continued to fight for justice from behind bars, and has had a positive influence on scores of young men in prison with him. We need him back in the community and with his family and comrades.

To support Chip at his parole hearing, please contribute here:

<http://www.plumfund.com/community-crowdfunding/aid-chip-fitzgerald>

We appreciate your support for Chip and all U.S. political prisoners and prisoners-of-war – Free Them All!  
In solidarity, (partial list)

Arthur League	Francisco Torres	Albert Woodfox	Robert King
Richard Brown	Ray Boudreaux	Bruce Richard	Sherwin Forte
Manuel La Fontaine	Dorsey Nunn	Sundiata Tate	Donna Willmott
Leslie Mullin	Harry Cary	Linda Evans	Judith Mirkinson
Shirley Hewitt	Claude Marks	Harold Taylor	Hank Jones

### **29 Apr - Escaping the Prism — Fade to Black...Book Party for Jalil Muntaqim**

**WHAT:** Book Party

**WHEN:** 7:00-10:00pm, Friday, April 29

**WHERE:** Freedom Hall - 113 West 128<sup>th</sup> Street New York, New York (between Malcolm X & Adam Clayton Powell Boulevards)

**COST:** FREE

#### **MORE:**

Keynote Speaker:

Francisco "Cisco" Torres, Jalil's Co-Defendant

Readings by former Political Prisoners Laura Whitehorn and Tarik Haskins

Multi-Instrumentalist Performance Poet Ngoma

Plan to come, have a great time, eat some snacks, buy the book and help Jalil ESCAPE THE PRISM!

## **1 May - May Day Noise Demo in Solidarity Prison Strikers and Akai Gurley**

**WHAT:** Noise Demo

**WHEN:** 6:00pm, Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>

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

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

### **MORE:**

*“We cannot help but believe that were every law, every title deed, every court, and every police officer or soldier abolished tomorrow with one sweep, we would be better off than now.” - Lucy Parsons*

American society’s core is predicated on slavery. When outright ownership of human beings was abolished, the prison system eventually filled the demand for a free labor force. However, while labor arrangements changed from chattel slavery to a wage labor system, the pervasive social context in the US has rested on the negation of personhood for Black people.

The slave masters and the slave catchers from the 18th and 19th centuries have become the police forces and judicial system today. The racist current that encourages police to shoot Black and brown people at will, with no consequence, also incarcerates a remarkable amount of people for trivial legal transgressions.

From the original May Day until today, those with a hunger for liberation have never stopped resisting. This May Day we are standing with two historic movements that are striving to break this system of domination: the Free Alabama Movement and Black Lives Matter.

The Free Alabama Movement in conjunction with the IWW/IWOC has called for noise demonstrations in solidarity with prison work strikes that are being launched on May Day across Alabama. The Free Alabama Movement stated, “mass incarceration is in essence an economic system which uses human beings as its nuts and bolts.” With solidarity from Texas prisoners, they intend to put this economic system to a halt.

In NYC, we are standing up for all the victims of police violence but specifically for Akai Gurley and his family who were recently violated in one of the most outrageous instances of American barbarism. If there is a time to stand up, it is now.

This May Day, with our fists raised in defiance we stand in solidarity with the prison strikers, with the family of Akai Gurley, and all those who desire to set fire to the master’s house. Burn down the American Plantation!