



POST OFFICE BOX 110034 BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11211

Updates for June 21st

7 Jun - Activist Loses Appeal for Free Speech in Prison

An environmental activist thrown in solitary confinement for sharing his politics in online magazines does not have a First Amendment case against his former prison officials, the Second Circuit ruled Tuesday.

MORE:

by Adam Klasfeld (*Courthouse News Service*)

Daniel McGowan, a former member of the Earth Liberation Front, was involved in the arsons of two Oregon-based lumber companies in 2001.

Four years would pass, however, before McGowan's foray into radical activism caught up with him.

The FBI eventually closed the loop on McGowan's case during "Operation Backfire," an investigation that the bureau described as a crackdown on "eco-terrorism," which critics cast as a green version of the Red Scare.

McGowan insists that he had renounced his affiliation with the group long before authorities arrested him at work, but his later disavowal of their methods did not provide him with any mercy at his criminal prosecution.

In 2007, a federal judge would apply a so-called "terrorism enhancement" in sentencing him to spend seven years in prison.

Initially designated as a low security prisoner, McGowan claimed in a federal lawsuit that officials at FCI Sandstone in Minnesota assigned him to a so-called Communication Management Unit, or CMU, a year into his sentence to squelch his online journalism.

Prison documents reprinted in his lawsuit justified his placement there by citing McGowan's bylines in a handful of movement outlets, including Portland Independent Media, Bite Back and Earth First! Journal.

McGowan received higher-profile media attention after being featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary, "If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front."

The Huffington Post later invited him to write about life in the CMU in articles accusing prison officials of violating his constitutional rights, but he has had trouble convincing judges that his speech deserved protection.

Upholding a Brooklyn federal judge's ruling, the Second Circuit dismissed McGowan's lawsuit on Tuesday.

"We conclude that, at the time the alleged violation occurred, our case law did not clearly establish that McGowan had a First Amendment right to publish his article," a three-judge panel unanimously found.

Judges Robert Katzmann, Jonathan Sack and Raymond Lohier are named as authors of the 19-page opinion.

Their ruling expressed sympathy with the justifications some prisons floated for preventing prisoners from having journalistic bylines.

"For example, in litigating the constitutionality of the byline regulation in the District of Colorado, the government took the position that allowing inmates to publish bylined articles could create security problems by permitting such inmates to become 'big wheels' in the prison community, or could incite violence, or could intimidate prison staff members," the opinion states.

"Whether or not we would agree with that analysis is beside the point," the ruling continues. "We conclude only that, in light of the different interests at stake, our case law establishing a prisoner's right to file a lawsuit or grievance does not clearly establish a prisoner's right to publish an article under a byline."

McGowan's attorney Alexander Reinart, a professor at Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law, said in a phone interview that he is "disappointed" in the ruling.

"We're reviewing all of our options right now," he said.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's office for the Eastern District of New York declined to comment on the ruling.

Meanwhile, McGowan is named as a co-plaintiff in another active lawsuit in Washington that attacks the constitutionality of CMUs.

Created during the George W. Bush administration, CMUs place prisoners under constant surveillance and radically restrict their contact with the outside world. Civil libertarians have long denounced these units as unconstitutional overreaches in the name of fighting terror.

The Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York-based advocacy group, noted in their lawsuit that 60 percent of prisoners in CMUs are Muslim, even though only 6 percent of the U.S. prison population practices that religion.

The lawsuit lists McGowan among the minority of non-Muslim CMU inmates, largely held in these units for their political affiliations.

The D.C. Circuit has yet to issue a ruling on the case, led by Yassin Muhiddin Aref, who is serving a 15-year sentencing in connection with a counterterrorism sting operation.

8 Jun - Update on Jay Chase's medical situation

We want to thank everyone who took the time in the last couple of weeks to call, email or write Pontiac prison and Illinois Department of Corrections, demanding that Jay see a doctor for his broken nose and that he get his good time credit restored. We realize that the employees were not very friendly or helpful.

MORE:

Many of you got the run around from both places with claims that Jay had never asked for medical care and that he needs to file for the good time restoration. Our statement to Pontiac is the same as to everyone who wrote asking for advice in how to deal with the calls: They were lying.

Jay had been asking for medical care regarding his face, which he was tackled onto in January, since the incident (an unnamed prison guard tackled him face first into the floor). While Medical Techs come through the cell house daily, they are only there to deliver medicine. If you complain about medical problems, they just tell you to put in a medical request slip—which Jay had done hundreds of times. He most recently submitted grievances about the lack of medical care on May 22—just as people were being told no grievances had been filed.

As a result of your calls (not that the prison would ever admit this, but the timing is hardly coincidental), Jay was finally taken to the medical unit last Thursday. His nose was finally x-rayed—he does not currently have a fracture, but of course it may have healed in the six months they delayed seeing him. The doctor also re-wrote the prescription for the two Huntington's medications he wants to be on (although they had not actually delivered any meds to him as of Monday morning).

Jay was able to see his lawyer this week and wanted to thank everyone for the calls, letters, cards, and books. He is currently working through *The Prince*, by Machiavelli.

11 Jun - June 11th Statements

Several political prisoners have written statements for the June 11 day of solidarity with long term anarchist and eco-prisoners.

MORE:

Jeremy Hammond

Revolutionary greetings on this June 11! Solidarity with all Earth warriors and anarchists behind bars!

We are up against a system of power and profit, a system that is destroying the planet and forcing the people into poverty and imprisonment. Many of us who have fought back found ourselves in the cross-hairs

of an extensive counter-intelligence apparatus who use trumped-up “terrorism” charges and entrapment by informants to put us in prison for years. There are many lessons from each case to consider before engaging in future work, but it is most important that we do not let the seemingly overwhelming forces of domination intimidate us into inaction and passivity. Even those of us doing time, you know we stay bucking the system, and it brings us strength and inspiration to hear about your work in the streets, to hear about ongoing campaigns – such as the fight to stop the Bureau of Prisons from building a new maximum security federal prison in Letcher County, Kentucky, in the middle of a mountaintop removal coal processing area. This is a winnable opportunity highlighting the connections between the prison industrial complex and the exploitation of the Earth by profiteering capitalists.

But to succeed, we must consider the full range of tactics available. Everything from organizing conferences and sending books to prisoners, from lawsuits to protest marches, to hacking websites and sabotaging infrastructure. Every act of defiance counts, even if we do not immediately see the results of our efforts, because even small ripples can make big waves. Local actions have global consequences. We are spreading seeds of revolution, growing wild and free. Until we can overgrow and overthrow this system once and for all!

For the rev!
Jeremy

Nikos Romanos (Greece)

Many things have been stated about the value of solidarity, and everything has its importance because it contributes to the attempt of giving meaning to a sense that constitutes a vital ingredient for our plans and actions. I will try to state in my own way an existential aspect of solidarity obviously through my own experiences. Solidarity means first of all emotions. Beautiful, wild, but most of all authentic emotions. Emotions that constitute the driving force for the growth of anarchist dynamics, which are liberating and beloved sounds and senses in the city, by yelling slogans, building barricades and by throwing blazing bottles that target the servants of authority. Solidarity doesn't mean identification, but complicity with everyone that chose to engrave liberating routes in the map of the anarchist insurrection. It's a relationship and within this relationship experiences are being developed and common desires are being produced for the destruction of this world, not in a vague future, but first of all within ourselves and then around us. Destruction to the degenerated relationships that this world is producing, in its depictions, in its symbols, in its officials and in its loyal servants.

It's been about 1.5 year since the time I was locked in a room-cell of a hospital with all the symbols of the state's enforcement around me (armored cops, orders of district attorney regarding force feeding) that I was seeing and learning about dozens of wonderful actions of revolt and defiance that were unfolding in the streets. No matter the contradictions involved in such a conclusion, these days with all their roughness and difficulties were the ones that I was feeling my heart beating through a primitive feeling of joy and my mind was traveling far away, to blazing horizons without bars and iron fences. From the burned police cars in police departments of Athens and the incendiary attacks, to the cars of the MEP (members of the European Parliament) in Brussels to the solidarity gatherings of friends and comrades outside the hospitals, from the combative demonstrations and the barricades that behind them their enraged eyes were meeting beneath their hoods, to the occupations of city halls and universities that were transforming to spaces of struggle, by creating points of diversion in their operations and spaces of dispersion of anarchist ideas. The feeling that anarchy is able to find spaces and ways of vital development and stay alive and dangerous was one of the most beautiful and powerful emotions that I believe are reflecting the power of solidarity.

“That is how I want to see these years in prison, consider them as part of a conscious choice, a choice that in spite of the known and obvious limitations, allows a different perspective, not only concerning the anti-

prison struggle but the anarchist struggle in general. In this respect I think that we imprisoned anarchists are not just ‘prisoners’; to reduce us solely to this definition would be like reducing our contribution and preventing us from continuing to participate in the struggle for total liberation in all its breadth and complexity”. – Francisco Solar

So, just as moments of struggle like the international day of solidarity with anarchist prisoners don’t constitute anything more than one more triggering event to sharpen the subversive remembrance and remind ourselves that the struggle against domination means at the same time a struggle against prisons. Because the offensive and destructive actions against the penal complex constitute moments where freedom seeps through our bodies and breaks the captivity status that they’re forcing on us. Till the human gestures between prisoners and free comrades acquire again the warmness of a hug, the fires and explosions will reflect our desire to meet again with our own conditions. Till all are free.

Strength and solidarity to all anarchist prisoners

Message from the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire / FAI-IRF for June 11th (Greece)

Prison has the terrifying ability to leave its own indelible imprints on the bodies and minds of its residents.

Imprints of sorrow, frustration, violence, asphyxia, enforcement. Doors that keep locking and unlocking everyday at the same time with exactly the same awful sound in a monotonous rhythm of a murderous routine that drips its poison of immobility and vanity slowly and painfully.

A brief description about the distillation of sepsis that is being produced by incarceration is enough to become understandable of the hate we feel towards prisons.

That’s why every time a prison break succeeds, every time that a penal officer is being paid an uninvited visit, every time that a prison director or police sergeant pays the price of his despicable choices, our hearts fill with a unique feeling of enjoyment and pleasure. Because revenge for the captivity can’t help but to find its incarnation over the constant assaults against the prison’s representatives.

If something is missing in our days, it isn’t the harmless babbling but the beautiful and courageous choices of comrades in order to create spots of organized offensive actions, to answer dynamically to the ashes that were left behind by oppression, to assert anarchy against its enemies. The passionate conversations are missing, for the necessary practices that we have to build, for the planning of deregulation, today, tomorrow and for as long as the world of authority surrounds us.

The desideratum now, for everyone that feels asphyxiated by the contemporary way of life remains common. To coordinate and strike the rambling tentacles of the state, capital, civilization, social apathy, to the everyday misery in the cities. Countless hostile depictions in a hostile pattern of life which in order to destroy we have to reverse their rhythm, movement and detestable pace.

The only way to set an attempt like this in motion begins from each and any of us individually, from the great choice to turn our personal hourglasses upside down in order for our lives to stop rolling in the rhythm that authority forces us, but instead to begin from the time we go on the offensive, from our desires to watch the world of order catching fire by our own hands and for solidarity to become the kindling for this fire.

Because solidarity is a momentum, it’s power. It’s the power that arises through the internal admission that we are all part of the anarchist clash against authority. The admission that we may end up in captivity tomorrow, in the place of someone in captivity today. An admission that constitutes essentially an

indissoluble bond between all anarchists who are fighting authority, each one with the way he/she chooses. A bond that mustn't break in spite of all the personal differences, in spite of the individual disagreements, this feeling of complicity is always there. It doesn't fall back. It persists and takes different forms.

A banner, a poster, a fire during the night, a deafening sound of an explosion, a blast at some authoritative scum, an action of liberating prisoners. Because only this way, only then, solidarity is indeed our weapon.

Conspiracy of Cells of Fire / FAI-IRF
Michalis Nikolopoulos
George Nikolopoulos
Panagiotis Argirou
Damiano Bolano
Theofilos Mavropoulos

Grigoris Tsironis (Greece)

An international day when all prisoners from all corners of the earth, all those who are experiencing the obligatory status of incarceration in the penal prison camps of democracy, those who are being deprived of the most valuable good of freedom, are uniting their voices, their thoughts and feelings, in order to send a signal among them that no one is alone.

Despite the hundreds of kilometers that are separating us, despite that we don't know each other, despite of all our differences, there is something that surpasses borders and achieves the elimination of all distances, something that can't be imprisoned, that escapes out of the walls that loom up around us, something that is priceless within the hearts of those who feel it, express it, or receive it.

It is this strong feeling of solidarity that fills us with strength, it gives us courage, in order for us to not give up even in these very difficult circumstances that we are experiencing, but instead to keep on fighting with the same passion.

It is the powerful bond between those who perceive themselves as fellow travelers, among those who transmute theory to action, those who are developing a polymorphous action with the purpose of destroying the existent, those who struggle against every form of enforcement and limitation, who fight back against injustice and exploitation, those who with rage and consciousness follow a decent life choice.

It is solidarity that in our days, more than ever, has been targeted by authority, by repressing and criminalizing it. But it is our weapon as well, no matter how much they'll try they'll never succeed in disarming us. Because solidarity's "bullets" are all these small or big gestures of support from all those who see in us a part of themselves, and those who can't feel free when at the same time there are imprisoned comrades, hostages in the hands of the state.

SOLIDARITY TO ALL CAPTIVES
OF THE SOCIAL-CLASS STRUGGLE
TILL THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LAST PRISON

Christos Tsakalos (Greece)

For everyone of us that learned to count our steps within the prison yard and divide our day between locking after locking and our night in tallies.

At the same time, June 11th is a day of war. It's a day of rebellion because law and order may rule but they do not reign.

The existence of anarchist prisoners reminds us of the existence of the anarchist war. A war that sometimes burns slowly and sometimes blinds the sky with its fires.

Every war has its losses. There are comrades that were lost to cop's bullets or from a bomb that "was in a hurry" to explode...

Comrades that will not be beside us in the next conspiratorial rendezvous.

And then there are those who got caught in the enemy's snare. An enemy that is baptized in democracy and takes revenge with prisons and courts.

A democracy that likes to carry its captives as trophies from prison to prison, in special conditions, charged with dozens of years of punishment...

Inside the cell, a question that slaps you often visits you...

– "Was it worth it?"

They say that if your enemy doesn't chase you, you must be doing something wrong...

Transports, special courts, special conditions of solitary confinement, hunger strikes, prohibition of visits, arrests and imprisonment of relatives, new trials, attempted prison escapes..proof that we didn't give up...

The prison may take away our freedom, but we carry the war against authority within us, in every prison transport, in every cell search, in every locking of the door.

And sometimes, when the prison walls seem to grow taller and every locking from the guard echoes inside your head, you know that you are not alone.

You know that it didn't simply happen to you, it isn't just bad luck that you were caught.

You know that you are the continuation of a thread, a story that began with the rebellion of Spartacus and even more before that...

You know that there are others like you within the cells of Chile, in custody in Mexico, in prisons in the USA, in FIES status in Spain, in vague detention in Germany, in supervision of thought in Switzerland, within special cell-blocks of isolation in Italy, in underground solitary confinement in Greece, in conditions of barbarism in Russia, in captivity in Poland...

And this gives you strength...you feel like an accomplice.

And all of us are connected with bonds of memory and perspective.

Memory for those who were imprisoned, tortured and executed before us in far more difficult times, and perspective for those who continue the thread of history walking against the hands of authority's clock...

So... the answer to the question is...

– "YES, it was worth it and if I turned back time, I would do the exact same thing again, a thousand times."

And if someone asks again..

– “But the prison, isn’t it a defeat?”

The answer is simple...

– “Victory is defined by the life you live...That’s why we are winners.”

11 Jun - Eric King update

A couple of significant events in Eric King’s life recently happened or are upcoming.

MORE:

June 11th - Eric Got Married!

After all the necessary paperwork was filed, and a marriage license was received, on Monday, June 6th Eric King and his partner were married by a good friend in Leavenworth, Kansas.

They had been supporting one another in a wonderful partnership and decided, especially in anticipation of Eric’s 10-year prison sentence that it was time to get married.

(from Eric’s partner)

“Even though it was a happy day no moment seems to be absolute when dealing with state oppression and such institutions of slavery. Even the most beautiful moments will always be tinged with stress and sadness. With time that sadness is going to fall away and what we have left is a memory of creating something so beautiful that it tears through the intended misery that the state is attempting to inflict through the ridiculously long sentence. Moments like this are a beautiful reminder that standing together we are strong enough to displace their torment.

It was wonderful to see him. He was so happy and surrounded by folks that love him. We made promises to always help each other be better and work to fight oppression. To work together as comrades, friends and partners to build something that the state cannot touch..

I guess I will add. After all the horribleness with the guards I had to walk into the room, stand against the glass and look into his eyes and breathe and fight to connect. That place is built to tear those connections down and it was so important to be able to fight to be present. That was a lot harder than I anticipated even with someone who I share such a deep connection with. And after that... there was just so much laughter and silliness in that room the entire visit”

The path to the day did not come easily, CCA Leavenworth took every chance to make things difficult for his partner and friends coming in, anything from finding dress code violations that weren’t there to making his partner stand up in front and be inspected by the chief of security. They finally decided that her attire was acceptable. And then they tried to impose “new” rules that left one of the witnesses out from entering the room and even tried to claim one of them had been taken off the list by Eric. Everyone stood their ground and were finally allowed into the room.

This was a day similar to a visit, a phone call or a great letter where Eric could escape with the words from someone who truly cares for him. We should all know June 6th, 2016 is a day that they will always remember, and it is clearly a day that will allow them both to get through this time together that much more easily.

(from Eric)

“We worked for this, we wanted this, it wasn’t easy but we made it happen and overcame their nonsense. It gives me lots of comfort and strength. This really beautiful moment takes away the sting of what is coming up... we re-appropriated this moment from them and that is bad ass. When we think back on this worst period, I will be able to look back on this blissful moment instead of the scariness of sentencing. That is the worst the state can throw at us, and we just eclipsed that. One of the best parts to me was seeing my friends and partner overcoming their bullshit that day. Their every attempt to put us off they just plowed through it. It makes a world of fucking difference having support from folks. There are so many people in here who are just so depressed because their partners, their loved ones, and their best friends just walk away from them. I have had that happen to me and that hurts so bad, there is no explanation and no closure. So to have someone like my partner and friends see this shit out it makes me feel like I am still alive and not buried in here. Even though I know that is not going to happen, the state still creates that fear when you see it all day long. That feeling isn’t mine, but it is one the state projects on me. That is where the people I love keep me grounded and in the present and that is very rare in here. It helps you know there is still life out there and helps you not just fall into the trap of prison negativity and putridness so even within the constant darkness it is my loved ones that bring the stars to me, the mountains of Scotland and the reefs in Hawaii. It saves me from prison becoming my whole world because when that happens you drown.”

June 28th - Sentencing Date Set

The sentencing date for Eric has been set for Tuesday, June 28th at 11:30am. Help us pack the courtroom!

US District Court
Courtroom 8A (District Judge Gary Fenner)
400 East 9th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Note: A valid state-issued ID is required for entry into the courtroom, as is going through a metal detector.

We’re hurriedly arranging a solidarity event in KC and housing options for people coming from out of town, so keep an eye out for further logistical details as we confirm them. In the mean time, start making your plans to pack the courtroom with us!

As EK’s transfer to a federal penitentiary looms, we are working hard to raise support funds to help him through the next 8+ years. Please donate to his support fund at <http://fnd.us/c/316cDf/sh/a4jVK6>. You can also get a kick-ass support t-shirt when you donate \$20 or more!

To order a shirt, donate and then email us at [erickingsupportcrew\(A\)riseup.net](mailto:erickingsupportcrew(A)riseup.net) with your shirt size (XS, S, M, L, XL) and mailing address. You can also email us to get a mailing address for donations by check or money order.

And don’t forget about writing to EK to help him through this stressful time! He always loves to hear from people, even when he can’t respond to everyone individually.

12 Jun - Why I believe Ed Poindexter is not a cop killer

Journalist Michael Richardson’s testimonial to the innocence of political prisoner Ed Poindexter.

MORE:

by Michael Richardson (*The Examiner*)

I met Ed Poindexter in prison. I was visiting, while Ed is still serving a life sentence. Poindexter was sentenced to “hard labor” with an indeterminate life sentence for the 1970 bombing murder of Patrolman Larry Minard, Sr. I went to college in Omaha when the crime happened so many long years ago and attended the first week of his trial.

Ed Poindexter was a Black Panther, chairman of the local National Committee to Combat Fascism. Poindexter and Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa, then David Rice, were convicted in April 1971 following a controversial trial. Both men have become known as the Omaha Two and always proclaimed their innocence.

I knew Mondo from our mutual attendance at the weekly City Council meetings and long wondered about his guilt. About a decade ago I took up correspondence with Mondo and eventually made a number of trips to the Nebraska State Penitentiary in an attempt to answer my compelling curiosity about his claim of innocence. Mondo asserted that Poindexter was every bit as innocent as he was and that both had been framed by a clandestine FBI operation codenamed COINTELPRO, a view that I now strongly hold.

When I met Ed Poindexter on one of my trips to the maximum-security prison in Lincoln, Nebraska, I still had not formed an opinion on whether either man was innocent or guilty. With apprehension and a feeling of unease I went into a tiny interview room with the man who was locked up for life for the horrific murder of a policeman responding to an emergency call.

The man that I met was polite, proper, and well-spoken. The interview went well and we parted with a handshake. I remained uncertain, however, about the ultimate question I was seeking to answer. I knew I had to continue my research into what really happened in Omaha on August 17, 1970.

It was on my second or third visit with Ed that I had my innocence breakthrough and came to understand that Poindexter was telling the truth. By then I had learned a great deal about COINTELPRO and the harassment activity of the Omaha Police Department against Poindexter and his group. The hard facts of misconduct by the Federal Bureau of Investigation against Poindexter had just about convinced me the Omaha Two were indeed political prisoners as they claimed. I don't really remember the gotcha moment when I realized Mondo was innocent, a think it was a slow realization. In Ed's case, I recognized the very moment it happened that my self-appointed jury duty was over.

I was asking Ed questions about the confessed bomber Duane Peak and his brother Donald. As Ed was answering about the two Peak brothers he paused. The look on Ed's face changed to one of disgust as he complained of reports the pair were laughing about Minard's death. Sitting just across the table, intently watching Poindexter for any sign of untruthfulness, I was immediately struck by the sincerity of the moment. I was in the presence of an innocent man.

The only evidence against Poindexter were dynamite particles allegedly found in his shirt pocket and the testimony of Duane Peak.

Ed's shirt traveled to Washington, D.C. with Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent Thomas Sledge. Sledge also transported two vials of dynamite particles for testing. Mondo's pants pocket also allegedly contained dynamite particles, however an Omaha World-Herald photo of Mondo with hands in pockets, just prior to testing clean for dynamite, disproves the ATF evidence against him and casts considerable doubt on the particles found in Ed's clothing. ATF agent Sledge's brother, James Sledge, was an Omaha policeman and injured in the bombing that killed Minard.

Duane Peak, an admitted perjurer, gave at least seven different versions of the crime, several of which did not even mention Poindexter. In exchange for his testimony against Poindexter the bomber was sentenced as a juvenile delinquent and never spent a day in prison.

At his trial Ed testified in a clear and steady voice, “I was unjustly accused of a crime.” Poindexter told the jury that he had been wrongly accused and stated that he never talked with Duane Peak about “how to kill a pig” and never knew Larry Minard nor had any reason to kill him as Peak claimed.

Going about in the world proclaiming the innocence of a long-ago convicted Black Panther is not a quick path to fame or wealth. The task is made more difficult by the unpleasant reality of a police conspiracy involving command officers of the Omaha Police Department, a small army of Federal Bureau of Investigation agents including the legendary J. Edgar Hoover, and at least one agent of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division. Many do not want to face the ugly truth of the matter.

Ed Poindexter says he is an innocent man and I believe him.

13 Jun - We must not let the Orlando nightclub terror further strangle our civil liberties

Please read Chelsea Manning's reaction to the recent massacre in Orlando.

MORE:

by Chelsea E Manning (*The Guardian*)

This morning, I woke up in my cell to an even more shattered and fractured world. We are lost. We are devastated. We are bewildered. We are hurt. And we are angry. I haven't been this angry since losing a soldier in my unit to an RPG attack in southeastern Baghdad during my deployment in Iraq in 2010.

As a young queer kid growing up, I explored my identity through the Chicago and Washington DC club scene. As many have said, the club is our sanctuary – a place where we find ourselves, love ourselves and find community. I can totally relate to the trauma that has afflicted our community in the wake of the shooting in Orlando.

We must grieve and mourn and support each other, but in our grief and outrage we must resist any temptations to let this attack – or any attack – trigger anti-Muslim foreign policy, attacks on our civil liberties or as an excuse to descend into xenophobia and Islamophobia.

However, an attack like this is carefully planned and executed to maximize attention by inflaming the passions of a helpless public. Because of this, the response can be more dangerous than the attack. The refrains of “safety and security” have, for many years, been used as a tool by the powerful to justify curtailing civil liberties and emboldening backlash against immigrants, Muslim people and others.

Those who wish to continue campaigns of fear are prepared to cast an entire religion as hateful with no reflection on their own complicity in the many forms of violence the queer community encounters in the United States. We should not let their agendas guide our reaction to this senseless massacre.

We're not sure yet what schemes might be proposed over the next few days and weeks, but we have seen how politicians have used our fear to compromise our constitution many times in the past, from extraordinary rendition (kidnapping) to enhanced interrogation (torture), from foreign intelligence surveillance courts to encryption backdoors.

Some will claim extreme measures are necessary to protect the queer and trans community. Others will erase the queer and Latin identities of the victims and instead claim that we are at war with Islam. But regardless of how the narrative is told, such policies will undoubtedly have a negative impact on our community at home and abroad.

Current proposals for hate crime laws and terrorism enhancements only take more power away from our community. We consolidate power with law enforcement only to have those same mechanisms turned against us. For example, more intense scrutiny on verification procedures in government and business have created barriers for trans people seeking documents that correctly identify their gender, causing us to be subjected to abusive and humiliating searches when traveling. Any increase in surveillance of marginalized communities for the sake of security theater have expanded the cycle of criminalization that queer people – especially queer people of color – are forced to navigate.

Earlier this year, the FBI sought a novel judicial backdoor to a cellphone in response to the San Bernardino attack. Such a backdoor would have potentially allowed the government to more easily target queer and trans people as well as human rights campaigners, environmentalists and anti-corporate protestors as “threats and criminals.”

In response to leaks and mass attacks on military bases, the FBI also sought to stifle potential whistleblowers. This Insider Threat program used my gender identity, psychological profile and history as a basis for their targeting. “Safety and security” has even been used as a justification to place a two-inch limit on the length of my hair.

We are not safe and secure when the government uses us as pawns to perpetrate violence against others. Our safety and security will come when we organize, love and resist together.

We should remember that we are alive. We are real flesh and blood. Apart from the fact that we are increasingly disconnected from the world by technology and politics, we are still surviving as a community.

And even though we have come a long way, events like these remind us we still have a long way to go. Thoughts and prayers alone won’t protect our community. We need to continue to build and support queer and trans communities and end the profiling and criminalization that so many face.

We find solace and sanctuary in the club because we are so often expelled from other public spaces – from bathrooms, from street corners, from jobs, from history. Our survival is our resistance. And our solidarity and support for the Muslim community in these coming days and months – some of whom are queer and trans – will lift us all up in the face of anyone seeking to further marginalize another.

15 Jun - ‘Enough Is Enough’: Prisoners Across The Country Band Together To End Slavery For Good

Siddique Hasan, a self-described revolutionary from Savannah, Georgia, has been waiting for a moment like this one, when prisoners across the country band together and say “enough is enough” when it comes to being treated like a slave.

MORE:

by Carimah Townes (*Think Progress*)

“It’s time for a broader struggle,” he told ThinkProgress during his daily phone time in Ohio’s supermax prison. “People have to lift up their voice with force and determination, and let them know that they’re dissatisfied with the way things are actually being run.”

So far this year, prisoners have been doing just that.

In a growing movement largely going unnoticed by the national media, inmates all over the country are starting to stand up against the brutal conditions and abuses they have faced for decades.

Beginning in March, thousands of people locked away in Michigan prisons launched a hunger strike over the amount and quality of food they were served by a private food vendor. That vendor should have been an improvement from its predecessor, which fed inmates refrigerated meat, trash, and rodent saliva. Instead, the new food provider served small portions of watery food. And what started as a seemingly isolated protest at one facility quickly spread to two others in the state.

In April, inmates in seven Texas facilities refused to go to work in protest of astronomical health care costs, their inability to use work time as credit for their parole, and having to live and labor in extreme heat with minimal compensation. In lieu of producing “mattresses, shoes, garments, brooms, license plates, printed materials, janitorial supplies, soaps, detergents, furniture, textile, and steel products,” participating strikers stayed in their cells.

“We need to be clear about one thing,” an anonymous organizer wrote, “prisoners are not looking for a lazy life in prison. They don’t want to spend their sentences sitting in a cell, eating and sleeping. They still will attend every education — rehabilitation and training programs (sic) available. They are not against work in prison — as long they (sic) receive credit for their labor and good conduct that counts towards a real parole-validation.”

Then, on May Day, prisoners hundreds of miles away in Alabama launched a strike of their own. Less than two months after riots broke out at William C. Holman Correctional Facility, an Alabama prison that’s notorious for gross medical neglect, poor sanitation, and overcrowding, hundreds of detainees in at least three facilities declined to make license plates, sew bedding, and labor in recycling and canning factories for 17 to 30 cents an hour.

One of the prisoners who organized the protest, Kinetik Justice, described the strikes in Alabama as a “struggle for freedom, justice and equality.”

“As we understand it, the prison system is a continuation of the slave system, and which in all entities is an economical system,” he explained to *Democracy Now*. “Therefore, for the reform and changes that we’ve been fighting for in Alabama, we’ve tried petitioning through the courts. We’ve tried to get in touch with our legislators and so forth. And we haven’t had any recourse.”

Finally, in June, Wisconsin followed suit, with a smaller group of prisoners waging a hunger strike against solitary confinement.

At first, strikes in different states appeared isolated, connected only by their common goals. In reality, the actions are part of a unified prisoner movement that’s sweeping the country. And they’re gearing up for a bigger protest that could force even Wall Street to take notice.

The makings of a movement

Prisons in the United States are inhumane and abusive places, and there is a long history of rising up against mass incarceration. But the level of coordination and solidarity driving the most recent wave of protests is relatively new.

As Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organizer Jimi Del Duca put it, "The days of divide and conquer -- it's not so easy to do that anymore."

Union members and volunteers with the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC), a project started by the IWW, are helping prisoners across the country to unionize and fight toward their collective freedom. The IWOC allows prisoners to join the union for free, and had a hand in the Texas, Wisconsin, and Alabama strikes.

Once they join the IWW, detainees can relay information to allies -- and each other -- across state lines. They coordinate and run their own campaigns with the assistance of people on the outside. IWOC sets them up with a network of penpals who eventually become informants, according to Del Duca. Some people, like Hasan, use prison phones and email servers to talk to supporters. In other cases, prisoners use contraband cellphones to get in touch with one another.

Now, they're teaming up with prison reform organizations throughout the U.S. to prepare for a massive strike targeting people's wallets.

"Prisoners make traffic signs. They make license plates. They make sheet metal. They work in shoe shops. Prisoners do all kinds of things and they're not being paid for it," Hasan explained. "These corporations come to the prison and get contracts with them and get cheap labor so they don't have to pay traditional workers. Prisoners get no social security. They get no overtime."

In federal and state correctional facilities around the country, detainees toil in factories or work as field hands for little to no money at all. Prison authorities claim work programs are rehabilitative and give detainees valuable job skills for their reentry. That can be true, with the right program and fair wages. But most prison labor programs are actually contributing to a multi-billion dollar shadow industry. Prisons strike deals with big corporations to provide cheap labor for large kickbacks, while paying workers mere cents. In turn, corporations sell the products supplied by prisoners at market value, and are able to cut costs by firing non-prison workers who have to be paid minimum wage.

The U.S. military, Victoria's Secret, Walmart, and McDonald's are among the beneficiaries of prison labor. Meanwhile, prisoners who perform backbreaking work, such as shoveling snow for 20 cents a day or fighting wildfires for less than \$4 a day, can't afford to make phone calls, purchase commissary items, or request medical attention. What little money they do make on the job is nowhere near enough to cover the costs of their survival.

Come September, on the 45th anniversary of the deadliest prison uprising in U.S. history, prisoners across the country will cease working altogether.

"In one voice, rising from the cells of long term solitary confinement, echoed in the dormitories and cell blocks from Virginia to Oregon, we prisoners across the United States vow to finally end slavery in 2016," reads a call to action posted in April. "Our protest against prison slavery is a protest against the school to prison pipeline, a protest against police terror, a protest against post-release controls. When we abolish slavery, they'll lose much of their incentive to lock up our children, they'll stop building traps to pull back those who they've released."

'We're not slaves'

Hasan is no stranger to fighting back against oppressive conditions. In fact, he's on death row for his role in the 1993 Lucasville uprising that ended with 10 people dead at the hands of prisoners. Prisoners hoped to keep things nonviolent and take guards hostage until they were allowed to make a comment to the press

about the brutal conditions they were facing: regular beatings by guards, overcrowding, terrible health care, the inability to talk on the phone for more than five minutes a year. But the nonviolent protest, which Hasan helped plan, didn't go as expected. Instead of simply taking the guards hostage, a bunch of prisoners beat guards with baseball bats and fire extinguishers. Some of them murdered fellow detainees, who they identified as "snitches." Multiple people were raped.

"Things got out of hand. You had a lot of prisoners with a lot of grudges, animosities and hatred in their hearts for prisoners and nonprisoners," Hasan explained to *TruthDig* last year. Hasan tried to protect the guards and control the chaos, but in the end he was one of five people sentenced to capital punishment for the massacre.

Yet that death sentence hasn't stopped him from fighting for revolutionary change. The prison conditions he's now dealing with have only fueled his fire. He's been on Ohio State Penitentiary's death row for nearly two decades, and participated in numerous hunger strikes for better privileges ever since. His eyes are now set on the national work stoppage.

"What's wrong with me talking about bringing about changes, fighting to be treated fairly, to be treated as an equal?" he asked. "In my mind, I'm not doing anything wrong."

Hasan is one of many people working diligently to get local and faraway allies on board, writing letters and emails, making phone calls, and passing messages through outside supporters.

"When they see that it's hard to beat the system within the system itself, and you get no meaningful redress, then you can't keep doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results. You have to take another route," he said.

"This intends to be a protracted struggle. How long, I can't say," he continued. "But there are some things that are non-negotiable and some things that are negotiable. We have to wait til we cross that road."

It's hard to measure how much a company or a prison would feel the pain from prison work stoppages. While states currently save millions by employing inmates, cheap labor is easy to come by. At the Holman Correctional Facility in Alabama, Del Duca explained, officials simply replaced the people on strike. Detainees involved in offsite work release programs were brought in to break the strike and resume the work that prisoners refused to do -- making license plates.

A national strike could do more damage, but it's too early and difficult to predict the extent of that damage.

As someone who has been in the system since he was a child, Hasan is familiar with how authorities respond to protest and anticipates that staff will try to paint prisoners as a security risk. Nevertheless, he thinks the winds are truly changing and believes a national work stoppage will force change. Previous strikes Hasan's been involved in have resulted in concessions from prison authorities: phone time, direct contact with fellow prisoners, religious services, and a larger range of movement.

"It's a big scheme that corporate America and the prison system are just taking advantage [and] exploiting prisoners. And they say [we're] the criminals. They ought to take a true look at themselves, because they're the true criminals," Hasan said. "We want to be treated as American citizens. We're not slaves."

16 Jun - Debbie Africa Denied Parole

As expected, this past week The Pennsylvania Parole Board denied parole for our Sister Debbie Africa and gave her a two year hit.

MORE:

A week and a half ago The Pennsylvania Parole Board denied parole for both Janet and Janine Africa, giving them both a two year hit as well. The recent parole denials are nothing more than yet another pathetic attempt by this Government to try and break our sisters. This attempt by this Government has not and will not Break our Sisters because they are Strong, Secure, and Committed Revolutionary Women thanks to JOHN AFRICA The FOUNDER and COORDINATOR Of THE MOVE ORGANIZATION.

Our sisters are remaining strong and have not given up in their fight for REVOLUTION and this is an encouraging example for us all to keep fighting . By no means are these recent denials a defeat for us but this gives us more fuel, more fire, to keep exposing this issue with The Pa Parole Board and The Fraternal Order of Police. This fight is far from over as we now prepare for the August 2016 parole hearing for our Brother Michael Africa and the now 2018 parole hearings for Delbert, Eddie, Janet, Janine, and Debbie Africa. So as was stated earlier, this fight is FAR FROM OVER and we are not letting up not one bit and we will continue to work to bring our family home.

We will soon post our next course of action as it relates to the illegal parole denials of The Move 9. In the meantime we continue to urge people to sign and share the official petition we have aimed at The United States Attorney General Loretta Lynch urging an investigation into The Wrongful and Ongoing Imprisonment of The Move 9. People can sign by going to the link <https://www.causes.com/campaigns/92454-free-the-move-9>

Also, this August 8th 2016 on the 38 Anniversary of the arrest of The Move 9, we will be putting together a twitter storm to obtain our goal of 25,000 signatures for The US Justice Department petition for an investigation into the wrongful imprisonment issue.

In the meantime we urge people to stay strong and keep fighting.

16 Jun - Political Prisoner Robert Seth Hayes Denied Again at His 10th Parole Board Hearing

We are enraged to report that political prisoner Robert Seth Hayes received notice on June 16, 2016, that he was once again rejected by the Parole Board.

MORE:

This is the tenth time Seth has been to the Board, and the tenth time he has been denied, despite having an excellent record and meeting all requirements to be released on parole.

There will definitely be an Article 78 appeal of this denial. We will need everyone's help in preparing for the appeal and will definitely be waging a strong campaign.

We will keep everyone posted on upcoming steps and actions to take.

16 Jun - Parole Hearing for Political Prisoner Jalil Muntaqim on Tuesday, June 21, 2016

Jalil had been told that his parole hearing was to be on Tuesday, June 14, 2016. However, he was not called to go to the Board on that day.

MORE:

NYC Jericho called Attica this morning, June 16th, and spoke with his ORC, who informed us the hearing is scheduled for next Tuesday, June 21, 2016.

When asked why Jalil was not informed of this, the ORC did not have a coherent answer, just repeated that the hearing would be next Tuesday. We consider this to be deliberate cruelty by DOCCS, since Jalil could have been informed ahead of time as to the change of date for the hearing, instead of wondering why he was not called to go to the Board for the entire day of June 14th.

This will be Jalil's ninth board, as he is essentially being resentenced by the Parole Board to Life Without Parole (LWOP), even though his actual sentence is 25 to Life. The corruption and complicity of the Parole Board with the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) is blatant. We must not allow it to continue.

16 Jun - Old New York Police Surveillance Is Found, Forcing Big Brother Out of Hiding

From the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, police surveillance of political organizations in New York was extensive enough to require more than half a million index cards, simply to catalog and cross-reference the many dossiers.

MORE:

by Joseph Goldstein (*New York Times*)

But over the ensuing decades, the dossiers themselves were presumed missing or lost. Police Department lawyers said they had no idea where the files had gone.

Now, a significant portion of the missing files have been discovered during what the city said on Thursday was a routine inventory of a Queens warehouse, where archivists found 520 brown boxes of decades-old files, believed to be the largest trove of New York Police Department surveillance records from the era.

"It's the whole mother lode," said Gideon Oliver, a civil rights lawyer who two years ago filed a lawsuit on behalf of a historian seeking records about a group that was a target of surveillance.

The boxes, according to a written index, contain extensive files about the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam and the Young Lords, as well as public demonstrations and civil unrest. Files on individuals are also among the documents; at least 15 boxes primarily contain photographs, Mr. Oliver said.

The city's Records Department, in a statement, said it was working to develop rules regarding public access to the documents, though no timetable or process has been set.

The files are bound to resonate not only among those subjected to surveillance decades ago, but also among current activists and organizations that have faced police surveillance and infiltration in the years since Sept. 11, 2001.

After the terrorist attacks, the Police Department bolstered its spying capabilities; Muslim organizations and mosques in particular reported extensive surveillance. Others, including activists associated with causes ranging from the antiwar movement to cycling, have also found themselves watched.

The files discovered in Queens are from a secretive police unit that began as the anti-Communist "Red Squad." During the 1960s, it was called the Special Services Division. Today it is called the Intelligence Division.

Its activities are subject to rules intended to limit the circumstances under which the police can begin investigating political groups, or maintain surveillance files that capture political activity. The rules, put in place in the 1980s and modified after Sept. 11, emerged from a long-running lawsuit brought by political activists.

Pablo Guzman, an early member of the Young Lords, said he hoped to have a chance to inspect the Police Department's records on the group, which was the target of extensive surveillance and infiltration, he said.

"We would be most interested in discovering who they sent in to infiltrate us — who were the undercovers and who was subverting what we were doing?" Mr. Guzman, a longtime television reporter in New York, said. "But we're not going to find out who the turncoats were, who the agents were. They're going to redact all that."

For the past 30 years, the files were supposed to be open to the public, as part of the settlement of the lengthy lawsuit. The city had agreed to release portions to people who asked to see their own file, one of the lawyers, Jethro Eisenstein, recalled. But a significant number of those who sought access were rebuffed, he said. By the time the files were to be made public they were in disarray, rendering the indexing system useless.

Civil rights lawyers claimed it reflected a clear effort on the part of the Police Department to stymie public access. "They scrambled the entire system, so it was impossible to find anything," Mr. Eisenstein said.

But the index-card filing system, described in various old court documents, offers insight into the extent of surveillance.

A court filing from 1989 provides a sampling of the material in the dossiers. One card referred to signers of a Communist Party petition, while another mentioned a Catholic lay teacher who was involved in labor negotiations with the archdiocese. There are index cards for those who spoke at rallies against the Vietnam War. There is an index card for the person "seated at Table 8 in Albert Ballroom, Americana Hotel, paying \$15 for dinner held by Emergency Civil Liberties Committee 12/15/62."

For years the files were believed to have been stored in two rooms at Police Headquarters. The rooms, A10 and 1206, became a topic of fascination and frustration for civil rights lawyers. Over time the files were said to become increasingly disorganized. Ultimately, they disappeared.

In affidavits from the past two years, the current occupants of those two rooms, or the detectives who searched them, reported finding none of the surveillance files.

"Throughout the '80s we were pressing for this stuff," Mr. Eisenstein recalled. "And then it fell from view."

Over time, he said, "the people who were concerned about what was written about them in the '60s were onto other stuff."

When the documents resurfaced this week, among the first to learn of the discovery was Johanna Fernandez, a professor at Baruch College who is writing a book on the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican organization that began as a reformed street gang in Chicago before evolving into a radical social justice

movement. She had requested surveillance files relating to the organization from the Police Department as well as from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which she said was far more responsive in providing records.

In 2014, she sued the city to gain access, after years of letter writing had yielded little.

In court affidavits, police officials said they found little, despite searches lasting more than 100 hours. The judge, Alice Schlesinger, dismissed the lawsuit in May, expressing frustration at the outcome.

In an interview, Professor Fernandez said she had been told by the Records Department that the documents would soon be made accessible not only to scholars but also to the public at large.

Taken together, she said, the files tell "the story of thousands of people and organizations in New York City who fought to make the city more just and democratic and were systematically obstructed by the police."

Her own book is largely written, but she said she hoped to incorporate the records into an epilogue.

18 Jun - Laptop & related for Sekou Odinga

Sekou Odinga, Black Panther Party leader and former Political Prisoner/P.O.W. was released in 2014 after 33 years in prison. Since his release he has spent most of every waking moment working, speaking, writing and organizing: continuing to speak truth to power.

MORE:

When Sekou went to prison there were no such things as email or laptops, he still writes with paper and pen. Let's help Sekou do his work, he needs a computer. This campaign's goal is to get him one. If 150 people kick in \$10 dollars we can get him the equipment he needs.

Supporting political prisoners includes helping them live and work after their release.

Please share this on all your social media. All contributions go directly to Sekou, even if below target amount. Please respond as early as possible; the campaign ends on July 10, 2016. The platform we are using has NO fees; Sekou keeps every cent you donate!

<https://www.generosity.com/community-fundraising/laptop-related-for-sekou-odinga>

19 Jun - Zolo Azania new address and stolen belongings

We recently found out that Zolo Agono Azania has been got transferred (without stating reasons).

MORE:

Moreover, during the transfer they withheld his belongings, which included:

- crushed red peppers, garlic powder, honey, barbecue sauce, and 5 hard back books

Further, Zolo writes that a certain Mr. C. Tray admitted confiscating things like his

- dictionary, islamic materials, prayer oil fragrances and beads, Holy Quran, Miswak, kufi prayer cap, drinking cup, towels, pastel art chalk, tweezers, and other things.

all of those items are known to be allowed at this new prison.

Zolo asked that we reach out to other groups to spread the word that his stuff has been taken from him and he needs it back...

25 Jun - Crises and Opportunities: Trump, White Supremacy, Fascism? Building New Resistance Movements

WHAT: Panel Discussion

WHEN: 2:00-5:00pm Saturday, June 25

WHERE: The Commons - 388 Atlantic Avenue Brooklyn, New York

COST: \$5-10, sliding scale

MORE:

As Donald Trump moves to an even larger national stage as Republican presumptive nominee, what does his white, male-dominated following represent? Is it an incipient fascist movement - or just a hyper-racist/sexist one? Beyond Trump and 2016, how do we best fight right-wing populist movements, here and abroad? With a sharpened understanding of the current historic context, presenters and participants will discuss how we can bolster the rising resistance movements of Black Lives Matter, immigrants' and Muslim rights, and the calls for a "political revolution."

Speakers include:

- * Matthew Lyons - co-author, Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort, and blogger
- * Sekou Odinga - former Black Panther political prisoner (invited)
- * dequi kioni-sadiki - Chair, Malcolm X Commemoration Committee
- * Sharmin Sadequee - organizer, No Separate Justice, an education/action organization opposing human rights violations of U.S. Muslims unjustly imprisoned in the "war on terror"

Performance by:

- * Nejma Shea - multi-media Hip Hop artist and sound designer active with the New Black Arts Movement

4 Jul - noise demo in solidarity with the Eastchester 120 and prisoners everywhere

WHAT: NOISE DEMO!

WHEN: 3:00pm, Monday, July 4

MORE:

July 4th is a day set aside for Americans to celebrate their freedom. What about the freedom of the 120 individuals taken into custody by nearly 700 police in gestapo style raids on April 27th? Many of these people were rounded up solely because of their manner of dress and without any evidence of them being involved in gang activity. The entire community was terrorized in order to awe its members into submission with a gratuitous display of the state's ostensible omnipotence. We stand against this manifestly illegitimate state and stand in solidarity with the 120 people who were taken on that day, as well as with the two million human souls locked up behind bars in this country. "The Land of the Free" is a collection of empty words when 2 million people are locked up in order to generate profit for a few; even more so when many of those souls are forced to work in slave labor conditions, devaluing and destabilizing work done by fellow workers on the outside. It's imperative we understand that it's only in collective solidarity with one another that we stand a chance against the few at the top who are willing to destroy our very lives in pursuit of profit. Toward this end, we stand in solidarity with the nation wide prison strike taking place on September 9th, the 45th anniversary of the Attica prison uprising. Without our collective submission to their rule, those at the top are powerless. It's toward this end of realizing our collective power that we direct this effort.